

Communicating the EU and Citizenship as Identification

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Introduction

Communicating the EU to its citizens is not an end in itself; it is widely perceived as crucial in promoting identification. The latter is seen as the basis of engaged, active citizenship qua civic and political participation, the apparent lack of which is widely lamented. As a result policy makers often emphasise communication, that is more communication and better communication, as a potential remedy to the lack of identification and, subsequently, participation. However, 'more' and 'better' are often understood as synonymous and, thus, the approach carries a somewhat simplistic equation of information and identification that, although pervading both political and academic debates, is by no means self-evident. Further, this is often implicitly premised on the rationalist and positivist assumption of the primacy of 'facts' and dispassionate logical argument.

This paper aims to challenge the validity qua sole applicability of the rationalist-positivist assumptions and argues that identification can be seen to follow very different 'logics', namely often those of affective narrative. It emphasises a constructivist theoretical approach and explicates theoretical and practical (both current and potential further) uses of affective and narrative forms of discourse. It embraces different types of textual sources, including both the written word and images; it draws on discourse theoretic political theory and innovative conceptualisations of ideology and political narrative. With regard to ideology, though inspired by the critical potential of the Marxist understanding, it turns to more recent structural analysis in order to allow detailed analysis rather than simple condemnation. With regard to political narratives, it aims to expand traditional foci on

history, shared memory and tradition by means of an extended understanding of political myths as any type of ideologically marked story held to be true by a certain group and, thus, constituting a community by means of perpetuating an ideological stance. Such stories, it is claimed, can be found in the context of several different policy areas. The present paper applies the above-outlined theoretical framework to an exemplary EU publication to provide some empirical evidence on how the EU citizenship of it are represented, extending Habermas's 'constitutional patriotism' to texts potentially enabling civic-ideological identification more generally. The publication in question is the brochure "What are my rights as an EU citizen?" published by the London office of the European Parliament in November 2007. Clearly, a host of other discourses could be argued to be relevant, too, such as foundation myths of the EU, European values, enlargement, constitutionalisation, etc. However, in the context of this conference, discourses around EU citizenship are particularly instructive in coming full circle to the question of how matters of citizenship in the EU are discursively represented.

Social Constructionism and Discourse

Long established in other fields, social constructionist approaches to the study of discourse are still relatively new in European Studies. Diez (2001) explains that rather than a tool that can be used to hold up a mirror to reality, language is constitutive of reality. If language is constructive of reality, then speech is action beyond mere utterance or writing and even beyond Searle's useful concept of 'speech acts' (1969); it is a method of the collective construction of reality or – to be more precise – social imaginaries that we refer to as 'reality'. However, as Wittgenstein's (2001) understanding of 'language games' holds, language and the construction of reality that springs from it, though offering potential for creativity in meaning, are not entirely free;¹ the former is structured and, consequently, the latter formed in a way that implicitly reproduces the rules of this structure. Explaining in more detail, Diez (2001) describes this process in terms of three theoretical moves: The first² refers to the move from the constitutive understanding of the nature of language, i.e. description of reality 'out there', to its performative one, which outlines for instance that the foundation, e.g. of a polity like the EU or any of its predecessor organisations, is performed through language. The second³ shift consists in the understanding that the language by which this is done is inherently political. While here, meanings and

the political implications they entail are considered to be rather fixed, the third⁴ move, does not rely on fixed meaning and subsequent understanding. It conceives of language as an openended chain, to which each articulation might add another meaning, which, however, nevertheless rely on sufficient ‘affinity of discourse and mutual translatability’ (ibid.: 94) to fulfil their social and constructive function. All these understandings of the role of language in the construction of social reality are accepted here as applying to the EU as well as any other social construct. And while a certain emancipatory potential is not denied, especially in the latter, but even the penultimate⁵, notion, it cannot be denied that some actors are better placed or equipped than others to effect such change, mainly because of the fact that power often works in the way Bourdieu (1991) famously outlined, namely facilitated by a person’s belief in another’s entitlement and/or ability to exert power rather than by physical or material structures. It is for this reason that this paper, and the broader study it belongs to, focuses on the discourses of European political elites and institutions and their (potential) effects on the formation of European identity.

One fundamental strategy of EU institutions’ representations of European identity needs to be identified or deconstructed here before the main argument of this paper commences. Like conventional European Studies discourses, these institutions tend to equate the EU and Europe in the sense that Europeanness is understood as belonging (economically, politically and culturally) to the EU; this is expressed in political practice and the work of scores of academics and other commentators on the EU. Despite such usage, however, the EU and Europe are by no means synonymous terms. Naively viewed, such lack of a distinction between the EU and Europe can be seen as a simple misnomer. However, it has also – rightly – been criticised as indicative of an attempt of discursive ‘colonisation’ of the broader term Europe (Boedeltje and van Houtum 2008), may it be to diffuse potentially negative connotations or to increase the EU’s clout externally and/or internally. This critique identifies the ideological or normative effect of the implied extension of EU-ness to the whole of Europe, which is equated with it and whose independent existence is by this process implicitly ignored. One rare example of an attempt to address this – albeit an implicit one that would benefit from explicit elaboration of motivations and approach – is Antonsich’s (2008) choice of the terms EUrope and EUropean. To make the relevant distinctions clear in this paper, EU-ropean and EU-ness will refer to the EU, while European and

Europeanness refer to a broader understanding of Europe (historically, territorially, and culturally) independent of and beyond the EU. However, it will become clear that in many instances the referent is EUrope, i.e. Europe understood in the image of the EU, and for these cases the terms EUropean and EUropeanness will be used.⁶

