MAKING EUROPEANS IN THEIR OWN WAY: EUROPEAN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN ITALIAN ONLINE MEDIA DISCOURSES

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Abstract

The paper explores a variety of narrative frames used by different international and domestic actors to discuss or promote European identity in Italian public space. In most cases, when these actors speak about a sense of common belonging to Europe, they use complex, non-linear narratives to approach this argument. “Classical” cultural and civic identity frames appear to be multidimensional ones and to have different spatial and temporal modifications. The former are related to the levels (local/regional, national, European or global) regarded as crucial in the sense of cultural diversity to be preserved or to divergent perceptions about preferable key level of democratic participation and civic engagement. The latter comprise various frame modifications which describe the sense of belonging to Europe in terms of historical identity: European history can play a role of Europe’s significant Other or can be used as a source for “civic religion” creation. These layers can be supplemented by (or substituted for) religious/secular identity and inclusive/exclusive identity sub-categories. Apart from the two major dimensions, numerous narrative elements encountered within research project dataset can be classified under several extra categories, e.g. plural or bounded European identities, and different frames describing European identity denial. Departing from the qualitative analysis of this variety of European identity frames and their dimensions, the paper proceeds by applying quantitative text analysis techniques to examine the relationship between these elements.

I. Introduction

The studies of European identity are a wide area, which lies at the intersection of different disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological perspectives. Numerous research projects (in most cases funded by the EU (European Commission 2012)), both individual and collective, deal with exploring the sense of belonging to Europe of different social groups and countries, with different layers, dimensions and components of European common identity, or with its relationship to other elements making up multiple identities of individuals and communities. Different research teams use top-down (Bee, Scartezzini 2010) or bottom-up (Scalise 2013), quantitative or qualitative approaches to the analysis of European identity construction/development, apply methods of sociolinguistics (Slocum-Bradley 2010) or corpus linguistics (Thornborrow, Haarman, Duguid 2012; Venuti, de Candia, Deckert, Ropers 2012; Bayley and Williams 2012), narrative analysis (Eder 2009) or biographical approaches (Miller 2012), employ various research methods and techniques such as mass and elite surveys, structured, semi-structured and autobiographical narrative interviews (very often in different combinations).
Studying European identity construction may have one undeniable advantage: one can avoid starting his or her work with attempts to grasp all the existing European identity conceptualizations and to find the notion of identification with Europe that is more (or less) appropriate to their research objectives. They may simply rely on the discursive frames proposed by the actors involved in the process of identity promotion and activation. However, this doesn’t save a researcher from the necessity to systematize the diversity of frames encountered while analyzing actors’ perceptions on identification with Europe. More than this, the problem of categorization becomes much more pressing especially in the case when qualitative frame analysis has to be combined with quantitative research on the ways the sense of European belonging is being constructed and on the actors involved in this process.

If research on European identity is regarded to be a “growth industry”, attempts to conceptualize and categorize European identity are without any doubt one of its key sectors. The most part of researchers agrees on the fact that European identity as any collective identity is a multiple one and the identification with Europe itself has multiple meanings depending on the context in which the term is used. This implies the need to categorize different forms and manifestations the sense of belonging to Europe can take. Such classifications are often binary ones: some studies distinguish a civic and a cultural components of European identity (Bruter 2004), other identify “modern” and “nationalist”/“ethnic” narratives of European identity (Risse 2010, Schlenker 2011), positive or negative models of collective identities (Mummendey and Waldzus 2004), and, finally, “weak” and “strong” identification with Europe (Scalise 2013). Many international research projects use multidimensional operationalization of identifications: EUCROSS project applied a bi-dimensional model that combines cognitive, evaluative and affective types of identification with political and cultural identity variations (Favell et al., 2011), INTUNE project aimed at finding correlation between strong or weak European identification and civic or cultural national identities (Bellucci, Serricchio 2011; Serricchio 2010; Serricchio 2012; Bellucci, Sanders, Serricchio 2012), just to name few of them.

Nevertheless, these complex categorizations may prove insufficient or inadequate to describe all the types of European identity frames retrieved from one’s research project dataset, even if it is bounded only to the one EU member state and to the single segment of its public sphere. This paper deals with the analysis of frames used by different international and domestic actors to discuss or promote European identity in Italian online public space. It is an integral part of a bigger project, which addresses the issue of European identity construction in Italian public space by using the data extracted from online media and Internet resources. This individual research project relies on the methodological framework developed by the research team of Europub.com project (Della Porta, Caiani 2006; Della Porta, Caiani 2007) and applies political claims analysis to the study of actors involved in the process of European identity promotion and discussion, and of European identity perceptions they try to communicate to broader audiences. The paper discusses typologies of European identity frames encountered in the course of research project dataset creation trying to find an uneasy balance between analytical accuracy and project coherence.
II. Methodology

The research departs from methodological findings of international Europub.com project (“The transformation and political mobilization of communication in European public spheres”) which was implemented in 2001-2004 by the team of researchers from seven EU countries, including Italy, and was aimed at the evaluation of the process of European integration by institutional actors, political parties, interest groups and social movements. Methodological approach of the project combined the analysis of political claim-making with structured interviews. The former was based on the data collected from sample issues of national newspapers. A “claim” is understood within this approach as an item of strategic action, physical or verbal, transmitted through mass media. The act of claim-making is divided into four key elements: a “claimant”, an “addressee”, an “object actor” and the “substantive content” of the frame (Della Porta, Caiani 2006; Della Porta, Caiani 2007; Koopmans, Statham 1999).

