Michaela FERENCOVÁ

Reframing Identities: Some Theoretical Remarks on 'European identity' Building

In the recent years, the issue of 'European identity' has been repeatedly brought to the fore. In the emerging discussions, it's mostly the existence of a common 'identity' on the European level that has been questioned as well as the 'European character' of certain candidates for the EU membership (i.e. Turkey). My aim here is not to contribute to further development of these discussions. It is rather to point to the requirement for a fundamental shift in the formulation of key questions addressing 'European issues', whether designed to guide scientific studies or to solve practical problems. In what follows, I make some theoretical remarks on the 'identity' research in the context of 'European identity' building. I suggest that the issue should be approached from two principal points of view: as a set of institutional practices on the one hand, and as a cognitive process of classification on the other hand. My theoretical consideration will result in an outline of alternative questions on 'European identity'.

I argue that 'European identity' is neither a real entity waiting to be explored, nor a feature firmly attached to individuals, but a concept. Consequently, I consider the question of its existence no longer relevant. I also point to the chiefly intuitive application of the concept of 'identity', not only in public or political discourse, but also in scholarly writing. Following Brubaker's and Cooper's[1] critical account of this concept, I propose that the relevance of the term as an analytical tool in social sciences should be reconsidered. Accordingly, more appropriate elementary analytical units should be identified, which should result in the required reformulation of theoretical as well as practical questions.

[1] R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, "Beyond "identity", *Theory and Society* Vol. 29, No. 1 (Feb. 2000), pp. 1 – 47.

Michaela Ferencová *is an ethnologist. She completes her PhD. at the Institute of Ethnology at the Slovak Academy of Sciences.*

In reference to dilemmas on the 'European character', I point out the constructed character of Europe and the 'European culture' as well as the possible ideological use of the concepts of 'cultural similarity' and 'cultural difference' in order to support political interests. For analytical purposes, I suggest to look at the problem of belonging to 'European culture' as two diverse processes. The first one is the cognitive process of classifying people (or countries) into categories according to certain, mostly unconscious, criteria. The second one is a decision making process performed by political actors, following prescribed rules, habits, and ideas, including those about the political priorities of the European Community and its member countries.

Reconsidering 'Identity'

Considering 'identity', we should bear in mind that we do not deal with a pure fact or a simple phenomenon. We rather operate with a theoretical concept used to analyze social phenomena on the one hand, and a practical category appearing in public discourses on the other hand. At this point I would like to make several comments on 'identity' as an analytical tool, which brings us closer to my aim to formulate new theoretical as well as practical questions.

In their article, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper[2] point to the terminological mixing of theoretical concepts with expressions used widely in public discourses. I agree with their claim that scientific practice demands a clear distinction between analytical categories designed to analyze the social world and practical ones appearing in discourses studies. Indeed, language is a social phenomenon. Meanings of words and expressions used in public discourse emerge in social interactions and, thus, they are often very imprecise and disputable. Therefore, uncritical adoption of these expressions in scholarly terminology necessarily results in inaccuracies in scientific analyses leading to blurred or even incorrect outcomes. What is more, the concern of social sciences with society implies that our analytical toolkit might consist of terms produced by the object of our scholarly interest. For these reasons, terms appearing in public discourses require reconsideration and redefinition to constitute scholarly terminology.

Correspondingly, precision in scientific analyses requires a break between 'native' and scientific categories addressed by Pierre Bourdieu as a break between the subjectivist and the objectivist model of theoretical knowledge.[3] Naturally, even science is a social phenomenon. As a result, the classical distinc-

[2] Ibid.
[3] P. Bourdieu *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), pp. 3 – 9.

tion between the subjective knowledge of social actors being under observation and the objective knowledge of the observer is insufficient. Bourdieu proposes the necessity of a second break with 'objectivist abstraction' enabling to escape from 'the choice between objectivism and subjectivism', and he calls for a need of reflexive social science.[4]

Scientific analysis requires also clearly formulated research problems and observable elementary units of analysis. However, 'identity' is neither elementary nor observable. Thus, with this concept we are not able to explain adequately more complex social phenomena. Conversely, 'identity' is a complex phenomenon requiring an explanation. What is more, the concept of 'identity' is too ambiguous to serve as an appropriate analytical tool. Brubaker and Cooper remarked, that the constructivist approach 'softened' the meaning of the term to the extent that it lost its explanatory potential.[5] Pointing to its wide scale of various, often even contradictory meanings within the scientific discourse, they revealed its inconsistency and ambiguous character. In their opinion, a search for a single expression addressing diverse problems is confusing rather than beneficial. As a conclusion, they outlined three groups of alternative analytical categories as a substitute for the notion of 'identity':

The concept of 'identity' is too ambiguous to serve as an appropriate analytical tool.

