

Turkey, Europe and the European Union: ***The perspective of Turkish students about accession***

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Abstract

Because of Turkey's strategic position between Europe and Asia, the issue of Turkey's potential accession to the European Union has been a discussion for decades. Apart from the substantive discussion and perceptions of Europeans about Turkey, there is a lack of research about the underlying layers, e.g. the images, thoughts, experiences and opinions from the perspective of Turkish citizens. The aim of this research is to gain insight in the perceptions that students from universities in Istanbul have of Europe and the European Union. Eighteen in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion were held with Turkish students in Istanbul (the largest city of Turkey and which lies on both Europe and Asia). The research revealed that students had positive perceptions about Europe and Europeans, while they had more neutral perceptions of the EU, and a mixed and ambivalent attitude vis-à-vis the accession discussion. Regarding their own identity, the students felt in between European and Asian. The students tended to define themselves by who they were not, especially when they were talking about the EU. The side of the city the students were currently living, historical events and historical persons were not influential in terms of their perceptions, while the places they were raised as a child, recent events, and their experiences regarding Europe and European friends were influential. More mutual knowledge about Europeans and Turks will reduce prejudices and create more mutual tolerance, trust and understanding that are needed for a successful accession of Turkey in the future, if Turkey and the EU have solved their political issues.

Keywords: perceptions, othering, Turkey, Europe, accession, European Union.

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Preface

At the start of my master Cultural Geography, I decided to do my master thesis abroad. I wanted to experience how it is to live in a foreign country and it would give a boost to my master program. Istanbul turned out to be an excellent research area, since my faculty had a student's exchange program with a university in Istanbul and the city has many culturally and geographically interesting characteristics. At first, my idea was to work on a thesis about borders and boundaries, but later, I decided to write my thesis about the current accession discussion of Turkey to the European Union and the underlying perceptions of Turkish students of Europe and the EU. An additional surprising and interesting event for me was the riots that started in Istanbul in June 2013. These events made my research become more relevant and challenging; and personally, it made me become more curious and interested in the topic.

I was in Istanbul from September 2013 until the end of January 2014. During this time I followed one course (Land Use and Transportation Planning) at the Technical University of Istanbul, and I did research for my thesis. I wrote my theoretical chapter and methodology, recruited participants for my research and did 18 interviews and 1 focus group discussion. From the start until the end, I fully enjoyed my time in Istanbul. I met many new people and made new friends. I lived in one of the most dynamic, beautiful and interesting cities in the world.

I want to thank my supervisor, prof. dr. Frank Vanclay. Since I have extended my master by doing my master thesis in Turkey, I have been under his supervision for almost 1,5 years. Therefore, a lot of patience is required. Furthermore, I appreciated his valuable and useful feedback and especially his always quick responses to my questions and emails. In addition, I want to thank the Dutch Institute for Turkey in Istanbul, especially dr. Fokke Gerritsen, for the information they gave me concerning participant recruitment in Istanbul. Their insiders' view was very helpful. Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for their support and the interest they expressed during my research. I particularly want to thank my grandmother. She is in the final years of her life and she was really worried when she heard that her grandson was going to live in Turkey for five months. Nevertheless, since the start of my plans and almost every month, she was sending me envelopes with an umpteen number of articles about Turkey and they even reached my house in Turkey. Without her realising it, she even provided me with one of the main sources of this research.

Thanks for your attention.

Ruben Bouwman
Groningen, May 2014.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the republic of Turkey exists on the world's maps (Figure 1.1). Geographically, Turkey's territory lies both on the continent of Europe (3%) and the continent of Asia (97%) (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2013). The direction of the focus of the country was mainly determined by which empire it was part of at any particular time. Turkey has been sought for rapprochement to Europe and the European Union (EU) and in 1963 it signed a treaty to become a future member of the EU (Wester, 2009). However, Turkey also explored the possible relations with Russia, the Arabian and the Asian world (Trouw, 2013). Because of its location, it has always been an important transit hub between Asia, the Middle East and Europe. It is a country with a large population, a big and powerful army, and it has always been seen as a 'buffer zone' between Europe and the Middle East (Morley and Robins, 1995).

Figure 1.1: Turkey at the world's map.



Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Republic_of_Turkey.png

Developments in the last decade show that Turkey has been a major player in world developments. For example, while the European Union was struggling with an economic crisis, Turkey was successfully getting through it due to past reforms (European Commission, 2009). In addition, in many Arab countries, democratic revolutions and conflicts are taking place, e.g. Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. This caused troubles and conflicts on Turkey's borders, as is currently the case in neighboring country Syria. And last but not least, the recent events in Turkey itself – started since June 2013 with

the Gezi Park protests around Taksim Square – gave an extra dimension to this, since they were also about democratic reforms and they received attention all over the world (BBC, 2013).

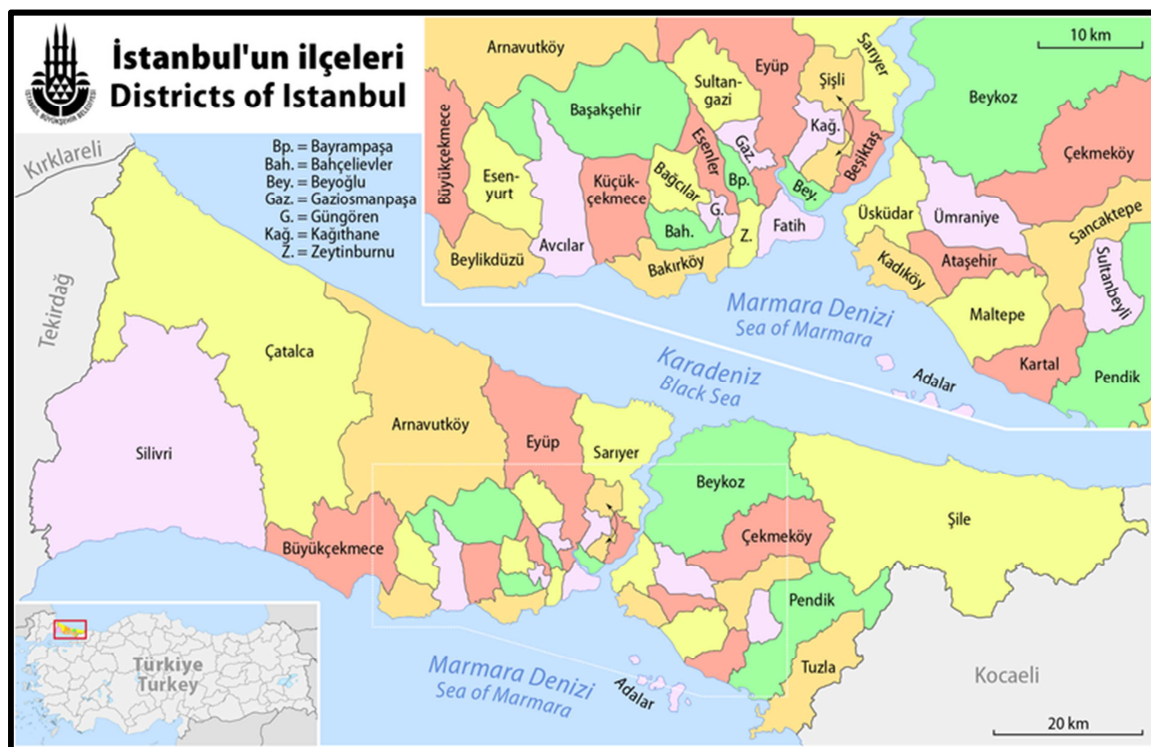
For these reasons, the case of Turkey's accession to the European Union has been very important for decades. There are a number of important issues, like the conflict between the Greeks and the Turks on Cyprus, the violations of human rights in the country, the suppression of minorities such as the Kurds, and the eternal contradiction between Christianity and Islam in the country. Many of these issues delayed the negotiations process in the 1990s because of their complexity, but were reopened since 2005, when Turkey achieved an impressive amount of reforms originating in earlier years (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013; Turkije Instituut, 2014). In recent years, the accession process came into a deadlock due to recent political problems in Turkey and a declining support.

Apart from the substantive discussion, there is an underlying layer, namely the images, thoughts, experiences and opinions of the people who are involved in the discussion. These are not only the politicians and policymakers from Europe and Turkey, but also those of the ordinary citizens of the EU and Turkey. In the recent decades, a lot has been written about how Europe thinks about its neighboring countries and continents and how the people perceive them. Less is written about the other way around: in this case, how Turkey's people perceive Europe. The concept of Orientalism of Edward Said has received much attention in research, but there is little about how the Orient thinks about the West (Occidentalism) (Morozov and Rumelili, 2012).

It is important to know how much interest there is from people in the EU and Turkey to solve the discussion problems and if these problems are solved, how to create more understanding and trust between Turks and Europeans and a smooth transition for Turkey's membership of the EU. Besides that, most of the research about the discussion is done about the substantive meanings and opinions from different people in quantitative terms. There is a lack of qualitative research about the experiences, associations and images that Turkish people have about Europe and the European Union. And finally, the small amount of existing articles and research in English about this topic is referring to more articles and research written in Turkish language (Çelebi, 2009; Hortaçsu and Cem-Ersoy, 2005; Yilmaz, 2011). This is also an obstacle especially for European organizations and institutions that want to know more about these perceptions of Turkish people.

To answer these questions, in this research the city of Istanbul has been chosen as the research area. Figure 1.2 shows a map of the province of Istanbul containing a framework that approximately comprises the city of Istanbul. In the middle, the city is divided by water, the Bosphorus. The eastern part is Asia (Anatolia) and the western part is Europe (Thrace). Istanbul is the largest city of Turkey with more than 14 million inhabitants (TUIK, 2014). It is also the only city in the world that is split across two continents. The city is near (within 200 kilometers) the strictly guarded political border with the European Union. Istanbul is also seen as 'a bridge to Europe' by many migrants from other continents (Bazuin, 2011). Therefore, the geographical aspects come into discussion by choosing this city as the research area of this research.

Figure 1.2: Map of province and city of Istanbul



Source: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_Stadtteile_von_Istanbul

Due to the complexity and extensity of the discussion, it is convenient to pick out and focus on one specific group in society: in my case, I have chosen the students of the universities in Istanbul. This group is probably more aware of the discussion, has been to Europe before and there is a higher chance that these people will be faced with the outcomes of the discussion and the EU itself later on in their careers and private lives. This group of people will occupy important spots in Turkish society and are the future of the country. The recent developments, which started in June 2013, i.e. the riots around Taksim Square, were mainly performed by students or other young people and demonstrate their interest in current political debates. Also, the developments in a broader context, the whole Arabic region reveals this awareness and involvement of young people/students in current political issues.

It is important that this research is carried out to get a glimpse of the perspective from Turkish people, specifically the students in Istanbul, to know what they think about and how they experience Europe and the European Union, and to assess if there will be enough support for accession in the future, when the negotiations between the EU and Turkey have a positive outcome. This research can also possibly be contributory to create better understanding and trust between Turkey and European countries and people. This will provide a foundation on which to build policies in the future. In this thesis, recommendations are provided to the European Union as to how to deal with these issues as a result of the current awareness in Turkey.

1.1 Objective and research questions

The aim of this research is to gain insight in the images, thoughts, experiences, opinions and associations students from universities in Istanbul have about Europe and the European Union, formulated in the following research question:

- *How do Turkish students in Istanbul perceive Europe and the European Union?*

This main question is broken down into a few sub-questions.

1. *What images and associations do Turkish students in Istanbul have of Europe and the European Union?*
2. *To what extent does 'othering' take place and what forms does it take?*
3. *What do the Turkish students in Istanbul think about the accession discussion of Turkey to the European Union?*
4. *To what extent are there differences and commonalities in the answers to these questions between the two sides of Istanbul?*

Before answering these questions, a short historical context is provided to give an idea about the relations and interactions between Istanbul, Turkey and Europe over history, and the impact of this for the perceptions of Turkish people. After that, the current important developments from recent year are briefly described and the process and discussion of the accession to the European Union will be explained to give an understanding of the current viewpoints and related images and perceptions of students. In addition, important theories related to perceptions and concepts related to this topic will be described and related existing research will be explored.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO TURKEY-EUROPE RELATIONS

2.1 Istanbul, Turkey and Europe

Historical relations

For a better understanding of the relations and interactions between Istanbul, Turkey and Europe, the following brief description has been paraphrased from the Lonely Planet travel guide for Turkey (Lonely Planet, 2011) and the Lonely Planet information online (Lonely Planet, 2013). Essentially, Istanbul has always been an important and strategic settlement. Originally, Istanbul was a Greek city, established around 700 B.C. and named 'Byzantium' after the name of its founder, Byzas. After being a prosperous city over many centuries, it was conquered by the Roman Empire and became an important city. First it kept the name, Byzantium, but when the emperor Constantine the Great decided to relocate the capital of the Roman Empire to the Bosphorus, it became known as Constantinople. It was the capital of the Roman Empire for 65 years until the year 395, when the eastern part of the Roman Empire became separated from the western part and was called the Byzantine Empire. The city was for a long time the largest city in Europe and important organizations of the church and the emperor relocated to Istanbul.

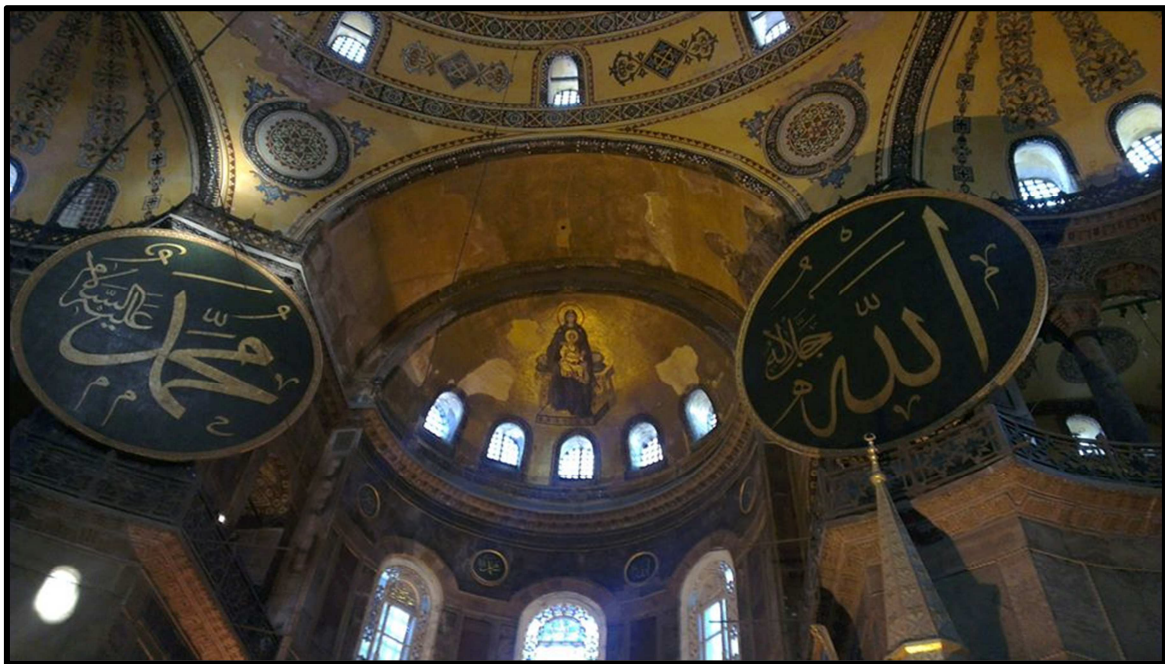
In 1453, after several years of decay and with the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the city was conquered by the Ottomans, led by Sultan Mehmet II. Despite the decay of the last decades, the Sultan made it the capital of the Ottoman Empire because of its strategic position and the city became an administrative, commercial and cultural heart of an empire again. The Sultan started building programs, like the Blue Mosque and Topkapı Palace, and made a mosque of the Hagia Sophia that was originally a church, as seen in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 on the next page. New flows of intellectual people and trade occurred, and the city became a mix of Muslims speaking Turkish, Greek orthodox Christians, Armenians and Jews. The Ottoman Empire expanded until its maximum size in 1750, when it included the Middle East, Northern Africa, the Balkans and the area around the Black Sea. However, at the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century, the whole empire again fell into decay, and countries like Greece and Egypt became independent. Despite the decay and the rising influence of European countries (e.g. France, Great Britain, Russia and Germany) in the region, the sultan continued his building plans and Istanbul was still regarded as the 'Paris of the East' (Lonely Planet, 2013). Also the Orient Express, the first great international luxury express train, was established running between Paris and Istanbul, and made famous by an Agatha Christie novel.

Figure 2.1: The Hagia Sophia from outside.



Source: <http://www.newworldwonders.com/2013/07/preview-hagia-sophia.html>

Figure 2.2: The Hagia Sophia from inside with Christian and Islamic influences



Source: Author

After the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was one of the losers and it lost more of its size. Istanbul was occupied by the British, and the Greeks were planning to invade Anatolia. However, at the same time, an Ottoman general, named Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk, the Father of the Turks, see Figure 2.3 on the next page), who was successful in battle during the First World War, was planning to take over the government of Turkey overthrowing the ineffective sultan. It led to the Turkish War of Independence (1920-1922), when Turkish Nationalist Forces, led by Mustafa Kemal, were fighting against Greek, French and Italian invasion forces. The establishment of the modern Republic of Turkey on 29 October 1923 was the result. After that, Atatürk decided to *'move away, both metaphorically and physically, from the imperial memories of Istanbul'* (Lonely Planet, 2013,

online). The city of Ankara, more centrally located and therefore less susceptible to foreign attacks, became the new capital of the young Republic and Istanbul lost much of its wealth and status over the following decades. Atatürk modernised and reformed the Republic of Turkey and made Turkey a secular state. Islamic traditions were put at the background, nationalistic feelings rose and Western modernisations were introduced. Istanbul, however, remained the cultural and economic centre of Turkey, although it lost its political status. After the death of Atatürk in 1938, Turkey chose the Allied side in the Second World War and democratic reforms continued. The first democratic elections were held in 1950 and since then, Turkey experienced several military coups. However, in 1983, economist president Turgut Özal won the elections and introduced a free market economy which led to an economic and tourism boom in Turkey and Istanbul. Especially from the 1990s, Istanbul was part of a 'renaissance': public transport has been upgraded and continues to be improved, suburbs have been reinvigorated and parklands line the waterways. The Lonely Planet travel guide (2011) finishes the history of Istanbul- part with a striking sentence:

"In short, Turkey's bid to join the EU is underpinned by the fact that these days its beloved Istanbul is a cosmopolitan and sophisticated megalopolis that has reclaimed its status as one of the world's truly great cities" (Lonely Planet, 2011, p.44).

