POLITICAL ALCHEMIES, IDENTITY GAMES AND THE SOVEREIGN DEBT INSTABILITY: EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN CRISIS OR THE CRISIS IN IDENTITY-TALK?

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It is possible to talk about European identity amidst the turbulence the Eurozone faces? If it is, what kind of meaning would one attribute to European identity now that questions of 'survival', be they related to foiling the fragmentation of the Eurozone, overcoming counties' decelerated economic performance and/or recession or even safeguarding citizens' dreams for a decent future for themselves and their families, have made the pursuit of existential quests a luxury? And further, why is it that European identity, which was supposed to be a shield against not only events threatening to destabilise the EU but also cycles of popular enthusiasm and disenchantment, has not been mobilised? I believe that any observer of the unfolding events in Europe would find interesting that questions of economics (taming sovereign debt without undermining economic growth), politics (possible models about enhancing fiscal supervision in the EU and enshrining this in primary law and further political union) and the price of the lack of leadership (Europe's politicians have not acted promptly and decisively) have overshadowed completely what may be termed as 'identity-talk'.

If in such periods of turbulence or, to use the institutionalist language, in such critical junctures,[1] European identity appears to be almost irrelevant to both the political protagonists and

[1] See S. Steinmo, K. Thelen and F. Longstreth (eds.), *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); P. Hall and C.R. Taylor, 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms', *Political Studies*, 44 (1996), 936.

ordinary people, the question that needs to be raised is whether it has been really relevant at all, notwithstanding its prominence on discursive agendas and in policy priorities at both the supranational and national levels since the late 1970s.[2] This question has important implications for the future, too, since any reappearance of identity narratives would not escape the critique that they may be just veneers seeking to mask or to promote certain political claims which may be, in fact, unrelated to identity issues.

The relevance of European identity is my main focus of concern in this paper. True, readers may find my quest for the explication of the role and political functionality of European identity deeply problematic. While the latter would be understandable given the innumerable pronouncements that have been made as well as the efforts, policies, discourses and research programmes that have been devoted to it during the last two decades, critics would hopefully agree with me that this question has not been asked very often and that the absence of European identity claims in the present era is puzzling. In this respect, it may be interesting to go beyond questions such as 'what is Europe's identity?' or 'how a European identity can be more than a thin overlay of deeply rooted national identities?' or 'what is the meaning of European identity?', to examine why political arguments are framed in ways that prioritise European identity in time t, while disregard it in t+1. In other words, what does 'European identity' do when it is invoked and validated by certain political actors or forces at a certain historical and political conjuncture?

Before proceeding to address these questions, it should be stated at the outset that I distinguish subjective identifications with the EU, which are invariably evolving and shifting, in the same way, that any personal self-identification evolves, changes and develops in response to events and the external environment (the personal world), and collective 'projects' about European identity formation which have public and institutional manifestations and political consequences (the political

[2] The concept of identity appears in social science in the second half of the 20th century. Its appeal has much to do with Erik Erikson and Fromm's psychoanalytic work on individual personality. Erikson was concerned about the crises of 'personal identity' in the post second world era and influenced by Freudian ideas and cultural anthropology which became entangled with American national policy in the 1950s and 1960s and the development of 'area studies', designed to map the 'national character' of countries, in American universities; for a wonderful explication of the origins of 'identity' and 'identity theory', see W.J.M. Mackenzie, *Political Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978). Words are not as innocent as they appear to be.

world). The subsequent discussion centres on the latter, thereby leaving room for perceptions about 'Europe', in general, or the European Union, in particular, to exist freely as states of mind and for individuals to weave their personal stories and identifications concerning fellow Europeans or the European institutional configurations without any impediment. Subjective identification with Europe is thus disentangled from public narratives[3] and political claims relating to European identity and projects for Europe or the Member States (MS) in this paper.

The subsequent discussion explores the above mentioned questions on the basis of five steps. First, I examine the national identities v European identity dichotomy which has dominated the academic literature and the public agenda in an attempt to uncover the political functions of this dichotomy. I argue that the questioning of the conditions of possibility of a European identity because the EU allegedly lacks the homogenising elements that have underpinned the formation of national identities has been in the main a 'home-made' (MS) distinction. Accordingly, it projects concerns and political arguments existing in the MS. Secondly, I discuss ways of conceptualising the EU and possible types of a European identity. This discussion leads me to argue that the relation between national identities and European identity is not conditioned by the identifiable qualities or meanings entailed by these two distinct entities, as it is often assumed in the literature, but by discursive constellations which are time and space specific. In other words, antinomic or symbiotic relations are projections of specific discoursive articulations (Step 3). This is attested by the Euro-zone turbulence and the present constellation (Step 4). If European identity, as produced in and by historically specific articulations for certain political purposes and functions, should be the main focus of our attention, then the question is what is left, if anything, of European identity. This question is examined in the last section of the paper.

[3] M. Somers has distinguished between public narratives and self-understandings that are shaped by stories which may be shared or not; 'The narrative constitution of identity: a relational and network approach', *Theory and Society*, 23 (1994), pp. 605-49.

