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European and Political Identity in a 'Transnational Paradise'

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Comments are welcome.

Abstract. Since the implementation of the free movement of European employees policy (1968), the EU has devotedly worked for the reduction of barriers among member states. Consequently, transnational practices are encouraged beyond labour and financial basis and Europeans are more mobile than ever. At present, little is known about the impact of transnational practices on European and political identity, two crucial indicators in the comprehension of European legitimacy and representativeness. Based on 60 semi-structured comparative interviews and data from the European Social Survey (2012), this study aims to bring light in the root causes of the emergence of European identity and the political motives among transnational and non-transnational EU-citizens. This study adopts micro (qualitative interviews to Spaniards) and macro (statistical analysis using the ESS) analysis.

Keywords: European identity, political identity, transnationalism, EU, migration, integration

Introduction

This paper reflects the early stages of my doctoral research on European and political identity. Although I have been studying European feelings of attachment in the past, it has not been until I began this new academic journey that I decided to include a political essence within the identity dimension. European identity formation shares many similarities with nation-state identity studies; thus, it should not be a surprise that, similarly to French citizens towards France, Europeans are bounded with a European political framework. Furthermore, parallel to the implementation and variations of policies during the European enlargement, European citizenship has not remained static over time. One just needs to remember that there was a time when Erasmus student exchanges did not exist, and that traveling to another European country frequently implied, the use of a passport, getting exchange from a different currency and crossing border checkpoints.

At present, there is an underlying paradox of EU studies that persists: the lack of civil society inclusiveness, participation, and democratic representativeness of the European Union in spite of the expansion of citizens' rights. In the last twenty years, scholars (Wallace 1995;

Schmitt and Thomassen 2000) cast doubt on the effectiveness of the European integration project stressing that the absence of social recognition indeed damages and/or strengthens the legitimacy of the European Union and its political membership. One of the most common criticisms during the European Union's unification has been the emphasis on elite-interests (Eichenberg and Dalton 1993) overlooking the motivation of the European demos. Similar to nation-state studies', it is believed that high levels of identification towards the European Union will ameliorate and strengthen the democracy and representativeness among Europeans (Wallace 1995).

It is expected that, depending on every individual's circumstances, the relevance of European citizenship will vary. For the purposes of my study, I have limited my research to Euro-transnational citizens. Through my work, I will explore the relationship of transnationalism in Europe addressing the following research questions:

> How do Euro-transnational citizens portray their identity?
>
> How do they relate to the European Union?

Despite scholars agreeing on the fact that the number of mobile Europeans has increased since the 1990s (Favell 2003; Kuhn 2011), the socio-political consequences of this phenomenon have not been sufficiently covered in literature yet. The aim of this research is twofold. Firstly, I intend to ameliorate the understanding of European identity formation and its political implications (e.g. EU legitimacy). Secondly, bearing in mind that the bulk of

European identity studies are top-down and quantitative, I would like to contribute through a bottom-up and mixed-methods approach, in which I will conduct semi-structured interviews (opposed to structured or unstructured) and use quantitative data from the European Social Survey.

European Citizenship and Transnationalism.

The latest Eurobarometer 79 (2013) revealed significant information regarding EU citizenship: more than half of respondents (62%) acknowledged themselves as European citizens (i.e. 22% answered "yes, definitively" and 40% answered "yes, to some extent"), a result that remained stable in previous Eurobarometer studies. From a general perspective, Gerard Delanty defines citizenship 'as membership of a political community (that) involves a set of relationships between rights, duties, participation and identity (2000: 9)'. One of the strengths of Delanty's definition stems from the explicit interplay between citizens' emotions and their interaction in a political community. In his definition, citizenship is a heterogeneous constructor endowed with cultural, structural and political determinants. Although rights and duties of citizenship rely on the development of nation-states, these do not necessarily correlate at the European level and *vice versa* (e.g. recognition of same-sex unions). Normally, the specificity of every national political regime coexists within a common European framework, which echoes in the conditions of citizens. In the case of the EU, 'rights are granted to all natural and legal individuals residing in a member-state' (Bellamy *et al.* 2006: 11), but considering this national-European political framework disparity, what does the European citizenship entail?

The amendments incorporated in the Treaty of Maastricht (1993) represent a landmark on European citizenship (Bellamy *et al.* 2006). In particular, there are four articles (8.a - 8.d) that broaden the political privileges of Europeans in the areas of: the freedom of movement within the EU, possibility of getting involved in local elections (i.e. through vote or as a candidate) while residing in different member-states, diplomatic and consular protection and the right to apply to the Ombudsman. Given the growth in European citizenship rights, it can be stated that the European Union has turned into an exemplary transnational arena beyond labour and financial basis; one in which Europeans encounter less hurdles to move and settle into a different EU state, integrate socially and participate politically.

Since the reasons behind intra-European mobility vary enormously (e.g. tourism, labour, education), one logical question left on the table is: what makes a transnational citizen transnational? The concept 'transnational' is extensively used in fields such as sociology, politics, anthropology, and migration studies. Theresa Kuhn's (2011) research on transnational citizens identifies three features attached to this concept: a) possessing a *transnational background*, b) *transnational practices* and, c) *transnational human capital*. The first one is usually inherited (i.e. ethnic minority background) but can be also acquired (i.e. obtaining dual citizenship). The subsequent characteristics imply an active and willingly engagement from individuals. *Transnational practices*, involve activities in which the individual establishes contact with citizens from different nationalities. These interactions do include both sporadic (e.g. being given directions in a foreign country) and durable ones (e.g. exchanging e-mails with a close friend from a different nationality). Finally, *transnational*

human capital takes into account all skills needed for encountering any experience abroad (e.g. language knowledge, cultural awareness, level of education).

