Bringing the demos back in: people's views on 'EUropean identity'

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Abstract:

The creation of a EUropean *demos* is often debated by referring to forms of ethnic or civic identities. The present article aims to expose the theoretical shortcomings of this dichotomous approach, which confines the complexity of EUrope within a simplifying methodological nationalism. By relying on empirical data collected in four different EUropean regions, the article points to the relevance of a functional or utilitarian rationale which EUropean interviewees use to justify the existence of EUrope. Although this rationale does not obliterate cultural and civic narrations of EUrope, I would argue that it invites to reconsider the traditional role played by identities in the construction of political institutions. Accordingly, I believe that scholars should take more seriously the metaphor 'EUrope as a laboratory' - a convenient, but often empty metaphor.

Keywords: EUrope, identity, *demos*, ethnic, civic

1. Introduction

Some years ago, 'the nature of the beast' (Risse-Kappen 1996) was one of the major concerns of students of European Integration (EI). This long-lasting debate between neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists seemed to come to an end when, in the 1990s, scholars decided that was no longer worth debating why and how the Euro-polity had come into existence, but, once taken for granted, it was more useful looking into its governing processes. This new endeavour has since been conducted within the theoretical framework of 'multilevel governance' (Marks 1993; Jachtenfuchs 1995; Caporaso 1996; Marks *et al.* 1996; Hooghe and Marks 2001; Jachtenfuchs 2001; Aalberts 2004; Eberlein and Kerwer 2004). This new perspective has certainly contributed to an understanding of the institutional functioning of the European Union (EU). It has also solved the conundrum between neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, by simply accepting the coexistence of both processes. Within multilevel governance, in fact, European integration does not take place at the expenses of the member states, but these latter continue to play an important role, along a variety of other actors (governmental and non), which coexist at multiple scales in a non-hierarchical network.

Yet, if the nature of the beast has somewhat found an answer from an institutional perspective, it is still an open and frequently debated question from a cultural and political perspective. "Should EUrope embody a civic or ethnic style of identity (if it has any identity at all)?" [1] This was the question asked to the panellists of a workshop recently organized by the University of Bristol on cultural approaches to European integration.[2] In the present article, I wish to contribute to this debate by somewhat

bringing the voice of the *demos* back in. By relying on qualitative data collected among ordinary people in four different EUropean regions, my aim is to move beyond this identity question. Empirical evidence indeed suggests that while people understand EUrope as a cultural and civic polity, their narrations also point to a new, post-identity EUrope.

The notion of identity is a highly debated and contested one. Social theorists usually prefer avoiding this term, given its resonance with something fixed, stable, and stabilizing (Hall 1996; Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Identities are better conceptualized as discursive resources activated in talk (Somers 1994; Antaki and Widdicombe 1998). People do not *have* identities, but they might *identify with*, thus signalling identity as a process rather than as ontology. I largely share these views, but my aim in the present article is not to deconstruct notions of ethnic or civic EUrope from a socially constructivist perspective. My aim, instead, is to show the limits of these constructions against both the methodological nationalism which, more or less implicitly, they reproduce and the views of the respondents which evoke forms of post-identity politics. To this scope, in the present paper identity is not deployed as an analytical category, but treated as a 'category of practice', i.e. a referent used both by 'lay' actors in everyday life to make sense of themselves, their actions, and 'others' and by 'political entrepreneur' to persuade people to legitimize and support collective action (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 4).

2. Ethnic or civic EUrope – is this really the question?

One of the most renowned contemporary students of the state once asked whether a society called 'Euro' exists (Mann 1998). This provocative question was accompanied by a pretty straightforward answer: EUrope as a socio-political space exists only as a network of upper classes and elites, but it remains distant from the emotions of the masses whose identities are primarily rooted in national spaces (Mann 1998: 198, 200). Moreover, EUrope's lack of both internal cohesion and external closure (a 'hard' frontier), as well as a common language which people can use to express their sense of common belonging and common destiny represented for Mann (1998: 192, 205) a clear obstacle to the transformation of EUrope into a viable polity.

