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1

What is Identity?

Along the past fifty years, a new, unique, political project – European unification – has emerged to unite peoples and nations, which had historically appeared to embody the archetypal symbols of war and enmity. How citizens have been led to accept peace and co-operation with their traditional enemies is a question, which has struck many observers as being extremely challenging and paradoxical. Have European citizens accepted European unification only because they have accepted the idea that it was favourable to their economic development and without developing a new political identity or, because they have progressively acquired such a new European identity? Surely, if European citizens have gone on not identifying politically with the European integration and equated the European project with a pure economic concept, there must be an overwhelming majority of citizens opposed to any further unification. Indeed, now, unification is predominantly political, and opens itself to poorer countries at a cost for the wealthier ones. Moreover, many of the specific policies of the European Union have been depicted in highly negative terms by the mass media and large numbers of politicians. However, at the same time, support for European integration has not decreased dramatically, and the political and social aspects of integration generally find greater support than the economic ones.

What is it all about? (And why does it matter? ...)

A citizen's political identity can be defined as his sense of belonging to politically relevant human groups and political structures. It has long been understood by political theorists that the emergence of a corresponding political identity can be considered as the primary source of legitimisation of a political community. In *Du Contrat Social*, Rousseau

(1762) explains that citizens choose to give their political community its legitimacy, and its right to determine what is the 'general will' through a social contract. After the original 'explicit' contract, however, the social contract that links citizens to their State is maintained implicitly legitimate because citizens choose to *identify* themselves to their community. Without identity, it seems that there can be no true, durable, legitimacy attached to a political entity, no conscious acceptance of the power of the State and of its monopolistic right to use legitimate coercion (Weber, 1946). Every time a new political community has been created, therefore, the legitimacy of the contract that links it to its citizens and gives it its fundamental institutional acceptability requires the creation of a new political identity.

This book is concerned with the formation and development of new political identities in general and of a European identity in particular. Its whole purpose is to evaluate whether such a thing as a mass European identity has emerged since the launching of the European project and, if so, how, and thanks to what actors, this has happened. It looks at the state of citizens' identity in the 15 pre-2004 member-States of the European Union after decades of unification, institutional change, and slow socialisation, and sketches what may happen in the countries that have – and will – join the European Union since the unification of Europe. It will evaluate how people identify with their new European political community, what influences their sense of identification, and how this new identity has affected other components (e.g., national, regional, and local) of their identity structure. In other words, this book shows whether – and which – European citizens have started to identify with the new construct of a political Europe, and, also, whether political actions, messages, and symbolic initiatives may have stimulated or impeded such a political identification process with the new Europe.

The question is everything but trivial. Since the eighteenth century, the very legitimacy of modern liberal democratic states has relied on a combination of guaranteed democratic processes and underlying political identity. Indeed, while democratic suffrage and constitutions have been one of the main determinants of politically acceptable states since the late eighteenth century, the Wilson doctrine of 1919 has transformed into a principle of international right that State borders should be defined according to mass identity realities and that populations should ultimately have the right to choose the political communities they want to belong to. Little by little, throughout the past half-century, a clear evolution of the European project has taken place. The European Union has quite explicitly transformed from a primarily economic

agreement to a deeply and quintessentially political construction. This new face of Europe makes it absolutely necessary to evaluate whether this move is only and purely the product of a unilateral, undemocratic, choice of the European political elite or whether it also corresponds to a new European 'social contract', and a real change in the political identities of European citizens. Therefore, if a predominantly political Europe suffers from the type of democratic deficit many commentators suspect it does, it is of utmost importance to know whether it can, at least, claim to rely on a progressive underlying mass identity as this would be, indeed, the main foundation of its very legitimacy.

Studying European identity: a challenge for political science

Traditionally, empirical political scientists have been more interested in the degree to which European citizens support European integration than in the extent to which they identify with the new political entity created (e.g., Inglehart, 1997, Gabel, 1994). Sometimes, scholars have even had to assume, for theoretical or practical purposes, that the latter is simply another expression of the former (Inglehart, 1997). By focusing *only* on the relative support of citizens for European integration, political scientists would run the risk of missing a fundamental and predominant link in their models of such a support. Models would end up explaining support for European integration without understanding the full depth and 'philosophical' significance such a support probably involves at this stage of the integration process. As a discipline, focusing on support without studying identity would mean that we would break a golden hierarchical assumption of the study of political behaviour: the idea that for every individual, his beliefs influence his attitudes, which, in turn, influence his actual behaviour (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987, Feldman, 1988). Moreover, from a methodological perspective, ignoring the role of identity in models where support for European integration is endogenous might result in statistical bias when European identity, as an omitted variable, would also be endogenous. This is particularly bound to be the case when predictors of both variables are included and if there is – as there most obviously is – a causal link between European identity and support for integration. Therefore, within the framework of methodological individualism in the study of political behaviour, one must acknowledge that behaviour is never self-standing and that political identities in particular, as the most fundamental self-characterisation of individuals, will influence citizens' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

It was often claimed that the consolidation of the creation of an American State was directly caused by the successful and relatively rapid emergence of a mass American identity. From this historical point of view, such a success could be explained by common ideals, common interests, and a set of favourable political circumstances. But can we really study the emergence of a new political identity as a purely aggregate and 'coincidental' phenomenon? In this research, it is hypothesised that the formation of a new identity is a political phenomenon that can be stimulated or impeded by elites and institutions. It is theorised that it can be successful or unsuccessful at both the individual and aggregate levels. It is considered that identity formation is a fundamental battle for political elites, and a question of individual and aggregate responsiveness to political symbols, images, experiences, and the actual achievements and failures of a political entity. It is, in other words, a potential result of intense political communication and persuasion.

