



The Single Currency and European Citizenship

Unveiling the Other Side of The Coin

Edited by

Giovanni Moro

B L O O M S B U R Y

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CHAPTER 2

Imaginary Europe: The euro as a symbol and practice

Kathleen R. McNamara

Introduction

What is the relationship, if any, between currency and citizenship? This question is not merely of academic interest. Instead, it is critically important for the real-world challenges that the European Union is facing today. The euro reached its tenth birthday only to be engulfed in a European sovereign debt crisis that has riled national bond markets and eroded confidence in the entire European project. Understanding the ways in which currency may shape citizenship is important to grasping the impact of the crisis, and the potential paths forward for Europe.

Historically, currencies and citizenship have moved in perfect lockstep with each other, as the nation-states of the nineteenth century created single currencies, consolidating different monies into one, as part of often brutal state and nation-building projects (McNamara 2011, 2010b). A single currency arose as a tool of the newly centralized, bureaucratized modern nation-state, allowing for a range of activities, such as revenue raising, spending, and borrowing, that extended the state's administrative reach. Such currencies encouraged the deepening of an integrated single market and gave political elites the ability to fight wars, solidifying the boundaries and political capacities of the states themselves. If currency helps make the nation-state, then it logically makes sense that currency makes citizenship, as part of the process of creating a nation.

Things are never that simple, of course. Citizens do not automatically appear in the process of nation-state building, and the evolution of the levers

of power and administrative capacity to the center of a defined political unit do not always create feelings of trust and identity among the people involved. There is a complex process that must occur for political authority to be genuinely transferred to the center of a political unit, and it is not a foregone conclusion that it will happen smoothly or end successfully. There are multiple ways for this process to occur, and this project, "The Other Side of the Coin," usefully explores many of them. To contribute to this exploration, I frame the relationship between citizenship and the single currency in terms of the need for political authorities to create an "imagined community" of Europeans.

I argue that it is this "imaginary Europe" that provides the necessary raw cultural material for meaningful European Union citizenship. The euro, as both symbol and practice, can contribute to the construction of this imagined community, even as the euro's own success depends in part on the sturdiness of that very construction. But the EU is uniquely hampered, perhaps fatally, in its efforts to use symbols and practices to create community. Because the EU is a historical innovation in governance that continues to coexist with its political predecessors, it cannot build the cultural foundation for its political authority in the same way as nation-states have. In the long sweep of history, successful political forms such as the nation-state have always eventually displaced the previous forms, be they Italian city-states, the Hanseatic League, or the Holy Roman Empire. In contrast, the EU must coexist, coordinate, and celebrate existing nation-states, along with their traditions and political authority, both symbolic and material. Although clever strategies have been used by EU officials to try to navigate these dilemmas, the cultural infrastructure for integration remains fragile.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of imagined communities and their linkages to citizenship. I then turn to the mechanisms of community construction, focusing on the role of symbols and practices in constructing the "social fact" of European political authority, and the potential of symbols and practices to engender a sense of belonging to an "imaginary Europe." I tease out some of the specific ways that the euro is symbolically constructed through images and representation, then turn to the ways in which practices reinforce that construction. Throughout, I highlight the contradictions and tensions in this political process of meaning construction in the EU. The chapter concludes with my thoughts on the implications of this research for the future of the euro and Europe as a whole.

Imagined communities and European citizenship

Political authority is a necessary part of governing. Getting people to obey your edicts, laws, rules, and norms is much easier and less costly if you

do not have to employ coercion but rather are viewed as legitimate. One underpinning for that authority is a sense of collective identity on the part of those being led. If a community perceives some shared, communal ties binding them together, the work of a governing polity is much more easily accomplished. This is particularly true in times of transformation and change, when uncertainty or competing authorities may shake up expectations and loyalties. The invention of the nation-state presented particular challenges for political elites, as it scaled up the organization of political rule to encompass larger geographical territories and often, different ethnic, tribal, religious, or cultural groups. Whereas the Holy Roman Empire might create ties based on the shared Catholic identity of its members, the nation-state had to create a new sense of political identity that would reorient its citizens toward the new central authority of the state. Notably, in contrast to earlier political forms, the nation-state demanded exclusive, sovereign, territorially limited political identities, not the overlapping loyalties and overlapping patchwork geography of medieval rule (Ruggie 1993).