Identity and EUropean Identification

The link between institutional discursive constructions of identity and individual identification can be understood as analogous to the often ill-understood distinctive yet related nature of social constructionism and social constructivism. While the former can be seen to refer to an ontology and a sociological conception of ‘reality’, ‘world’ or ‘imaginary’ that social interaction gives rise to, the latter is of an epistemological nature and refers to a psychological conception of individuals’ cognitive processes in constructing concepts and understandings that enable them to make sense of and, in turn (making the link to constructionism), act in the ‘world’. Clearly, these two processes are closely linked in a relationship of mutual contingency and continuous debate, reaffirmation, adaptation and change. The way identity is understood here is similar; it is as a product of the combination of individual cognitive processes and actions on the one hand and social interactions on the other. This includes discourses, such as those provided by EUropean political elites, e.g. on the topic of citizenship and it has been stated already that these are given salience because of the function of power that supports them. Thus this paper somewhat challenges the rigid distinction that conventional European Studies draw between processes of ‘Europeanisation’ that affect political elites and institutional structures in the member states as well as in Brussels on the one hand and citizens’ individual and collective identification with the EU and/or Europe on the other. These processes are perceived to be complementary dimensions in processes of European identification and the paper is concerned with the nature and content of ‘EUropeanised’ projections of European identification, i.e. EUropean identification.

While this understanding may help to some degree in identifying what the study of identity is about, including in political contexts, a more precise definition is necessary. Commentators on questions of EUropean identity rightly lament that, due to imprecision, the term often lacks analytical utility (e.g. Delanty 1995). While often true within the field of European Studies, it is possible to find a variety of useful

definitions if one looks further a-field; Brubaker (2004) summarises its features as follows. Firstly, following the mathematical use of the term identical, identity refers to exact sameness of one or more characteristics of a group, which enables collective identification, often including a sense of solidarity, of an in-group. Simultaneously, this process leads to the construction of an out-group, because if difference is seen to pertain to what is seen as a core aspect of identity, it signifies as 'other'. When these processes are mobilised in the political context, the result is often a form of 'identity politics' (cf. Malesevic 2006), i.e. the assertion of particularistic demands of groups based on a particularistic rather than universalistic self-understanding. Beyond this specific case, this understanding of identity illustrates the fundamentally bifurcated character of identity as continuously defined against the dual referents of same and other. It also points to the dialectic of particularistic and universalistic social position of agents, which, in practice, enable social, including political, action. But not only does identity facilitate social interaction, but social interaction also facilitates identity; identity can be understood as performance of the social behaviour that are understood to make it up (Butler 1999). Lastly, and often neglected in the political realm, identity is understood by postmodernist writers as 'unstable, multiple, fluctuating and fragmented' (Brubaker 2004: 35). One important change in our perception of identity that these latter points flag up, is the rejection of the conventional assumption of its fixity. This understanding was particularly apparent in the essentialist implications of national identity that almost always makes claims to shared unchanging ethnic or cultural ties or even primordial bases. However, this understanding has been shown to be mistaken. More fully understood in studies of cultural rather than national identities, identity has been identified as a process of negotiation, re-affirmation, change and hybridity (Bhabha 1998, 2002). Despite individuals' perception of a coherent self-hood that seems to deny malleability, the constructionist argument points out that changing circumstances may lead to changes in characteristics of individuals or groups. The notion of identity as a performance, mentioned above, is helpful here, too; it explains how both change and re-enactment of certain traits or behaviours work in the construction of identity. It is because of this understanding that the term identification is chosen here over that of identity: referring to a process rather than a state or characteristic qua possession, it carries the intended constructivist rather than an overly essentialist connotation.

More recent engagement both within and outside European Studies has attempted to identify various levels at which processes of affirmation, adaptation and rejection work in individual and group identification, several of which are implicitly utilised in EU representations of citizenship as means of projecting a specific form of identification. One important contribution is that of Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) who make the distinction between ‘ways of belonging’ and ‘ways of being’. By the former they refer to what identity is most commonly understood as: abstract, self-conscious identification that implies awareness of and a sense of belonging to a collective. By the latter, they refer to practices that express identification, yet are not necessarily consciously connected to its cognitive and affective form.⁷

Another nuanced understanding of identification that has figured more largely in debates about Europe and the EU as well as questions of cosmopolitan democracy is that of what might be called ‘dry’ versus ‘sticky’, ‘thick’ versus ‘thin’ or ‘procedural’ versus ‘substantive’ forms of identification. This debate revolves around the question of the possibility of a supranational identity being built on identification with the normative assumptions and outcomes of justice and equality springing from a shared legal code. It is the debate about the potential of ‘constitutional patriotism’, and this debate is often implicitly understood as concerning citizens, although, of course, strictly speaking, it would also concern non-citizen residents. What these terms seem to refer to in a rather round-about way, is the question of the depth and permanence of forms of identification that aim to replace national ones, but are intended to be based on different sources. With most of the scholars engaged in these discussions heavily influenced by the Enlightenment’s privileging of rationality, this language seems to be designed to avoid the direct mention of the role of affect in processes of identification and politics.

This dimension will also be shown to be of relevance in the projection of the EU citizenship as a tool to generate identification. However, while it does figure in discourses about Europe and or EU citizenship in some respects, not only commentators but also policy-makers of the EU seem to have a preference for the Enlightenment ideal of rationality and to be ill at ease with the affective dimension of politics. However, Mouffe has rightly pointed to the danger of downplaying the ‘primary reality of strife in social life’ (Mouffe 1998: 13) and its natural reflection in

politics, whose fundamental role and function is to address this. She explains that this deprives people of the opportunity to express their political passions in a mainstream environment. While her main point is to account for the rise of right-wing populism, another argument relevant here is that of the generation of popular political disenchantment and apathy often understood as a lack of identification. It is because of this important connection that it is argued here that it is crucial to take the affective dimension of politics into account.

