JEAN MONNET CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (2024-27),
Cultivating Our European Resilience and Evolution,
Project ID: 101176336

Working Group 1

European Narratives and Identities

Research Structure, Directions and Outcomes

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This working group is dedicated to investigating the historical narratives of Europe and myths, symbols linked to the concept of a shared European identity, with particular emphasis on European integration processes. We focus on the role of individuals and communities in constructing and experiencing Europe as a common cultural and political space. Our working group aims to deepen academic understanding of the narratives on the history of Europe and explore the nature of European identities across the continent.

Drawing on interdisciplinary methodologies from history and political science, the group engages in the critical analysis of narratives that have shaped —and continue to shape — the self-understanding of European citizens. This analytical framework enables an adequate exploration of how shared memories, myths, and symbolic representations contribute to forming collective identities within the European context. Our working group aims to enrich academic debates on narratives of European integration and identities.

The working group's research activity will take two main approaches to the issue.

Firstly, we will take a historical and political science approach, exploring the narratives that can be identified in the unity process throughout European history. (1) The other main thrust of our research is focusing on providing explanations on how European collective identities are formed and what the relationship of these identity elements is. (2)

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1. Narratives on the History of Europe's Integration and Unification. From a Historical and Political Science Perspective: Selected Examples

After the fundamental thesis of integration as a means of saving the European nation state ('The European Rescue of the Nation State'[1], there was subsequently a lack of a comparably powerful overall explanations of motives for the integration process of (Western) Europe, apart from integration theories, such as, on the one hand, 'liberal intergovernmentalism'[2] based on nation state dominated interests and, on the other hand, (neo-)functionalist interpretations with synergy effects ('spill overs') based on Community legislation and jurisdiction as well as supranational parliamentary democracy. These political science theories can be considered in addition to idealism, constitutionalism and (social) constructivism. Nine different approaches should be offered now in this abstract paper.

1.1. The Result of Modernity and the Holy Roman Empire as an inspiring Analogy

A distinction has to be made between the historical, political, economic, civil society and cultural 'motives and driving forces' of Europe's integration. It had served the motive of peace, the solution to the German question, Europe's self-assertion in the world on the one hand and as an instrument of national self-assertion on the other, but had also contributed to the 'intertwining of markets', economic policy and civil society as well as to a corresponding identity and the formation of a European public sphere. This view dates back to the 19th century, starting with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and interpreted European integration as a product of modernity.[3]
The Polish political scientist Jan Zielonka went even further back and recognised analogies to the Holy Roman Empire and used it as a source of inspiration for a better understanding of the EU by seeing, without periodising, not a sovereign Westphalian superstate in the Union after the 'eastward enlargement', but the continuation of a neo-medieval and multicentric area of rule with fluid borders and divided sovereignties.[4]

1.2. Cross-Border Interdependencies before 1914/45

The ideas of Europe developed in the years from 1914 to 1945 were dismissed by contemporaries as unrealistic utopias[5], but were to be taken up again as constitutional ideas[6]

1 MILWARD 1992.
2 MERKEL 1999: 302-338.
3 THIEMEYER 2010: 29-69, 71-218.
4 ZIELONKA 2006:1-22, 12, 14.
5 D'AURIA-VERMEIRE 2020.
6 ELVERT 2007: 5, 142-147.

after the Second World War. The EU was seen as 'the history of historically developed, cross-border interdependencies between its member states and their institutionalised, politically desired, supported and developed as well as legally enforceable, institutionalised, politically desired, supported and developed as well as legally bindingly regulated by national and specially established European bodies'. The Union is 'not a finished house', but still a 'building site', the foundations of which have 'gradually developed interdependencies' since the 19th century. Before 1945, for example, there was already cooperation in the areas of industrial cartels, electrical engineering, the iron and steel industry, electricity distribution, crime prevention and cross-border transport.[7]

1.3. Different Discourses and Spheres

European integration was neither a teleological nor an inevitable development. It came about through the efforts of a small circle of statesmen in the shadow of two world wars. The history of the EU can be identified with different discourses as well as different spheres: an outer sphere that includes all European states, an inner sphere of the common space and an intermediate sphere, the Community area and an intermediate sphere among individual EU members. The first consists of a 'secret of the table', the 'transition to the majority principle', the 'step over the threshold' as well as the 'leap' and the 'bridge'. The second sphere touches on 'vicissitudes of fate' in the 'stream of time', including the 'coming together' of the founding members (1950-1957), the 'communal waiting' (1958-1989) with self-generated time pressure and the 'acting as a union' (1989 until today). The third sphere is characterised by 'the search for the public'. This includes the 'clamour for applause', the German strategy of building a community of 'fateful comrades', the Roman strategy of protecting the rights of 'clients' and an Athenian strategy of the 'chorus' through regular popular consultation as a unanimous and polyphonic drama.[8]