In this paper, the notion of transnationalism is limited to Europeans crossing borders within the European Union. More specifically, the focus resides on the case study of second-generation Spaniards living in Germany. This population is particularly interesting since they fall into the category of transnational individuals defined by Kuhn (2011), i.e.:

- Belongs to an ethnic minority (i.e. Spaniards living in Germany),

- Crosses European borders actively (i.e. they usually travel between Spain and Germany every year),

- Possess high language skills: they speak fluently, at least, two European languages (Spanish and German),

- Has a transnational human capital: not only with family members, but also in Germany they tend to interact with migrants (European and non-European).

Once the notion of transnational individuals for this particular case has been introduced, how does the reality of EU-transnational citizens connect with European identity studies?

European Identity

Traditionally European identity has been deemed under two predominant approaches: top-down and bottom-up. The first one considers that national identities are fundamentally constrained and shaped by elite groups (Rokkan 1975; Gellner 1983; Rokkan and Urwin 1983; Subotic 2011), whilst bottom-up studies highlight the importance of the demos in the

construction of feelings of attachment towards any political entity (Deutsch 1969; Brubaker 1992; Breuilly 1994; Díez Medrano 2003; Fligstein 2008; Bellucci *et al.* 2012). Although there has recently been a switch from top-down to bottom-up studies, it should be noted that most of the literature is overwhelmingly quantitative and top-down, lacking a reflective understanding of the formation and establishment of the cultural and political identity of Europeans. Next, main European identity bottom-up theories will be discussed.

Although several studies have connected Europeanness with economic evaluations (Anderson 1998), and domestic performance (Eichenberg & Dalton 1993; Sanchez-Cuenca 2000; Rohrscheider 2002), more recent research seems to agree on the following statements: European identity is crucial for the future and legitimacy of the European Union, it is a multidimensional concept, and it cannot be exclusively tackled using economic and/or vote turnout predictors (Delanty 2002; Boomgaarden *et al.* 2011; Bellucci *et al.* 2012). Evidence from data (e.g. Eurobarometer) demonstrates that Europeans do not exclusively feel attached to the European identity. This can be combined with local and national identities. Therefore discussing European identity feelings entail theories that help us understanding the coexistence of multiples identities (Inglehart 1970; Anderson 1991; Hooghe and Marks 2004; Bruter 2004 Díez Medrano 2008).

Karl Deutsch (1969), a classic author in the realm of identity and transnational studies, believed that national identities are constructed and fluctuate between the requirements of a historical background within a state, and the horizontal spread of a shared culture. In addition to this, the collaboration between countries and the phenomenon of citizens crossing frontiers would ameliorate feelings and perpetuation of a given community (Deutsch *et al.*1957). Ronald Inglehart is another scholar interested in citizens' ability to

'relate to a remote community' (1970: 47) like Europe. Using quantitative cross-national data to measure Europeans' opinions (i.e. foreign travel, mass media exposure, community size, free movement of workers and abolition of tariffs) Inglehart developed his theory of *cognitive mobilization*. His approach is still used in academia to understand both support towards European integration and feelings of attachment.

Social scientists have also studied the connection between European identity and other identities. Sophie Duchesne and Andre-Paul Frognier (1995) addressed European identity in relation to national identities, concluding that national feelings do not necessarily impede attachment towards the European Union. Later, Díez Medrano (2008) will provide evidence of these findings, suggesting the existence of nested identities among German, Spanish and British citizens. Through the use of a mixed-methods approach, Díez Medrano concluded that historical and cultural factors are essential in understanding different views of European support and its identity.

In the last twenty years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on European identity embracing more variables (e.g. demographic, historical). This is the case of Gerard Delanty (2002). His model, *European cosmopolitanism*, stems from the cultural and historical conflict of the cosmopolitan European legacy based on the models of European cultural particularism and European people. After an extensive review on previous European literature, this author presumes that European identity is dynamic, inclusive and, as a consequence of the historical strife, originated as a conscious deliberation among Europeans. Its consciousness attribute refers to the reflectivity of leaving part of the national identity behind ('forgetting of history') for the sake of a European identity ('the remembering of history', Delanty 2002: 355). Finally, Paolo Bellucci, David Sanders and Fabio Serricchio

(2012) conducted a study in-depth testing major European theories (i.e. cognitive mobilization, instrumental rationality, political mobilization and affective/identitarian). This work represents an important contribution to European literature due to the combination of structural, social, and historical (e.g. religion, political history) factors under citizens' perception. One of their most significant conclusions is that closeness and trust towards other EU citizens strengthens European and political identity (Bellucci *et al.* 2012).