During the last decade, EUrope's internal interaction has grown significantly and its frontiers have certainly hardened, despite the fact that a common language is still lacking and people's emotions are still primarily rooted, according to Eurobarometer surveys, to national and sub-national spaces (Antonsich 2008a). The point, obviously, is not to assess the validity of Mann's view in relation to EUrope's recent transformation, but to indicate how such a view is representative of a form of methodological nationalism which, particularly in public discourses, is often used to evaluate EUrope's development.

From this perspective, EUrope is indeed regarded as a would-be nation-state and its progress being dependent on the degree to which it reproduces those features which characterise the nation-state. [3] Thus, for instance, Anthony D. Smith, one of the leading scholars in nationalist studies, some years ago observed that "'Europe' is deficient both as idea and as process" (Smith 1992: 62). According to the famous British scholar, in

fact, ‘Europe’ lacks most of the features which defines a nation, i.e., “a named human population sharing a historical territory, common memories and myths of origin, a mass, standardized public culture, a common economy and territorial mobility, and common legal rights and duties for all members of the collectivity” (Smith 1992: 60). Apart from common economy, territorial mobility and common rights and duties, no historical territory indeed exists, as the very definition of Europe, in geographical terms, is a long-standing conundrum (Heffernan 1998), which reverberates in the present confusion about EUrope’s future boundaries (Eder 2006; Rumford 2009). Similar considerations can be made for common memories and myths of origin, since many of the traditions which are generally invoked to characterize EUrope (Roman law, Christianity, Renaissance, and Enlightenment) spread unevenly throughout European regions. Despite student-mobility schemes (e.g., ERASMUS, SOCRATES), the existence of a European standardized public culture is also difficult to sustain, as curricula remain very much nationally based and their recognition across countries is more a matter of theory than practice. Most importantly, for Smith, no common language, ethnicity, culture, and ‘mythomoteur’ exist to produce a community of ‘affect and interest’ and mobilize people’s imaginary and a shared sense of belonging.

It is exactly this methodological nationalism which, I would argue, is at the basis of the idea that EUrope needs an ethnic or cultural identity in order to support its political project (see also Leoussi in this issue). The EUropean *demos* should be a group of people sharing the same culture, historical memories, myths, and, possibly, also religion and ethnicity. Since such a *demos* does not exist and it is very unlikely that will come into existence in the foreseeable future, despite all efforts put forward by the European

Commission for creating a form of 'banal Europeanism' (Cram 2001 - see also Shore 1993), it is not surprising that scholars who adopt this 'national' view are sceptical about the consolidation of EUrope as a space of affiliation, belonging, and loyalty.

Antithetical to this position is the so-called 'post-national' view, epitomized, among others, by the works of Jürgen Habermas. According to the German philosopher, EUrope stands for the first post-national democracy, i.e., a democratic polity based on a form of collective identity defined not in cultural, but in political terms – the sharing of cosmopolitan values and participation in the deliberative democratic process (Habermas 2001: 88-90). In this case, the *demos* is not defined in ethnic or cultural terms, i.e., as a community of fate shaped by common descent, language and history (Habermas 2001: 15). Rather, it is a community of citizens who identify themselves with a liberal political culture, sustained by the functioning of democratic legal institutions and procedural norms – what Habermas calls 'constitutional patriotism'. It is this idea that Habermas (1992) applies to EUrope and the EUropean *demos* and on which the notion of civic EUrope can be based. In this case, EUropean identity is not conceptualized as a pre-political endowment of a people defined by ethnic and cultural elements, but as a product of the functioning of EUrope as a deliberative democracy (Habermas 1998: xxiii).

Since its theorization by Hans Kohn (1945), the ethnic-civic distinction has long been studied and debated by students of nationalism. Yet, it has also been challenged on the basis that there is no such thing as civic nationalism. According to Xenos, this is indeed an oxymoron, because any form of nationalism requires "a mythologizing of nature and of the relationship of the political community to it" (Xenos 1996: 228). Similarly, Yack (1996) discards the civic-ethnic distinction as flawed, by suggesting that any nation,

however civic it wishes to portray itself, is also constructed on "a rich cultural inheritance of shared memories and practices".

