The Idea of Europe: Identity-building from a Historical Perspective[1]

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Introduction

History illustrates that Europe is a dynamic and evolving entity with many faces, multiple identities, multiple expressions and experiences and diversified cooperation forms.[2] Europe is a two thousand year civilisation with a multiplicity of cultures; it is also a socio-economic model and a unique integration process. The whole European history is characterised by forms and attempts of economic, political, military and cultural cooperation to search for equilibrium between integration and diversity within certain contours. Europe is however in the first place a community of shared values, based on values such as the centrality of the human being, freedom, equality, respect for human rights, and acceptance of diversity as an asset, tolerance, justice and solidarity. Europe is also a political project trying to unite people while respecting their diversity. Today however Europe is struggling to keep its diversified societal model alive in the midst of complex and interconnected issues of globalisation vs. europeanisation.[3]

Identity and identity-building have been treated by numerous scholars from various disciplines and perspectives. Many have contributed to understand the complexity and the dynamism of these terms and offered theoretical instruments to deal with changing realities. However identity remains an open concept, increasingly shaped by growing interdependencies and transformations in the current international system. *"The globalising world is characterised by some asymmetry between the growing extra-territorial nature of much power and the continuing territoriality of the ways in which people live their everyday lives."*[4]

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1   Parts of this contribution have benefitted from Chiarello, A., *European Identity beyond the Nation State. Plurality and Inclusion for a new Democratic Space*, Thesis, June 2012, University of Padua.

2   An innovative analysis of ideas about Europe from an interdisciplinary perspective is given by Dainotto, R., *Europe (in Theory)*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007.

3   Giddens, A., *Europe in the Global Age*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007.

4   Bekemans, L., "A Cosmopolitan Perspective of Multi-level Governance in Europe," in *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights*, 2/2010. p. 46.

The European Union can be perceived as a unique but complex system of governance with a policy mix of supranational and intergovernmental elements. After many centuries of rivalries and wars among European countries, the end of the Second World War paved the way for a peace-building process of integration. This process has followed a "neo-functionalist" step-by-step approach very much embodied by Jean Monnet, envisaging spill-over effects from the economy to the political area and beyond. We are convinced that the only way of making people identify with Europe and build a sense of belonging without trying to replace national affiliations or marginalise regional or national identities is the development of a community driven political project, embodied in a set of shared values and common principles. Such a political consensus might give coherence to its actions, legitimacy to its institutions and inspire the citizens of Europe.[5]

I. The Idea of Europe

The French poet and philosopher Paul Valéry described the common characteristics of Europe in his "*Homo Europaeus.*" He focussed on the Europe of the spirit, shaped by the legacies of Rome, Athens and Jerusalem. This means that Europe is a world of historical references, memories and experiences shared by people. In his book "*The Origins of European civilisation*"[6] Hendrik Brugmans identified two major elements of European civilisation: the active participation to the many spiritual heritages and a series of historical experiences from the Roman Empire onwards. He distinguished three phases: the Empire of Constantine or a Mediterranean Europe, Medieval or Christian Europe and Europe of the Nation-State. It is in the broader space of today's Europe that the original virtue of the spirit of Europe, namely democracy, dialogue, respect for the rights and the harmonious development should be understood, sharing a common heritage and rooted in Christian values.

A.   *Classical Origin*

The term "Europe" has many origins and interpretations. For some authors it derives from the Greek word "*eurus*" meaning "wide"; some others refer to the dualism in the Acadian language between "*asu/acu*" and "*erib/ erebu*," where the first means "to rise" and would indicate the dawn, i.e. the East and Asia in particular and the second means "to enter" and stands for the sunset, so the West and specifically Europe.[7]

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[5]   Jansen, T. (ed.), *Reflections on European Identity*, European Commission, Forward Studies Unit, Working Paper, 1999; Bekemans, L., "The Idea and Practice of Europe in a Globalising World: Reality and Responsibility," in *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights*, 1/2005, pp. 121-133.

[6]   Brugmans, H., "Europe: One Civilization, One Destiny, One Vocation," in H. Brugmans (ed.), *Dream, Adventure, Reality*, New York, Greenwood, 1987, pp. 11-39.