1.4. A recurring Triple Combination or three Attempts with Specifics

European integration was more than just a triple leap from ideas to institutions to unification. However, this view made it clear that constructive initiatives and lasting institutions were indispensable foundations for unification and ultimately responsible for the cohesion of a jointly organised Europe, whereby an overall assessment must take into account decolonisation and the Cold War as pacemakers and the policy of détente as a decelerator of integration, i.e. favourable and retarding framework conditions.[9] From a political scientist view the EU has long recognised a three-phase 'dialectic of crisis and reform' (1) with the founding moment and the

7 HOEBNIK 2015: 7-38.
8 MIDDELAAR 2013: 1-33.
9 GEHLER 2018: 639-657, 823-836.

beginnings of the Treaty of Rome, successes, crises and attempts at reform in the 1960s and 1970s and the path to the Single European Act (SEA). This was followed by 'Europe after 1989' with 'reform and enlargement', the 'end of the division of the continent', the 'foundation of the EU' through Maastricht, the Treaty of Amsterdam with the 'unused opportunity to correct course' and the (unsuccessful) 'third attempt of Nice' (2). This was followed by the development of a constitution for the Treaty of Lisbon with the innovative reform body as the 'Constitutional Convention', its failure, a period of reflection and, in 2007, the leadership impulse under the German Council Presidency in favour of Lisbon as a 'historic step' (3).[10]

1.5. Deconstruction of Narratives and Criticism of EU Criticism

There exists also a critical history of the deconstruction of integration policy and its narratives in the form of striking labels and concrete goals. These include 'peace and security', 'economic growth and prosperity', 'participation and technocracy', 'values and norms', a 'bureaucratic monster or national instrument', 'disintegration and dysfunctionality' and the 'community and its world'.[11]
Historiografie argued also for a balanced and fair judgement of the EU in the era of Euroscepticism. In the wake of emerging public opinion, one can saw a 'disaffection with the integration project' and demonstrate this using the example of caricatures on European unification, before taking aim at the EU's 'supposed democratic deficit', explaining the 'absence of political union' and finally asking whether 'a possible new beginning' was conceivable.[12]

1.6. Thought Structures and their Characterisations

Five developmental-historical attributions of European integration can be named 'from defence against evil to bonum commune europaeum' (1); 'from market citizens to citizens of the Union' with a European development of fundamental rights (2); 'from internal market to system of government' with regulatory governance at several levels (3); 'from crisis import to a monopoly on the use of force' under the sign of "Europe's turn to the world" in the arc of tension between universalism of opinion and global strategy as well as the protection of the EU's external borders as a key issue for the "regaining of sovereignty of action" (4) and finally "from normative power to multilateral world power", combined with the "withdrawal from the world as a condition of a normative new beginning" with a "geopolitical commission" using a "language of power" (albeit without a great position of power) in the face of uncertainties and new threats (5).[13]

10 WEIDENFELD 2021: 69-107.
11 PATEL 2018: 65-341.
12 KREIS 2017: 9-16.
13 KÜHNHARDT 2008: 121-237.

1.7. From Reorganisation and the Euphoria of Freedom to Neo-Mercantilism

Historiografie also divided the history of integration from 1948 to 2020 into two major development strands in terms of social, market and regulatory policy: The first section, 1948-1991, was about organising the European continent during the Cold War (I.), whereby this part was divided into eight different subsections: These include a 'liberal Europe' with the market at its centre (1); a 'social Europe' as a market companion (2); the 'failure of a radical social Europe' with planning, reduced working hours and the democratisation of companies (3); the 'neo-mercantilist temptation' of the 1970s (4); the 'impossible promotion of European champions' (5); 'competition policy as the vanguard of ultra-liberal Europe' (6); monetary union as a solution to the crisis, linked to the question of the return of the market or the ultra-liberal turn (7), as well as an epilogue on the global upheaval of 1989-1991 and the birth of the EU (8). In the second strand of development, Warlouzet deals with the 'Liberal euphoria and neo-mercantilist reactions in the long 21st century' 1991-2020 (II.), which includes the 'rise of ultra-liberalism' (1), social and ecological Europe (2) and 'a neo-mercantilist and identitarian resurgence' (3).[14]