Although these studies explain feelings of identification due to external factors, this paper states that theories addressing individuals' psych are fundamental in identity research. So far, European studies in political science tend to lack the inclusion of psychological perspectives around the self. For instance, the notion of social circles under Georg Simmel's (1908) view is an interesting concept useful for the comprehension of European identity. In his analysis, he uses the constructor of *strangers* to understand their relation within a given community. According to Simmel, every *stranger* possesses a double nature: one in which s/he feels connected with, and another in which s/he feels detached. Not only the *stranger* is divided between two worlds (exclusion and inclusion), but s/he is also torn by the relation towards social circles: as a member of this group and as an individual within a circle. Finally, Simmel highlights that the *stranger* feels shaped by two drives within social circles: a) the constant need of individualization (i.e. being different to others), and b) the search for social differentiation (i.e. being part of a group with similar characteristics).

This work contributes to identity knowledge by providing inner explanations in relation to alternative factors that might foster or prevent individuals from developing a European identity. This raises some interesting questions. Firstly, how does Simmel explain the adhesion to other social circles, in other words, the process of social differentiation? And

secondly, why do some individuals have the urge to expand their social circles and how does it affect their identity? On one hand, the process of individualization, the sense of uniqueness within society, fills individual's life with positive and significant values; in other words, making his/her life significant. On the other hand, it may occur that those who reach a high level of individualization within a group, will be overcome by a stronger need to move into a broader social circle.

The process of adhesion to a different social circle is not random and tends to appear between social circles that are alike and apart from each other (e.g. immigrants from different backgrounds in a host society). In fact, these similarities will foster mutual ties and relations based on solidarity. Furthermore, every time an individual enters a new social circle they have to deal with the constant struggle between the non-differentiation and individualization continuum. Although Simmel (1908) does not state that expanding into a bigger social circle will certainly occur, he affirms that there is a pattern, a predisposition that echoes among societies. Joining bigger social circles has an impact on individual's identity since it expands.

Zygmunt Bauman in his book "Liquid Modernity" (1999) states that modern societies mainly characterized by liberalization, flexibility, and new technology alter the nature of individual's interaction. All these liquid qualities promote means that "allow the system and free agents to remain radically disengaged, to by-pass each other instead of meeting (1999: 5)." According to this author, modern society is turning into a 'place without a place' (1999: 99) due to the reproduction of insignificant spaces (e.g. shopping centres or restaurants like Burger King that have the same design anywhere). For Bauman, individuals cannot escape from these social changes pushing them to follow and adapt to this liquid model in order to pursuit their freedom. This adjustment shapes their interaction with other subjects, or as

Bauman denominates them: *strangers*. In addition to this, he believes that social interaction taking place in liquid societies are endowed with the premise of interacting: "with strangers without holding their strangeness against them and without pressing them to surrender it or to renounce some or all the traits that have made them strangers in the first place (1999: 104)."

Now, coming back to the case of transnational individuals, has the EU evolved into 'a place without a place'? The EU is politically portrayed as an international entity that promotes union and diversity. In fact, the EU integrates different member-states under the same umbrella providing certain privileges. Therefore, it protects ethnic minorities, integrates several languages and facilitates Euro-transnational practices for all its citizens. In other words, the EU promotes the idea that all Europeans are *welcome strangers* (following Simmel (1908) and Bauman's (1999) perspective); strangers that can interact with other strangers in a liquid European society while sharing and reproducing similar characteristics (i.e. common currency). To sum up, the European Union has turned into 'a place without a place' that encourages liquid interactions through the allowance of freedom of movement.

Methodology and Data Collection

The methodology section is still a work in progress. Therefore, any suggestions, criticisms or comments will be highly appreciated. The dependent variable of this study is European identity, understood from a socio-political perspective. The independent variables constitute the characteristics of Euro-transnational citizens described by Kuhn's (2011) definition: crossing European borders actively, being in touch with people who live abroad (nationals or non-nationals), advance language skills in, at least, two European languages,

belonging to an ethnic minority and sufficient knowledge to adapt to the culture of any host country.

The methodology is seeking to combine qualitative (i.e. semi-structure interviews) and quantitative (i.e. European Social Survey/Eurobarometer) tools. As it has been previously stated, the bulk of European studies approached identity from a top-down (i.e. elite groups) and quantitates perspective. For this reason, this paper aims to contribute to the literature offering a bottom-up (i.e. citizens) and mixed-methods methodology. The qualitative data will be based on semi-structure interviews of approximately 60 respondents. The sample will be divided by two groups: transnational and non-transnational Europeans. The intention is to analyse two sets of European citizens with similar cultural backgrounds, one control group and another experimental group, in which their main difference is the transnational dimension.

The European nationality of the sample for the interviews will be Spaniards. There are a couple of reasons for selecting this group. First of all, Spain has been strongly shaped transnationally since the XX century. European emigration among Spaniards was often encouraged during Franco's dictatorship (1939 - 1975). According to Carlos Sanz (2010) this was presented as part of the Spanish 'economic miracle', facilitated by bilateral agreements through official channels for migration. In fact, between 1960 and 1975 approximately 600,000 Spanish people migrated to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Consequently, in 1963 Spaniards formed the second biggest group of migrants who lived in the FRG, after Italian migrants' (Sanz, 2010). Spanish emigration decreased until the latest financial

difficulties (2008), moving again the migration pendulum, pushing citizens in Spain to leave[1].

The second justification for the choice of citizens from this European member-state is based

on linguistic foundations. As a fluent Spanish speaker and considering the weight of

language for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative interviews, interviewing Spaniards

represent a qualitative advantage in the understanding of populations' portrayal of their

European identity.

