Abstract

Based upon the original application to the European Commission, this article gives insights into the thinking of the Euroidentities team at the point that the project began. The question: *Is the European ‘identity project’ failing?* is posed in the sense that the political and economic attainments of the European Union have not been translated into a sense of identity with or commitment to Europe from the populaces that have benefited from them. The urgency of European ‘identity work’ is asserted with a number of levels for the construction of European identity being hypothesized.

Euroidentities is intended to break conceptual ground by bringing together on an equal footing two apparently antagonistic views of identity – the collective and institutional and the individual and biographical – to give a more anchored and nuanced view of identity formation and transformation than either can provide on its own. Rather than following the dominant approaches to research on European

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identity that have been macro-theoretical and ‘top-down’, retrospective in-depth qualitative biographical interviews are planned since they provide the ideal means of gaining insight into the formation of a European identity or multiple identities from the ‘bottom up’ perspective of non-elite groups. The reliability of analysis will be buttressed by the use of contrastive comparison between cases, culminating in contrastive comparison across the national project teams between cases drawn from different ‘sensitized groups’ that provide the fieldwork structure of the project. The paper concludes with a summary of some of the more significant findings.

**Key words:** Identity, Europe, biographical narrative.

1. **FOREWORD**

The editors of *Sociological Review* first approached Euroidentities in the spring of 2009 when the project was about a year into its funding about reproducing the part of the original application to the European Commission that had put forward the conceptual and methodological rationales that underlay the submission. As is apparent here, the initial proposal has grown into this special edition of *Sociological Review*. Writing on behalf of all our colleagues in Euroidentities, we are honoured by the invitation extended to us to present so much of the thinking and findings from the project together in a single, prominent venue.

As the editors explain, most of the articles in this volume present ongoing analysis and findings from the project. The piece below is different in that it was completed in April 2007 immediately prior to the Euroidentities application being submitted to the Commission. It itself was the culmination of a long gestation. Many of the persons in the Euroidentities project had been involved in a previous Framework 6 bid on a similar topic that, while positively evaluated, had not been funded (European Identity Work 2008). The British Academy funded a workshop in Belfast in September 2005 at which the conceptual and methodological issues around using biographical methods to study European identity was discussed further and the decision was made to make a further application if a suitable topic appeared in Framework 7. It then transpired that the parameters of Workprogramme Topic SSH-2007-5.2.1: ‘Histories and Identities – articulating national and European identities’ in the first Call were a very good fit with our interests and the Euroidentities application was developed in late 2006 through early 2007.

While Miller and Schütze are given as the authors, we want to make clear that the following piece was very much the end product of a process that
included at one stage or another all of the ‘scientists-in-charge’ of each of the Euroidentities national teams, plus many of the other persons who have worked on the project, as well as participants in the British Academy workshop and other meetings where the project took shape. The paper was section B-1, ‘Scientific and Technical Methodology’, of the application. It is being presented here because the document was the agreed outcome of the cumulative collaborative debates and discussions that had taken place among the project members up to the point of submitting the application. It can be seen as a ‘snapshot’ of the collective thinking of Euroidentities at a point in time shortly before the actual work of the project began in earnest. As such, when read along with the other papers in this special edition, we hope it will prove of interest by showing both the initial perspectives that drove the project and their continuity and/or evolution through its course.

Since the intention is to convey the thinking of Euroidentities at the time the project commenced, we have resisted the temptation to ‘improve’ the document and have made very few changes to the original except to remove some notation conventions that only made sense within the application. The use of **Bold** as it was employed in the original application has been retained in order to give the reader a sense of the points that at that time we wished to highlight to reviewers as being unique or special.

2. **INTRODUCTION – IS THE EUROPEAN ‘IDENTITY PROJECT’ FAILING?**

The European Community has reached a state that can be seen as a crisis of confidence. The Community has succeeded in attaining what were historically its core goals. While the history of the last decade has shown that Europe is no more immune to regional armed conflict than other global regions, the prospect of a true central European war between major nation states no longer exists.

The economic goals of the Community have been realised at a continental level so that Europe has maintained and strengthened its position as a major global economic block. The ongoing extension of the boundaries of the union to the east and south and the desire of the candidate accession states to join is a reflection of this success.

However, these political and economic attainments have not been translated into a sense of identity or commitment from the populaces that have benefited from them.
The refutation of the draft European constitution marked this widely spread crisis. It is especially poignant in that the blunt refutation came when individual citizens rather than their representatives had the chance to exercise their opinion of a broadening union and that the rejection came from two of the original six signature nations of the treaties of Rome.

While it may be argued that the electorates actually were expressing their dissatisfaction with their respective governments about other economic and political policies rather than the European constitution, the central question remains why the ideals of the European constitution were not seen as more important than questions of mundane day-to-day politics.

The refusal of the constitution points to a more fundamental issue than just the thwarting and stagnation of political momentum towards a more unified Europe. The question becomes: How can it be possible that the experience of ordinary citizens of the European Union at a time of unprecedented communication and influence across all parts of the continent is not matched by a parallel shift in personal orientation and a growth in loyalty towards the European entity? This question about the apparent lack of correspondence between the personal orientation of the individual and the growing European nature of the structure in which the individual finds oneself is a crucial question of identity – both the formation of identity and its apparent lack of change.

In the view of the Commission, ‘Citizenship of the Union is both a source of legitimisation of the process of European integration, by reinforcing the participation of citizens, and a fundamental factor in the creation among citizens of a sense of belonging to the European Union and of having a genuine European identity.’ (Commission, 2001) However, as the same report acknowledges, European citizenship is something ‘superimposed’ on the national and regional or local. The model described aspires to essentially a new type of multiple citizenships on different levels, with the European complimenting other expressions found at national, regional and local levels. This model may express the constitutional and judicial reality but in terms of reflecting the social or political it is perhaps best understood as an ideal type – an aspiration rather than a social reality. Such models are a necessary point of reference but, as elite constructions, they tend to circulate among the elite. The reality is that there is cause for increasing concern both about the level of Euro-scepticism that has grown among some Europeans and the relative failure to promote a sense of European identity (e.g., Vitorino, 2001), reflected in the decline of political participation.

The question of European identity is an empirical question, concerning whether and to what extent the European Union can be seen as a ‘we’ community
at all. The scope and dynamics of the question are basically unknown at present, even to the social sciences. Remarkably, there have been only four European Community framework projects that have had European identity as a significant part of their remit. The IDNET project, *‘Europeanization, Collective Identities and Public Discourse’*, concentrated upon the role of the mass media in arenas of public discourse (see Risse and Maier, 2003). The Border Discourses project, *‘Border Discourses: Changing identities, changing actions, changing stories in European border communities’*, focussed on the construction of border identities (see Meinhof, Armbruster and Rollo, 2003). The *‘Youth and European Identity’* project investigated perceptions of Europe among young people (see Jamison, 2005). The EIWSR project, *‘European Identity, Welfare State, Religion’*, also centred on identity, but with a focus on the continuing significance of religion for identity (see Milan, 2002).