[7]   Mikkeli, H., *Europe as an Idea and an Identity*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Publishers, 1998.

In Greek mythology "Europa" was the daughter of Agenor, the Phoenician king of Tyre. Zeus felt in love with her, transformed himself into a bull. brought her to Crete, assumed human form and had three sons from her. It can be argued that the opposition between West and East was illustrated in Classical Age by the Greek and the Persian world: the first was symbol of democracy and freedom, opposed to the absolutism and despotism of the Persian ruler. According to Herodotus, the geographical boundaries of Europe were defined by the Mediterranean Sea in the South, the Sea of Azov and the River Don in the East, and the Pillars of Hercules in Gibraltar in the West, also considered the limit of the human civilisation.

Following the historical track of the origin of Europe, authors such as Mikkeli and Braque argue that the Roman Empire cannot be defined as the first European superpower.[8] According to Mikkeli the principal aim of the Roman Empire was to control the main commercial routes, extending its territorial power to the southern coast of the Mediterranean and a part of Asia. However the impact of various philosophical and religious currents made it difficult to define Europe ideologically. Brague follows the same of line of reasoning, asserting that the constant confrontation with "the Other" during the Roman Era represented the most significant element on which a European common cultural heritage can be understood.[9] This perspective conceives the European culture not as a fixed set of values, but in terms of "cultural transmission". The myth of the "abduction of Europa" underlines the fact that its origins were constructed from an appropriation of what belonged to others, moving from the East to the West.[10]

It is clear that in the Ancient Age Europe was not perceived as a political community with unifying characteristics, but rather as a geographical area with unstable borders. In spite of some mythological common origin, none of the citizens of the Roman Empire defined himself/herself as a European, preferring instead the image of Rome as *caput mundi*. After the schism in 395 a.d. the term "Europe" became more and more used to identify the western part of the Empire, whose identity was strongly shaped by Christianity.[11]

B.   A Res Publica Christiana in the Middle Ages

The period after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, which coincides with the enormous Arab expansion, was characterised by cultural fragmentation. The Frankish attempt to build a united political community is considered by many authors as the very origin of Europe. This term was

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[8]   *Ibidem*, p. 18.

[9]   Brague, R., *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, South Bend, Ind., St. Augustine's Press, 2002.

[10] Boon, V. and Delanty, G., "Europe and its Histories," in H. Persson and B. Strath, *Reflections on Europe*, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 159-182.

[11] Delanty, G., *Inventing Europe. Idea, Identity, Reality*, London, MacMillan Press UTD, 1995.

used in the middle Ages to create a sense of solidarity in addressing a common enemy, the struggle against Islam to preserve Christianity as the religion of Europe.

During the battle of Poitiers (732 a.d.) the word "*Europeenses*" (meaning "Europeans") was used to refer to Charles Martel's coalition army against the Arabs.[12] However, there are some critiques to the alleged unifying role of the Frankish Empire, as it did not cover the whole Europe and it co-existed with the remaining Roman territories in the East. For some authors, the Carolingian period cannot be defined as the starting point of the European integration process and would be better termed as the end of a specific historical era, characterised by the attempt of Charlemagne to combine the Roman classical heritage with Christianity.[13] The Crusades need to be understood in this historical context. The beginning of the crusading period is generally attributed to Pope Urban II's calling of the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont in 1095 to an armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land and defend Europe from the Muslim invasion.

An important contribution of Christianity to European unity has been given by the Catholic Church. Its aim was the creation of a community of independent states under the spiritual guidance of the Pope. It promoted a policy of international mobility of students and lecturers, with Latin as the vehicular language. In the 9th century the term "*christianitas*" stood for the whole territory inhabited by Christian people, however with a focal attention towards universalism. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), one of the most powerful and influential popes of the Middle Ages, affirmed the existence of a Christian territory ("*terrae Christianorum*"), with specific borders ("*fines Christianorum*") and one single "*populus christianus*," though under different political communities, but with the need to defend its identity against non-believers.

