

AER WHITE PAPER "EUROPE AND REGIONS"

(Europe day, 9 May 2006)

Two articles by professeur Charles Ricq for the AER white paper "Europe and
regions"
on "regional, national, and European identities"

General introduction

A White paper on Europe and the regions implies in-depth knowledge and analysis of the regional facts and figures having marked European history and which continue to mark current and future European construction. Describing and identifying the position and role of the regions in a long-term vision of European integration requires a forward-looking approach based both on the regional facts applying to all of Europe and on scenarios relating to the various disciplines covered by human sciences. This is the aim of the White paper on "Europe and regions" by focusing research and recommendations on the new central concept of "governance" applied to the regions, States and European Institutions. It would clearly be too easy to believe that this single concept could provide all of the solutions for the political construction of Europe and replace the position and role of the regions in this construction

Even if the different levels of governance (regional, national and European) need incorporating in conceptual and practical terms, the mutual imbrications and indispensable interaction between these levels must still be identified. On this issue, the AER, just like, and in cooperation with, the Committee of Regions in Brussels, the Congress of local and regional authorities in Strasbourg, can provide all of its actions, analyses and projects as starting points for a solution to regional governance.

Let's just clarify that focusing the White paper on the topic and reality of governance implies that the latter is based on all of the basic principles enshrined in European construction, and mainly the principles of subsidiarity, proximity, partnership, solidarity and citizenship. But these principles, and the concept of governance itself, are of no impact if not placed in the context of real identities, i.e. the roots of each and every European citizen in his or her region, country and Europe. It is therefore of outstanding importance to correlate governance and identity at regional, national and European levels. And in a more general manner, any type of consideration, analysis, proposal, draft or similar on the European constitution, European territorial, administrative and political organisation, or enlargement, etc. cannot ignore the dimension of identities in European construction. Nor is any vision of the future of Europe, the States or the regions possible without continual reference to the phenomenon and processes relating to identities. It is therefore indispensable

- to better define identity in general
- to better define identity processes and their inherent layers, stages, and basic parameters, their imbrications with the territorial organisation of the States and regions, and with the political construction of Europe.

This is the aim of this report.

Before starting all these analyses, let's just reiterate a few basic factual points demonstrating the identity phenomenon at all three levels (regional, national and European). To give an example:

- at all three levels, identity claims concern languages, culture, history, social and economic traditions and organisations, legal, executive or judicial institutions...
- identity complexes or withdrawals on the basis of political, economic or social aspects, not forgetting taxation...
- social exclusion phenomenon leading to identity fixations or opposition, or even the emergence of new identity "cores" (cf. the "revolt of the urban suburbs..." and their identity crisis)
- new forms of identity dialogue, just like tectonic plates, which affect migratory flows and interculturalism or the cultural or identity blockages caused...

The identity phenomenon, with all its components, dimensions and developments is right at the heart of European construction and the fundamental relations between regions, States and Europe.

1st section: notional approaches to the identity phenomenon in human sciences

2nd section: the identity process in the construction of an individual (the person) or collective grouping (the region or the territorial authority)

3rd section: basic parameters of individual or collective identities: plural identities

4th section: the construction of European identity: stages, elements, processes, dialogue.

Conclusion: position, role and recommendations of the AER at the 3 levels (regional, national and European) of identity processes.

1st section: the polysemy of the identity phenomenon in human sciences.

Each of the main human disciplines or sciences has attempted to define the phenomenon of identity in its own way, nevertheless, without ever providing a strict or exhaustive definition. Let us consider a few of these definitions.

1.1. philosophy:

All of the philosophers from antiquity, the medieval period, Renaissance or modern times have considered the issue of identity. Whether you analyse the texts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, St. Augustin, St. Thomas, Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Rousseau, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Fichte, Kant, Marx, Heidegger, Hume, Kierkegaard, Marcuse, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, or Bergson, they all insist on identity as the basis of the relation with id and others via an assimilation of the identity – and I resume – as:

- the act of existing
- duration over time.
- the challenge or risk of existing
- the identity - alterity antagonism up to the extreme formula of Sartre for which "man is a wolf for man"
- the mode of relationships...

each of these philosophical definitions or approaches would need amplifying to fully understand and analyse what regional, national and European identities represent.

1.2. social psychology and psychoanalysis: with authors such as Piaget, Freud, Jung, Grosser, Lévi-Strauss...

- Piaget's genetic epistemology analyses the construction of the "subject" in successive stages from the "centring" of the subject on id (personal identity) and "socialisation" (social identification) to autonomy in interdependency.
- psychoanalytic schools, after Freud and Jung, each insisted, in their own ways, on the different components of "id" and the conscience of identity identity as the structural element of the personality

We will take note of recent discussions in certain psychoanalytic and psychosomatic circles concerning legal and psychological issues in view of the possible creation of electronic and biometric identity cards in certain States, the European Union and the United States.