**Euroidentities** will add significantly to the current state of knowledge expressed by these projects. While the IDNET project was centrally concerned with the question of the European identity, it adopted very much a ‘top down’ perspective of identity formation. The ‘Border Discourses’ project applied qualitative methods of narrative interviewing, but concentrated upon an intergenerational analysis of cross-border families. **Euroidentities** will also be centrally concerned with European identity but will adopt a ‘bottom up’ perspective, using a distinctive biography-analytical methodology to focus on the formation and change of European identities from the point of view of the everyday citizen. Furthermore, the findings of this project will be placed directly within the ‘crisis of confidence’ debate discussed above.

### 3. ‘EUROPEAN IDENTITY WORK’

People in the European nations have to accomplish ‘European Identity Work’ to an increasing degree. ‘Identity work’ is a biographical process of identity (re)formulation that leads to the incorporation within the individual of morally binding concerns for all varieties of communities and collectivities. Over the last three centuries of European history these were in particular the collective concerns of the nation. Now, however, with the process of European unification those morally binding aspects of orientation are losing their national exclusivity. In contrast to the national level, differences between cultural and economic regions (such as between European peripheries and centres) and political-legal aspects of identification and creation become more and more crucial for identity work.
Thus, it becomes a central issue how, and by which types of engagements, the individual actor is able, on the one hand, to connect these concerns for collective tasks with concepts and orientations at different levels of abstraction in his or her own biographical construction of identity, and how, on the other hand, she or he will be able to become emotionally and analytically detached from collective concerns, and finally assess and balance divergent or even discrepant emerging collective demands, therewith bearing and handling the paradoxes caused by contradictory collective concerns and loyalties in her or his moral orientation. In this regard, people who live in hybrid and marginal (bi- and/or multicultural) situations, are highly relevant for the study of European identity.

3.1. The urgencies of European ‘identity work’

The need to understand how European identities are developing, or failing, is not solely of importance in order to develop a majority for a plebiscite on major issues. The globalised world of the twenty-first century requires effective collectivities that are wider than the nation. Aside from macro-nations such as Russia and the United States, that are almost continents in themselves, nations cannot be anymore the ‘perfectly sheltering home’ from the dangers of the world economy, war and cultural conflicts. The sense of investment in a collective identity and the forms that sense may take are crucial for the maintenance of a genuine collective political entity.

Within the public sphere and state-regulated institutions there is a need for an underlying non-contractual framework of implicit assumptions and common conventions of behaviour (for instance, trust, a willingness to negotiate and principles of fairness and reciprocity) to underpin formal mechanisms such as labour market regulations, principles for safeguarding the environment and, in a specific European context, safeguarding the human rights of European citizens and the European Social Charter. In a very real sense, the ‘micro’ reflects the ‘macro’ and in this instance in turn the ‘macro’ is dependent upon the ‘micro’.

An underlying base of cultural assumptions shared at the level of the individual is required to make ‘Europe’ a functioning social entity as well as a political and economic entity. These shared assumptions are essential to the development of a sense of socio-biographical identity, the intersection between the individual self and social structure.

Whether peoples’ sense of personal identity are moving towards a shared core of beliefs is a moot point. As well as centripetal forces promoting the development of an inclusive European identity, there are centrifugal forces that can drive people
apart. The sense of personal identity is expressed at the level of the collective. National identity can reassert itself in part since it still seen by the mass media as the central arena for political decisions; or, in contrast, national identity may become fragmented by socio-economic differentiation or by the assertion of ethnic identity within regions or across borders (Kłoskowska, 1996/2001). Perceived, and arguably real, adverse effects upon the economic prospects of individuals and indigenous collectivities due to the movement of economic migrants from east to west within the Union and from the ‘south’ into the Union, seen in part as resulting from European Union policies, cause reactions against economic ‘others’ that can grow into an aversion to the cultural ‘other’. The resulting right-wing extremism can morph into ultra-nationalism or even xenophobia.

A less extreme manifestation can be seen in the disappointment of the general population with the organisation, management and handling of their political concerns within European institutions that are seen as lacking political legitimacy and serving the ends of elites. ‘Distanciation’ may be more pronounced in larger states than smaller societies where elites and lay population may not be so separated. This malaise can be compounded by the tendency of politicians to elicit anti-European stereotypes and sentiments within their respective national constituencies. At the level of the popular arts, people can become disenchanted with the superficial, void, ritualised ‘scenic’ productions of trivial European intercultural exchange.

Finally, the extra-national identification of a person living in Europe can be identification with some other, extra-European, affiliation; such as: a ‘trans-Atlantic’ identity; identification with others sharing a common tongue with its associated common cultural outlook (e.g., fellow Anglophones); a pan-Islamic world view; or identification with the Chinese or Indian Diaspora.

Hence, the evolution of a European identity or identities can by no means be taken for granted.

3.2. The reflexive context leading to identity (re)construction

The first decade of the twenty-first century can be seen as placed firmly within a new era in terms of identity maintenance and transformation. The old sureties of identity construction – in terms of traditionally understood gender, social class and geographic origin – while important, no longer hold undisputed unchanging sway across the life span. While stability across all these dimensions still remains the norm, the perception of them as the norm has been supplanted by a much more malleable view than previously. Gender identity, that was not seen by the general
population as a matter of debate only a few short decades ago, is now recognised as flexible, if not for oneself, at least for others. Congruent with this are changes towards more flexible views on family structure and sexual morality. While the gross figures of the proportions of the population who experience significant social mobility remain remarkably stable, the perception is that social background no longer plays as an important role as in the past. While rates of geographic mobility have increased appreciably, the norm for the majority is still, at most, short-distance moves. What has changed is the exposure to alternate conceptions of gender, contact with social class lifestyles that were previously only imagined and direct exposure to cultures that previously were geographically beyond reach. The old view of a life course as being an institutionalised progression of set stages has been supplanted by a view of life courses that merge and diverge depending upon individual circumstance and choice.

These changes have implications for the formation of individual identity. Whereas in the past identity was established at the beginning of life and remained anchored in gender, class and location, this no longer applies. Identity has to be seen as an active, ongoing process of construction and reconstruction, set in and reacting to the present. This process is a tension between a current orientation set in the past and a conscious and unconscious need to adapt that is framed by an anticipation of the future. It is this tension between changing structure and agency that drives the biographical construction of identity.

An essential principle of this project is that there is an intimate connection between individual biographical identities and collective identities conceived of as ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1983, Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983, Macdonald, 1993). Collective concerns are kept alive through individual involvement and imagined communities have symbolic power within personal biographies. Research therefore must engage with the biographical ‘bottom-up’ processes of identity construction that take place in everyday life. Compared with previous generations of nation-state citizens, today’s actors are faced with new, more complicated ways of doing ‘European identity work’. The need to interact continuously with members of other groups, nations and cultures partly contributes to the development of more complex identity constructions, although it may also lead to more demarcated and group-centred identifications.

The evolution and development of a European identity or identities needs to be seen within this ‘late modern’ biographical context. Collective identity is a cross-cutting issue that has implications for citizenship in the formation of civic values, the shaping of new kinds of social understanding through migration and mobility, representations of the past and future of European integration,
the resolution of social conflicts, and cultural dialogue. **Euroidentities** aims to show the **contribution** of identity work to these processes and how it supports (or undermines) the development of European citizenship in settings that typify the construction of a new ‘European space’.

