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Concepts and Perceptions of Democracy and Governance beyond the Nation State: Qualitative Research in Education for European Citizenship

The empirical research presented in this paper focuses on concepts and perceptions of European politics and citizenship which are expressed by students and teachers in secondary schools. The qualitative study is based on semi-standardized interviews, written surveys, and classroom research (video transcripts, observation records). The results suggest that many young people are amenable towards transnational patterns of identity and they tend to combine pragmatic-optimistic expectations with European Union citizenship. Many of the students interviewed seem willing to adapt themselves to a larger European environment. However, many of the teachers voiced ambivalent notions while expressing veiled scepticism, although they rarely expressed open criticism based on their own fears towards political developments in a unified Europe. The classroom research shows that in the examined civic education lessons, the everyday concepts of students are seldom questioned and sparsely developed towards social-science-based explanatory models. Sometimes even misleading concepts are enforced in classroom interaction instead of being clarified by the development of adequate categories and models.

Keywords:

European Union citizenship, multi-level governance, citizenship education, grounded theory, qualitative classroom research, conceptual knowledge, participatory capabilities

In almost every policy field, political problems and alternatives for practical solutions are no longer comprehensible and cannot be conducted in an exclusively national or local context. There has been a significant increase of EU legislation in the last decades, which has to be implemented through national and local policies, where many national and local political decisions are made or are influenced by European agents and institutions. The context of substantial political problems, like climate change, migration or financial crises, can only be solved on an international level.

At the same time, the traditional mechanisms of democratic control and participation are eluded to large extent by European politics. Political communication and the public sphere is still primarily dominated by regional and national media interlaced around the civil society structures. Many citizens do not perceive the EU as a political body which offers actual problem solutions; they rather experience the EU as loss of democratic influence and sovereignty. Processes of Europeanization and globalization are observed as insecurity and intrusion; they are not recognized as opportunities to shape policy. Citizens daily confront many situations of high complexity, flexibility and de-framing. They are challenged cognitively and emotionally to process them.

In this way, multi-level governance beyond the nation state strongly challenges theory and practice of citizenship education. Teaching and learning politics and social sciences can no longer be effectively practiced without analyzing and reflecting the European perspective. Normative as well as empirical research

in the field of European citizenship education and social science didactics need to explore the dynamic concept of a transnational fragmented citizenship and the widely perceived deficits of European democracy: What are the consequences of transformation processes of statehood, democracy and the public sphere in Europe for the citizens' self-conceptions and their participatory chances?

Selected results of the qualitative research perused for the author's PhD thesis are presented in this paper. The study (Eis 2010) followed the methodology of *Grounded Theory* in order to examine conditions of learning and teaching processes in European citizenship education. According to the research design (refer section 2.1), the qualitative analysis of data (interviews and classroom research) are not based on a pre-chosen theoretical framework. The normative development of categories and the generation of a theoretical approach went hand in hand in a circulated proceeding of both inductive and deductive argumentation as it will be shown in this paper (Strauss, Corbin 2008; Kelle 2005 [<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/467/1001>]).

The qualitative research shows to what extent students' judgement capabilities, political skills and responsibilities on both the national and the European level are developed by an awareness of European problems and conceptual knowledge. The study is presented here in four steps. Firstly, the research interest of the study is derived from its theoretical context of European Union citizenship and *citizenship practices* beyond the nation state. The empirical study investigates the individual perceptions with subjective interpretation of a 'presumable' new understanding of fragmented citizenship of students and teachers.

The second part of this paper deals with the question of what kind of transnational awareness students



and teachers developed and to what extent political transformation processes are identified as such in context of everyday's local life. Furthermore, in the third step, the development of cognitive patterns of explanation and the subjective understanding perceived by students and teachers was analysed during classroom interaction. Here, the question was examined to what extent individual interpretation patterns facilitate or inhibit the development of political competence of judgement and the ability for participation.

Finally, the didactic approach of teaching European citizenship education, worked out in the author's PhD thesis (Eis 2010) will be outlined according to the consequences of qualitative research for generating conceptual knowledge about governance in transnational democracies. The argument is based on understanding European politics, i.e. reflecting chances and limits of democracy beyond the nation state, representing not only a pedagogical situation in school, but rather a permanent social learning process. Academic categories are construed in controversial discourses and are selectively conveyed in political and educational learning processes. Citizenship education also needs to reflect this transformation process of ideas towards political paradigms.

1. Union citizenship and citizenship practice beyond the nation state

The research is centred on the concept of *European Union citizenship*. The term on the one hand combines the enlargement and amendment of the civil legal status. Which enables citizens from all member states to live and work throughout the Union while enjoying multiple social and political rights, e.g. not being discriminated on the labour market, or the right for citizens of one EU-member state permanently residing in another EU-member state having the right to participate in local elections of residential country. Moreover, the concept of Union citizenship also stands for an ongoing process of Europeanization and de-framing, which creates new ways of participation and opportunities for action, that is to say "citizenship practice" (Wiener 1998). On the other hand, limits of democratic control, lack of transparency in the process of decision-making and gaps of legitimization are widely recognized on a supranational level in the "post national constellation" (Habermas 2001; Scharpf 2010; Abromeit 1998). Citizenship education needs to critically reflect the tension between a possible benefit of enlarging the legal status and the democratic public sphere and simultaneous tendencies of losing democratic control and equal participation opportunities by transferring powers to the EU-level as well as by the growing influence of private global players and European lobbyists on the other side. Furthermore, European citizenship is only one dimension of several (new) claims of multiple identity patterns

(such as cultural, ethnic or cosmopolitan identity etc.), which individuals are challenged to integrate in their dynamic biographies (Benhabib et al. 2007; Sprongøe, Winther-Jensen 2006; Wildemeersch et al. 2005; see below, part 2.4).

According to the "classical" approach of national citizenship, the problem of the (allegedly) non-existing European *demos* cannot be solved by the legal implementation of a Union citizenship policy (Mackert 2006, 95-100). In early 1974, Raymond Aron expressed the democratic dilemma of a European citizenship to be developed: "Though the European Community tends to grant all the citizens of its member states the same economic and social rights, there are no such animals as 'European citizens'. There are only French, German, Italian citizens" (Aron 1974, 653). Even after numerous modifications of the European treaties and after the official introduction of Union citizenship in 1992, the problem of the democratic deficit and the awkward construction of "a" European public sphere remains largely unsolved. The controversial debate still continues, in which Union citizenship is perceived to have an exclusive legal, economic status enabling people to work and consume in the Single European Market, or it is indeed developing a political dimension (Bellamy 2000; Bellamy et al. 2006).