1.3. political sociology

Although sociological ideas vary for each sociologist, sociological texts on identity all insist on:

- the importance of the group, of collectiveness in the construction of identity, of the conscience of identity;
- all social processes allowing individuals to identify themselves to a collective group by assimilating its values, standards, myths and symbols...;
- the need for a group to last over time and space via an identity statement such as an institution or institutional process;
- the relation between identity and power over id or others (type of governance);
- the identity and the type of actor represented by the individual or/and the social group

To resume, according to sociologists, the sociological identity can be compared to a sustainable trend, a root, a home port, a specific signature, fruit or yeast ... Sociologist E. Morin, goes as far as to assimilate "human identity" and "global village".

1.4. history and geography

Historical and/or geographical studies have all insisted on the specific identity of the regions, based on their geographical characteristics, demographical blending or preservation, and their types of economy, institutions, social relations, urban development, languages and cultures etc.... Historians consider that important military events and social, economic and cultural events effect all European regions. Geography has no less to say, many geographers have created an osmosis of territory and identity, sometimes going as far as to highlight a certain territorial influence on the construction and reproduction of regional identity. Other geographers have attributed greater importance to territorial planning – these texts are known as "voluntarist geographic" research - and insist on all national or European regionalisation policies which they often identify as administrative or political techniques for national territorial distribution, or European territorial distribution (cf. structural funds and community statistical tools - NUTS I, II, et III). For both geographers and historians, this regionalisation from the top opposes regionalism and regional movements which amount to rising awareness, autonomous territorial management, and institutional or cultural claims from and for regional authorities. For historians and geographers, the region is primarily and above all an identity space.

1.5. economy

Let us start by reiterating that traditional Keynesian economical theory was little interested by regional aspects and even less regional issues - which ceased to be the case for economic science in the 1950s -. The importance of the economic factor as a variable which explains the deterioration or boom of the regional identity, national identity, and even European identity, must be insisted on: just consider the crisis in wine-growing and industrial regions, etc... Two schools of thought in regional economic analysis have appeared concerning regional, national and/or European areas. The first school of thought is based on the central-periphery problem, and distinguishes innovative, dynamic central regions which adapt to changes in technology or international labour practices and in which the identity process remains active. With this school of thought, economic development, the adapting of the production of goods and services accords priority to central regions. The second school of thought appeared approximately thirty years ago with the works of the OECD and applies the topic of "endogenous development" using the specific resources and potential of each individual region, particularly peripheral regions. This potential cannot be developed in an optimal manner other than using cultural factors and the regional identity variable.

Urban phenomenon are also social, economic and cultural events. What is its influence on the continuation, modification, development and reproduction faced by regional and national identities? A complete "White paper" would required drafting on the production and reproduction of identity on the basis of towns.

It is also worth noting that within Europe, the Lisbon strategy in terms of competitiveness, employment, and knowledge economy, decided by the 25 Member States of the European Union in 2002, needs to be rooted in regional and national identities and respect and accept responsibility for these identities. The same applies to all community policies, starting with the common agricultural policy, as no policy can ignore the regional and/or national roots of identities.

2nd section: The identity process and construction of the individual and/or collective subject

No identity phenomenon is definitive, all identities, any search for identity is primarily and above all a process aiming at the development and improved confirmation of the subject. The timeless question for ourselves and our collective groupings arises once again: how can identity and change be reconciled? what position and role can all types of economic, social, cultural and political interaction play in transformations desired or accepted by individual and collective identities?

Some of the answers to these questions lie in analyses highlighting human sciences such as psychology, sociology, political sciences, or in the day-to-day experience of individuals and collective groupings: "belong" and/or "refer to" represent the essential part of most identity dialogues, and any developments or enrichment in identity.

2.1. acquired identity and reference identity

This initial distinction obviously highlights the reality of any identity process, of the ever-changing, ever-adapting identity phenomenon. From birth, we all belong to a social group, a national entity, a European reality. This marks the identity of the individual or group definitively. The very essence of the identity process is the perpetual dialogue between the acquired identity and the reference identity ("identification with" as S. Freud put it). With individuals, this shows the extent to which the perpetual search for identity is more or less challenging and a source of inner conflict. How to achieve assimilation with other groups, other values, standards, symbols, etc, without partially losing or transforming those of the acquired identity. Some sociologists consider that interculturalism or multiculturalism partly provide a solution to this inner identity conflict.