### 4. LEVELS OF CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

‘Identities’ are not objects *per se* to be isolated and defined. They are the resources which individuals and groups use in contexts of interaction to deal with problems of self-identity and otherness. **The construction of a European identity or identities can be seen as taking place at a number of conceptually different levels, ranging from the collective and institutional to the individual and biographical.**

#### 4.1. Collective consciousness

Acting in concert with others and taking part in group enterprises is a level that can contribute to the formation of a collective European identity. Firstly, the experience of participation in social movements or large-scale shared projects that have a European dimension will affect one’s own self-view. This collective involvement implies taking on the perspective of the other co-participants and dwelling on features shared with them. Secondly, this common experience of social networks, organisations or institutional regulations (even unplanned common experience such as being part of a common wave of migration) may lead through action in concert with others to shared frames of reference or arenas of moral discourse at the collective level.

The collectivities with which one may bond may be multiple, opening scope for the possibility of juggling competing sources of identification. The sources of competing identity can be located at different levels – regional, national or international territorial spheres with distinct cultures and with different administrative bodies or institutions. There can be multi-layered incorporations of expectations and obligations with several, perhaps competing, loyalties, impinging upon the same individual, leading to feelings of hybridity or marginality from them all. One can become either engrossed or detached, either engaged or disengaged with any given collectivity.
4.2. Structural conditions and opportunity structures

Many structural factors can affect the generation of collective identity. The structures of opportunity open to individuals may affect their choice of collectivities with which they identify. This identification with a group that offers better chances of success in life can be either an unconscious identification with ‘the winners’ or conscious and strategic (for example, identification with a given collectivity can open avenues for support through mechanisms such as access to social networks or funding). The instrument can be one of feedback, with identification with a chosen collectivity affecting one’s opportunities and choices of life strategies. Opportunity structures can be sited in geography. For example, at a regional level, location in a backward peripheral region with reduced resources and opportunities leads to a different type of regionally-based collective identity than location in a centre with privileged access to opportunities, the latest scientific and technological advantages, and other facilities and amenities. Location in a ‘centre’, whether regionally or organisationally, can confer advantages of access simply through being ‘central’, being located at the point where knowledge crosses and access to communication and networks is easy. Organisational frameworks, developments within organisations and their ‘culture’, both generally and in specific instances such as security measures or institutional regulations, can promote or impede identification.

4.2.1. The public sphere and state-regulated institutions

The construction of a European identity involves the ‘shaping and dimensioning’ of the individual’s relation to the public sphere and to state-related institutions. If positive, there is a biographical process of bonding morally to the precepts of the public sphere that involves engaging with the duties and obligations of that public sphere. If negative, there is detachment.

The development of European identity requires the construction and refinement of communication between the constituent groups within the European Community – processes of standardisation and regulation that can be seen broadly as processes that have the effect of cultural design and mediation. On the one hand, internal communication within language groups in the Community is refined by the development and purification of linguistic codes. On the other, the processes of language translation and interpretation can be seen as processes that weaken exclusionary divisions through acting as means of mediation and liaison between cultures. A true translation involves more than the simple transposition of words. It requires situational and personal re-specification, detachment, and a sharing and
simplification of social categorisation. The true interpreter must take the perspective of ‘the other’, in which one refers to social situations and defines them in a value-neutral manner. In effect, the translator/interpreter is subjected by the experience to a temporary identity change that may have permanent effects upon the psyche.

4.2.2. Inclusion/Exclusion: boundaries

Collective identity construction can be seen as a process of defining one’s ‘we’ community by seeing oneself in contrast to others. The resulting ‘borders’ are not necessarily national or geographical. Rather the key is that they are constructed by contrast with the ‘other’ who has a culture or way of life that is different from one’s own. While there is ‘otherness’, there are areas of contact and overlap due to some common core values and moral obligations. Hence, the relationship between ‘others’ need not necessarily be antagonistic – the relationship is mutual and is one of ‘figuration’, the contrast with ‘the other’ can be one of the features that determines oneself.

There can be grades of social exclusion. Otherness can arise from the contrast between a centre and a peripheral fringe or between urban versus rural and from migration from (and to) the fringe. In this way, migration will impact upon the construction of individual and collective identity.

This is qualitatively different from the relation to ‘the alien’, where there is no understanding due to there being no overlap of core values and moral obligations. There is no communication, only incomprehension. The development of xenophobia can be seen as a process in which the perception of ‘the other’ is warped into a perception of ‘the incomprehensible alien’.

As well as acting to confirm the exclusivity of identity of the included, there can be a rise of a sense of ‘we-ness’ among the excluded. To the extent that these parameters of inclusion and exclusion are being actively constructed rather than being inherited or reproduced, their generation can be considered a biographical process of identity formation.

4.2.3. The merging of historical time and biographical time

At times of social change, particularly during times of profound historical change, there can be a merging of historical time with biographical time. Individuals caught up in a collective historical concatenation of events find themselves in a situation that can be perceived as both enabling and disabling. Firstly, there may be a feeling of personally being part of an evolving collective history and contributing to it. Secondly, there can be a feeling (and perhaps an experienced reality) of being swamped by historical events that are beyond one’s own control.
where one’s personal safety may be at jeopardy and in which assets of economic and social capital disappear. This feeling of being caught up in a chaotic or an anomic situation breaks down the security of identity. If the individual can cope, the effect of the trajectory can be positive, leading to a reformulation through processes of ‘biographical work’ of a revised identity that is more congruent with the changed circumstances and more effective at coping with them. Thirdly, experiencing a common history – a collective trajectory of events – leads to collective identity processes as the common experiences are talked and written about – a ‘projection of the recent past’ into a shared frame of meaning. As we make sense of the experiential, there is a crossover with the collective social world. Collectively, this latter experiential history can set people apart into one or more age-defined ‘cohort generations’ – groups socially-defined differently from those who are older or younger than them by unique demographic or historical experiences. The reaction to a common historical experience leads on to the production of a common cultural heritage through mechanisms such as belletrist literature and sharing symbolisms such as using a common language or style of communication, common identity markers or the presence of myths or collective memories held in common.

5. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION – PROGRESS BEYOND STATE-OF-THE-ART

5.1. Conceptual framework

The evolution of identity across one’s life course is a biographical process that is on the one hand an unconscious ‘seen but unnoticed’ unfolding in which repertoires of behaviour that were largely established within the social and structural context of early life express themselves in current circumstances. That is, within a life there is continuity of identity. On the other hand, the unfolding of biographical identity also involves the focussed working through of experiences and the projection of possible ways of acting into the future. That is, there is change in identity. Both the former, a contextualised perspective that can deal with the continuity of identity, and the latter, interactionist perspective that can deal with identity change, are analytically necessary in order to carry out a mature study of the interface of individual identities with collectivities that will be required to examine the evolution of identity within a European context – the interplay of structural and cultural frames within biographical work.

Euroidentities will break conceptual ground by bringing together on an equal footing these two apparently antagonistic views of identity. Their
melding gives a more anchored and nuanced view of identity formation and transformation than either can provide on its own and will provide a conjoint framework that will allow us to investigate the development of European identities in a manner that is both more conceptually-grounded and substantively relevant than that which has come before.