Figure 2.3: Atatürk



Source: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa_Kemal_Atat%C3%BCrk

Perceptions of Europe

The historical context of Istanbul reveals the influences Istanbul has been exposed to. More important in relation to this research is to what extent these historical facts have an influence on the mind-set of the current inhabitants themselves.

Joost Legendijk, former Dutch Green Left Member of the European Parliament (MEP), former joint chairman of the Turkey-EU Parliamentarians delegation and now columnist with two of Turkey's newspapers, *Zaman* and *Today's Zaman*, together with his Turkish wife, Nevin Sungur, a former journalist with several Turkish television channels, wrote the book *'De Turken komen eraan!'* (The Turks are coming!), about these perceptions of European people and Turkish people. They spent a

chapter of their book on the weight of history on the perceptions of people in both Europe and Turkey. Drawing largely on their work and an article of Yilmaz (2011), focusing on the negative perceptions of Turkish people, in this section of the thesis, the most important historical events in relation to the perception of the Turkish people will be discussed.

Lagendijk and Sungur (2013) describe the overall perception of and attitude vis-à-vis Europe by Turkish people as ambivalent: a 'love-hate relationship'. This description is used in more articles, both in actual newspapers (Trouw, 2013) as in scientific works (Morozov and Rumelili, 2012). On the one hand, Turkish people admire Europe as an economic and cultural superpower because Europe succeeded in defeating the former Ottoman Empire. In the 19th and 20th centuries they started to be an example for the whole world, also for the Ottoman Empire at its last days, and the new republic of Turkey. On the other hand, there has always been a deep rooted distrust of Europe because of the perceived intentions Europe has had and might have for Turkey, including from the 17th century when the Ottoman Empire was in decay. This distrust was created by a number of developments that happened when the Ottoman Empire was trying to resist this decay.

The first development, according to Lagendijk and Sungur (2013), was to modernise the army. Several battles had shown that the Ottoman Empire was not strong enough, so they started to modernise the army with western values and standards and different reforms, like improved weapons and better trained soldiers. These reforms were led by foreign military advisors who maintained good relationships with the Turkish elite. After this development, the Turkish army started to be the precursor of modernisation.

In 1839, the Tanzimat (Reorganization) period began. Besides the already successful reforms of the army, the state and the law were also modernised. These developments were particularly good for the non-Muslim minorities in the empire, because of increasing pressure from Europe for better treatment of the Armenian and Greek minorities, and led to the emergence of separatist organizations in the Balkans (Lonely Planet, 2013). Nevertheless, this Tanzimat period started to be a Tanzimat syndrome, when the inhabitants of the region started to consider that the reforms were only beneficial to the non-Muslims, the reforms became too expensive, and the interference of countries like Great Britain, France and Russia remained. Nowadays, this period is remembered as an instructive period, due to two lessons: giving rights and freedom to minorities don't make them more loyal to the state but just made them more confident and rebellious; and that the European countries just want to make the Turkish state weaker. Nowadays, in public debates, many people refer to those lessons when there is discussion about giving minorities such as the Kurdish people more rights and freedom (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013).

Another important lesson from the Ottoman past are the capitulations the Ottoman Empire did in the form of giving privileges to foreign powers in relation to trade and taxes. That act led to reduced income to the Ottoman Empire while they were busy with expensive reforming programs. The Ottoman Empire had to borrow more and more money from Europe and became dependent on Europe to a large financial extent. In Turkish historical books, these capitulations were seen as an example of Turkish humiliation and of European imperial ambitions (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013).

The loss of the Balkans in 1878 was another issue. The problems in the region continued and led to a loss of a third of the Ottoman Empire and a large proportion of its non-Muslim inhabitants. This led to large migration flows to the central part of the Ottoman Empire, Anatolia. At the start of the 20th century, these flows were strengthened by the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 against the Greeks, Serbians, Romanians and Bulgarians. Only a small part on the European continent remained part of the empire. These massive developments had a big influence on the self-image of the Turkish people and their surrounding countries. The Balkans had been seen as being the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Legendijk and Sungur (2013) describe it at the following manner:

“In the eyes of many people, the empire loses with the Balkans not only its spirit, but also the belief in the possibility of the peaceful coexistence of different religions and ethnic groups. In Turkish understanding, they were ungrateful Christian subjects spurred on by European superpowers, and were revolting against their Turkish master that had treated them well and with respect for centuries. The Turks now feel betrayed, and this sense of victimization is an important basis of the popular Turkish sentiment that ‘Turks don’t have friends, only enemies, especially in Europe’.” (Author translation, Legendijk and Sungur, 2013, p.38)

Another blow to the former Ottoman Empire was realised after the First World War. The Turks could not resist the Russians in the east and the French and British in the south. After the already lost Arabic parts, the Ottoman Empire had to accept another humiliating loss. Also, Istanbul and Anatolia were threatened by the Greeks and the end of the Ottoman Empire seemed near. The Sultan had to sign the Treaty of Sèvres where all the painful losses were recorded on paper and Anatolia was divided up by the different countries. However, this treaty was never carried out, because of the protests against it, led by the Turkish hero Mustafa Kemal.

Nevertheless, this Treaty of Sèvres remains a very important proof for the Turks to demonstrate the willingness of Europe to drive the Turks out of Anatolia and to support the Greeks, Armenians and Kurds (Yilmaz, 2011). Legendijk and Sungur (2013) say that many nationalistic Turks see the current attempts of the EU to give more rights to ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey as an attempt to reach the same goal as at the time of the Treaty of Sèvres: the weakening of the Turkish state by supporting non-Muslims and Kurds. Also Yilmaz (2011) sees this ‘Sèvres syndrome’ as a key to understand Turkish euro scepticism.

Another label that is regularly used by Turks is to see Europe as a ‘Christian Club’. They accuse Europe of Christian exclusivism since no Islamic country is part of the European Union yet, so they are refusing Turkey for cultural and religious reasons (Morozov and Rumelili, 2012; Rumelili, 2008).

2.2 Turkey, the European Union and the accession discussion

The historical developments described above all had their impact on the perceptions of Turkish people about Europe. As stated earlier, after these developments, 1963 was the first time Turkey tried to seek rapprochement to the European Union, another important process in this research. What follows is a short description of this process until now and the substantive arguments for and against accession of Turkey to the European Union.

Figure 2.4: The member states of the EU and Turkey.



Source: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~gisinghal/classweb/EU-Turkey/Main.htm>

Turkey and the European Union

In 1958, the European Economic Community (EEC) was founded and one year later, Turkey applied to become a member. In 1963, an association agreement was signed to establish that Turkey can begin the process of becoming a complete member in the future. However, the relation between the EU and Turkey became worse, largely because of various army coups and the role of the army in Turkish politics, especially in the 1970s and 1980s (Wester, 2009). Also, the internal conflicts like the Kurdish conflict made Europe not willingly to continue with accession in these decades. Besides that, Greece became a member of the EU in 1981 and this caused more pressure on the existing conflict between Greece and Turkey about the situation on Cyprus. In 1987, the Turkish government made its first application for full membership of the EU and in 1999 Turkey obtained the status of 'candidate country' (Turkije Instituut, 2014).

To become a member of the EU, a country must meet the Copenhagen criteria. Drawn up in 1993 by the European Council, these criteria are regarded as the minimum standards to be considered for entry to the EU:

- ✓ *“Political: the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;*
- ✓ *Economic: existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;*
- ✓ *Acceptance of the Community ‘acquis’: ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union”* (European Union, 2013, online).

Besides these criteria, other criteria are also important issues in public debates instead of these formal debates. For instance, historical, geographical and cultural issues, since the majority of Islamic people in the country and this issue was a major reason for European politicians to hesitate about their support to Turkish membership (Rumelili, 2008; Yilmaz, 2011; Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013; Turkije Instituut, 2014). The question came up if Turkey is in fact a ‘European’ country or not, especially when problems arose around the multicultural society in European countries. When in 1997, the EU presented a list of countries that could become a member of the EU and Turkey was not on the list, it was a big disappointment to Turkish people at that time (Rumelili, 2008; Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013). However, after the assumption of power by the AKP party in 2002, the European Union was impressed by the quick tempo of reforms in the period 2002-2004 and this led to the re-opening of negotiations in 2005.

The negotiations are conducted at two different levels: the technical adjustments of the laws of the future member state to the EU-laws; and the political reforms that every future member state has to fulfil to match with the Copenhagen criteria (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013). These negotiations are divided into 34 different sections covering different policy areas of the European Union. Immediately after the start of the negotiations, Cyprus, France and the EU objected the talks about one half of these sections, what means that the negotiations cannot continue until Turkey or one of the ‘blockers’ changes its view. The sections about Cyprus are related to the Greek-Turkish conflict about the island and the former French president Sarkozy has always been a fervent opponent to Turkish accession. That is one of the reasons why there is talk of a stalemate in recent years (Bürgin, 2012).

However, these technical adjustments of law in different sections are mostly invisible, detailed and too complex for European and Turkish people to base their understanding and opinion on (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013). More important are the political reforms that are intended to make Turkey a more democratic country. These reforms have been complex for various reasons, extracted from Lagendijk and Sungur (2013):

- Reducing the role of the army in politics.
Since Atatürk, the army has been an important protector of the secular state and achieved much respect. The AKP party tries since 2002 to reduce this power of the army to fulfil the European standards.

- Solving the Kurdish issue about the rights and recognition of the minority in Turkey due to the long-lasting conflict.
The Kurds have always tried to separate and create their own Kurdistan. Since the 1970s, the conflict between the state Turkey and the minority of the Kurds has become more heated due to several fights with the radical PKK party of Abdullah Öcalan. In 2013, new reforms were introduced to give the Kurdish people more rights and recognition, but it is still a sensitive issue.
- Solving the Cypriot conflict.
Since the coup in the Greek-Cypriot part in 1974 and the reaction of the Turkish army in the Turkish-Cypriot part to protect the Turkish Cypriots, the island of Cyprus is divided into two parts. The Greek-Cypriot part is a member of the EU since 2004. That part is not recognised by Turkey and Turkey disagrees about the accession of the Greek-Cypriot part to the EU. As a response, the Greek-Cypriot part is blocking a few sections of the negotiations about Turkish accession.
- Improving the position of religious minorities like the Alevis, a Shiite movement within Islam.
- Reforming the justice system, because of its conservative and Kemalist (i.e. based on the values of Atatürk) structure.
- Guaranteeing freedom of speech and freedom of press.

All these developments led to a more negative view about the accession of Turkey on both the European and the Turkish side (Boudewijn, 2006). Due to the early impasse, caused by the Cypriot objection of certain negotiation sections after its accession in 2004 and the opposing attitudes of France and Germany, and later the economic and financial crises in the European Union itself and the recent political crises in Turkey, the attention and support of European countries to the accession of Turkey is increasingly on the decline in recent years (Wester, 2009; Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013; Turkije Instituut, 2014).

Discussion content

One important question in this research is how students of Istanbul think about the accession discussion itself. Due to the complexity and the multiplicity of arguments of this discussion, plus the fact these arguments are all interlinked and difficult to divide in different groups, this research will not provide the whole discussion content. However, to get an idea about the discussion content, a brief summary of the interactive platform *Debating Europe* (2013) where people can share their views with European politicians, is used:

- Geography
 - AGAINST: Turkey lays 97% in Asia, so it is not a European country and accession will give rise to other 'border-countries' wanting to apply. Besides that, the EU does not want shared borders with Syria, Iran or Iraq.
 - FOR: The country is a bridge between the continents Asia and Europe and will give opportunities for better relations between Europe and the oil-rich Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. Its geostrategic position and second-largest NATO army will improve Europe's security.

- Politics
 - AGAINST: Turkey is not a mature style European democracy, but a tussle between the army and Islamists. Human rights are routinely abused and freedom of speech and press is not ensured. Furthermore, the public opinion in Europe is overwhelmingly opposed and the Turks are hesitating.
 - FOR: Turkey is already a vibrant democracy, caused by the reforms of the last years and the improved human rights and will give more incentive to complete these after being a member. Also, Turkey is a trusty and loyal strong member of the NATO, so when rejecting the accession, it can develop more as a rival in an unstable region and it will have a negative effect on Europe's credibility.

- Economics:
 - AGAINST: Despite its last growth, Turkey is still an underdeveloped country compared to European averages. Also, the wealth is unequally spread, which causes a migration of poor people from Turkey to other more developed EU countries.
 - FOR: Turkey's economy is thriving and it resisted the financial and economic crises much better than other European countries. The introduction of this booming economy and 75 million new consumers will improve the market.

- History, culture, religion:
 - AGAINST: Turkey's history lays in Central Asia and the Middle East and it does not share the important moments in history that bind Europeans together. Turkey's Islamic cultural roots are also fundamental different with the Christian European roots. Turkey's relation with Europe has always been as an outside invader.
 - FOR: Accession of Turkey will show Europe's open minded way of thinking about Islamic culture and will give an example to other Muslim countries for democracy. Turkey's westward looking is still going on and EU accession will be a catalyst for Kurdish, Armenian and Cypriot issues.

2.3 Recent developments

This short overview gives a clear and global picture of the existing discussion since the negotiations started in 2005, but the perception of Turkish people about the European Union and the impasse in the negotiations became more at the background of public debates after the recent developments in domestic politics and the climax of these conflicts in June 2013 at Taksim Square in Istanbul. These recent developments are also an important factor to understand the perception of students in Istanbul, especially because the students were an important boosting group in society in relation to these developments (Zürcher, 2013b).

The AKP party

At the start, the AKP *'can best be described as a post-Islamist movement: keeping its ties with Islam in the social realm but abandoning it as a political program'* (Rumelili, 2008, p.107). However, during recent years, the party showed that the latter is far from true anymore.

The victory in the 2002 election by the AKP party can be seen as a starting point, since this was the moment when a new way of politics started by a completely new person in Turkish politics, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (see Figure 2.5 on the next page). The AKP party won 35% of the votes and besides the AKP, only the CHP (Republican People's Party) achieved the electoral threshold of a minimum of 10% of the votes. That is why these parties were allowed to divide the seats in the parliament and why the AKP got a two-thirds majority of the seats, which gave the party the ability to work their ideals and ideas about Turkey out (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013; Turkije Instituut, 2014).

Figure 2.5: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan



Source: http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dosya:Tayyip_Erdo%C4%9Fan.JPG

In their first period of government (2002-2007), they reformed the economic, financial and political sector completely which led to a lot of goodwill both inside and outside Turkey, illustrated by the start of the accession negotiations with the EU in 2005 (Rumelili, 2008). The AKP and the EU seemed to have a similar program of reforms, e.g. more rights for the Kurdish minority, abolition of the death penalty and reduction of the power of the army in politics (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013).

In their second period (2007-2011), the reforms stagnated and because of the economic recession in 2009, they received fewer votes at the municipal elections in 2009, but they remained the largest party in Turkish politics (Turkije Instituut, 2014). Possible reasons for this stagnation are the setbacks in the EU negotiations due to negative statements by European politicians and governments and an impasse in the Cypriot issue. In recent years, people are wondering about the real aim of the party, because they started to increasingly change the basic principles of the secular state. Especially urban and culturally-progressive young Turkish people became worried, because of the gradual introduction of conservative Islamic-based norms and values. The government had the space to do this because of their majority in parliament and they were ignoring the opposition parties.

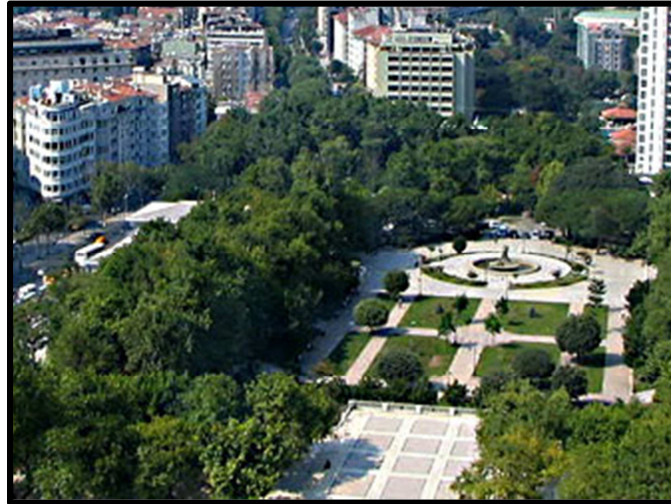
Opponents of the AKP are criticising the party because of its authoritarian way of governing in the last period and the changing of secular norms and values to more conservative Islamic norms and values. Proponents of the AKP are pointing at the economic and democratic political reforms and improvements since the start of the AKP (Turkije Instituut, 2014).

Nevertheless, in 2011, for the third time in a row, they won more votes at the national elections, due to the still prevailing satisfaction by the voters about increasing welfare and consumption possibilities and the lack of a clear alternative party (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013). That is why the AKP dominates Turkish politics for the last 12 years, under the charismatic leadership of premier Erdoğan. All the above issues together, give the impression that the AKP party is content about their existing status and does not want to introduce risky reforms anymore that could change their status (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013; Zürcher, 2013b).