The structure of the interviews will be based on key topics relevant in identity studies

(e.g. definition of the European Union, feelings of attachment at the European level, political

interest and participation). Although there will be an outline and a set of questions,

respondents will be given the freedom to discuss the topics in-depth. The expected average

length of the interviews will be between 45-60 minutes, depending on the answers of

respondents. The interviewee will be asked for permission to record the interviews and these

recordings will be transcribed and translated for analysis. Face-to-face interaction will be

prioritised but due to the nature of the topic, respondents will be given the option of being

interviewed by the telephone or via videoconference.

The process of typification is a qualitative tool utilized to analyze and classify the

information gathered by social scientists. This approach is based on the idea that individuals

are embedded in a social structure in which they socialize and interact with other subjects

(Berger and Luckmann 1966; Habermas 1973; Simmel 1904). The adaptation of a person in

this social context is constrained by personal drives and others' disapproval, resulting in a

'predictable' behavior. Therefore, humans explain their world and experiences through similar

social concepts (McKinney 1969). In the process of typification, social scientists intend to

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[1] Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.es/2014/01/04/cuantos-espanoles-han-emigrado_n_4529600.html, seen on
March 2014,

find constructs stressed by respondents, which aspects they find significant and how their ideas are justified in the attempt to organize and express their knowledge. For this reason, the key questions for sociologists using this methodology are "how", "from what" and "for what purpose."

Finally, I am still working on the quantitative aspect of my methodology, due to the difficulties finding datasets with enough demographic variables to identify transnational citizens.

Results

The results presented in this section gather the interviews conducted during my master's program and they exclusively refer to the social aspect of European identity, since as a first year Ph.D. student it has not been feasible to develop further data yet. It was stated at the beginning of this paper that the political variable has been included recently and will not appear in these results. However, in the following paragraphs the reader will find the most relevant information regarding the social profile of the sample, perceptions as a *stranger*, definition of the European Union and meaning towards this entity.

These data comprise of 15 semi-structured interviews conducted to second-generation Spaniards living in Germany[2]. This data was gathered through the snowball technique. The main channel was established through the Spanish associations formed by the first generation in Germany that are still active. Following Kuhn's (2011) definition (i.e. possessing transnational background, transnational human capital and transnational practices), it could be stated that second-generation Spaniards represent an exemplary case of transnational

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[2] Second-generation Spaniards involve the offspring of Spanish individuals who migrated during the last two decades (60's - 70's) of Franco's dictatorship and settled in Germany.

citizens. They live between two cultures: the one from their Spanish background transmitted through family heritage, and the one acquired through the process of socialization (i.e. school, university, work) in Germany. In most cases, they are still related to Spain, travelling and maintaining contact with family and friends back 'home', and they are fluent in, at least, German and Spanish.

The sample of the study is gendered-balanced; it is composed of eight women and seven men (see figure 1). Ten out of fifteen respondents were born in Spain and joined a migratory member of the family (mostly men) once s/he was settled in Germany. Ten of the respondents were born during the 50's and 60's; there are four respondents from the 70'-80's and one who was born during the last decade of the 21st century. The cities of origin correspond to those in which the migration phenomenon in Spain during the 60's took place, frequently in the most rural and impoverished areas: Andalusia, Galicia and Estremadura.

All respondents were fluent in German and Spanish. Although they all learned German at school[3], Spanish was acquired in several ways. Due to the lack of German knowledge among most first generation parents', Spanish was the dominant language used within the family unit. Regarding other European languages, thirteen of the respondents confirmed the fact that they spoke English fluently. There are some respondents that can speak up to 5 languages, adding Italian and French to the three that have been already

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[3] Compared to the first generation, there has been an educational improvement between first and second generation. Except for a couple of cases, the highest level of education among the parents of the second generation corresponds to primary and basic education. In the case of the sample, there are only three respondents with a basic level of education (i.e. high school), four with a medium level and eight with university and, in a couple of cases, postgraduate studies.

mentioned. Furthermore, some respondents are still able to communicate with other family members using the local dialect of their parent's hometown (e.g. Galician).