A crucial historical moment in the identification of Europe with Christendom was the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. It resulted in a clear separation between the Christian Europe and the Muslim Asia. Although the fragmentation caused by the schism between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church was reduced, a sense of unity of the continent was not yet present. The crusaders went fighting for Christendom and not for Europe.

Still the importance of Christianity in Europe needs to be put in its proper perspective. It was an Asian religion, born in the Middle East, with a universal message that transcended European borders. Nonetheless it gave Europe its territorial grounding and became the symbol of European unity against the Islamic East.[14] In Pagden's words, it means that "*an abducted Asian woman gave*

[12] Wilson, K. and Van der Dussen, J. (eds.), *The History of the Idea of Europe*, London, Routlege, 1995, p. 26.

[13] See for example Mikkeli, H., *Europe as an Idea*, *op cit.*, p. 27.

[14] Delanty, G., *Inventing Europe*, *op cit*.

Europe her name, a vagrant Asian exile gave Europe its political and finally its cultural identity; and an Asian prophet gave Europe its religion."[15]

To summarise, it is difficult to state that the idea of Europe in the Middle Ages assumed a strong political connotation; it was instead used as a vague geographical expression which covered the cultural and religious common heritage of Christianity and the Classical Roman Age. The unification of the continent was therefore a mere answer to external threats and internal common interests were not strong enough to favour a process of actual integration.[16]

C.   *A Process of Secularisation towards a European Civilisation*

History shows that the idea of Europe assumed many different connotations throughout the centuries according to political and cultural contexts. In the humanistic culture of the Renaissance 14th and 15th century, the word "Europe" regained a strong meaning, recognised as a common reference by the intellectual classes in most European countries.[17] From the beginning of the 16th century Christianity gradually lost its central role in the conception of Europe. Both the outbreak of religious conflicts with the Protestant Reformation challenging the role of the Catholic Church as European cultural unifier and the discovery of the New World with the colonisation of American territories led to a process of secularisation. The ties with Christianity were loosened and the affirmation of a European civilisation emerged, exhibiting a high level of knowledge and a differentiated culture.[18] The Protestant Sebastian Münster describes Europe in *Cosmographia Universalis* as the most fertile and cultivated area despite its relatively small dimensions. The actual conceptualisation of a "European civilisation," however, was made during the Enlightenment (17th–18th century).

From the political point of view, the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 marked the beginning of a new European era, where the balance of power between sovereign states came to be a central element. The term "Europe," detached from its religious connotations, became of common usage among political decision-makers. Moreover it constituted the base of political projects that aimed at achieving an internal peaceful organisation of the continent.

On the cultural side, Europeans believed in the universal value and superiority of their civilisation. It was seen as a process leading towards a virtuous and ideal state[19] and finally to eternal peace.[20] The highest expression of civilisation was represented by the nation-state which

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[15]   Pagden, A. (ed.), *The Idea of Europe from Antiquity to the European Union,* Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2002.

[16]   Mikkeli, H., *Europe as an Idea, op cit.*, p. 36.

[17]   Wilson, K. and Van der Dussen, J. (eds.), *The History of the Idea*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[18]   Mikkeli, H., *Europe as an Idea, op cit*, p. 44.

[19]   Wilson, K. and Van der Dussen, J. (eds.), *The History of the Idea*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[20]   Kant, I., *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, 1795.

was to be legitimised in the context of "methodological nationalism."[21] The idea of different and equally valuable forms of society was not taken into consideration so that other populations were labelled as "barbarians" who needed to be civilised, imposing them European values. This concept of civilisation is thought to be the secular substitute of Christendom as the unifying element for the continent. Norman Davies notes that in the early phase of the Enlightenment "*it became an embarrassment for the divided community of nations to be reminded of their common Christian identity; and 'Europe' filled the need for a designation with more neutral connotations*."[22]

Another contribution recognising the European common culture came from the French philosopher Voltaire. He argued that, in spite of political fragmentations, Europeans share the same religious background and the same civil principles. Strong focus was put on arts and natural sciences which create close ties among nations and result in a "*République littéraire*." This was in his view the decisive element that made Europe the most civilised continent in the world. It should however be added that the feeling of belonging to the same cultural community was shared only by the closed circles of intellectuals with the same classical education, without much influence on ordinary people; for them, the privileged reference was their closer local community and the idea of Europe was seen as abstract.[23]