Benedict Anderson's (1993) concept of an "imagined community," well captures this notion of a constructed sense of belonging.¹ An imagined community is one in which citizens have a shared conception of an embodied political space, where people have a sense of belonging together despite never knowing each other personally. Whereas in early forms of political organization, such as the village, or tribe, it was possible for all to have some personal connection to each other, if not directly, then indirectly through a cousin or other clansman or neighbor, as the larger-scale nation-state developed, this personal connection became impossible. Therefore, some new ways of creating the bonds of community had to be forged to hold together the newly enlarged national polity by creating a sense of belonging among its citizens. Today, given the scaling up of political authority that has occurred in the twenty-seven member state EU, the task of creating such a community in Europe is even more daunting.

Most important for thinking about the EU's challenges, however, is that the device for creating this new national-level bond rests in our imaginations. The most powerful way of understanding the dynamics of the cultural construction at work is to see how images and representations, as well as practice, are key to creating meaning in a specific cultural setting (Wedeen 2002). For example, because the political relationship someone in Cornwall might share with any given family in Oxford cannot be directly and personally experienced, it has to be filtered through a common set of ideas and experiences of being English. This relationship, being abstract and not personal, requires imagining, and therefore has to be represented symbolically. This symbolic representation is strengthened when it is undergirded through shared practices, so that "thinking" is reinforced by "doing." Rituals, be they very clearly linked to political identities or more banal, provide a way to put into action shared symbols, even though they are experienced in parallel rather than interactively. So the family in Cornwall might sing the "God

Save the Queen” while watching the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, while a couple in Oxford does the same, putting the symbol (the national anthem) into practice (singing at a virtually shared event).

Although national identities are largely taken for granted today in the West, the feeling of belonging to a distinct sovereign nation of people is a cultural artifact, one created, not organic or primordial. Whereas some argue that centuries old hatreds or identities are intrinsic and unchanging and thus to blame for outcomes of conflict, the sociological view insists that these identities are malleable and created through social interactions over time, rather than fixed and genetic. Ambitious empirical work across a variety of European cases has emphatically made this point. Historian Eugen Weber in his monumental book *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976) traces out how a plethora of state policies in education, new national holidays, intensive language training, and other measures were necessary to corral a fragmented country into the French nation that up until beyond the nineteenth century had only a tenuous sense of being French. An astonishing study of the development of Scottish national sentiments based on the notion of the Highland Traditions has likewise traced many of the purportedly “ancient” Hibernian traditions (Scottish clans with distinct tartans made up into kilts and so on), to a combination of creative hucksters writing in the early nineteenth century and romantic leanings on the part of various members of Scottish society (Trevor-Roper 1983).

These accounts of the rise of the nation emphasize the particular political tools, symbols, and technologies intentionally welded by motivated actors, alongside broader structural changes that provided fertile ground for reorganization of political identities. They should therefore make us wary of assuming the “intrinsic” or essential nature of member-state nationalism as a bar to any such development at the European level, while also not seeing that nationalism as easily malleable or replaceable. The obstacles to a European imagined community may be plentiful and real, but, to understand the potential and the challenge, we need to turn our attention to the question of the actual processes by which such imagined communities arise, or fall apart—a critical one for our exploration of the ways in which the euro may link to citizenship. The current Eurozone crisis indicates the pitfalls of attempting to govern over a polity that does not necessarily identify itself as one. Although seemingly robust nation-states with strong imagined communities also can fall prey to divisive and potentially self-destructive political divisions in times of economic crisis, the EU seems particularly challenged in this regard.