Figure 1: Description of the sample.
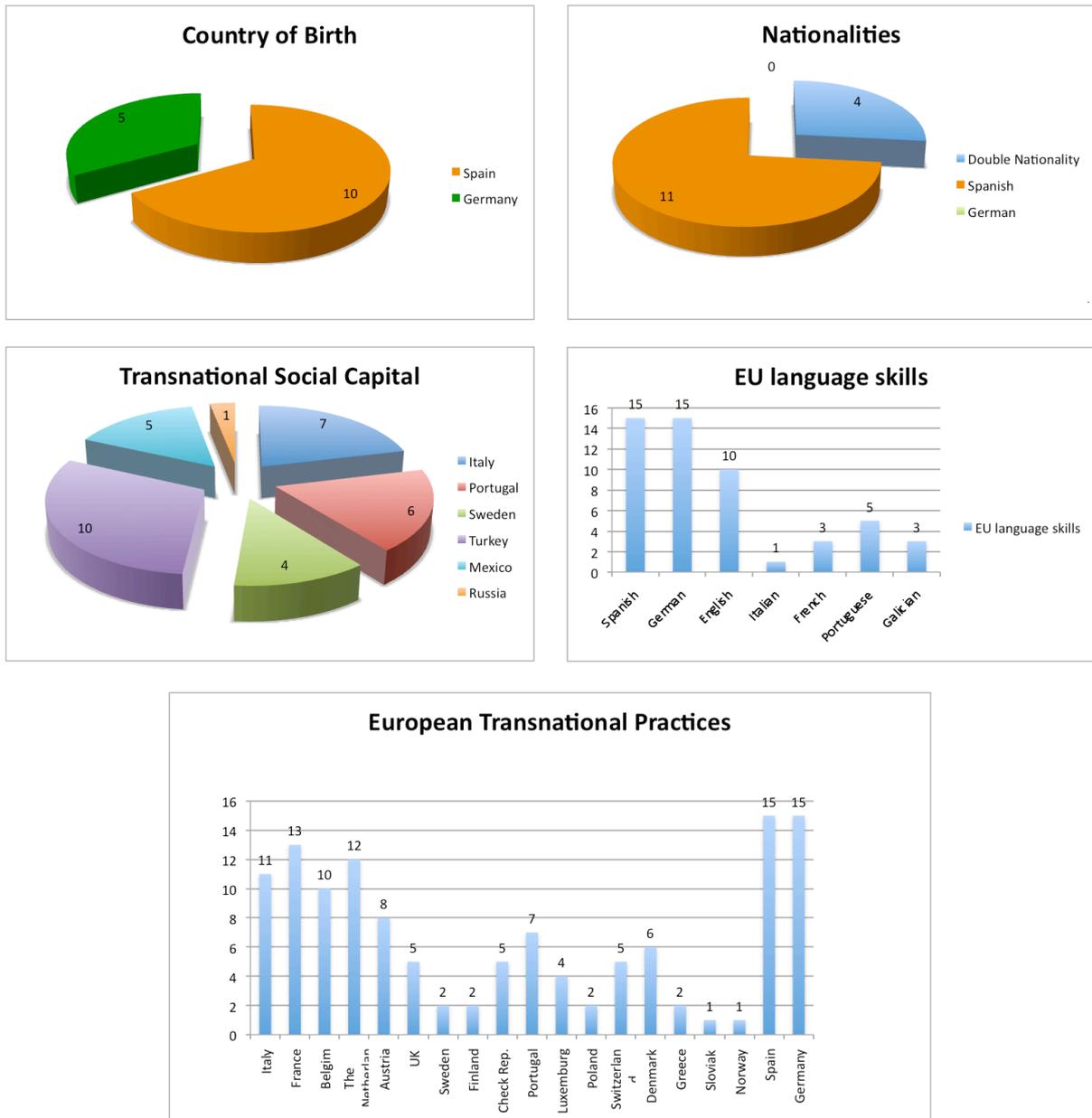
Source: own

The favourite destinations among the sample are Germany and Spain, stating that they try to visit relatives and friends in Spain, at least, once a year. However, respondents sporadically cross borders of other member-states. For instance, all respondents have visited at least 6 European countries (apart from Spain and Germany). The most visited ones were: the Netherlands, Italy, France, Belgium and Portugal.

The Romantic, the Disenchanted and the Sceptical European

The tool used for the analysis of the interviews was typification. As it was explained in the methodology section, this method is based in a process of global understanding and comparison of different social structures that sociologists find in respondents' discourses. Therefore, instead of comparing the results in different groups of themes (e.g. definition of the EU, flag identification), the interviews were read considering respondents as a whole social unit. After this procedure, three remarkably different social types of Eurotransnational individuals were found: *romantic, disenchanted* and s*ceptical*. Broadly speaking, the main difference between the first two types and the last one is the level of embracement of their European identity. In this case, romantic and disenchanted individuals admit to share a sense of belonging to the European Union, in other words, they perceive themselves as Europeans; while sceptical individuals remain strongly attached to their Spanish identity.

If we look at these categories closer, there are other interesting aspects beyond those related to European identity. As the word itself evokes, romantic individuals tend to portray an idealized picture of the EU, claiming its achievements, personal positive experiences and improvements in their lives. On the other hand, disenchanted individuals do not frame the European Union in such optimistic terms. In fact, besides a shared sense of European

identity, disenchanted citizens do not fully comprehend the political or economic purposes of the EU or consider if it influences their personal affairs. Compared to romantic individuals, they present disappointed attitudes regarding the duties of the EU and its evolution. Finally, sceptical individuals offer a narrower picture of the EU appealing to their lack of interest in politics or failures of this international entity.

The Stranger

One recurrent idea shared by all three social types when asked: "What do you generally answer when someone asks you 'where are you from?' How do you define yourself?" was the concept of the *stranger* (Simmel 1908). Second-generation Spaniards have been living in Germany for decades and although they perceived themselves as fully integrated members of this society, the label of *stranger* persists. Sometimes, these differences reside in the values and behaviour gulf within the German society (see romantic 3); while, on other occasions, this label has been acquired based on their physical appearance (see disenchanted 5), in other words, outsiders with different features (i.e. physically and emotionally) and minorities in a German society.