5.1.1. Contextualised perspective

It is a truism that the building blocks of identity are laid down early in life and that the early social context – both the material resources and potentialities available but more importantly the ways of behaving that are absorbed from the context – is crucial. While open to later development and evolution, this early identity framework will remain with the individual throughout his/her life. In order to work effectively with the phenomenon of continuity, this study will take inspiration from a ‘Bourdieusian’ view of identity that centres upon the concept of habitus and routines for handling one’s social environment. Habitus was developed by Pierre Bourdieu as a means of resolving the tension between structure and agency when explaining human behaviour. Located at the nexus between the determinism of structure and the freedom of exercised individual initiative, it is a ‘classic’ view of identity. The ‘structured’ aspect of habitus refers in the first instance to the internalisation during childhood of a world view that stems from socialisation into one’s stratum of origin. This consists of experience of and knowledge about the social and material world coupled with orientations and volitions towards behaviour – predispositions towards action that will be expressed in concrete behaviour as personal circumstances change throughout life. The ‘action’ aspect of habitus refers to the malleability of potential behaviour. The dispositions to action given by habitus do not lead to mechanically-determined behaviour but are better seen as general orientations to action that will be expressed uniquely depending upon the circumstances at any given point. The initial dispositions laid down in early life will take primacy, but they can alter with subsequent experience; hence, continuity but the potential for real change.

The classic definition of habitus cited by most commentators is as follows:

’...Habitus is ... a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor’ (Bourdieu, 1999/1972: 72).
Some commentators (e.g., Jenkins, 1992; King, 2000) argue that habitus is fundamentally a structure-bound concept that cannot deal adequately with change; however, this is a misreading. Habitus emphasizes the reproduction and stability of social behaviour since, for the majority most of the time, this is the norm. Most people’s social environment does not change fundamentally over life; for most people the initial orientations of habitus towards behaviour will remain substantially intact across the life course, changing more in the manner in which they are expressed rather than in the fundamental dispositions towards behaviour. Furthermore, habitus does limit what people can see as possible avenues of behaviour at any given time – horizons are constrained. Habitus can provide a conceptual device that will allow the project to grasp the mechanisms that drive the phenomenon of the quasi-automatic, almost unconscious, out-of-hand rejection of pan-European ideals.

However, habitus is not stagnant and will change as circumstances change. Rather than a set orientation to behaviour, habitus is better conceived of as an evolving set of dispositions that will follow a course of change as an individual moves through her/his life. If circumstances change radically – which can occur in situations where one’s society undergoes a profound social transformation, or when one moves to a radically different social environment, such as with international migration, or even when one’s personal life alters in a deep way – this can lead to a significant alteration in one’s habitus.

5.1.2. Interactionist perspective

The ‘Interactionist’ view of identity has its foundations in symbolic interactionism and, in our project especially, the work of Anselm Strauss. It approaches the issue of identity change through the central concept of biographical work. Biographical work, or biographical identity (re)formulation, has a humanist view of the individual that incorporates the following features.

The self is seen as a developing entity. This developing is important for the person, and should be focused upon. Initially a person will not understand the quality and dynamics of his/her unfolding and this needs to be understood. If one is developing in benign or positive ways, these should be fomented. If one is developing in detrimental ways, this needs to be realized as a first step towards understanding and changing the negative progression of one’s life.

In order to gain an understanding, the task is in some manner or other to tell one’s life history by at least a partial autobiographical story telling to important others and/or to oneself in an ‘inner conversation’. This telling involves expressing the possible overarching features of one’s life in order to understand
that it is important to see the self-historical shape of one’s biography. It includes delineating and reflecting on the nature of one’s life as reflected in the (assumed) mirror images provided by significant others who act figuratively or literally as ‘coaches’, ‘referees’ or critical onlookers. The process of reflection also needs to bring in how one’s central value orientation is mediated by collective identities – the connectedness to, and distance from, collectivities significant for the person concerned, the realized or not realized obligations to these collectivities. One’s own personal identity features are streamed and structured according to the ‘grammar’ and the topicality of collective identity features that are relevant to oneself. The relationship to collectivities brings in issues of the individual’s cultural ‘marginality’ or ‘hybridity’ and discrepancies within and between central social relationships, both individual and collective. The relationship may be one of self-realisation – not only identifying but also in some way distancing oneself from collective identity requirements and insinuations by re-individualising, re-singularising or re-concretising one’s own life course and personal identity. Elementary assumptions regarding adopted responsibilities towards collectivities may be questioned as various levels (e.g., sacrificing oneself for one’s family, following nationalistic or patriotic percepts as morally legitimate or obligatory, whatever they may be).

The sense making process needs to delineate the self-historical gestalt, or overarching principles and structure, of one’s basic life orientation and identity development as well as considering alternative ways to interpreting its self-historical shape. What are the social relationships, media, vocabularies, and cultural styles that enable, or at least assist, one to discover the overall shape of the biography? Do generally-accepted professional explanations for one’s own personal difficulties and potentials fit or not? What are the self-thematizations of one’s life history as a whole; especially its far-reaching plans, attainments, disappointments and personal hurts? Are the self-theories that one has developed up to the present in order to explain difficulties and shortcomings in one’s life realistic or delusional?

The study of biographical work has concentrated upon phenomena such as: the sequence of biographical actions schemes; the competition within a single individual between different biographical action schemes; trajectories of suffering and their assault upon identity; biographical metamorphosis when one develops new capacities or rises above a negative trajectory; institutional expectation patterns, such as careers. This study has been applied – addressing questions such as how to follow up (and strengthen or fight positive and negative progressions
respectively) and to realize their actual and potential interconnections in order to perceive and develop a realistic overall positive shape for one’s biography.

5.1.3. Cross-fertilization

While both of these approaches can provide a conceptual framework in its own right with which to study the biographical processes of identity formation and change, each has weak points that can be resolved through a combined framework. While it is now recognized generally that the charge of ‘structural determinism’ leveled against a Bourdieusian view of identity is unfounded (Paadam & Miller in preparation; Crossley, 2001; Fuchs, 2003; Reay, 2004), it is the case that the mechanisms for how identity change occurs within the framework of an identity contained within habitus need to be delineated more clearly. The Interactionist standpoint within biographical research has been concerned centrally with these mechanisms and, in fact, the humanistic orientation of this perspective is grounded upon assumptions that identity change (for the better) is possible, that identity change can be effected as a conscious, deliberate process, and that effecting this change should be a goal within the wider context of the research process.

In turn, while the Interactionist perspective takes structure into account, recognizing the existence of constraints on behaviour such as gender, nationality or ethnicity, class and social ascription generally, it does so in a comparatively uncontextualised ad hoc way. Structure is recognized, but not its great strength for affecting biographical progression. Bourdieusian sociology, with its embedding of the habitus concept within a nuanced theoretical structure of capitals, the overarching field of social class and milieu, and the broad political context of symbolic violence, provides a rigorous contextualized view of society that is weak within the interactionist approach.

The Interactionist perspective also posits that biographical identity formation is partially a conscious process, while one can argue that for most people most of the time, there is continuity of identity, and its formation and change takes place partially unconsciously, as a by-product of experience and coping with life. In contrast, the Bourdieusian view of identity as being located in habitus posits identity formation and transition as being primarily if not wholly unconscious. Again, the two perspectives compliment each other.