Gezi Park events

In June 2013, the protests at Gezi Park (Figure 2.6, next page) started. At the beginning, the protests and disturbances at Taksim Square (Figure 2.7, next page) arose because of the plans of the government to change one of the last green parts in the centre of Istanbul, Gezi Park, into a shopping mall and to shut down the Atatürk Cultural Centre building, close to the park, to make place for a mosque. These changes in planning, as shown in Figure 2.8 (next page), seemed quite innocent, but the symbolic values of them were the reason for the strong protests (Zürcher, 2013a). Firstly, the change from a green park to a shopping mall is perceived as symbolic for capitalism and the economic growth of Turkey at this time. Secondly, the shopping mall will be in the architectural design of an Ottoman military barracks, demonstrating the willingness of Erdoğan to reorient more towards the Ottoman past and put it more at the front of current Turkish society and identity (Zürcher, 2013a; International New York Times, 2014). Thirdly, the change of a building at Taksim Square – that was previously called the Atatürk Cultural Centre – to a new theatre and mosque is symbolic of Erdoğan's attempts to put Atatürk's secularism at the background and to bring Islam more to the front in society. Another criticism was that these decisions were made too quickly by the government, without any public debate and participation (BBC, 2013). So, concluding, the most important reasons for the protests were the abuse of power by Erdoğan, his authoritarian way of governing, a lack of respect to the rare green parts of the city centre, concerns about the hyper capitalistic way of consuming and the urban renewal and the Ottoman revival attempts of Erdoğan and his government (Zürcher, 2013a; Turkije Insituut, 2013).

Figure 2.6: Gezi Park



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sky_view_from_Taksim_Gezi_Park,_Istanbul,_Turkey..jpg

Figure 2.7: Taksim Square with the Atatürk Cultural Centre at the background.



Source: Author

Figure 2.8: Plans around Taksim Square



Source: <http://www.greenprophet.com/2012/02/istanbuls-main-square-to-become-lifeless-and-isolated-in-new-urban-plan-opponents-warn/> (names edited by author)

In particular the abuse of power and the authoritarian way of governing of premier Erdoğan made the protests become more general and they spread to other large cities in the rest of Turkey, specifically Izmir, Ankara and Adana. Also, the extent of use of teargas, water cannons and violence by the riot police made the tensions between the police and the protestors increase and escalate. That is the reason for many of the injuries and eight deaths, even though most of the protests started in a peaceful way (Turkije Instituut, 2014).

Figure 2.9: Riots around Taksim Square



Source: <http://darkroom.baltimoresun.com/2013/06/june-11-photo-brief-a-soldier-faints-zebras-blend-a-child-goes-splash-and-the-world-seems-angry-protests-in-turkey-britain-kenya-russia-and-brazil/#1>

Immediately after the start of the riots, The Netherlands, Germany and Austria blocked the reopening of the accession negotiations. They were shocked by the way Turkish police treated the protestors with teargas and water cannons (NU.nl, 2013). The negotiations were postponed until October 2013, when the yearly progress report on Turkey was to be released. Another important issue were the German elections: current German President, Angela Merkel, has always been an opponent of Turkish accession and she won the elections again, which is a negative indicator for Turkish accession (Today's Zaman, 2013).

The protests were mainly organised and performed by a young well-educated middle class, divided in different subgroups. This group is actually the result of the rapid economic growth of Turkey and they want a society with space for diversity and debate. Other groups than students were football hooligans of the three big clubs of Istanbul, extreme-left, feminists and Kurdish people. Later on, many older people were also motivated to join the protests because they did not agree with the way the police treated the younger groups. Also groups of secularists who support and protect Atatürk's ideology and values were joining the protests. However, the loyal supporters of Erdoğan and many

other older people in Turkey who were loyal to premier Erdoğan were against the large riots in the centre of Istanbul and other large cities (Zürcher, 2013b).

Erdoğan responded to the protests in a judgmental way by calling the protestors 'criminals' and said that he was not going to rethink the urban plans for Istanbul. Zürcher, professor of Turkish studies at the University of Leiden, calls this the heart of the problem:

"The government and particularly the Prime Minister see democracy in very simple terms: they think that the fact that they have won the elections (time after time) gives them the right to carry-out their programme without any regard for minorities of any kind. Ten years of success, both political and economic, have reinforced this belief" (Zürcher, 2013b, at *A Week in The Shadow of Taksim*).

A 'cat and mouse game' between the police and the protestors about occupying Gezi Park, Taksim Square and the surrounding streets carried on for weeks. After the summer holiday, a relatively peaceful period, at the start of September 2013, when many students came back to Istanbul, there were another few days of protesting, and riots were caused by a few new incidents and the death of a protestor. Also during the matches of Istanbul football clubs, the slogans of the Gezi Park protests were heard.

Nevertheless, from October to December in 2013, there were no further riots, but two important things happened: Erdoğan presented his democratisation package and the EU presented the yearly progress report on Turkey. The democratisation package included reforms to enhance the rights of minorities like the Kurdish and Alevi, and for instance a proposal with three different options to change the minimum electoral threshold of 10%, in order to increase the chance that smaller political parties can gain seats in the parliament. This is also one of the positive conclusions in the progress report of Turkey by the European Union. They are satisfied with the democratisation package and the reopening of the peace negotiations with the PKK. On the other hand, strong criticism is expressed about the treatment of protestors during the Gezi Park protests, about the banning of social media and critical articles in newspapers, and the treatment of journalists. In conclusion, the report advocates to accelerate the negotiations between Turkey and the EU and to open three sections of the technical negotiations that were still closed until now (European Commission, 2013).

The corruption scandal

In December 2013, after a relatively peaceful period, the agitation of the young people about Turkish politics, caused by the Gezi Park events, occurred again in the form of a few nights of new riots, this time due to other reasons. Important to note is the fact that the data gathering of this research was mainly done during this month, so these events were rarely mentioned by the students.

At the 17th of December, it started with the arrest of at least 40 leading politicians in Turkish politics, including three sons of ministers of Erdoğan's ruling AKP party, accused of evasion and fraud (International New York Times, 2014; Legendijk, 2014a; Turkije Instituut, 2014). A next round of arrests was blocked by the government, because Erdoğan's son seemed to be one of the arrested. After a week of hesitating and denying, Erdoğan decided to substitute four ministers who were accused of being involved in the corruption. To make sure that there were not going to be other rounds of arrests; the government blocked other investigations and sacked hundreds of important

police officers and prosecutors who were involved in the preparation or execution of the arrests. Erdoğan called these people ‘traitors’ and talked about ‘conspiracy theories against the rise of a strong Turkey by national and international powers’ (Lagendijk, 2014a, online). The timing of the arrests was also bad for Erdoğan because of the municipal elections in March 2014. Lagendijk (2014a) describes this development in the following way:

“It is a massive intervention by the executive power in the autonomy of the judiciary power with just one goal: to stop all operations that could be harmful to the government. It is no coincidence that the European Commission, which oversees the necessary reform of the legal system, within the framework of the accession negotiations, has warned immediately of an attack on the rule of law” (Author translation, Lagendijk, 2014a, online).

The events gave rise to new protests and riots, more focusing on the government and Erdoğan himself in comparison with the Gezi Park protests. It led to some new nights of clashes around Taksim Square and in other districts of Istanbul and also other large cities in Turkey between the protestors and the police. In the last months, every important news fact with a curious role of the government was followed by a night of riots between the protestors and the police (Turkije Instituut, 2014). In February 2014, there were clashes because of the acceptance of a law about internet restrictions. This law makes it easier to block websites and to control the internet. Two days before the acceptance of this law, a rapport of a non- governmental organization, Freedom House, was publicized, with many critical notes about the lack of press freedom and freedom of speech in Turkey (Turkije Instituut, 2014). Afterwards, Twitter and YouTube were blocked by the government. Furthermore, the death of a 15-year old boy (March 2014), who was in a coma since the Gezi Park events led to the largest protests since the Gezi Park events. For the protestors, he became a symbol of the protests, since he died due to a tear gas bullet on his head when he was buying bread for his mother. Finally, the recent mining disaster in Soma (May 2014), where 301 miners were killed due to bad conditions in the mine, was the most recent reason for new nights of clashes in Istanbul and other Turkish cities (Turkije Instituut, 2014).

Future expectations

Despite the heavy riots and conflicts during the last year and the attention given to these conflicts in national and international newspapers, Zürcher (2014) thinks Erdoğan will remain at the top for several years, but he describes it as ‘the beginning of the end’. He predicts that Erdoğan’s loyal supporters will make him win the municipal elections at March 2014 (which he did), and the subsequent national elections at August 2014, but his support is declining, as even his most loyal followers are leaving him. The Gezi Park protests will not be decisive anymore, because the AKP made the society polarized by opponents and proponents. More important will be factors such as the stagnation of economy, the Syrian war and the Kurdish conflict, according to the Turkije Instituut (2014).

Finally, despite the overall negative perceptions of Europe by Turkish people due to the events of history and recent developments, one half of the Turkish people are still in favour of European accession, according to Lagendijk and Sungur (2013). There is a difference between perceptions of Europe and perceptions of the EU. Despite a growing distrust of Europe, most Turks want to join the EU. When in 2002 and 2003 Turkey tried everything to meet the conditions of the EU that resulted in

the start of the negotiations in 2005, the image of Europe was very positive with 75% being in favour. Now there has not been made much progress, the doubts are back and support is declining (Boudewijn, 2006; Çelebi, 2009; Yilmaz, 2011; Bürgin, 2012). This way of thinking is well described by Legendijk and Sungur (2013) in the form of a personal perception by Nevin Sungur:

"I think for many people in Europe it is difficult to understand how disappointed many Turks nowadays are about the EU. In December 2004, everything seemed so beautiful. After Turkey got the green light to start the negotiations, the headline in one of the big newspapers was simply "Success!" Everyone was excited and thought it was really going to happen immediately. So it was for me. To be honest, before that time, I didn't know a lot about the EU. But in the newspapers and on the television at that time, almost every day a European politician or a senior official from Brussels was explaining how the EU works. Like many other Turks, I was just wondering what was awaiting us. People had the idea that finally the promise of Atatürk was going to be realised: we would become part of modern civilisation.

The euphoria was also great because we were all brought up with a schizophrenic image of Europe: on the one hand, it was an ideal that we want to join; and on the other hand, Europe was an imperialistic power that cannot be trusted. ... The positive feelings we felt [after winning the Eurovision song contest and the start of the negotiations] are now almost gone. I don't want to say that we are back at square one, but the belief that there will be a good outcome is much damaged, and the momentum is gone. No one now is talking about the EU, although that is the strange thing, most of us do realise very well that Turkey can only become a democratic country if we stay on the EU track" (Author translation, Legendijk and Sungur, 2013, pp. 216-217).

Because of declining support for accession in recent years, articles are now being written about 'euro scepticism' (Yilmaz, 2011). Yilmaz focused entirely on this phenomenon and wrote an article about the development of euro scepticism in Turkish history. Also, the possibilities for Turkey without EU accession are being investigated (Bürgin, 2012). Balci (2013) writes in the Dutch newspaper, Trouw, about a 'more likely alliance' with Russia (also mentioned by Boudewijn, 2006) and China:

"The Turks consider their country as a bridge between the West and the East and they are honest about their identity crisis. But the desire to have an alliance with the eastern superpowers, Russia and China, has never been as strong as when the government of Islamist Erdoğan is in power" (Author translation, Trouw, De Verdieping 25-06-2013, p.2).

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The central question of this research is how Turkish students in Istanbul perceive Europe and the European Union. That is why at first it is important to understand what a perception actually is, how perceptions are created and how that process is working. After that, the focus will be on the perceptions of Europe and the EU in practice: related concepts and theories about perceptions of Turkey about Europe and the European Union will be explored.

3.1 Perceptions in theory

Simply said, the verb ‘*perceiving*’ means ‘*to become aware of (something) by the use of one of the senses, especially that of sight*’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2014, online), but also hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting. In the context of this research, the senses of hearing and seeing are the senses that the focus is on. Perceiving is the process of looking at and listening to stimuli, become aware of it through our senses and form or shape a representation of it in our mind. It is the way your mind understands sensory information that it receives from the world around us. At first, you receive some stimuli from your environment, then you select the stimuli you pay attention on and you organize it in your head to interpret the information at last (Cherry, 2014). This information is never the same as it is in reality, but it is a representation of the reality: it is based on ‘*what our senses tell us what exists and what our brain is capable of dealing with*’ (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, p.42). Besides that, the moment when the perception leaves the mind and is going to be communicated to another person is also a representation. This is an appropriate remark in this research: realize that all the perceptions that are gathered from Turkish students are representations. Those representations are translated to and communicated by the speaking of a language. This language is again in succession heard and interpreted by the researcher, so in fact this is a perception of a perception, of the investigated student. This way of discoursing about perceptions and representations is also reflected by the definition of ‘*representations*’ in the Dictionary of Human Geography:

“A set of practices by which meanings are constituted and communicated. Such representational practices produce and circulate meanings among members of social groups and these meanings can be defined as culture. Such shared meanings are based on representations of the world” (Johnston et al., 2000, cited in Wester, 2009, p.15).

Culture and identity

In short, the representational practices are developing ‘culture’: the meanings of people. However, the definition of culture has always been approached as a complicated concept that has always been different thoughts about. For instance, when putting culture in front of its anti-pole ‘nature’: Culture is everything that is not nature (anymore). However, in this research, the definitions and descriptions of culture are used that are the most useful and relevant to this research.

During the last decades, culture is seen by social scientists as a way how people see the world and experience it, as a set of values and norms. For instance, the awareness of what is good and bad, important and unimportant, valuable and disrespectful and norms as rules of behavior for example (De Pater et al., 2005). Another characteristic of culture is that it is not innate, but something that has to be learnt during life. By the transference and teaching of culture, people become civilized. The parents, family and friends of people play an important role in this, but in recent decades, also the media became more and more important. Because of that, culture became more open and individualistic and less tied to the spatial and social surrounding where a person is born coincidentally (De Pater et al., 2005). The most well-known and contemporary definition of culture is given by the British scientist Stuart Hall: cultures are '*systems of shared meanings which people who belong to the same community, group or nation use to help them interpret and make sense of the world*' (Hall, 1995, p.176). He sees culture as a mental framework that is used by a group of people to make sense and give value to the surrounding world and its place in the world.

Culture is mostly seen as a shared set of meanings, so shared by more people, by a group. However, if you translate that to an individual person, the concept of identity is more relevant. It is again a categorization of yourself to make sense of the world and especially the people around you, but more focused on your '*true self*'. A person's identity is that what that person really is and what makes him different from another person. Nevertheless, a combination of the two concepts, cultural identity, is also an existing concept and useful to understand the difference between culture and identity. Stuart Hall (1990) defines it in his article '*Cultural Identity and Diaspora*' as: "*one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common*" (p. 223). The identity is more focused on the person, on the inside.

Since we are talking about the region of Europe in this research, the connection with cultural geography comes into discussion when we are talking about cultural identity. De Pater et al. are giving a clear explanation about processes in contemporary cultural geography, with links to the mentioned concepts of power, identity and cultural identity:

"Actors are constructing (or producing) a specific cultural identity for a region because they have a specific interest in it or a plan for it. After that production, this region can get a more independent value if other actors accept it, use it and thus reproduce it. However, other groups of people can also identify against the produced region or decide to construct another cultural region or redefine the identity of the region (contested regions). Actors with a lot of power often succeed to make their identity dominant. This success depends on the extent of credibility of this construed identity, so they are referring often to shared elements like cultural and historical heritage, landscape, ethnicity, religion and language. With the increase of external contacts, the regional culture becomes more dynamical" (Author translation, De Pater et al., 2005, pp.147-148).

Othering

Out of these 'imaginative geographies', the concept of 'othering' and the related theory of Edward Said (1978), Orientalism were created. When talking about Turkey and Europe, this concept always comes into discussion, because of the perceived cultural, religious and historical differences between the two groups. A lot has been written about the perceptions of Europe about Turkey, but less about the other way around.

The shared set of meanings that forms a culture can be formed only by contrasting it to or define it from another set of meanings of another culture or group. Simply, because every human has to order the information they gather out of society in their head. Everyone has to put this information into different groups or demarcated/bordered figural boxes. Automatically, when you put something in a box, you separate it from another box or boxes. This works the same for the minds of people.

Othering is a process that is used to determine someone's identity, by distancing someone, or moreover, some group from this identity. By othering, you define what you are, or what your group is, by defining also what you are not (and another person/group is) and the other way around (Oakes and Price, 2008). It can be done on the basis of a variety of factors, such as homeland, culture, gender, religion etcetera. Sometimes, othering is confused with the concepts of ordering and bordering (Creutz Kämpfi, 2008; Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002). Every human gathers a lot of information out of society and has to put this in different boxes to keep the overview on it.

With othering, this ordering goes one step further to connect a value judgment with it that is related to the shaping of your own identity. In essence, the concept is something positive, because defining yourself and the other group gives a necessary guidance to understand the world. However, in practice it turns out to be something negative and subject to stereotypes, because you are always excluding someone or some group in an inferior way (Wester, 2009). Also Elsrud (2008) explains this in one short definition when doing research about the construction of others out of immigrants in rural Sweden. He defines othering as *"a general process in which a group is given the position of a negative cultural counterpart through which the cultural self can be uplifted and kept in a more favorable position"* (Elsrud, 2008, pp. 428-429). Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002), referring to the September 2001 (9/11) events, point out to the recent increase in negative othering:

"It is worrying that the recent shocking, horrific attacks in New York and Washington have also been used as new inputs on the justification and legitimisation of border control on cross-national mobility in various countries around the world. Through the attacks, and not much helped by the bothersome rhetorical ideological identity politics of the so-called 'free world', the purification of 'unwanted elements', the stereo-typical construction of strangers in our societies has been given a new negative upswing" (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen, 2002, p.127).

In this extract, Van Houtum and Van Naerssen are also referring to the practical implementation of othering in everyday life what is related to the concept of territoriality. The ordering and othering that people do in their minds is brought into practice to make and define borders. It gives the feeling of controlling a place and belonging to a place, because you have the ability to exclude others at different levels, from homes to nations (homelands).

Despite the fact every human is 'othering', the aspect of power is important to determine who the 'other' is. Every human is gathering information from its surroundings and surrounding people, but it depends on the power of the surrounding environment to what extent this human is really 'believing' and taking it for granted. The story that is told by another person about one particular place or region for example is called a myth or mythology. Holloway and Hubbard (2001) are exploring the importance of mythologies in imaginative geographies in their book *People and Place*. They describe a myth as an often vague and diffuse way of imagining particular 'real' places and the people in them. Mostly, it is not clear on which facts those stories are based on, but that is less important. More important is the extent these stories are accepted and seen as the truth. This is again related to the power of the story itself or the person/group that is telling it.

In this research, Turkey is situated as the self and Europe as the other. So this research already created its own level of othering, its own 'self', namely the specification to 'Turkish students of Istanbul', but it is more important to investigate what the students themselves see as the 'self' and how they situate the 'other' Europe according to their own identity.