This book does not satisfy itself with being purely theoretical or purely empirical. It has two main goals. First, it seeks to provide a renewed conceptual and theoretical framework for the analysis of political identities, that is, what they are, how they may or may not be formed, strengthened or threatened. Second, it provides an empirical analysis of the emergence of such an identity among European citizens first at the individual level, and then over the past 30 years at the aggregate level.

This first chapter is concerned with a discussion of the concept of identity, and how it can be studied. It makes a series of very important conceptual distinctions and assumptions without which no study of the emergence of a European identity itself would be possible. In this discussion, I propose a brief 'reader' of some of the main studies on political and European identities, and use the insights of political scientists, and also philosophers, social psychologists, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and even discourse analysts, all traditionally keener on the study of identities than political scientists, and more concerned with the study of identities 'outside of language' than us.¹ Using their works, I shall first define identities, political identities, and the way they can be studied. I will then propose some theoretical distinctions on components of political identities and a theory of political identities and the way they are connected.

Two conceptions of mass identities: top-down and bottom-up perspectives

A first necessary distinction has to be made between two ways of studying identities. Depending on academic perspectives, theoretical assumptions,

and research questions, two main perspectives for the study of identities in general and a European identity in particular have been used by scholars. The first can be defined as a 'top-down' perspective, and the second as 'bottom-up'. Let us consider the logic of the two perspectives with regards to the study of European identity, that is, in a way, the study of 'who is European'.

The first angle of research – or 'top-down' model – focuses on questions such as who *should* be considered European, what unites Europeans in terms of geography, politics, culture, and where the natural limits of 'Europe' are. Studying European identity from a top-down, 'objective', perspective has meant to try to understand what unifies Europe and Europeans in terms of cultural heritage, values, and the like and how to characterise Europe and a presumed European common heritage. This task has been undertaken by political scientists such as Ester, Halman, and de Moor (1993), who have investigated the degree of convergence of values in the EU countries across a 10-year time period. Similarly, social historians such as Wintle *et al.* (1996) have conducted extensive work on culture and identity in Europe, and particularly enriched the debate on the 'borders' of Europe both historically and contemporaneously. These insights add to the empirical research of Van Deth and Scarbrough (1995), Inglehart (1990, 1997), Dalton (1996), and Duchesne and Frogner (1995). A more theoretical approach to the questions of what is Europe, who are Europeans, what is European citizenship, and what are the grounds of a European identity has also been taken by Howe (1995), Meehan (1993), Guild (1996), and Waever (1995). Finally, the institutional identity of the European Union and its social meaning, in terms of images of identity and community, have been mostly studied by sociologists and anthropologists such as Shore (1993), Shore and Black (1992), and Abeles, Bellier, and McDonald (1993).

In contrast to this approach, the second tradition of social science research to which this book clearly belongs takes a behavioural 'bottom-up' perspective and tries to answer questions such as: who 'feels' European (using an individual level perspective)? Why do some citizens identify with Europe while others do not? What do people 'mean' when they say that they feel European? From the point of view of the political scientist, this question involves serious theoretical, conceptual and empirical problems. Indeed, the basic question addressed here is how to define, conceptually, a European identity? Bruter (2003) has argued that we should differentiate between two aspects of political identities, a 'cultural' one and a 'civic' one. This typology, which is further developed here, has been adopted, since then, by a certain number of researchers on political identities such as Risse (2004) or Meinhof (2003).

Citizenship and identity

While this book focuses on the political (and particularly European) identity of individuals and how institutions and the media can influence it, it is important to remember that some scholars (perhaps somehow idealistically) have occasionally held the belief that an absolute coincidence could ultimately exist between the way citizens relate to their political systems (identity) and the way the political system tries to include its population (i.e., by determining the attributes of their citizenship). In other words, the borders of a single territory could – and should – be matched with a unified state, citizenship, and political identity.

Identity and citizenship are, in a way, the two mirrored components of the relationship between the institutional and human foundations of a political community. In this sense, defining the fundamental basis of political identities implies the formulation of assumptions regarding what constitutes and unites a nation and defines a citizenship. The nation consists of this human component of a political community, while the fundamental basis of citizenship in a corresponding political system shows how the political system will identify those who belong to it, their specific rights, and their particular duties.² Altogether, while the notion of European identity has only received scholarly attention in recent years, the study of a European (Union) citizenship has already made great progress over the past two decades. The body of literatures on citizenship and on identity are as distinct as the concepts they are dedicated to, and it is not the object of this book to rewrite a new theory of EU citizenship, but rather, to understand how EU citizens *feel*. However, because the two approaches paint a symmetric march of a European political system towards its people, and of a European Union people towards its political system, it is important to underline the contribution of the study of the latter in defining the potentials arisen, and difficulties faced, when trying to give a new depth and width to the emerging EU citizenship.