Antje Wiener (2007; 1998) answers the question about political status of a European citizenship pragmatically in a social-historical context. Her research emphasizes the analysis of a citizenship *practice* instead of dealing with the normative discussions about constructing a European identity as a nation or *demos*. Unlike in the national political movements of the 18th and 19th century, the status of European citizenship was not fought from below by underprivileged social classes and groups. This citizenship was introduced top down and also in some member states many citizens voted against it. Nevertheless, according to Wiener the socio-historical analysis shows that not only European actors, like the European Parliament or the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Luxembourg have made long-term contributions to the practical benefit and implementation of the Union citizenship. Interest groups, associations and also several individuals played a significant role in continuously changing the social relevance and political importance of the Union citizenship in "Europolity". The genuine significance of Union citizenship does not primarily arise from its legal status as it is constitutionalized in the European treaties; it rather derives from a "set of practices" (Wiener 2007, 261).

Wiener characterizes the relationship between individuals and supranational institutions as a "fragmented citizenship", or as citizenship "beyond the state" (ibid., 262). The EU is not a federal state yet, and there is no political will or intention to constitute a European state in the near future. Hence, a new categorical



understanding of the meaning of citizenship – both on a national and a transnational level – needs to be developed. Besides, European citizenship implies of different “new types of citizenship practices”, including legal relations between citizens and international institutions as well as multiple claims for identity recognition (Fraser/Honneth 2003). For instance, in the case of offences against the European Convention on Human Rights, individuals can claim to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg which is not an institution of EU. Such possibilities of individual claims are not considered in the context of EU and European Court of Justice (Ong 2004; Kostakopoulou 2008; 2009).

The dynamic interrelation between the legal implementation of Union citizenship as “a top down institutionalisation” with a “bottom up process” of citizenship practice could be seen as a strong potential for political mobilisation. European institutions as well as member states are pressured by civil society which could finally lead to a long-term democratization of the European decision-making process (Wiener 1997; Shaw 2007). Hence, the point of research may not only be the question of “how political institutions shape individuals and how they relate to each other”, but, furthermore, the often ignored perspective of participatory citizenship, “the possibility that individuals shape constitutions: constitution-building is not only a top-down process” (Wiener 1997, 600).

However, the hope to reduce the democratic deficit of the EU by correlative “spill over effects” from a still weakly established Union citizenship is confronted with strong scepticism of democratic functionalism’s perspective. Several political scientists are quite sceptical towards vague expectations which anticipate a growing interlinked progress between citizenship and European democratization and the potentialities of participatory mobilization that would finally lead to institutional reforms in the decision-making process (Abromeit 1998; 2001; Kohler-Koch, Larat 2008 [http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/typo3/site/fileadmin/BookSeries/Volume_Nine/CONNEX_Report_Series_09.pdf]). Should this scenario take effect, it would undoubtedly be a very welcomed development. But so far, according to the functionalists, there seems to be little empiric evidence for this kind of democratization process. Constitution-building as a

participatory “bottom up process” can at best be understood as useful addition by activities of the civil society. It cannot, however, be regarded as an “exclusive democratization strategy”. Realistically, the political agenda will still be determined by institutional reforms with a focus on technical procedures of legitimization (Huget 2007, 67-8). Consequently, citizenship education needs to reflect both: the numerous new opportunities of participating in European politics (Dolejsiova 2009 [http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Citizenship/Research/European_citizenship_book.pdf]; Eis 2007) as well as the limits of civil society for democratization of European governance (Boucher 2009 [http://www.ceps.eu/files/book/1856.pdf]; Kohler-Koch et al. 2008 [http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/typo3/site/fileadmin/Final_Conference/papers/FinCon_BKK_CQ_VB_final2.pdf]).

2. Subjective interpretation patterns: Processing political transformations and social de-framing

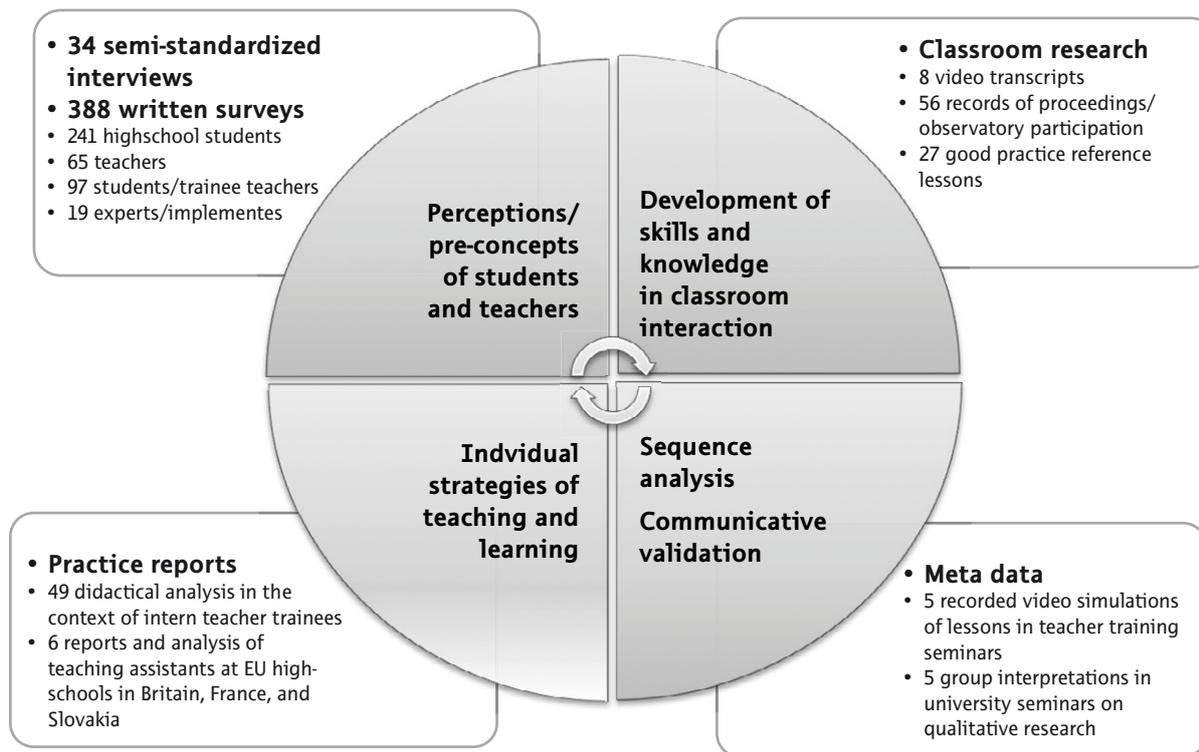
How do social science teachers and students perceive and process those complex experiences of political transformation and social de-framing? To what extent do their modes of interpreting citizenship, democratic decision-making process and political problems include awareness of European transnational perspective? Or are their perceptions still exclusively based on local and national models with respect to parliamentary democracy and nation-centered citizenship?