> *"I say I'm Spanish, because I am. My parents are both Spanish, as a child, I socialized as a Spaniard although I obviously feel entirely integrated in the German society, it is obvious to me that I see differences with the rest. Which differences? Things to do with behaviour and with how behaviour is perceived; I see differences between how Spaniards and Germans are raised. I can see it every time I go back to Spain. Even though my behaviour remains the same, I am better understood there than in Germany (romantic 3)".*

> *"I say I'm Spanish because I have always considered myself Spanish. And since in Germany I am still holding a Spanish nationality, at home I always speak Spanish, my family comes from Spain and German people have always called me "the Spaniard". Nowadays, I always say I'm Spanish, but now I've also been saying, "I was born in Germany", but I am Spanish (disenchanted 5)".*

On the other hand, some respondents seem to have a constant feeling of *strangeness*. In the following quote (see sceptical 1), we observe how this individual claims to feel Spaniard due to his Spanish socialization and family background. However, he admits that he has also developed his roots in Germany.

> *"(I say I'm…) from Spain because I am Spanish, I feel Spanish and I will always be Spanish. I have thought it through; I was born in Spain and I'll be Spanish my whole life. My roots, however, are now here (Germany) and I feel right at home. Despite that, my homeland, my nation and my heart are Spanish (…). I cannot tell you how Spaniards are nowadays in Spain. That's a major problem for emigrants, they're stuck (sceptical 1)".*

Lastly, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the respondent acknowledges that there is a gap between his personal definition and the current reality of what being Spaniard means in the present day. It seems as if he were torn between two social circles, in both of which he is an outsider: a "Spanish social circle" that does not correspond to the present Spanish society, but in which he establishes his national identity, and a German social circle in which he has managed to "feel like home", but not strong enough for him to claim a German identity.

Defining the European Union

Respondents portray the European Union in several ways. Romantic social types provide a broad definition that includes subjective (e.g. democracy) and objective properties (e.g. European flag). For instance, they assign to the EU the following characteristics: a positive entity, a strong historical and philosophical background, the defence of human rights, multiculturalism, a welfare state, freedom, lack of frontiers, Christian background, team-

working values, something to stand up for, living in peace and a common currency (see

romantic 1).

> *"I think that the collaboration among countries is a great, positive idea, something worth fighting for. Diversity is a wonderful thing. I am a convinced European. (…) Christian tradition is truly relevant in Europe, we have a very rich culture in Europe, well, it is truly enviable. I believe the Enlightenment was essential and characteristic of Europe (romantic 1)".*

Generally, disenchanted respondents depict the European Union in less subjective

terms. They consider democracy, the disappearance of war conflicts' among European

countries, a common currency, unity, solidarity and freedom of movement as the main

attributes to define the EU (see disenchanted 3). Compared to romantic individuals, their

definition is narrower and refers to less subjective terms.

> *"The EU got together to change their currency and to be stronger together; otherwise, America would always be [economically] stronger than Europe. Plus, this way there won't be a war among them, as I believe they signed a UN agreement not to start wars [among themselves] (disenchanted 3)".*

Finally, sceptical respondents downsize their definition of the EU to economic

concerns (e.g. economic solidarity, common currency), washing out all subjective attributes.

Most sceptical individuals conceive that the emergence of the EU is based on economic

interests, which has not necessarily improved their living conditions. Moreover, they cast

doubt on the future existence of the EU due to recent economical struggles (see sceptical 1).

> *"To me, it is a community which is mainly based on the economy, they got together because of the economy, to do business, also trying not to lose each country's identity, it is a very difficult project that nowadays, not only because of the crisis, is becoming more and more complicated. To me, it's all a group of large companies that got together. (…)The idea was that everyone would support each other, and now the whole thing's going down. And by removing the mark and the peseta, they also removed much a country's identity, through its currency, its way of paying. It's all an idea which is trying to turn something which is not a country into a country, but it's a continent, and many haven't joined in, such as Great Britain (sceptical 1)".*

Identity and Symbols

A way to test the influence of top-down constructors upon respondents is through understanding the feelings about the European flag among second-generation Spaniards. Are they familiarized with it? Do they identify themselves with it? Would they say it represents them? Generally speaking, the European flag does not have a strong impact on respondents' lives. All respondents could recognize it and referred to it as "the flag with the blue background and the little starts in it". The main differences between respondents reside in the level of identification with this symbol. In fact, romantic individuals identify themselves with the European flag, since it reminds them of previous positive experiences in the realm of the EU:

> *"Having to choose between Europe and Germany, I feel more represented with the European flag. The European flag includes the achievements of Germany, Italy, Spain...crickey, when I go to Italy I have a good time, and I also find the Brits amusing. The European flag is like having the chance of remembering all those positive things that I've known in all the European countries (romantic 3)".*

When it comes to the European flag, disenchanted and sceptical subjects do not feel represented by it. The first social type has more sympathy for the national (Spanish or German) and local flags, based on their familiar roots and German socialization (see disenchanted 1) Apparently, disenchanted individuals do not perceive the European flag as meaningful because the EU does not necessarily evoke any emotion in them. For them, the European flag reminds them of the economical agreements or difficulties:

> *"I identify myself mainly with the Catalonian flag, as well as the one of Hamburg, as I have relatives in Hamburg, which is where I was born and I also have relatives in Catalonia (disenchanted 1)".*

> *"I don't feel represented by it, no. Because I haven't felt it yet. Up until now, it is only an entity, over there, but not one that is doable, maybe because of the economic*

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matters, with so many problems yet, I think it would need much more time until it really gets to people (disenchanted 4)".