The reasons for this special level of challenge to creating a sense of European citizenship in an imagined community are clear. While many important governance functions have been transferred to the EU level in Brussels, Frankfurt, Luxembourg, and elsewhere, the nation-state still is the overwhelming primary locus of authority for member state citizens. The euro exemplifies this. The euro was created in 1999 as part of the EU’s

Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), with a European Central Bank (ECB) at the center of EMU to govern over it. But EMU was disembedded from the larger governing structures that support currencies nationally in every existing nation-state. Most importantly, no broader economic governance capacity was created at the EU level to oversee fiscal and financial regulatory issues or a eurobond type debt instrument. Decision making was left at the national level, with the euro and the ECB floating out alone at the European level, disconnected and ultimately in conflict with the national-level institutions and authorities. The designers of EMU believed that Europe was not ready for an explicit transfer of taxing, spending, and debt to the EU level, because of the pull of national sovereignty and the lack of a sense of common European identity. For the euro to succeed, such a larger economic governance structure must be built, but it must occur hand in hand with a process of broader authority construction at the European level to legitimate and democratize the EU. The following section explores the ways in which the euro project creates social representations and practices that provide some foundation for a sense of European citizenship in an imagined community. But the euro's particular construction, on top of robust national identities, also highlights the ways in which the EU is severely hampered in these efforts, producing a weak sense of imagined community as it tries to situate Europe as complementary to, not a replacement for, national citizenship.

Navigating the nation-state: Localizing Europe

The euro as a symbol

Political actors, be they states or EU, have to be reified before they can be actors and sites of legitimate authority. In other words, they must be represented through images and symbols, and experienced in practice. If successful, this process makes the EU into a taken-for-granted "social fact." Social facts are shared ideas so obvious that most people think of them as *objective* facts, forgetting that these facts are dependent on shared, intersubjective understandings for their existence. Paper currency is a nice example. A piece of paper with a euro symbol on it takes on the status of money because we all act "as if" the paper is money, rather than merely a representation of value. If one person stops believing that a 5 euro bill is worth less than a 50 euro bill, it will have no impact on its status as a social fact. However, if there is a widespread rejection of the value of the 5 versus 50 symbol on the euro, the social fact will break down in the midst of hyperinflation. Durkheim describes social facts as ways of thinking and acting, collective beliefs and practices, that derive from membership in particular societies, or substratum of societies, and, over time through repetition, come to constitute

a reality in their own right, quite distinct from the individuals that produce them (Durkheim 1939, 7). He emphasizes the coercive, if subtle, power that these social facts exert. These taken-for-granted things, which we “know” without consciously thinking, and act within, come to have, in Durkheim’s words, a “constraining” effect on actors. In the case of the EU, if it is taken for granted as a social fact, its fundamental existence as a political actor is not contested, although its policies and programs may be (McNamara 2010a; Cram 2012).

What are some of the symbolic dynamics at work with the euro, and how do they relate to European citizenship? The creation of EMU, with the euro and the ECB at its center, brought the EU both a powerful economic policy tool and a way to symbolically represent Europe as a bounded political entity (Risse 2003; Kaelberer 2004; Manners 2011). It also provided an avenue for new sets of experiences that reshaped the logic of practice for participants in Euroland. The very fact of a physical object like the euro signals the presence of the EU and makes it real for citizens. EMU is rife with such symbols: in its physical currency of paper and coins, in the ECB tower, in the value of the euro as an exchange rate traded on world markets, in the generation of economic data that uses Europe, not national economies, as its frame of reference. All of these elements of EMU underpin the EU as a social fact, symbolizing the centralization of authority to the European level, and the creation of an imagined community of Europe. Their particular content and form also can tell us quite a bit about the specific contours of what that community is and the values associated with it, as well as giving us clues about where points of contestation will rise, and the likely forms of citizenship we might expect.

Most strikingly, the EU’s imagined community rests on symbols that seek to carefully navigate the preexisting loyalties and identities of the (ever robust) European nation-states while establishing a separate European sphere. Processes of standardization, on the one hand, and localization, on the other, are being used to symbolically navigate the symbolic terrain of monetary integration. Standardization uses abstraction and de-localization to invoke a unifying universality, while localization processes have attempted to resituate preexisting loyalties, symbols, and authorities within a larger European sphere.