3.2 Influential theories about perceptions of Europe-Turkey relations

Orientalism

The work of Edward Said (1978) is definitely the most influential work about imaginative geographies created by myths and othering and also, in relation to this research, linked to othering between Europe and Turkey. In his book *'Orientalism; Western conceptions of the Orient'*, he talks about the concept of Orientalism; the image of the East that is created by the Western World to contrast to their own world during the times of colonialism. It creates a contrast between positive images of the Western 'modern' world and a negative mirror image: the Eastern world, the Orient. It has been an important manner for Western countries to justify colonialism and to understand their own identities related to the imagined East. In other words, the Orient is the West's 'other'. The Eastern countries would be exotic, erotic and sultry, but simultaneously cruel and barbaric. Those myths were spread by stories of travelers, explorers, films, novels and other media. Holloway and Hubbard (2001) say that Orientalism *"needs to be seen as a power-laden myth in so much that it involves racist stereotyping associated with the idea of the Western superiority, and gender stereotyping in its representation of Eastern women as exotically, mysteriously and passively sexual"* (p.141). Wester (2009) gives a typical example of Orientalism in the work of the German geographer Rühl, also mentioned by Said. He contrasts the mentality of the West, where people work hard and efficient, to the mentality in the East, where people are relaxed and unhurried. According to Wester, *"The Islam imposes restrictions on production, consumption and trade whereby the east stays economical behind. A weak mentality prevails and there is a lack of belief in progression. The fear of novelty and sticking to traditions makes Eastern people in the eyes of western people 'strange and subordinate creatures'"* (Author translation, 2009, p.17). Turkey has always been part of the Orient in Western eyes, since it was part of the large Ottoman Empire that was always in conflict with the European countries.

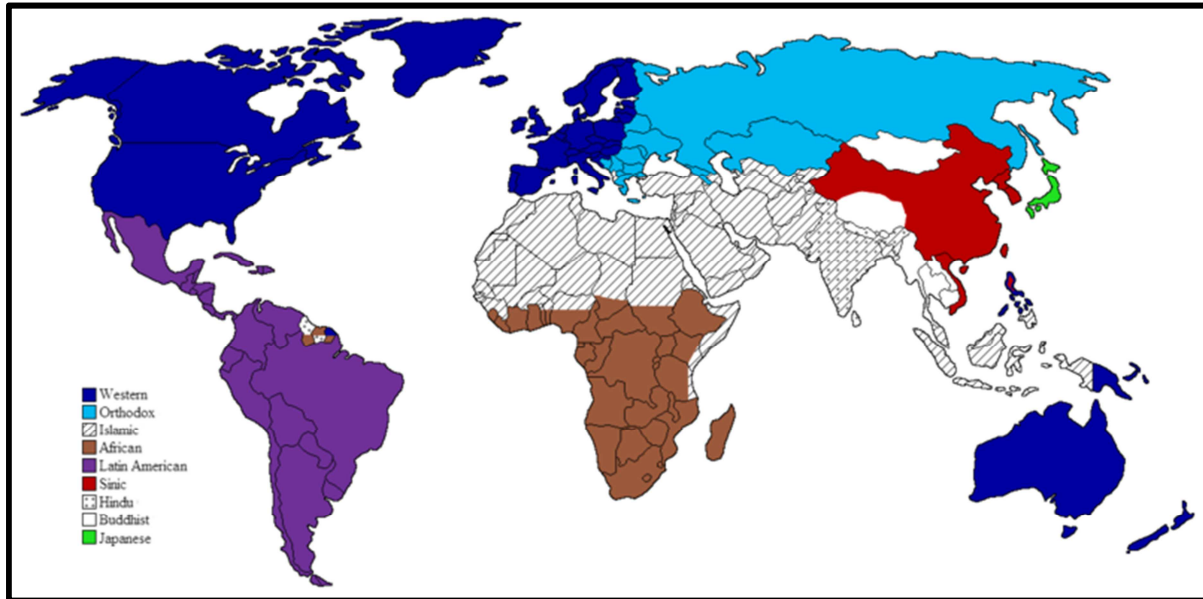
Occidentalism

However, more important in this research is the more recent developed 'counterpart' of Orientalism, namely Occidentalism. It is the way the eastern world looks at the western world, both positively and negatively. Western Europe and the United States (The West) are associated with development, science, democracy and quality of life, but also with imperialism, egoism/individualism, materialism, discrimination and war (Carrier, 1995). This concept received more attention after the attacks of 9/11 in 2001. Theoretically seen, Occidentalism is not the exact counterpart of Orientalism, since it is not connected with the aiming of being dominant over the west in the form of colonialism and imperialism (Wester, 2009). In a smaller and negative context, Occidentalism is seen as an aversion to Western civilization being materialistic, frivolous and individualistic. It is a sort of stereotype of the West being imperialistic, corrupt, decadent and alienating. Buruma and Margalit (2004) wrote a book that is contributing to the understanding of the hate of some Islamic countries against the western countries. They are focusing on the negative images that the East has about the West. Buruma and Margalit (2004) are talking about a group of hostilities: glorification of the countryside against hostility to the city, to prefer heroism instead of commercialism, romantic surrender above rational thinking and accepting God's sovereignty instead of idol worship. Buruma and Margalit (2004) are not arguing that every criticism on the Western World is seen as Occidentalism. According to them, someone is an Occidentalist when there is talk of a presence or absence of bitterness and rancor. They also state that the Islam is the most important source of Occidentalism.

The Clash of Civilizations

Another influential work regarding the perceptions of Europe and Turkey is the article '*The Clash of Civilizations?*' of Samuel Huntington in 1993 and his later more comprehensive explanation of his theory in his book '*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*'. He stated that in the 21st century, after the Cold War, conflicts will be especially between different cultures and religions instead of between different ideologies. He posits that the concept of different civilizations, as the highest grade of cultural identity, will become increasingly useful to predict future conflicts. As can be seen in the map of Figure 3.1 below, he roughly differentiated the following cultures: Western, Orthodox, Islamic, African, Latin American, Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist and Japanese. With this differentiation, he said he could determine if a country could be part of the European Union or not, considering the cultural group a country is part of. For instance, Greece cannot be part of the EU, according to Huntington, since it is an orthodox country.

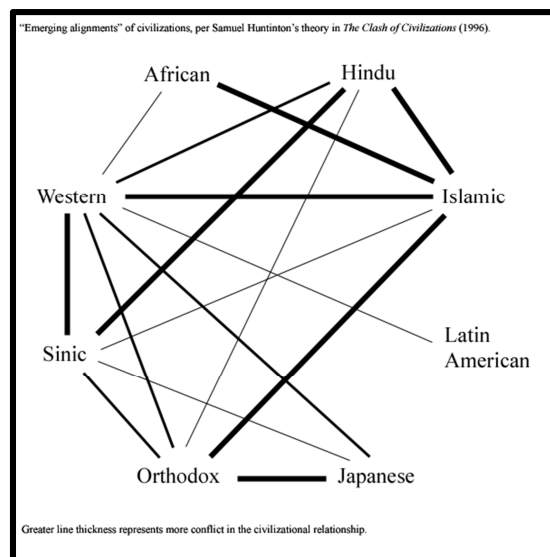
Figure 3.1: The different civilizations.



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Clash_of_Civilizations_map.png

Another interesting figure in Huntington's book (1996) is Figure 3.2. This graph represents the possibility and chance of clashes between the different civilizations, according to Huntington's supposition. The thicker the line, the higher the chance of a conflict.

Figure 3.2: Chances of clashes between civilizations



Source: <http://mhamishi.wordpress.com/2011/07/04/cultural-clash-or-clash-of-civilizations/>

One of the things Huntington mentions in his thesis which is related to the concept of Occidentalism, is that the image the West has about itself – that their western values and political systems are universal – is naïve and the continuing urging of other countries to democratization and take on such values is provoking hostility in other civilizations and countries. He thinks that the political, military and economic power of the West will move to the '*challenger civilizations*': the Chinese and Islamic civilizations. One of the most controversial statements of Huntington is that '*Islam has bloody borders*' (Huntington, 1993, p.35), referring to his view that the greatest risk of future conflict is likely

to be between the Western and the Islamic civilizations (see Figure 3.2). He attributes this to the enormous population growth in the Muslim countries and the presence of many neighboring civilizations.

Since Figure 3.1 is a rough representation of Huntington's differentiation, Turkey is part of the Islamic civilization, but in fact, Huntington separates the civilization and culture of Turkey as a *'lone country'* (together with Haiti and Ethiopia) and also as a *'torn country'* (Huntington, 1993). Huntington describes a torn country as a country that is trying to join another civilization. Turkey is Huntington's *'most obvious and prototypical'* example, since the country is originally an Islamic country, but simultaneously trying to become a western country since the times of Atatürk, illustrated by the attempts to become a member of the European Union. According to Huntington, a torn country has to satisfy to three conditions to define its cultural identity again:

- The political and economic elite has to be generally supportive of the move;
- Its public has to be willing to acquiesce in the redefinition;
- The elite of the host civilization has to accept the torn country (Huntington, 1993).

Huntington (1996) says that no torn country has succeeded yet in defining its cultural identity again. This is mostly caused by the elite of the host civilization that doesn't want to accept the new country. In the case of Turkey, he says:

"In addition, while the elite of Turkey has defined Turkey as a Western society, the elite of the West refuses to accept Turkey as such. Turkey will not become a member of the European Community, and the real reason, as President Özal said, "is that we are Muslim and they are Christian and they don't say that" (Huntington, 1993).

Huntington has received much criticism on his work. Firstly, his work was mainly focused on anecdotes, not on empirical evidence (Zürcher and Van der Linden, 2004). Secondly, the differentiations he made seemed to be too general and based solely on religions. According to his criticisms, the world is more fragmented, illustrated by the different Muslim groups with various different images of the world. Another criticism is the inevitability of the clashes and the determination of the borders between the civilizations. Berman (2003) suggests that there are no clear cultural boundaries anymore in this globalizing world, because of the interdependence and interconnections between different continents and cultures. Related to this interdependence, the earlier mentioned Edward Said (2001) also reacted on the work of Huntington with his work *'The Clash of Ignorance'*. He thinks that Huntington's categorization of the determined civilizations ignores the dynamic interdependence and interactions of cultures. He calls Huntington's work an imagined geography that legitimizes 'a specific kind of politics' (Said, 2001).

Challenging the dichotomy

In reaction to the work of Huntington, Rumelili (2008) investigated the relations between the European Union and Turkey in recent years in a theoretical perspective in her work *'Negotiating Europe: EU-Turkey relations from an identity perspective'*. She points at the important role of identity in the discussion and discusses the representational practices of Turkey regarding their identity that the country used in the recent decade, which is also reflected in her article with Morozov (2012)

about Turkey and Russia as 'Europe-makers'. She criticizes the essentialist approach of EU-Turkey relations in recent decades about a division between Christianity and Islam and different historical empires. Rumelili (2008) presents an alternative constructivist approach by focusing more on the premise that identities are socially constructed and negotiated to give more chance to an accession of Turkey to the European Union in the future. She states that *'the process of European enlargement has been made possible by representational practices of the applicant and member states that have together redefined European identity'* (p.98).

In addition, she gives an analysis of two modes of Turkish representational practices: *"An earlier mode that reproduced the construction of Europe and Islam and Europe and Asia as mutually exclusive and inherently incompatible identities and a later mode that sought to challenge these preconceptions about mutual exclusivity and inherent incompatibility"* (Rumelili, 2008, p.98). What she means is that historically, or in European perspective, there has always been an image of Europe and Islam and Europe and Asia as mutually exclusive and inherently incompatible identities. Huntington's work is a good example of this.

By the first mode, starting in the mid-1980s Turkey tried to *'reproduce'* this identity dichotomy with its representational practices. This means that the concept of a 'torn country' was still accepted: a country cannot be Christian or Islamic simultaneously, it can only be one of them. In accordance to the attempt to become a member of the European Union, Turkey positioned itself as *'a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism'* (p.103), so as part of Europe and these views were also resounding in European public opinion at that time. Nevertheless, Rumelili sees this strategy as self-defeating, since it was emphasizing the threat of Islam to Europe and the possibility that Turkey was going to differentiate more as an Islamic country. The label as a torn and unstable country, a country without an identity, was confirmed.

However, in the second mode, after the disappointing decision in 1997 to not name Turkey as a membership country by the European Council, Turkey decided to *'challenge'* the dichotomous construction of EU-Turkey relations (instead of reproducing it) in three ways:

"First, Turkey successfully invoked the 'spectre of Huntington' and reproduced the discourse of 'Christian Europe'. Second, Turkey began to emphasize that it is simultaneously European and Asian, and thereby presented itself as contributing to the transformation of Europe into a multicultural space and collectivity. Finally, the fact that by 1999 a political party of Islamist heritage, the AKP, became one of the strongest advocates for democratization and integration with Europe in Turkey, has further challenged the dichotomy of Europe/Islam" (Rumelili, 2008, p.104).

However, despite this more successful second mode, Rumelili concludes that the effectiveness of these representational practices is depending on its resonance in the future, because of the current shifting landscape of politics and religion in Turkey, explained in the previous chapter.

3.3 Comparable and related research

After exploring the existing theories and concepts underlying this research, the already existing related research that is done about Turkey-EU relations after the start of the negotiations process will be outlined.

The first work about Turkish opinion regarding the EU was done by McLaren in 2000. She wanted to provide some insight into Turkish opinions about the accession discussion by interviewing Turkish elites, consisting of academics, businessmen, journalists and government ministers. She asked many of the same questions as asked in this research. The result was that the Turkish elites were still quite favourable in accession, despite some doubts. Also, the elites were pointing more at the economic problems of Turkey that are precluding Turkish accession, while the European Commission is more concerned about political problems, as human rights violations and the conflict with Greece about Cyprus (McLaren, 2000).

A second qualitative research about images of the EU and Europe was carried out by Armbruster et al. in 2003. They investigated the everyday narratives in European border communities. Turkey was not one of the researched countries: the border communities consist of people from Western member states (Italy, Germany and Austria) and Eastern applicant states (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia). The article shows how people conceptualise the EU and Europe, once invited to do so by the interviewer. They also support the qualitative way of researching the social construction of identities which is reasonable for this research either. One important finding in their research was the absence of a 'European' identity in the narratives of the participants. Only when the researcher asked a question about it, was there talk of it. Related to this, there was no clear outcome of the research. There was no overall clear image of the border communities about Europe and the European Union. There was also not a significant difference in answers of the member states and the applicant member states. The singular moment when the participants talked about the concept of Europe was when they were asked about migrants from countries that are not a member state yet. These people were seen as intruders into 'their' European community.

In 2005, quantitative research was done by Hortaçsu and Cem-Ersoy. They investigated the values, identities and social constructions of the European Union among Turkish university youth, which is very similar to the main question of this research. In particular, they wanted to prove four specific predictions:

"The study had four specific aims: (1) To investigate dimensions of constructions of the EU among Turkish university youth. (2) To show that these constructions are related to reactions to the Copenhagen decision. (3) To show that various social identities endorsed by university students are related to values associated with ideological issues in Turkey's recent past. (4) To show that values and social identities are related to constructions of the EU" (Hortaçsu and Cem-Ersoy, 2005).

They did research among 400 students of five universities in the big cities in Turkey: Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul. After that, they did quantitative factor analysis to generalize some specific properties of the respondents to their opinions, identities and values. These statements and questions can be used as a start-up for this research, where this research can go more into detail about the specific

arguments and underlying thoughts about several statements. Specifically looking at the results about their views of the EU, the research concludes that the group of respondents reflected both positive and negative views about the EU and about the decision of the EU at that time to delay the negotiations about Turkey's accession. There was a group that approved the decision and acknowledged Europe's superiority, but there was also a consistent group that blames Europe of discriminating out-groups and attributed the delay in the decision as being due to a conflict of interests. Thus the view of these Turkish students was quite mixed, but also before recent events in Turkey.

After that, in 2009, a quantitative comparative research was conducted by Çelebi about the opinions of students at a German and a Turkish university about Turkey in the EU-accession process. According to the results, Turkish students were more concerned about health issues, economic/political instabilities and discussions about secularism in relation to the possible accession of Turkey to the EU. German students highlighted religion, population and also economic factors as problems, but they were more positive regarding the discussion. They generally thought Turkey is ready to join the EU, in contrast to the Turkish students, but Çelebi (2009) also concluded that this trust of the German students was based on little knowledge about Turkish reality.

A later research, conducted in 2010 and 2011 and released in 2012, where students of the third city of Turkey, Izmir, were part of the research, at the time when the support for the EU was declining in the recent years, Bürgin did research among the social groups of students, academics and party members. He wanted to answer the question if this declining support is better explained by a disappointment about the EU approach to Turkey or more because of the new self-confidence of the country. The study was carried out by an online survey and personal interviews with the different groups. The students were used as a sort of start-up for the method of snowball sampling to recruit respondents. For instance, the students were not interviewed, only the politically engaged persons. The online survey was therefore used to set up guides for the interviews. The second assumption, the risen self-confidence, was for one third of the respondents the most important reason and also the reason why Turkey was seeking more contact with its eastern neighbors; a rising regional power. He concludes an enduring alienation between the Turks and the EU and that *'Turkey is driving away from the West'*. However, this is the overall conclusion, but in relation to this research, the focus has to be on the students' approach. Besides that, Bürgin (2012) noticed that the AKP-voters are underrepresented in the research. That is why his conclusion is not a vis-à-vis outcome of the online survey. If we only look at the results of the students, the online survey shows that more than one half of the students were still in favor of EU-accession in 2010. Also more than one half thinks the declining support in general is caused by the negative discourse in European politics.

The most recent related research about students is done by Ozturk in 2013. He was investigating the attitudes vis-à-vis the EU and Europeans among geography student teachers from Turkish universities by the quantitative method of sentence completion. They had to finish some sentences to reveal their perceptions and associations of the EU and Europeans. The sentences were "People in Europe are...", "the EU means to me (that)..." and "problem with the EU is (that)..." . The overall outcome was mixed with more or less the same amount of positive and negative attitudes vis-à-vis the EU and Europeans. Pro-Europeans were especially focusing on the inadequacies of Turkey, while anti-Europeans were accusing the EU for not accepting Turkey.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Type of research

This research is of an exploratory nature, since its objective is to gain insight in the phenomenon being studied. There is a lack of qualitative research about the way Turkish people perceive Europe and the European Union, especially focused on students. Most of the research that is done about the perspective of the Turkish people on this discussion is about the substantive arguments. This research tries to reach an underlying layer of perceptions, images, associations, feelings and opinions. The method is qualitative, because the researcher wants to understand the images, perceptions and experiences from the perspective of the students of Istanbul (Hennink et al., 2011).