My argument is not so much about the fallacious character of the civic/ethnic distinction, but about its use to make sense of the 'nature of the beast' in cultural and political terms. It seems to me, in fact, that both ethnic EUrope and civic EUrope fall into the same trap of methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003). While this is particularly evident in the case of the 'ethnic' view, I would argue that it also applies to the 'civic' view, as this latter equally theorizes the link between territory, people, and politics along the same lines used to understand the nation-state (in this case, however, the common identity is civic rather than ethnic). Yet, no explicit rationale is put forward to justify this conceptual operation. Why should EUrope be understood through the same categories used to scrutinize a very historically-specific product such as the nation-state? This critique is obviously not new. Other scholars have indeed manifested the need for a more subtle vocabulary to capture something which cannot be equated with the political institutions of the historical past (Painter 2001). While the ethnic-civic opposition has been a useful analytical framework to understand the formation of the nation-state, there is indeed no guarantee that it could also apply to the study of EUrope. On the contrary, the reproduction of categories introduced for the study of a given historical institution might prevent scholars to detect new, alternative spatial forms of socio-political organization which EUrope today might embody. This is why I would argue that scholars, as they have managed to move beyond the inveterate opposition between neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, should also consider a similar move beyond the distinction of cultural (ethnic) and political (civic) EUrope.[4]

It is the aim of the present article to contribute to an exploration of this issue, by relying on the analysis of EUropean people's opinions collected in four different regions. To bring the voice of the *demos* back in, I would argue, is a necessary step in this exploratory exercise. Too often, in fact, the debate has been conducted in normative terms, at the level of political theory and philosophy (Antonsich 2009). While certainly useful, I think this level should necessarily be complemented by empirical analysis, so to avoid the risk of devising solutions for the *demos*, which the *demos* itself would find alien and ultimately reject.

3. Bringing the *demos* back in

The empirical material discussed in this section comes from eight-months of field work, which I personally carried out, between May 2005 and January 2006, in four different EUropean regions (Lombardia, Italy; Pirkanmaa, Finland; North-East of England, United Kingdom; and Languedoc-Roussillon, France). Overall, I administered about 100 semi-structured individual interviews with 'local elites' – here defined as any person holding a political, institutional or social role within the local society – and 16 focus groups, with 4-5 participants in each, males and females, aged 18-26 years old, using education as a 'control characteristic' (Bedford and Burgess 2001). As such, in each region two groups were formed by participants with a university degree or in the process of obtaining it (henceforth labelled as 'students' for matter of brevity) and two groups by participants without a university degree and not willing to obtain it in the

future, who were already occupied in a low-skilled position or were studying in vocational schools (henceforth labelled as 'workers'). I detailed elsewhere both the process for selecting the four regions and the sampling of individual interviewees and focus group participants (Antonsich 2008b). I should note that these data were collected for a larger research project, aimed at exploring the relationship between territory and identity at multiple scales – local, regional, national, and EUropean (Antonsich 2007). In this article, however, I will only focus on data collected for EUrope and, more specifically, on data related to the question of what EUrope means for the respondents.

The analysis of these opinions clearly confirms the relevance of the ethnic-civic distinction also in relation to EUrope. On the one hand, in fact, respondents talked of EUrope by using the same ethno-cultural categories which they would have used to describe their own nation-state: language, culture, people, history, traditions, religion, laws, and political institutions. These elements were generally discussed either in relation to their richness ('EUrope is made up of many diverse traditions and this is what makes EUrope unique') or in negative terms, as respondents remarked the lack of a common language, history, etc. While in the first case a sense of EUropean identity, attachment or, more vaguely, sympathy emerged in the discourses of the respondents (a point confirmed also by other quantitative studies – e.g., Licata *et al.* 2003), in the second case EUrope remained a distant subject, which did not trigger any emotional feelings.