A single currency shapes political communities through processes of symbolic standardization and replacement: at the most general level, as euros replace francs, symbolic forms shift and become universalized rather than localized. Likewise, the reframing and re-categorization of economic data into “European” inflation, or the ECB’s announcement of a universal EMU interest rate involves a conceptual standardization and melding into one of “like” things. The iconography of the paper currency of the euro is similarly standardized across all twelve participating member states. All of the paper currency denomination have the same shaded map of Europe, with no distinct states but rather a single geography. The currency features

designs of vaguely European architecture without specificity, not anchored in any particular place or actual physical structure. The images feature bridges and windows, with the lowest denominations showing older, more historic images (Romanesque arches), moving through time up to modern architecture for the higher denominations. As Jacques Hymans (2004, 2006) has argued, this particular iconography reflects the desire of European officials to highlight the openness and open-endedness of the integration project. Indeed, these images were chosen in a very carefully orchestrated and a carefully considered design competition and process of choosing the physical representations on both paper currency and coins (Barker-Aguilar 2003; Shore 2000). The euro's iconography is also emblematic of the careful balancing of national and European symbols. The euro's paper currency is standardized and uses European symbols, maps, or nonspecific images exclusively. However, each participating member state issues its own coins with standard European imagery on the one side and national symbols and portraits on the other.

The iconography of the euro also is interesting for its content, and what it implies about the type of imagined community being built. EU has often relied on seemingly deracinated, technocratic, and somewhat emotionally superficial symbols and practices, rather than attempting to mine the deeper, more emotional roots of national identities. The paper currency of the euro provides a nice illustration: while it redraws the lines of Euroland, the pictorial representation of the EU draws on abstract images rather than historical figures or scenes that might have specific referents. The imagery suggests a community that is simultaneously inclusive and undefined as to its borders or specificity, which is omni-present and yet nowhere in particular (Hymans 2004). However, the paper currency presents a deracinated, abstracted set of universal architectural images. It is a paper currency without specific referents, no particular historical figures.

The actual symbol of the euro has come to signal EU as a sort of logo, recognizable from afar, and universally readable in any language. Very few currencies in circulation have their own widely recognized graphic symbol or currency sign. The British pound (£), Japanese yen (¥), and US dollar (\$), and now the euro (€) are the world's most commonly used currency signs. The euro's glyph or graphic representation is a shorthand that comes to signal Europe. Oddly, the euro symbol does not appear on the paper currency, only on the coins, but does appear on every price tag in Euroland, on shoppers' receipts, in currency exchange bureaus in airports, on computer keyboards, and in the business section of the newspaper. The euro exchange rate value has become another standardized, numerical focal point representing Europe, offering an external face of a standardized, consolidated Europe to the world. With the rise in the value of the euro over its decade of existence, and stability even through perilous economic stress in the Eurozone crisis, the European currency's appreciation may act as a source of symbolic strength. It also allowed euro holders to go on spending sprees on trips

to the US, giving those travelers a sense of superiority in Apple stores and the Gap, even as it makes EU products less competitive in world markets. Extensive commentary prior to the recent crisis about the euro displacing the dollar as the international reserve currency of choice constitutes a status marker for Europeans as well. More recently, however, as bonds within the participating states are now denominated in euros, even as they are tied to the national economies (as in Spanish eurobonds or French eurobonds), the precipitous decline of certain European economies has meant vastly negative associations with those Greek euro-denominated bonds, even as the German eurobonds are a source of stability. For our discussion, the negative and positive both add up to symbolic representations. Even as they may have normatively different content, they both signify the EU's presence in EU citizens' lives, for good or ill, just as the burning of the EU flag in a Greek square asserts the EU as an authoritative, if despised in the moment, actor.

The EMU and the euro are not only about standardization, but also about engaging in processes of localization that are happening in ways different from the more monolithic consolidation of national currencies in the nineteenth century. In many instances, the symbols of EMU contextualize Europe explicitly within the extant nation-states rather than attempting to displace national identities. As such, the implicit message is that the various member-state nationalities can be understood as embedded within Europe, complementary to and situating what is local or national within a broader European setting. This is most evident in the iconography of the euro coins in their iconography construct a complementary and simultaneous Europe that coexists with the national political entities, many of which do use traditional figurative symbols deeply rooted in national culture (as with Queen Beatrix on Dutch coins). That the euro coins have both a standardized EU side and a nationally specific design on the other side neatly reflects the potential for the EU to allow for a "marble cake" identity of complementary and coexisting political allegiances, where the adoption of one can occur without the exclusion of the other but rather simultaneously (Risse 2010; Raento et al. 2004). The iconography materially and symbolically situates the member-state nations within the EU, rather than placing them in opposition.