4.2 Methods of data collection and analysis

An important issue of this research is the language. The research and the interviews were done in English. For the researcher, as well as for the participants, this was not their mother tongue, so there were more ambiguities, but these were not problematic to understand each other.

The main method of data collection was in-depth interviewing. Turkish students of universities in Istanbul were interviewed for this research. They were recruited by sending them a message by email that encompassed in short the content of the research and the rules of the interview. Also, acquaintances of the researcher who were part of the population were approached to make use of the already existing network of the researcher and in order to extend it. After reading the email, recipients could decide by informed consent if they wanted to participate in the research. Furthermore, the Dutch Institute for Turkey was used as a 'gatekeeper'. They facilitate and support scientific research about Turkey performed by Dutch students and scholars and helped with information about participant recruitment in Istanbul. The interviews were held at the homes of the participants, at an empty classroom at their university or at the home of the researcher. The homes are usually the places where the participants feel most comfortable (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005). In general, the interviews took around 1 hour and were recorded for further analysis, with the consent of the participant. The amount of interviews was set for the moment when saturation was achieved and information was repeating itself. After doing 18 interviews, this was the case.

In the first part of the interview, a method of free association was used. In this method, the participants had the opportunity to nominate the first three words that came to mind with words like 'Europe', a 'European (person)' and 'the European Union'. By starting with this method, the associations could be used later in the interview to gain more detail. This provided an open and creative start of the interview, which was used to break the ice between the researcher and participant and to force the participant to think about the subject. Furthermore, a map was given to the participant to draw borders, which was used to collect the geographical associations and knowledge of the students about Turkey and Europe. The borders that the participants were asked to

draw were the borders between Asia and Europe in reality and in their mind. Also, they were asked to draw the border between Turkey and the European Union. After the start with these more open methods, the interview was focusing more on issues related to Europe, Europeans and the European Union accession discussion. The participants were asked questions about their relations and experiences with Europe or things related to Europe and the European Union and their opinions about the discussion.

Another method of data collection that was used was a focus group discussion. This method was used to identify a range of opinions about the discussion and to seek for norms in the group of students (Hennink et al., 2011). The interaction between the different students was interesting and it gave the ability to focus more on the accession discussion itself by going more in detail about the specific issues that are part of the discussion and were mentioned in the interviews before.

The records of the interview and focus group discussion were used for further analysis. The researcher listened to the tapes by using the program Expresscribe, which was useful to fast forward and rewind the records by using shortcuts. The records of the interviews were not transcribed verbatim, because the level of English of the Turkish students was not good enough for useful transcripts. Instead, the researcher listened to the recordings and made notes of the things said. Besides that, important and interesting quotes were transcribed. Afterwards, the data was coded by making a code list and using the program Atlas.ti. This program was useful during analysis and writing the results chapter since all the related codes could be grouped per theme.

4.3 Ethical considerations

One of the most important ethical considerations was the origin of the researcher and the participant. The researcher was influenced by the images and opinions that were present in his own country about the European Union, Turkey and Turkish, since the researcher is from the European continent and living in the European Union. Also, his own opinions and images about the discussion were of influence. The fact that the researcher is from a Christian family and raised by the norms and values of a Christian country could affect the outcomes. That is why questions were open as much as possible and as a preparation, the questions were checked by insinuations. For example, the researcher was asked about his own opinion and perceptions by the participants during the data collection, but he refused to give answers before the data collection was finished. This positionality of the researcher is taken into account during the whole research.

In this research, the trust between the participant and the researcher was important, because they were talking about personal experiences and opinions (O'Leary, 2010). That is why the participants were kept anonymous, so they were free to give their opinions and share their thoughts with the researcher, because the subject and the discussion itself can be personal and sometimes emotional for the participants, due to the recent Gezi Park events. Participation was voluntary and the participants were free to refuse questions when they were not comfortable by answering them.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

In this chapter, the outcomes of the 18 interviews and the focus group discussion are outlined. Since each interview was roughly divided into questions about Europe and another part about the European Union, which is also reflected in the main research question, this division is also used for the results chapter. The participants were mainly focusing on European people and the related images, associations and opinions about them, when talking about Europe. I start with information about the participants and the exercise at the start of the interview to draw borders.

Description of participants and their experience with Europe

As shown in Table 5.1, the group of participants for the in-depth interviews consisted of 17 students who were studying at the Technical University of Istanbul and one student at Koç University. Seven of them were female and eleven were male. The ages of the participants varied between 21 and 26 years. The five rows in the darker blue color were also participating in the focus group discussion.

Table 5.1: Information about the participants.

Participant	Sex	Age	Grown up place in Turkey	Study at Istanbul Technical University (ITU)	Living in Istanbul for:	Been to Europe?
1	Female	21	Adana	Manufacture engineering	3 years	Yes
2	Male	26	Ankara	Civil engineering	6 years	No
3	Male	22	Isparta	Electronic engineering	5 years	Yes
4	Female	21	Denizli	Chemical engineering	3 years	Yes
5	Female	23	Berlin (Germany)	Civil engineering	5 years	Yes
6	Female	22	Istanbul (Asia)	Architecture	23 years	Yes
7	Female	22	Çorlu	Architecture	5 years	Yes
8	Male	22	Edirne	Mechanical engineering	5 years	Yes
9	Male	22	Istanbul (Asia)	Mechanical engineering	22 years	No
10	Male	22	Kuşadası	Mechanical engineering	5 years	No (USA)
11	Male	26	Çanakkale	Management engineering	8 years	Yes
12	Male	26	Çanakkale	Master of Business Administration (Koç University)	8 years	Yes
13	Female	23	Antalya	Electrical engineering	5 years	Yes
14	Female	22	İzmir	Textile engineering	4 years	Yes
15	Male	22	İzmir	Electronics/control engineering	5 years	Yes
16	Male	26	Şarköy	Mathematics engineering	8 years	Yes
17	Male	24	Balıkesir	Electronic engineering	6 years	Yes
18	Male	26	Kayseri	Management engineering	6 years	Yes

Source: Author

Figure 5.1 shows the places where the students were living in Istanbul at the time of the research. Two of them were living on the Asian side of Istanbul with their parents, while the others were living on the European side, close to their university campus with friends or in the dormitory on campus. Most of them were living in Istanbul since they graduated from high school (around the age of 18) and started to live separately from their families. Most of the students started to live in Istanbul by hiring a shared room in a dormitory on their university campus to meet new people and because of the strict rules and low renting prices of the dormitories. This gave them the opportunity to make new friends, to adjust and to get used to live in the metropolis of Istanbul.

Figure 5.1: Map of participants' current home places in the city of Istanbul.



Source: Google Maps, produced by author.

An important characteristic of this group of participants is the fact that almost all of them already been to Europe at least once. Only three of them hadn't been to Europe yet, but one of these had been to the USA for 3 months and the two others were planning to do so as soon as possible in the future. This overall experience of the participants with Europe and European people has an important influence on the results of this research, which will be explained in the discussion chapter.

The most common experience in Europe for those students was a 5 or 10 months participation in an ERASMUS exchange program between a European university and their own university. This program is supported by the European Union to promote the international exchange of students. Besides that, as it is really hard and a lot of paperwork for Turkish students to get a visa to go to Europe, they also took this exchange possibility to travel around Europe through different European countries.

Other frequently mentioned shorter experiences abroad were a summer school and a work-and-travel program, especially in England and the USA, for 2 or 3 months. During these months, the students were living in a dorm or with a host family, to improve their English by following a language course or to work for 2 months and travel during the last third month.

Drawing borders

All of the in-depth interviews started with two exercises to start the interview in a more or less open way and to function as a sort of 'icebreaker'. One of the exercises was about drawing borders on a blank map of Europe (Figure 5.3). First, they were asked to draw where the border between Europe and Asia was in their imagination. Then they were asked to draw the border between Europe and Asia where they think it is 'in reality/in theory'. Finally, they were asked to draw the border between Turkey and the European Union. This exercise provided some information for the researcher about the geographical knowledge of the students and gave an impression of their image of Turkey and Europe.

Figure 5.2: Blank map of Europe to draw borders.



Source: http://www.glencoe.com/vaessentials/gwhea/soltwa/OMRB_31.jpg

For the last request, all participants drew the border between Turkey and the European Union exactly at the place where it is in actuality. What was more surprising, however, was that about half the students also drew the border between Europe and Asia at the same place as the border between Turkey and the European Union. Istanbul is well-known for the fact that it is split across two continents, with the boundary between those continents running straight through the Bosphorus. One half of the student drew the boundary here, but the other half chose to draw it at the border between Turkey and the European Union.

The drawing of the border between Europe and Asia in the imagination of the participants led to a diverse range of responses. Some participants chose to draw it at the border of Turkey and the EU, some chose to include the whole Turkey in Europe, but the most common imaginary border was drawn somewhere in the middle of Turkey, at least more to the west side of Turkey, including the coastal regions and the largest cities of Turkey. As an explanation for this, participants mentioned the differences between the Eastern part of Turkey, where more Kurdish and less educated people are living, and the western part of Turkey including the largest cities, like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, where people are more used to European people, are living a more-or-less European lifestyle and are more open minded and relaxed. This is explored below in the discussion of European people.

5.1 Europe

As already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the first part of the interviews was about the perceptions of Europe. Beforehand, the researcher put some questions about European people as well in this part, but after a few interviews, it was clear that the participants perceive Europe especially the way they perceive European people. For that reason, this part will start with the influences the participants mentioned on their perceptions, followed by exploring the descriptions the participants formulated during the interviews and the reciprocal differences between countries of Europe and the differences with Turkey. After that, the perceptions of European people will be outlined, again in comparison with Turkish people, since the students made comparisons between Europeans and Turks all the time.

The questions about Europe started with questions about influences on their perceptions about Europe. The questions were divided by influential events that happened in history or in their personal lives, but also by people that had an influence on their perceptions about Europe.

Influential events

When talking about events, many of them logically mentioned their ERASMUS experience in Europe as of importance on their perceptions. It was the first experience abroad or in Europe for many of them, so they were exploring new countries with its cultures and they met new people and made new friends in these countries. Furthermore, the meetings with European people, especially tourists, were common answers.

Besides these more logical events that had an influence, the participants talked about the things they were taught at primary school about Europe by teachers and in history books. Revolutions in Europe, the renaissance and the crusades were named as important events in history. However, almost all of the participants mentioned the moment when the Ottoman Empire was in a really bad situation after the First World War and Europe was trying to occupy, separate and divide Turkey among the different European countries, where Lagendijk and Sungur (2013) referred to as the Treaty of Sèvres. One of the participants stated that *'Turkey was a good cake to share'* (P1, female, 21 yrs.). Those wars between Europe and the Ottoman Empire were firmly emphasized in history books and during history lessons. The children had to be proud of the strong and mighty Ottoman Empire and to see

Europe as their enemies, countries as France, Germany, England, Italy and Greece in particular. The interesting thing is that most of the participants admit that they have been influenced by those stories during their childhood, but almost all of them do realize now that these stories were propaganda of the Ottoman Empire. After their experiences in Europe and the recent years at university, they see that those events are not relevant anymore. They even made them think more critical and in the opposite way:

"I always got an education from the Islamic part. After my university age, I can think that it's not normal. It affected me, but maybe it also affected me the opposite way. If you really want to insist me about saying the same thing always, maybe you will become sceptical about it. Why are they always saying the same thing? If you ask something they will be aggressive. Maybe this made European people more sympathetic for me" (P16, male, 26 yrs.).

The participants were also asked about the influence of the most recent events on their perception of Europe. Most of them said that the recent events had nothing to do with Europe and it didn't change their perception, but some participants noted a positive impact. Firstly, it made them compare the rights Europeans and Turks have again, when looking at human rights, freedom of speech and democracy. Besides that, the participants felt some support from European countries, European media and especially European fellow students. Especially the participants that were studying in Europe at the moment of the protests noted the curiosity of the European students. They were asking many questions about the situation in Turkey and were helping the participants to share all kind of messages and articles on social media.

Influential persons

When talking about people that had an influence on the perceptions about Europe, the participants often referred to their family and friends. Most of the parents were not so affective on their perceptions, since they had fewer opportunities to go to Europe before, but especially relatives who are or were living in European countries influenced their ideas when they told them stories about the life in Europe. Almost all of the participants mentioned a relative that is or was living in Europe. The following quote is illustrating the overall scope of the stories:

"My grandfather lived in Germany. Now he lives in Istanbul. He always said: Go to Europe. Go to Germany or other countries, because people have a value there. In Turkey, police attacks protesters and sometimes they die. Because of this, he said: Go to Europe. When you go to Europe, you can see the differences with Turks and Turkey" (P9, male, 22 yrs.).

On the other hand, since those relatives were Turks that were living abroad, many stories were about the way Turkish people behave and live in European countries, supplemented with stories that Europeans told them about Turkish people living abroad. The details will be explored later on in this part when European people are discussed.

Another person that was named by a group of participants was Atatürk. He is seen as a hero for many Turks and you can see his photos everywhere and in every living room of a Turkish family. In relation to Europe, Atatürk was the person that started to focus more on Europe, introduced western modernizations and put the Ottoman traditions more at the background in society. Since he founded

the Republic of Turkey, Turkish people had the desire to be more western, more European. For that reason, some of his thoughts were of influence on some participants

Descriptions of Europe

Another question during the interview was the way they would describe the term 'Europe' when they got this question at an exam, according to their own imagination. At the start of the interview they were already forced to write down three associated words with Europe, but this question gave them more space to explain their images of Europe.

Shortly said, most of the participants started with the observation to see Europe as a continent with a rich history, where the civilization started and many different people and different countries are living in peace. Besides that, they see it as a place with a lot of freedom where they can travel from country to country. They also view Europe as a Christian club, but the topic about religion will be captured in the part about the European Union.

To start with the first association, some participants referred to the historical buildings and architecture they saw during their journeys through Europe or the pictures they have seen in books or on television. Especially the students that are studying Architecture were really enthusiastic about this, because they had to learn many things about European architects and artists during their courses. But also the engineers mentioned those European architecture a few times. They particularly admire the way Europe has preserved their old buildings despite several large wars at the continent. Comparing to Turkey that has demolished many historical heritage from the Ottoman times, Europe really did a good job. Related to that, the participants see Europe as really civilized. As examples, they gave the way European countries are protecting green areas in the inner city center and the amount of bicycles that are used in the city. In Turkey, many green parks were replaced by new modern buildings, like the plan to build a shopping mall instead of a scarce green park which was the inducement for the Gezi Park events in June, which one participant is referring to:

"They [European countries] have strict rules about it. When I was in Cambridge, they have rules about the green areas. They have so many big green parks and they cannot destroy them and build a big shopping mall there. This is what we fight about. If you go to the city centre, you cannot see so many green areas. They are destroying forests to make a third bridge across the Bosphorus. They say: 'The architects are always against everything', but it's stupid. Maybe they could better listen to us" (P7, female, 22 yrs.).

Besides that, riding a bicycle is not very common in Turkey, while everyone is having a bicycle in some European cities.

The last association was focusing on the differences between the countries and the people in Europe, but also compared to Turkey and Turkish persons themselves. Practically all participants mentioned this regional diversity in Europe and were comparing the differences with their own country. Only a few participants were focusing on the commonalities between the countries, for example because of the Treaty of Schengen, which gave them the possibility to travel freely through different countries.

Roughly, they made a division between the southern Mediterranean countries, e.g. Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal, and northern European countries, e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Poland, illustrated by the following quote:

"I can say that the Turkish people get along very well with are the people from the Mediterranean coast, like the Italian, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese are almost the same. I saw this better during my Erasmus, because my closest friends were Portuguese and Spanish and Italian. And Greek people were like the same thing, except we don't speak the same language. Even our food and drinks are the same. So it's like you can find common grounds really easily and just talk about everything. That's why I really like them" (P4, female, 21 yrs.).

One of the main differences is about the different lifestyles. Northern European countries are stricter about the rules than the southern countries, for example in traffic and about being late, which will also be explained when talking about European people. Another difference is the way of helping people. The participants perceive the northern Europeans more as cold and individual; while people from Italy for instance, are more helpful on the streets, as well as the Turks see themselves as really helpful too.

5.2 European people

As mentioned earlier, the participant was focusing mostly on Europeans/European persons, when the interviewer and participant were talking about Europe. Especially characteristics of European people, in comparison with Turkish people (often initiated by the participant itself), were discussed. Some striking examples are discussed below.

Open minded/respectful

A characteristic that was considered in almost every interview was that Europeans are open minded and respectful people. More than Turks, Europeans are open to other cultures, religions and people from other countries or continents, do approach them with respect and are willing to live with the other people's differences, according to many participants. They realized this especially when they were in Europe and were meeting and talking with European persons and friends. There were no taboos to talk about during conversations about sex, drugs and religion for instance. Another example that is more related to be respectful is the difference in the amount of honking of cars in the traffic. Some participants were surprised not to hear a regular sound of honking in the traffic in Europe, since in Turkey people are even honking when they drive around a corner of the street. One of the reasons for this open minded view was considered to be caused by their education when they are really young:

"I liked them because they have knowledge about the world, about the culture, about other places and sides of the world. They are reading books, they are learning, but not like American people. I liked that side of the European people; they want to preserve their culture, their heritage. When I compare them with Turkish people: they are more willing to learn something. ... Most of them were making some specific interests, like sports or some hobbies. I think it's really good that they started with it when they were really young. They understood the world better. They are respectful to other cultures and other cultures of the world. It's my perception. In religion stuff, it's really different. Besides that, they are taking it more warmly. They respect it. They are open minded" (P18, male, 26 yrs.).