Step 1: On identity games, politics and imperfect equilibria

Having set out the foundations and the regulative framework for the common market and against the background of political battles and the demise of the Bretton Woods system in 1971, the European Community was searching for a new vision in the 1970s. A narrative on European identity seemed to be the missing ingredient that could reinvigorate European integration by eliciting peoples' interest in and support for European affairs. The Werner Report on European Monetary Union in 1970 and the launch of European Political Cooperation in the same year had provided impetus for the political development of the Community, but the latter process, unavoidably, needed 'Europeans', too. And 'Europeans' would only lend support to the political development of the Community, if the 'market Europe' became transformed into 'a people's Europe'.[4] Accordingly, the Copenhagen summit in 1973 furnished a 'Declaration on European Identity' which was to be built by coordinated action internally and externally. The internal face of the European identity required a predominantly political public narrative which would champion critical legal and political principles, such as respect for the rule of law, social justice, human rights and democracy, as well as the award of special rights for Community citizens while the external one would highlight the role and responsibilities of the nine Member States vis-à-vis the rest of the World.[5] In December 1974, the Paris Summit Conference endorsed the declaration and laid down the foundations for direct elections to the European Parliament and the incremental development of a Citizens' Europe. Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Prime Minister who was instructed by the Paris conference to articulate concrete proposals for strengthening citizens' rights, produced a report which advocated the protection of fundamental rights

[4] D. Kostakopoulou, *Citizenship, Identity and Immigration in the European Union: Between Past and Future* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). In this book I argued that European identity is a process and a project. A similar argument has been made by Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein, *European Identity* (Cambridge University Press: 2009).

[5] Annex 2 to Chapter II, 7th General Report EC, 1973.

in the EU, consumer rights for European citizens and the protection of the environment. The establishment of common European rights would bring 'European close to its citizens', create a feeling of identification with the Union as a whole and make a 'people's Europe' a reality.

Albeit the fact that the Tindemans' report did not capture the national executives' political imagination, its recommendations did not have sharp edges; they merely furnished the basis for a soft identification with the EU. The proposed reforms can not be viewed as undermining the national frames of reference or threatening the Member States' sovereign powers in the fields of citizenship and migration regulation thereby upsetting their categorisations and established identities. Unlike the Tindemans' report, however, the Commission's invocation of the concept of 'a passport Union' in its report on 'Towards European Citizenship' (1975) which entailed the adoption of a uniform passport, harmonisation of the rules affecting aliens and the abolition of controls at internal frontiers, entailed the prospect of changing radically political realities, framing perceptions and shaping citizens' orientations.[6] The replacement of national passports by a uniform passport was seen by Community institutions as establishing a definite connection between individual Europeans with the Community and ensuring equality of treatment for all passport holders by non-member countries irrespective of their nationality. But Member States detected in this proposal the questioning of their powers of categorisation of the population under their jurisdiction. And by 'confirming the Community as an entity visa v is the rest of the world' and eliciting popular feeling of belonging to that entity, it appeared to clash with national identities and feelings of belonging to distinct nation-states.

Further reforms at the turn of that decade, such as the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979,[7] the introduction of uniform passport in 1981, the prospect of the abolition of internal frontier controls coupled with the Commission's draft directive on residence of Community nationals in the territory of host Member States in 1979, and its proposal to grant local electoral rights to Community nationals residing in host Member States[8] appear to recast established conceptions of

[6] Bull. EC, Supplement 7/75.
[7] OJ EC, 278, 8/10/77: 1-11.
[8] Bull. EC. 10-1972.

community membership and intra-Community migration away from the Member States' classificatory and regulatory matrix.[9] The discourse of European identity served to legitimise such developments in the same way that the discourse on national identity had served to legitimise state-building in the previous century. Community officials tapped into historical processes of state-building and sought to utilise the symbolisms and 'consciousness raising' initiatives (i.e., a European flag, a European anthem, stamps and so on) that had accompanied the formation of nation-states.[10] By borrowing existing tools, resources and established mythomoteurs, they foreclosed the possibility of innovative solutions and pre-empting antagonistic reactions by the Member States.

The Member States opposed the relaxation of the national citizenship requirement for franchise in the 1970s thereby forcing the Commission to shift its attention from political rights to establishing local consultative councils for migrant workers in the host Member States. And in the mid-1980s although the Adonnino report[11] explicitly recommended in addition to local electoral rights voting rights at European Parliament elections in the Member State of residence as well as a number of other reforms designed to strengthen citizens' involvement in and identification with the Community, the Member States continued to remain unconvinced. Yet, the 'People's Europe' problematique was gaining momentum and the absence of progress in the grant of special right to mobile Community citizens was seen to undermine attempts to construct a European identity by making European decisions and affairs relevant to the lives of ordinary Europeans and the developing practice of European citizenship.[12]

The narrative about the formation of European identity and the political reforms that sustained it clearly created interference patterns in national executives' regulatory and governmental powers. They also threatened to superimpose a different notion of citizenship upon the prevailing notion of national citizenship, since Commission officials in the 1970s and 1980s did not merely see the