Authors such as Wiener (1998) have gone a long way in trying to understand what constituted the specificity of a EU citizenship as opposed to its national equivalent. Similarly, Mokre, Weiss, Bauböck *et al.* (2003) have looked at the ‘national’ tie of European Union citizenship (as opposed to the possible territorial and direct sense it could have assumed), making it an extension of national citizenships rather than a cross-cutting supra-European one. This could have expected implications on the nature of European identity and its relationship with national identities, to the extent that EU citizenship itself has been largely built as a supplemental citizenship.

The consequences of this supplemental identity may be all the more important since the European Union, even after the 2004 enlargement, does not match the borders of a European culture and civilisation (most of the Balkans, South Eastern, and Eastern Europe are not included alongside Norway, Switzerland, and number of small Western European states from Monaco to Iceland whilst the rest of Western and Central Europes are included).

Moreover, while the most 'traditional' attributes and privileges of citizenship used to include the right to vote, to do one's military service, and to work in the civil service of one's country, in the context of the European Union, the practical benefits of citizenship – beyond the right to vote in European Parliament elections and the right to work (with some functional exceptions) in the civil service of any of the member-States – partly vary according to whether one's country belongs to such entities as the Eurozone or the Schengen area. In this sense, European citizenship and identity might be expected to present themselves in an extreme variety of shades and nuances. At the same time, however, the constructivist aspect of EU citizenship may also have an impact on the predicted strength and sustainability of a EU citizenship based on a legal status rather than an *ex ante* cultural demand.

As this volume intends to study the emergence of a European identity from a bottom-up perspective, normative questions, and objective analyses of whether there is theoretically enough 'ground', in objective terms, for a European common identity to have emerged (a question posed, for example, in more general terms, by Miller, 2000, or Kymlicka, 1995) will not be of interest here, except in some extremely specific and marginal respects.

Indeed, instead, the choice of a bottom-up perspective, which relies on citizens' own perceptions of their individual identities, implies a need to answer further (and no less complicated) questions such as the link between European and other identities. This question, briefly explored empirically by Licata (2000) and Bruter (2003) has raised tremendous debate in the literature and in the 'popular press' alike, with number of commentators still conceiving national and European identities are naturally in tension both in terms of psychological identification and political allegiance. Our interest is almost exclusively focused on what makes people *feel* European, and how the European population has grown to feel European from the origins of the European project to the dawn of the third millennium. The notion of identity having been limited to its subjective perspective for the purpose of this book, let us now consider, some of the debates that have surrounded this extraordinarily

'intimate' concept which relates, in its subjective form, what people are to how they perceive their own self.

Cross-disciplinary perspectives on identity: self, belonging, and out-groups³

Before it became an area of interest for historians, sociologists or political scientists, the notion of 'identity' was extensively studied by philosophers and psychologists. In psychology, the concept of identity is what bridges the gap between the self and the outside world, the idea that while individuals are unique and independent, their perceptions of themselves can only be constructed in relation, sympathy, or opposition to elements of the outside world (Mummendey and Waldzus, 2004). Identity is therefore understood as a network of feelings of belonging to and exclusion from human subgroups: belonging to a gender group, a given age group, a family, religion, race, community, nation, etc. The unique superposition of groups a human being feels attached to constitutes its individual and unique 'identity' together with the definition of what constitutes the out-group (Mummendey and Waldzus, 2004, Wodak, 2004). The definition of an identity in psychological terms is obviously a mixture of real connections or differences and prejudices, the latter being necessary to enrich the world with one's own knowledge and certitudes, whether 'objectively' true or false (Mummendey and Waldzus, 2004).

Because of this presence of clear subjective elements in the definition of one's identity and the out-groups it is defined against, according to psychologists, we can only first understand identities at the individual level and using the traditional framework of methodological individualism. This implies that to understand the development of a mass European identity, one must analyse how the identity structure of individuals varies, how an individual identity is either formed in the stages of early socialisation, or bent later in an individual's life to incorporate further elements of reference. If one fails to take into account that identity is first and foremost an individual characteristic, the array of research questions linked to identity formation becomes much narrower, and their answers less flexible. Studied from a societal perspective, as done by many sociologists such as Bourdieu (1991) and Leca (1992), identities become fixed, rigid, categories that only evolve through generational replacement and environmental evolution. From an individual perspective, however, changes in mass identities present all the ambiguities and complexities of veritable 'realignments' with the

wide variety of theoretical and analytical explanations that can be attached to them.