The symbols on the euro are also carefully constructed in terms of the representations of the literal mapping of Europe. In contrast to the standardized and indistinct map on the paper currency, the coins offer a richer array of geographic expressions of what Europe is: a unified image of a community of Europe with no borders appears on the most valuable coins (1 and 2 euros); of a group of sovereign and distinct states on lower value coins (on 10, 20, and 50 cent coins); and as a region in a global context on the least valuable coins (on 1 and 5 cent coins). This telescoping out from the most to least valuable representations of Europe places an emphasis on the heart of Europe (although still with blurred boundaries) with reference both

to the sovereign states that make it up, and to the broader world in which it is located. Interestingly, the representations in the maps vary slightly in terms of where EU starts and stops, with the paper currency more inclusive and open to gray boundary areas toward Russia and the hinterlands.

Along with the iconography, the creation of physical representation of governance with the birth of the European Central Bank, sitting at the center of the European System of Central Banks (composed of the national central banks), has also engaged symbolic representations that also seem to carefully balance between the processes of standardization and localization. More generally, capital cities and national buildings have long been understood to be part of nation-building (Van Der Wusten 2004). Once again, we see that the EU has shied away from brazen attempts to compete with the monumental and mythmaking architecture of other European capital cities (think of Garibaldi in Rome or Haussmann in Paris). Various agencies and institutions have instead been spread around the EU to promote a sense of inclusiveness and transparency, rather than concentrating all governance activity in Brussels (Kelemen 2005). The ECB's location in Frankfurt was carefully thought out as well, as part of an effort to reassure the Germans and other Northern Europeans that the new bank would be as sober as the gray Frankfurt sky. At its founding, the ECB was housed in a downtown office building renamed the Eurotower, but it has been carefully moving forward with the construction of a new building, one which was chosen after an elaborate design competition, because, according to the ECB, it embodied the values of "transparency and unity" (Papademos 2005). The ECB buildings thus support one central purpose of a capital city, which is to represent and symbolize state power and national unity even though the national central banks, now part of the larger ESCB system, are geographically dispersed, woven throughout Europe, navigating preexisting nation-states and their symbols and structures. In addition to the bricks and mortar of the ECB, a more human focal point for governance has also been created with the appointment of a president of the ECB, who himself serves as the symbolic embodiment of both the euro and the EU. Testifying at the European Parliament, and appearing at summits, the president (currently Mario Draghi) gives the EU a face, one of a neutral, purportedly apolitical and supranational, not national (Italian in his case), central banker.

In sum, the creation of the euro and EMU has contributed to the symbolic infrastructure that builds an imaginary community. Both territorial reframing and the contextualizing of member-state nationalism within a broader European setting are occurring across a range of areas. Particularly striking is the ways in which the forms and political technologies of the nation-state, namely those related to a consolidated national currency, have been appropriated for use in the EU case. But the particular content of those political symbols and practices have been fashioned to navigate those very preexisting nation-states even as they accrue power and authority to Brussels (and Frankfurt). In the monetary area, as in many others in the EU,

the imagined community that is being built is one that must be engaged in gingerly and yet, placed in the long history of development of different unified political forms, is remarkable in its reorienting of political authority, and perhaps, citizenship.

The euro as practice

The EU's ontological status as an invented reality does not mean it is not felt: in many instances, the EU symbols are experienced in practice as well and it is in these cases that the social construction of Europe has the most potential. The symbolic representation of the EU that occurs when national passports are reissued with EU symbols on their covers is reinforced in practice, when "EU Nationals" breeze through the passport control lines at the airport. In such moments, Europeaness is reframed symbolically and experienced materially, even if those travelers have no knowledge of the Schengen agreements or laws that produce that experience (McNamara 2010a). Symbolic representation constructs reality, but practice is what can solidify and make real those constructions on a daily basis as symbols become fact through these social processes.