As expected, the lack of identity with the EU among sceptical subjects entails that the Spanish flag is the only one that sceptical individuals perceive as relevant. This feeling is justified by the fact that there are stronger emotional attachments to Spain than to Germany or Europe:

> *"Yes, I do know the European flag; that's the one with the little stars, isn't it? But I don't feel represented by it. Why? I don't know, I just don't. The only flag I identify myself with is the Spanish flag. Being Spanish is an honour, being Galician is something to be proud of. I don't feel represented by the European flag, only by the Spanish one or the one of Pontevedra. I'm not interested in politics, I know nothing about them (sceptical 3)".*

Meaning of the European Union

This is one of the questions in which one could best appreciate the strongest cleavages between the different social types of this research. In the discussion of the meaning the EU has for respondents, romantics consider that the EU is embedded with many subjective features (e.g. different cultures, civilization). Furthermore, the EU is perceived as a borderless place in which individuals move and settle freely (see romantic 3). Again, the idea of fluidity appears. Romantic subjects are willing to change their location or adapt to other cultures, simply because they do not consider other European countries as different from their own.

> *"It's philosophy in the cultural aspect of it. To me, Europe means culture, as it does art, thought such as traditions… To me Europe is the cradle of civilization and I identify myself with European culture. I could see myself living in virtually any European country. Homeland? I feel deeply identified with Europe (romantic 3)".*

In the case of disenchanted individuals, their answers reflect doubts and feelings of mistrust towards the EU. Providing a specific meaning or definition turns into a struggle.

Moreover, this meaning is contaminated by the present economic and cultural difficulties that the EU is facing (see disenchanted 5). For instance, these individuals tend to stress the economic aspects of the European Union with a sense of disappointment. It is interesting the metaphor that disenchanted 5 uses. The belief of the EU as a puzzle is especially significant and it highlights this idea of solid social circles; in other words, disenchanted respondents present some difficulties in the identification of themselves with other European countries, considering that they have been unjustifiably and artificially "glued". Contrary to romantic subjects, they emphasize the differences diminishing the similarities with other European cultures.

> *"Phew! (thinking)… well a jigsaw puzzle of countries which really are too different and that want to merge, but mainly because of commerce and law; I mean being able to walk from one country to the other, of being able to appreciate what our neighbour has (…) but, in essence, it is difficult because we're talking about very different cultures, which think differently and whose origins differ so much from one another than, even here today I can tell the difference. (…) It's like gluing together something that is still far from being called Europe. Europe wants a union and it's forcing the same law to all countries as if they were the same, but not every country is at the same level, and you cannot apply it to the individual. (…)At the moment, nothing, it is like a puzzle which is being put together but still has a long way to go (disenchanted 5)".*

Finally, sceptical individuals present the least affectionate response. Instead, they highlight the benefits and facilities of Euro-transnational practices "freedom of movement and working is an advantage, common currency," referring to the improvements experienced before Spain belonged to the EU (in 1986). Although sceptical subjects consider the "lack of frontiers" as positive aspects, they claim that the European Union has no emotional value for them. The idea of "being European" for sceptical individuals is justified by belonging to Spain, solely based on territorial grounds (see sceptical 1).

> *"Europe is a continent, just like Africa, South America or Australia. Europe to me is not more important than it was before, even after getting together. What is a real*

advantage is the freedom to work anywhere, to travel, to pay, not having to change currency, just like we did when we travelled by car and had to change [currency], that sort of thing are easier, borders are now more open (...). I know I am European because I live in Europe, but, if asked, I say I am Spanish, just another human being in this world. To me, Europe doesn't play a bigger part than others, it doesn't count for much (sceptical 1)".

Wrapping Results Up

The fact that transnational citizens are constantly exposed to interact with other Europeans and, therefore, other EU identities, indeed facilitates a situational and deliberative identity process. For instance, transnational Europeans are repeatedly asked about their roots (e.g. introducing oneself, being asked for international identification due to bureaucratic procedures). In the line with Delanty's work, transnational citizens would present higher chances to reflect upon their national identity that might lead them to embrace the similarities and differences of a European identity.

The graph below (see figure 2) illustrates the phases of European identity among the transnational citizens of the sample. The first and smallest circle symbolises a preliminary stage in which individuals have not developed a European feeling yet (e.g. sceptical respondents). Individuals at this stage tend to avoid intimate relationships with outsiders and only feel comfortable in a reduced number of social contexts. The state of their social relations is described as solid (Bauman 1999) since their social circles experience little change overtime and they understand that individuals outside their social circles are 'aliens'. In addition to this, the feeling of unlikeness experienced by individuals in this first stage towards outsiders prevents them to expand their social circle, constraining the process of social process of non-differentiation and prioritizing their individualization (Simmel 1908).

The solidity in their social circles it is also depicted by sceptical individuals who need an attachment to a physical context.

Figure 2: Stages of European Identity in Euro-Transnational citizens.