On the other hand, the participants regard Turkish people to be (more) conservative and focusing on the past with all its traditions, for instance dating from the Ottoman times. They call their religion, Islam, as a reason for that. Some of the participants told that they are an atheist, but they do not talk about that in public because it would give them a bad reputation. Europeans are more rational, progressive and forward looking, while Turks are romantic, conservative and backward looking. Most of the participants see these characteristics as negative and have many criticisms of it. That might be the reason why, as a response to these criticisms, they see Europeans as the opposite, modern and having a progressive way of thinking. For example, every time one of the participants started talking about Europeans as open minded and respectful, they immediately changed the subject to compare it with the behavior of Turkish people. Here are some exemplifying examples about male and female friendship, sex and a Turkish saying:

"Here [in Turkey], when I say to my grandparents that I want to move in with a friend who is a boy, it would be like: Oh no, you can't do that. It would be bad and that wouldn't work. And then you talk about this with your European friends, they would be like: Why not?" (P4, female, 21 yrs.).

"If you watch a TV series on TV with your family, and if it's a kissing part or something, or making love or something, our fathers always change the channel because they think it's a bad thing" (P1, female, 21 yrs.).

Another participant even suggested that there is a Turkish saying when someone is not open minded enough: *"We say: Come on, be a bit European!"* (P7, female, 22 yrs.).

One of the participants had a clear analysis of this difference between Turks and Europeans:

"There are some stupid rules of Islam and Turkish believers cannot really think and analyse this religion. They just obey. Some of them don't even obey the book; they just believe what they hear and how they are raised. They like new stuff, but they want to stand with their traditions. ... Maybe it's about the education system, because it's basically religious. They just teach. No imagination time. Maybe in Europe, the system is different. They don't make it this hard for students. ... Religion, family, traditions and education are the basics of the differences between Turks and Europeans" (P14, female, 22 yrs.).

Relaxed/free

Europeans are considered to be relaxed and free, according to the participants. For instance, the Turkish students found out that the European students in general don't have any concern about their future, because their governments provide some standards of life and some fundamentals to rely on, such as funds when they become ill or unemployed. Besides that, Europeans are considered to live from day to day. Regarding freedom, the participants frequently mentioned freedom of travelling, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to drink, and also equality between men and women. Again, they compared this with life in Turkey. The life of Turks is much more stressful, especially nowadays since the Gezi Park events; there is a lot of tension in society. A participant saw this difference when he was in Germany during the Gezi Park events:

It was the time during the Gezi events and I was seeing many police violence in Istanbul and it was really good for me to not see police in 10 days [in Germany]. There police are not involved in daily life, I liked this. I saw people were living relaxed compared to Turkey and Istanbul. You can feel the tension in Istanbul and Turkey. For example, at public transport. It's so crowded and there is always a tension that a fight will start. Traffic makes nervous. The drivers are always nervous" (P16, male, 26 yrs.).

Another example that was alleged many times during the interviews was the difference in working hours during a day between Europeans and Turks. In Europe, people are going home when their working time is over and employees are protected by laws, but in Turkey they have to finish their work before they can go home, so they may have to work 14 hours a day if their tasks are not finished. This is also related to being relaxed and free.

Strict/living according the rules

Europe is seen as a continent of rules for many participants and the Europeans were seen as living with respect for these rules and laws. This discipline gives them order and structure in their lives. The mind-set of Europeans and Turks is different, illustrated by the following quote, which is also referring to the differences between northern and southern European countries again:

"Europe is like a country of rules for me, because Turkish people don't obey the rules so much. For example, if in Europe a car doesn't stop for a zebra line, it's a crime, but here, it is so normal. Those kind of things. For example, with Turkish people, if we do something wrong, we can be proud of it. But Europe people don't, it is a big difference. Not killing a person, but the small moral rules. In this case, Europe is so different. You think about rules if you think about Europe. Not actually all, for example Italy, it's not true. But the northern countries, mostly northern countries, a lot of rules. The southern countries also, but not that much, but still more than Turkey.

The most striking example was about waiting in queues for a bus, as mentioned earlier. It was really interesting that three participants all mentioned this specific example as typical for the difference between Europeans and Turks on this subject. The following participant explained it most clearly:

"Turkish people at first think: how can I cheat on this? If there are a 100 people waiting for a bus in a queue, a Turkish person thinks at first: how can I find that trick to become the first person and spend less time. If a European comes, he just goes to the back of the queue and he waits - to respect the 100 people already there. Turkish people always at first think how to cheat on something" (P11, male, 26 yrs.).

Other examples relating to traffic were mentioned, like not paying tickets for a bus, not paying for car parking, and exceeding the speed limit on roads. The government is not combatting these misdemeanours and have never combated them, since they think it's not important enough and they are dealing with more important issues.

Prejudiced

The characteristics above were mostly positive characteristics of European people. However, cited in one of the quotes above, there was already a short example of a negative characteristic of Europeans: the prejudices they have about Islam and Turkish people, especially developed due to the behavior of Turkish people who are living in European countries. These prejudices are really bothering the participants.

Since the terrorist attacks at 9/11 in America and the 'war on terrorism', Europeans have a negative view of Islam and Muslim people, according to the participants. Turkey is a Muslim country with a government that is introducing religious laws and a society full of religious traditions. The participants blame the Europeans that they are thinking that all the Muslim people are the same, as people living in countries like Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This prejudice is comprehensively explained by the following participant:

"My perception is that most of the Europeans are Christian and they saw the other religion, especially Islam, in a bad way, because of the happenings in the Middle East, like Afghanistan and Pakistan. They are not taking it very calmly. They are just stepping back when this kind of issue comes. I just can say that they are making it because of their experience and their knowledge of the media. There are many immigrants in central Europe from Africa, the Middle East and India. They are mostly not Christian but Muslim. They are just matching the Islam with these people, but they are not well educated and they are desperate people, because they wanted to leave their countries and wanted to live a better life in Europe. That's why the people that are living in their own country match those people with the Islam. I think because of that and the happenings in the Middle East" (P18, male, 26 yrs.).

When talking about prejudices about Turkish people, some funny prejudices were mentioned. One participant mentioned the prejudices she heard during her studying abroad. Some old European people thought that Turkish people still rode camels. Another participant had a French boyfriend and she was surprised by the prejudices French people had about Turkish women. They thought the only thing she wanted was to get married and to get children as soon as possible.

However, the most powerful prejudice about Turkish people is caused by the Turkish people that are living in European countries. These people are especially in Germany, but also in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. This topic was discussed many times during the interviews, since the participants were really concerned about it. The first generation of Turkish immigrants came to Europe during the last decades of the 20th century to work as guest workers. They didn't make any problems. The problems arose with the second and especially the third generation of Turkish people. The Europeans blame the foreign Turkish people who stick to their own community, their own people, culture and language. It means they are not integrating in the society of the country they are living in, like not learning the language, only consorting with other immigrants and following their own traditions.

Besides that, they are causing problems in society. One of the participants was born in Germany and lived there for the first 6 years of her life. She experienced this behavior in real life:

“The children I was studying with were not good in the economic situation and they were coming from the smaller places, but they were my friends of course. ... The funny thing is that those children were really terrifying. They were not studying. They were making trouble. I was surprised, they were also like, their parents were in Germany or something, but they were so different from me. I also thought their families had to be so different, but years later I found out most of Turkish immigrants were like this. I said it, because I looked at their children. They gave me this idea and years later I found out it was like that. I haven't been to Germany again, but of course I know. People go there to work and then the first generation that is immigrating, they work in maybe tough jobs, but it's their children. If they don't study, if they don't learn German...” (P5, female, 23 yrs.).

The other participants got this information from their relatives living abroad and from European people or friends they talked about it. The participants agree with Europeans that this is not proper behavior and are even dissociating of foreign Turks most of the times:

“I don't blame them [Europeans], because the Turks living in Germany: we also don't like them. They are not like actual Turkish people. Real Turkish people are more social, hospital and close to you. Turkish people in Germany are like in their community and not open to other people and living with themselves. They just think if they open to the European part [culture], they will be out of their religion and culture. That it would be a really bad thing for them. They are always close minded” (P15, male, 22 yrs.).

“This is the main problem in Turkish migrations in Germany, because those people change a lot from us. Time is changing. They became too conservative. It was a cultural shock for them to go to Germany. They had to choose whether changing drastically or getting more conservative. So, of course, they chose the latter, so that's why they stayed like this. We changed a little, Europe changed a little, but they stayed the same” (P12, male, 26 yrs.).

However, their concerns are about the prejudices caused by this behavior. Many people in Europe think that all the Turks are behaving like this, also in Turkey itself. The behavior of foreign Turks has a big impact on the image of Turkish people living in Turkey. On the other hand, they blamed the prejudices mostly to a lack of knowledge about Turkey and Islam, so it is not always a conscious choice. Furthermore, they were also self-critical about the prejudices Turkish people have themselves about European people.

5.3 The European Union

The second part of the interview was about the European Union and the accession discussion. As the first part about Europe, this part also started with questions about the images and descriptions of the European Union. Secondly, the knowledge of the participants was assessed. The participants were asked if they knew the existing issues of the discussion and about the statements of the countries in Europe. After that, the primary bottlenecks of the discussion were discussed, according to their opinion and their opinion about joining the European Union was explored. At the end, the interview ended with talking about the future of Turkey and the European Union.

Descriptions of the European Union

First of all, the participants described the European Union as a parliament for the countries of Europe: the countries of Europe are working together and drafting laws, especially for economic reasons. Besides that, one of the main reasons it was set up, was to gain power opposing other big countries, like the USA, Russia and China. So they started the collaboration for economic and trade reasons, but it developed as a symbolic big power towards other large unions, continents or countries. They also think that the support of the citizens in the European countries is decreasing since the last decade, due to the economic and financial crises and the differences situations caused by that in the northern and southern European countries. Furthermore, they were also referring to their personal experiences in the Union: providing the ERASMUS program and the possibility for the citizens to travel freely around the continent.

Another image that came up many times, was the importance of the biggest and most powerful countries of the EU, namely Germany, France and England. Most of the participants had a negative view about this. Sometimes they referred to the activities of those countries as imperialism: to get control over the smaller countries in Europe. Also, they told that the point of view of those three countries is decisive in Turkey's accession process.

Knowledge about the discussion

The students were asked two questions about their knowledge of the discussion. First they were asked to identify the three biggest issues of the discussion. After that, they were asked which countries they think are proponents and opponents of Turkish membership.

Most of the students didn't know exactly the specific issues of the discussion nowadays, but most of them mentioned the issue of religion. The European Union consists of countries that are mainly Christian and Turkey would be the first Islamic country with all its consequences. Besides religion, the large population and the human rights were seen as big issues. Turkey has a population of around 80 million people and the migration to Europe can cause big changes in all kind of sectors. The human rights are an issue, because Turkey has to change many of them to become ready to join the European Union. Furthermore, the Cyprus issue, the domestic problems inside Turkey and issues about food were numerated.

Almost all of the participants didn't know exactly which countries were opponents and proponents of Turkish membership of the EU. The countries they mentioned were mainly guessed. Germany, France and Greece were the most frequently mentioned countries that are against Turkish membership of the EU. Germany and France were mentioned because the participants remembered speeches of the presidents of those countries; Merkel and Sarkozy (who is not president anymore). Those speeches influenced their imaging. Also, the behavior of foreign Turks in those countries was mentioned as reasons for their resistance. Sometimes, the Netherlands and Belgium were mentioned for the same reason. Greece was seen as an opponent as well because of the historical conflicts and wars they had and still have about Cyprus for instance. Some southern European countries, like Spain and Italy were mentioned as proponents of Turkish accession, but the

participants knew less about the proponents. They just referred to the commonalities between those countries and Turkey that might be a benefit for both of them when Turkey joins the EU. Sometimes Scandinavian countries were mentioned as proponents because they said some positive things in the news about Turkey in the years before.

The main issues

The largest part of the talks about the EU during the interviews and focus group discussion was about the main issues of the discussion. The participants were already asked about their knowledge of it, but here they were asked to explain the primary bottlenecks of the discussion according to their imagination and opinion.

➤ Selling food at the streets

The most striking issue was related to food. It was not seen as the most important issue by the participants, but surely as the most typical, symbolic and also silly issue. A few participants mentioned exactly the same example of food that was a big issue in Turkish media and among Turkish citizens, although it wasn't that important in politics: kokoreç. Kokoreç is a typical traditional Turkish fast food dish made of the intestines from a goat or a lamb with bread and some vegetables (see Figure 5.3). You can find it everywhere at the streets in Istanbul and Turkey. If Turkey wants to access the European Union, the EU wants Turkey to stop eating intestines and other organs at the streets, concerning health issues. In theory, it is a small rule of the European Union but it had a great impact on the mindset of Turkish people about accession and it became a symbolic example for the amount of rules Turkey has to adapt on. People even started to produce songs and t-shirts of it. One of the participants formulated her opinion about it in the following way:

“Turkey had to quit some habits, like some food. Do you know kokoreç? Like that. I don't know if it's real, but they told us we have to stop selling kokoreç. That's the only thing I can remember. People were like, we can't live like that and we are used to this. It's a silly thing to give up on food, just to get in. EU wants us to leave some Eastern traditions to get in Europe, but it's silly, because every region has their own traditions and food and culture. If we have to leave them, it means we don't want to be Turkish anymore. We just want to be a European country. That's why I don't like to be in the European Union” (P14, female, 22 yrs.).

More broadly, the European Union wanted Turkey to stop selling all kinds of food on the streets. The participants thought about it as a silly rule and they don't want the European Union to interfere in this detail in their culture and daily life.

Figure 5.3: Kokoreç vendor



Source: <http://carpetblog.typepad.com/carpetblogger/2007/05/kokorec.html>

➤ Religion

The most important and frequently mentioned issue was religion. Most of the participants did not feel the urgency to explain and talk about this issue comprehensively since it is a clear situation: The European Union consists of Christian countries, Turkey is an Islamic country and the EU doesn't want a Islamic country in the Christian Union as well as Turkey doesn't want to be a member of a Christian Union, according to the participants. It is also related to the fact that the Turkish republic started as a secular state, but since the AKP-party is in charge, more and more religious and Islamic rules and laws are introduced in Turkish society. Some participants are concerned about this. Furthermore, the related prejudices and conservative thoughts due to religion are playing an important role.

➤ Cyprus

The conflict about Cyprus right now is also one of the most strategic and decisive issues according the participants. As long as Turkey is not recognizing Cyprus, one of the members of the European Union, Turkey cannot join the European Union. The stalemate on Cyprus has to be canceled and the conflict has to be solved to make a chance become a member of the EU.

➤ Large population

Another frequently mentioned issue by the participants was the large population of Turkey. Turkey has around 80 million people and when Turkey joins the EU, the whole situation of the European Union will change in many sectors, like the economy and politics. This population will spread through Europe and will change the situation in Europe, both positively and negatively.

One of the positive aspects of the large population is the fact that Turkey has a really young population, while Europe has a relatively old population and problems with ageing. If Turkey would join the European Union, the amount of young population from Turkey can solve this ageing problem in Europe partly. Besides that, the participants mentioned the working power of the Turks as another positive characteristic. Since the population is generally young, Turks are energetic people from

origin and they are used to work many hours per day. They can do a lot of work instead of the old European population, according the participants.

One of the negative aspects is the education level of the Turkish people. There are many uneducated people in Turkey and the unemployment level among Turkish people is also high. Those people will migrate to European countries to search for better opportunities, but it will have negative effects in those countries, since the EU is still struggling with some existing members due to the economic crisis. Another negative side effect when Turkey joins will be the fact that the balance of the European parliament will change drastically. Since the amount of chairs in the European parliament depends on the size of the population of a country, Turkey will have an important voice immediately and will be decisive. Finally, they already have many problems with Turkish people that are living in Europe at the moment.

➤ Human rights

The lack of human rights in Turkey is also an issue to discuss many times, especially because most of the participants saw themselves how human rights appear in the daily life of Europeans during their study periods in Europe. Examples from the participants about this lack of human rights are the violence that was used by the police during the Gezi Park events, the disapproving speeches of premier Erdogan about boys and girls living together and the limited rights of ethnic minorities as the Kurdish people. Also the state of the judgment system in Turkey was occasionally linked to human rights problem in Turkey by some participants, like the following participant:

“In Europe, law courts are really developed. They are the first thing. I don’t know too much [about it], it’s just my thought. They are living peaceful and fair. The laws are focused on that. If I need to compare with Turkey, many things are not focused on happiness or lifestyle. They [politicians]are focused on their own things. In Europe, it’s not like that. Laws always support the people. Every person is the same in front of the law” (P17, male, 24 yrs.).

➤ Geographical location

As also mentioned in the introduction chapter, the participants think that Turkey’s geographical location plays a role in the discussion, again both positively and negatively. Since Turkey is located at the continents of Europe and Asia and it is surrounded by four seas, Turkey is an important country for trade issues for the EU by providing connections with the Middle East and Asia. On the other hand, if Turkey joins the European Union, the EU will have borders with countries like Syria, Iraq and Iran. Some of the participants thought that Europe doesn’t trust the borders of Turkey, because there have been wars in the recent years or wars are still going on.

➤ Turkish government

Nowadays, the students - of whom almost everyone has taken part in the Gezi Park protests - do also think their own government precludes Turkey from joining the European Union. Since the government is putting more and more religious norms and values in society, still infringing human rights and the recent events, like the police violence during the protests and the corruption scandal, many participants think that their government has to change first, before there is even the possibility to talk about the other issues. Following another participant’s opinion, there is also a lack of willingness among the politicians:

“Think about Turkish people promise a lot, but they don't do it. Europe wanted to arrange some laws in Turkey last years to make more civil laws and Turkey said we will do it, but they forget it and try to fight each other again. If Turkish politicians cared a lot about this, we would already be a member right now. They only use this when there is no important news. Work hard and do it if you really want it”
(P11, male, 26 yrs.).

According to this participant, the media is also used by the government. This issue will be discussed when talking about the future expectations of the participants.

Opinions about joining

After having explored the main issues with the participants, they were subsequently asked about their own opinion about joining the European Union and the related arguments via the question: ‘Do you think Turkey should join the European Union or not?’ The remarkable outcome of this question, when simply counting the ‘yes’ and ‘no’s’ as an answer to the question, is that 6 participants say ‘yes’, 6 participants say ‘no’ and 6 participants are ambivalent about joining. Therefore, the conclusion might be that the participants were totally divided about joining the European Union. However, it is much more interesting to discuss the different arguments that were given to support these viewpoints.