2.1 Research design

The qualitative study is based on different methodical procedures. On one hand, everyday ideas and interpretations of democracy and governance beyond the nation state were gathered from 241 middle and high school students and of 65 teachers mainly in Germany (with selected comparison of data from Great Britain and Slovakia) in form of semi-standardized interviews and written surveys. On the other hand, teaching and learning strategies as well as didactic approaches of teaching politics and citizenship education were explored by the systematic evaluation of 64 lessons about European topics (partially based on video transcriptions and participant observation reports).



Figure 1: Data collection and analysis

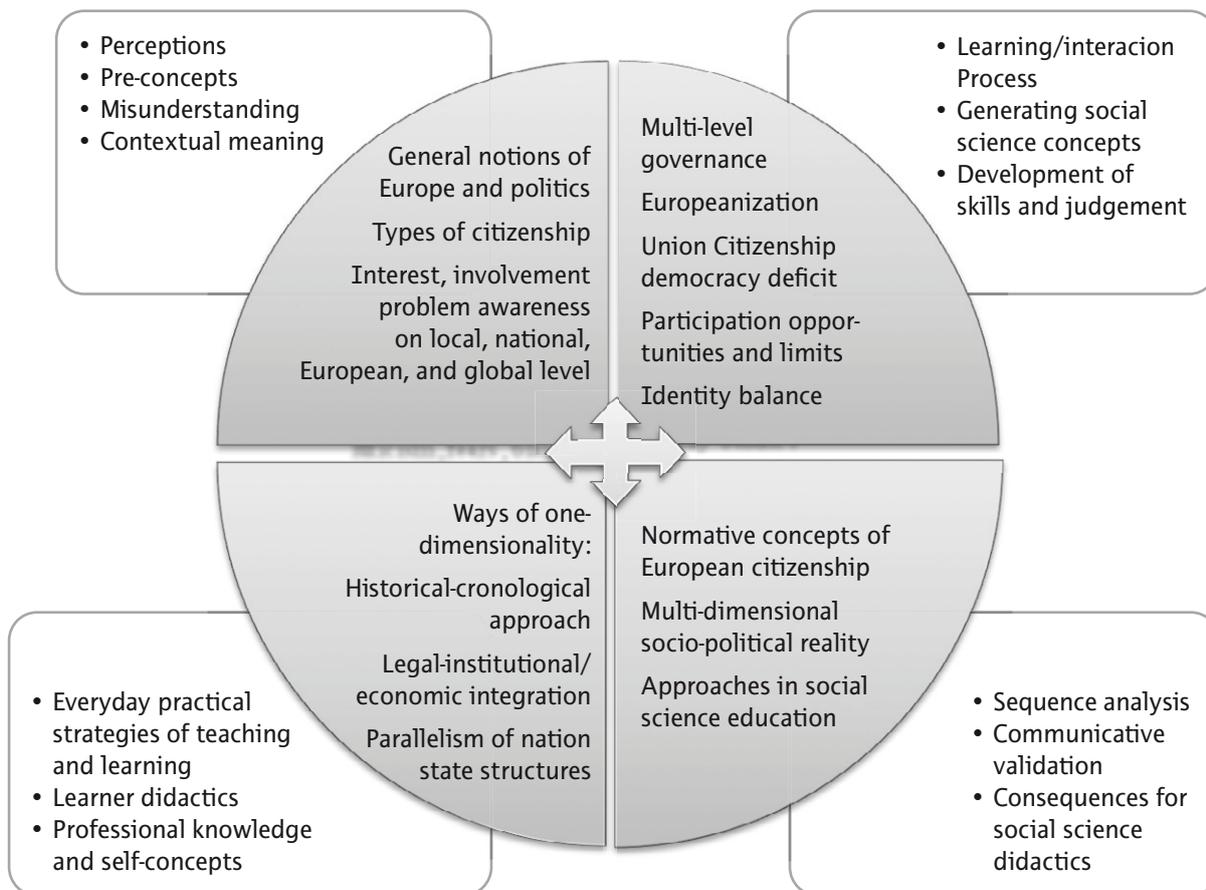


(Eis 2010, 233)

Focal point of the qualitative research was to analyse the interpretation patterns based on semi-standardized interviews and questionnaires. The second step followed with comparison and evaluation of results obtained with context to classroom interactions, with particular attention to the everyday development of political knowledge and skills in teaching and learning processes (Eis 2010, Ch. B, II-IV). In the qualitative research on classroom practices, 64 lessons based on European topics were analyzed with regard to underlying didactic approaches in European citizenship education. The second approach was to analyse determining factors for developing profound knowledge, argumentative skills and critical judgement. Following this, analysis of interviews and questionnaires to-

gether with qualitative classroom research provided the empirical basis for didactic learning theory in European citizenship education, according to the methodology of *Grounded Theory* (Strauss, Corbin 2008; Kelle 2005 [<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/467/1001>]). Further, the study examines, to what extent transformation processes of politics and democracy are cognitively and emotionally processed by students and teachers. It explores, whether the social changes are perceived as an enlargement of personal and social scope or merely as menaces of social security and obstacles. Referring to the aim of teaching European politics, the study needs to analyse the extent of establishing self-concept and political self-efficacy in students.

Figure 2: Structure of generating a theoretical approach in teaching European Citizenship



(Eis 2010, 245)

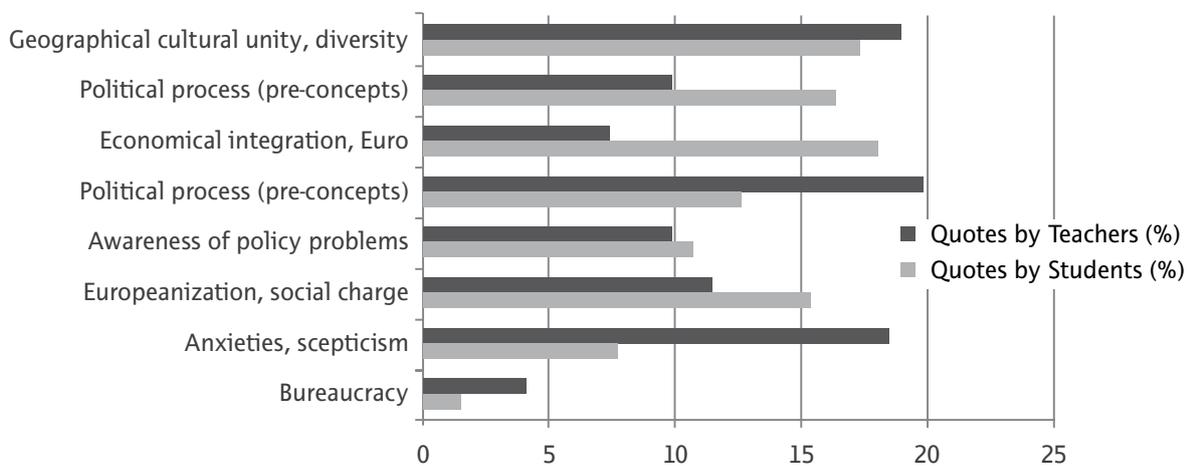
2.2 Pragmatic self-perceptions of German and British high school students