- identification and categorization
- self-understanding and social location
- commonality, connectedness, groupness.[6]

Considering 'European identity', my scholarly interest is oriented towards two basic issues: belonging to the group of Europeans, and loyalty to Europe as a political unit. I understand these issues as corresponding with Brubaker's and Cooper's 1st and the 3rd group of analytical categories, namely with the categories 'identification', 'categorization' and 'groupness'.

Groups as Representations

Questioning 'identity' in the sense of belonging to groups requires deeper insight into the principles of group formation. 'Group', as well as 'identity',

[4] Ibid, pp. 3 – 4. See also P. Bourdieu, L. Wacquant *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992).

[5] R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, "Beyond "identity", *Theory and Society* Vol. 29, No.1 (Feb. 2000), pp. 1 – 2.

[6] Ibid, p. 14.

is a theoretical concept. Thus, again, the study of groups demands more elementary units of analysis. The first idea about 'group' coming to mind would probably be that it is a sum of individuals. However, such a definition is too minimalist to operate as a powerful analytical tool. In order for it to have explanatory potential, the concept of a group necessarily has to represent more than a haphazard aggregate of human beings. In my view, the existence of relations among the group members should be included in the concept. Thus, I think about groups as social networks which are defined as a sum of people and ties of various kinds among them. Yet, the mere existence of relations among group members does not necessarily imply awareness of belonging. Here the concept of in-group may be of great benefit to us. In contrast to the concept of out-group, it assumes recognition of the existing group by its members themselves. In other words, it states that people identifying themselves with a group have a representation of this group. Without this representation any group of people is rather a haphazard aggregate of individuals or an unrecognized network than a self-aware community.

Henri Tajfel[7] understands groups in terms of inclusion and exclusion. He distinguished internal criteria related to self-identification, and external criteria defined as outside characteristics used to identify others. Tajfel argues that external criteria are not sufficient to constitute a group in a social-psychological sense. Individuals identified as members of some group must be aware of their communion. Again, the necessity of the representation for in-group existence is emphasized here. Nonetheless, being a student of inter-group behavior, Tajfel further argued that self-identification is not a sufficient condition to emerge interactions at the inter-group level. In order to interact with others as group members, one must recognize their group from outside. Thus, in the study of interactions between groups we are supposed to deal not only with the representation of in-group produced by its members, but also with that in the minds of the people belonging to other groups.

Benedict Anderson was perhaps the most influential author making the view of nations as representations popular in the nationalism studies of the non-cognitivist and non-psychological tradition. He looks at nations as 'imagined communities', because, as he argues, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[8]

---

[7] H. Tajfel *Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 2.

[8] B. Anderson *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London/New York: Verso, 1991 (1983)), p. 6.

His idea refers to nations that are communities large in size. However, I apply his definition to social groups in a broader sense, regardless of their kind and size. Hence, I point to the already mentioned necessity of representation for the existence of a social group. The size of the group and the question whether its members have ever met each other is of no significance to us.

Understanding of groups as representations leads us to the question of the origin and the implications of these representations. Cris Shore argues that in anthropology, "identity is [often] represented as a process of classification involving boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. As anthropologists and historians have frequently shown, it is essentially a dualistic concept: in order to define 'Us' there must be a corresponding 'Them' against which 'We' come to recognize ourselves as different. As ethnographic studies have repeatedly illustrated, people affirm their identity largely by defining who they are not."[9]

In 'identity' studies more attention should be paid to the results of cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology.

Similarly to Tajfel[10], Cris Shore approaches identification with groups as a classificatory process consisting of the procedures of inclusion and exclusion. Indeed, the human mind seems to be designed to order things according to the principles of similarity and distinctiveness. Thus, social classification is a cognitive process producing distinctions between members of our in-group and others. In his classical work The Nature of Prejudice Gordon Allport[11] argued that the importance of social categorizing lies in reducing the complexity of the social world. Similarly, Dave L. Hamilton[12] claims that categorizing people into groups based on identification of common attributes reduces the amount of information to be dealt with. Hence, categorization of people into groups is a reality reducing process performed by our minds.