1.8. Rounding off the Periodisation of the Community Union Europe

The motives for the establishment and cohesion of the Communities: Peace, solving the German question through integration, prosperity and strengthening Europe's role in the world[15] are still valid for the EU as well. In addition, the member states realised what a possible loss of the EU would cost them. The 'cost-of-non-Europe' argument was, despite its limited effect,[16] the strongest argument against member states going it alone, going their own way and egoism, as long as the advantages of belonging to the EU prevailed.

1.9. Proposals for three comprehensive major Historical Phases

The previous assumptions, descriptions and explanations of driving forces, motives and goals, as well as the approaches mentioned, have come close to an understanding of how European integration came about, but for the most part remain in need of differentiation, supplementation and weighting based on the latest state of research due to the dynamic and open-ended development. The development from the Marshall-Plan to the end of the Cold War (1945/47-

14 WARLOUZET 2022: 435-454.
15 LOTH 2025: 9-25, 9-12.
16 GÖLER 2012:129-135.

1989/90) can be seen as a first narrative and the subsequent pan-European unification from Maastricht to the Lisbon Treaty (1991-2007/08) a second one. A third narrative follows, which encompasses an EU in a permanent state of crisis from the banking crisis and the incomplete Lisbon Treaty to the all out Russian war against Ukraine (2009-2022 ff.). For a provisionally concluding periodisation debate, this represents a clear caesura for a new phase in the history of integration, if not for a history of the reorganisation of Europe in the sign of an intensified neo-imperial age of world history. Identical aspects and findings derived from them can be found for each of these three narratives. This is the interaction of ideas, institutions and Europeanisations[17] with subsequent renationalisations. In essence, there were three stories:
(a) Western European integration (1945/47-1989/90),
(b) New initiatives, institutionalisation and Europeanisation: EC and EU on the road to pan-European integration (1991-2007/08) and
(c) Delayed initiatives and restrained institutionalisation: The EU of Lisbon in a permanent state of crisis from the banking crisis to the all-out war in Ukraine (2008-2022).

These were unique, but by no means purely European constellations, but also factors of international relations and the consequences of global power shifts, which helped new ideas and initiatives to break through, established institutions and brought about corresponding Europeanisations, nationalisms and renationalisations. A combination of different factors came into play: political actors with specific biographies and distinctive profiles emerged. Their Europeanism, internationality and socialisation led them to develop concepts. With them, they undertook corresponding integration policy initiatives, which resulted in the formation of institutional structures. These were promoted not least by favourable economic cycles and major political events at international level, which had a positive effect on European unification and again provoked reactions of renationalisation.[18]

Summary

To summarise, it can be said that
1. The development of the integration of Western Europe 1947/48-1989/90 must be distinguished from the road to unification of Europe 1991-2007/08. This was followed by a further phase from 2008-2022, whereby the extended war in Ukraine represents a profound caesura that indicates a change in the course of European integration.
2. European integration must be understood in its cross-border, transnational and intercontinental significance – not a closed space like a container, but open to non-European influences as well as reciprocal inter- and transcultural developments, i.e. it must be seen in its global dimension and integration.

17 GEHLER 2022: 29-67.
18 GEHLER 2017: 201-203.

3. The unification of Europe should not be understood as an isolated or linear, i.e. teleological 'process' in the sense of a pure success story, but rather as a complex multidimensional development – accompanied by crises, failures and setbacks – which was an open-ended and by no means irreversible process, but which repeatedly showed progress and successes in the sense of variously induced Europeanisations.
4. Europe's integration would not be Europe's unification if it were not understood in its diversity, which is far more its essential characteristic than its unity.
5. With ideas and institutions that – despite existing populisms as counter-reactions to renationalisation – inspired and permanently enabled Europeanisation, the Europe of EU integration came closer to the political unity of the continent.

