The Europeanisation of Everyday Life:
Cross-Border Practices and Transnational Identifications
Among EU and Third-Country Citizens

Transnational Practices and European Identity:
From Theoretical to Policy Issues

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EUCROSS Working Paper # 3

April 2012

Executive Summary

This brief paper locates the EUCROSS project within the field of studies on European identity, sharpens its theoretical underpinnings and outlines policy scenarios in line with its general hypotheses.

In the broad literature on European identity, a basic distinction between speculative research on civilisational identities and empirical social science research on collective identifications must be drawn. Focusing on the latter, to which the EUCROSS project belongs, it is argued that there are two distinct logics underlying existing inquiries. These are grounded in models of collective identity formation that stress either *cultural messages inscribed in discursive processes* or *practices situated in socio-spatial relations*. They are called respectively, the 'culturalist' and the 'structuralist' models of identification. The first one considers identity as a direct outcome of the exposure to content-specific messages; the second, as an emerging property of socio-spatial interactions that are content-free of identity references.

The EUCROSS project adopts and advances the second and less developed research tradition which studies the effects of transnational practices on European identification. This paper discusses the potential of this approach from a policy-oriented perspective. In this last respect, it is held that the culturalist model encourages the development of narratives 'selling' the Union to its citizens, while the structuralist model suggests a content-neutral emphasis on the facilitation of cross-border practices.

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Mapping the field: European identity and European identification research

From Novalis to our days, many humanists and philosophers (but also some sociologists and linguists) have fathomed the cultural *Leitmotive* of Europe – that is, the quintessential themes of Europeanness (e.g., among many others, Morin 1987; Brague 1992; Delanty 1995; Lűtzeler 1997; Mikkeli 1998; Eder 2009). Often walking on the thin line between description and prescription, such intellectual efforts tend to adopt a historical focus and a 'top-down' perspective (Bruter 2005, 4-5). They assume that there are cultural bricks of 'Europe' shaping its identity over time and across space. In brief, this research tradition investigates *civilisational* identities.

A different take comes from empirical social science, which concentrates on contemporary societies and prefers a 'bottom-up' approach to *collective* identities. This is the literature the current project belongs to. In this research stream, the interest for European identities boils down to two paramount questions:

a) *What is Europe in Europeans' minds?*
b) *What makes some people feel more European than others?*

Answers to the first question are usually given by delving into European *identity frames* (also outlined as 'contents', 'meanings', 'perceptions' or 'positioning'). Methodologically, these studies adhere to post-positivist epistemologies and interpretative constructivist approaches and thus use in-depth interviewing, focus groups or other non-standardized research methods. Findings are usually nuanced by national and even local contexts, often showing cognitive inconsistencies and gaps, especially among less educated citizens. For a large share of the public, 'Europe' and/or 'the European Union' tend to be associated with fuzzy features and have limited identity salience (e.g., see the essays in Duchesne 2010; Gaxie et al. 2011).

The other research strand is in fact concerned with European *identification* – that is, individuals' self-categorisation as 'European'. Mostly, it relies on mass survey indicators that ask population samples to situate themselves in terms of collective belonging, adopting methodological individualism as the underlying epistemological framework. Eurobarometer, the European Values Study and the European Social Survey are the benchmark data sources. Over time, the distinctive effects of age, education and nationality emerge as recurrent findings – the likelihood of calling oneself 'European' being higher among the young, the more educated and the citizens of Central-Southern European countries (e.g., see the essays in Fuchs and Klingemann 2011; also www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu).

In the EUCROSS project, the first question – i.e., about European identity frames – shall be dealt with by the EUMEAN in-depth interviews survey in 2013. Initially, in fact, the project addresses the second question – i.e., measuring levels of European identification – through an original survey

(the EUCROSS survey) that will expand the range of available predictors of identification. In particular, we will introduce a 'social practices' perspective and control for the impact of transnational behaviours on European identification. The theoretical foundations and possible policy implications of our approach are succinctly described in this paper.

Discourses or practices? The determinants of European identification

When seeking to open the black-box of European identification and highlight what its social and cultural antecedents are, the bulk of scholars fall back – more or less explicitly – on the political socialisation paradigm (e.g., see Dawson and Prewitt 1969). This claims that identifications are deep-seated attitudes acquired through emotional attachments – prevailingly, even though not exclusively, during childhood and adolescence. Identities are cultural phenomena generated, reproduced and transmitted by culture itself. Such a line of explanation surmises that symbols, mostly targeted through discourse, mould collective identities. In other words, this theoretical standpoint assumes that *logos* shapes identities. And even if the socialisation framework is not so frequently mentioned (for exceptions, see Checkel 2005; Risse 2010), its core assumption is part and parcel of most empirical research on European identity formation. This can be called 'the culturalist model of collective identification'.