The concept of identity realignment

In terms of analyses of electoral behaviour, 'realignments' – turning points when the patterns of partisan identification of the electorate sharply transform – have always led to serious theoretical controversies. Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960), Butler and Stokes (1974) and others have tried to survey the various possible theoretical patterns of realignments and face them with real situations, contrasting aggregate-level and individual level-generated changes, conversion, and replacement, and so on. Comparing the emergence of a new mass identity to an 'identity realignment' may sound a bit audacious at first. However, when one considers the questions raised by the study of the emergence of a new political identity – such as a European identity – the realignment approach seems to be relatively logical or relevant.

In *The American Voter*, Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes (1960) define realignments as changes in mass party *identification*. Their very keenness on anchoring the study of voting behaviour in terms of psychological identification – and therefore identity – should encourage us, in turn, to perceive the question of the emergence of a new mass political identity as a matter of true and fundamental realignment. The traditional hierarchy used in political science orders beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. It is clear that while party identification, despite its name, could be predominantly classified as an attitude, focusing on an identity realignment, that is on the evolution of a political belief or even what comes 'before' beliefs, would add a new dimension to the existing studies on realignments. It would help us greatly, as a discipline, to understand better the more general concept of realignment at a deeper and further level than the traditional but rather narrow borders inherited from the very valuable works of Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, Butler and Stokes, and many others.

Personal, social, and political identities

In the sociological and psychological literatures, it has become quite traditional to separate materially two forms of identities. According to Breakwell (2004), it is possible to distinguish between the personal and social identities of an individual. Personal identity is made of a network of references to family belonging, upbringing, personal and cultural

characteristics. Personal identity therefore appears to be a form of identification directly centred on the individual and extending towards the rest of the world. The individual identifies his world 'inductively' from his own self, defining the various yardsticks of his identity. That is to say that personal identity is, in essence, the affective definition of one's 'friends' and 'support' in a world far too wide for an individual. In contrast, social identity is a set of references to pre-existing social groups, feelings of belonging to characteristics that 'make a difference' in the society in which the individual lives. These can include gender, race, social class or category, sexual orientation among other possible social identity features, which have been most often studied by social scientists of all sorts. Social identity, therefore, starts from a group socially expected to matter and that is found to include or match, 'deductively', the individual.

For many sociologists, studying the 'political' identity of individuals is a mere extension of what is known as their 'social identity'. This assumption, often found in the literature implies that political identity should be considered predominantly as a feature of social difference or distinction rather than a deeper cultural sense of belonging to a given community. In short, to make a parallel with one of the most traditional conceptual distinctions used by political scientists, political identity is understood by this body of literature to be a matter of status or citizenship, rather than a deeper personal constitutive identity.

The conceptual perspective taken by this study, however, seeks to invalidate this quite common assumption. It intends to put forward the claim that instead of being a mere sub-category of social identities, political identities are a form of identity in their own right, which can be reduced neither to a social component nor to a personal component of identity but, instead, involves both. The argument underpinning this theory is that far from being a 'pure' question of status – as social identities are, indeed, defined by Bourdieu (1991), political identities involve an affective dimension, like any element of a personal identity. This affective dimension is most evident when people cry when 'their' team wins the football World Cup, 'their' astronauts are the first to land on the moon, or 'their' soldiers die at war. No social identity would be expected to provoke such reactions, while personal circles of identity, such as family, would. For most purposes, and in most cases, the distinction may seem to be meaningless. It will, however, have an impact on the way political identities can be studied. Taking them as a form of status would not be enough because political identities involve a whole 'philosophical' position of individuals towards the imaginary institution of the social contract,

towards democracy, community, society, and relationships between human beings altogether. It is, therefore, impossible to ignore the importance of both social and personal elements in political identities both in absolute terms, and when it will be attempted to measure them.

Defining 'civic' and 'cultural' components of political identities⁴

As shown earlier, the distinction between social and personal identities seems, therefore, fairly pointless when it comes to studying the emergence of a new political identity. In contrast, this book largely relies on a new and fundamental distinction between two hypothesised components of political identities, which I call civic and cultural. This theoretical and empirical distinction largely underlines the two components of identity I mentioned in the introduction: identification with a political group and with a political structure. I now explain the theoretical foundations and implications of the distinction between the civic and cultural components of political identities in general and a European identity in particular.

Conceptually, political identities have been the subject of heavy theoretical and ideological quarrels between political scientists. Three main perspectives have been used since the eighteenth century to characterise the foundations of the legitimacy of political communities.

The first, derived from the French Enlightenment and the 1789 Revolution, links the legitimacy of political communities to the very existence of political institutions that are implicitly accepted by society through a social contract (Rousseau, 1762). Following their lead, Habermas (1992) suggests that institutions altogether have the power to create a citizenship that will be strong enough to generate a feeling of bonding between the members of a community and sufficient allegiance to the political system.

The second, developed by German political thinkers such as Fichte (1845) and Herder (1913), links the legitimacy of political communities to a corresponding 'nation', defined by a common culture (and principally, for Fichte and Herder, a common language). At the same time, several contemporary philosophers also question the likelihood that a common citizenship can be sustainable without unifying 'national' cultural attributes such as a common culture and language (Miller, 2000, Kymlicka, 1995, Taylor, 2004) or, in the context of a multicultural society, without a clear definition of how ethnic cultures will participate in the shared national identity (Parekh *et al.*, 2000).