2. European and National Identities

2.1. Theories of identities – "us" and "they"

The cohesion of communities and social groups is facilitated by the identification of shared beliefs, such as common values, goals and ideological elements, which influence the process of identity formation.[19] When defining one's own group, the "us", individuals typically see their view of the group positively, in defence of a positive self-evaluation, while also acknowledging the uniqueness of each group member.[20] In contrast, external groups and other communities are assumed to be more homogeneous. The external groups, the category "they", are thus treated by the individuals in a manner distinct from their own group, referred to as "us".[21]
A fundamental indicator of the identity formation process is that the individuals are constantly comparing their own group memberships with that of others, and shaping their identity through this process. The social identity of the individuals is also a function of "the evaluation of their own social position".[22] In order to define ourselves, we must also be able to say which groups we do not belong to and which we do not identify with.[23] "It is a fundamental characteristic of identity that identification only ever makes sense in relation to something".[24] "The self-determination of identity can be understood as the result of a representational struggle, always

19 BAR-TAL 2000.
20 SMITH – MACKIE 2004: 339.
21 KOLLER 2022: 368.
22 SARBIN – SCHEIBE 1983: 5-30.
23 KOLLER 2006: 50.
24 Ibid.

concerned with the ability of groups or individuals to communicate their own distinctiveness to others".[25]

2.2. Collective identities, nations and national identity

Anthony D. Smith defines national identity as "the existence of a common historical territory, common myths and historical memory, a common mass culture or economy, and rights and duties extended to each individual".[26] The nation has played a prominent role in the history of Europe, and the nation is still one of the most important communities of social identity for European citizens.[27] However, the content of the concept of nation differs from one definition to another. Some authors highlight the importance of ancestry, others the importance of cultural traits; other scholars emphasize the importance of the set of symbols and myths rooted in the past that hold the national community together[28].[29] Ethno-symbolists argue that a common ethnic past, myths and symbols rooted in a shared history are necessary for successful nation-building and that these elements constitute the identity of individuals through collective memory. Therefore, in the absence of a common ethnic past, identity formation cannot be successful.[30] In contrast, constructivists argue that the symbols of nations are fictional and constructed. Thus, the nations are relatively new entities, or as Anderson argues, "imagined communities".[31] They argue that intellectuals and elites played a key role in the creation of national symbols. In the 19th century, "philologists, linguists, folklorists, publicists and composers" were the opinion-formers of the era, portraying the "golden age" of the glorious past of the nation, making it accessible to the everyday people and making the "imagined community", namely the nation, accessible to a larger crowd of people.[32] Applying Anderson's theory to the present day, the actors of the political elite, political parties, the media, NGOs and stakeholders, as well as the European Union itself, are now key players in the process of identity formation. They are all agents in the construction of collective identities.
Most nations today have both historical roots and constructed identity symbols. However, it is worth stressing that the nations of Europe have followed different paths of national development, and the differences between them still define and give uniqueness to their identities today.[33] These differences are easily identified in the different concepts of the nation. At the beginning of the 20th century, the German historian Friedrich Meinecke distinguished

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25 HANÁK 1997.
26 SMITH 1991: 14.
27 KOLLER 2006: 11-44.
28 VAN DEN BERGHE 1978.
29 SMITH 1986:
30 SMITH 1982, 1991.
31 HOBSBAWM – RANGER 1983; ANDERSON 1991.
32 ANDERSON 1991.
33 KOLLER 2022: 369.

between two types of the nation: the political nation, which is defined by a given territory, legal and institutional systems and political means, and the cultural nation, where the national community is defined by ethnic and cultural elements.[34] The two types of nations formulated by Meinecke also appeared in the later typologies of nations, vested with geographic dimensions, but also in later theories[35] that distinguish between civic and ethnic concepts of the nation. In the case of the French or the English, territorial self-determination is more pronounced. The consequence of this is that while German authors have several definitions of cultural nations, French and Anglo-Saxon authors tend to use the concept of civic nation for their definition of the nation.[36]

2.3. Central-European nation-building

Central European nation-building patterns can be described by additional unique features.[37] Brubaker's typology of triple nationalism, for example, can be applied to the understanding of the identities of the ethnically and culturally diverse Central European region, and so Hungarian national identity. This typology distinguishes between the types of nation-building nationalism, mother-country nationalism and minority nationalism.[38] Another peculiar feature is that a new kind of nationalism emerged in the Central European region after the change of regime, since during the communist period there was only a very limited possibility for nation-building, so when the Iron Curtain fell, the Central Europeans' need for nation-building surfaced in almost all states, but in different ways.[39] Recognition in this region is based not only on the recognition of sovereignty but also on "values such as pride, dignity and authority", which the Western world has long ignored in relation to Central Europeans.[40]