Ideology⁸ and European Identification

The task of providing answers to questions of the 'best' or 'correct' way of distributing resources and an outlet for political passions has traditionally fallen to ideologies, and it is the argument of this paper that the EU espouses a particular ideology. In contrast to conventional European Studies approaches that treat the EU as ideologically neutral, especially when the internal dimension is concerned,⁹ the building blocks of the EU's discursive representations, e.g., of citizenship as a means of identification are seen here as ideologically marked. In order to comprehend what is meant by this, the underlying conceptualisation of 'ideological' needs to be set out.

Starting out as an attempt to construct a 'logos', i.e. scientific study, of ideas, the term ideology soon lost its scientific credentials. This happened at the hand of Marx and Engels (1970) who held that ideology contained wrongly constructed ideas that correspond to the wrongly constructed world of socio-economic practices that they are situated in. These are seen to hinder the achievement of human potential by taking on a function of power, domination and exploitation through obscuring the reality of social relations and the possibility of alternative arrangements. Later, however, Mannheim (1936) argued that all groups in society have their own particularistic perception of a shared formative reality, which is what he understands by ideology. This leads to the understanding, relevant here, that 'ideology is an omnipresent social phenomenon¹⁰ as well as a group phenomenon' (Freeden 1996: 26). Returning ideology to the realm of scientific study, this leads Mannheim to demand a fully-fledged 'systematic exposure of the link between ideologies and socially determined vantage points and group interest' (Bauman 1999: 116). While the link implied here is an essentialist one of bottom-up social construction, this paper is concerned with the reverse function; i.e. that of ideology in the formation of social, i.e. collective,

identification. It is argued that it takes on this role by providing patterns of political thought regarding factual, moral and functional aspects of the world, and thus providing individuals with the means of ‘thought-behaviour’ that enables them to make sense of and act in the world in which they live (Freeden 1996, 2001). This suggests: ideology bridges the gap between theoretical political concepts and practical political behaviour. It does so by, firstly, explicitly and implicitly addressing the question of how resources are to be distributed in society, and, secondly, being inherently collective or group identity-endowing. Therefore, it is not to be understood in the excessively individualist and relativist terms of ‘Weltanschauung’, which implies the removal of the dimension of practice, or ‘mentality’, which suggests shared attitudes, but leave it to chance whether they lead to similar or, even, orchestrated action. Both would render ideology meaningless in the present context. What is aimed for here, is an outline of the structure and resulting function of ideology in identification, and the illustration of these in the context of the EU’s ideological discourse.

While this endeavour contains a critical notion, it has to be clear that this is not the main focus of this paper; such Marxist-inspired instruments of study – however useful in abstract critiques – are often content with just these and, thus, foreclose the detailed study of the structure and function of ideology. Such detailed study of the structure of ideology is provided, for instance, by Martin Seliger (1976), who identifies the following components as constitutive of ideologies across the board: description, analysis, moral prescriptions, technical prescriptions, implements, and rejections. Different levels of operation of ideology spring from the variability of the central component; in ideological fundamentalism the moral prescriptions take centre stage, an emphasis on the operative level of ideology affords centrality to technical prescriptions. Springing from a dynamic between the different levels and components in practice, ideologies are not clearly bounded but overlap with each other in terms of their components and arguments. Furthermore, while displaying a certain degree of coherence, they are always able to and often do include contradictions. Freedon’s (1996) understanding can be seen as complementary, yet in some respects more advanced; it goes into more detail of the structure of ideologies, which he conceives of as one of clusters of core and peripheral concepts. Ideologies enable people to make sense of themselves and act collectively in by providing patterns of political

thought. Here the theory is not explicitly limited to conventionally ideologically marked institutions, but might also apply to ostensibly ideologically heterogeneous or neutral ones. Their ideologies may display distinctive configurations of concepts in the same way and – what is more – they also function by creating meaning for collective identification. This happens in the same way as in all other forms of ideology, namely by attempting to counter the essential contestability of all concepts. This process, called ‘decontestation’ (Freeden 1996), works by assigning fixed meanings, which are derived from temporal and spatial context and internal morphology, i.e. relative position of the component concepts, of the ideology. But, beyond simplistic binary structure of meaning, ideologies are able to incorporate contradictions and ambiguities and there is often overlap, both in terms and in meanings, between different ideologies. In all this, as identified by discourse theory, ideology functions by allowing worldviews, values and forms of identification to be grouped under an umbrella term. The main function of this process is that it gives this collection of ideas the appearance of a unified whole and obscures that the term that acts as an umbrella is devoid of meaning, namely an ‘empty signifier’ (Laclau and Mouffe 2001) that only functions as a nodal point which anchors the meaning of the combined components of the ideology. This can be applied to terms such as EUrope in the same way as, say, Communism. All this leads to a greater variety of possibilities of espousal and combination of concepts and a more dynamic nature than the traditional concept of ideology, which makes the concept suitable for empirical rather than purely theoretical study. As it fits the complexities of the issue better than previous accounts, it is also another argument in favour of using ideology as an analytical tool in the study of identification.¹¹

While a move from the sole focus on the macro-level of ideologies to engage with their micro-level of ingredients and from a sole focus on their substantial values to one that includes attention to the language in which they are represented, can be observed in the study of ideologies (Freeden 2001), the move to political institutions and patterns of identification has not been made yet despite the fact that the conceptual understanding and methods conventionally employed are equally applicable here. It is therefore the project of this paper to deconstruct, i.e. make explicit by means of critical analysis and comparison to potential alternative representations, the constituent concepts of the ideology disseminated by the EU as

well as the means employed by the process. It is considered important to make them explicit as their current invisibility points to the success of the ideology they form (Barthes 1993, Malesevic 2006); as mentioned in passing above, the invisibility of ideology does not suggest its end, but ideological convergence or decontestation of the concepts making up the ideology.