D.   *A Cosmopolitan Perspective of European identity*

As was said earlier the idea of Europe has mainly emerged by a constant confrontation with otherness. However, this process is more complex and cannot be reduced to a mere clash or rigid distinction from the "Other." Hobson argues that Europeans have always had intense interaction and exchanges with the Eastern countries. In fact, some elements of European culture are originated and borrowed from outside Europe. It is worth to remind that the mathematic models used by Copernicus were invented by Ibn al-Shatir and that the typical British tea-drinking comes from the Chinese tradition. [24] The distinctive feature of European culture is often the appropriation, acculturation and reworking of elements of other cultures.

The fundamental ambiguity accompanying European identity-building throughout the centuries has been the constant effort to provide its identity with a kind of substance,[25] referring to an alleged common geographical belonging, ethnic origins, or to a common cultural heritage. This effort has often implied the demonisation of the "Other" and the refusal to build constructive forms of dialogue, looking instead for unity as common opposition to an enemy. History shows however that

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[21]   Beck, U. and Grande, E., *Cosmopolitan Europe*, Cambridge, Polity, 2007, pp. 94-97.

[22]   Davies, N., *Europe: a History*, London, Oxford University Press, 1996.

[23]   Burke, P., "Did Europe Exist Before 1700?," in *History of European Idea*, Vol. I, 1980, pp. 21-29.

[24]   Hobson, J., "Revealing the Cosmopolitan Side of Europe: the Eastern Origins of European Civilisation," in G. Delanty (ed.), *Europe and Asia Beyond East and West: Towards a New Cosmopolitanism*, London, Routledge, 2006.

[25]   *Ibidem*, p. 180.

every attempt to purify Europe from the presence of an alleged hostile "Other" has always turned into tragedy.

Understanding the historical trajectory of how the idea of Europe evolved and identity was built over the years to a common cultural heritage is fundamental to interpret today's scenarios and make policy assessments for Europe's future. Some of the cultural specificities of Europe can therefore be related to: 1) the rescue of history from memory to focus on ideas which travel irrespective of borders; 2) the move beyond assimilation and multiculturalism towards interculturalism to management diversity and live with difference; 3) the acceptance of change so that the dialogues and mutual listening becomes the driving social force and 4) the learning from humility so that Europe can draw from its religious and non-religious traditions and from its Christian roots in learning how to practice humility. We consider these characteristics major components of the European spirit.

In order to valorise these components a cosmopolitan perspective of the European integration process might be helpful in recognising plural and multifaceted identities in Europe, accepting its constitutive otherness and benefiting from its diversity. Stimulating intercultural dialogue [26] as instrument and objective of building cohesive and sustainable societies might therefore create new forms of relationship between the Self and the "Other," leading towards a democratic and inclusive Europe.

II. European Identity-building

A.   *Concept and Models*

Identity is related to the way individuals reach certain self-awareness, in relation to their family, social or ethnic group, language, culture, religious affiliation and political commitment. It is often expressed by the idea of "belonging." Therefore psychological and social factors play an important role in creating that awareness. As identity always implies both a strong interaction between the individual and the group and an affirmation of a group as distinct from others groups, its political implications are fundamental. This is especially the case in the different ways identity can be experienced or exploited.

However, identity determination is not a constant invariable process, but changes over time according to criteria such as birth, family, language, religion, territory, etc. Nowadays this has become more complex with the heightened mobility of people and the trespassing of visual and virtual borders; it has also become more disturbed by the growing individualisation and vagueness

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[26]   See Bekemans, L. (ed.), *Intercultural Dialogue and Multi-level Governance. A Human Rights Based Approach*, P.I.E. Peter Lang, Berlin/Brussels/Bern/New York, June 2012.

of the moral norms within society. In short, given the growing interdependent globalisation trends in today's world a shift has been taken place from a more static definition to a more contextual and dynamic understanding of identity.