➤ Advantages of joining the European Union

The most obvious argument in favour of joining was to get a visa for Europe and have the possibility to travel freely around Europe and not doing all the effort anymore for getting a visa. Many of the participants experienced this, since almost all of them went to Europe before and they had to apply for a visa. Some of them expressed their frustrations during the interviews:

“When you try to get a visa, you'll get many problems. They let you down; they make you feel like shit. I hated that idea when I was getting the visa. It's like I definitely want to leave my country. I hated that idea. They think that if they give us the free entrance, they think we will all immigrate [to Europe]. This is not true, I love my country. I think Istanbul is one of the best cities” (P5, female, 23 yrs.).

This saying shows some underlying reasons why Turkey made it that hard to get a visa. The visa benefit was mentioned by almost all of the participants, both opponents and proponents. Only two participants didn't mention it during their interviews.

Besides visa as the most important benefit for joining, the proponents of accession referred to the high quality of life and characteristics of Europe and the Europeans that were named in the first part of the interview and this chapter: more human rights, better education, more freedom and people that are more open minded, respectful and relaxed. Turkey can learn a lot from these living standards when they have joined, according the participants.

➤ Disadvantages of joining the European Union

Opponents of joining the EU mostly came up with the viewpoint that the EU wants to change or even use Turkey for its own benefit. According to them, this will have negative effects on the culture of Turkey. The aforementioned issue about kokoreç became one of the symbolic cultural examples of traditions that will disappear, but also other Turkish traditions will be threatened. Turkey is not a European country from origin, so it is impossible to adjust that much to European norms and values, especially for conservative, religious and traditional people.

They also think, due to membership of the EU, Turkey's power in the world will decrease and Turkey will become more dependent on the EU. One of the participants described a typical image of this using of Turkey:

"If we join, we would be something like Greece: The child that needs help of the big brother or the big family. And we will always be the low level country of the EU. I mean, we will have the resources to help the EU, but as a political or economic or ethnic part, we will always be the last. Because of the Muslim thing. The EU has a different Union than the governments of countries, so from every country there will be a minister to discuss these things in the EU. But our minister wouldn't have any influence on the others, just because he's from Turkey. His ideas will always be thought like: you are just new here" (P15, male, 22 yrs.).

Some participants did it one step further. They said Turkey does not need the EU and joining is 'unnecessary'. They were pointing at the economic situation of Turkey at the moment compared to the European Union, the working power of Turks, the resources of the country and a big army to protect all these things. Turkey has much potential to stay on its own for the next years, according to them. Besides these positive characteristics, Turkey has many domestic problems and conflicts that have to be solved as well, as the current problems with the government, the ethnic minorities and the bad education of Turkish people.

➤ Ambivalence about joining the European Union.

Besides the arguments of proponents and opponents, there was also a group that was ambivalent about joining. Sometimes this ambivalence was caused by a lack of knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of accession. But moreover, some participants showed a high degree of disinterest or nonchalance about joining. The only thing they were interested in was the visa to go to Europe, because it would give them more opportunities as a person in life, but furthermore, they just didn't care if Turkey would join the EU or not. This attitude had various reasons.

Firstly, the participants were bored of the discussion. Turkey is already trying to become a member of the EU for several decades but until now without success. There were some years when there seemed to be a higher chance of accession and the support and hope of Turkish people was decreasing, but other years, like the recent years, the support and the hope was decreasing due to negative happenings in politics. Until now, it has always been a process with ups and downs towards accession, but they are still not a member right now and the support and hope is decreasing. That is why some participants just don't care about it anymore. They blame the politicians to use the accession to the EU as a promise during election times for example, but they never really want it, since it is too complicated. The participants also believe that the Turkish government always uses this discussion when there is no important news at some moments, but when some more important

news shows up, the discussion moves to the background again. This situation was explained during the focus group discussion by one of the participants:

“Politicians don’t care about it so much. Is there emptiness for Turkey, they put it in front of the people, the European issue. But at the background, they don’t work on it. We have a ministry for it, but I am not sure how they work. We don’t know if they want it or not. How many years have passed already?”
(P11, male, 26 yrs.).

An example of more important news and a reason why the discussion moved at the background again during last year are the recent Gezi Park events that started in June 2013. After that, Turkish people are more concerned about the situation in their own country than accession to the EU, which was also discussed in the focus group discussion:

P11: You know we have really big problems right now, so we don’t care about that issue.

P16: Yes, we don’t care now.

P11: It depends on the season. If you ask it 3 months later, it will be still decreasing, but our common opinion might be changed. Right now it’s about other problems. We talk about what the media writes.

P16: Turkey can change in a minute. After the 17th of December [the corruption scandal], Turkey is a different country. After the Gezi Park events, Turkey became a different country. So I think there is no general view for the EU for a long time. It’s always differing from time to time”.

Even though the discussion was moved to the back of the head of the participants, the recent events could have had an influence on their opinion about the European Union. Many participants said that these domestic events didn’t have an influence on their opinion about the EU, but there was also a group that alleged that the recent Gezi Park events made them think more positively about the EU. The police used a lot of violence against the protesters and the government didn’t give them the right to protest. Once more, these events showed the students there is a lack of human rights, democracy and freedom of speech and protesting in their country. Some of them thought these things wouldn’t have happened when Turkey would be part of the European Union already:

“We feel a bit lonely. We don’t want to stay alone with our government and us. If we would be a member of the EU, they wouldn’t let the last events happen. That’s why I want to be a member more. I don’t feel safe enough with my government. A Union has some bigger rules, so all the countries have to follow those rules. Now we have to follow our government rules and they are never good for us. I want to be a member to feel safer” (P7, female, 22 yrs.).

The EU would probably not allow the Turkish government to handle in this way, so it made some of them think more positively about joining the European Union.

Future of Turkey and the EU

A third reason, besides a lack of knowledge about or a lack of interest in the discussion, for the ambivalence of some participants occurred when the future of the accession discussion was discussed at the end of the interviews and focus group discussion: a lack of faith. First of all, this was shown by a statement of five participants in more or less the same way: *“If I was the EU, I wouldn’t accept Turkey”*. By this quote, the students showed some understanding of the EU for not accepting their own country until this moment.

Furthermore, the lack of faith was shown in the general answer to the question if the participants thought that Turkey will ever join the European Union in the future. The majority of the participants think that Turkey will never join the European Union. The most mentioned reason for that was that they think the EU will not exist anymore when Turkey is ready to join or will collapse when Turkey joins. The few participants, who thought Turkey will ever join, emphasized it can only happen after at least 20 years on average. A change of government was one of the conditions that were mentioned to reach this moment.

There was also talk about focusing on other Unions in the future, like unions with Asia, China or Russia, but also with other Middle East and Islamic countries. Since the current government is introducing more and more religious and conservative rules in society, the participants think that Turkey is moving more in the direction of Asia. However, most of the participants hope this is not going to happen, because it can be even worse for Turkey looking at the existing wars and military coups in the region.

Finally, at the end of the focus group discussion, the participants themselves wanted to talk about a possible compromise in the future that would give possibilities for both Turkey and the EU to access Turkey; if there is a way for both sides when Turkey can join.

P1: I think we should have talked about if there is a way to be a member and everybody is okay with it. If there is a way to do it, like doing the right changes in both sides. Do you think there is a way? I think it should be thought largely.

Int: You mean if there is a way for Turkey to join to make everybody be ok?

P1: Yes, like a compromise.

Int: Ok, try to answer it. ...

P5: I cannot see a way.

P1: Everyone should be maximum tolerated.

In this quote, participant 1 mentioned more tolerance from European people. This topic was discussed earlier in the discussion when changes of the EU were discussed.

P11: Maybe the education level. They have to tell more about Islamic history, Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

P1: They have to tell the truth. ...

P11: I want more education for European people about us. I have to know what European people think about this, so they will have fewer prejudices.

P1: I say more tolerance. About scarved women on the streets. Also in here, I don’t like it, but it can improve.

P3: Also, they should react different if they see Turkish people.

P11: Wearing a cross and wearing a scarf is the same thing I think. I don't think anything when someone is wearing a cross.

P2: They have to change some ideas. I have one friend she came from Belgium. She said, my town has some Turkish people and most citizens think Turkish people are thief's etcetera. She said: 'when I came here, my opinion really changed'. I think European people have to change some ideas. They don't know only Turkish people. They saw Pakistan, Iraq. They think all Islamic people are the same".

Therefore, the conclusion of the participants was that Europeans have to reduce their prejudices, learn more about Turkey and Turkish people and develop more tolerance towards Islamic people, but Turkey has to look at itself and solve its own domestic problems first.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the main results are discussed following the research questions in light of the existing research about this topic. Furthermore, the limitations and contributions of this research are explored.

6.1 Images and associations of Europe and the European Union

In Chapter 2, one paragraph was written about the historical influences on the perceptions of Turkish people, mainly drawing on the work of Lagendijk and Sungur (2013). They summarized the relationship between Turks and Europe as a 'love-hate relationship': love because of the economic and cultural hegemony, defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the western focus of their hero Atatürk, hate because of the deep rooted distrust, caused by a few developments, like the modernizations in the army, financial capitulations and the loss of the Balkans. Related to the 'love-part', only Atatürk was mentioned by the participants of this research. He played an important role for some students, since he developed the desire of Turkey to become more western. Related to the 'hate-part', all the developments were not mentioned by the participants, except the Treaty of Sèvres. The thinking that 'Turks don't have friends, only enemies, especially in Europe' (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013), was also reflected in their history books, according to the students. Almost all of the participants told about the stories in history books at primary school about this happening and they told they were influenced by this at that moment. One of the participants quoted a song that Turkish football fans sang during the 1990s, when Istanbul's football club, Galatasaray, reached the semi-finals of the European Champions Cup:

"In the stadiums, there was a song. It was: 'Europe, Europe, hear our voice. This is the sound of the steps of Turkish people. Nobody can ignore Turks. Gay Europe, defend yourself!'. They were trying to warn Europe that we exist and we are coming through football. I was a child and I was thinking that Europe was a big thing and we are Turks, we are strong and we are coming to beat them" (P11, male, 26 yrs.).

However, they also stated these stories were dating back to their youth, so nowadays these stories are seen by them as outdated and too long ago. Recent experiences, like the interest of Europeans in the Gezi Park events, and persons in their personal life are the most affective on their perceptions, so it's not a key for euro skepticism for them anymore, as Yilmaz (2011) argued.

Europe itself is overall seen as a continent with a rich history, where the civilization started. Many different people and countries are living in peace and have the freedom to do whatever they want, like travelling from country to country. A negative label is the fact that Europe is seen as a 'Christian Club', which is in accordance with Morozov and Rumelili (2012) and Rumelili (2008).

The students have a really positive view about European people. First of all, they are open minded and respectful to each other, as well as with regards to other countries and cultures. Secondly, they are relaxed and free people who don't have many concerns about the future. Interesting is the fact

that Wester (2009) mentioned the same characteristics, like relaxed and unhurried, as describing the East in Western eyes (Orientalism), the opposite perspective. He also says that the Eastern people are ascribed to have a weak mentality, whereas the participants praise the working power and energy of Turks. And thirdly, the participants see Europeans as strict and living according to the rules that are given by their governments. One negative aspect is the fact they are really prejudiced about Turkish people, especially due to the behavior of foreign Turks in Europe. It might be that these prejudices of Turks explain contemporary Orientalism and also the aforementioned different images about Turks.

When relating to Occidentalism, the view of the East about the West, it was ascribed to have both positive and negative views about the West. This group of Turkish students is especially referring to positive views about Europe. What is more interesting is the work of Buruma and Margalit (2004) that explains some parts of the hate of Eastern people of the West: glorification of the countryside against hostility to the city, to prefer heroism instead of commercialism, romantic surrender above rational thinking and accepting God's sovereignty instead of idol worship. What is remarkable is that the negative characteristics of the West are seen as positive characteristics by the participants of this research. They do not praise the romantic surrender and God's sovereignty in their own country, but rather praise the rational thinking and the absence of religious rules in the European society. There is even a Turkish saying, according to one participant:

"There is a common idea in Turkey – when we get angry with the government about something, we say: 'I will go to Europe'. It's a joke, but also really serious. We love our city, our country and our people. That's why we will stay here. But when we are angry, we say it (P7, female, 22 yrs.)."

The recent quantitative research of Ozturk (2013) about attitudes of geography student teachers to Europeans and the EU shows comparable associations, but more mixed in general. The Christian religion of Europeans was mentioned more often and they accused Europeans to be more selfish. In contrast to these negative attitudes, Europeans were perceived to be 'well-of' and more free compared to Turks.

The European Union was occasionally seen as a more abstract concept to describe and to imagine. Overall, it is seen as a parliament with delegates from the European countries that discuss and collaborate especially in relation to economic issues. The gaining of power in opposition to other large countries and multi-nation trading blocs is one of the main goals. Its most powerful member nations are Germany, France and England. Many students regard these countries, but also the EU in general, suspiciously, especially in terms of imperialism. On the other hand, their view became a bit more positive due to the recent events, since the participants believed that all this police violence would not have happened if they were already part of the EU. In general, the view of the EU was quite neutral. No clear value judgments were related to when the participants were describing their images and associations of the EU. The same conclusion was drawn by quantitative research of Hortaçsu and Cem-Ersoy (2005), since they received mixed (positive and negative) views about the EU. Their explanation is quite recognizable for this research as well:

"One explanation of this neutrality may be ambivalence resulting from past conflicts and differences together with acknowledgement of advantages of the EU and inferiority of Turkey vis-a-vis the EU standards" (Hortaçsu and Cem-Ersoy, 2005, p.118).

The same mixed set of associations and perceptions was found by Ozturk (2013) in his aforementioned research. His most remarkable outcome was the fact that 42% of his participants associated the EU with 'unimportant', which uncovers a lack of interest in the EU.

6.2 Othering

The research question about othering was by far the most abstract and theoretical question: 'To what extent does 'othering' take place and what forms does it take?' That is also the reason why there was no specific part in the interview or discussion about this. However, it is a really important question for this research to explore questions about identity/self-images of the participants.

Only one question was asked that was directly related to othering: 'Do you see yourself more as a European, Asian or neither of these two?' This question investigates othering by the persons themselves and the perception of the own identity (the Self) of the participants. Some participants didn't like the question, because they didn't want to classify themselves in a group or in this level of classification (continents, civilizations). One participant was really aware of the fact she is excluding a group when she would determine her own identity:

"I'm just a person. I didn't like the question, because I can show you that I am so sure there are millions of people in Asia thinking like me. I can't classify. I don't like classifying. When I think about myself, I just see someone. I just see a random person. If I say 'I am a European', it means that I put all the Asian people together. I feel like none of them. Maybe I am just Turkish, but I don't support the question" (P5, female, 23 yrs.).

Furthermore, some participants answered the question by changing the level of classification to national or civic. They stated they are just 'Turkish' or 'Istanbul'.

The general answer of the participants was that they are just in between Asian and European, but more close to European. The people who felt more European used Asia as the other. The following participant gives a striking example:

"When I went to England, at the airport, for example: There was a European queue and non-European queue to the airport. I was of course in the non-European queue, they were Arabic countries, all black. I was hurt, because I thought I am not like these people, because the way they are behaving I didn't like. I thought I don't deserve this, but I was in the non-European queue of course" (P8, male, 22 yrs.).

By far, the most participants felt in between and this feeling is summarized by the following participant, who is even mentioning the concepts of orientalism and Occidentalism:

“It’s a hard question. I don’t see myself all European or Asian. Not oriental or occidental. Turkey has an oriental side and an occidental side. Our history was in the middle of these borders, so we got some European stuff and also some Asian stuff. I am a mix of them. Turkish people are in the middle of this. Not all Turkish people, but the western side of Turkish people are in the middle. The east of Turkey is more eastern than western” (P18, male, 26 yrs.).

On the one hand, the students feel more European, since they are living in Istanbul, are more open minded and progressive and have some characteristics of European people they say. On the other hand, they also saw the differences between them and Europeans when they were in Europe and they recognize the influence and importance of religion and traditions in their lives. This ‘in between’ feeling is also related to the work of Huntington. His work about clashing civilizations was never addressed by the participants. They didn’t talk about any kind of clash between Islamic and Christian civilizations in the future, so it might also be a bit outdated, like the historical wars between Europe and Turkey. However, some allegations of Huntington can be related with views of the participants, for instance the status of Turkey being a ‘torn country’ and a ‘lone country’. Huntington sees Turkey as not part of any civilization and willing to join another civilization. On the one hand, the participants agree on the fact that they and their country are a country that has aspects of both Europe and Asia, but on the other hand, the participants have a more positive view about this situation. Whereas Huntington is focusing more on the negative aspects as being alone and torn, the participants are pointing at the power Turkey has because of this diverse identity and strategic position in the world. The same idea of the students and opposing Huntington is also reflected in the theory of Rumelili (2008) that Turkey is ‘challenging the dichotomy’ in recent years by using its representational practices. Turkey realises that it’s simultaneously Asian and European and can contribute to Europe as being the first Islamic country in the EU.

Another part of the interview that is more indirectly relating to othering was the exercise of drawing borders. Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002) told us that making and defining borders is the practical implementation of othering, related to the concept of territoriality. Especially the first border they had to draw, the imaginary border between Europe and Asia, is interesting. As earlier said, most of them drew the border vertically at the half of Turkey or in the direction of the West coast. This practical outcome explains the overall feeling of the participants to feel in between Europe and Asia. Moreover, when they drew this border in the middle of Turkey, they put themselves inside the Western/European part, which is related to the answer to feel more European than Asian. This will be explained more in detail when discussion the results of the fourth sub-question.

Furthermore, some typical examples of othering took place during other parts of the interview when the participants were not aware of it. Here is an example:

“For example, I really like Germany, and when I am there, I feel belonged here. I don't know why, I can't really explain it, but it feels like home somehow, because I feel like Turkey is not very organised and then in Germany everything is really organised and disciplined. So when I am there, it's more me. I feel like that. So that's why, when I am travelling, like I told you, it's fun and it's nice to see new places. But when I was in Germany, for language courses, for a longer period of time, it was nicer because I really liked the lifestyle there, the quality of life” (P4, female, 21 yrs.).