Decontestation and ideological convergence equate to the closure of the communication space. The latter is a space of discursive contestation that, once discourse is closed, implies the potential for or even achievement of collective identification.¹² Eder (2007) has identified EUrope¹³ as such a communication space based on Deutsch's (1953) classic idea that it is practices of shared communication that are conducive to collective identification rather than assumed shared characteristics understood as essential and based in ethnicity or culture. He argues that it is discourses of shared (more or less accurate) memories, very similar to Hobsbawm's (1983) understanding of the 'invention of tradition' and a belief in the fairness of the shared EU rules that gives rise to collective identification in EUrope. What Eder's account (unfortunately only) implicitly adds to the exclusively historical focus of for instance Hobsbawm is the understanding that the historical dimension is not the only relevant one in the construction of shared social imaginaries. In his insistence on the argument about a shared sense of fairness of the EU rules, Eder, however, overlooks that this focus is questionable on a variety of grounds; e.g., whether it actually exists. But he opens up the opportunity to make sense of this specific aspect as a form of narrative that in terms of content may be different, but in its form is similar, to the historical narratives he mentions as collective identity-endowing mechanisms.¹⁴

Political Myth

So, why and how do such narratives work? The popular assumption that EUropean identification would be formed analogously to national identities, with a sense of solidarity based on the idea of essentialist characteristics of common ethnicity and language (Anderson 1983) or common re-enacted ideas and practices that establish a link to a constructed shared past (Hobsbawm 1983) is not helpful in the context of the EU, as it lacks the former and attempts at the latter are thwarted by the interference of nationally defined historical discourses that would highlight their divisive, rather than

uniting, aspects. While it has promoted the acceptance of this diversity, the EU has not seized the opportunity to leave behind such limiting points of reference in favour of identification that might transcend the national or quasi-national structure. Instead it has attempted to achieve the collective identification of its citizens by introducing shared rituals and symbols analogous to those that usually go with national identification. This has been explored in some detail (e.g. Shore 2000) and while it can be assumed to have had some effect, it seems to imply the assumption of the possibility of simple top-down indoctrination by repetition. This elitist and purely quantitative approach smacks suspiciously of a banal EU-ism (analogous to Billig's (1995) concept of banal nationalism) that consists of constant unthinking flag waving and has lost or never gained a substantive meaning. It also seems to miss the qualitative dimension of symbols such as the mechanism of 'bivocality' (Cohen 1981: 151), i.e. the mystification of whether the symbol represents the community or the individual, which enables the individual to see both in it. Symbols alone can therefore not be the answer to a lack of identification, for it has to be clear in how far they can refer to the individual and the collective at the same time. What is needed is a story that allows for bivocality to work. Therefore, while acknowledging the role of symbols and ritual, in the present paper, narratives that may stand for themselves or underlie such symbolic signs and interactions take pre-eminence.

It has already been stated that the conventional emphasis on history in the context of such stories is not essential for them to function in an identity endowing fashion; firstly, it unnecessarily limits the scope of empirical analysis by exclusion of relevant source material and, secondly, it is misleading by the implication of an accuracy that is not only often doubtful but also not a requirement for the fulfilment of the function that this paper is interested in. A better way to conceptualise such stories is the category of 'political myth' as defined by Flood (1996). It has to be noted here, that while this addresses the need to include inaccurate or even invented accounts, this is in addition to, not instead of, true accounts. More important than the truth-content in defining political myth are the following four features: firstly, that it carries ideological beliefs; secondly, that it presents itself as and is held to be true and, often, sacrosanct; thirdly, it may appear in regional or diachronic variations and synchronic analogies; and fourthly that it displays a sequence of connected past, present or future events in narrative form. While the dimension of historical events is again considered

of less importance here, the identification of political myths' sequential and narrative form is crucial. In their combination, the above criteria carry a variety of important points. By relating ideological content by means of narratives about the past, present and future, and thus providing justification and inspiration, myths express a will to act justified by accounts of inspirational action of others that individuals are encouraged to identify with. Furthermore, in their narrative form, myths work beyond and, thus, defy rational argument as the dominant form of political expression (both Sorel 1999). This is an important observation to keep in mind in the context of this paper. As is Flood's rejection, also based on the emphasis on narrative form and verbal content, of an earlier definition by Barthes (1993), who emphasises the functional dimension of myth and thus conceives of all kinds of social practices and objects used to communicate mythical meaning as myths. However, Flood's more exclusive definition – accepted here – does not foreclose the use of material other than verbal narrative in the study of myth, because even though they are not accepted as myths in their own right, it concedes that other carriers of symbolic meaning, such as visual text or ritual behaviour, often point to myths that are in circulation in the given context.

Discourse Analysis

With the primacy of a discursive practice such as myth and its function in processes of social construction and identification thus established, it is not surprising that the method of analysis chosen as the most suitable for the discourses concerned and their function in the construction of a social imaginary that gives rise to collective identification is one of discourse analysis. Based on the constructionist ontology and epistemology outlined above, it offers insight into the discursive construction of social imaginaries of 'reality', but while the construction process may be interesting for its own sake, the present paper is also represents a critical approach involving deconstruction and the highlighting of room for improvement – both regarding the EU's effectiveness at projecting representations for the purpose of identification and in a moral sense.¹⁵ Thus positioned, the present paper aims to avoid both the sweeping claims of the interpretive structuralism of a Foucauldian type of discourse analysis and the painstaking detail of social or critical linguistic analysis of the grammatical, lexical, etc. aspects of an isolated text.¹⁶ This means it will include some contextual information, which is necessary as, most observantly pointed out by Hajer's (2005)

concept of ‘story lines’, most communication contains gaps, which are filled by commonly assumed shared knowledge.¹⁷ This has, of course, always been assumed in discourse analysis (hence the significance attached to contextual information), but has rarely been made explicit. Hajer’s contribution by making it so should not be underestimated; not only does it explain how substantive assumptions can be omitted in representations of myths without the latter losing their meaning, it also explains how many myths, though based on a logic of affective narrative rather than rational argument, can often take a shape in which the narrative structure and affective nature are not immediately apparent.