Such a relational identity requires an open attitude towards "the Other," wanting to listen to them and to induce comprehension and benefit from dialogue. However many people are still afraid that intercultural encounters result in a loss of identity and create insecurity. Therefore, to overcome the perception of "the Other" as potential threat, it is necessary to build the sense of belonging as close as possible to the citizen and to valorise local communities and cities as living places of intercultural conviviality. Subsequently, a spill-over effect can support the building up of identities, characterised as belonging to a group differentiated but sharing a basic set of common values and interests.

Literature presents different models of European identity-building with various policy consequences. The Communitarian view stresses the Europe of culture as a family of nations anchored in a common history and culture. It emphasises that European identity has emerged from common movements in religion and philosophy, politics, science and the arts and argues for a stronger awareness of the Christian (or Judeo-Christian) tradition. On the contrary, the Liberal and Republican view argues for a common political culture, i.e. a civic identity, based on universal principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, etc. that are expressed in the framework of a common public sphere and political participation (or "constitutional patriotism").[27] It is said that cultural identities, religious beliefs, etc. should be confined to the private sphere. According to this view European identity will emerge from common political and civic practices of citizens sharing the same political and civic values, while at the same time adhering to different cultural practices. Finally, Constructivists argue that a European identity can only emerge as a consequence of intensified civic, political and cultural exchanges and cooperation. As identities undergo constant change, European identity encompasses multiple meanings and identifications and is constantly redefined through relationships with others. According to this view Europe is a place of encounters and participation of citizens in collective political and cultural practices.

The point of departure of most discussions on European identity is the idea that a political community needs a common set of values and references to ensure its coherence, to guide its actions and to endow them with legitimacy and meaningfulness. However, despite fundamental differences, preconditions for the emergence of a European identity are linked to the strengthening

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[27] Habermas, J., "The European Nation State. Its Achievements and Its Limitations. On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship," in *Ratio Juris*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, June 1996, pp. 125-137.

of democratic participation at all levels of decision-making, the valorising of the European dimension in education and culture and achieving social and economic sustainable cohesion.

As far as the European political identity is concerned, the nation-state continues to be the predominant reference for European citizens despite growing europeanisation of identity-building. The Eurobarometer surveys show that EU citizens continue to identify first of all with their own country. A relatively low political participation and weak attachment pose of course a legitimacy problem to the EU.[28] Moreover, in the current period of dramatic transformations of societies within the globalising context, new (and different) political actors are shaping the world scene, undermining traditional forms of national statehood.[29]

Prospecting a sustainable European future today requires more advanced forms of supranational and multi-level governance, capable of managing complex and interconnected economic and political issues with strengthening a common sense of belonging. It is therefore important to understand the necessity for European identities to be inclusive and intrinsically plural, far from the exclusive national patterns of identity, nationality and citizenship.

It would be undesirable, and rather impossible for the EU to return to the historical path of nation-state building. Europe does not represent an actual European "demos," its borders are not fixed and it contains many different peoples and cultures. That's why the "Unity in Diversity" motto represents quite some institutional and political challenges in today's Europe.

### B.	European Identity-building in the EU Treaties

The identity of the European Union has so far predominantly been defined politically. The EU is founded "on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law" (Art. 6 TEU). Fundamental disagreements emerged in the work on the EU Constitutional Treaty about a reference to "God" or "Christianity" in the Preamble. It now only refers to the "religious heritage" of Europe. The Copenhagen criteria of stable and democratic institutions, functioning market economy and adequate administrative structures are to be interpreted in this process of European identity-building.

The recent developments of European identity-building very much refer to the EU legal context. The treaties from 1951 onwards up to the Treaty of Lisbon highlight the different contexted approaches which were used to strengthen the idea of Europe and European identity. During the first decades of the European integration process the only reference to the identity issue was connected to distinguishing Europe from other international political actors. From the second half of

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[28]	Eurobarometer 71, *The Future of Europe*, January 2010.

[29]	Papisca, A., "Dallo Stato Confinario allo Stato Sostenibile," in *Pace, Diritti dell'Uomo, Diritti dei Popoli*, Anno VI, numero 3, 1992 (1994).

the eighties, Europe has been more and more conceived as a community of shared values and a political space for active citizens, embodied in the Treaty of Lisbon and implemented in various EU programmes.