Social theory in international relations has taken a "practical turn" recently, which can provide a very helpful set of mechanisms for understanding the construction of the EU as a social fact (Adler and Pouliot 2011; Neumann 2002; Mitzen 2006). These authors caution that too much focus is placed on symbolic representation, at the expense of understanding the role of practical logic in human experience, particularly in political life (Pouliot 2008, 2010). Instead of only studying what agents think about, be they narrowly strategic as in more rational materialist accounts, or how they are socially conditioned in their cognition, as in most constructivist accounts, Pouliot and others argue that we should also consider what they think *from*. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's idea of practical reasoning (Bourdieu 1998) can provide a way to understand the processes of construction of the EU as an imagined community by highlighting the commonsense and inarticulate grounds for action in lieu of studying only how reality is represented. Humans reason in multiple ways, simultaneously, and to fully understand the evolution of the processes undergirding the development of the EU, we would do well to incorporate this "practical turn" in sociology into any account of how the EU is created as a social fact.

What practices do Europeans today engage in that have shifted due to the newly integrated EU? How have their experiences of daily life, their routines, their engagement with each other, and their personal, professional, or social worlds changed over time? For example, how does increasing EU support for reimbursed cross-border healthcare and the ability to go anywhere in the EU for medical procedures subtly shift the way citizens experience their own welfare systems? How does the ability to move freely without any barriers

across the border between Hendaye, France and Fuenterrabia, Spain, change people's experience of space and place? Focusing our empirical attention and methods closer to the ground, understanding from the bottom up how the daily lives of those in the EU may have changed, or not, and how they make sense of their experiences is one way in which the practical turn in the sociology of culture can fill in gaps in our understanding of the meaning of EU integration, and more specifically, the ways in which the euro is shaping the imaginary Europe.

How might practices around the euro help create Europe as a social fact, and provide the cultural underpinnings for European imagined community of citizens? When symbols become concretized and have physical expressions, in the process that some scholars call "entitativity" (Risse 2003), such cultural underpinnings are built. Here, symbols—and the ideas, values, and emotions contained within them—become physical objects that actors interact with in practice. Symbols are made "real" by being embodied in objects that actually become part of peoples' lives in a practical way. The euro is one of the most dramatic examples of the process of entitativity, as the single currency makes concrete the imagined community it constructs, and opens the possibility for the construction of citizens within it (Risse 2003; Castano 2004; Herrmann et al. 2004; Kaelberer 2004). From this viewpoint, as the euro rests in people's hands, pockets, wallets, and purses it becomes a physical expression of the new governing authority of the EU. European Commission officials were well aware of these processes; for example, Prodi (2002):

To millions of European citizens, the euro notes and coins in their pockets are a concrete sign of the great political undertaking of building a united Europe . . . So the euro is becoming a key element in people's sense of shared European identity and common destiny.

Just as with the symbols discussed, we can understand this process as one of standardization and localization. As the euro circulates, it embeds in practice "Europe" in relation to national polities, not in conflict, but in concert with them. In practice, the symbol of Cervantes emblazoned on Spanish euro coins becomes European, as the coin circulates throughout the member states, mixing with images of the Celtic harp and the Brandenburg gate in pockets and purses. In so doing, the euro personifies the notion of different nationalities naturally embedded within Europe, in a complementary way, not competing. As with the National System of Central Banks, this makes the euro project all part of the construction of a complementary and simultaneous Europe that coexists with the national political entities rather than overtly seeking to displace them.

Within the ECB itself, a host of new practices have come into being with the establishment of EMU that further contributes to this cultural shift. European wide economic frames are being generated as statistics are

collected in the member states and put together in spreadsheets and reports on the “European economy,” legitimizing the category of Europe and redrawing in numbers what the euro represents with its map. For European policymakers, integration into the ECB has created standardization in their policy practices. English has become by far the dominant language within European central banking circles, along with standardization of employment requirements, modes of analysis, and other professional practices. European central bankers and finance ministries even have referred to their zone of governance as “Euroland” in their daily speech implying the consolidation of the euro, and the replacement of national currencies has produced a territorial reframing in imagined community terms.