This research methodology has a mixed nature – quantitative study of actors involved in European identity construction and of actions (or discursive acts) they undertake to promote the sense of European belonging is combined with qualitative and quantitative analysis of “claims” containing information on the type of European identity promoted by the actor. This mixed methodological nature of political claims analysis requires that dataset is to be created via manual coding. It especially applies to the analysis of European identity frames as a variety and complexity of models found within the dataset prevented us from using any of typologies mentioned in introductory part of this paper.

Within this study European identity construction and European identity frames in Italian public sphere are studied with the use of slightly modified version of political claims analysis. These modifications are caused by the use of the different data source. The sources of information on European identity for dataset creation were not predefined; they were instead retrieved from the results of the search via standard Web search engine, with the first 1500 relevant entries taken for analysis. As far as in the beginning of manual coding process different types of European identity frames have proven to be too difficult to categorize, the first 250 were taken for the deeper frame analysis to facilitate frames description. At the second stage of research described in this paper a pilot data subset containing 160 newly collected entries was used to validate the results of qualitative analysis.

Web pages or attached documents included in first dataset were created in the period of 24 years, between 1991 and 2015. All these entries contained a binary word combination “European identity” both in a title and a body of web page (almost all irrelevant web pages which contain word combination “European identity” referred to “European digital identity” and “European Union identity card”). For the aims of this research project the quantitative correlation between relevant and irrelevant entries has no importance. What is more important is that all the relevant web pages contained information concerning what European identity is or what it should be, i.e. they included explicitly expressed intention to promote or to create a certain type of European identity.

The use of standard search engine for the data collection is not a forced choice that was made due the lack of other sources. This choice was determined by the necessity to grasp the variety of actors, which are trying to enter the public space with their visions and representations of Europe and European identity rather than to focus on perceptions of single groups or actors channeled through the specific information sources (e.g. party manifestos). Search engines results, then, are supposed to tell us
much more about the messages that have easily and directly reached their audience than any other information source within online public sphere.

It is worth noting that online public sphere is by no means the only forum/space where the meanings/images/identities are created and disseminated. It is neither the major source used by Italians to search for information, but it is getting more and more connected to the offline one and even emulates the latter through/via online bookstores, digital libraries and online newspaper archives, TV and radio podcasts, event announcements and reports etc.

The advantage of such kind of data retrieval is evident: it allows us to detect various groups of actors which bypass traditional media and other intermediaries, and are directly involved in the process of European identity construction. The “classical” scheme describing the act of claim-making described above, though, requires modification as it doesn’t take into account a wide variety of these sources of information, on the one hand, and doesn’t give us enough information about distribution of roles between different actors, on the other hand. The scheme used for collecting data from online resources for this research project consists of five elements: a “source of information”, a “donor”, a “form of action”, a “claimant” and the “claim”/”statement” (frame). Groups of actors taking part in discussion and promotion of European identity and frames describing their vision of European identity were not fixed in advance; this means that to identify them as well as to single out European identity frames they develop was the task of the first stage of research, which is partly described in this paper. To single out different European identity frames the study departed from the basic distinction between civic and cultural forms of collective identity which was used by the team of INTUNE project (as well as by previous studies of European identity in Italy) (Battistelli, Bellucci 2002; Bellucci, Serricchio 2011; Serricchio 2010; Serricchio 2012; Bellucci, Sanders, Serricchio 2012). The overall picture, though, has turned to be more complex.

III. A variety of European identity frames: qualitative analysis

250 entries from the first dataset containing claims (statements) of different types (including rhymed ones) regarding characteristic features of European identity differ considerably regarding nature and size of documents: from full text e-books, graduation theses and dissertations to radio and TV podcasts, newspaper and journal articles, conference announcements, etc. Even if some of these statements are clear cut and concise, it is impossible to narrow down the majority of claims to the “classical” cultural or ethnic vs. civic identity typology, as these two categories would include units with absolutely incompatible characteristics. This led us to the necessity to add several subgroups within and outside of two major categories.

1. Civic identity frames

1.1. Broad European civic identity frame
Within this frame European identity is seen as a unity in Europe of freedoms and of human rights. It contains a “standard set” of civic values, civil and political rights and freedoms and have neither clear reference to a polity (be it EU or another unity) that should inspire the common sense of belonging nor indication to the level (European, national, regional or local) where these rights and freedoms should be ensured. European identity is represented as strictly connected to European citizenship and its values: democracy and human rights (135); the culture of legality as the key element of
democracy, non-discrimination, dissemination of values, solidarity, harmonious development of European society, the culture of self-respect and of respect towards other people (202). European space is supposed to be a place of peace and growth, of culture and of democratic participation (122), as well as the place of scarce individualism related to the “consciousness-of-being-in-society” which is rooted both in socialism and in catholic solidarism: “The “gene of socialism” is in the DNA of Europe and it stands up against social Darwinism and makes Europeans statists” (213)

The same frame is related to the categories of welfare state and social rights. Europeans are presumed to primarily have in common “the concept of welfare attained through the trade unions struggles and not through the homeostasis of the individualistic ethics of success” (213).