1) The Early Years of European Integration

The end of the Second World War paved the way for the process of European integration. The French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman stressed in his Declaration on May 9, 1950 that durable peace in Europe can only be achieved if the age-old rivalry between France and Germany can be eliminated. The first period of an economic driven integration was thus characterised by a strong pragmatism and a "step-by-step" strategy aiming at building up a common economic space.

In this context little space existed for debating about identity. The preamble of the Treaty establishing the ECSC in 1951 expressed the conviction that "*the contribution which an organised and vital Europe can make to civilisation is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations.*" The pursuit of common economic interests would create "*the basis for a broader and deeper community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts*" or, as the Treaties of Rome suggest, "*lay the foundations of an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe.*"

The idea of Europe emerging from the first treaties is deeply influenced by the historical tragedy of the World Wars. Economic areas were privileged for cooperation in accordance to the neo-functional approach. It was nevertheless always the objective to develop the process of integration beyond the European Economic Community. However, most attempts to go beyond the mere economic orientation of the European integration process failed in the early years.

2) The Declaration on European Identity (1973)

The concept of European identity was introduced for the first time in the European political agenda with the "Declaration on European Identity" (Copenhagen 14th December 1973). It was said that cooperation among European peoples represents a real need to effectively face the current global threats. The action proposed was oriented to "*defend the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice – which is the ultimate goal of economic progress – and of respect for human rights […].*" All of these are fundamental elements of the European identity. A number of articles of the Copenhagen Declaration are illustrative for this changed (at least rhetoric) focus on European identity-building. Very interesting in this perspective is Article 3:

The diversity of cultures within the framework of a common European civilization, the attachment to common values and principles, the increasing convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common and the determination to take part in the

construction of a United Europe, all give the European Identity its originality and its own dynamism.

Article 4 reaffirms the open nature of the Community, leaving space for further enlargements to peoples who share its same ideals. Another important aspect is the external dimension of identity, i.e. Europe's place and responsibility in the international landscape. Article 6 recognises that global problems cannot any longer be solved at a national level and consequently that Europe is to "*speak increasingly with one voice*" to other countries and regional areas.[30]

It was already said that in the first decades of integration the issue of European identity was raised mainly in its external dimension, as an attempt to collocate the new supranational actor within the world context, or as a common project, founded on the search for "*l'intérêt communautaire*" in the coordination of national policies. There is however another aspect which has to be taken into consideration from the Single European Act onwards, i.e. the existence of a community of citizens.[31]

3) Europe as a Community of Citizens

The first attempt to push European integration beyond the notion of a common market dates back to 1976 with the Tindemans Report. In the chapter, "Europe of the Citizens," a community of citizens was proposed by rising the European awareness through visible (symbolic) measures (e.g. unification of passports, the vanishing of border controls, the common use of the benefits of the social security systems, the accreditation of academic courses and degrees, etc.). In 1984 the European Council of Fontainebleau set up the Adonnnino Committee to address issues related to a "people's Europe." In spite of the ambitious goals only some (modest) proposals were adopted to increase the sense of belonging to the European Community (e.g. the European flag, a unified passport and the anthem.[32] In the same year Altiero Spinelli advocated a more ambitious idea of the establishment of a political union which was, however, not translated in a more political commitment.

A milestone in the European integration process is represented by the Treaty of Maastricht (1993). It instituted the establishment of a "European citizenship," a legal status which guarantees a set of rights to the individuals possessing the nationality of one of the member states. At last, the Treaty of Maastricht started a path towards an ever closer relationship between the European institutions and citizens. European identity was not any longer exclusively addressed to the external dimension, but acquired a more specific internal meaning. In fact, it was not reduced to an

[30] Strath, B., "A European Identity: To the Historical Limits of a Concept," in *European Journal of Social Theory*, Sage Publications, 2002.

[31] Jouen, M. and Chambon, N., "L'identité Européenne dans les Textes et les Politiques Communautaires," in www.notre-europe.eu, 2006.