In the EUCROSS project, in fact, we test what we call a 'structuralist model of collective identification'. Briefly, building upon experimental group psychology, as well as on some of Georg Simmel's and Karl Marx's theoretical fragments on collective consciousness (see Recchi 2012), we contend that associative relations (*demos*) and shared spaces (*topos*) shape large-scale identity formation more than exposure to symbols and discourses*.*

The key difference between a culturalist and a structuralist explanation of collective identifications lies in the conditioning factors: on the one hand, the *exposure* to influential cultural objects (discourses and symbols), on the other, the *involvement* in space-situated associative relations (independent of their specific content). But how do these diverging views apply to European identity?

The two models entail different mechanisms that usually, but not necessarily, occur at different stages of the life-course (table 1). When exposure takes place in the early years of individuals' life, it tends to activate the socio-psychological dynamics of *primary socialisation*. In the literature on European identification, Checkel (2005, 804) refers to it as 'type II internalization/socialization', which 'implies that agents adopt the interests, or even possibly the identity, of the community of which they are a part'. In adulthood, the process is more likely to be mediated by different socialisation agencies – primarily, the media – and falls within the scope of secondary socialisation (or *persuasion*). This is what Checkel (ibid.) labels 'type I internalization/socialization', a process in which social actors endorse identities that fit well into their roles and outlooks. The structuralist avenue of identity formation works through the acquisition of a behaviourally-related disposition to transnationalism during childhood and adolescence. Following Bourdieu (1984, 466), we can call it *habitus*: 'the primary forms of classification [that] owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will'. When they occur at a later stage of the life-course, in fact, transnational interactions are more likely to spur the emergence of *interest affinities* – that is, a

reframing of associative relations and situations focused on commonalities and devoid of references to the nationality of the parties involved (for an example, Fligstein 2008, 139).

Table 1. Patterns of European identity formation

	Model	Culturalist	Structuralist
	Trigger	*Exposure*	*Association*
Life-course stage	*Childhood, adolescence*	PRIMARY SOCIALISATION	HABITUS
	Adulthood	SECONDARY SOCIALISATION, PERSUASION	INTEREST AFFINITY

While the range of studies adopting it to capture the determinants of European identification is quite limited, the structuralist model emerged earlier, when Karl W. Deutsch crafted his 'transactionalist thesis' on European integration. Deutsch, a Czech-born German-speaking political scientist who taught at MIT, Yale and Harvard, started his academic career as a scholar of nationalism. In his view, nation-building was largely predicated on the creation of infrastructures that ease social and economic exchanges within neat territorial boundaries (Deutsch 1953). Infrastructures create 'societies', while communication and culture create 'communities'. But the latter cannot exist without the former. Feelings of belonging to nations – that is, a 'national community' or a 'people' – grow out of this intensification of societal relations in conditions of functional 'complementarity'. On the world map, 'each cluster of intensive social communication is a people' (ibid., 188). Its members interact with one another more than with people outside this same community, thus reinforcing their sense of solidarity and common destiny. Later in his life, turning his attention to international affairs, Deutsch adjusted his theory of nationalism to processes of super-national integration. Similarly to nation-building, the emergence of stable 'security communities' derives from the amplification of economic, social and cultural exchanges expanding across national boundaries. The newly-born EEC was taken as a prime instance of a security community with the potential for nurturing a common identity via increased transactions among its citizens (Deutsch et al. 1957).

Deutsch's insight on the conditions for a 'bottom-up' growth of European integration *and* identity has not been taken seriously by empirical research until quite recently (see Delhey 2004; Kuhn 2011). In particular, a reappraisal of Deutsch's legacy is the core point of Neil Fligstein's (2008) sociological fresco of European integration. Fligstein argues that the capacity of the EU to sustain and spread people's identification further must rely on the engine of cross-border interactions – especially intra-EU mobility. Indeed, on the basis of a large five EU15 country survey, the 5th FP

PIONEUR project proved that intra-EU mobility and European identification are closely correlated (Recchi and Favell 2009). But free movement does not exhaust the cross-border opportunities created by European integration. Here, we build on research carried out by Steffen Mau (2010). Inspired by Hannerz's (1996, 29) question: 'Who are globalizers?' and by Habermas' (2001) stance that greater connectivity would boost a new understanding of global interdependency, Mau (2010) has explored a wide palette of cross-borders individual interactions of the German population – from travels to consumption habits – showing that they tend to be empirically associated with de-nationalised attitudes.

Physical and virtual mobility: Specifying relevant cross-border practices

Hitherto, the 'structuralist model of European identification' has never been tested fully. Existing studies that pursue this research line, briefly reviewed in the previous section, show at least two noticeable limitations:

1. They analyse a reduced set of transnational activities. Mobility (either migration or travel) has been taken as the core component of cross-border activities. Personal friendship with non-nationals is another. But the range of such activities is much larger, especially if we consider the possibility of virtual mobility and interactions;
2. They concentrate on specific or limited populations. Original research on transnational behaviours has focused on a single nationality (e.g., German residents: Mau 2010) or, when comparative, has targeted relatively uncommon individuals (e.g., mobile citizens: Recchi and Favell 2009).