This is certainly often the case regarding the discourses used by the EU to represent EU citizenship and by means of which it contributes to a construction of European identity. These discourses are found in a variety of empirical material; the amended treaty, policy documents, speeches and press statements, and public relations material. As for the rationale underlying such sampling, these materials are seen as documents that fall under an extended understanding of the concept of constitutional patriotism. If the civic-ideological content of a constitution may offer grounds for collective identification, as is commonly assumed, it does not seem to make sense to exclude other documents carrying such content – especially if they may be more stimulating regarding the affective dimension of identification referred to above, as e.g. public relations brochures. Regarding the content of such documents, a variety of discourses could be seen as relevant; citizenship as well as myths of the foundation of the EU, European values, enlargement, and constitutionalisation.

Due to the briefness of the presentation attached to this paper, the focus is rather limited here. It is on a single document, the brochure “What are my rights as an EU citizen?” published by the London office of the European Parliament in November 2007. This is a random choice based on the availability of material. With its rather visual character, it has the advantage that it lends itself to the illustration of the complementary use of semiotic analysis, which treats images as ‘readable’ text as well. It needs to be noted here, however, that ‘readable’ refers to ‘interpretable’ than any form of direct transmission of meaning. However, this applies not only where images are concerned, although it becomes clearer in this context than with regard to the ostensibly clear written or spoken word. While interpretation may be regarded

with the suspicion of lack of objectivity by traditional positivist analyses, it is not so here. It is one of the tenets of the understanding of discursive construction that meaning may or does change with usage,¹⁸ and therefore interpretation can never be complete in the sense of either fullness or verifiable correctness. Such a quest would be seen to be illusionary from the start. Validity here does not consist in the conventional understandings of generalisability and reproducibility, as these fall victim to the same illusions mentioned above. It also does not hinge on attempts to explain ostensible gaps, as story lines always imply gaps of some sort or another, or to justify deviant cases, as ambiguity and contradiction are an inherent part of ideological discourses. It is expressed, instead, in plausibility based on good contextualisation and through analysis.

What Are My Rights as an EU Citizen?

The present text therefore makes no claims to completeness and validity in the understanding propagated by positivists, it aims to draw out some strategies employed and extract some ideological meanings carried by this particular published representation of EU citizenship as these are understood as projecting, and therefore contributing to the construction of, a specific, deliberate and potentially powerful image of European identification. Detailing the affective nature and narrative structure as well as ideological content of these representations, placed within their discursive context, will ensure the plausibility of the overall interpretations and evaluations made.

To begin with, while less prominent than in other contexts (for instance the title of this conference) the so-called ‘colonisation of Europe’ is a strategy that is apparent in the names of institutions such as the European Parliament instead of the ‘European Union Parliament’ or the ‘Parliament of the European Union’. This strategy, which has become second nature for many a politician and commentator on the EU, can be found in the publication discussed here in the form of the claim that Members of the European Parliament are citizens’ ‘voice in Europe’ (14), rather than the EU.

Another strategy very often employed and also identified here is the use of metaphors. Often taking a part of something to refer to the whole, they trigger the precise response from the reader that enables myths to work. The most striking in this case is

the use of hands to represent people. The choice of hands, especially of varying shapes and characters, rather than faces, facilitates what might be seen as a possibility for universal identification and suggests well-known political narratives of equality and solidarity. Starting from the title page, on which one hand seems to hold up with ease the letters making up 'EU' while another holds onto them as if for support, many different hands are shown in various poses that seem to suggest 'tangibility', 'engagement' in both ways of being (practices) and ways of belonging (cognitive identification), 'empowerment', 'human touch', and 'picking and choosing'. However, while representing an atmosphere of harmony and inclusivity, it is conspicuous absences of several types that imply forms of exclusivity that the EU still often displays. Firstly, as the second to last image of the brochure highlights with its stereotypical reference to the 'other' in the context of human rights, there are only white hands represented in all other images. Clearly, such a simplistic understanding of Europe is unfortunate, as is the one implied in the second conspicuous absence; all the hands displayed are clean, healthy, well-maintained, and some are obviously manicured. Clearly, these images have been chosen in line with the assumptions guiding the design of advertising brochures or similar materials that the design agency would usually work on, which suggest some form of alignment of the EU with practices of capitalist consumerism. Moreover, when it comes to these images' effect in projecting an image of Europeaness, it is again unfortunate not to acknowledge the existence of hard manual work and disadvantage of various kinds. In these ways, the EU is seen to create a narrative that elevates a specific, albeit not representative, image to a normative ideal. While easy to identify with for the privileged, this may have either aspirational and escapist or alienating potential for those less privileged.

Another way in which this distorted understanding of European realities is promoted is the focus on the economically advantaged, in the form of accessories (youths with fancy sun glasses having coffees in cafes) and expensive practices (an elderly couple by the sea, shown on the display of a digital camera, may have travelled to or moved to a retirement home in one of the southern European countries – due to a reference in the text to residents of different EU member state background in Spain the suggestion seems to be the latter). A further example of the focus on the affluent is the obsession displayed with technology represented in the form of a mobile phone and head-set, laptop, digital camera – with all of them on pages 2 to 5. While certainly representing

progress and a commitment to it, the overemphasis implied by partly unnecessary displays could be read as a sort of fetish. However, most of the images are intended to carry other messages, too. As already mentioned, the image of the elderly couple by the sea emphasises ‘ways of being’ European as a form of identification that does not ask for conscious cognitive attachment. The laptop (displaying the website of the European Parliament) and the mobile phone (displaying the message ‘call us: the EU is just a phone call away...’) are presented as means of information about and access to the EU, with transparency and approachability two issues that the EU is keen to address to improve its image with citizens. While the former suggests the rather simplistic equation of information and identification that has been highlighted at the beginning of this paper, the latter again emphasises practices of engagement, and both create myths of participation and identification by the implied message of both being achieved with ease by others that the reader is invited to identify with.