Five additional frame modifications, though, were singled out to distinguish actors’ diverging perceptions about their preferable key level of democratic participation and civic engagement.

1.1.1. European identity via local civic values (descending civic identity-1)
This frame describes European identity as “the centrality of locality” (but not of localism): “This Europe of people and territories should be able to combine everyone’s roots with the common sense of belonging”. It corresponds to the idea of Europe of people, not that of nations, Europe of territories, of regions and communes, of cities and villages, of labor and of local products, Europe of places, but at the same time, Europe of values of equality, justice and liberty (101). Local level is represented here both as the basis for economic recovery (first of all, in agriculture and in rural areas, and particularly within the Europe’s Mediterranean dimension) and as an instrument to tackle the degradation of democratic politics.

1.1.2. European identity as an extension of (or a supplement to) national identity (descending civic identity-2)
In this case European identity is also seen as an identity made of differences and national, local, religious and communal peculiarities, of diverse but convergent histories, of liberty and diversity. According to this modification European democratic society should be regulated by Constitution, and Europe should become a society where European citizenship rights are exercised and duties are performed. At the same time European citizenship is not supposed to replace national one but to join it, to become its new dimension and to make it even stronger.

1.1.3. European identity as a step to the universal one (ascending civic identity)
This frame is connected to the notion of European cosmopolitanism (186). In this view of European citizenship is only a step towards, an anticipation to the universal citizenship, and European federation is the intermediate stage leading to the global federation which is seen as the only truly legitimate political community (073). Europe is framed as a cosmopolitan project opposed to the idea of a superstate. The process of European integration had already lead to the cancellation of contrasts and should follow the way of cosmopolitanization (149). This cosmopolitan identity should unite all the people in a spirit of mutual respect and comprise all the principal values of civic cohabitation (073).

*Europe is the homeland of national model and, thus, a place where political culture of mankind division developed. At the same time, Europe is the homeland of the culture of*
human being. European culture has reached the first form of maturity of culture for all the people, the culture of human being. The great “cultural fact” is that a multinational level, i.e. the really human one, political culture of the mankind unity is to appear right in the homeland of nations. At this point the universal essence of culture, cultural identity for everyone, will lead to the creation of politico-cultural identity open to the humanity. European culture exists as such because it represents not only the political culture of mankind divisions but also the universal culture, the first step in its development. But Europe will inevitably face the necessity to suppress itself to make this universal culture come true.

The sense of European identity, thus, a European who is in a state of conflict with his social essence made up of national identity (which is an exclusive one and “subordinate human to national in the heart of every human being”), and is to become what he really is – a human being (170).

It is important for European federation not to chase existing cultural identity but to create a new one which will be based on today’s political and economic realities. It will be supranational identity that will overlook, cultural heritage of its ancestors, physical features, architecture of the cities... It is necessary to discuss a new, inclusive identity which will be a clear political and social one. The necessity of a cultural identity is already fetishist as far as every real culture is already global. It is politics that still needs to become global as well (003).

1.1.4. European civic identity as an identity on its own
This frame addresses to the urgency of nation-Europe and to the European nationalism (040). It refers to the idea of “new citizenship: “It is in Europe where the idea of “neocitizenship”, ethnic, national, international and planetary at the same time, is to materialize through the open and innovative democratic model (178)”

Shared (political) identity, postnational and supranational, is supposed to be in the making and viewed as stimulating democratic participation and functional capacity of democratic institutions. The establishment of social solidarity mechanisms at the European level, i.e. a kind of Welfare union in Europe, is regarded as crucial for the development of such identity model (074).

1.1.5. European civic identity as a combination of different levels of democratic governance
The key idea behind this frame is that a sense of belonging to Europe can not substitute other identities and should be built on the basis of their interaction, as well as on respect for the core democratic values:

European identity hasn’t been written but it is not a blank page. It is a product of previous identities, all the Europeans should recognize each other in this patriotism, and future generations will have a right to contribute to its definition. We should defend all the rights and diversity of cultural expressions but our values, first of all democracy, cannot be compromised (149).

1.2. European civic identity as a historical identity
This frame is related to the significance of so called “Cultural heritage of war in contemporary Europe” or shared memories of tragic events for the development of sense of belonging to democratic Europe.

Two modifications of this frame were found during the process of statements analysis.

1.2.1. European history as “the Other”
European civic identity in this case is a negative identity. Atrocities and crimes of the past take part of Europe's significant Other as they are compared with today's peace and prosperity (238):

“European spirit” emerges out of a glance back at the abysses of European civilization (186).