When looking at the interviews in general from a larger distance and during the listening and transcribing of the interviews, another interesting similarity came up related to othering. As said before, the interview was divided by a part about Europe/European people and a part about the EU. In the first part, the participants were mainly talking about 'European people (they)' and 'Turkish people (they)', since they were often comparing these two different groups. In the second part about the European Union, they changed their way of talking: 'European Union (they)' and 'Turkish people (we)'. Especially the latter is interesting. During the first part of the interview about Europe and Europeans, the participants were mainly talking in the plural of the third-person. In this way, the participant dissociated himself/herself from these two groups where he talked about, so no othering took place in general. I think in this way, it was easier to talk about the differences between European people (mainly positive) and Turkish people (mainly negative). During the second part of the interview about the European Union, the participants were mainly talking in the plural of the first-person: 'we'. Through this way, the participant incorporated himself/herself into the group of Turkish people and contrasted his/her group (the 'self'/the 'cultural identity') with the European Union. I think the reason for doing this is because the overall tone of the conversation about the EU was more neutral or negative and the view of the participant's own group was more positive, so to put their own group 'higher', othering took place. When this observation is matched with the theory about othering, the earlier discussed definition of Elsrud (2008) explains this othering in the second part: *"a general process in which a group is given the position of a negative cultural counterpart through which the cultural self can be uplifted and kept in a more favorable position"*. During the first part about Europe, the 'cultural self' was not in a more favorable position, so othering was not needed.

6.3 Opinions about the accession discussion

Main issues

When the participants were asked about their thoughts on the accession discussion, the main issues were discussed first. These have already been discussed in the results chapter. However, it is interesting to compare the main issues with other issues mentioned about the opinions of Turkish people.

The most symbolic issue was the issue of selling food on the streets, which participants thought was going to be forbidden if Turkey would join the EU. Kokoreç was mentioned as a striking example of this. Remarkably, this issue was not mentioned by other researchers.

Conversely, religion was the most serious and ongoing issue between the EU and Turkey and this was also addressed in other research, e.g. McLaren (2000) and Ozturk (2013). In McLaren's research, economic problems were regarded as the most important, but this can be explained by the fact she interviewed Turkish elite groups and the booming years of the Turkish economy were yet to come. The fact that the European Union only consists of Christian countries makes it a Christian Club that is never going to accept an Islamic country, according to the participants, and also according to Huntington (1993). He stated that the elite of the European Community would never let an Islamic

country have access. This is mainly caused by the prejudices Europeans have about Islam and Turkey, since many Turks are living in Europe and are behaving badly, according to the participants.

Thirdly, Cyprus was regarded as one of the most complicated and decisive issues at the moment. This stalemate in recent years is also acknowledged by Bürgin (2012) and Lagendijk and Sungur (2013) as a determinative factor, but, according McLaren (2000), underestimated by the participants of her research.

Furthermore, the large population of Turkey is a thorny issue. When Turkey joins the EU and people migrate to Europe, it can have a positive effect as the population is young and willing to work hard. On the other hand, the participants think there are many uneducated people and the large population will have a big effect on the balance of the European parliament. Interesting about the research of Çelebi (2009) is that she received similar answers, positive and negative about the population issue, but they were divided between the two research groups in that research. The German students were emphasizing the positive characteristics of the Turkish population (young, willingness to work hard), while the Turkish students were pointing at the largeness and low education of the Turkish population.

The issues about the geographical location, human rights and Turkish government were occasionally mentioned in other research, probably since these issues were often linked to recent events and conflicts. The conflicts near the borders of Turkey with neighboring countries like Syria are originating from recent years and still going on, and the violation of human rights by the Turkish government is often emphasized since the recent events started in June 2013.

Opinion about joining

In this research, 6 participants were in favor of accession, 6 participants were against accession and 6 participants were ambivalent about accession. When comparing this with the opinion of other research, this research shows a different outcome. The trend, if you analyze the comparable research in chronological order by the publication dates, is that the overall support is declining (Lagendijk and Sungur, 2013; Turkije Instituut, 2014; Wester, 2009; Boudewijn, 2006; Bürgin (2012); Yilmaz, 2011). This research still shows a mixed outcome about joining. An explanation is the fact this research was done among students of whom almost all of them went to Europe before and live there for a longer period. Their experiences with European norms and values might be decisive.

Among the participants of this research, VISA, human rights and the high quality of life were seen as benefits of accession to the EU, as in the research of McLaren (2000) and Çelebi (2009).

Counterarguments of participants of this research were the changing and use of Turkey by the EU due to all the requirements and also the lack of urgency to join the European Union, which is comprehensively explained by the research of Bürgin (2012). The ambivalence of students in this research was mainly caused by a lack of knowledge and disinterest among participants about the discussion. Through the quote that describes the personal perception of Sungur in Chapter 2, Lagendijk and Sungur (2013) describe accurately the same kind of boredom felt by some participants in this research as well.

Future of Turkey and the EU

The results showed this ambivalence was also caused by a lack of faith in the future among the participants. Most of the participants expected it would never happen in the future or when Turkey would become ready, the EU will not exist anymore. They also said they can understand why the EU does not want to accept Turkey. One participant used a clear metaphor for this:

Because some big countries just don't want Turkey and Turkey can't fulfil some requirements. [The Turkish government is like the boy who always walks after someone [follows them around] and tries to be a friend of him, but he is just a loser" (P14, female, 21 yrs.).

This negative view of the future is also reflected in the answers of participants from other research (Çelebi, 2009; Bürgin, 2012). The only exception to this is the research by McLaren (2000), whose participants thought it would not happen quickly, but finally Turkey will join. However, it is clear that the time of her research is decisive for this divergent outcome.

However, in one of his most recent columns, Lagendijk (2014b) answers the question if the EU should suspend the negotiations with Turkey. He discusses the reasons why he thinks the EU will not suspend the negotiations. He thinks that the EU does not want to take the risk to lose Turkey as an ally and is giving premier Erdogan more arguments to rebel against Europe. On the lower level, the participants of the focus group discussion came to the compromise that Europe has to get rid of its prejudices by learning more about Islam and Turkey to create more tolerance, while Turkey has to endeavor more to solve its domestic problems.

6.4 Differences/commonalities in answers among both sides of Istanbul

The fourth sub-question of this research was asked as an additional question to compare the answers of Turkish students in Istanbul among two groups during the analysis: students who were living on the Asian side of Istanbul and students who were living on the European side of Istanbul. The assumption and expectation of the researcher were that there might be differences in answers (views, images, associations etc.) in the perceptions of Europe if you were living on the continent of Europe itself or you were living on the Asian continent.

However, when the data gathering started in Istanbul, soon it became clear this was not the way the students of Istanbul conceive their locality or identity. First of all, this became clear through my own observation and informal talks with Turkish students about the research. Secondly, during a meeting with the director of the Dutch Institute in Turkey, he mentioned other factors such as the nature of the university (public/private), the district of the city, birthplaces, experiences with Europe and family or friends are more affective and could make a difference in answers.

Still, it did not hurt to ask the question. For that reason, at the end of the interview, the sub-question was simply asked of each participant. Here are some typical answers:

“No, for Istanbul it's all the same, because there is just sea between them and a bridge. If you were living in Istanbul, the question would be funny, because it's totally the same. Maybe someone expects that the Asian side would be different” (P5, female, 23 yrs.).

“No, because I lived on the Asian side, but now I am living on the European side. They are the same, the only difference are the names, Europe and Asia. For example, I lived on the Asian side, now I live on the European side. I don't realize differences” (P9, male, 22 yrs.).

“No, you cannot separate Istanbul; it's not a true border. Some districts are similar on both sides” (P16, male, 26 yrs.).

In general, the students stated there might be some differences in living on the Asian or European side concerning traffic issues or living circumstances, but this is not related to differences in answers. The border between Europe and Asia is only a line on a map – the Bosphorus in this case – and it is not part of the way people think or perceive.

Through these answers, it became clear that the side of the city does not play a role in the differences in answers, but a higher level of the geographical factor, such as the continent they were raised, does play a role. The map of Figure 6.1 shows the places where the participants spent their youth (during primary school). The place names are mentioned in Table 5.1, at the beginning of the results-chapter.

Figure 6.1: Map of grown up places participants in Turkey



Source: http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=704&lang=en , edited by author

In particular the students who were raised on the European continent (Thrace) said their place of growing-up was an influence and might make them feel more European than other participants. The participants who were raised on the Asian side did not mention this difference in view about Europe. Again, some illustrative quotes of the participants who were raised on the European continent:

"P7: And also sometimes, Thrace is closer to the European part. Turkey is really Islamic, so it's not so easy to drink alcohol with your parents or something. But at the Thrace part, it's ok always. When I was a child, we were used to drink raki [Turkish alcoholic drink] with our parents and everyone.

...

Int: Can you think about more things between Thrace and Anatolia?

P7: About the wearing stuff. There are cities, like Konya or something in the summer, you cannot wear a small shirt. But in my hometown, it's ok always. We say we are European. More people in Thrace think like that. Also the Marmara side [west coast] and the more touristic sides of Turkey think like that. Also in political things, Thrace part is more revolutionist, we are more against the government" (P7, female, 22 yrs.).

"Many people know each other in Tekirdağ [where the participant went to primary school]. For a high school student it's better. I am happy with this. I like Thracian people, they like drinking alcohol and they are famous for this in Turkey. We like raki and they are funny. Compared to other Turkish people and other people I know this" (P16, male, 26 yrs.).

Another interesting outcome appeared while making the map in Figure 6.1. As seen in the figure, almost all of the participants were raised in places close to the coast and in the western part of Turkey. This might be another reason why the participants are this positive about Europe and Europeans. An example is the tourists they have seen during their youth. The west coast of Turkey is famous of its tourism and it is an important source of income in the local economies and communities. Furthermore, the participants already said that the way of thinking is different in the western part of Turkey compared to the eastern part. This is going to be explained more in detail the next paragraph about the overall view. Finally, this might also be the reason why most of the participants drew the imaginary border between Europe and Asia vertically at the half of Turkey or more in the direction of the west coast. It is also a kind of othering.

6.5 Limitations and contributions of the results

It is evident there is a large bias in this research. This was anticipated in advance of the research and also confirmed during the analysis. First of all, the students who participated in this research are from the same city and university. If people from other cities in Turkey or other universities in Istanbul took part, they quite likely would give different answers. Besides that, the experience of the students plays a role. Almost all of the students appeared to have been in Europe before, for various reasons. This was a decisive factor in their views and opinions about Europe and the EU. This experience apparently had an influence on their level of English as well. The researcher recruited participants from within his own network, so the students accessed were open to international students and able to speak in proper English. Finally, because of this unnatural English language and since this research is about perceptions, all the answers are always representations of the real perceptions in the heads of the students.

Due to these limitations, the students were asked about the overall view of Europe and the EU to get an impression. The students often indicated factors such as birthplace, education, age and experience as determining differences between them and other groups in society. The western part

has always been more western minded, because of the tourism along the coast for instance. The eastern part is less educated, poorer and more primitive compared to the western part. This gives them fewer opportunities to gain knowledge about Europe and the EU and will give them other, apparently negative views, according the participants. Furthermore, it also differs from city to city and is depending on the age, like this participant explained:

"I can say that the young people support getting membership [of the EU], but when you go to the older people, it will decrease. Old people are more conservative. They used to live in a Turkey that is not a member. They probably say: we don't need them. We [younger people] have more connection with Europe and foreign friends. We can see differences, that's why the young people will be more positive [about accession]" (P7, female, 22 yrs.).

Overall, the students think the view of the Turkish people in general is more negative compared to the view of the students, since they have more experience with Europe and are more progressive.

Despite the limitations of this research and with this impression of the overall view, the research contributes to the existing knowledge on this particular topic. As explained in the introduction chapter, there is a lack of research about the Turkish perspective of Europe and the accession discussion and an investigation of the underlying layers of these perspectives is missing. The existing research is mainly in Turkish. The insights arising from this research contribute to the mutual understanding between Europeans and Turks and can provide recommendations for further research and policymakers (see the conclusion chapter).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The first research question investigated the images and associations the students had about Europe and the European Union. Many of these images and associations derived particularly from the experience almost all the students had with Europe, e.g. studying in Europe, travelling through Europe, and social contacts with European people. In contrast, previous research mainly indicated influences from historical events and persons. These factors were also mentioned by the students, e.g. the Treaty of Sèvres, the wars with Europe, and Atatürk. However, these historical events and persons turned out to be not highly influential anymore. It is likely that friends, recent events in Turkey, and personal experiences with Europe and Europeans were more influential factors on their perceptions of Europe and the EU.

In general, the images of and associations with Europe and Europeans were positive. Europe was described as a continent with human rights, freedom and opportunities, e.g. travelling, working and living. European people were seen as open minded, respectful and living according the rules. However, they were also seen as prejudiced about Turkey, Turkish people and Islam, mainly caused by the behavior of Turks who are living in European countries. The EU was considered more neutral in comparison to Europe, since the participants perceived it more abstract and had mixed feelings concerning the EU.

These mixed feelings are also reflected in the answer to the third research question what the students thought about the accession discussion of Turkey to the European Union. The opinions about accession were totally mixed, as 6 students were proponent, 6 students were opponent and 6 students were ambivalent about joining the EU. This result is similar to other research done on students about opinions about accession. The reasons for the ambivalent opinions of the students were interesting in particular. Fundamental to this ambivalence was the lack of faith in future accession of Turkey to the EU. Furthermore, a lack of interest in the topic was shown, because the accession process has been going on for decades and does not seem to be making progress. Many issues that are of concern, e.g. religion, human rights, the geographical location and large population of Turkey, will have to be solved first.

The second research question asked to what extent othering took place and in which forms. It appeared that othering especially took place when students were talking about the EU and in particular by students who were more negative about the discussion. The students mostly perceived themselves as in between European and Asian, as having characteristics of both Europe and Asia. Hence, the students were not othering when considering their perceptions of Europe and Europeans, because they were mainly admiring Europe and European norms and values and did not include themselves in one of the groups (Turkish people and European people). In contrast, the students were othering during the talks about their perceptions and opinions about the EU. If they needed to emphasize their more negative perceptions and opinions about the EU, they were contrasting their own group or country to the European Union, by using words as 'we' and 'they' for instance.

The last sub-question investigated to what extent the answers to the questions were similar or different, comparing students that were living on both sides of the city. The side of the city in which

the students were living had no influence on the perceptions of the students. In contrast, their place of growing up (i.e. which continent) appeared to have some influence.

As a conclusion, the answer to the question how Turkish students of Istanbul perceive Europe and the European Union is that they perceive Europe (and European people) as a group they want to be part of. These perceptions basically derive from their experiences with Europe and Europeans. Due to these experiences, they realized this is also the way they want to live. On the other hand, the students are proud of their country and people, and they don't want to deny their origins. For that reason, they feel in between European and Asian. In contrast, they don't feel the same urgency to be part of the European Union in general and they also think this is not going to happen in the near future. Too many issues are in between Turkey and the European Union right now.

Recommendations

Currently, the accession process is in a deadlock and the directions of the European Union and Turkey are diverging. The EU is dealing with its own economic problems and judging the recent events in Turkey, while Turkey is coping with its own domestic problems and ignoring the EU (Lagendijk, 2014b). Therefore, the future of Turkey-EU relations is uncertain. However, as long as Turkey and the EU are negotiating and a possibility for membership remains, it is essential to be aware of underlying perceptions. With the knowledge gained from this research, it is possible to give some recommendations for future policy concerning Turkey-EU relations:

First of all, the lack of faith in a positive outcome of the accession process among the students is one of the main results of this research. If this lack of faith is altered into a more hopeful and interested attitude among Turkish people, the support will increase again. One of the reasons why there is a lack of faith is that the students think the EU is never going to accept their country due to some fundamental issues, e.g. religion, the large population of Turkey and the conflict at Cyprus. To create a new awareness of the chance of a future membership of Turkey, the EU should create a new spot on the horizon, by developing and presenting a future plan, readable and accessible for ordinary citizens, with steps that both the EU and Turkey have to take towards Turkish accession. Subsequently, these citizens can determine by themselves whether it is feasible or not.

Furthermore, the students that took part in the focus group discussion constructed a possible solution to make Turkish membership in the future more feasible. They stated that Europeans have to reduce their prejudices about Turks, Turkey and Islam to create more tolerance among these groups. On the other hand, Turkey has to solve its own domestic problems. I share the same view with the students and think these changes are fundamental for a positive outcome. The latter is depending on Turkish politics, but the first two changes can be supported in two ways in my opinion.

1. Exchange of knowledge

To reduce prejudices and create more tolerance, Turks and Europeans should exchange more knowledge about each other. If Europeans and Turks learn more about their history, cultures and religion, they will become more open minded and tolerating towards each other, since it will reduce their oriental and occidental views. European countries and Turkey should enrich their education systems and media with this knowledge about each other.

2. Exchange of people

Besides this theoretical information, it is also important to experience this theory in practice and in real life. Europeans are living with Turks who are currently living in Europe, but these people mainly create negative views about Turks in Europe. For Turks, it is really hard to go to Europe, because of the visa limitations. If Europeans and Turks have the possibility to travel to easier to their countries and to meet people that are living in these countries, they will also learn more about each other and can tell other people in their home countries about these experiences. Furthermore, they will also meet these people when they are in their own country and both groups will get more used to each other. All of the students showed that their experiences had a positive influence on their perceptions of Europe and Europeans. For that reason, not only students and well-educated people should have the chance by study and work related trips, but also ordinary citizens should have these opportunities. The difficulties the Turkish people experienced in obtaining a visa were an important topic in this research. The EU and Turkey should consider these limitations again to provide a larger exchange of people and experiences.

Through these ways, mutual understanding and trust can be improved and used to continue with the challenging of the everlasting dichotomy of Europe and Turkey.

Areas for future research

More research about perceptions of students in Turkey about the EU should be carried out to get an overall view, e.g. among students from other universities and other cities. Furthermore, other groups in Turkish society can be investigated, e.g. students with a lower education level, elderly, ethnic minorities and religious/non-religious people. Finally, related to the exchange of knowledge, this future research should be done or translated in English to learn more about each other's results. Currently, students and elite people are mainly investigated, since this research can be carried out by European researchers in English.

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