More symbolic in nature are some of the other strategies employed. One of them is the visual reference to Europe’s Graeco-Roman heritage in the form of the goddess of justice, Themis or Iusticia respectively, displayed in gold in an elevated position against the blue sky that lends its colour to the EU flag. Not only does this glorify such cultural influences and elevate them to a status of sole relevance and validity. By invoking a set of myths in the most classical sense, it also contributes to the reader’s affective involvement, which might then be attached to the discourses of rights, the rule of law and democratic participation – the ultimate European values – that are covered on this and the following pages. It does so by being juxtaposed to an image that seems to echo the colour scheme of gold on a blue background at the same time as projecting the EU’s emblem of twelve stars onto an otherwise unexciting or ambiguous image that is reminiscent of the construction of a stage or news studio. However, attempting to invoke symbolic identification and work the bivocality of symbolism in the context of an image that triggers no or little affective involvement – indeed may be interpreted as a representation of the distance between the EU and its citizens expressed in the need for mediation or a mockery of the political process because of the emphasis on the theatrical aspects of it – may be understood as a gesture of banal EU-ism.

Another, now classic, metaphor is that of the EU as a ‘construction’, ‘building site’, ‘work in progress’. This is expressed clearly in the figure of what seems to be an architect (however, judging by his attire, he could be an official or technocrat involved in the construction of EUrope just as well as a professional genuinely involved in the design and construction of buildings) holding a floor plan of a building implied to be the glass and steel construction in front of him, which, the reader is led to assume, is one of the EU institutions’ buildings. With this reference to the construction metaphor in one of the first images of the brochure and another one in the very last one, this theme seems to be an overarching one. In the last image, however, one can find a variation of it. Combining the metaphor of construction – implicit in a building that, although finished, has an airy, dynamic character – with the reiteration of elevation of progress and ideals, and with the longstanding tradition of political and religious institutions’ and leaders’ use of architecture as a means to solicit popular admiration, the last image of the brochure shows a large, circular, modern building opening into the skies. Again, the reader is inclined, despite possibly complete lack of knowledge and means of verification, to believe that this building is representative of the European Union. (Which in a sense it is, as it is the European Parliament Atrium.)

A further set of strategies needs to be mentioned, however, that does not imply such an exclusive focus on the EU. Concerned about potential reactions based on readers prior and, possibly, stronger sense of national identification, not only legal jargon that might put off lay persons is avoided, but also terms such as ‘freedom of movement’ which may carry a negative connotation of migration demonised in certain member states’ domestic discourses (in this case the UK’s). In the same way, it is emphasised that EU citizenship is in addition to and does not replace national citizenship. However, in its determination to utilise this discourse to achieve identification, it is not mentioned that the concept is legally reliant on member state citizenship. But other steps at acknowledging traits of the specific member state in question are taken, too. Cultural institutions, such as the BBC, are quoted, and the list of representatives is limited to national ones, the latter of which seems to suggest a complete abandonment of the supranational dimension. Addressing a further idiosyncrasy of the country in question, the publishing institution represents itself as consisting of the UK office of the European Parliament in London and a branch in Scotland. Furthermore,

in a cursory acknowledgement of the ethnic diversity of the British population, one individual who might be of South Asian descent is pictured in the brochure. However, it can be noted that while he is part of the young generation, i.e. the generation of the future that is often at the centre of attention of the EU's attempts to address its citizens in the context of identification, he is portrayed not as an active contributor to the EU but as enjoying the privileges it affords. The message or narrative communicated to both groups, those who identify with the normative and those who identify with the subaltern category of such discourses, is clear, and while such a message certainly has affective potential, the EU might wonder whether it is of the kind it wishes to mobilise.

With regard to the only other ethnically or racially marked image, the one displayed in the context of the EU's stance on human rights mentioned above, that displays an unfortunate and simplistic equation of the issue with the 'other' which is largely ignored or denied within in the context of EU citizenship in a strict sense, several important points should be noted. Representations of this kind might seem natural for EU citizens that fall under the normative category, and some might even be inclined to explain them in terms of the historical ethno-cultural make-up of Europe or similar quasi-nationalist approaches to identity and identification. However, it is not only unfortunate, but also short-sighted in the extreme and contradicts any notion of progress for the EU to overlook that such categorisations are discriminatory against a large number of its citizens. It is interesting to note, however, that although simultaneously a means of othering, this image, with its allusion to narratives of solidarity, is one of the most affectively powerful in the a brochure that emphasises individualism both by starting out with an individualist rights discourse under the capitalised heading 'YOU' and in most of its representations displays individual (sets of) hands and solidarity only amongst family members (the elderly couple) or direct acquaintance or friends (the youths in the cafe). However, what is meant to be distinctly EUropean in the context of the propagation of human rights, especially accompanied by such a simplistic visual of a binary opposition, remains to be explained. In so far, the affective potential of both the discourse and the visual have been lost for any attempt to construct a collective EUropean identity, even if it might contribute to a mass individual EUropean identity (remember Delanty's (1995)

distinction of the two). Moreover, they highlight the lack of solidarity implicit in the emphasis on individualism throughout the text.