1.2.2. European history as the basis for “civil religion” construction
On the one hand, this frame is related to “historification” of the European Other as it appeals to its history of opposition movements and activities in former socialist countries – today’s and potential future Member States of the EU. On the other hand, within positive modification of this frame common European history is seen as setting pattern for today’s and future consolidation of civic values and democratic principles of governance. One illustrative example of discourse within this frame is related to the European day of the Righteous established in 2012 by the European Parliament to commemorate “those who in all genocide cases and under totalitarianism have done everything in their power to defend human dignity”2. An attempt is being made to connect this commemoration to the values of European culture and to common European identity as “in front of economic problems of the EU and Europe’s moral crisis nationalisms become a refuge for too many people who don’t feel the need to define themselves as Europeans anymore” (193).

“To commemorate the Righteous who fought against racial laws, as well as those who launched the process of the Berlin Wall fall, who put their effort into preventing genocides or defended truth and memory in totalitarian systems means to transmit moral examples that serve as pillars for our identity”.

“A taste for democracy and pluralism, A taste for diversity as a part of our own personality, a pleasure to defend the truth without falling into arrogance, acknowledgement of importance of forgiveness in human relations – these are the key components of lifestyle of those who believed in European construction” (193).

1.3. European civic identity as a secular identity
A number of statements on European identity contain special references to secularism and secularization of Western civilization (222) as to the basic element of European identity, even if sometimes this frame is embedded into the broad one:

Today Europe has a meaning of unity-in-diversity and of ability to carry on a dialogue among people of different languages, traditions and ethnic groups, and, thus, of different identities, who share common principles and values, both Christian and ex-Christian, bourgeois and Enlightenment values, united under one roof. These comprise values of rationality and efficiency but, at the same time, values connected to the individual, to the liberty of conscience, to the liberty tout court, to the solidarity, and to the respect of human rights. Development of these values is seen as a precondition for the creation of European common consciousness and even as a key goal of all European history. European common consciousness is a form of civic consciousness which is connected to the principle of secularism” (178).

Secularism is defined as the most mature product of European history and characterized as a unity in pluralism, tolerance and mutual respect, valorization of individual consciousness, civic commitment and social solidarity.

“Secularism means the ethics of responsibility which is connected to the ethics of communication and implies key values and principal means of mutual respect and

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2 “Righteous Among the Nations” is a denomination used by the State of Israel for non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis.
dialogue. Secularism means a widespread ethos that sees in facing differences an opportunity to enrich (not to pose a threat to) its culture, a challenge to its prejudices, and an incentive to rethink constantly its identity and to valorize the possibility of “miscegenation” (178).

1.4. European civic identity as a religious identity
The only distinguishing feature of this modification is the fact that European civic values are traced directly to the Christian faith: “We work hard to build on the basis of our Christian faith a human and social Europe where human rights and fundamental values of peace, justice, liberty, tolerance, participation and solidarity would be of great importance” (070). According to this view Christian identity in Europe is not exclusive but inclusive one, in the sense that it possesses all the necessary conditions for the development of the liberty of conscience which is the foundation for European democracy (070).

2. Cultural identity frames

2.1. Broad European cultural identity frame
In its general form European cultural identity frame is related to the claim that culture and art are the basic principles of European identity (219). The emphasis here is placed on the cultural diversity that makes up Europe (201). As is the case with civic identity frame, European cultural identity frame has a number of modifications, and they are also related to the levels that are regarded as crucial in the sense of cultural diversity to be preserved. But the set of different modifications within cultural identity frame is more complex due to the diversification between “identity as a dialog of cultures” and “identity as a preservation of culture” variations.

2.1.1. National cultural diversity in conservative/exclusive European identity
In this interpretation of European cultural identity Europe is supposed to be a unity of historical and moral type, and in this kind of Europe common cultural, moral and religious heritage should shape the integrity of its nations and guarantee peace among them. National identities “should be respected and united, at the same time, at the higher level of the community of people” (105). Europe doesn’t abolish national identities but it constrains national identities to undergo revisions and to communicate with each other, while still preserving their peculiarities and relying on them. The “religious imprinting” of Italian identity, culture and society is not negotiable, with Christianity belonging to the DNA of Italian people…. “It is impossible to build an integrated Europe without taking into consideration national identities” (216).

2.1.2. National cultural diversity in “open”/inclusive European identity
This frame modification is also related to the idea of national cultural diversity but European identity is perceived to be a form of intercultural dialog: “European culture could become the main way towards a federal Europe. European culture is a paradoxical one as its identity is constantly under construction and deconstruction. European identity is not a statement but a question that is full of anxiety – an interrogating identity. European culture as a culture of asking questions and discussion. It is the primary basis for “living together”. European identity, thus, is a plural one. Europe needs national cultures that are proud of themselves and are valued. National cultural diversity is the only cure for the evil of banality which is a new version of the banality of evil” (207).
2.1.3. Local/Regional cultural diversity in “open”/inclusive European identity
This modification is based on an argument that European identity is in the making but it is to be based on identities of single villages: “if you feel at home in your village and manage to sustain your culture, you will be able to bring it to a bigger village which is formed by all the cultures united. A camp is the same but flowers to be planted will be different, with different smells and colors” (148).