What both approaches have in common is a humanistic value system. This is explicit within the Interactionist perspective with its unapologetic advocacy that a core value driving the biographical research enterprise must be the positive self-realisation that can be attained through a process of discovery fomented through the biographical interview process. The same humanity-affirming values
are present within the Bourdieusian perspective, though less obvious. The final goal of Bourdieusian sociology is to reach a level of understanding where the veil is torn from the normally-obscured processes of symbolic violence that work to maintain social exploitation. This goal of subverting entrenched inequities is no less a humanistic goal at the societal level than the goal of self-actualisation that the Interactionist approach seeks at the individual level.

6. METHODOLOGY AND ASSOCIATED WORK PLAN

6.1. Method – the approach

The dominant approaches to research on European identity have been macro-theoretical and ‘top-down’. They focus on measures to promote European unity, a common culture and a positive sense of European identity via the public discourses of the EU and member states (Shore, 2000, Chapter 1). Historical images of Europe as a whole, the key documents of European unification, the EU constitution, media discourses about Europe and so on can provide powerful collective images of orientation towards Europe. Concerned with the outcomes of public discourse, however, the dominant approaches underestimate the power of individuals to shape relationships with various collectivities and to define collective situations and public issues. Research is needed to show how these images are put to use by the citizens of European societies – how they are internalized, developed, changed and managed in the everyday life of the ordinary citizens who use them to construct and maintain collective identities. Underestimation of the power of the individual is detrimental to the pursuit of the cultural, social and biographical strengthening of citizenship, especially European citizenship, and to the creativity this requires. Members of the research community acknowledge that ‘bottom-up related processes of identity construction are admittedly hard to gauge’ (Petersson and Hellström, 2003: 236). Retrospective in-depth qualitative biographical interviews provides the ideal means of gaining insight into the formation of a European identity or multiple identities from the ‘bottom up’ perspective of non-elite groups. Identity maintenance and transformation is a biographical process, with the individual’s perspective being formed in part out of the sum of the influence of their past experience and their subjective perception and processing of this past. Former experiences may either support a productive unfolding of one’s own identity or – if they encompass heteronomous conditions – undermine the self identity of the person affected. This received past plays into the present as one’s identity is being maintained but
also actively constructed. At the same time, the present perspective is also formed by an anticipation of the future – what the individual sees as the likely outcome of the present in the immediate, medium and long terms. Despite Kierkegaard’s famous dictum that ‘Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward’, in a real sense, present identity is a lens that focuses darkly upon both the past and the future. Over the last quarter of a century, in-depth qualitative biographical techniques of interviewing and analysis have evolved that always have had a focus upon questions of identity. These techniques allow the analyst to gain insights into how the individual actively constructs their current identity and also are capable of providing reliable insight into the evolution of identity over time.

The partners in Euroidentities all have considerable experience in doing biographical research and have used a variety of biographical techniques which can be utilised in this instance to investigate the evolution of European identity. The approach followed by each partner in this project will share the some basic characteristics. Small numbers of individuals chosen by purposive sampling to represent ‘sensitized groups’ (‘sensitized’ by European concerns described in the next section) will be interviewed by non-directive techniques.

The goal of this approach at the interviewing stage is to elicit a narrative of the interviewee’s life that is as little affected by the influence of the researchers as possible. Great care is taken in the interviewing process and in the analysis to discriminate between material that arises unsolicited from the interviewee and material that results indirectly or directly from interviewer’s questions. The presumption is that, ceteris paribus, the unsolicited material provides a purer insight into the interviewee’s own gestalt, or all-encompassing view of her/his life. Normally, there is a single eliciting question that is designed to get the interviewee to give a biographical narration. During this phase of the interview, the researcher does not intervene, but only provides non-committed, mostly non-verbal, responses. At the conclusion of this first stage, the interview moves to a second, more probing, stage where the researcher asks questions on topics or issues relating to European identity that have not been raised by the interviewee. The questioning part of the narrative interview has three sections: a section for asking questions regarding additional narrative topics just alluded to or faded out in the main story part of the interview that harnesses the communicative scheme of narration; a section for asking questions regarding social frames and routines not explicated in the main story part of the interview that must be described using the communicative scheme of description; as well as a section for asking questions regarding the self-theories of the informant and regarding the potential
for theoretical explanations of enigmatic courses of events and significant or difficult experiences rendered in the main story part of the interview using the communicative scheme of argumentation. It is important to understand, that the descriptive and argumentative passages of the interview, which as sub-dominant strings within the dominant scheme of narration are also interspersed in the course of the narrative rendering of the main story line (e.g., at certain positions in narrative units where social frames or routine procedures must be described or argumentative commentaries given to work through difficult experiences), present all types of social milieus, social worlds, social arenas, social procedures, social institutions and all layers of social knowledge (including theoretical self-understandings, explanations and legitimizations of the informants and their interaction partners) and items of public discourses that became relevant for the informant’s orientation.

The precise approach to analysis will vary between partners but in all instances will involve the in-depth consideration of the interview transcripts in which the ultimate goal is to produce a holistic understanding of each interviewee’s own perspective on ‘Europe’ and how their identity has changed or evolved over their lifetimes. One approach that has been developed by Fritz Schütze, Gerhard Riemann and others has had a significant impact on the development of biographical research in Europe (Schütze, 1983, 1995, 2007; Riemann and Schütze, 1991; Riemann, 2006; Czyżewski, Piotrowski and Rokuszewska-Pawełek, 1996; Kaźmierska, 1999; Rokuszewska-Pawełek, 2002).

The nature of the collected life histories is too complex (typically, 30 or more pages of intensive interview transcript) to allow for the material to be analysed through the data reduction or summarizing logics of quantitative analysis and, hence, the goal of qualitative research is not to be statistically representative. In contrast, qualitative analysis emphasis the epistemic nature of its in-depth ‘rich’ material in which social processes can emerge or be revealed in the analysis of even single texts. In our case, the reliability of the analyses will be buttressed by the use of contrastive comparison between cases. This comparative dimension will occur at three levels: initially, between cases representative of the same ‘sensitized group’ within a given partner country; secondly comparison between cases of the same ‘sensitized group’ but drawn from different partner countries; finally, contrastive comparison across the project between cases of different ‘sensitized groups’.
6.2. ‘Sensitized groups’

In contrast to other studies of the development of European identity, this study will not concentrate upon elites whose lives and careers take place within centrally-located European institutions. These groups have been covered well elsewhere and it is not our goal to replicate this work. Secondly, due to their life and work roles the members of European elites almost by definition possess a developed pro-European identity (except populistically or nationally minded politicians trying to influence the European decision process in terms of so-called “national interests”). The underlying problem driving this project is not the European identity of elites but the failure of the European Union to realise a comprehensive set of European features of identity or identities among the general population that relate enthusiastically to them.