[9] The latter term is borrowed from Rogers Brubaker, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XLI:I (Summer 2010) 61-78, at p. 76.
[10] Kostakopoulou, supra note 3, 2001, pp. 44-47.
[11] Pietro Adonnino chaired the ad hoc Committee for a People's Europe in line with the mandate given to it by the Fontainebleau Council in 1984.
[12] A. Wiener, *Building Institutions: The Developing Practice of European Citizenship Practice* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview,1998).

emerging notion of Community citizenship to be simply additional to national citizenship but envisaged that the latter would eventually become subordinate to the former.[13] The gestures towards the creation of a soft identification with the EU were gradually seen to implicate a harder European identification narrative which would have an internally equalising effect since Community nationals would be assimilated to state nationals and enjoy complete equality of treatment and a coercive external categorisation.

The Draft Treaty on European Union proposed by the European Parliament in 1984 echoed Spinelli's belief that the Second War II reduced 'the habitual respect of citizens for their states and their myths and opened the way to the united European transformation'[14] and recommended the formal establishment of European Union citizenship conditioned on the possession of Member State citizenship. Although the draft treaty did not have a formal institutional impact in the sense of its provisions finding their way into the concrete articles of the Single European Act, it, nevertheless, provided important normative and ideational resources which would be utilised at Maastricht and beyond. In fact, it may be argued that DTEU's provisions on Union citizenship, the Adonnino Committee's work[15] coupled with the Commission's determination to expand the personal scope of free movement beyond active economic actors, which was also reflected in the 1985 Paper on Completing the Internal Market,[16] and the formal adoption of the three 1990 Residence Directives (on students, pensioners and self-sufficient European citizens provided that they had medical insurance and sufficient means so as to avoid becoming a burden on the welfare system of the host state)[17] led to the constitutional framework on Union citizenship at Maastricht. And although the European citizenship discourse had somewhat subsumed the European identity narrative in the late 1980s as

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[13] Bull. EC 12-1972, point 1104; Bull. EC Suppl. 7/1975.
[14] Spinelli, 1966, page 7, cited in W. Maas, *Creating European Citizens* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007) at p. 120.
[15] See its second report in June 1985, Bull. EC. Supplement 7, 1985, pp. 9-14.
[16] COM(85)310.
[17] Directives 90/364, 90/365 and 90/366, which was replaced by Directive 93/96. The European Parliament and Council Directive of 29 April 2004 *on the right of citizens of the Union and their Family Members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States* (2004/38/EC*)*, which repeals the above mentioned Directives, introduces three separate categories of residence rights and establishes an unqualified right of permanent residence after five years of continuous legal residence in the host Member State; OJ 2004 L 158/77 (30 April 2004).

emphasis was put on citizens as participants in politics at Community and national levels, the latter was resurrected in the early 1990s as national delegations were justifying their approval of Union citizenship on the ground that it would enhance feelings of belonging to a single entity[18] and the creation of a citizens' Europe.

The Maastricht Treaty gave constitutional status to Union citizenship by pronouncing 'every person holding the nationality of a member state a citizen of the Union' and supplementing the pre-existing Community rights to free movement and residence (Article 8a EC) with local and EP electoral rights in the MS of residence, consular and diplomatic protection when travelling abroad and non judicial means of redress, such as the right to petition the European Parliament and to apply to the Ombudsman. It is true that the Maastricht framework included a limited set of rights and many of the Commission's proposals were omitted from the final text. It is also true that the normative potential of Union citizenship was not fully appreciated at that time. Concerns about making Europe a tangible reality in the lives of European citizens thereby increasing the Union's social legitimacy by promoting identification with it as well as addressing its democratic deficit were predominant**.** Indeed, the Commission successfully linked the progressive implementation of the citizenship agenda with the enhancement of the democracy in the EU which would in turn lead to the reinforcement of the political dimension of the Union, while national executives preferred to view 'Europeanness' or European identity as a key step towards a more coordinated foreign policy.[19] However, European identity politics was not wholly subsumed by the discourse on democratic participation and the social legitimacy deficit of the EU.[20]

Step 2: Point, counterpoint

[18] Maas, 2007, supra note 13, 47-48.
[19] See the TEU's Preamblic reference (9) to 'reinforcing European Identity' in the context of defence policy.
[20] Compare Wiener's insight that the citizenship discourse in the early 1990s showed that 'the focus shifted from creating a feeling of belonging to establishing the legal ties of belonging'; 2008, supra note 11, p. 295.