In short, on the one hand I approve the understanding of groups in terms of the social network theory while, on the other hand, in the context of 'identity' studies I emphasize the necessity to deal with groups as representa-

[9] C. Shore, "Inventing the 'People's Europe': Critical Approaches to European Community 'Cultural Policy'", *Man*, New series Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec. 1993), p. 782.

[10] H. Tajfel *Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[11] G. W. Allport *The Nature of Prejudice*. (Reading. MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

[12] D. L. Hamilton *Cognitive Processes in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior* (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1981).

tions. For us, examining identification with groups means looking into the processes of category production and maintenance. Hence, I propose that in 'identity' studies more attention should be paid to the results of cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology.[13]

Approaching European Integration

European integration can be described as a set of institutional practices followed by the European Institutions. They attempt to maintain power relations in favour of the European Community as a supreme political body. At the same time they put considerable effort in manipulation of classificatory schemes. Methodologically, there are two partial processes to be distinguished. Firstly, it is the effort to increase loyalty to European institutions. Secondly, there are attempts to enhance solidarity to the 'imagined' in-group of Europeans. The loyalty or the solidarity being under consideration here are not formed in a vacuum. Instead, there are other well established targets of loyalty and solidarity. Among them, nations (and ethnic groups too) and national institutions are probably the most visible ones. Indeed, a plenty of examples from everyday life and also from scientific writings indicate that thinking beyond the national scheme is impossible. Almost everything in the world appears to be organized within the national discourse. Ironically, the European Community is not an exception. Being a trans-national rather than non-national community, it consists of national states as lower administrative, political, or even cultural units. Thus, the process of European integration is locked within the national framework.

Nation is the central category and nation-state the central political institution the European idea is supposed to compete with. In his study of the 'European Community cultural policy', Cris Shore mentioned two divergent directions in 'European identity' building. On the one hand, there is a group of 'extreme federalists' seeing nation-states as 'a primary obstacle to European unification' and thus aiming to eliminate 'all those barriers that actually constitute the nation-state'.[14] On the other hand, a number of practices conducted by the European Community indicate rather a vision of 'integration through hierarchical levels of belonging', to regions on the lowest level, to

[13] For general overview of cognitive anthropology see R. D'Andrade *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995); for an overview of applications in the studies of ethnicity see R. Brubaker, M. Loveman, P. Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition", *Theory and Society* Vol. 33, No. 1 (Feb. 2004), pp. 31 – 64.

[14] C. Shore, "Inventing the 'People's Europe': Critical Approaches to European Community 'Cultural Policy', *Man*, New series Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec. 1993), p. 787.

nations on a higher level and to the European Community on the supreme level.[15] The hierarchical model is supported also by the Article 128 of the 'Treaty on European Union' (The Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992) stating that: "The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the member states, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."[16] Similar statements and corresponding practices indicate an effort to preserve lower-level solidarities and to 'build unity through diversity'.[17]

According to the 'social identity theory'[18], the mere process of categorization is sufficient to emerge in-group favoritism, which may bring about discrimination of out-group members. Consequently, persisting regional, ethnic or national categorization and the following identification with regions, ethnic groups or nations produce sufficient conditions for persisting tensions among these lower-level units. In fact, enduring solidarities to these units might inhibit the constitution of solidarity to the Community.

The 'social identity theory' provides perfect arguments in favor of Euroscepticism.

The 'social identity theory' provides perfect arguments in favor of Euroscepticism. From this perspective, the constitution of the Community as a properly working political unit is predestined to end up as an unsuccessful enterprise. Since being built of smaller, more compact and more basic national units, the instability of the European Community is often emphasized. Actually, ethnic groups, nations and nation-states are often treated as primordial, natural units that cannot be eliminated, while Europe is perceived as something constructed and artificially implanted. Here I would like to point to the illusoriness of the distinction between 'artificial' and 'natural' groupings. This distinction, again, is a cognitive scheme organizing objects or practices according to the perceived level of their familiarity. It may, however, operate also the other way round, as a tool used to reify concepts and to constitute habits. As I have already stated above, all groups are

[15] Ibid, p. 784.
[16] Ibid, p. 784.
[17] Ibid, p. 791.
[18] H. Tajfel, J. C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict", W.G. Austin, S. Worchel (eds) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. (Monterey: Brooks/Cole, 1979), pp. 33 – 47.

products of classificatory procedures performed by our minds accompanied by institutional practices.