The point of interest was the everyday perception of European politics and the self-concept of citizenship. The analytical result of interviews and questionnaires showed that students rather tend to have a pragmatic and optimistic self-concept of being European citizens. They expressed less objections and scepticism towards the EU and performance of European politics compared to with some teachers, as explained in section 2.3 (correlates also with representative studies, e.g. the Eurobarometer, EB 73/2010, QA 16 [http://

ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb73/eb73_first_en.pdf]). Many young people rarely recognise the concrete effects of European legislation on their everyday life. However, concepts and interpretation patterns of the young generation majorly demonstrate natural integration of their personal interests and local establishment in a European or global context. Be it youth culture, personal life, career planning or every day dealing with social and political problems on a national or global level, many students do not reflect their living experiences and their visions of the future in a primarily local and national context.

Figure 3: Perceptions of Europe and European Politics; Coded statements (%); Total codings: Students 397; Teachers 243

	Quotes by Students (%)	Quotes by Teachers (%)
Bureaucracy	1,5	4,1
Anxieties, scepticism	7,8	18,5
Europeanization, social change	15,4	11,5
Awareness of policy problems	10,8	9,9
Political process (pre-concepts)	12,6	19,8
Economical integration, Euro	18,1	7,4
Political process (pre-concepts)	16,4	9,9
Geographical cultural unity, diversity	17,4	18,9
	100	100



A 16-year old student from Berlin describes a transnational network as development and extension of European youth culture. As a German-French citizen, he regards himself as part of a quasi worldwide cultural community, which can hardly be located geographically:

"That's just my culture here, or what do you call as culture, it's all quite mixed up. And anyhow, there is no longer an actual place in culture or youth culture. [...] Nowadays everything is in video and media and of course it spreads from continent to continent. And everybody speaks English, more or less [...]. You of course know, what comes

from where, but still, everything is played or drawn everywhere" (SE 23, 37+43)¹.

For *MarceP* transnational communication does not seem to be a problem. However, he also rejects a political unification and cultural standardization in form, e.g., of a European federal state, which he envisages as an undesirable levelling of distinguishable cultures and languages:

1 SE = Data collected from students [Schülererhebung].
 2 Names of all persons interviewed are changed.



"The states should remain separate. [...] There are too many nice languages, actually, for choosing a single one and say, now this one has to be spoken. I do think cultural boundaries should be open, but nevertheless, there should be boundaries" (SE 23, 89+93).

Many of the polled students perceive Europe as an unlimited cultural sphere and an open economic area with provision of many opportunities in spite of associated risks. Several juveniles emphasized the notions of stability and a high standard of prosperity which they associate with Europe and its internal market. Nevertheless, most of the students interviewed (and many teachers as well) had no other vision of EU's deeper political consolidation than the idea of a central federal state. And nearly everybody – students and teachers alike – flatly rejects this notion.

George from South England (18 years), e.g., connects Europe first of all with prosperity, security and stability, due to good, "obviously reasonable" – meaning but "not radical" – government activity. Whether he associates with his idea of primarily British politics the governments of the European nation states or the European Union remains elusive:

"Well, there is, I suppose, a sort of security, pride somewhere, I suppose, in Europe, it's a nice continent to live in. As I say, it's very secure, makes secure lifestyle. [...] It's a very safe place and it's governed well, and taken seriously, properly looked after. [...] It's a sensible government, not radical. Not too many radicals and things, not at the moment, comfortable, comfortable life, really" (SE 18, 12-16).

George has a pre-concept of *good governance* which he does not connect exclusively with Great Britain but somehow in general with Europe. Still, the course of the interview suggests that he rather reduces the EU to a free-trade area and a kind of international organisation. *George* doesn't perceive Europe as a political unity, but mainly as an economic area. For him it is the continent which succeeded in regulating national affairs by peaceful negotiations: "In general, as I say, I think it's a good idea to boost the international relations and to..., also, like the internationality, to help sort out disputes without too much grieve, and of course no physical damage to countries [...]" (SE 18, 46). However, *George's* interpretation of the possible political dimensions of a Union citizenship is inconsistent, in fact sometimes quite contradictory. When it comes to the question of the EU's conceivable future developments, he suddenly talks about a European *nation*:

"I think there is a lot of action trying to get Europe to come together as one nation in the way of the European Union, which obviously will greatly help relations between the separate countries in the Union, and it's trying to become like the USA, the separate countries like the states are unified under one flag,..."

The countries become just regions in one big state?

Sort of, not actually but it will be ..., it will get that impression. That, I think, is the idea of the European Union obviously helping trading and international relations between ...

Okay, do you support that?

I do, but there are aspects I don't agree with. I don't, well, I am not keen that we are going to the Euro or anything like that and I don't think many Britons are.

Why not?

Very traditionalist, I think. We are just proud people. We, just for the currency, I am not sure, I think, a lot of people think currency separates us from..., shows our independence of the rest of Europe as well. And I think, I suppose, I don't fully agree with the idea of one law for every nation" (SE 18, 40-46).

George thinks that the EU, in his generalized idea will develop along the slogan of the "United States of Europe", which Winston Churchill phrased already in 1946. In spite of his expressed support to this idea, *George* also connects essential restrictions with it, which seem hardly consistent with the concept of a unified European federal state. He reduces the Union to be "helping in trading and expanding international relations" (42). He would personally neither support the perspective of Great Britain joining the Euro zone nor a supranational legislation ("one law for every nation", 46). Still, *George* appreciates the possibilities of the European labour market and the educational system. He stresses the need to promote a European dimension of economic competence and transnational communication skills for employees, for entrepreneurs and "career makers":

"[...] More international companies can employ anybody anywhere and that's quite a big opportunity for a lot of career makers. I can work for a computer company in Germany and live in Munich, but obviously the international market is important and that's why it is also important to be able to speak other languages in business because there is often a lot of conferring between nations which needs to be well understood ..." (SE 18, 54).

Nora (17 years old) holds a free-market position even more distinct than *George*. She could be described as a liberal European British seeing herself as part of a single European society: "I think of a big sort of society [...]" (SE 16, 8). She understands Union citizenship as a complementary identity, even if only few Britons perceived its meaning:

"I think, you feel a sense of belonging although that does not really tend to apply so much while living in Britain, because they are more detached from Europe as compared to other countries. [...] I think, it's a sort of another identity to have, just being British, but I think a lot of British people [...] don't like to think of themselves as being European, maybe because they are not on the continent itself. I like to think of myself as being European and part of that community" (SE 16, 10+18).