On the other hand, the comments of focus group participants and, more frequently, individual interviewees (particularly those holding left-wing political views), showed a post-national understanding of EUrope. In this case, EUrope was defined as a space of democracy, tolerance, humanism, and protection of human rights – a sort of lighthouse

for the rest of the world. This view clearly resonates with the cosmopolitan values which inform the Habermasian version of civic EUrope. In this case the respondents also talked of a sense of personal identification with this post-national or civic EUrope – a point which scores in favour of Habermas's call for empirically testing his idea of *civicness* rather than dismissing it out of hand for being too abstract (Pensky 2001: xiv).

Yet, respondents also commented on the idea of EUrope in a way which goes beyond this ethnic-civic distinction. They talked indeed of EUrope in utilitarian terms, as an institutional space which can further both their own personal well-being and the welfare of the nation-state to which they belong and primarily identify with. In neither case, however, was there a sense of identification, emotional attachment or cultural belonging expressed by the respondent. Given the importance of the utilitarian dimension to speculate on alternatives to the ethnic-civic distinction, I shall spend more time and illustrate it with some direct quotes.

From a personal utilitarian perspective, EUrope was often associated with mundane aspects of everyday life – e.g., freedom of travel, convenience of using a common currency, opportunities of studying and working in other EUropean countries. These comments emerged particularly during the focus group discussions, without any noticeable difference in terms of the regions of the participants, their gender and education. As remarked, for instance, by two different participants:

> "*For me, Europe is something positive. I see Europe principally through the opportunities that it offers to travel, to exchange…*"
>
> (Laetitia, French 'student', aged 20)

"*I enjoy going to different countries and experiencing their culture. I don't want to be part of one large European culture, I want it to be national identity that they can ascribe to and I can subscribe to mine, for me that works fine*"

(Matt, English 'student', 19)

EUrope answers the needs of the modern individual to travel, to communicate, to exchange information and experiences. This clearly resonates with the image of the mobile European citizen put forward by Verstraete (2010). Yet, while I subscribe to her idea that sharing, in principle, the same mobility might be the unifying factor on which to build a common EUropean identity (although, I would say, a very fragile, contingent and temporary one), it is also interesting to observe that no reference to personal or social identification emerged from the respondents' accounts. These reproduced instead a disjuncture between the functional and the cultural, as illustrated by the following two passages from a focus group discussion among English students:

"*I don't feel European in the slightest*; *no, not even a small bit, but I do think of it as somewhere where I want to spend a lot of time, where I want to spend most of my future, I think, on the continent of Europe […] I think you can do that, you can live there and… um… be involved in the local society but still you don't have to feel specifically European*."

(Judy, English 'student', aged 23)

"*Europe to me is it's a bit like the GB, UK thing to me, they're kind of not so much to do with culture and identity, they're political things, they're to do with money and economy and managing people and Europe has recently just incorporated a whole lot of new countries […]. I don't actually feel European, I just want to reap the benefits from being a European citizen […]. With modern, like, Western, capitalist kind of society and culture I think that kind of umbrella hierarchy, structure is basically necessary to govern and manage those aspects of life but then I want to keep because that's all very personal, I want to keep cultural identity close to me, have it personal, have it meaningful*."

(Anna, English 'student', aged 24)

EUrope is a functional space where the individual can realise her/his Self. It is a space chosen for its quality of life. It protects the rights of the individual and enhances her/his well-being. Yet, it is not conceived as a space of identity, a socio-spatial category with which the subject identifies (Chryssochoou 2003) and which is charged with an 'emotional investment' – a key identity aspect according to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1982: 2).

A similar absence of an identity dimension emerged also in those comments referring to EUrope as a functional space which can help the nation-state to better compete in the global economy. This argument was heard mainly among elite interviewees rather uniformly across the geographical case studies and the political and/or economic interests they represented. They saw EUrope, with its critical mass, as the only viable way to compete successfully against the other major world economies - USA and China:

"*If we think that there is Asia, the US, maybe there should be Europe as one*"
(Anonymous representative of the Confederation of Finnish Industries)

"*We are gonna be kicked off, if you like, if we are not strong… strong, in Europe, paneuropean… political and economic clout… we are gonna be kicked off. It's a matter of need and anything else*."
(Anonymous representative of the Labour Party in County Durham, North East of England)