The establishment of the new institution of Union citizenship gave rise to the prospect of the dilution of national citizenship and fears about divided loyalties and allegiances in some national arenas. While the Commission and the European Parliament welcomed innovative templates on citizenship and membership which superseded troubled national pasts and national loyalties and granted non-national EU citizens political rights in national arenas, certain Member States were concerned about what saw as the narrowing of the parameters of national states' policy choices. This was so despite the facts that the Maastricht Treaty explicitly affirmed that the Union is obligated to 'respect the national identities of its Member States, whose systems of government are founded on the principles of democracy' (F.1 TEU) and must contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States while respecting their national and regional diversity, too (Article 128 EC) at that time. Similarly, in an attempt to appease national sensitivities and anxieties, the Declaration on Nationality of a Member State, annexed to the Final Act of the Treaty on European Union, expressly stated, 'the question whether an individual possesses the nationality of a Member State shall be settled solely by reference to the national law of the Member State concerned'. Similar declarations were adopted by the European Council at Edinburgh and Birmingham. The Birmingham declaration confirmed that, in the eyes of national executives, Union citizenship constitutes an additional tier of rights and protection which is not intended to replace national citizenship – a position that found concrete expression in the amended Article 17(1) at Amsterdam.[21]

Notwithstanding these pronouncements about the 'added value' and enriching character of EU citizenship, however, the promise of constructive politics entailed by Union citizenship unsettled national political actors. Denmark decided to opt out from the TEU's Union citizenship provisions, stating that 'nothing in the TEU implies or foresees an undertaking to create a citizenship of the Union in the sense of citizenship of the nation-state. The question of Denmark participating in such a development does, therefore, not arise.[22]

[21] Bull. EC 10-1992 I 8.9. The Amsterdam Treaty added the statement that 'Union citizenship shall complement national citizenship' to Article 8(1) EC (Article 17(1) on renumbering).
[22] Danish Declaration, OJ C348/4, 31/12/94.

On the discoursive chessboard of the 1990s, European citizenship and the construction of a European identity were not merely portrayed as 'dangerous supplements',[23] but also as part of 'either (European)/or (national)' dualisms. Although such a discoursive articulation reflected nationalist preferences for overriding and undivided national-statist loyalties and deeply rooted and, thus resistant to change, state-centred identities, it was, nevertheless, premised on questionable assumptions and politics as well as on misinformation about the European developments. As we shall see below, it also foreclosed the promotion of more collaborative, open and inclusive practices of citizenship at both national and European levels in the 1990s. The new function of a reconstructed discourse about a super-added European identity as a threat to national identities was to shield domestic rules, policies and practices from unwanted change and to stifle a debate about their adaptation to new circumstances and developments (processes of Europeanisation) by cultivating anti-European sentiments among the population.

The national identity game unfolded in the 1990s by exhibiting three distinguishing patterns: first, it was used to sustain implicitly or explicitly a reifying view of national identities and citizenship practices since it simply asserted their historicity, primacy and importance without mentioning their continuing change and adaptation to the realities of a globalised economy and more mature and multifaceted European Union decision-making process; secondly, it focused on the 'thingness' of national identities, that is, their existence, and not on their substance, that is, their meaning and consistency, which are often quite difficult to define; and thirdly, it served to reinforce the simplistic view of European integration as both a process entailing the eventual demise of the state which had to be resisted thereby ignoring the complex realities of every-day permeation of Europeans laws and judicial decisions into national arenas and multilevel governance as well as a deficient one since it lacked the 'ethnic mythomoteurs', that is, myths, symbols, memories and traditions[24] that had been instrumental to nation-state building. The European identity/national identities opposition was thus a

[23] D. Kostakopoulou, 'Nested "Old" and "New" Citizenships in the European Union: Bringing Forth the Complexity, Columbia Journal of European Law, 5(3) (2000), 389-913.
[24] A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).

discursive articulation which advanced progressively backwards and thrived on essentialism and the selective remembering of a past, thereby ultimately thwarting a debate about weaknesses in democratic representation, inclusive and equal political membership and citizenship policies at both the national and European levels. Oddly, enough the alleged identities' clash seemed to be mutually reinforcing of established nationalities at the domestic level and of the alignment of the novel institution of European Union citizenship to such standards of nationality, thus effecting no change to the cognitive template of citizenship cum nationality.

The flawed fiction about the opposition between a European identity and national identities was entirely 'home-made', that is, constructed in national arenas. English nationalism underpinned the Conservative Party's opposition to TEU's 'ever closer Union'; as Wallace wrote in 1995,[25] 'the Conservative Party's discourse is instinctively that of national identity'. British Euro-sceptics argued that national sovereignty and identity had to be defended against a 'Federal Europe' seeking to undermine democracy and erode the sense of nationhood of the Member States. Fears about the prospect of a European federation were also expressed in France, despite the fact that the two intergovernmental pillars of the Treaty on European Union confirmed the crucial role of the Member states in determining the pace of the European integration process. To such fears, Hoffmann added the prospect of 'a Baroque or Gaudiesque construction, multilevel and multispeed, manipulated above all by Germany'.[26]

Through such narratives, Member States sought to validate domestic arrangements, reassert statist power and galvanise popular opposition to 'Europe' thereby stifling political dynamics for change at the European and national levels. Realities, such as 'system interaction' and 'system change' through the every day processes of policy making at European Level, the ECJ's expanding case law which ensured both the amplification of the four fundamental freedoms (free movement of goods, persons, services and capital) and the MS' implementation of Community legislation were conveniently ignored by circumstantialist political discourses. The terminology and symbols

[25] H. Wallace, 'Britain Out on a Limb?', *Political Quarterly*, 66(1) (1995), 47-58, at p. 50.
[26] S. Hoffmann, 'Thoughts on the French Nation Today', *Daedalus*, 122(3) (1993), 63-79.

associated with a language of the past were used in order to reassert the nation-state as a relevant organisational concept and to react against perceived threats of erosion of state power owing to the shift to qualified majority voting in certain areas, the increase in the competences of the EU, the establishment of EU citizenship and the abolition of border controls. National identity-talk invoked unspoken assumptions and qualities that are meant to merit our automatic approval thereby transfiguring issues and developments into matters of survival of 'what we hold dear'.