Finally, the third conception, formalised by Renan in 1870, modernises the original universalistic theory of the French Revolution, and associates the legitimacy of the State institutions to the existence of a 'common desire to live together' of its citizens. At the aggregate level, dealing with the top-down 'reality' of citizenship, Leca (1992) and Deloye (1997) find that citizenship is generally based on a mixture of these ideal-typical perspectives of national rationales. It is also clear, however, that specific countries have emphasised, to different extents, the various aspects of national definitions and their consequences. The French revolutionary perspective led to a clear universalism of the Revolution, intended, in the early 1790s, to extend to the rest of Europe and led to the development of theories of a cross-national interest of the 'citizens of Revolutionary Europe' (Bernstein and Milza, 1994). At the same time, the German culturalist conception led Fichte to propose maps of the German nation that 'democratically' included almost half of Europe, from Austria to Belgium, from Sweden to Ukraine, and from Poland to Switzerland through Hungary, Alsace, and the Italian Veneto! (Fichte, 1845). Needless to say that many of the so-defined 'Germans' concerned did not share the German identity claimed by Fichte for them.

From these three theories, I derive two interpretations of the notion of identity of individual citizens to existing political communities. The first, a '*cultural*' perspective, would analyse political identities as the sense of belonging an individual citizen feels towards a particular political group. This group can be perceived by him to be defined by a certain culture, social similarities, values, religion, ethics or even ethnicity. The second, a '*civic*' perspective, would see political identities as the identification of citizens with a political structure, such as a State, which can be defined as the set of institutions, rights, and rules that preside over the political life of a community. To some extent, in order to relate – in an over-simplified way – this conceptual discussion with two of the main notions used in political science, the first, cultural, perspective links political identities to the idea of a 'nation', and the second, civic one, to the idea of a 'State'.

Rather than assuming that political identities are one or the other, the contention made here is that the two components of political identities exist in parallel in citizens' minds and should simply be differentiated conceptually and empirically whenever possible. A given citizen may have a stronger civic or cultural European identity, and differences may well be systematic across individuals, countries, or time periods.

Of course, the 'cultural' and 'civic' components of most political identities are almost impossible (and would not necessarily appear to many

as very useful) to distinguish because in many cases, the dominant 'State' and 'Nation' of reference are super-imposed. Even in cases of countries where regionalist and separatist tendencies are strong (see the studies of Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, or Seiler, 1998 on that question), differentiating between cultural and civic identities might only be possible for peripheral, minoritarian groups. For example, in Britain, many Scots would think of themselves as having a dual Scottish/British identity. For most Englishmen, however, Englishness and Britishness will be considered as implicitly or explicitly similar. Europe, however, presents a completely different pattern. Indeed, while conceiving Europe as a cultural identity presumably implies a reference to Europe as a continent or civilisation that stretches from the Atlantic to the Ural, conceiving Europe as a 'civic' identity would imply a reference to the European Union, which covers well under half of it. In these particular circumstances, the political entity referred to in the hypothesis of a European civic identity does not match the cultural entity as yet. This makes tests for the differences between the two types of identities and their relative strengths – even for the 'centre' – much easier to perform than in any other existing case, and more interesting when it comes to the study of the political significance of further enlargements of the European Union on local as well as Western European public opinions.

Identity and identification

Another major theoretical debate in the literature on identity formation that we need to consider is the distinction between the 'recognition' of a pre-existing identity and the active 'identification' of an individual with a new identity group (Laclau *et al.*, 1994). This debate refers to a major conceptual opposition of the causal sequence of identity formation and, also, on the need for objective markers of identity, that is of the relation between the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches distinguished earlier. Believers in the 'identity recognition' theory assume the pre-existing relevance of a multitude of patterns of 'actual' identity of individuals with human sub-groups. Individuals are perceived to be truly – although latently – defined by such characteristics as their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, country, or town, which influence their status, beliefs, and attitudes (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987, Feldman, 1988). The maturation of their individual identity leads them to 'recognise' or 'acknowledge' the relevance of these characteristics of their identity and its impact on who they are and how they think and live.

On the contrary, theories of identification suggest that all patterns of 'actual' identity that could be used to describe an individual are indeed irrelevant as long as this individual does not think of them as parts of his own, constructed, identity. Identities refer largely, as explained by Anderson (1991) to 'imagined communities'. Here again, the difference between the two theories could be caricaturally characterised by the distinction between two approaches that define identity as the relevance of real world elements for an individual, and the relevance of individuals for elements (groups) of the real world respectively. The theoretical impact of the debate is far from negligible. Indeed, it modifies the focus of the dependent variable of interest and the way analytical puzzles can and should be formulated by political science research. For defenders of the 'identity recognition' approach, the main dependent variable of interest is generally not the individual identity perceptions of human beings but the 'true' category of identification. Indeed, in the theoretical framework that is then conceived, the acknowledgement of various aspects of identity depends largely on the nature of the true category itself, its visibility, its social acceptability, social relevance, and more generally the macro-level social images attached to a given human category. Identities must then be studied primarily at the aggregate level, and primarily through the true category they are attached to rather than as self-standing subjective feelings of belonging. Individual differences of identification become mostly interesting through the different images of the true category they translate, the reasons of the recognition or non-recognition of the identity by various individuals, and the gap between the true category and the various subjective images it generates (Wodak, 2004).