2.4. Multiple identities, local and regional attachments

Beyond national identity, other communities are also parts of our collective identities. The local, regional and European identities are essential elements of our collective self-understanding.[41] What kind of relationship can be imagined between each of these attachments? Can it be stated, for example, that the nation is the most important community of our collective identity, or is it conceivable that national, regional local, and European identities are as important categories as

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34 MEINCKE 1969. (Original edition: 1907).
35 SMITH 1992.
36 GIDDENS 1995.
37 DIÓSZEGI 1991: 131-142.
38 BRUBAKER 1996.
39 ÖRKÉNY 2005.
40 BRIX – BUSEK 2019: 111.
41 KOLLER 2022: 372.

attachment to the nation?[42] There are scholars who assume a hierarchy between identity elements and believe that a hierarchy of importance can be defined between individual collective attachments.[43] Other authors emphasise the co-existence of collective identity elements and think that the relationship between identity elements can be described by concentric circles[44], or multi-level structures, or the so-called identity network model[45]. What all these theories have in common is that they define the relationship between collective identity elements in a multi-level system. Society, institutional and political structures, including national and EU institutions, are constantly influencing and actively shaping the process of identity formation. However, bottom-up socialisation processes also play a role in collective identity formation[46], meaning that not all constructed identity elements resonate with individuals to the same degree.

2.5. European and EU identity

European identity exists, historically and culturally, independently of the Union. Nevertheless, it was in the 1970s that the European Community first expressed the need[47] to bring European integration that was invented by the elites to its citizens. By this time, integration had already reached a high level, especially in the economic field, which could no longer exist without the greater support of its citizens and, through them, the legitimacy of the political community.[48] Several theorists, including Joseph Weiler, saw the future of integration in the strengthening of the European political system by the citizens and the creation of a European *demos*. He argues that the creation of a European *demos* with civic values can ensure the functioning of the European democracy. However, this *demos* is heterogeneous; it preserves the various cultures of the European nations.[49]
Since the 1970s, the European Community has, in parallel with building a political system, created citizenship of the European Union, declared the rights of individuals in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and constructed symbols such as the flag, the anthem, the common motto, and, with the introduction of the euro, the single currency.[50]

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42 The results of Eurobarometer polls have already demonstrated that not all EU citizens are most strongly attached to their nation, and that attachment to local communities or even regions can be stronger than attachment to the nation. See: KOLLER 2006:129.
43 PATAKI 1986.
44 José Miguel Salazar questions the hierarchy between levels of collective identity, thinking in terms of concentric circles of collective identities. In his theory, concentric circles represent a level of identity of the individual. The closer the geographical unit, the stronger the link. See: SALAZAR 1998.
45 The author first developed the *identity network* model in his doctoral dissertation, but has built on it in subsequent work. See: KOLLER 2003:
46 RISSE 2005: 295.
47 KOLLER 2019: 209-236.
48 Report by former Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans in 1976 - See: KOLLER 2019: 174.
49 WEILER 1997: 97-131.
50 KOLLER 2019: 173-184.

The European identity has been more strongly apparent than ever in the Central European nations' approach. The "back to Europe" accession narrative did not primarily represent the integration bond, but, in a much broader temporal perspective, the need to return to the mainstream of European history. The European Union is a special political community. Not only its treaties, institutions and policies change from time to time, but so do its borders. The history of the European Union is also a history of successive enlargements and, since the UK's withdrawal, already territorial losses. Self-definition is, therefore, always a challenge for EU citizens. Enlargements, as well as welcoming people from outside are not conflict-free processes. "The accession of a new Member State creates an inclusion pressure in the European Union". In the definition of group identities, we need to re-construct the answers to the questions "Who am I?" and "What does it mean to be European?" Sometimes, citizens of the old Member States already in the EU identify more quickly with the newcomers, or, on the contrary, do not identify with them for a long time. It is not only the process of inclusion but also the process of arrival that poses challenges, and gaining full membership does not necessarily imply the inclusion of a European dimension in the identity elements. Nevertheless, it may also happen that, despite having gained full membership, individuals who have become European citizens still consider themselves outsiders, and different.[51]