Regions must also face this dialogue between acquired identity and reference identity, be it only at institutional level via the distribution of competences, instruments, resources ... for regional governance. How many European regions refer to other European regions via enhanced interregional cooperation, "territorial cooperation" as it is now called in Brussels. But comparisons are not straight facts, especially as no "standard model for a European region" exists or is likely to exist, considering the diversity and complexity of the history of all of the political systems in Europe, and the historical, geographical, institutional, social, economic and cultural particularities of each region in Europe.

2.2. identity over time

When the identity phenomenon is analysed, it is often taken in the context of the past, present or future, which leads to the following conceptualisation of identity: memory-identity; action-identity and forecast-identity. The first form of identity is included in what individuals and territorial groupings remember from their history: a notable event, a linguistic, economic, social, cultural, or institutional characteristic, even ecological characteristics nowadays, a family relation, a founding myth, etc.... Action-identity or action-culture is based on the current ability of an individual or region to face various changes occurring. This ability will vary depending on the resources of the individual or region (this is the notion of "endogenous development") or on external resources, which are not always well assimilated. With regards forecast-identity, this is included in future projects, central ideas, e.g. autonomy ideals.... and an individual or region will assimilate this identity when constructing its future.

It is easy to perceive the unavoidable sources of conflict between these three forms of time-based identity. Regional dynamism sometimes sinks into the past if memory-identity is over-invasive, or into future projects e.g. of economic development, neglecting the rich historical features of the region, or the drive behind a territorial authority sometimes has no real future projects. All of these situations can be observed in the analysis of many European regions and demonstrate the difficulty of finding a compromise situation, which requires constant modification, between the 3 forms of identity. Certain political scientists consider that to confirm the position of the regions in current and future European construction, the regions must develop an "opening logic" rather than settle for "acquired benefits". In other words, regional identities, with all their wealth and complexity, need constructing rather than re-founding.

2.3. identity dialogue and identity layers

Any identity process is therefore part of the conflictual relations between acquired identity and reference identity, and between memory-identity, action-identity and forecast-identity, for individuals and regions. However, psychological analyses have shown that conflict is not total, as our individual and collective identities are constructed of successive layers (cf. Piaget's "construction of the subject"). The main characteristic of these layers is that they are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they mutually enrich the identity of the individual or collective subject. From this point of view, we can conclude that layers of regional, national and European identification are not contradictory and mutually rich each other.

Identity layers are complex as they include many economic, social and cultural elements. Sometimes, obviously, just like the tectonic plates which unfortunately shake the land under our feet, conflict may arise between layers. It is simply worth mentioning here that in certain regions dialogue is persistent between social identity phenomenon and regional identity phenomenon: how many times have I heard that in certain regions class conflict must be accorded priority (and the inherent identity conflict) or the regional combat for greater autonomy, or independence. There is substantial need for serious analysis of social identity or the relation between a specific social group and regional, national or European identities in order to observe, assess, and interpret whether parallels can be drawn between regional, nationalist or European tendencies and laymen, blue collar staff or management status.

3rd section: basic parameters of identities

An exhaustive definition of identity is impossible. The complexity of the previous sections demonstrates this. We can simply define the main indicators and different basic parameters of the identity phenomenon as precisely as possible, which would lead to emphasising that our identities, regional identities are "plural", "compound", and not homogenous with one single explanatory characteristic. The basic parameters of our identities are constantly being interchanged, crossed, transformed, brought into osmosis, enriched... . Let us attempt to define the main parameters with regards regional identity, which would be identical if we analysed the national and/or European identity.

3.1. spatial parameters of the regional identity

No identity can exist without reference to a given area or territory, which may be symbolic. The osmosis of territory and identity leads to the defence of territorial integrity, or to claims of territorial integrity impregnated with its history, geography, losses or new spatial distribution or assembly. The entire history of Europe and its regional territories has proved this, from the north to the south and from the east to the west of Europe. In-depth analysis of current regional, national and European territories highlights this notion of territorial integrity and consequently of limits and borders. How many border conflicts have been started on the basis of claims of an identity! Many crossborder problems affecting minorities are inherent to historical identities, with unceasing identity statements applied with varying degrees of peacefulness, even in a Europe aiming at integration.

The spatial parameter of the construction of identity also concerns the assimilation, use and management of land by regional authorities. This aspect has even become a basic component for regional autonomy requirements or aspirations. With this in mind, we could mention, among other aspects, that all problems relating to territorial planning, infrastructures, corporate delocalisation, types of tourism, percentages of secondary residences, investment by multi-national companies, irrigation and not simply the crossing of regional areas by transport, etc...

Is it also possible for new regional identities to emerge as a direct effect of the new administrative (and political?) distribution decided by States or the European Union (NUTS I, II and III), with varying amounts of historical foundations?