Thinking of identity as an identification process, however, implies the necessity to consider identity formation as a purely mental phenomenon largely independent from any true category of actual shared characteristics it might relate to. The 'truth' about identification categories becomes absolutely irrelevant since only the unique individual subjective images a human being attaches to a group matter. In fact, there is no unique category of reference for all identifiers to, say, Europe, but as many perceptions of the category of reference as there are individual identifiers. When identity formation is conceived in terms of identification, it becomes a matter of structural image formation (Castoriadis, 1975), that is, the projection of the self on an imaginary category and not, as in the previous case, the attachment of the self to a true pre-existing ad hoc category. In other words, while the first theory implies the internalisation by the respondent of objective categories, the

second one implies the opportunistic extrapolation of individual characteristics of the subject.

Here again, the conceptual perspective of the book must be made very clear. The idea that there is a 'true' shared European heritage, based on the diffusion of the Greek, Roman, and Judeo-Christian traditions seems to make some sense, but it is of no interest to us here. As explained earlier, a large amount of historical and sociological literature has been dedicated to what Europe is in 'real' terms, and I do not intend to build on that by any means. While the very concept of cultural identity implies that an individual perceives the group to have a certain shared heritage, and while it would be most interesting to know whether Europeans perceive this shared heritage to rely mostly on common values, ethnicity, religion, democratic principles, and others or why different individuals interpret this common baggage differently, it is, simply, not a task for this book except very marginally in the chapter dedicated to the analysis of focus group discussions of what Europe is perceived to 'mean' for citizens.

Multiple identities and theories of identity connections

Studying the emergence of a new identity implies very fundamental questions on the possible evolution of an identity. Many authors have considered identities to be totally fixed and the sheer result of early socialisation. Nevertheless, considering that an adult individual may, over time, feel more or less European hypothesises the possibility of identity evolution, and, indirectly, of multiple identities as the emergence of a new identity in an individual is unlikely to condemn the other, pre-existing components of his identity. If a citizen may identify, at the same time, with several communities, will there necessarily be a hierarchy between these different identities? Can this hierarchy change? How can it be modelled? Risse (2004) tries to answer this question with the 'Russian doll' and 'marble cake models'.

Up to the nineteenth century, most political thinkers believed that individuals could only have some allegiance to one given State (e.g., Petöfi, 1871). If one believes in this theory, then we should consider different identities as opposed in principle and therefore incompatible in so far as they are 'positive' identities. In the case of European identity, this is the idea defended by sociologists like Japperson who therefore consider European identity as an elite phenomenon, and, for all practical purposes, an 'anti-identity' that really measures cosmopolitanism.

To some extent this is also the implicit definition that seems to be used by Inglehart (e.g., 1990) in all his works on that question.

Later on, however, the introduction of new State organisations such as federalism, confederalism and decentralisation, reinforced not only the idea that several hierarchical levels of government were compatible, but also that they were possible in a democratic context where multiple allegiances would therefore be required of citizens. In the context of European integration, this even led to the formulation of the ideal of subsidiarity, that is, a system where each decision, depending on its nature and whose life it will influence, is taken at the lowest possible level of government.

The subsidiarity principle has an equivalent in terms of theory of identities. It is the theory that claims that several identities can coexist, but that they are additive and based on territorial proximity. In other words, the coexistence of identities can be summarised as a form of concentric model as shown in Figure 1.1. A citizen will 'naturally' feel closer to people from his own city than to people who are from the same region but another city, closer to people from the same region than to people from another region but the same country, closer to people from

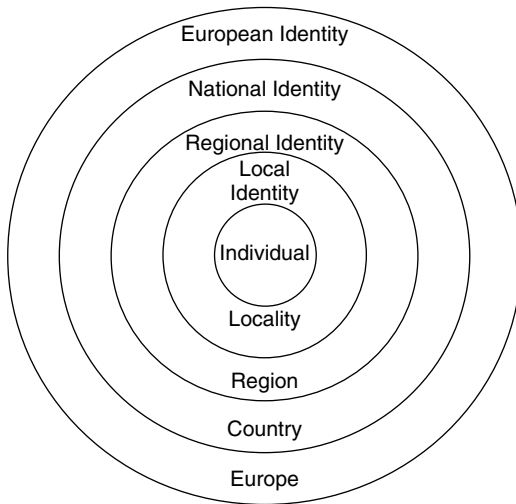


Figure 1.1 A concentric theory of political identities

Notes: The level of identity with a community is the inverse of the distance between the individual and the corresponding circle. Because communities are included in one another, identity feelings are therefore additive. That is, identity level with country = identity level with Europe + supplementary identity.