On the other hand, neither will this study concentrate upon a random selection of the general populace. Preliminary interviewing work has established that undirected autobiographical narrative interviews will not elicit lengthy or in-depth considerations of an interviewee’s identity in relation to Europe, since the ‘European’ features of one’s life are normally routine (e.g., using the Euro currency, crossing borders without police checks, studying according to the regulations of the Bologna process) and not seen as part of an interesting story. This becomes different when somebody is confronted with European experiences in a non-routine, focussed way; e.g., experiences such as fighting for one’s right of biculturalism (Kłoskowska, 1996/2001) or of bilingualism in bilingual areas of Europe (e.g., Wales, Catalonia, South Tyrol (Treichel, 2004)) or carrying out reconciliation work. One could opt for a strategy of semi-structured interviews of random members of the general public that probed explicitly for European identity issues from the outset, but this research design would be flawed. One would not be able to assess whether any ‘European’ attitudes elicited were more than a situationally direct, and therefore shallow and inauthentic, result of the questioning strategy itself.

Rather than either of these extremes, this study will concentrate on ‘sensitized groups’, non-elites who, in one way or another, have been intensely exposed to European contexts or drawn into European tasks. These ‘sensitized groups’ in one sense are ‘bridging elites’, but they need not be privileged in any sense. The common rationale for inclusion in our study as a ‘sensitized group’ that all these categories of people possess is, if European identities are evolving at a non-elite level, the locus for their evolution is among those groups who have some regular contact and/or significant experience at the pan-European level. Studying these
aggregates will provide insights into processes that are occurring more widely among the general population, only not in as intense a form.

During our planning meetings, the consortium has decided upon two 'sensitized groups' that will be studied by all partners:

- **Educationally mobile**: This group will be people who have had significant experience of study abroad (e.g., as Erasmus exchange students), interviewed later in their lives. The rationale behind interviewing former rather than current exchange students is twofold. First, the current attitudes of those experiencing educational exchange already are well-documented and we do not need to duplicate this research. Second, and of more significance for this project, investigating the biographical significance of educational experience in another country for later phases in one's life allows an assessment of the extent to which sponsored educational mobility is realising its greater goals of promoting a permanent change in perspective and a lasting integration across European national borders.

- **Trans-national workers**: The people who make up this larger aggregate category will be those whose labour market activity has resulted in a significant amount of cross-European experience. A key discriminator for inclusion in this group is 'significant'. A casual labourer or student who works for a short period of time in another country and then returns home would not fall into this category. However, an economic migrant who has spent a significant portion of their life working abroad in another part of Europe, a businessperson for whom cross-border contacts and markets are essential, or a person whose move for work-related reasons has led to their making links in the 'host' country beyond those that are solely job-related (such as bringing their spouse and children to live with them or even forming a partnership with someone in the 'host' country or becoming involved in local politics there) would be included. There could be an overlap with the 'Educationally-mobile' 'sensitized group' among young professionals or scientists with an academic education who are working in multinational companies or as specialist liaison workers within established or emerging trans-national European organisations. Present or formerly undocumented migrants, including women doing domestic and care work, as well as workers in the entertainment and sex industry, could be included. The developing European identity of migrants from outside the borders of the continent could also be legitimately targeted for study. The intention to return eventually to one's country of origin would not exclude a person and 'returned migrants' if their experience of one or more other societies in the European Union had been significant could fall within the category. Since there are partners in the consortium located in nations that either send or receive migrants, we have the potential to study transnational workers at both ends.
It may be that researchers from a ‘sending’ nation may travel to the ‘receiving’ nations to conduct interviews with their compatriots. ‘Virtual workers’ who are not geographically mobile but whose information technology work consists largely of European contacts outside their own borders can be considered to have significant cross-border experience and hence also could be studied.

There also will be three categories of ‘specialized groups’ that will be studied by subsets of partners:

- ‘Farmers’. Farmers can be seen as a particular case of small and medium economic enterprises where Europe is critical. Farming within Europe takes place within a structure of regulations and continental markets that forces those in the sector to think within a European context. Farmers have a long tradition of dealing with European legislation and regulations, with the economic movements of the European agrarian market and with lobbying for their political concerns and advantages in Brussels through their associations and political parties which are specifically concerned with their economic welfare. In addition, they must take European environmental requirements into account. Quite often they are in conflict with environmentalists and managers of national parks, who would threaten to take environmental issues played down by the farmers to the European Court of Justice.

A further rationale for including farmers is based on the heterogeneity (heterogeneous in terms of social structure, values and identities) of farmers as a social group. A starting point can be that the construction of biographies of farmers from the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Member states has different grounds and diverse development modes.

In contrast to other ‘sensitized groups’ who may be more mobile and faster to incorporate European identities, farmers could be defined as a more static group who are strongly affiliated with the nation and the national due to their bonds to a certain territory and land. This applies especially to farmers from the new Member states (NMS). A number of surveys have shown that farmers are still stronger oriented ‘inwards’, towards the national (and local) rather than ‘outwards’; i.e., to the European space. Individualism and personal concerns still dominate the nation (especially for Bulgaria, see Avramov 2001). Farmers’ perceptions of EU integration have brought more fears than certainty, preventing them from collective actions when they had to protect their interests. ‘Self’ and local-bonded identities still predominate in NMS where the drive towards individual prosperity remains stronger than any other collective civil and moral values.
Hence, the development of the identities of farmers from the former socialist states towards the construction of new interconnections and interactions is important for present and future EU integration. How does and how far ‘self’ identity may change in collective identity is a question of empirical verification. In contrast, the farmers in the ‘old’ EU states have internalized the European norms and values. Their biographies have emerged and developed in other value systems, collectivities and morally binding concerns that are historically linked to the European norms. Generally, west-European farmers have more ‘associative habits’ (Gonzalez and Benito, 2001; Labrianidis, 2004), they tend to be more socially included, and they are organized in associations and movements that express their concerns and demands to the EU Common Agriculture Policy. These identities have been constructed and developed for years through their (past) individual biographical experiences, but in an interactive process and within the common EU market and environment.

- Cultural contacts. Cultural activities in terms of both ‘high’ Culture and ‘low’/popular culture span Europe with the participants, their audiences and the associated markets crossing borders. Arguably, these types of spontaneous activities may exert more influence towards the development of European-wide perspectives by members of the general public than consciously-imposed ‘top down’ attempts to promote a European consciousness. Artists and musicians who make their careers across Europe could be seen as overlapping with the ‘Transnational worker’ ‘specialized group’. Examples of the types of activities that will be studied include: Eurovision; the owners of ‘second homes’ in nations other than their own; tourists and other leisure travellers who have an extensive experience of cross-border travel; soccer and other cross-national sports supporters and participants.

- Civil society organisations (CSOs). Civil society organisations are an important feature of public arenas within Europe and can be seen as constituting an alternative quasi-official ‘shadow government’. Our definition of a civil society organisation is a legal entity that is non-governmental and not-for-profit that does not represent any commercial interest, and pursues a common purpose in the public interest. The activities of these CSOs may span countries and can have a specific European or cross-border context; for example, ‘reconciliation’ groups and environmental groups. Those of us involved in the CSO ‘sensitized group’ work package intend to develop and maintain a special relationship with the targeted organisations in which they will receive feedback from the research findings from an early stage. This is both to involve them actively in development
of the research conclusions and to help us help the CSOs concerned work more effectively in the arena of public debate.