3.2. social and economical parameters of the regional identity

3.2.1. economic parameters

Relating identity statements to economic development: experience gained by certain European regions confirms this relation, but other regions appear to negate any link. It would all appear to depend on the manner in which the previously analysed memory-identity, action-identity and forecast-identity interact, and this interaction varies for each region. Certain political scientists are currently considering the relationship between identity and the "knowledge economy and society". All European regions, independently of the extent, strength, form and content of their regional identity, are constantly attempting and will attempt to increase the links between the variants of the knowledge economy and society (training, information techniques, internet networks ...) and an awareness and statement of their personality, their particularities, and their historical, geographical, institutional and cultural roots. One question remains however, and each region must find its own answer: do we need to enhance regional identity to increase economic development or is it necessary to initially insist on an equal distribution of economic development to enhance the regional identity?

Nevertheless, should regional identity be excessively assimilated to its spatial and time invariants via set collective memories, the identity may well be disassociated from economic development. "Living at home" would thus only have meaning in a past-based allusion, while this expression could very well become part of an action-identity and a forecast-identity in a new knowledge economy and society which all European regions could assimilate as desired and according to their specific characteristics.

3.2.2. social parameters

Regional identity and its social dimension

This is the cement behind the group, the home port for the regional identity group, and translates and reveals social organisation, layers, conflict, and tension in many different ways. To begin with, the aggregating function of regional identity is not perceived or experienced in the same manner by the different social layers. The gap from the regional identity or the interiorisation of this identity will almost certainly depend on the social origins of the individuals, or their reference groups. Whether it concerns the representation of regional areas, the use of regional languages, or insertion in regional institutions, all notable social facts in regional issues are experienced differently according to the social and professional categories of individuals. In the same way, collective memory, which is intrinsically linked to regional identity, retains and selects specific historical facts or institutions differently according to the social group.

The social dimension of regional identity also appears via the spread and reproduction process of the identity. Each social group in the regional group will translate its feeling of belonging to this group in its own manner on the basis of its sometimes similar, sometimes contradictory interests, strategies, values, and symbols. All socialisation phenomenon (in the sociological sense of the term), via school, or the mass-media, categorise groups in their own way, and consequently create widely varying spatial and cultural experiences as compared with the social base which is also represented by regional identity.

How can these regional institutions and socialised regional identities evolve? Even if regional identity is partly based on functional and spatial invariants, and on a certain level of sustainable historical and cultural particularities, the question of the form and level of "reproduction" of regional identity cannot be eliminated. How can a group maintain, transform and spread its identity? Is conjunction possible or rupture obligatory between the spatial and social transformations of a group and its identity as experienced and perceived? Will in-depth modifications to spatial organisation and to collective representation lead to ruptures of identity, or "identity loss? Will new voluntary or mandatory connections arising between local, regional, national and international realities push regional identities into the background, or on the contrary, will these new connections encourage regional identities, as is the case, for example, with crossborder polarisation? It would appear clear that identity loss or black holes cannot occur, but simply varying degrees of identity transformation. The very existence of the individual or collective subject will imply an identity statement.

3.3. social and cultural parameters of the regional identity

The cultural variable is sufficiently explanatory in itself for the regional identity that certain authors, and even certain regionalist movements, have defined regional identity exclusively on the basis of the cultural factor. This clearly simplifies the argument, even if this cultural factor has a substantial influence on regional identity, on the basis of language among other aspects. Language does indeed represent a "cultural invariant" of regional identity, just like the territory represents a "spatial invariant" of the regional identity. Regional solidarity, more than language, although this latter helps to drive the former, is part of the social dimension of regional identity and is indispensable for the long-term survival of the group and its space. The importance of solidarity for the regions and regional governance could fill a book.

Language has always - rightly or wrongly - been the main revealing factor of a surviving, lost, or renewed regional identity. Language has often been used as a catalyst for transforming a region into a nation, or regionalism into a "nationalist" movement. Certain individuals even state that "all human communities having stood up as nations have a common language or identify with a language", as demonstrated by the recent example of Catalunya.

In historical terms, language and nation were synonyms in Middle age universities, as stated by Denis de Rougemont in his recent publication "L'avenir est votre". This is without doubt at the current time, for example in Belgian Flandres, where linguistic claims have taken the lead over any other form of claims for regional identity. As for Ricardo Petrella, who defines the regions as "areas of history, speech and culture", he particularly refers to language as at basically least one of the driving elements behind the renewed historical conscience of certain regional areas. As for other forms of regional cultural expression, which would require further development, they encourage regional identity in relation to language. This applies to music, theatre, and regional literature.