the same country than to Europeans from another country, etc. The relative strengths of each additional level of proximity (region in addition to nation, town in addition to region, etc.) are then graphically represented by the relative width of each additional circle (Figure 1.2). However, the absolute size of each new circle is also of interest since we can consider that some citizens might be, by personality, strong identifiers, with large circles at all levels while others might be weak identifiers with all circles being small and meaningless. The emergence of a new

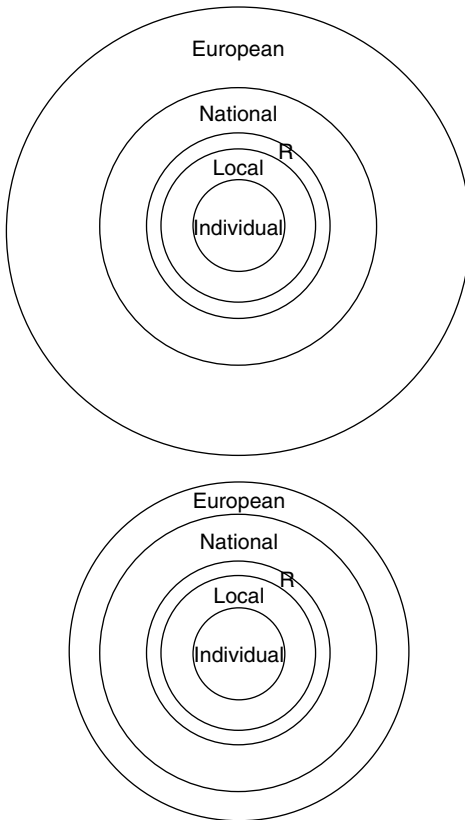


Figure 1.2 Relative strength of territorial identity circles: the example of strong and weak European identities

Notes: The two diagrams represent the territorial identity patterns of two imaginary individuals. All circles are equal, except the two 'European identity' circles. This circle is much wider for the first individual, meaning a much 'looser' identity. The circle is much narrower for the second respondent, which means that his European identity is much stronger.

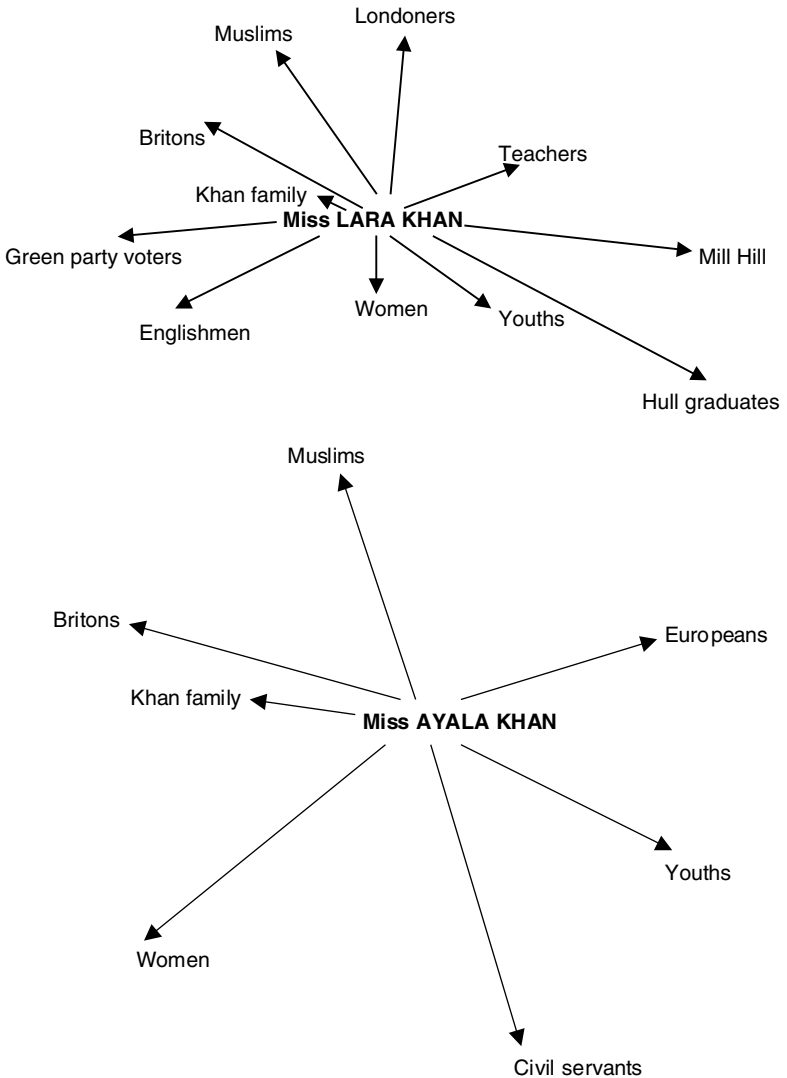


Figure 1.3 Measuring identity in relative proximity models: the identity maps of the (imaginary) sisters Lara and Ayala Khan

Notes: The cases are, obviously, totally imaginary. All the identity links that are perceived as relevant by the subject are represented. The closer the group to the individual, the stronger the identity link. The 'maps' vary in terms of numbers, global strength, and hierarchy of the identity links.