2.2. European cultural identity as a historical identity/”common roots” dimension
The situation becomes even more complicated when “common roots” dimension is added. Within this frame European cultural identity is represented as multifaceted but at the same time recognizable as unitary one (188). At the same time, the list of elements which form “common roots” can differ significantly: “Ancient Greece, Christian religion, Renaissance Humanism and the Enlightenment” combination, Greek and Biblical traditions combination, Jewish-Christian roots or just Christian roots combinations. The principal dividing line, though, passes between the notions of “cultural roots” and of “religious roots”.

2.2.1. Cultural roots frame
This frame is generally connected to the common values of dialog and “openness”:

“Cultural roots of Europe are in the meeting of two great cultural traditions: Greek classical tradition and Jewish tradition. They both are very different from each other and have their own specific features. They developed autonomously and had divergent and contrasting trajectories, but it was their meeting that laid the basis for the development of Christianity and, thus, for the rise of European culture, born and flourished as a result of their synthesis. Key element that these traditions have in common is the primacy of intellect and of spirit and the concept of human being viewed as a “person”. Athens and Jerusalem become symbols of European culture. The two cultural traditions in this dialog have lost their “localism” and gained the dimension of universal values” (168).

“If European culture is born of meeting of Greek and Biblical traditions, one should also add to these two traditions the dimension of law developed by Romans. This synthesis took place both in Western and Eastern Europe, even if some characteristic features and development paths could be different in these two parts of the continent. Byzantine and Latin-Frankish-Germanic traditions picked up and developed this synthesis. In both cases the Greek-Biblical synthesis entered in dialog with other local cultures acquiring some new traits and peculiarities and integrating them into basic values. The profound unity of ideas, fundamental values and multifaceted character of European culture come from here” (168).

2.2.2. Religious roots frame
Even if discussing the same traditions this frame addresses religious rather than cultural roots concept and refers to traditional values and “moral” identity. European Union is represented as a project that has at its heart “men and women, that is to say, not as “citizens” or “economic agents”, but as “persons endowed with transcendent dignity”” (214):

“Europe’s identity is an identity of a place of immeasurable dignity of every human being from the moment of conception and of irreplaceable nature of family conceived as a marriage between a man and a woman” (105).

2.3. European cultural identity as an identity on its own
According to this frame to construct European identity it is necessary to “demolish”, to get over identity and coexistence models that are not efficient anymore and to adopt new ones that contain points of convergence between all the cultures of the EU (186).

3. Ethnic identity frame
This frame, connected to the European cultural identity frame, refers to Europeans as to ethnic and racial category. Europe is represented as one nation divided into regions and “dialects” but having the same cultural and religious references. It is important to notice that this type of European identity frame is always correlated to the European negative identity frames where the European Other can be represented by European political elites, immigrants (009) or the Islam (250).

European integration is argued to be equivalent to genocide, and to ethnic suicide. “Europeans are being convinced by means of disinformation and humanitarian brainwashing fulfilled through the mass media to repudiate their roots, to deny their ethnic identity. The supporters of globalization try to persuade us that to give away our identity is a progressive and humanitarian act, that “racism” is a mistake, but in fact they just would like to make us all blind consumers” (009). European integration and mass migration are perceived to be the elements of a plan worked out by European political elites and aimed at racial mongrelization of Europe. European people are supposed to degenerate into “a group of individuals deprived of ethnic, historical and cultural cohesion” and would be easily controlled by the ruling elite (009).

4. European identity as Plurality/Diversity
A large number of statements do not address neither civic nor cultural elements of European identity, and the vast majority of these claims refer to diversity or plurality that is regarded as the key distinguishing element of the common European consciousness. “It is possible to construct European identity exactly on the basis of openness, of encounter/confrontation with the other. This identity, located right between demos (understood in terms of “juridical and universalistic citizenship”) and ethos (defined in connection with a concept of “cultural and particularistic citizenship”) takes form of political identity respecting ethical peculiarities, of a union in plurality of differences” (141).

“It is diversity, on the one hand, and universality of shared values, on the other hand, that are in the core of the unification and of the European identity construction. The “European” exists only in this meaning” (209).

Plurality here is an unspecified category. In some cases it can be regarded as a specific form of spatial organization and is explained by the physical geographical features of Europe. European identity is seen as a plurality (not a diversity) and cohabitation (not a unity, as this expression gives a wrong impression of leveling out differences) and these are attributed to the distinguishing features of European territory: continuity and intensity of contacts (due to the high quality and quantity of communications) and the separateness of communities (due to the existence of numerous natural barriers) (109).

Another variation of this frame is European identity viewed as a combination of diversity and fluidity. Diversity and transformation here are considered as strong points and advantages and not as threats for the European identity, and Everyday landscapes as an integral part of European identity, “identity that is always in flux and that is plural, not an exclusive process guided from above but a process open for participation” (119).