I will not insist on the notion of ethnic identity in this article, as it is often attached to the cultural dimension. Guy Héraud and Donald Horowitz have widely written on the topic of ethnicity and its cultural invariants, certainly excessively.

Let's now leave the linguistical aspect and its importance in terms of identity to take a more sociological approach to the cultural parameter of the identity phenomenon. Culture in sociology covers all aspects relating to signs, symbols, myths, standards and values of individual and collective behaviour which a regional society would use or identify with by giving form to these aspects and modifying or forgetting them over time and space. All subjects can realise the importance of all these factors in the roots of identity, despite evolution, next to the previously analysed linguistic factors: I would need a 10-volume bibliography to mention all the sociological publications!

3.4. political and institutional parameters of the regional identity

3.4.1. political parameters

While regional power and regional identity are also related, the role and influence of political parties, and movements must not be forgotten, and are worth reiterating, in this emergence and survival of the regional identity of a region or nation.

Two trends are appearing in relation to the emergence of parties or movements which base their characteristics, strategies and objectives on regional identity. The first trend attempts to base its approach on a popular unionist vision. New slogans have taken shape such as the "Neither white nor blue, but Breton" in Brittany, or the "neither royalist nor republican, but Catalanian" in Catalonia, etc ... The regional or nationalist combat thus takes the lead over the social combat. The second trend, sometimes known as the "chain store" trend, is the event of centralised parties which attempt to switch to regionalisation in terms of names, speeches or programs. In a more general manner, the relation to power via the regional identity remains a source of conflict, consensus or compromise, according to a certain region or a certain political party or movement, or a social category. Careful analysis would allow this relation to regional power via regional identity to be better defined.

3.4.2 institutional parameters

Institutions and identity are indispensable to the functioning and survival of the group. They represent the container for the content in some ways. Although the institution represents one of the important elements for the perception and experience of the identity, in terms of analysis it is worth distinguishing the institutions to begin with.

Regional institutions correspond to coherent systems with layers of organisation and collective action. These institutions found and allow for a more less balanced functioning of the group, thereby revealing a certain social order, or a more or less integrated social space in a certain manner.

Institutions break down this social space on the basis of fields of competences, assigned territories and types of authorities. They are also part of the collective representations mentioned previously, based on perception or experience, and therefore, create this identity, as required for the sustainability of any group. In view of the position of the institution in the social space, and due to the competences held or the authorities assigned, it would be more appropriate to refer to an "institutional field", which reflects a certain idea of limits and borders, but also of conflicting forces and relations. Some individuals have even suggested the term "institutional realisation" for this issue, and sometimes identity realisation by deduction.

Sociologists generally separate the instituter from the instituted, i.e. the form taken by the institution from the actor, individual or group which experiences, or even creates or suffers the institution. This takes us from the concept of institutional space to the concept of institutional substance, where a certain social dynamism is developed via interaction. Can the term institutional dynamism really apply? most certainly, as instituter and instituted are closely interdependent, and are the result of conflict situations, blockage or restrictions. As a group lives with its institution(s), these become a basic component of "identity" in terms of dynamics or conflict, particularly as even the time dimension of the institution, its duration, is an additional sign of reference identity and/or acquired identity for the group instituted. It would be worthwhile analysing all the democratic institutions marking and infiltrating our Europe at regional, national and European level, from this point of view.

Institutions and historicity, in the same way as identity and historicity, go together. The institution therefore becomes one of the "values" on the basis of which a group constructs and develops its feeling of belonging, but always within a specific space, in a specific territory, for a variable period (which I would personally call the "institutional time" or the institutional "trend"). Permanent dialogue is also established between the instituter and the instituted, between institutional forms and the actors experiencing these forms. It is therefore necessary to consider the "institutional experience" of the individual and collective modes of interiorisation of the institutions by the actors concerned. A whole series of aspects such as institutional attachments, institutional belonging, and institutional membership will accompany these modes of interiorisation with varying degrees of articulation – e.g. with behaviour - with a hierarchy applied on the basis of various criteria and above all subject to variable intensity. From this point of view, the institutional space, or rather the institutional field and substance becomes one of the sustainable basic components for the identity.

To conclude, we could maintain that spatial and regional organisations, decorated with institutions and impregnated with identity to varying degrees, will exist in the future. This future, however, will depend on the different components of the regional system, their articulation or opposition, their influence and their respective roles. The typology or modeling of the regional phenomenon, on the basis of the identity parameter among others, is only possible on the basis of this articulation or opposition, e.g. between political/administrative institutions, social/economic structures with varying levels of polarisation, social/cultural values, collective representations, regional identity and conscience, or, in more general terms, between economic development, social integration and cultural identity. The current and future stakes of regional identity and the role of organisations representing the regions (AER, CoR, CLRAE), are played out in the context of articulation – opposition.