European identity will have been symbolised by the addition of a new exterior circle without necessarily modifying in any way the other existing circles. On the contrary, the other circles might not have stayed the same, with any change having been dependent or independent from the emergence and possible progress of a new European circle.

To reintegrate this model in the more global 'map' of all political and non-political identities, that is, in a model where all identities are not territorially organised, we can represent the complex identity map of an individual as a star-shaped network of identity feelings still centred on the individual. This model is shown in Figure 1.3. Here, the relative strength of an identity feeling is inversely measured by the distance between the individual and the community of interest. The 'closer' a dot to the centre of the map, the stronger the identity. Additivity has to be abandoned in this more global map because of the impossibility of comparing or adding up some utterly different identity links, such as familial and political. Here again, however, we may suspect maps to be different in their shapes from each other. This will not only be because of the relative position of each identification group and their number, but also because some individuals might be strong identifiers in need of a lot of close-by yardsticks while others might be weak identifiers.

Many political scientists rely implicitly on models of identity opposition when studying European identity. The design of the first few questions on identity in Eurobarometer, for example, as designed by Inglehart, asked respondents whether they felt mostly (their nationality, for example British) *or* European. It does not seem particularly logical to us to *assume* any theory about the relationship between different political identities. The model of identity complementarity that I have just proposed and intend to use as the basis of my theory leaves room for any form of internal organisation and relation between identities. The questions derived from this theory of identities will allow us to show – instead of to assume – whether national and European identities, for example, are opposed or, on the contrary, positively correlated, or, even more simply, totally uncorrelated. The questions built on the assumption that identities are opposed do not leave room for any such test.

Summary of the conceptual framework of the study

The concept of identity and the difference between bottom-up and top-down approaches are, as seen, at the centre of some significant scientific controversies in the social sciences. In this context, this book chooses a clear and specific conceptual framework: to focus on individual identity

feelings and the way they react to institutional and elite messages. Unlike most studies of identities, this research is based on the perspective of methodological individualism. It takes a behavioural, 'bottom-up' perspective and is not interested either in normative conclusions or in the study of objective commonalities between Europeans, or in the study of 'what is Europe' from an absolute philosophical or historical perspective. It is not another study of European citizenship either, but rather a study of how citizens perceive themselves politically in a context where institutions and the elites have clearly tried for the past few decades to tell them how they should perceive themselves. I defined the identity of an individual as the perception of him/herself in relation to the outside world and to the different relevant groups (s)he identifies in it. I showed that elements of identity could be ranked in three categories: personal (or affective) identities, social identities (or elements of status) and political identities, which do not fit in any of the two other categories and have both some affective and status-related components. I defined two possible components of political identities based on the existing literature on the relevance of States and nations. The first is a 'civic' component, and the second a 'cultural' component. These two dimensions complement the self-attributed and spontaneous 'general' identity of citizens. I posed that the emergence of both components is necessary to the legitimacy of a new institutional construction like the European Union, within a context of multiple identities that allows for the opposition, independence, or even positive correlation between various identities.

Plan of the book

This book is concerned with the emergence of a mass European identity and what has influenced it. It is also interested in its evolution at the individual and aggregate levels. It is structured in two main parts.

In this first part, I am interested in the theoretical model that is to be tested in Part II of this book. In this chapter, I have considered the concept of identity and defined the analytical framework of the study. The chapter reviewed the existing literature and theoretical debates surrounding the notions of identity and political identity, and proposed a new paradigm based on two – civic and cultural components – of a European identity, and within a context of compatible and mutually enriching multiple identities. Chapter 2 specifies the theoretical model that is tested throughout this book and the methods that are used to test it. It focuses on the mechanisms that may enable institutions such as

political institutions and the mass media to influence citizens' identities. Chapter 3 complements this theoretical argument by examining four 'lessons from the past'. It proposes a comparative analytic narrative of identity formation in four countries: the United Kingdom, the United States, Austria, and Israel. Last Chapter of Part I, Chapter 4 examines the nature of the attempts made by institutions to foster a new European identity, by providing European citizens with a series of clearly identifiable symbols aimed at anchoring the very notion of Europeanness. In the second part of the book, I empirically test the model developed in part I at the individual and aggregate levels. I start by providing some empirical insight on the strength and nature of the European identity of individuals in three member-States of the European Union, based on the results of the survey conducted for the purpose of the project on which the book is based (Chapter 5). I then look at the impact of good and bad news on Europe and symbols of the European Union on individuals' levels of European identity (Chapter 6). The rest of the study proceeds to analyse how and to what extent a mass European identity has emerged at the aggregate level in the European Union between 1970 and 2000 (Chapter 7). Finally, I propose to analyse some qualitative evidence on what Europe and European identity mean to citizens, and how they perceive symbols of the Union and the way they are informed about Europe (Chapter 8). Chapter 9 provides a general discussion of the findings and conclusion for the book.

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