Given this, nations are neither natural nor less constructed than the European Community. For example, Ernest Gellner argued, that 'national identity' did not always operate as a 'natural' principle of identification. There were other kinds of 'identities' in the course of history that were perceived as 'natural'. Gellner also stated that: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents them where they did not exist."[19] Benedict Anderson, however, disagrees with his view of nationalism as "false consciousness". He argues that all communities are constructed and that science should classify them "not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined"[20].

The principal difference between nations (nation-states) and the European Community lies in the fact that the Community is currently being constructed while nations (and nation-states) are well established. 'European identity' building is an effort to reframe classificatory schemes. In fact, nowadays, we are experiencing an attempt to introduce an innovation in the field of classification. It is, however, not the first attempt of this kind in history. The constitution of nation-states with loyal citizens required similar reframing as well. The dominance of national categories, appearing nowadays so natural, resulted from long-lasting efforts of national institutions.

European Community policy

The European Community spends a considerable amount of energy in constituting awareness to the Community as a supranational unit. Cris Shore[21] illustrates this effort by statements declared by the European Community. He points to the statement in the 'Commission of the European Communities' (1988), that the European Commission has "developed a 'cultural policy' which has helped to boost people's awareness of a European cultural identity"[22]. Furthermore, there is the Community's declaration about "bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore", included in the

[19] E. Gellner *Thought and Change*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), p. 169.
[20] B. Anderson *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London/New York: Verso, 1991 (1983)), p. 6.
[21] C. Shore, "Inventing the 'People's Europe': Critical Approaches to European Community 'Cultural Policy'", *Man*, New series Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec. 1993).
[22] Ibid, p. 779.

Maastricht Treaty (Article 128). Particularly, they made a commitment to support the "culture and history of the European peoples; conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance; non-commercial cultural exchanges; artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector"[23]. And finally, Cris Shore writes about the European Commissions' campaigns 'Citizens' Europe' and 'People's Europe' aiming at constituting 'European identity' and highlighting the existence of the Community in everyday life.

People never identify themselves with a single group. As Cris Shore pointed out, there are "different levels upon which people construct their identity and [...] different institutions of authority"[24]. I believe that there are not only different levels but also different domains of identification corresponding whether to differing principles of classification or with people's perception of relations among particular targets of identification. All the examples of the Community's efforts presented by Cris Shore indicate intentions to increase the importance of the Community in the hierarchies of preferred belongings. The European Community representatives seem to be aware of the fact that increasing loyalty to the Community Institutions requires also activities in the field of culture, which is expected to lead to transformation in hierarchies of preferred categories of identification. "The Commission officials and Eurofederalists now generally agree that to construct a European 'community', as opposed to a 'common market', requires a much more concerted attempt to change people's consciousness of themselves, including their identity as nationals rather than European citizens."[25]

The Community 'identity policy' consists of various practices including introduction of common symbols (i.e. flag, anthem), common passports and driving licenses; elimination of borders to enable free movement of people; unification of educational policy; organization of international exchanges (for students, artists, etc.); recognition of common cultural heritage; and constitution of common European history. In general, we can speak about unification of practices; coordination of activities; constitution of common communication network to coordinate the flow of information; and constitution of the 'imagined community' of Europeans in people's minds. All the practices enlisted here can be understood as reifying procedures constituting the European Community as a 'natural' political and cultural unit.

[23] Ibid, p. 784.
[24] Ibid, p. 781.
[25] Ibid, p. 785.

Including the practice of history making in the Community policy implies that the European Community is being reified not only as a 'natural' grouping existing in the present times, but also as a community of ancient origin. I propose that history making is implicitly guided by two principles. The first is represented by the idea of continuity that helps to link distinct time moments to each other. The principle of continuity enables looking at the Community as an identical unit in different times, regardless of the transformations it went through. In other words, the idea of continuity enters the history making process as a principle constructing the ancient roots of the European Community.

I refer to the second history making principle as 'the authority of the ancient'. I assume that people show stronger tendencies to consider something 'natural', when they believe either in its biological nature, or in its ancient character. It sounds quite logical that the less people know about the constitution of objects, the more they perceive them as normal. Objects or units having emerged in the times that nobody remembers anymore are, usually, without any hesitation apprehended as primordial. It seems that the 'natural character' is a matter of memory. What is more, the ancient character is also a source of authority. The belief in common roots gives a stamp of legitimacy to attempts to constitute unified practices and values. Conviction about the ancient and thus natural character of the Community provides deeper incentives to its reconstitution than if it was a mere political interest of a narrow group of powerful people.