These narratives are certainly not confined within elite groups, as they are actually rather widespread within European societies. They reproduce what Weiss (2002) has named 'globalization rhetoric' – a rhetoric which finds the rationale for the existence of EUrope somewhere outside EUrope itself, beyond any internal identity discourse, whether cultural or political. Thus, it is not surprising that the image of EUrope as a functional-utilitarian space created in the interest of the nation-state (Brenner, 1999) was also voiced among focus group participants, as for instance exemplified by the following quote:

"*[Europe] is the spare wheel if the country goes wrong. […] For development, it's good; but I don't think that Europe touches on our cultures: we don't feel European […]. Europe does good things, it's practical, but apart from that there is not a*

European culture. I would not make a difference between a European and a non-European."

(Aurélien, French 'non-student', aged 18)

However trenchant in tone, this quote is representative of an attitude towards EUrope shared by quite a few participants, across the different socio-demographic and regional characteristics. EUrope matters, but it does not necessarily activate a sentiment of personal or social identity:

"Yes, I agree with the fact that we have to put everything in common, but this does not make our identity […]. Europe is very good, [it's good] that we are all together, hand in hand, but we should preserve our individuality and our culture. To have all the same culture would not serve to anything."

(Emilie, French 'non-student', aged 18)

From this utilitarian perspective, EUrope is not narrated in terms of identity; it is not a source of a collective 'we-feeling', either ethnic, cultural, or civic (Bruter 2005). Yet, this absence of identity does not prevent the respondents to acknowledge EUrope's political, social, and economic relevance. As expressed by two French students:

"*I voted no* [in the referendum on the European Constitution on 29 May 2005], *because if I don't have a cultural attachment to Europe, I still want that we make common projects*" (Cindy, French 'student', aged 23)

"*I see Europe as a medium of social and political cohesion. At the cultural level, as a medium of management of heritage. At an identity level… no.*"

(Audrey, French 'student', aged 24)

It is important to note that this utilitarian perspective is not as marginal as one might think with regard to people's perceptions of EUrope. In fact, it also clearly emerges from the periodical surveys administered by the Eurobarometer consortium.[1] Moreover, it is also one of the key factors which explain popular support for the EU (Gabel 1998; Fuchs, 2010), besides being regarded, by some scholars (Moravcsik, 1998), as the driving force behind EUropean integration. Yet, it does not seem that scholars have paid the due attention to the challenge that this perspective poses to the specific relationship between territory, people, and sovereignty which has so far characterized the nation-state. Either in its ethnic, cultural or civic version, a sense of collective identity has indeed been the glue which has preserved this relationship and on which the nation-state has built the rationale for its existence. When people, however, talk of EUrope in terms of a political and territorial community without mobilizing a 'we-feeling' to justify their support to this community, it means that, from a politico-institutional point of view, we are witnessing something new, which cannot simply be captured by the old ethnic-civic distinction. To remain within this analytical framework would limit our theoretical scope. It would prevent alternative visions by which to decipher new ways in which territory, people, and sovereignty are tied to each other beyond the idea of a common identity.

[1] See survey data for 'Meaning of the EU' available on the Eurobarometer Interactive Search System (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion).

4. EUrope as a 'laboratory': Going beyond the ethnic-civic divide

As framed by the ethnic-civic opposition, the debate over the future of EUrope has focused on what kind of identity the EUropean *demos* should embody. The post-national or civic camp has rejected the possibility for culturally homogenous *demos*, since the new post-modern condition has brought about a major structural transformation of political institutions. As Delanty (2000, quoted in Rumford, 2003: 37) argues, "we are living in an age which has made it impossible to return to one of the great dreams of the project of modernity, namely the creation of a unitary principle of integration capable of bringing together the domains of economy, polity, culture and society". Similarly, in the words of Beck and Grande (2007: 69), EUrope should not (and could not) become both a nation and a state. Thus, from this post-national perspective, a shared political or civic identity appears as the only possible recipe to give EUrope a *demos*.