[32] Panebianco, S., *European Citizenship and European Identity: from the Treaty of Maastricht to Public Opinion Attitudes*, Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics, no. 03/96, December, 1996.

instrumental usage for coordinating national policies, but created a constitutional and founding value of the concept of "Europe of citizens."[33]

Still the debate on the existence of a European demos, often referring to "the peoples of Europe" remains open to various interpretations. The construction of a single European subject is an ongoing process thanks to the direct application of EU norms to the citizens. The democratic base is not anymore the representation of "*the peoples of the European States brought together in the Community*" (art. 189 TEC); in fact "*Citizens are directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament*" (art.10.2 TEU).

The Convention on the Future of Europe produced a draft for a Constitutional Treaty which expressed an intention to increase the level of participation of European citizens in the decision-making process.[34] Despite its failure following the negative outcomes of the French and Dutch referenda in 2005, the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) has finally followed the same focused line on citizenship. Next to the principle of representative democracy which is the base of the functioning of the Union (Art. 10.1 TEU), Article 11(1) states that "*the institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.*" The method chosen to put this general principle into practice is the "Citizens' Initiative," as formulated in article 11(4):

Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties […].

According to Article 24 of the Lisbon Treaty, the details and the conditions for an effective implementation of the Citizens' Initiative have been discussed by the Council and the European Parliament within the so called "ordinary legislative procedure" and a specific regulation has been adopted.[35] The ECI was finally launched on May 9th, 2012 with the registration of *Fraternité 2020.*

4) European Citizenship in a Cosmopolitan Perspective

European citizenship only includes a set of rights and responsibilities, but also contains an important symbolic value. Even if the concept remains linked to national belongingness, the existence of a "common citizenship" applying to many nationalities and covering multiple identities establishes a fundamental shift in the relation between identity, nationality and citizenship. This

[33]   Mangiameli, S., *L'Identità dell'Europa: Laicità e Libertà Religiosa*, paper from www.forumcostituzionale.it.

[34]   Dauvergne, A., "The Treaty of Lisbon: Assessments and Prospects as of Summer 2011," in *Notre Europe*, Studies & Researches, 2011.

[35]   Regulation (EU) no. 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Citizens' Initiative, 16 February 2011.

innovative legal status produces political implications as it favours "trans-national democracy" and the development of a European public sphere.[36]

Moreover, the recognition of a multiplicity of identities can be simultaneously envisaged under the traditional notion of nationality as well as under the notion of European citizenship. Amartya Sen's argument on the multiplicity of identities [37] finds in this context a possibility of implementation, even if European citizenship is only addressed to the member states' nationals. However, if European identity could be based on the principle of inclusiveness, EU citizenship should also be obtained by legal long-term third country nationals. Papisca argues that the sense of belongingness to a European political community can be achieved if individuals and peoples will be its principal actors.[38] Sharing projects and participating to the decision-making process is the only way for Europeans to be inspired, motivated and committed to Europe.

In the cosmopolitan view,[39] European citizenship is a step towards a global citizenship. Europe is conceived as a political laboratory for a new supranational and transcendental democracy, but the outcome of this process cannot be a mere translation of functions from the national to the European level. The horizon for active citizenship is the European and world space of internationally recognised human rights. The EU provides the evolutionary context and spatial horizon in which plural citizenship and inclusion practices can be implemented. Citizenship rights therefore must be exercised in a broader constitutional space, expressing both legitimisation of decision-making and citizen's participation in the formation of a global civil society.

With this approach, the universal human rights paradigm is the fundamental point of departure for conceiving a citizenship "*ad omnes includendosi*."[40] It is therefore worthwhile to focus both on the set of values adopted in the Treaties as constitutive of European identity and on the process of codification of human rights.

5) The Role of Cultures and EU Founding Values

The aspect of the cultural and religious heritage of the European peoples is introduced in the Treaties as an element of differentiation rather than unification.[41] However, to imagine Europe beyond the beaten track of institutional, economic and political integration requires a value driven

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[36] Morganti, L. and Bekemans. L., *The European Public Sphere. From Critical Thinking to Responsible Action,* Brussels/Bern/Berlin, P.I.E. Peter Lang, forthcoming, Autumn 2012.

[37] Sen, A., *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Cambridge, Polity Press, London, 2007.