Despite her clear commitment to Europe while considering herself as a member of this "big sort of society" (8), she admittedly supports economic consolidation but is not convinced by the political integration. Like George, she sceptically refuses supranational legislation. On being asked about her views of the European Union in general, she answers:

"I think it's a good thing. But I think, when you speak carefully on how far it goes, certainly with a legislation that goes for all countries, I think that..., because a lot of legislations can't be applied to all the countries. That doesn't work in every country. But I think in terms of free trade, many trades and currency, I feel, it is a good thing" (SE 16, 48).

Generally, Nora expects and welcomes a stronger integration of Great Britain in the EU; even imagines a possible joining of the Euro. Besides the currency, she does not however mention any other potential policy fields suitable for a deeper integration. "I think eventually, Britain will get more involved. I think [...] most of the countries will end up with the same currency, the Euro. I think we'll just be more involved really, it'll be a closer community" (42). Concretely, she stresses only a strengthening of free-trade. At the same time, she clearly opposes adjustments to or standardizations of European labour legislation and social policy. She argues with different cultural and political traditions that might interfere with an adequate implementation of European standards into national law:

"It bothers me that trying to impose the same legislation for all countries or they will try to, because that won't work, for example same working hours. That is something – working hours, that might mean something to Germans – may not suit British people, they have different sort of ways of thinking and routines as such. And I think the movement of people should be restricted to some extent. I think people should be able to travel easily between the countries, but like moving permanently to another country needs to be watched, I think, it should not be so easy" (SE 16, 64).

Nora shows awareness of political problems and to some extent, an understanding of the interrelation of European and national legislation. She also holds a pre-concept of the principle of European subsidiarity: Which regulations function in which country? Which legislative structure (hierarchy) should be responsible for what European policies? On the other hand, her demand for stronger restrictions of the free internal market contradicts clearly her liberal position expressed above. Like Nora, also other polled students obviously reflected the recent British debate on the effect of Polish, Rumanian and Bulgarian immigrants since enlargements in 2004 and 2007.

2.3 Awareness of European political problems: Comparing concepts of students and teachers

As a result of the qualitative analysis, the study classifies various types of students' interpreting patterns (Eis 2010, 250).³ Right in the sense of the "competitive European economic citizen," Nora – like George – refers to the importance of education as a specific characteristic feature of European culture. She points out education's relevance particularly for young Europeans interconnecting with a developing European civil society: "I think education is important [...] for young people obviously and students [...]. I think they are together involved in another lot of stuff as well as the academics, like being politically involved as well, (...) with societies and unions and stuff" (SE 16, 26-28).

The answers of the German and British students overlap regarding those policy fields where an increasing necessity is perceived to politically act on the European level. Especially the polled German juveniles cherish expectations towards the European Union as a potential actor for solving pressing transnational problems. The main issues students are concerned about are notably the climate change, environmental problems and energy policies, especially the reinforced practice of nuclear power in Europe. Also security policy problems are mentioned by singular students, e.g., potential new conflicts about energy resources (SE 22, 5) or the international dimension of a permanently growing, powerful Union which could be perceived by other countries as a political threat (SE 24, 111-12). Furthermore, some students worry about a Union growing too big by successive enlargements and having all the possible new candidates from South East Europe (SE 19, 56; SE 22, 12). Some of the polled young people express scepticism and anxiety towards an expected levelling of national cultures, which then could no longer be distinguished as independent entities. This latter fear of students is mainly connected with the often expressed vision of a European Federal state, which is usually imagined as a unitary federal state with a centralized administration or simply as a "European Empire" ("europäisches Großreich") (SE 22, 8; cf. also SE 10, 169+176; SE 24, 104). Only few students expressed doubts or fears regarding the European integration process, i.e. negative influence on the national social systems or the job market (SE 16, 66). Again, only a few referred to the problem of too much bureaucracy and the inefficiency of the European decision-making process – one student reflects that even though the problem is widely discussed in the media, she does not have enough insight to express a reasonable judgment (SE 17, 52).

In comparison with polled teachers, students more often recognize the EU in areas of politics, which they

3 Figure: "types of students' citizenship self-perceptions"



themselves perceive as frightening, coincidentally as a powerful actor who contributes to the regulation or solution of transnational and global challenges. Hence, the youth's high confidence placed in the EU regarding its problem solution competence is not shared by many teachers. The polled teachers express considerably a higher proportion and variety of fears, concerns and insecurities associated with processes of social and political transformations in Europe. Similar results had already been confirmed in representative studies for adults in general (Flash EB 252/2009, p. 14 [http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_252_en.pdf]).

The list of expressed scepticism and fears of the teachers is about twice as extensive as those of the students (considering that the poll had only 65 teachers but 241 students). A wide range of 45 coded statements covers propositions like "dismantling of the social standards" (LE 8, 7)⁴, "prosperity [...] must be shared more now" (LE 7, 80), "danger of relapsing into a free trading zone" (LE 8, 12), "too much bureaucracy and too many particular interests" (LE 8, 10). Teachers are concerned that majority decisions would turn into "cowardly compromises" (LE 8, 11), that citizens' "frustration and disagreement would increase" (LE 8, 17). They feel threatened by "migration; the boat is full" (LE 8, 16) and by economic developments: the "power of the trusts, social dumping, oasis for Monsanto's genetically modified corn" (LE 11, 5), by the activities

of the "dreadful fundamentalism" (LE 10, 48) as well as by ideas of losing sovereignty, identity and traditional European values (LE 6, 22+32).

Nevertheless, some of the teachers' statements depict that the EU as a political structure handling urgent international problems is better than single national actors. In several cases the positive role of the EU is associated with the regulation of international conflicts (LE 5, 41). The answers stress the hope that the EU may use "its soft powers more efficiently" (LE 11, 14). Simultaneously, other polled teachers connect to the increasingly important role of the EU in foreign policy but again with the fear that it might become a military power similar to the U.S., thus losing its inoffensive bias (LE 9, 14). More often, teachers link the policy fields mentioned above primarily with a basic scepticism. About one third of the teachers' coded statements, in the category of *political process*, renders general notions of democratic deficits and efficiency problems in decision-making within the EU. They seldom mentioned the different levels and actors involved in European decisions both at national and EU level. Statements reflecting the final effectiveness, notably the problem solution competence in the sense of an output-oriented way of legitimacy, are as hard to find in detail as comments on the European decision-making process. The model of multi-level governance is not acknowledged by a single teacher and only a few referred explicitly to the role of nation states and other actors in the EU-system.