The ‘sensitized groups’ form the core of the empirical work of the project and the investigation of each makes up one of the Work Packages.

7. ANTICIPATED RESULTS AND THEIR USE

As previous studies of European identity have demonstrated convincingly, this study does not expect to find that an overarching European identity is supplanting national or regional identity. Rather, the general finding is likely to be that if European identities are evolving these are developing through national, regional or other types of identity with ‘Europe’ seen through the lens of nation or locality. The biographical approach utilised in EuroIdentities will provide a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the evolution of collective identities. The biographical approach of the EuroIdentities project will be capable of showing the tacit, ‘seen but not noticed’ (Garfinkel, 1967: 36) ways in which identity work gets done. EuroIdentities will provide a more specific, systematic and concrete understanding concerning these paradoxical ‘vague processes’ of contemporary European identity formation and use it to test claims about collective identities in Europe. These claims concern the changing bases of identification linked with the development of European institutions and social policies. They also concern the ways in which people make sense of themselves as individual actors and the new forms of reflexivity, self-construction and relationships emerging as traditional political and community commitments are being replaced by so-called ‘identity politics’.

There may be some who have moved further along the path towards a European or at least multiple national/regional identity than others, but these will have particular aspects to their biographies that explain this. We should be able to provide a description of the common grounds and arenas of communication that lead toward an orientation towards a European identity and add to the knowledge concerning the difficulties that infringe upon this process. We anticipate that the formation of close personal relationships across borders will be important for these people, with those who have married or set up permanent partnerships being the most clear-cut example. An early predisposition, perhaps stemming from parental history or influence in childhood, may appear as significant for current ‘cross-border’ experience and orientation.
We do not assume that the findings of Euroidentities will necessarily point towards an inevitable rise in European identity. There may be aspects of the extra-national experiences of ‘sensitized groups’ that make them in some ways less disposed towards a pan-European identity. Migrants may be subject to homesickness or the victim of discrimination in their country of origin. Those attempting to operate economically across borders may have found the experience of bureaucracy to be debilitating. Rather than a new European identity, some of those living between countries may feel they no longer have any clear cut identity. On the other hand, Europe may offer new opportunities which might be audaciously taken, and, in addition, might involve activists of the five (to seven – see below) Europe-sensitized groups in cooperative European projects.

8. AFTERWORD

While the following articles drawn from Euroidentities show the findings that have arisen from the project, we would like to preview a major development and a key finding that both came about during the course of the project.

First, preliminary analyses of the first interviews led us to decide to generate two additional ‘sensitized group’ categories from within the body of interview transcripts that had been collected:

• **External to Europe** – During the first main analysis workshop of the project as a whole, we realized that we were in danger of falling into the trap of seeing ‘Europe’ in a stereotypical way; to put it bluntly, as ‘white’ and ‘Christian’. By bringing together interviews scattered across the original ‘sensitized group’ categories and also carrying out some additional interviews, the project developed a new analysis aggregate: persons who either (I) had originated from outside Europe (either through migrating to Europe from outside the continent or being the children of intercontinental migrants) or (II) had been born in Europe but had spent a significant portion of their lives living outside the continent. The former aggregate reported experience of having one’s identity as a European being challenged both officially through issues such as citizenship and visas and unofficially through ‘othering’ reactions from the ‘native’ population ranging from mild scepticism about a person who does not fit into a stereotype of a ‘European’ but nevertheless considering themselves to be a European through to xenophobic prejudice.

• **Intimate relations** – Another feature that emerged strongly from the first analyses was the significance of cross-border primary relationships; either being
the child of parents from two different countries and/or, even more significantly, having experience of a close personal relationship with a person from another country. In either case, people have close exposure to at least one other national culture that, because the exposure comes about as a consequence of one’s closest personal involvements, almost inevitably must affect one’s sense of self and identity.

Second, what answer has Euroidentities been able to generate to its key question – to what extent is a European identity or identities evolving? While very few individuals would consider themselves to be ‘Europeans’ over their national, regional, local identities nor over, other, non-geographic identities, many persons living in present-day Europe have psychological fields of reference or orientation that transcend regional and national boundaries and are afforded the chances to make use of transnational opportunity structures in Europe and to become involved in transnational European comparisons, emulations and sometimes even cooperative projects. These latter phenomena are essential features of a European mental space. As the core overarching finding of the project, European mental space as a complex and nuanced concept is explored in considerable depth in the following articles. The summarizing article by Antonella Spanò, Ulrike Nagel, Pasquale Musella and Elizabetta Perone, ‘From Europe to Europeans and Beyond: Meanings of Europe through people’s biographical experience’ gives generalizing insights into the theoretical advancements of the “Euroidentities” research project.

Finally we would like to remark upon six features of the collaborative working together of the seven national research teams – Estonia, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy, Germany, Wales and Northern Ireland – as in itself part of the European mental space:

1. The elementary research practice of our own mental meeting and “symbolic” interaction with the life histories of the informants was very intriguing. We came across phenomena in and with Europe we did not know about at all (e.g., how to decide where to establish your family home after retirement if you have children and grandchildren you left behind or even “relinquished” in several European countries during your work stays in various European countries and how to overcome the difficulties contingent upon collecting your retirement payments from several countries). We learned about unfamiliar experiences and creative sense making practices of life in Europe. For some European policy makers and politicians these might be even more unfamiliar than for us, who had the chance to learn from the lives of many informants.
(2) It was felicitous that we developed a separate “substantive” field of research specific for each of the seven national teams, i.e. the life and the work of the members of the seven (formerly five) Europe-sensitive social aggregates, and that at the same time these substantive fields of research would transcend national borders and limitations by virtue of their general topical import. For example, one general feature of the substantive field of life and work of farmers in Europe is the phenomenon that they are critical regarding the quite different national interpretations and applications of EU regulations and policies concerning agrarian production and marketing as well as those focussed on support of farms. The general analytical focus then became the modes of handling EU regulations by the bureaucracies in the national governmental departments and administrations of agriculture in a comparative perspective. In terms of “research pedagogics” this meant that each national team had its own autonomous field of study and the responsibility of poignant and creative scientific research connected with it. But, this field of topical study had to be discussed with other teams who would share their own interview data on the topic and the respective analytical insights.

(3) Much of the research was done in numerous trans-team research workshops – this was always done in confrontation with the empirical data of the autobiographical narrative interviews. Therefore there was always the necessity: (a) mutually to explicate empirical insights on biographical courses and work developments of the same biographical single cases scrutinized by each of the national teams; (b) to differentiate between the cultural insider perspective of the national team that conducted the interview with a compatriot, on the one hand, and the cultural outsider perspectives of the other national teams, on the other hand, as well as; (c) to understand and to interpret the insights of the other teams by taking their analytical perspectives and to triangulate the perspectives of the other teams with one’s own; (d) The intensity of the epistemic procedures of taking the perspectives of the others and of triangulating them was even more increased by the very fact that each of the national teams brought into the research workshop their own national-cultural background of understanding of life, of biographical development and work as well as of handling collective identities, in the latter respect especially in the form of treating one’s own and other national collectivities more or less critically and ironically. That is, on top of the general analytical procedures as harnessed and also put fruitfully to work within national-culturally homogeneous research workshops, in our transnational research workshops the permanent “translation” of cultural background understandings into explicit transcultural comparative or even general notions was necessary. This prodded the explication of “seen but unnoticed” (Garfinkel, 1967: 36) deeply ingrown national-cultural understandings of one’s own
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and the research partner’s society. Exactly in the course of looking at the same single case empirical material and conversationally exchanging analytical insights about it, the following happened: focussing on the differences between culturally familiar understandings and culturally foreign understandings (and on attempts to explain them) as well as focussing on comparing the national differences of understandings (and on attempts to explain them) it became analytically possible to reach toward and to grasp universal features of biographical work, cooperative project work and practices of dealing with all types of collectivities and mental space phenomena in Europe. – All these epistemic processes of generating social science knowledge happened by virtue of the creative epistemic logic of the multinational research workshops.