[38] Papisca, A., "Riflessioni in Tema di Cittadinanza Europea e Diritti Umani," in *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights*, 1/2004.

[39] Beck, U. and Grande, E., *Cosmopolitan Europe*, *op. cit*.

[40] Papisca, A., "Citizenship and Citizenships Ad Omnes Includendos: A Human Rights Approach," in L. Bekemans *et al.* (eds), *Intercultural Dialogue and Citizenship. Translating Values into Actions. A Common Project for Europeans and Their Partners*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2007.

[41] Mangiameli, S., *L'Identità dell'Europa, op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

foundation of the search for European identity.[42] This is underscored by the words of Karel Verleye, one of the founders of the College of Europe in Bruges:

It is excluded that a European citizenship or a European commitment will be stimulated with the population, when no ample consideration will be given to a number of forgotten or undervalued factors in the construction of the new Europe, such as the cultural, regional, ethical, historical and spiritual dimensions.[43.]

European identity-building within the EU legal context is not based on a common linguistic nor cultural nor religious origin; the focus is instead on the necessity for EU institutions to "respect the equality of member states before the Treaties as well as their national identities" (Art. 4.2 TEU). The Treaty of Lisbon includes the Title XIII on culture and clearly defines the role of the Union in cultural matters in its Article 167. It affirms that "*[t]he Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore*" *(*Art 167.1*)*. Furthermore, "*[t]he Union shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures*" (Art 167.4).

A clear signal of the EU attitude has been the refusal of making any reference to the Christian roots of Europe in the Constitutional Treaty. Despite a strong opposition from the Catholic Church, the Preamble reads as follows:

Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, […].

The same formulation has been adopted within the Treaty of Lisbon, adding the intention "to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions."

In recent years, significant progress has been made to recognise the importance of fundamental rights within the European Union. The Amsterdam Treaty (1997) introduced for the first time a specific reference to human rights. The Treaty of Lisbon reinforced this perspective: "*The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail*" (Art. 2).

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[42] Bouckaert, L. and Eynikel, J. (eds.), *Imagine Europe: The Search for European Identity and Spirituality*, Leuven, Garant, 2009.

[43] Bekemans, L., "The Idea and Practice of Europe in a Globalising World: Reality and Responsibility," in *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights*, 1/2005, p. 131.

It also stipulates that "*the Union shall respect fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950 and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, as principles of Community law*" (Art.6.2). Moreover the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has been given the same legal value as the Treaties. Its binding value commits the EU in building a political community within which human rights have utmost importance as ultimate reference.[44] It illustrates a relevant qualitative shift in European integration, leading towards an inclusive community where the citizens can be the real protagonists.

Conclusion

The historical path of the idea of Europe shows that European identity-building is the result of a mixture of elements coming from different contexts, set in a process of cultural appropriation and a continuous reworking of a dialogue of civilisations. The evolution of the European identity issue within the main European Treaties highlights the fact that only in the eighties, when the importance of political legitimisation of EU institutions was clearly perceived; the European Commission started engaging in the cultural sphere. It defined EU founding values and officially embraced the universal human rights paradigm. The relative failure of EU in the attempt to make people identify with the European project is partly due to the state-like "top-down" strategy and the lack of a genuine post-national identity.

Cosmopolitanism as a new way of conceiving cultural otherness opposes both hierarchical subordination and universal equality, recognising instead the existing (and undeniable) differences between peoples and giving them a positive value. Territorial boundaries, social groups and cultural barriers are transcended. The ultimate reference remains "*the worldwide community of human beings*"[45] where everyone is seen as both equal and different in order to expand "*the concept of the public beyond its national borders and opening it up to an emerging European space.*"[46]

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[44] Papisca, A., "'Europe 2020': What Compass, What Soul, Which Kind of Architecture for the EU Governance? The Need for Human Rights Mainstreaming," in *Pace Diritti Umani/Peace Human Rights,* 3/2010.

[45] Nussbaum, M. *et al*., *For love of Country. Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1996.

[46] Bekemans, L., "A Cosmopolitan Perspective of Multi-level Governance in Europe," in *Pace Diritti Umani /Peace Human Rights*, 2/2010, p. 58.