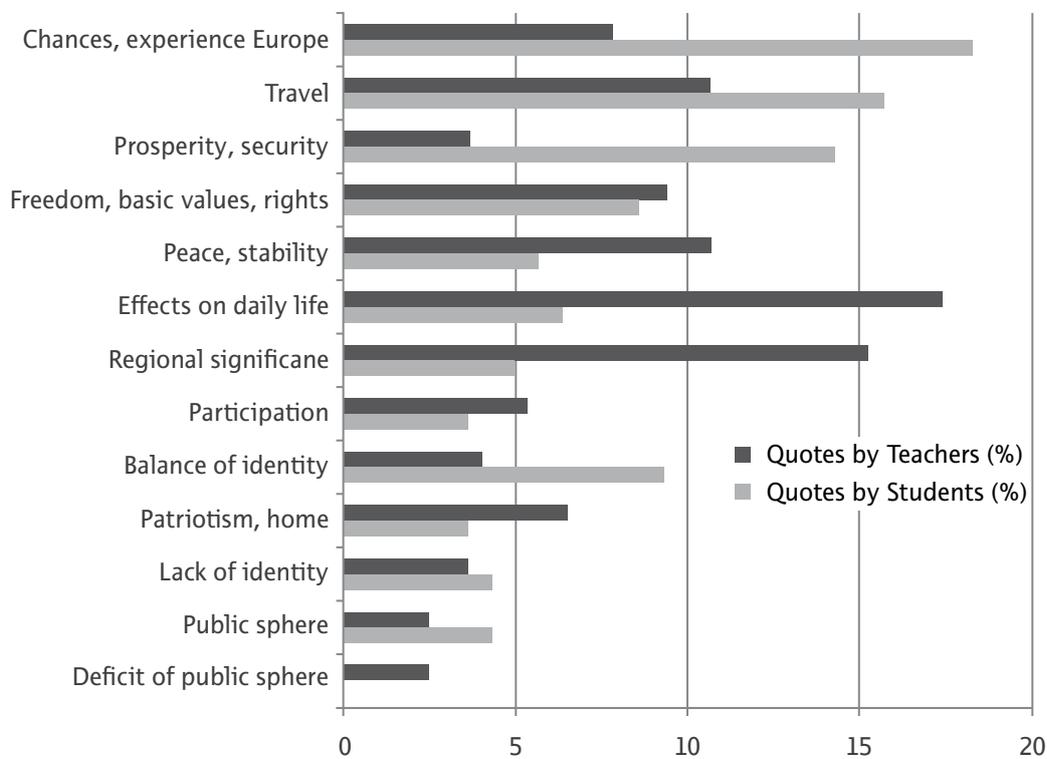
4 LE = Data collected from teachers [Lehrererhebungen].



2.4 Political self-concepts and identity constructions of students and teachers

Figure 4: Meaning of European Union Citizenship; Coded statements (%); Total codings: Students 298; Teachers 242

Union citizenship	Quotes by Students (%)	Quotes by Teachers (%)
Deficit of public sphere		2,5
Public sphere	4,4	2,5
Lack of identity	4,4	3,7
Patriotism, home	3,7	6,6
Balance of identity	9,4	4,1
Participation	3,7	5,4
Regional significance	5	15,3
Effects on daily life	6,4	17,4
Peace, stability	5,7	10,7
Freedom, basic values, rights	8,7	9,5
Prosperity, security	14,4	3,7
Travel	15,8	10,7
Chances, experience Europe	18,4	7,9
	100	100



The analysis of the perceptions and interpreting modes of polled German and British students show a trend towards pragmatic (despite the expressed fears), purpose-built self-concepts of their European citizenship. The students associate with Union citizenship not only in case of advanced opportunities, rights and personal perspectives in internal market, but they also connect it with the Union – surprisingly much more than the teachers – above all prosperity and the warranty of basic needs and values like safety and freedom. Equally, the development of multiple identities and an *identity balance* between several degrees of political and social affiliations (as different but intertwined dimensions of their personal identity) could be documented in the students' rather than in the teachers' self-concepts of citizenship. Many students already had intercultural experiences; some juveniles have socialized in transnational social environments and thus were able to connect to the subject, future perspectives, education and professional career plans in Europe. Constructing and "*doing identity*" (Richter 2004) in a local and a national as well as a European or even cosmopolitan context does not impede or exclude one another in the self-concept of many students. Instead, those patterns of fragmented citizenship identities are often interpreted as meaningful and enriching supplements:

"It is definitively a good thing to have several stages of identity, like I would say, about being English and British, then European, because it gives you a sense of place, I suppose, in greatest scheme of things as compared to the rest of the world. [...]" (SE 15, 40).

However, only few students – and teachers alike – see the European level as a suitable sphere for political participation. The documented concepts of students about Union citizenship represent rather passive or non-political ideas from a consumer's perspective. The youth is interested in rights to move with free will and with a possibility of economic profit. Their role as economic citizens is also linked with a perception of stronger competition, the need for an economically beneficial education and also – in some cases – with uncertainty and anxiety regarding side-effects of the socio-cultural de-framing. In turn, some of the teachers hardly pointed out promising ways of participating in opportunities, while they encourage their students to head for a career directly in the European Parliament or in the Commission (LE 10). Other instructors initiate the expectation that the national members of the EP should be obliged to report and justify European politics (or just a failed school excursion to Brussels) personally in school meetings (LE 4).

3. Understanding European politics or "well-learned" misconceptions? – Results of the classroom research

On one hand, results of the classroom research show didactical deficiencies and dimensional reductions of European politics (e.g., by a purely institutional or historical-chronological perspective on the EU), but they also reveal several well-learned misconceptions and the passing on of problematic concepts which are not helpful to understand multi-level-governance in Europe. On the other hand, conditions and criteria for a successful development of political competences being objective of the study could be answered by analysing as the found good and best practice lessons. In the following, selected results of the classroom research will be discussed.

The analysis of certain political learning units in 10th grade reveals that presumably learners have minor development of knowledge and advancement in social science skills as compared to the geography curriculum in 6th grade. The genuine characteristics of EU-politics, which is the linkage of different levels and actors, the meaning of the subsidiarity concept or the dimension of Union citizenship are rarely objectives of social science education in school.

Certainly, some very flourishing examples of an advanced analysis in exemplary case studies are documented in the classroom research as well. Students were enabled to investigate different policy areas (e.g. social and employment policy, food safety or the intergovernmental judicial cooperation) and had to analyze and evaluate the democratic quality of a concrete decision-making process. Such good-practice-lessons were taught predominantly in the 12th grade by university students of social sciences at high schools in Thuringia. Twice in 6th grade geography lessons, the ambivalent role of tourism in the Alps as a transnational economic, social and environmental problem were analyzed and evaluated by the young students as per the syndrome approach of social geography didactics (Schindler 2005). In this case study, political and economic interests, opportunities to take action by involved groups, and means of participation of local citizens were examined and controversially discussed in a simulated hearing with regard to the economic, ecological and socio-cultural effects of tourism in the Alpine region (UE 24)⁵.