As I have already mentioned, I consider analyzing groupings within the dichotomy 'natural' – 'artificial' scientifically improper. In my view, nation-states are not less constructed than the European Community. Moreover, both the Community and nation-states seem to be constituted through resembling practices. Cris Shore drew attention to the similarities between the process of nation building and European integration when noted, that: "[...] the symbolic terrain upon which the new Europe is being constituted is precisely that upon which the nation-state has traditionally been founded."[26] Stuart Woolf points out the significant role of history making. He states that it is fashionable to publish "histories of Europe" and "European histories"following the commitment of the Maastricht Treaty 1992 to „bring the common cultural heritage to the fore".[27] The objective is to create conditions for constructing common 'European identity'. According to Woolf, there are no principal differences in

[26] Ibid, p. 791.

[27] S. Woolf, "Europe and its Historians", *Contemporary European History* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Aug. 2003), pp. 325 – 326, 330.

the two mentioned processes. „In both cases, the claim to a cultural identity provides recognition of a collective identity."[28]

Controversies in Community Building

There are several disputable features in the Community 'identity policy' that may inhibit or even disable the constitution of in-group solidarity on the European level. Cris Shore, for example, drew attention to the contradictory character of the European Community 'cultural policy'. He wrote, that "[...] Commission and the Parliamentary officials insisted that the aim was not to impose homogeneity or cultural uniformity, but rather to celebrate Europe's heterogeneity. The commonly stated objective was to 'build unity through diversity. "[29] Thus, on the one hand a considerable effort is made to weaken the political and the economic power of nation-states and, on the other hand their cultural diversity is supported. In my view, the principal contradiction lies in the fact that the same reason is believed to have diverse effect when comparing European to national level. The construction of common European cultural grounds is supposed to lead to stimulation of solidarity on the European level, while the preservation of nations as cultural units is believed not to preserve strong affiliations to particular nation-states. While common cultural heritage is considered an important source of loyalty to institutions on the European level, its potential seems to be neglected on national levels.

Stuart Woolf pointed out that European symbols and 'European culture' are constituted of national cultural elements. He argued that: "There is little evidence that the abundant invention of European symbols – from flags to anthems to maps and remembrance days – can create links with popular collective and traditions, which are, almost by definition, local or national."[30] Again, I would like to point to the tendency of dealing with national units as 'natural' entities. I argue that the national symbols were invented as well as the European symbols are. Moreover, the national symbolic was, in fact, often constituted of regional features. Hence, also in nation-building, the symbols of smaller units were appropriated to national purposes and finally nationalized. In my opinion, the problem lies not in the use of national symbols for European purposes, but in the fact that these symbols are persistently inter-

[28] S. Woolf, "Europa, una sola storia, un'unica identita?", F. Cerutti (ed) *Identità e politica*. (Roma/Bari: Laterza 1996), p. 213.

[29] C. Shore, "Inventing the 'People's Europe': Critical Approaches to European Community 'Cultural Policy', *Man*, New series Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec. 1993), p. 791.

[30] S. Woolf, "Europe and its Historians", *Contemporary European History* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Aug. 2003), p. 334.

preted within national framework. There is a task for the Community politics to achieve a successful shift in preferential hierarchies of categories in favor of the Community, which would most probably change ways in which the surrounding world is interpreted.

I strongly agree with Stuart Woolf when he questions people's ability to identify themselves with geographically large units. He argues, that: „the greater the geographical scale, the more difficult it is to invent symbols that arouse collective sentiments by evoking associations with personal memories, places or events."[31]. As I have argued, classification is a cognitive process in which information is reduced and organized, so that our minds could process it effectively. This implies the question of the minimal units of social classification required by the human mind to work efficiently. The European Community appears to be too large, indeed, to operate as a minimal unit. Therefore, the persistence of smaller units of certain kind appears to be indispensable, which implies the question how their existence affects loyalty to the Community.

The European Community appears to be too large to operate as a minimal unit of social classification.