First Stage

Second Stage

Third Stage
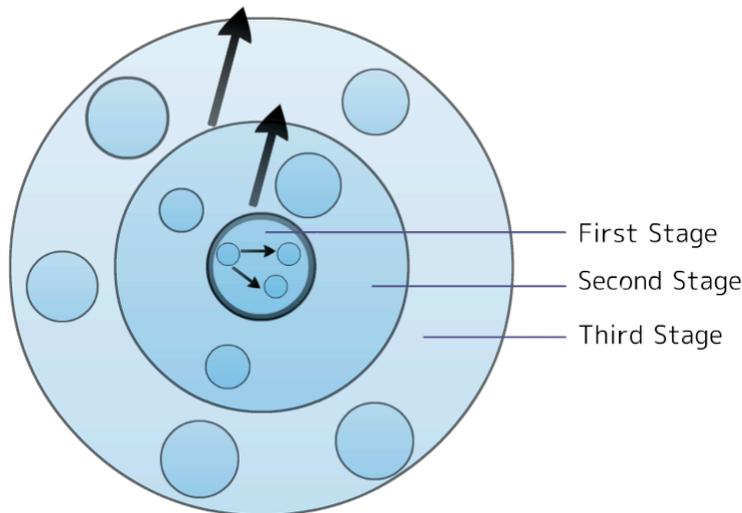
Consequently, this closeness to the self-shaped imagine of the Spanish culture prevents them to expand their social circle and their identity remains immovable. The evolution to a second stage occurs when individuals experience a higher sense of alikeness and closeness than dissimilarity towards other social circles. This is the case of disenchanted subjects whom social circles state' are viscous, a degree between the solidness of the first stage and liquidity of the last one. To disenchanted subjects, the idea of integrating newcomers seems conflictive due to, mainly, cultural differences. Although disenchanted individuals present several identities (e.g. Spanish, German and European), they are embedded with an inner identity struggle. For these individuals, joining bigger social circles could become a detriment for their dominant identity (i.e. national identity). For instance, in this case, European identity would remain into an inferior level of acceptance until subjects manage to solve their identity conflict.

The third and last stage is characterized by a sense of abstractness and liquidity towards other social circles. At this level, individuals understand cultural diversity as a learning and growing experience. Enlarging social circles is desirable since it is perceived as a mean for self-identity-enrichment. Romantic respondents belong to this third level. In several occasions romantic individuals evoked the idea of "global citizen", abandoning the notion of frontiers or migration itself. At this stage, subjects developed a strong sense of commonness towards other strangers. For them, the urge of non-differentiation towards other social circles overcomes the process of individualization. Therefore, they embrace different identities without the threat of losing their own. In sum, the identification towards the European Union is explained by the process of: "differentiation of social groups and frequently, there arise a need and an inclination to reach out beyond the original spatial, economic, and mental boundaries of the group and, in connection with the increase in individualization and concomitant mutual repulsion of group elements (Calhoun *et al*. 2007: 301)."

Conclusions

This thesis started by posing several research questions regarding transnational practices within the European Union. Contrary to the top-down approach, this paper focuses on the emergence of the European identity from citizens' interaction. The key question is: if European identity is socially constructed, which role do transnational practices play in it? Could Euro-transnational practices promote this feeling? Although Euro-transnational citizens (i.e. second-generation Spaniards) have great chances to develop a European identity, being a transnational individual does not fully guarantee that this identity will emerge (like it did not among sceptical respondents) or that it will be equally intense among individuals.

Compared to other Europeans, Euro-transnational citizens have higher chances to establish relations with other member-state citizens. As Bauman (1999) would put it: establishing liquid relations, among outsiders with a touch of commonness and nearness. Scholars have demonstrated that the coexistence of several identities is possible. For instance, Díez Medrano (2008) showed in one of his studies that Spaniards might present nested identities: Basque, Spanish and European. According to Simmel (1908), the expansion of an individual from a local identity (e.g. Basque) to a bigger social circle (i.e. national or European identity) depends on the process of social differentiation of the individual.

In this paper three types of European identity were differentiated. When a European experiences a stronger feeling of strangeness while interacting with another EU citizen, the need of individualization will be stronger than non-differentiation. This explains the reasons among sceptical individuals to remain in his/her social circle (i.e. stage 1) and do not develop a sense of European identity. On the other hand, a feeling of alikeness while interacting with another Europeans might impulse the expansion to a bigger social circle (i.e. stages 2 and 3) similarly to romantic and disenchanted respondents.

I have identified two causes that might originate the individualization decision-making process taking place in the first stage. All second-generation Spaniards of the sample experienced a feeling of strangeness in the host society. In the case of sceptical subjects, strangeness manifests doubly. Firstly, the label of outsiders *chases* them due to their inevitable non-native condition. Secondly, sceptical individuals are aware that they do not represent the picture of Spaniards at present, since they (or their families) left Spain almost 50 years ago. It was stemmed from the interviews that this group simultaneously feels a

stranger in both Germany and Spain. However, they perceive a bigger cultural gap towards the host society than their family country.

As a final note, I would like to share some of the reflections for my current and future research. The starting point of this paper comes from the results of my master thesis. Obviously, there are several limitations that I aim to overcome through my Ph.D. Firstly, I seek to conduct a comparative method among transnational and non-transnational respondents. This comparison will be easier through qualitative methodology than quantitative means. In fact, the lack of transnational and demographic variables in quantitative datasets (e.g. Eurobarometer) hinders the identification of transnational citizens and their feelings towards the European Union. Secondly, including a political perspective in the study of European identity requires a review of the theoretical framework used in the past. Naturally, this is being addressed as part of the literature review stage. However, even though transnational and identity theories from a liquid perspective helped in the understanding of the results obtained, this might not be the case of the data collected in my Ph.D. Thirdly, and connected with the second point, I expect to be able to elaborate a mixed-methodology that will help me addressing my research questions adequately.

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