This argument has been challenged by the opposite camp, those who believe that democracy, solidarity, trust, and loyalty are not possible outside the emotional feelings that only a common culture can generate among people (Miller 2000). In other words, the *demos* can exist only when and where a common cultural identity exists (Cederman 2001). To these critics, Habermas's constitutional patriotism is too abstract a principle, as human society is not made up of citizens, but real individuals who have feelings and specific identities (Schnapper 2002: 11). Decoupling the political from the cultural – the argument goes – is, therefore, neither feasible nor desirable, as a disembodied, legalistic,

and a-cultural view of citizens simply does not correspond to lived reality (Shore 2004: 29).

The civic camp, in turn, has rebuffed this criticism, by asserting that trust and solidarity do not necessarily have to rest on deep affective feelings of identity and belonging (Zürn 2000). Cosmopolitan values (Turner 2002: 57-58), commitment to constitutionalism and its ideals (Kumm 2005), shared projects (Nicolaïdis and Howse 2002: 773), mutual engagement in the public sphere (Calhoun 2002: 156), utilitarian or contractual factors (Kaelberer 2004: 162; Kritzinger 2005), and, in Rawlsian terms, a sense of justice (Føllesdal 2000) can also work as substitutes. When these elements are in place, a sense of collective identity can be generated *a posteriori*, without being a prerequisite for the construction of a politically viable community (Kohli 2000).

My argument is not to support one or the other of these views, but to observe that both are actually more similar in their political speculations than what might appear *prima facie*. Both indeed reproduce for EUrope the same structural relationship between territory, people, and politics on which the nation-state has relied. While the national (cultural) camp talks of a shared ethnic or cultural identity, the postnational (civic) camp talks of a shared civic or political identity as the principle around which this structural relationship can still be organized. In other words, both believe that EUrope needs a *demos*, defined either in culturally or politically terms. Although with clear distinctions, this means to implicitly classify the new 'beast' as belonging to the same family as the one of the nation-state. EUrope is indeed debated alike, in terms of a governing principle around which trust, solidarity, identity, and belonging coalesce. The creation of the

demos is regarded as the necessary step in an accretion process which resembles too closely the one theorized for the nation-state (Paasi 2001).

Yet, in the case of EUrope, empirical evidence also leads to unpacking the bundle formed by identity, loyalty, solidarity, trust, attachment, and belonging which, either in ethnic-cultural or civic terms, has structured the relationship between territory, people, and politics as occurred, at least in principle, in the nation-state. EUrope might be something else than a political institution in need of a *demos*.

'EUrope as a laboratory' is often voiced by scholars as a way to signal that EUrope stands for something new in the panorama of politico-constitutional experiments. Yet, it seems to me that this expression has also become a sort of dominant, but empty mantra, conveniently used to skip indeed the question about what is actually new in this experiment. I would argue that the empirical evidence presented in this article brings forward an interesting perspective which could substantiate the metaphor of 'EUrope as a laboratory'. The evidence indeed suggests that while both cultural or civic EUrope exists as an idea among ordinary people, it also points to the idea of a post-identity EUrope, which *de facto* challenges the necessity of a EUropean *demos*. Some respondents affirmed in fact to be in favour of EUrope, yet they did not feel EUropean, i.e. they did not feel belonging to a EUropean *demos*, either ethnically, culturally or politically.

Critics would observe that such a lack of common identity would prove fatal to EUrope in times of crises, as for instance during the present euro crisis. To predict the EUro(pe)'s end is something which obviously lies outside the scientific realm, being in fact a matter of mere opinions, conjectures, wishes, fears, etc. Yet, if one has to stick with the existing evidence, it would be hard to suggest that a potential EUro(pe)'s end would

be a consequence of the lack of common EUropean identity and, in turn, EUropean solidarity. Eurobarometer survey data indeed suggest that, in the summer-fall 2010, i.e., already in the midst of the present euro crisis, forty nine per cent of respondents affirmed to be willing to provide financial help to another member state facing economic and financial difficulties.[5] Moreover, only few months later, twenty three per cent of Eurobarometer respondents believed that the most effective level for tackling the present economic and financial crisis was the EU, against twenty per cent who believed it was the national government.[6] EUrope scored even higher (forty five per cent) than national governments (thirty nine per cent) in terms of the effectiveness of the actions put in place to tackle the crisis.[7]