Academic writing at that time seemed to lend support to such narratives either by positing system effectiveness at the European level as antithetical to democracy which was aligned to national governance in a perfect and unquestionable way,[27] the absence of a 'European demos' to sustain the construction of a European polity,[28] the embryonic stage of a European public sphere and Europe's lack of deeply rooted myths and memories, that is, the essential material required for the formation of collective identities. By pinpointing the 'impossibility' of the European Union polity construction and the unlikelihood of generating a sense of pride, trust and a shared identity among the peoples of Europe, they sought to highlight the validating logic of statism, reaffirm the homogenising impulses of national identities and provide self-justificatory strategies for ideological and political positions. The issue of national identity and its continued survival in light of the trends towards greater and deeper integration and globalisation became the foreground for the generation of interests and political claims while in reality the maintenance of these interests and claims were the reason for the appearance of the national identity discourse and the alleged threat that 'Europe' posed. The success of this narrative hinged on its ability to project national identity as the main reason for national worries and concerns – as opposed to a veneer camouflaging vested interests. This was a clever move since the main focus would have to be on understanding and taking into account identity issues and not on analysing the deeper interests and the political claims involved in 'national-identity talk'. Accordingly, the desired resolution would have to be based on an acknowledgement by European officials of the resilience of national identities and on less 'Europe', in the sense of a less activist

[27] R. Dahl, 'A Democratic Dilemma: System Effectiveness versus Citizen Participation', *Political Science Quarterly*, 109 (1994), 23.
[28] J. H. H. Weiler, 'The Transformation of Europe', *Yale Law Journal* (1991), 2405-82.

Commission and a less activist Court.[29] By starting from an a priori assumption about deep rooted national identities that provided the ultimate locus of political authority, the home-made dualism between national and European identities thus obtained a symbolic force thereby precluding an engagement with both the democratic credentials of the forces invoking it and the substantive merits of their claims.

Step 3: Disconnecting the dots

The oppositional discourse on identities was underpinned by two tactics; namely, treating identities, be they national or European, as unified concepts and simplifying what such categories may stand for. In this respect, they left very little room for individuals' multiple identifications as well as the shifting meaning and importance that each of them may acquire in certain contexts. Reflecting the ideology of nationalism, national identities were depicted as unambiguous, integrated, monistic and overarching, thereby overlooking the shared interests that may exist among citizens belonging to different countries with respect to certain issues as well as individuals' propensity to accord priority to an identification other than their national one in certain situations. The abstraction of the nation could not accommodate multiple identifications and individuals' freedom to shift in and out of subject positions and to call upon different identity options in different contexts for different purposes.[30] Yet people cultivate affinities and identify with groups, communities and organisations which extend beyond and across state borders and it is this journeying in multiple worlds that makes us who we are and creates political options for us. In other words, 'I' is the product of many 'We's'[31] and a given political identity is simply one narrative to realise a sense of common purpose.

Interestingly, the fixity, monism and inflexibility characterising national identities were also grafted onto the European level without any attempt to rethink and adjust the theory of identity to the

[29] Compare, *Eniko Horvath, Mandating Identity: Citizenship, Kinship Laws and Plural Nationality in the European Union* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Kluwer, 2008), pp. 78 – 82.
[30] S. Wallmans, 'Identity Options', in C. Fried (ed.), *Minorities: Community and Identity* (Dahlem Konferenzen, Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1983), at p.70.
[31] See Mackenzie, *Political Identity*, supra note 2.

institutional peculiarities of the Union and the historical as well as political indeterminacy of Europe. As regards the latter, a cursory look at the literature can reveal the many 'faces' of Europe or the many 'Europes' within Europe; namely, the Europe of the Greek mythology, the Hellenistic Europe, the Roman Europe, the medieval Europe, the Christian Europe, the Europe of Enlightenment, the Colonial Europe, the racialist Europe, the capitalist Europe, the 'Kidnapped' Europe,[32] the brainwashed Europe which was able to redeem its cultural identity after the fall of communism and so on. Indeed, all the above narratives circulated in the public space in the later 1980s and 1990s. In addition, right-wing discourses have always appealed to a selective 'European heritage' and ignited racism and xenophobia by culture-baiting ethnic and religious minorities as 'others' and threats to the alleged relative ethnocultural homogeneity of Europe. Indeed, GRECE (Groupement de recherché et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Europeenne), the cultural wing of the French 'New Right', sought to empty Europe from the 'Judeo-Christian elements of egalitarianism' and notions of humanism and universalism in an attempt to revive an 'original' European identity which would not incorporate the European Union's migrant and multicultural population.[33]