2.6. Central European identity

In the case of Central Europeans, in the post-accession period, the inclusion of new members was delayed by some of the citizens of the old Member States. Central European states were regarded as so-called *New Member States*. The "us" category of collective identity thus did not include Central Europeans for a few years.[52] In parallel, some Central European states, learning the rules of the game and the functioning of the European Union, started to reverse the top-down direction of Europeanisation, leaving behind adaptive modes of cooperation, and became more fierce in their struggle not only with a view to asserting their national interests but also to defining the common agenda of the European Union. Central Europeans, disillusioned with the "adaptive phase", were thus, so to speak, "emancipated", and they themselves wanted and still want to shape the functioning and future of the European Union as a whole. This change occurred somewhere towards the end of the first decade after 2000 in the Central European states, giving way to the so-called bottom-up Europeanisation efforts. If one accepts Fukuyama's thesis[53] that the struggle for recognition drives history, then it can certainly be said

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51 KOLLER 2019: 177.

52 A similar pattern was observed in European integration after the other enlargement rounds. For example, even after Greece's membership in 1981, many citizens of the old Member States still felt that Greece should not have been admitted to the EC.

53 FUKUYAMA 2018: 10.

that after Central Europeans gained full membership, the need to struggle for recognition as equal members of the EU became, and still is, increasingly strong.

2.7. Politics, identity and narrative politics

All forms of politics are built around collective identities. The distribution of public goods and the mobilisation of different social groups require a distinction between the categories of "us" and "them". Within the political sciences, identity politics is particularly prominent in the study of political behaviour, political sociology, political psychology and political economy, but is also present in other fields. More recently, there has been an increasingly strong articulation of identities in the manifestos of political parties, in the speeches of political leaders and in the decisions of voters. We are also increasingly seeing that the persuasiveness of policy arguments based on rational calculations, of measures based on economic considerations and rigorous calculations, is being overshadowed by emotional and less rational influences. The voter votes for a party and supports a movement that he or she perceives as similar to his or her own group. The collective identity of the individual thus determines his political action.
Some authors also suggest a close link between the rise of different patterns of populism[54] and identity politics, due to the fact that identity messages are also embedded in the anti-elitist attitudes of social groups.[55]
However, the strengthening of identity politics is not only evident in the actions of populist leaders and parties - though certainly in theirs - but can be seen as a general phenomenon in the increasingly polarised societies of the 21st century.
One of the most powerful tools of identity politics is storytelling, collective action wrapped in narratives. Frederick W. Mayer argues that it is precisely the shaping of individuals' identities that makes narrative tools effective.[56] After all, our identity is constantly changing throughout our lives, and we are constantly comparing and evaluating our own group membership with that of others. Since narratives play an important role in the formation of our identity and the ability to formulate why we are who we are through our life stories, narratives also provide a framework for our everyday actions and help us to find our way.
Since storytelling, and the experience of our own role in it, is a creative process, we can more easily understand and absorb the collective actions and attitudes of others, of external groups, through narratives. Taking a constructivist perspective, for political parties, leaders, and media actors, narratives are, in fact, also facilitators of the creation of symbols, symbols, and myths. A well-conceived, constructed narrative precisely frames the group boundaries of 'us' and 'them', guides us in judging "right" and 'wrong', answers our basic questions, and thus creates continuity in our existence, facilitating our choices.

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54 MÜLLER 2016, MUDDE 2017
55 VELASCO 2020
56 MAYER et al. 2014

However, narrative is itself a product, which the opinion leader, who plays a key role in identity construction, can also use to further his or her own interests. It is a product with power and/or economic value. The narrative is used by the politician to maximise votes and forge political capital, by the journalist and the editor to enhance reputation, and by the economic actor to promote consumer choices. However, narrative can also be a dangerous tool since it is by framing, constructing and demarcating group boundaries that it is ideally suited to fear and hate-mongering, fostering a sense of insecurity, labelling enemies or allies, and packaging disinformation that can lead to persistent antagonism and group conflict between social groups.

3. Expected outcomes

As part of our research, we aim to generate scholarly publications; at least one peer-reviewed journal article or book chapter annually, ensuring a steady dissemination of our findings. In parallel, we plan to initiate co-supervision of PhD students, fostering the next generation of researchers while deepening our collaborative research capacity and expanding our intellectual network. To enhance scientific dialogue in European studies, we also intend to organize thematic panels, online discussions, and research exchanges. These outcomes will support the long-term sustainability and visibility of our research agenda.

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