Correspondingly, the challenges for the second generation of studies that seek to test and specify a practice-based model of European identity formation are:

1. To draw an exhaustive and sharp classification of cross-border practices;
2. To map this wide range of practices in a systematic way on an international scale.

The EUCROSS project sets out to face these challenges and address the shortcomings of existing research on transnationalism and collective identities. Cross-border individual practices are classified as illustrated in table 2. Moreover, attention shall be paid to the spatial dimension of each kind of practice, especially aiming at distinguishing those rooted within the EU and those that span over non-EU countries, assuming that 'distance matters' (Berezin and Díez Medrano 2007). Basically, we do hypothesize that:

a. *Each practice fosters a stronger attachment to the geographical area within which interactions take place*;
b. *The more permanent and personal practices exert a more marked effect on identifications*.

Broadly speaking, border-crossing is also border-tearing. In line with Deutsch's theory, we hold that this is even more so the case when there is a political infrastructure – like the EU – that encapsulates and eases these interactions. As a consequence, cross-border practices take place in a consistently bounded and regulated space. This leads us to formulate a third hypothesis:

c. *European identification 'bubbles up' out of intra-EU practices more than cosmopolitanism out of extra-EU experiences*.

Table 2. Classification of cross-border individual practices

Physical border crossing?	Dimensions	Indicator
Yes → Physical mobility	High permanence	
		Long-term stay (>3yrs) abroad
		Medium-term stay (3months-3yrs) abroad
		Short stay (3weeks-3months) abroad
		Holidaying, short trips abroad
	Low permanence	
No → Virtual mobility	Personal	
		Having a foreign spouse or family member
		Having family/relatives in a different country
		Planning relocation in a foreign country
		Having foreign friends/neighbours
		Having friends abroad
		Sending children abroad
		Having foreign business partners, clients, colleagues
		Adhering to international associations
		Interacting with foreigners through social networks
		Making foreign investments (house, bank account)
		Buying foreign products online
	Impersonal	

If cross-border practices matter for European identification: Policy implications

While the bulk of extant research in the field relies on the culturalist model of European identity formation, the EUCROSS project opts for the structuralist model, in which social practices rather than discourses are key to the strengthening of collective identities. The two models are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, plausibly, they can both work and 'join forces' in the long-term process of Europeanising national societies (Díez Medrano 2008). What has still to be assessed is their relative effectiveness and inter-relations. And, more precisely, within each of them, which kind of messages and which kind of practices affect identification more strongly.

Besides their theoretical differences, the two models have also distinct policy implications in view of a more widespread identification with Europe among European citizens – an almost unavoidable concern for the EU (Kaina and Karolewski 2009). Towards this goal, the culturalist model can only encourage the development of narratives and symbols that 'sell' the Union to its citizens. In brief, it forms the theoretical backdrop of a *cultural marketing strategy*. In fact, the

structuralist model suggests a content-neutral emphasis on the *facilitation of cross-border practices*.

In a policy perspective, the EUCROSS project hypotheses – if corroborated by empirical research – may lead to shifting the emphasis of EU identity policies from support for cultural initiatives (European museums, EU days, *et similia*) to the promotion of transnational relations and mobility. On both fronts the EU has been very active over the last decades. But knowing from rigorous research findings which of the two is more fruitful can be dramatically important for concentrating efforts and investments.

To be true, giant steps have been made by Community policies towards easing freedom of movement and all sorts of cross-state relations since the early years of European integration. Most of what now falls under the rubric of 'EU citizenship rights' consists of achievements related to individuals' entitlement to live and project their lives across the national borders of Member States. As Elspeth Guild (2006, 15) puts it, the right to free movement boils down to 'the right *not* to encounter the administrative authorities of Member States'. In fact, since the last EU enlargement some of these achievements are at risk of being reverted or limited. A revision of Schengen rules to reintroduce internal border control, as proposed by some political leaders and opinion-makers, would go in this direction. Equally, a (total or partial) demise of the common currency would dismantle its capacity to sustain individual freedom of movement and planning in a de-nationalised economic environment.

Building on a bottom-up knowledge of the cross-border experiences of European citizens, further facilitations can be tailored and devised – from apparently petty measures like the elimination of roaming fees for intra-EU phone calls and internet access to more ambitious harmonization plans in the field of pension and tax schemes. But perhaps, at a critical time for the world and the EU economy, existing measures aimed at creating a 'common European space' need consolidation more than an additional leap forwards. Preservation and fine-tuning of policies on free movement and the single market create a bulwark to the possible re-nationalising of collective identities. If the structuralist thesis is valid, the best ally for European *political* integration is European *societal* integration, to which transnational practices contribute decisively.

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