As regards the institutional peculiarities of the European Union, Habermas identified the possibility of severing ethnos and demos and fashioning a political identity at the European Union level which would promote the flourishing of equally legitimate cultural forms of life.[34] On this account, democratic citizenship would be the integrating device of the new polity and the foundation for the formation of a European public sphere that would be separate from the national spheres. Constitutional patriotism would thus complement national patriotism without displacing it. Weiler and Bellamy and Castiglione[35] articulated variants of the Habermasian approach seeking to accommodate 'non-rational political loyalties' that exist at national level and to gradually correct them. In addition, to a 'corrective European identity', functional and constructive European identity options emerged as

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[32] M. Kundera, 'A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out', *Grata*, 11 (1984), 92-122.
[33] I draw on chapter 1 of *Citizenship, Identity and Immigration in the European Union*, supra note 3, pp. 26-7.
[34] J. Habermas, 'citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe', *Praxis International*, 12 (1992), 1-19; 'The European Nation-State', *Ratio Juris*, 9(2) (1992), 125-37.
[35] J.H.H. Weiler, 'To be a European Citizen- Eros and Civilisation', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4(4) (1997), 495-519; R. Bellamy and D. Castiglione (eds.), *Constitutionalism, Democracy and Sovereignty: American and European Perspectives* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1997).

candidates for the formation of a European political identity within a system of nested and interacting tiers for governance. By creating a diverse map of European identity pathways, the above accounts showed that Eurosceptic discourses about the incompatibility between national and European identities concealed completely what has always been so, that is, the reality of multiple identities, and what might have been, the symbiosis among identities.

The discussion thus far has sought to sketch out the multiple games implicated in the invocation of a European identity for more than three decades and the modalities of power involved. One cannot but be impressed by the variety and diversity of the political configurations of European identity and the political strategies underpinning them. Although it has not been my intention to construct an all-encompassing theory of European identity that would account for all of them, the discussion has intimated that we need to probe more into the various uses of European identity or of the politics of 'European identity' talk.

In this respect, it would be incorrect to view European identity as antithetical to national identities. For such an opposition, an either/or dualism, is not the by-product of a relation among two distinct entities having their own intrinsic qualities and differing implications, but the artificial projection of a process as well as context seeking to justify certain political claims and arguments by depicting them as antithetical. Crucially, as the discussion has unravelled, this process and the context on which it is based were conditioned by time and the discoursive games played by political actors. And discoursive games at time (t) are a function of circumstances, perceptions, information and prevailing political interests. It is thus the constellation of time, space and discourse within which nodes of power operate that determine both European identity and national identity 'talks'. One could easily envisage a different constellation of time, space and discourse in which the same relation (European and national identities) could be depicted quite differently or could even be seen to be of no relevance at all. Hierarchies of power or forces of antipower may or may not have an interest to make 'identity' a central issue or to combine identities in so many different ways that enhance the pluralisation of individuals' energies and their channelling into processes of democratic transformation.

Step 4: Instability in the Eurozone

We have seen that the dualism between a European identity (A) and national identities (B) was not essentially an issue of the relation between A and B, since A and B as well as their relation (AB) were projections of context C which infused them with particular meanings designed to justify political claims and/or to motivate or demotivate political action. This process has been time bound; it is the political context in time t that gives A, B as well as AB their specific meanings and fixes their relation. For it is plausible that in time t+1, the same relation which was depicted as antithetical (AvB) could be perceived to be symbiotic (AB) or could even be degraded to an unproblematic or irrelevant relation (-AB). By choosing the Eurozone crisis as the crucial t+1 moment, I wish to reveal the contingency, artificiality and inherent limitations of claims concerning identity and thus the unavoidable plasticity[36] characterising all political contexts and discoursive configurations.[37]

Interestingly, one would have expected a proliferation of identity claims in a period such as this which requires sacrifices on the part of some members for the interest of the whole; after all, identifications with a polity are meant to elicit popular support in times of crises. In this absence of sustained attention to European identity and its relation to national identities since 2009, I discern not only the artificiality of the debate on national v European identities, but also the possibility of less ideological politics sustained by the realisation that what was taken for granted in the past was the by-

[36] R. M. Unger, *Plasticity into Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[37] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have sketched the emergence of the identity focus in the academic literature in the early 1950 and its proliferation in the 1970s and 1980s following the turbulence of the 1960s and the weakness of class politics in the US; see their article entitled 'Beyond Identity', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 29 (2000), pp. 1-47. See also John D. Ely, 'Community and the Politics of Identity: Toward the Genealogy of a Nation-State Concept', *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review*, Volume 5(2) (1997). Gleason has noted that the 1930s Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan: 1930-1935) did not have an entry on identity, but the 1968 International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan) did have one on 'identity, psychosocial' written by E. Erikson; Philip Gleason, 'Identifying Identity: A Semantic History', *Journal of American History*, 69/4 (March 1983), 910-931.