The stakes of regional identity are truly three dimensional in time and space: social/economic, cultural and political.

4th section: the imbrications of regional, national and European identities

These imbrications are based on different types of analysis and can all lead to long-term solutions.

4.1. based on the analysis of national and European identity layers

Recent referendums on the new European Constitution have partly demonstrated the imbrications and oppositions between the different types or levels of identity: regional, national and European. Certain authors attribute the rejection of the new European constitution by France and the Netherlands to a simple expression of identity. This almost certainly "one-dimensional" approach, to use the words of Herbert Marcuse, considers that an identity crisis has appeared and explains the priority accorded to national belonging rather than the European "reference". This explanation rejects the identity "continuum" analysed in the 1st section, i.e. the construction of the identity of the European citizen, rather than articulating all elements of identity (regional, national and European components) successively and in a positive manner, tends to oppose the different elements, and even go as far as to entirely reject imbrications. Rather than mutually benefiting each other, the different layers in identity unceasingly participate in a negative dialogue.

4.2. based on the analysis of the identity processes

As seen previously, any construction of an "identity subject" will obligatorily refer to memory, action or a forecast. What does "identity time" become in regional, national and European osmosis? Independently of the type of identity subject (regional, national or European) the dialogue and thus weighting between memory, action and forecasts will vary and be complex by definition. Certain authors attribute more importance to memory and action to confirm and reassure regional and national identity while European identity, due to the political break down of Europe for historical reasons, is more influenced by forecast-identity (the "European project": but what is this project, what are its conditions, its spatial, economic, social, cultural, political and institutional criteria?). At the current time, we recognise that the mosaic of memory-identities, action-identities and forecast-identities at regional and national levels hardly encourages the construction of a European identity subject or a peaceful identity process in Europe in terms of space and time.

4.3. based on the basic parameters for regional, national and European identities.

4.3.1. spatial parameters of the European identity

All identities refer to an actual or symbolic space or territory. While this is simple to understand for European regions and States, despite certain "territorial adjustments" which systematically create difficulties, the spatial parameter is the source of various conflicts, misunderstanding, refusal, rejection, etc. for the European identity. Where does Europe start and stop? The Council of Europe has provided its answer (45 Member-States, including Russia and Turkey) which the European Union appears to ignore, certainly with arguments of varying validity. "From the Atlantic to the Ural" declared a great French politician, but what was the context? what were his arguments? his criteria? his aims?

The spatial parameter still appears to endanger the construction of a European identity.

4.3.2. economic parameters of the European identity

European construction is based on the principle of "harmonious" development of Europe (cf. Treaty of Rome) and therefore on the principles of cohesion and solidarity between the regions and States, cohesion and solidarity with which the European citizen can identify, thereby implying an optimal distribution or redistribution of the community budget on the basis of particularities, economic criteria (market economy with competitiveness and competition), social categories, social/economic and geographical problems affecting specific portions of the European territory.

Recent discussion by the latest European Council in Brussels in December 2005, hardly appear as good indications for a full and serious consideration of the economic parameter in the European identity. Members still create opposition according to their "economic schools of thought": e.g. the Keynesian "school of thought" or the neo-liberal "school of thought".

4.3.3 social parameters of the European identity

A fundamental interrogation arises between social identity and European identity. What are relations, any overlap, contradiction... arising between these two types of identity? Which type should have primacy? Should either type have primacy? If identity translates a feeling of belonging (and not a logic of belonging), will social references prevail over European references due to the "contradictory pressures" applied to groups? If so, why and how? Do the collective representations of social groups articulate with or oppose these two types of identity? We need to consider three aspects to answer this essential question: collective memory (and the importance accorded to certain events, certain actors, certain selections...), historical solidarity, and the economic area as planned or transformed. Creating a hierarchy between or opposing social and European identity implies more detailed understanding of factors of cohesion and conflict between social groups with regards specific social variables; the spatial and social discontinuities of these groups; types of collective memory; past, present and future transformations of the economic and social space; collective mental autonomies; endogenous potential of all types - cultural, economic, social; modes of reproduction of social groups; "social imaginary aspects" in general with all their symbols and signs and particularly their myths in my opinion; opposite or convergent economic or social strategies in a specific region, or country, or in Europe in general.

There are plenty of examples of integration, or even mobilisation - in the political sense of the term - between various social sectors and "European culture" in Europe. Whether this refers to "lower, average and higher" social categories, to use the distinctions used by certain American sociologists, of varying degrees, and varying intensity, these different categories perceive, experience and view European identity according to their own specific criteria.

However, in certain cases, the marxist tradition, if still existing, will accord priority to class combat over national and/or European combat.