It is certainly possible that with the intensifying of the crisis these figures could change. Yet, the present available evidence seems to suggest that a sense of common identity is not necessary for the stability of EUro(pe) (Kaelberer 2004), as long as this latter continues to be perceived as effective in its governance capacity (Kritzinger 2005). This would confirm the principle of 'secondary allegiance' put forward by Van Kersbergen (2000) – i.e., as long as EUrope is perceived to work to the benefit of national states, citizens would profess their allegiance to EUrope as well.

I should make clear that filling the metaphor of 'Europe as a laboratory' with this utilitarian content should not be taken as a normative project. I am not in fact proposing EUrope to be such a utilitarian polity. I am simply taking seriously a view which emerges from the voices of the EUropean *demos*, rather than simply discarding it because it is deemed not enough to produce stable, democratic institutional spaces, supported by mutual solidarity and trust as we have known them so far. To remain open to this view

from the *demos* means to continue exploring the extent to which EUrope is a laboratory. To discard it for the reasons just mentioned simply means to believe that there is only one model that works, whereas all the others are doomed to failure - i.e., we already know it all.

Let me finally point to another factor which I think should stimulate scholars to continue exploring 'EUrope as a laboratory', namely the changing ethno-cultural face of Europeans. In 2010, the Eurostat datum about foreign-born people residing in the EU-27 space was equal to 9.4% of the total EUropean population.[8] Although already relevant, this datum should however be complemented with figures related to the percentage of foreign citizens, refugees, undocumented migrants, second generation 'immigrants' and individuals with mixed background. How, within this context of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2007), would still be possible to talk of a common EUropean identity becomes therefore even more problematic. It seems indeed not realistic to believe that everybody would share the same individual liberal values, equally commit to constitutionalism and its ideals, or regularly adopt the same rational proceduralism to deal with conflicting views, as maintained by Habermas's constitutional patriotism (Baumeister 2007).

The notion of multilevel governance has answered the question about the institutional nature of the beast by fully espousing a pluralistic view, beyond the traditional opposition between neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. I believe that if we want to further our understanding of EUrope in cultural and political terms, we should equally open our analytical tools to plurality, liberating them, among others, from the binary opposition of the ethnic-civic debate. Free vision and 'dirty feet' (i.e., walking into the ethnographical

field) would certainly help enrich our understanding of the cultural and political nature(s) of the beast.

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[1] I use henceforth the spelling 'EUrope' to suggest the conceptual overlapping which, both in public discourses and scholarly research, characterises today Europe and the European Union. It is not here possible to critically engage this hegemonic representation, yet the spelling EUrope aims to remind us of the politically-charged character of this overlapping.

[2] "Identity, norms, community, discourse: cultural approaches to European integration", University of Bristol, Department of Politics, Bristol, 13-14 May 2010.

[3] Interestingly, this same 'national' view also informs the legal-constitutional debate about EUropean integration. See for instance the reservations made by the German Federal Constitutional Court to the Treaty of Maastricht on the basis that a minimum common identity is necessary for legitimate democratic rule (Mahlmann, 2005).

[4] For a similar argument see Chalmers (2006), whose invitation to think of a post-national EUrope as a balancing act between 'the ethnic' and 'the civic' remains however merely stated rather than discussed in terms of how actually balancing the two dimensions.

[5] Special Eurobarometer 74.1 (fieldwork: August-September 2010; publication: November 2010), p. 63-64. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/topics/eb741parl_en.pdf. In Germany, the country most financially exposed to the bailout of Greece, this figure was only slightly lower: forty six per cent.

[6] Standard Eurobarometer 74 (Autumn wave; fieldwork: November 2010; publication: February 2011), p. 15. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb74/eb74_cri_en.pdf.

[7] Ibidem, p. 16.

[8] See Eurostat News Release 105/2011 available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-14072011-BP/EN/3-14072011-BP-EN.PDF