Outside of the ECB, Eurostat, the EU’s statistical agency, and Eurobarometer, the polling agency, marshal statistics and ask about attitudes toward the euro. Statistics have long been a key political technology developed by the nation-state as a lever of power (Scott 1998), but in many areas, the practice of statistical gathering is now in the hands of Brussels and oriented toward a Europe-wide frame. A number of standardizing strategies are used, such as the counting of intra-EU trade as internal, even as important national reporting practices and agencies continue to coexist.

In the broader social arena, the creation of EMU and the ECB has also created new communities of practice that engage with the central bank. The European Parliament was legally empowered to routinely bring the head of the ECB to testify in front of the Monetary and Financial Affairs Committee, creating new sets of interactions that embed the ECB, albeit weakly and incompletely, within the broader democratic structures of the EU and Europe. Social groups throughout the Eurozone have reoriented their public claims toward the new focal point of the ECB and the EU’s fledgling economic governance systems. EMU is thus creating new communities of citizenship practice beyond the technocratic corridors of Brussels and Frankfurt, although the insulated nature of the hyper-independent ECB means this process is always a thin and contested one.

Is it enough? The future of European integration

Has the establishment of the single currency fostered or weakened the EU citizenship-building process? How has the Eurozone crisis affected the relationship between the single currency and citizenship of the Union? Despite the incomplete and halting nature of this process, it is my contention that the European Union, like earlier political forms before it, has been and is being constructed not only through economic and political dynamics but also, culturally, through social dynamics that are creating an “imagined political community” of Europe and Europeans. However, that this community exists

does not mean it is perfect, or complete, or all-encompassing, or permanent. The current Eurozone crisis is severely testing the EU's legitimacy, even as large parts of the EU remain deeply, if often invisibly, integrated. The Single Market and the European Court of Justice have built an extensive European legal system that stretches across all areas of daily life, the national bureaucracies of the EU states have been merged together through the EU policy system, and the EU has become an international actor on the world stage. An imagined community supports these developments, but it is a very particular version of one, blending elements of the political communities that preceded the nation-state, more modern state-like dynamics, and some truly new postmodern characteristics.

Unlike the emergence of the nation-state in the second half of the nineteenth century, the EU cannot draw upon that exclusive narrative of political identity, but rather must coexist alongside its national members, with their own well-developed political communities and symbolic apparatus. The EU must somehow navigate these preexisting and robust identities to succeed. Europe's imagined community could not be constructed simply by having the EU reproduce itself squarely on top of the nation as in Anderson's original account. Policymakers must instead find other ways to fit within the existing cultural context of the modern era of the nation-state, appropriating and reinventing national symbols, juxtaposing rather than confronting them. The EU and traditional national symbols coexist, but crafty policymakers have attempted to frame them so as to not to be in direct competition with each other, their effect additive and positive sum, not zero sum. The strategy that has been followed, I argue, is one that uses symbols and practices to create a localized Europe that is rooted in relatively uncontested, seemingly trivial layering of images and experiences, where the EU is framed as complementary to, not in contest with, the nation-states. The sober central bankers in their Eurotower, the abstracted arches of the euro's paper currency, the language of "Eurozone interest rates" has subtly reframed the reference points of citizenship in the EU by creating an imagined community supported by particular symbols and practices. This has contributed to the broader cultural infrastructure that has allowed the EU to develop as it has, and even in the midst of a catastrophic bond market crisis, to collectively pool funds of 1 trillion euros (and counting) to try to keep the Eurozone intact. Yet while the imagined community of European citizens, as described earlier, may have been adequate to get us to the astounding historical innovation in political organization, that is, the EU, it is not likely to be enough to sustain the deep integration needed. For the EU to not to end up a spectacular failure of imagination, there must be a move forward in the collective commitment of European leaders, as well as their publics, to deeper and more democratically meaningful governance at the EU level. The contestation around the Eurozone crisis, ironically, is a step forward

in engaging in vigorous debate over the depth and shape of Europe. Only time, and the creativity and leadership of Europe's leaders and its citizens, will determine the fate of "imaginary Europe" and the political order it embodies.

Note

- 1 See Cram 2001, 2009, 2012 for valuable analyses that also uses the imagined community concept to investigate the EU's development.