(4) In cases in which the interviews were not conducted within the English language medium (interviews in English were usually (with a few exemptions) conducted in Wales and Northern Ireland; this was also the case with interviews with teachers of English in other countries as well as with some of the migrants, especially those going to English speaking countries) we and our transcription specialists did almost line by line translations of the mother-tongue autobiographical narrative interviews into the English language in order to keep the specific logic of the unique autobiographical renderings of the informants. This included the sequential order of presentation, paralinguistic phenomena like smiling and weeping, stylistic features and symptomatic phenomena like hesitation pauses, broken and unfinished syntactic constructions, vague expressions and self-corrective background constructions. We kept in mind that access to the empirical grasping and representative understanding of the informant’s biographical work of her- or himself and of her or his world-view (especially on collective identities and on the European mental space) would be through the informant’s mother tongue. The translation of the mother-tongue interviews into the lingua franca of English can only partially resemble the logic, style and psycho-dynamic “order of chaos” of the informant’s autobiographical rendering in her or his mother tongue. But at least we – including our transcription specialists - tried not to get lost in translation and to keep all the said formal features of the original mother-tongue text of the informant’s autobiographical rendering while translating interviews into the English medium.

(5) Not all of the interviews could be translated into the English language due to financial restrictions. But we did manage to represent all interviews of the Euroidentities project in the forms of summary statements or sequential reports in order to have access to all the life histories as complex single cases and to their inner logic as expressed in the medium of the narrative interviews. On
the one hand, guided by the summary statement or even more by the sequential report, it was possible to go deeper into an intriguing (miraculous, contradictory, complex) part of a life-history case, when it seemed to be promising, by adding a thorough English translation of the respective part of the original-language interview, in case the interesting socio-biographical phenomenon expressed in the original-language transcription seemed to be very complicated. On the other hand, by reading many summary reports and sequential statements one could manage to get a quick overview over one or the other of the topically interesting partial corpora of the life histories collected within the project. More than the summary statements would do, sequential reports would even express important features of the logic and style of autobiographical rendering of the informant, they would hint at complex and difficult phenomena that it would be sensible to translate from the original-language transcription, and they would give first analytical approaches to the overall biographical structuring of life histories as expressed by autobiographical narrative interviews.

(6) A European research project is normally characterized by the specific communication feature that some of its members speak English as their mother tongue, whereas others must use the medium of English as a lingua franca with all the associated restrictions of expressing themselves in a differentiated mode. In such mixed teams a danger that could emerge is that native speakers of English could acquire a power position of being the spokespersons, theoretical definers and “arbitres elegantiarum” of the project work and that the members restricted to English just as lingua franca would not feel entitled linguistically to develop their own specific analytical and theoretical perspectives. And in addition – and still generally speaking – the non-native speakers of English could develop an unjustified resentment regarding the easiness and elegance of the linguistic expression of native speakers of English who at the same time – possibly not realized by the non-native speakers – might even try hard to understand the language difficulties of their colleagues who are not native speakers. – None of these detrimental developments could be observed in the Euroidentities research project. Generally speaking: especially for a social and cultural science research project, it is very helpful that some of the team members ensure that the English language is not restricted to simplifying routine fashions of speaking that are characteristic for a lingua franca. By virtue of their role model of language mastery, the medium of English language – like any other possible mother tongue that incorporates belles lettres and social science writings – becomes a powerful instrument for emotionally reaching out and for analytically grasping processes of cultural, social and biographical reality. In case of the team cooperation within the Euroi-
dentities project too, the native speakers’ differentiated expression and rendering of phenomena of social, cultural and biographical processes protected the team members not having English as their mother tongue from having at hand shallow presuppositions that would transport phoney cliché patterns of emotional processes presumably underlying the behaviour reported in the interviews and from respective simplifying socio-cultural categorizations that might be enforced by the essentially restricted potential of, or even by the prison for, linguistic expression within the lingua franca. In addition, the non-native speakers of English in the “Euroidentities” project, who, by the way, partially worked in the Welsh and Northern Irish teams, too, were always allowed to remind the others of the central differences and, at the same time, the cultural equality of mother tongues as the means of authentic expression of social, cultural and biographical meaning. For example, they drew the attention of the other team members to the difficulties of doing an “authentic” translation of the autobiographical interviews and to the importance of preserving the expressive order of the original interview texts in the process of translation. By this work of reminding, they helped the native speakers of English to understand what was really meant behind the veil of translation of interviews conducted in other languages than English. – During the joint workshop-analysis work, the native speakers of English became thoroughly sensitized to these difficulties. In addition, they were concerned to find out what was really meant by the analytical contributions of the non-native speakers of English. On top of this, the habit and even “virtue” of conceding that lingua franca English, however useful and handy it is as intercultural data presenter, while preserving the interviews by translations, and purveyor of scientific exchange, is not the king’s road to reality and truth, was generously extended by the native speakers of English to communicative situations in which those participants of the Euroidentities research project who are not native speakers would feel the anguish of being restricted in expressing themselves when analysing the interviews and raising theoretical questions. And in reverse, the team members who do not have English as their mother tongue became aware of how difficult it would be for the native speakers of English permanently to witness the difficulties of the former in expressing their personal views and insights without going the way of a simplifying linguistic rendering.
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**EWOLUCJA TOŻSAMOŚCI EUROPEJSKIEJ: WYKORZYSTANIE METOD BADAŃ BIOGRAFICZNYCH W BADANIU ROZWOJU TOŻSAMOŚCI EUROPEJSKIEJ**

(Streszczenie)

Artykuł powstał na podstawie aplikacji złożonej do Komisji Europejskiej przez zespół Euro-identities. Punktem wyjścia było tu pytanie o aktualny status „projektu” tożsamości europejskiej w sytuacji gdy proces integracji obejmujący sfery ekonomiczną i polityczną nie przekładał się na budowanie poczucia tożsamości europiejskiej. Propozycja badawcza pokazywała, iż odgórnie zaprojektowane z perspektywy elit (top down) działania, których celem jest tworzenie tożsamości europejskiej nie znajdują odzwierciedlenia w potocznym doświadczeniu zwykłych obywateli budujących poczucie identyfikacji przez biograficzne doświadczanie Europy. Artykuł przedstawia najważniejsze założenia projektu oraz sposób jego realizacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** tożsamość, Europa, narracja biograficzna.