Speaking more objectively, will separation, opposition, or parallelism between social and European identity prevail? Each region or State must find its own answer to this question. Many analyses are still required to clarify this relation between social and European identity, for each specific social category, region and State. However, to give an example, regional or national identity conflicts could appear at European level if "regional or minority languages" ever call for equality with national languages.

4.3.4 social and cultural parameters of the European identity

The weighting of myths (e.g. the winged kidnapping of Europe by Zeus in greek mythology...), values (democracy and rule of law or Jewish/Christian foundations of culture and European society ...), and signs and symbols (European flag, European anthem...), in the construction of the European identity will vary according to the region or State. In the same way, the projection of social and cultural parameters at European level is not always perceived in a global and complete manner. In this case, even if the principle of cultural diversity is accepted by all regions and States, European identity with its social and cultural foundations would require enhancement to allow the parameter of European identity to take its full role which certain individuals consider as fundamental and a priority according to myths and fundamental values.

Still considering social and cultural parameters, generally speaking, the influence of religious factors and religion in the construction of European identity must be highlighted, just like factors in regional and national identities. Although the religious factor may appear complex, and sometimes ambiguous, this factor is no less an often decisive element in identity statements in many areas in Europe.

The problem of minorities in Europe is such that a full "White paper" in itself would be required. This article focuses on regional identity in relation to any form and content of regional governance, therefore it is important to mention this factor as all of the minorities in Europe are part of the larger mosaic of Europe and merit in-depth analysis in view of identity in themselves, as this affects them more than other regional groups. This in-depth analysis would include the 4 sections of this article concerning identity processes, identity layers, the basic components of identity, historical and geographical aspects of identity, and prospects for identity.

4.3.5 political and institutional parameters of the European identity

These political and institutional parameters of European identity are experienced and perceived differently, and according to content which varies with time and space, by European States, populations and regions.

Let's start with the "European reference" which is used for various purposes by certain peripheral regions, territorial authorities with slow development, the crowd of "euro-regions" created particularly in central and eastern Europe, a certain number of regionalist movements which pay more attention to European references than national references, etc. This mosaic of "European references" demonstrates, to varying degrees, the influence of the political and institutional parameter in the emergence of a European identity.

The other identity process based on political and institutional variables concerns the slow and complex construction of Europe. The notion of "intergovernmental cooperation" cherished by the Council of Europe, created by the Treaty of London on 5 May 1949, has been swapped for "European integration" thanks to political prophets such as Monnet and Schumann who dared to propose the idea, to definitively get ahead of the past conflicts of the Europe of nation-States. This aim of European integration based on the principles of subsidiarity – ascending and descending –, proximity, proportionality and solidarity, should have gradually led to a "European citizenship". Even if real symbols and signs exist as initial indicators of European citizenship, such as the euro, the European passport... the emergence of a daily reflex of European identity, a European identity experienced on a day-to-day basis by each citizen, has as yet hardly appeared in States and regional authorities.

Is the European identity better experienced in crossborder regions which are dispersed throughout Europe? From a political and institutional point of view, i.e. the focus of section four, this would not appear to be generally the case, despite the efforts of European institutions to integrate the European reference and European belonging in all crossborder cooperation phenomenon. The European Union, with its 3 programmes - Interreg I (1991-1995), II (1996-2000) and III (2001-2006) - and its future "territorial cooperation" programme (2007-2013) has certainly substantially contributed to including "European solidarity", "European subsidiarity", "European proximity, and even

"European citizenship" in community border areas and even with external neighbours, however it remains clear that this undeniable and extremely effective financial assistance has not systematically led to the European identity reflex. The future community regulation known as the "European grouping for territorial cooperation" may have more success in terms of identity, let's hope so.

As for the Council of Europe, its legal and institutional contributions to experiences in crossborder cooperation via the Madrid Convention of 15 May 1980 and its two additional protocols have hardly led to the emergence of a real European identity in the border regions of its 45 Member States. Perhaps the possible future new Convention of euro-regional cooperation still under consideration by the entities of the Council of Europe will allow the European dimension to further penetrate territorial populations and authorities linked by the new crossborder institutions known as Euro-regions, particularly in countries in central and eastern Europe.

General and temporary conclusions

Individuals and authorities need identity references to exist, last and adapt. Identity represents a feeling of belonging, or a drive to be part of a group, and is indispensable for the existence and long-term sustainability of a local, regional, national or European authority. The main point is to consider how to ensure balance and interaction between the different types of identity in view of the stakes involved or created. Interdependency between authorities in Europe does not appear, in principle, to accord priority to national identities rather than regional identities. The history of populations and nations, although spread over time, does not immediately obliterate regional identities. New political constructions must be envisaged at European level, constructions requiring greater autonomy in the context of interdependency, and therefore greater identity, for the various regional and national authorities within the "Maison de l'Europe"..