In this discourse European identity is represented as a process, not as a state of art. European identity Is not perceived as fixed and given, territorially bound and delimited, it is considered to be identity on the move, a “construction site Europe”, a fluid identity referring to “be on the road”, to travelling (186). It is an “active” and inclusive identity
which is expressed through the actions of leveling, building, creating, founding, organizing, searching and trying, finding and inventing, being lost or confused:

“European identity is a laboratory where many workers and many factors play a role, and which cannot be just the product of an elite consisted of history scholars, but a reflection of the collective conscience, meaning the way Europeans perceive themselves” (189).

5. Plural European identities
The concept of European identity is not always used in the singular; some claims refer to different types of plural identities, e.g. European cultural identities or positive European identities. The most illustrative example of European identity in the plural is a “Two Europes” frame. According to this frame there are two Europes: one Europe is Catholic, Latin, and Mediterranean, it is made up of nation-states built on the ruins of Roman empire, another Europe is Protestant and Germanic, extended towards the North sea and Eastern Europe (Mitteleuropa). These two Europes correspond to different European ideas: universal, supranational and imperial idea of Germanic world and the Latin and Mediterranean idea of nation-state. The have different interests and these interests lie in different geographical areas (018).

6. Denying/Bounding European identity
Even if denial of identity can hardly be regarded as an element in the process of identity construction, the reasons for this denial indicated by the claimant in most cases reveal characteristics of his/her preferable identity model. For this reason, all the cases which contain statements denying or bounding European identity were coded within separate category.

6.1. “Too diverse to be united”
This model is related to the idea that different parts of Europe are too different to have any common identity:

“The only real supranational identity that Italy has is not European but Western one. Until the end of 1980s cultures, political and economic systems of Post-communist countries of Eastern Europe differed sharply from those in Western Europe. Italy has much more in common with the USA (democratic parliamentary system, liberal economic system and culture that goes back to Western European one) and even with Japan than with the Eastern European countries” (140).

“West and East, North and South of Europe are worlds apart. There are huge differences in a sense of history, economy, and, thus, in a sense of anti-crisis management strategies...” (052).

6.2. European identity as having no identity/Denying common European cultural identity
Different manifestations of the modern global world: nomadism, cosmopolitanism, universalism, “mondiality”, digital revolution that speed up circulation of texts, polymorphic and metamorphic imagination, the crisis of eurocentrism, and a multitude of translations are regarded as preventing European cultural elites from developing a strong sense of belonging to Europe:

“For today’s novelist cinema, music clips, commercials can be more important than tradition of European classics. The weakness of European identity is not only an antidote for aggressive localisms and universalisms, but also a source of hybrid, open, fluid vision, a matrix of dynamic and plural Europe that connects cultures and values
diversity. This Europe’s identity weakness, this identity that consists in having no identity can be its primary strength” (188).

European identity is neither Greek nor Christian, Arabic, or Germanic. It is perfectly reflected in Rome but only in a sense that to be Europeans means to behave as Romans did, i.e. to be able to adapt themselves and to become a structure of cultural transmission, to accept the superiority of Greeks and Jews, resigning themselves to a minor role. Romanity means to consent to play a secondary role (secondarietà), to have inclination to receive and to transmit, to recognize your own identity in tensions between classicism and barbarity; it means to be able to accept what is yours by means of an alien. This is not an identity per se but a willingness to construct it, an aptitude that makes us able to put ourselves in someone else’s place, to be Catholic in a non-confessional sense, i.e. to be universal (195).

6.3. Denying identification with the EU
This kind of reasoning about European identity is based on the certainty that common European identity doesn’t exist and can’t be created within the European Union because the EU in its current form doesn’t conform to democratic ideals: “We don’t have a language, an identity, a shared historical memory. To cut a long story short, we are not a nation. To build a European state we should invent it or create an empire… Certainly, an identity is always plural. In this world we are all relatives after Adam and Eve. Despite everything, many of us still keep a feeling of being European (europetità), shimering and prudent, though, and, first of all, when not in Europe. But there is an abyss between this feeling and a possibility to transform it into the foundation for a polity”… Liberal-democratic institutions and values should not be compromised for any reason including construction of a European state. “The founding fathers explained that they were working for the Europeans, not with them. As good tutors. Meanwhile, we have grown up a little bit and are qualified to doubt. To choose. Democracy first, then Europe” (221).

6.4. “The Decline of Europe” frame
Europe is seen as impotent, unbelieving, blasphemous, lacking of identity or having a “corrupt identity”, unable to find itself, suffering from the erosion of identity: There is no more Europe, only European heritage persists. Russia has inherited political and spiritual traditions of Europe, that is why it might be a stronghold of the ancient European tradition, a barrier against neoliberalism and ultra-capitalism, a crossroad of cultures, people and traditions” (026).

6.5. Bounding Europe to the cultural elite
According to this view, the sense of belonging to Europe is bounded to adult generation, and in a more restrictive sense to the cultural elite. Young people are not supposed to feel themselves as Europeans. European identity, thus, is still very fragile and umbraticolous, and young people presumably aren’t interested in it (145).