product of historically situated political choices and a circumstantialist environment that was receptive to such choices.[38]

It is noteworthy that when the extent of Greece's debt exposure was revealed and austerity measures were contemplated, the population did not feel the pull of national identity in order to rally behind the government. Instead, discord, narrow party political interests, opportunistic agendas by party leaders and strategies of blame attributing and blame shifting predominated. Indeed, events not only in Greece, but also in Spain, Portugal and Italy during the last two years have shown that the presence of an allegedly strong sense of collective identity does by no means make people less critical of the status quo and more willing to support it in times of crisis. National identities have little to offer to concrete and acute economic problems and although populist forces may seek to exploit the former in order to mobilise the peoples against the EU, peoples realise that the sovereign debt problem is 'home-created' and that their governments would have to place their economic houses in order within or even outside the Eurozone.

Similarly, high levels of 'Europeanness' in specific countries provide little guidance in terms of predicting whether a particular country will welcome a fiscal Union or be prepared to grant bail out packages to its debt ridden European neighbours. This is not only because peoples' subjective identifications fluctuate so unpredictably, that being a winner or a looser in time t provides almost no guarantee that one will display a positive or negative attitude towards European integration, respectively, in time t+1.[39] It is also due to the fact that valuations change, identifications evolve and even fade away, too, owing to a range of endogenous as well as exogenous factors. This is, perhaps, one of the important lessons we have learnt from the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone area. Despite being winners, German citizens did not welcome further bail out packages in the Eurozone or the French proposals about a closer economic union, with a centralised authority coordinating taxation

[38] My argument here differs from path-dependent theories which see present outcomes and developmental paths as the product of past choices and decisions taken at critical junctures that shape the contours of future developments; See Kathleen Thelen, 'Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2 (1999) 369-404; Paul Pierson, 'The Limits of Design: Explaining Institutional Origins and Change', *Governance*, 13 (2000), 474.

[39] D Kostakopoulou, 'On European Identity', in R. Bellamy et al. (eds.), *EU Citizenship and the Market* (London: UCL, 2011).

and expenditure, even though they are aware of the severe economic as well as political costs associated with either the collapse of the Euro or the fragmentation of the Eurozone.[40]

Similarly, the EU has finally embarked upon a closer economic and fiscal union because this is seen to be the only credible option to solve in an effective way the economic crisis and avert a Euro collapse which would endanger the whole European integration. In a speech delivered on the 28th of November 2011, the Polish Foreign Minister, Mr Radoslaw Sikorski, reminded Germany that its has been the biggest beneficiary of the single currency and thus had a responsibility to display leadership in resolving the crisis.[41] Accordingly, not only does the sovereign debt crisis make notions of national or European identity less relevant, but also shows that 'Europeanness' indexes of Europe's populations may have very little to offer in particular settings which require concrete measures, imaginative solutions and credible policy ideas in order to meet crises effectively. In such circumstances, peoples' loyalty cannot be assumed; it has to be earned by political leaders. And trust in politicians, institutions, systems, be they political or economic, is not an objective quality brought about as a result of the tag of nationality we all carry, but it has to be cultivated, nurtured and sustained through the adoption of the right policies, credible attempts to root out systemic problems, corruption and irresponsible spending and the avoidance of inefficient policy-making decisions. As the details of the new European fiscal contract are being negotiated, 'Europe' has finally come once again to the 'rescue' of the state,[42] that is, of its solvent and financially undisciplined members. Seen from this perspective, further and closer European integration does not appear to be consonant with winning 'game, set, and match' for either national identities or a European identity, but with the very preservation of a political experiment that enables such identifications to be invoked and reconstructed, to circulate, flow and interact.

The present economic crisis thus exposes the fallacy of a normative commitment to identity as an end goal that holds statal polities together or the glue that will unite the European Union. It also

[40] See Sam Fleming's article entitled 'The devastating price of pulling out of the Euro', The Times 7 September 2011, p. 39.
[41] Cited in Camilla Cavendish's article entitled 'We're crippled by a risk we can't even quantify', The Times, 1 December 2011, p.35.
[42] A. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 1992).

demonstrates the optionalist or circumstantialist character of invocations of identity, be it national or European. For instance, Mr Cameron's decision to shield the city of London from the unwanted European financial transaction tax can hardly be amenable to claims about a shared national identity given popular discontent about the banking elite that is held responsible for the 2008 economic crisis and Britain's public sector debt. At the same time, a European identity cannot be mobilised at a time when Europe has been so deeply divided about identifying comprehensive solutions to the economic crisis, be they permanent rescue funds and the issuing of joint Eurobonds or measures to regain market confidence, as well as the institutional pathways of implementing them. At the present conjuncture, therefore, national identities cannot be mobilised to construct subjects and/or electors for states. Nor can European identity be utilised in order to prop up the Euro. Political elites can derive neither arguments nor answers from them that suit them. They know this as well as that European publics are in an anti-'politics as usual' mood.