What is the position and role of regional authorities, and particularly the Assembly of European Regions, the only political movement to unite all European regions independently to competencies and administrative or political status, when faced with all of these analyses concerning identity? Four possible initial answers exist on the basis of the different previous analyses.

This first possible answer is more a question of political philosophies and calls for precise reflection and action by all regional authorities, the AER, the Committee of the in Brussels, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Strasbourg, on the existence of all European regions, even if they are only just starting to emerge, and on the challenge of their existence in space and time. Regional identity cannot exist without regional alterity: this issue is just as important, as it is supposed to lead to ever more prominent interregional cooperation, an indispensable "horizontal" level for effective European construction, rather than conflict between regions. As for the eternal dialogue between regionalisation and regionalism, the 3 aforementioned representative organisms uniting the regions will focus on finding ever-changing common points, to ensure that States and European institutions do not forget to harmonise their regionalisation efforts with the regionalist aspirations of territorial authorities, i.e. their management requirements for their living space, and therefore a minimum of administrative and financial autonomy, their need for a regional identity in terms of culture, and their specific requirements for social and economic organisation and sustainable development.

The second possible answer concerns the "construction of the subject". Which scenarios could be considered? the scenario of the development of autonomy is the most appropriate to be included in the phenomenon of regional identity according to the different and varying containers and content. All decentralisation and regionalisation processes could be included in this approach. But autonomy does not mean interdependency, and this must be insisted on. A simple juxtaposition of autonomous subjects without any real osmosis with other subjects would be of no help: the same applies to the future of Europe. All human sciences (philosophy, psychology, sociology, law, political science, history, geography...) reiterate this aspect. All layers of belonging and reference, at all three levels (regional, national and European), must interact with the same vision, avoiding mutual annihilation and opposition and preferring unceasing enrichment. Even the sometimes virulent debate between localisation and globalisation only contributes another, positive, layer to the identity process for each individual, region and State as "the earth is our homeland" as Edgar Morin put it.

The third possible answer is that concerning the type and condition of identity, i.e. memory-identity, action-identity and forecast-identity and applies to all organisms and institutions representing the regions. They must constantly remind regional authorities of the 3 types and conditions of identity. No future can exist without a past and present. The common point between the 3 types and conditions is constantly changing. None of the types or conditions of identity should be ignored. All aspects relating to the cultural heritage of the regions, to give an example, or their ability to be a part of social and economic developments or even the future projects of the European regions represent a key task for the AER, the CoR and the CLRAE. Positive approaches for the regions will also be positive for the nations and for Europe as a whole. Each and every day Europe must remember its past (the memory requires constant reactivation), consider its present (awareness of its abilities without unmerited pessimism or optimism), and envisage its future (long-term aim of European political, social and cultural integration ...).

The fourth possible answer is that of the basic parameters of identities. The plural nature of these parameters is indispensable for the understanding, statement, production and reproduction of the identities of the regions, States and Europe as a whole. The 3 aforementioned organisms representing the regions will have every interest to combine each of the 5 main parameters (spatial, economic, social, cultural, political...) in order to mutually enrich each region, in view of the particularities of each region, its history, geography, social/economic development, cultural characteristics, and institutional and political roots. All these efforts are part of the statement that Europe is united in and thanks to its multiple facets. The use of or reference to all these facets of identity imply an effective partnership between the regions, States and European institutions. This partnership, just like what occurs or could occur in border areas, can only follow the traditional stages of collaboration, cooperation, convergence, harmonisation and, finally, integration. If social aspects only are taken: "no European social model" stated the European commissioner for this sector recently, but nothing prevents the regions, States and European institutions from attempting to improve cooperation, convergence and harmonisation in social fields. According to recent referendums on the European constitution, the identification of citizens from specific States or regions with a "European social reference" still needs working on. If we apply the political and institutional parameter of identity, major efforts are required from the regions and the 3 representative organisms, and from States and European institutions, to ensure that this parameter gains renewed importance and its merited role in the construction of the identity of every European citizen.

To resume, the European identity process requires collaboration between all actors in European construction, territorial authorities, regions, States and European institutions. This identity process implies progress, retreating, and even "identity crises". Over time all actors will need to consider the interaction of layers and types of identity, basic components in identity, feelings of belonging and references, the roots of identity and, in addition, the indispensable stages in the construction of every "European subject" (with autonomy and interdependency) and therefore the emergence of the "European citizen" as:

if we want to construct Europe, we need to create Europeans

And this final statement applies for the regions and for the 3 representative organisms as well as for States and European institutions.

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