6.6. Bounding European identity to the identification with the EU
This frame is related to the perception of the European identity as identification with the EU, and as a result of European integration process (140). European identity and the European Union are seen as one and the same thing, as identical to each other.

7. European identity as a negative identity
European identity in this case is represented as a form of demarcation between Us and the Others. In the most broad interpretation this frame is related to the statement that
individuals can become aware of their “Europeanness” only through the encounter with extra-European cultures:

“We become aware of our own European identity when we contact an extra-European culture, including American one…” (213).

“European” is something indefinite that individuals reveal about themselves at the very moment when they leave their homeland and the culture they are used to (201).

7.1. America as the European Other
In most cases corresponding to this frame America is seen as the most significant Europe’s Other:

“European citizenship alone is not sufficient to abate a sense of national belonging by virtue of integration into a larger system. Only a comparison with someone who seems distant brings us closer to the common vision of Europe. It is easier to think as “European” by contrast with “American”. European construction proves itself in opposition to the USA, they hold diverging positions on the major international issues such as the war: Europeans consider the US to be imperialists, aggressive and even violent. Americans are considered to be insidious and warlike, while stereotypical Europeans are humanitarian, good natured, and prudent. In global collective unconscious Europe is viewed as a continent of peace, as a counterbalance to the American excessive power, the continent of evolution and cooperation (209)

At the same time, America is viewed as the place where dreams can come true and the land of meritocracy. Europe, in its turn, is presumed to take the lead as a tourist destination with its historical sites and cultural attractions, arts, European savoir vivre, football, culinary arts. It leaves the US far behind in terms of public transport or healthcare systems (209).

Europe, unlike America, suffered from dictatorships, it has a knowledge of the evils of war, and, as a result, it is more human and prone to solidarity (213).

Special attention is paid to the difference between European and American social models and to the threat of Americanization of European welfare state.

European cultural matrix differs from the American one as it is based on the idea that some rights and services can’t be weighed according to the parameters imposed by the market. American healthcare model that guarantees treatment only for those who can afford it would be accepted in Europe (212).

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, thus, is supposed to pose a serious threat to European culture, to European identity, and to the binding principles which underlie European social state (212).

In some cases the list of Europe’s Others is wider, with China, Asia and Africa included (usually in addition to America):

“We should remain united to resist the US and China” (201).

“Another element of European identity is a fact that Europeans are more apt to comprehend diversity than people of Asia and Africa, Europeans had acquired this capacity during the colonial period” (213).

“European identity is hard to define but we just can’t stop to discuss it. An idea that is hard to define is often defined by the opposition to the Other: China, Africa etc., it helps us to mark its contours” (149).

7.2. “Europe of money” as the European Other
This frame addresses a “Europe of money” as Europe’s “inner Other”. The destruction of Europe of banks in this view should help Europe to transform its men and women into
citizens and restore a sense of community. A community is supposed to be made of identity and traditions, to be based on its memories of history and culture, and to use its roots to get a new start and to design the future. Europe’s strength is argued to consist in peculiarities and the heritage of the multitude of its people, and People’s Europe is declared to be the only True Europe (078).

8. European external identity
This frame is related to the image of Europe as a global actor. According this view, Europeans think more and more the same way about the management of international crises and the fight against international terrorism. As a result, leading roles played by single European states are less likely to be justified by the necessity to represent divergent public opinions of different nations. National leaders should take into consideration this growing coherence of European citizens’ views and emerging common identity. If the member states are not able to come to common position, the EU is destined to play less and less important role at the international level (160).

Thus, qualitative analysis of European identity frames transmitted via online media and other online resources within Italian public space allows us to trace at least eight different dimensions of discourses aimed at enhancing the sense of common European belonging. These compound dimensions comprise: (1) cultural vs. civic, (2) positive vs. negative, (3) exclusive vs. Inclusive, (4) “domestic use” vs. external, (5) historical vs. “visions of the future” (desirable) vs. existing, (6) religious vs. secular, (7) plural (“plurality of identities” variations) vs. singular and (8) various forms of geographical identity (global vs. European vs. national vs. regional vs. local). They are not closed spaces and have numerous intersections. We should also add here three simple dimensions: “plurality as identity” or pluralist European identity, ethnic and fluid forms of “European belonging”. Moreover, at least six different types of European identity denial or limitation were found within the dataset (Table 1).

Table 1. European Identity Construction Set
IV. A variety of European identity frames: quantitative analysis

The second set of 160 entries was created according with the same principles as the first one was. These entries are still different types of documents retrieved from Internet via standard Web search engine. The only difference is the dating of samples: as the data was collected in the period between September 2016 and June 2017 the major part of documents within this subset was published in 2016 and in 2017. A decision to use another data subset for quantitative analysis is explained by the necessity to check the validity of categories detected at the previous stage of the project.

Every integral statement (claim) on European identity made by every single actor, not a single mentioning of it nor a document as a whole (only two documents, though, contain more than one clear statements on the sense of common European belonging), was coded using all 25 categories mentioned above. This means that a code containing 25 symbols corresponds to each of 162 statements and our data matrix is 162*25.