Conclusion

This article set out to reconsider possible approaches applied in the 'European identity' research with the further aim to reformulate frequently discussed questions referring to European integration. I have argued that 'identity' is not a real entity, neither a feature firmly attached to individuals, but a theoretical concept. Pointing to its ambiguity, I have suggested, in accordance with Brubaker and Cooper[32], that 'identity' should be understood in terms of identification, categorization and group affiliation. I have also emphasized the constructed character of groups with an implication that groups should be considered as representations and products of classifications. Thus, the emergence of social groups or categories is inevitable, however classificatory schemes can be institutionally regulated.

In this study, I have tackled European integration as an institutional regulation of classificatory schemes. The goal to be achieved in this process is a

[31] Ibid, p. 334.
[32] R. Brubaker, F. Cooper, "Beyond "identity", *Theory and Society* Vol. 29, No.1 (Feb. 2000).

successful reframing of classificatory schemes in favor of the European Community as positioned on top of the hierarchy of people's identities and loyalties. In fact, effectively working political unit requires, above all, loyalty to political institutions. On the one hand, the will of national representations to delegate certain power to the Community as the supreme political body is essential, as well as the acceptance of directions from above. On the other hand, the potential lying in the recognition of the Community's authority by the citizens should not be neglected. Despite the primary importance of loyalty to institutions, the Community invests enormous energy into the constitution of in-group solidarity at the European level. The Community representatives seem to be aware of the possible difficulties that might result from the lacking sense of communion.

'European' and 'national identity' appear to be mutually competing within the same domain, which means that the there is not an intention to introduce a completely new classificatory system, but to shift preferences to a higher level. In fact, the European Community is supposed to operate as a shelter category unifying smaller units, especially nations. This all indicates that the concepts of the 'European identity' and 'national identity' might be based on similar principles. Remarkable resemblances between the practices used in the constitution of the European Community and those applied in nation-building support this hypothesis. I assume that the similarities might be explained by Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus'.[33] In my view, practices of the Community representatives are implicitly guided by the dispositions, i.e. ideas how to achieve political goals (in our case, how to build a community) and learned habits of political acting, adopted as a result of self-reproducing practices of nation-states. To put it more simply, politicians have been trained within the national education systems and are experienced in national-level politics. Therefore, the strategies adopted in the constitution of the transnational European Community may remind us of those used in the nation-building process.

Building on my considerations presented in this article, I would like to outline several questions addressing theoretical as well as practical aspects of European Community building. In reference to the mentioned dilemma about the 'European character' of certain candidates to EU membership, we should be aware of the constructed character of the Community and the 'European culture' as well. Hence, the following issues, rather than belonging or not belonging to the European cultural tradition, should be questioned. As

[33] P. Bourdieu *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), pp. 72 – 95.

scientists, we should enquire how the representation of the Community and 'European culture' is constituted and what the criteria of classifying countries as European and non-European applied by politicians on the one hand, and the citizens on the other hand are. The practical question addressing the issue would be how the accession of certain countries would affect further existence and character of the Community.

Approaching 'identity' as a concept we should examine its understanding by politicians as well as by the citizens, which brings about the question of the influence on political and everyday practices. Further, I propose that the position of the Community in the people's hierarchies of categories of identification also requires deeper investigation. As I have mentioned, the Community appears to be too large to operate as a minimal unit of classification. Therefore, the coexistence of lower-level solidarities with the preferred loyalty to the Community should be questioned. In this context I put special emphasis on the relation between the Community and the nations and nation-states. I believe that detailed research following the outlined directions might throw more light upon he Community building process and help to resolve at least some of the crucial controversies it brings about.

References

Allport, G. W. *The Nature of Prejudice.* (Reading. MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* (London/New York: Verso, 1991 (1983)).

Bourdieu, P. *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977).

Brubaker, R., Cooper, F., "Beyond "identity", *Theory and Society* Vol. 29, No.1 (Feb. 2000).

Hamilton, D. L. *Cognitive Processes in Stereotyping and Intergroup Behavior.* (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1981).

Shore, C., "Inventing the 'People's Europe': Critical Approaches to European Community 'Cultural Policy'", *Man,* New series Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec. 1993).

Tajfel, H. *Social Identity and Intergroup Behavior.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict", Austin, W. G., Worchel, S. (eds) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Monterey: Brooks/Cole, 1979).

Woolf, S., "Europe and its Historians", *Contemporary European History* Vol. 12, No. 3 (Aug. 2003).

Woolf, S, "Europa, una sola storia, un'unica identita?", Cerutti, F. (ed) *Identità e politic,* (Roma/Bari: Laterza, 1996).