Again, these 6th grade geography lessons persuasively demonstrated that the transnational case studies, policy analysis, and political judgment do not imply any dimension which should be exclusively reserved for higher secondary level (Sekundarstufe II) in Germany, although the political action level of the EU initially played marginal role in these lessons. On the contrary,

5 UE = Data collected in classroom research [Unterrichtserhebungen].



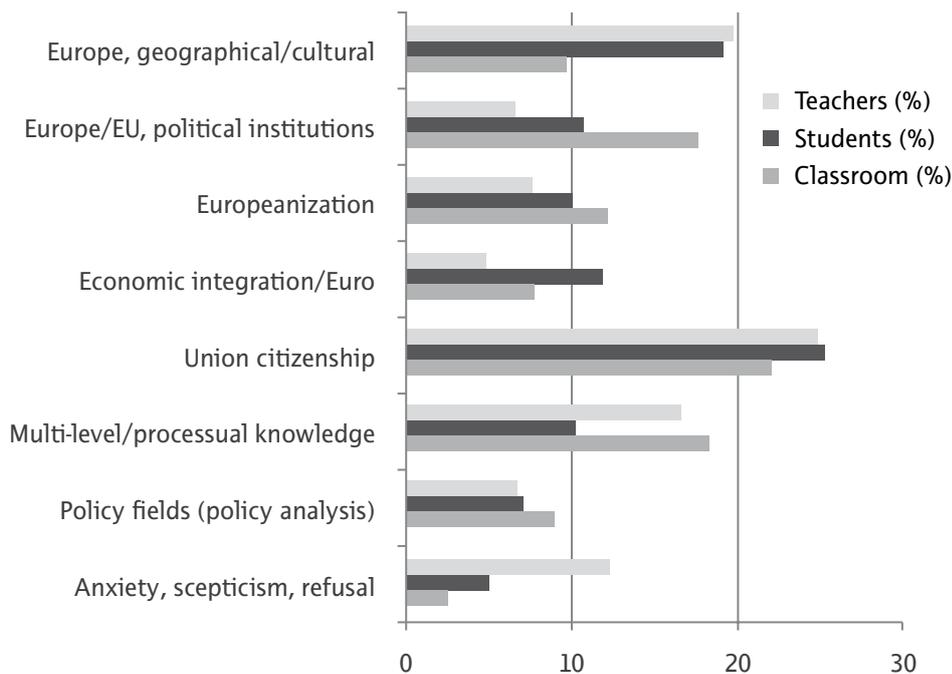
if knowledge about institutions and basic concepts of the EU system is separated from actual conflicts and concrete policy problems, students will not be able to understand much about its meaning and functional interconnections within the multi-level-system.

The coding of the classroom research suggests that political institutions are neither taught exclusively as isolated facts, nor is the polity dimension generally separated from the decision-making processes and

the policy fields. However, in many of the listed codings, reference to policy was reduced to addressing the 3-pillar-structure of the EU with their respective areas of responsibilities. In some lessons, the issue of politics as decision-making processes was covered by just a brief mention of different modes of voting in the Council, without detailing the meaning of those procedures or referring to different forms of participation in the European Parliament legislation.

Figure 5: Pre-concepts and Conceptual knowledge; Coded text segments (%);
Total codings: Students 604; Teachers 361; Classroom statements 584

	Classroom (%)	Students (%)	Teachers (%)
Anxiety, scepticism, refusal	2,5	5,1	12,5
Policy fields (policy analysis)	9,1	7,1	6,7
Multi-level system/ processual knowledge	18,5	10,4	16,6
Union citizenship	22,1	25,4	24,9
Economic integration/ Euro	7,9	11,9	5
Europeanization	12,3	10,1	7,8
Europe/EU, political institutions	17,8	10,8	6,6
Europe, geographical/ cultural	9,8	19,2	19,9
	100	100	100



Several exemplary sequences illustrate that pre-concepts of students, their everyday perceptions and biases are very well expressed by applying the activity-oriented method of political simulations. However, in the reported lessons those concepts and experiences are rarely identified, discussed and developed, in comparison with social science models. Even in very sophisticated planned lessons students and teachers talk at cross-purposes. Classroom interaction rarely allows scrutinizing and critically reflecting individual modes of interpretation, because teachers lack diagnostic competence and conceptual knowledge to counter students' misconceptions with social science explanation models of governance beyond the state (UE 8; UE 12; UE 16).

"We don't want to nationalize everybody. That's why there are the clauses that everybody [each member state, AE] still has its own regulation right. So, proposals are made, but their implementation is still the responsibility of each country. [...] If we had made everything always only by laws, we would put ourselves in chains." (UE 12, 17+19)

These phrases were expressed by a student in the role of Manuel Barroso, president of the EU Commission, in a simulated panel discussion on the question of "Do we need an EU Constitution?" The student points out that neither a standardization of all jurisdictions has been planned in the scope of the constitutional process, nor should the national legislative powers be transferred completely to the EU. Besides, the student also indicates possible alternatives for regulations beyond state-centered hierarchies. She obviously commands a pre-concept of new modes of governance in the multi-level-system. Unfortunately, these impulses are not picked up and reflected in the following classroom interaction. Instead, the teacher participating in the panel discussion while mediating role of a journalist presents a stereotype about the long required reform of the EU Parliament, "which to date had actually no say at all" (UE 12, 20). The learners could not catch the purpose of this, presumably a provocatively intended thesis (LE 2, 156) as an impulse to reflect and challenge populist slogans about "undemocratic" forms of European decision-making. The obviously erroneous statement of the teacher remained undisputed in classroom. Furthermore, quasi as answer to the teacher's impulse the principle of double majority in the Council is explained.

Very seldom, the teachers transparently reveal their own reserve and criticism concerning the effects of Europeanization and transformation of governance in class. Instead, some teachers – particularly from Eastern Germany – demonstrate a highly optimistic and euphoric European self-concept. Yet their repeated professions of peace and the glorification of new opportunities in a unified Europe do not strike as consis-

tent and authentic. Teachers reveal themselves with ambivalent lip-services as "actually ardent followers" of an "in itself" and "first of all fantastic" Europe. The major "... however" is implied now and then in interviews but it hardly becomes a subject in social studies at school. Teachers' skepticism and attitudes against the EU in general as well as their criticism of the democratic deficit implicitly determine the underlying structures of classroom interaction.

Both documented interviews and classroom research show that institutional reforms and democratization of the European regime so far is conceived almost exclusively in terms of an either parliamentary or a more direct democracy, but in any case as state-oriented paradigm of citizenship. The appearance of non-governmental actors, of new ways of governance as well as of appropriate associative or deliberative participation models is hardly recognized. For the supranational "association of states *sui generis*", as the EU's multi-level system is usually characterized, seem to exist no cognitive concepts neither by students and nor at large by teachers. Students and teachers alike have internalized the "classical federal state concept", ultimately related to the centralized state (Schönberger 2007). Such a result cannot be very surprising regarding the prevailing paradigm of "methodological nationalism" in social sciences, and hence in teacher trainings (Beck, Grande 2007).