Four of these 25 dimensions, i.e. local, regional, national and universal spatial dimensions, were coded with ternary symbols \{-1,0,1\}. This choice is justified by the need to find out how different forms of geographical identifications are related to the European identity:
-1 means that local/regional/national/universal identity/-ies is/are considered by the claimant as incompatible with European one or is/are seen as an obstacle for its creation and development.
0 means that local/regional/national/universal dimensions is/are not mentioned by the claimant.
1 means that local/regional/national/universal dimensions is/are regarded as a basis for the development of European identity or/and seen as its integral part.

For other 21 categories binary symbols were used \{0, 1\}, where 0 means that dimension was not mentioned by the claimant and 1 has the opposite meaning.

The quantity of claims chosen for the analysis has proven insufficient to make any conclusions regarding the frequency of claims containing all 25 categories, as far as all 162 combinations of these elements has turned to be unique and have no repetitions, even if sometimes only one or two elements vary.

E.g. the following codes: a) 1100100000011010100001100
b) 1100100000010010100001000

should be read as follows:

a) Both civic and cultural identity based on national one, singular, both positive and negative identity that does not yet exist but is desirable, historical, with Europe’s own past viewed as “the Other” (390);
b) Both civic and cultural identity based on national one, singular and positive identity that does not yet exist but is still desirable (430).

Nonetheless, even this small set of 162 entries was useful to validate stable combinations of several categories detected at the first stage of this research, as well as to confirm that proposed categorization of European identity dimensions is correct. It can be also used to test (with some limitations which will be discussed below) how combinable or incompatible all these categories are.
First of all, it is worth stressing that all of the categories detected at the previous stage of research were also encountered at the stage of quantitative analysis (Graph 1). References to ethnic, plural and denied European identity were registered only once for each of these categories. Only three claims from the data subset contain references to external identity of Europe (or of the EU). All other categories are mentioned much more often. Sometimes claims were coded as belonging to a category for the reason that this belonging is considered to be self-evident and, thus, is implicit. This is the case with singular, self-sufficient and internal European identity categories. There is no need for a claimant to verbally express and stress the importance of these features of European identity model they prefer or promote. This partly explains the high number of references to these categories but, at the same time, this does not mean that it says us nothing about the claims on European identity within the data subset.

![Graph 1. European identity categories](image)

The more important thing, though, is the combination of different categories within the same claim because, as stated above, the majority of statements contain combination of different elements (often more than six elements). Even when we deal with binary dimensions such as exclusive/inclusive or internal/external the data demonstrates that they are not always mutually exclusive (Graph 2). As the data subset is small, it is not possible to speak about statistical relevance/irrelevance at this stage but we still can mention these cases as extremely curious. The high level of compatibility of civic/cultural identity elements (25 of 162 claims), though, seems to be more important.
Turning to the testing of European identity categories' combinations which were detected earlier (Graphs 3-9), it is necessary to stress again that it is too early for any kind of statistical generalizations. Nevertheless, we can say with certainty that all the combinations from the first data subset are also present in the second one.
Finally, it is important to indicate at least two limitations of the coding procedure proposed here. The first of them is related to the fact that a quantity of possible European identity categories’ combinations is extremely high, and as the number of claims will grow a variety of these combinations is expected to be even higher. The second (and smaller) data subset contained a lot of dimension combinations which were absent from the first one, e.g. both religious and secular elements combination within the same European identity discourse model or both civic and exclusive European identity narratives. The same is true for the new form of plural European identities present in the second data subset: French vision of European identity (nationalist, isolationist, protectionist) vs German vision (inclusive European identity) (422), new types of “European Other”, such as immigrants (448) or Roman Catholicism (313) etc. The second limitation is much more serious and it is connected to the multi-level character of a great number of claims from both of data subsets. It means that code is not able to demonstrate hierarchies of categories and links between different elements. For example, when a claim is coded as containing civic, historical and positive dimensions, it can be decoded as a claim referring to the European history as the basis for “civil religion” construction but, at the same time, as a claim containing separate and not connected references to civic values and common European history.
V. Conclusion

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses reveal a vast variety of elements and different models of their combinations within statements made by various actors on European identity. Broad cultural and civic identity frames appear to have the largest number of spatial and temporal modifications. The former are related to the levels (local/regional, national, European or global) regarded as crucial in the sense of cultural diversity to be preserved or to divergent perceptions about preferable key level of democratic participation and civic engagement. The latter comprise various frames that describe the sense of belonging to Europe in terms of historical identity: European history can play a role of Europe’s significant Other or can be used as a source for “civic religion” creation. Cultural and civic identifications with Europe can have religious or secular nature, European cultural identity, moreover, can be exclusive or inclusive. European ethnic identity frame is related to some of negative identification forms. Such a diversity of competing frames in such a limited number of documents gives us a hint that European identity construction is unlikely to become an easy task in the nearest future, for Italians at least. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Europe is too diverse to be united.

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