Overarching the detail of the images and text of the brochure, it has become clear that their selection and arrangement follows a structure that has its own narrative logic, affective power and ideological meaning; some can be seen to form contained groups (for instance those emphasising affluence, those representing abstract values, or those conjuring images of sameness), others provide a thread to follow throughout (the hands), or form overarching connections (e.g. the construction metaphor displayed at the beginning and the very end of the brochure), or points of contrast (e.g. the individualism throughout and the solidarity emphasised towards the end). Overall, the brochure seems to display a structure of contents and representations that alternate more affective and more abstract dimensions. Partly, this impression is generated by the use of images alternating between those displaying people (complemented or exclusively represented through the theme of hands) and images that do not but focus on symbols such as the classical goddess, EU symbolism superimposed on what might be called a political stage and buildings.

Conclusion

The EU tells ideologically marked stories about what it means to be European. It utilises a several discourses, including that of citizenship, for this purpose. This becomes clear when considering that citizenship is a legal concept, and that EU citizenship is a rather hollow seeing as it, and with that the rights it affords, is entirely based on national citizenship of the member states. Nevertheless, EU citizenship discourse is utilised and broadly accepted in the terms of cultural identification. It contributes to a social imaginary of Europe. The ideologically marked narratives, or myths, that are told about Europe in discourses of EU citizenship contain many familiar aspects, which due to their prevalence in other discourses that contribute to the construction of a European identification are to be expected. So-called European values like liberal democracy, the concept of rights (often in the form of human rights), and the rule of law figure largely. Consumerism, founded in Europe's capitalist outlook and leading to the elevation of individualism over solidarity also figures largely. The latter seems to suggest itself as one factor contributing to the EU's perceived inability to mobilise a collective identity, as it seems to replace it with

mere mass individual identification. It would seem that representing citizens more as recipients of privileges and – at a maximum – accessing information about the EU rather than actively involved in constructing it, is not helpful. In a way, ‘apolitical’ is also a derivative of ‘political’ as such an attitude can be constructed by means of a certain ideology, too. A further consequence of the Capitalist heritage seems to be the obsession with the ‘white collar normativity’ of late Capitalism, which discriminates against more traditional and manual ways of being in the economic realm that the EU certainly covers (think only of the role of the Common Agricultural Policy within the EU). Beyond that, other forms of traditional exclusion reflected in the EU’s discourses include matters of disability and, of course, as outlined above, a form of othering that seems to be an unpleasantly persistent echo of a previously common racism. It seems to imply a Eurocentrism, or even Euronormativity, that seems to suggest an attitude of patronising cultural imperialism. And, as the identification of the process of the ‘colonisation of Europe’ suggests, one facet of this is the EUrocentrism and EUronormativity that the EU projects onto Europe as a whole.

With regard to how this EU specific ideological compound is projected, it is important to note that while many political and academic discourses tend to emphasise the role of rational argument, it has been shown that they mostly take the form of narrative and it can also be observed that the affective dimension is a very powerful means for political and collective identification. While it can be observed that even the pseudo-rational political communication of the EU sometimes plays on this dimension, it has become clear that in most such cases this is not done effectively – not only in the use of symbolic practices, but also in the narration of political myths. In its failure to transcend the formats previously used in the construction of national social imaginaries, the EU is missing an opportunity to afford the affective dimension its proper role in political identification and put it to use in ways more inclusive than nationalist ones. This means that both the EU’s effectiveness at using discourses, e.g. of citizenship, to promote identification, and their moral content leave much to wish for.

Notes

¹ Otherwise, as Saussure (1983) pointed out, language would become nonsensical, for it is the interrelation of words according to the theoretical and practical rules that a language functions by that gives rise to meaning

² What Diez calls the 'Austinian' move

³ The 'Foucauldian' move

⁴ The 'Derridean' move

⁵ While the Foucauldian notion of the role of discourse in the construction of social reality seems to suggest a certain fixity of meanings and the political implications they entail, it is useful to bear in mind that his understanding of power is one of a dialectical process that always implies both authority and resistance.

⁶ Due to past conflation of these terms it is not always possible to differentiate clearly between the different referents, but it will be attempted as much as possible here; and where necessary, a combination of the relevant terms will be used.

⁷ Slightly weaker conceptually yet one of few attempts so far to introduce new, similar, ideas to European Studies, Caporaso and Kim (2009) have proposed the distinction between 'subjective awareness' and 'coherence' in order to differentiate between the purely cognitive and mostly individualistic dimension of identity and the role it plays in the social context when put into practice, namely constructing or contributing to the coherence of a social entity. The use of the term 'awareness' can be criticised for its implication of (possible) sense of distance and lack of the affective notion of belonging, which, as will be come clearer cannot be excluded from processes of identification. The term 'coherence', too, is problematic; it seems to shift the focus away from identification towards the community or society as the sole unit of analysis, which in the context of a constructionist analysis that relies on both individual and social dimension seems unhelpful. Nevertheless, it is an instructive attempt at getting to grips with some of the nuances of processes of identification, even if the afore-mentioned seems more clearly identifiable in EU discourses on citizenship.

⁸ Note here that this refers to ideology in the abstract (as explained conceptually in the text) and not ideologies or a particular ideology in the sense of an established, more or less rigorous system of political beliefs on the basis of which a group such as a party is formed.

⁹ With regard to the external, or foreign policy and accession, dimension, the EU's ideological character seems to be admitted more readily, although the choice of terms is rarely this explicit and favours terms such as 'moral' or 'normative'.

¹⁰ Despite the proclamation in recent years of the end of ideology, which, however, seems more accurately made sense of as the convergence of ideologies.

¹¹ Having returned to forms of identification, it is necessary to insert here a short excursus to pre-empt potential misunderstandings that more recent accounts of the relationship between ideology and identity may cause. Schwarzmantel (2008) for instance, argues that identity has replaced ideology as the concept that drives and shapes political behaviour of collectives. What he refers to is, of course, the type of 'identity politics' mentioned above. However, while not assuming the replacement of one by the other, Malesevic (2006) argues that by fulfilling this political function, identity has itself become an ideology. It is important to note here that while such attempts to make sense of identity may be applicable to some contexts of empirical study, including some in the European context, the focus in the present text is a different one: it is not interested in identity's formative potential and function in the construction of ideology but, vice versa, in ideology's potential and function in processes of identification.