Step 5: What is left of European Identity? Mapping Possibilities

Identities, be they personal or collective, are stories, that is, narrative constructions which not only enable us to make sense of our being into, and entanglement with, particular social worlds but also to take part in them as political actors as well as subjects. They are thus necessarily situated in time; they belong to time and are subject to the waves of change. Constructivist perspectives have convincingly demonstrated that, contrary to primordialist and ethnocultural accounts of nationalism, national identities are not expressions of timeless essences.[43] Being historically conditioned, but also constructed, narrated and reinterpreted in a myriad ways, identities are infinitely plural and complex. The same realisation should accompany the examination of their relations (- which often take the form of oppositions) to other identities, be they subnational or European. This relation, too, is the product of political imagination and history and is thus subject to several articulations and differing

[43] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

interpretations. In this respect, it is important to refrain from bracketing identity issues from the historically specific political context and ideological tableau within which political actors invoking them act. Seeking to find ontological realities would not be a wise pursuit. The same applies with respect to European identity and the discussion above charted its emergence and evolution during almost three decades (1970-1995) as well as its fading in the era of sovereign debt crisis. Since national and European identity constructions have an almost fractal quality and are made salient or less relevant depending on the political context and claims about clashing identity dualisms are more often than not fictions, games of simplification and in simplification, camouflaging political claims and assumptions, the question that needs to be addressed at this point is: what is left of European identity? Should we abandon it as a concept and category of analysis? Or could it be utilised in progressive ways to foster or accentuate political developments in the European Union that enhance human welfare?

Evidently, the above question refers to European identity as a collective narrative. For individuals in the EU remain free to use it as subjective identification which could be made to fit so many rich, complex and diverse personal experiences. It is thus bound to remain a floating resource entering individuals' lives intentionally or unexpectedly, being subject to cultural or political articulations and rearticulations, being invoked and then set aside as individuals shift in and out of environments in time specific contexts. In this evolving narrative cycle of self-identification, a European identity can still have an important role to play. But recognising our freedom to 'draw', 'construct', 'represent' and 'imagine' the world we call 'our own', to choose to remember, champion, forget or make irrelevant our connections with the European space does not give us the licence to worship essentialist constructions of European identity and false dualisms. Subjectivised narratives must be ethical. Individuals have an ethical duty to refrain from severing the European space from the world and the values of humanism by closing off connections, cultivating resentment and hatred towards the other and erecting arbitrary boundaries among different nationalities, religions, races and ethnic origins. More importantly, we need to show our distaste and objections to racialist, exclusivist and homophobic notions of European identity which clearly forget that 'creating an ever closer Union

among the peoples of Europe' has been a project in healing humanity from the evils of cruelty, war and inhumanity, imagining a better world and making it possible since the very beginning.

But what could it be said about European identity as a collective story? Could it be used as the basis of social and political action? Could it nurture progressive collective self-understandings? Or should it be made an appendix? I would argue that an acknowledgement of political uses of European identity does not necessarily make European identity obsolete. It may well provide an argument for less identity-centred politics, but still leaves enough room for identity narratives in politics. In my earlier work I have defended a constructivist option of European identity nourished by an inclusive European Union citizenship and an open and principled European migration and asylum policy. Such a mode of European identity does not rely on hegemonic 'identifiers', that is, political units categorising, distinguishing and positioning 'ins' and 'outs', but emerges as a result of the institutional openings it creates and the empowering trajectories for co-creating social life it gives rise to. By resisting fixed and essentialist readings, European identity becomes the pure locus of the possible; that is, of writing a different future, opening up opportunities for institutional arrangements that enhance freedom and equality, creating opportunities for new and more enriched life experiences and encouraging multifarious connections among peoples and collectivities. European identity could thus be seen as the space of political potentiality. A space that is sustained by subversive memory, hope and a willingness to find solutions to common problems that exist, and emerge unpredictably from, within as well as from a rapidly changing and volatile external environment. Unlike national narratives which can only make national identities credible, unified and homogenous by bracketing the violence associated with the historical matrix that shaped the formation of the nation-state and socialising citizens into similar acts of forgetting, European identity relies on memories and the remembrance of the human suffering that has accompanied its past. In this sense, a collective European identity can only be an actionist and subversive identity.

By the latter, I mean an identity that utilises the memories of the past in order to push a vision for humanity forward and gives freedom to believe that another world is possible. And by constantly reminding us that polities can be built by design and dissimilitude with state formations, that political

realities are changed, changing and changeable and that it is possible to transgress the boundaries that have made and make national identities not only visible but also singular and exclusive, it opens up possibilities for modifications in institutions, policies and cultures and for alternatives. On this account, European identity can only be experimental, transformative, enigmatic, diffuse, fluid, transitional and ambivalent. Should this fill us with trepidation? I do not believe so. As Berger, Berger and Kellner observed in 1974 with respect to a different context, 'stable identities (and this also means identities that will be subjectively plausible) can only emerge in reciprocity with stable contexts (and this means contexts that are structured by stable institutions)'.[44] But, as we all know, stability is simply an illusion.

[44]P. L. Berger, B. Berger and H. Kellner, *The Homeless Mind* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1974).