¹² This may be the case in either cognitive form or in that of practices – along the lines of Levitt and Glick-Schiller's 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging' or both.

¹³ Although he does not clarify whether he is referring to Europe, the EU or Europe, he seems to refer to the latter as he explicitly discusses the EU yet projects its ideas onto Europe as a whole.

¹⁴ One possible such narrative, less focused on fairness but on the EU's rules themselves, has already been identified in this paper in the notion of 'constitutional patriotism' (e.g. Habermas 2001), which can be seen as carrying the potential to endow collective identification and is drawn on in some of its aspects in the EU's representations of EU citizenship that aim to facilitate collective identification. It might be mentioned here, though, that a sense of fairness of these rules may be part of the narrative as a whole.

¹⁵ As in the context of the definition of ideology discussed above, one needs to caution against too radical an approach; a critical analysis does not imply an outright condemnation of the discourses and discursive practices studied, but, by means of deconstruction, holds the promise of identifying injustices and potential room for change and improvement.

¹⁶ Cf. Phillips and Hardy (2002) for several models of discourse analysis.

¹⁷ This, however, can be understood as commonly shared only in the generality of the assumption and not necessarily with regard to its substantive content.

¹⁸ Remember Diez (2001) outline of the different 'moves' of how the role of discourse or language in the construction of 'reality' can be understood.

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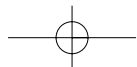
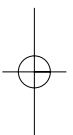
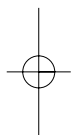
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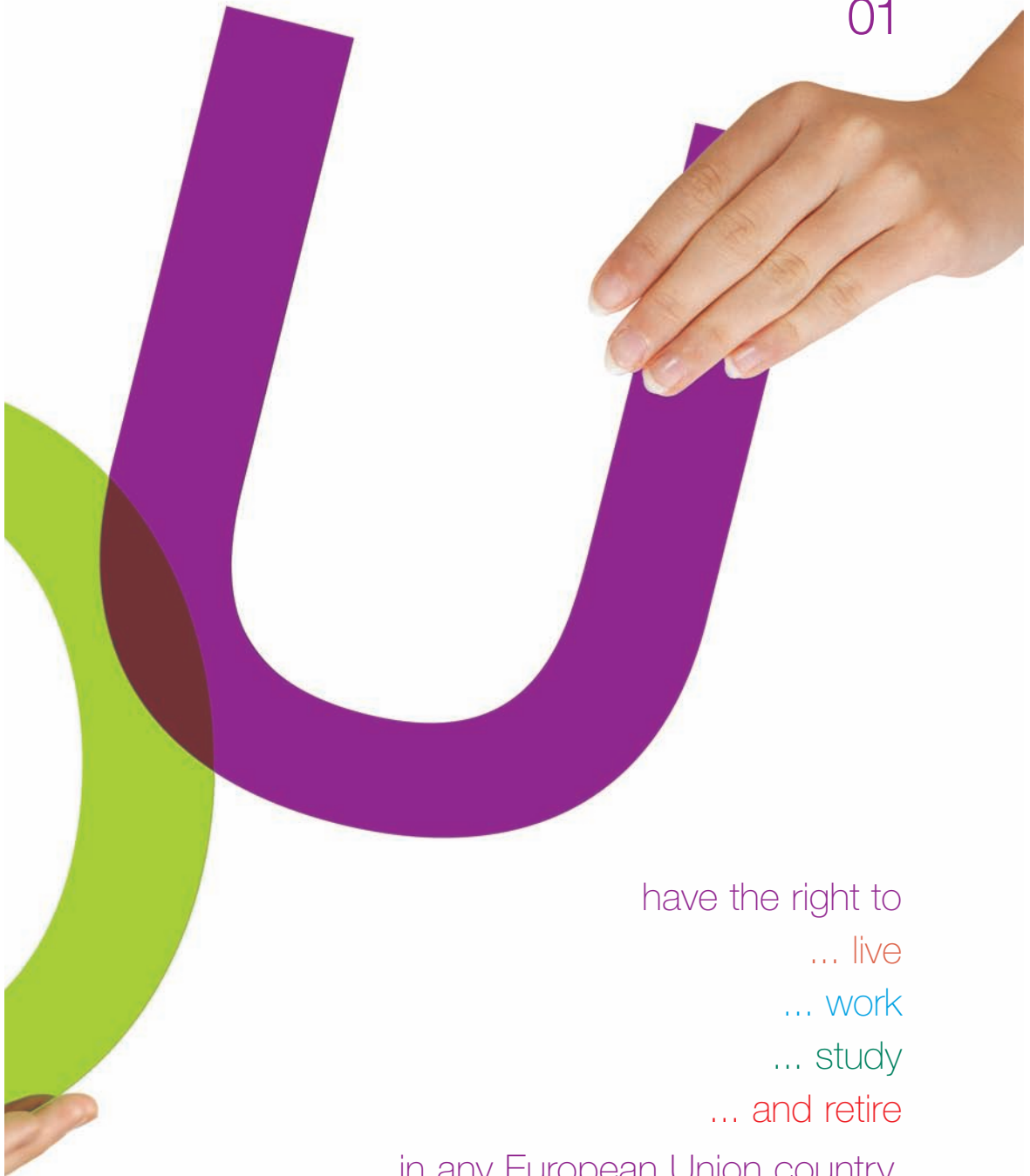
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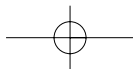
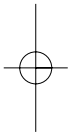
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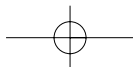
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02/03

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04/05



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08/09



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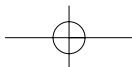


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10/11





12/13

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