Teaching and learning of misconceptions occur not only implicitly, but also explicitly as items on the teaching agenda (see the example above of the EP's legislative competences). An exemplified "well learnt" misconception can also be deduced from the teaching material used for the preparation of the above mentioned panel discussion. The instructor had composed a summary of arguments to stress her topic, "Do we need an EU constitution?" One of her pro-arguments expressed a misleading phrase that the EU constitution "unites not only states, but also cultures" and that this process would be "another step towards a European federal state" (UE 12, appendix 8). Even if the teacher could basically justify this argument, it would not serve at all as a pro-argument. Numerous statements of students as well as of teachers indicated that hardly anyone of those polled would support the formation of a European state, and much less on the basis of a "united culture" which is always conceived and is simultaneously rejected with the adoption of a common language.

Far be the study's target to blame teachers for lacking conceptual knowledge in European citizenship education. Misleading concepts of a European centralist federal state in foundation were not least evoked by the political discourse and the debate about the symbolism of a European constitution. The attempt to lay down constitutional symbols evoking classical state symbols like a hymn or a flag in the European trea-

ties and, moreover, the document's title, "Treaty establishing a European *Constitution*", certainly implied the obvious interpretation that this reform included a first (or even final) step towards the foundation of the United States of Europe. The answers of Union citizens, being consulted on this question in various referenda, are congruent with the interpreting modes of European citizenship documented in the study.

4. Governance in transnational democracies: Generating conceptual knowledge as social learning processes

European citizenship education would appear highly questionable if it meant to merely compensate the loss of identity with and the responsibility for the nation state ("Verlust der Bindungskraft an den Nationalstaat", Lösch 2010, 119). The purpose of social science education at school cannot be, to counteract the EU's structural democratic deficit by promoting "European identity" of whichever content. If that was its political guideline, citizenship education would lose its genuine mandate to encourage citizens to act responsible, comprehend, judge critically and to decide deliberately which development of democracy and of political systems in Europe they will support or not. Nevertheless, it is not a purely formal legal relationship that binds young people and adults into the transnational European public sphere. The decision-making processes, even on local and national level, including the conditions of political socialization and social integration can no longer be understood in reduced context of clearly definable communities. For instance, due to taxes and prevalent social systems all over EU, the taxpayers are the ones who stood in for the consequences of fiscal decisions during the Euro crisis in 2009. Social and political transformation processes generate a series of epochal key problems and crises which shape everyday life of citizens in an existential way. Following Gerd Steffens, each crisis, however, opens paradigmatic "alternatives of development" as option for "social learning processes" (Steffens 2010, 28-9). Political education needs to focus on such epochal crises and should stress on the possible alternatives while social transformation processes take place. In fact, identifying key problems with a popular significance exceeding the horizon of national societies as a didactic approach is not a very new idea (W. Klafki, W. Hilligen; Westbury et al. 2000). However, basic conditions of political decision-making processes, also modes of democratic legitimization have changed significantly in the last decades. The approach of European citizenship education developed in the study (Eis 2010, 187-227) emphasizes the importance of promoting skills of students to comprehend local and transnational problems and thus realizing the significance of the reflexive hermeneutic competence to construct a political self-concept (Schelle

2003). Social science education in a European perspective should start with some direct effects of European politics in the local environment of young learners. The analysis of actual conflicts and consequences of EU legislation does not only illustrate where citizens and interest groups benefit from Europe, also appropriate case studies illustrate how national, regional and non-state actors participate and intervene in EU politics. Students need to analyze and to evaluate ways and limits of participation in Europe. Despite the "democratic and public deficit" conjured up again and again, a tremendous number of transnational interest groups, associations, trade unions and NGOs have been established at European level. About 700-900 associations and several thousand other interest groups are represented in Brussels (Charrad 2010, 58). Even if no Europe-wide party structure have not been established yet (and perhaps is not desirable or possible), the base has already been formed as European party networks, and there are numerous ways open to citizens for participating and gaining information (Dolejsiova et al. 2009 [http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Citizenship/Research/European_citizenship_book.pdf]; Eis 2007).

Democratic legitimization and participation in European context is currently and in the foreseeable future not possible in an exclusive parliamentary way. Models of an associative and deliberative democracy become increasingly important through new forms of governance, and they should be considered while teaching European politics. In developing a didactical approach for teaching European citizenship education, the study establishes basic categories of conceptual knowledge as well as dimensions of skills and competences for the generation of transnational judging and acting abilities (see the matrix of skills and competences in European Citizenship Education, Eis 2010, 224-25).⁶ Nevertheless, the mere elaboration of a new core curriculum or a body of basic knowledge will hardly promote better understanding of political transformation processes. In order to understand European decision-making and Union citizenship practice, conceptual knowledge must be deduced in tangible example policy analyses. Basic categories to deduce in suitable case studies could be the European *multilevel system*, the concept of *subsidiarity*, new modes of *governance* by cooperation of public and non-governmental actors, the integration of *interest groups* in the decision-making process, *deliberative cooperation procedures*, *policy learning*, social and economic *self-regulation*, etc. (see the matrix of basic social-science-concepts on European studies; Eis 2010, 212).⁷

6 Matrix of Skills and Competences in European Citizenship Education

7 Matrix of Basic Social-Science-Concepts on European Studies



However, understanding European politics and reflecting chances and limits of democracy beyond the nation state represent not only a pedagogical situation in school, but rather a permanent social learning process. A sound education for active and responsible European Union citizens will not be realized by either implementing euphoric illusions (LE 10, 44) or strengthening the myths of a "Eurocratic" elitist system, or by producing bureaucratic and arbitrary decisions without any democratic legitimation. Political-democratic consciousness develops in everyday interactions where transnational political implications become accessible in suitable learning surroundings. The approach to European Citizenship Education refers to the personal consequences of political transformation processes and social de-framings as "dilemmas of the self" in conditions of late-modernity (Giddens 2006; Schelle 2003, 121-28). The competence dimension "*federal identity balance*" (Eis 2010, 225) depicts a hermeneutic interpretation process reflecting social constructions of citizenship, hence enabling learners to balance their own consistent biography in terms of developing multiple identities or just "doing identity" and "doing European" (Richter 2004). Moreover, the historical-political genesis of Europe becomes comprehensible as an institutional long-term change. The developing concept of European citizenship becomes meaningful and tangible as a "narrative of Europeanization" which had always included interrelations of departures and breakdowns (Beck, Grande 2007, 12-16).

Existential crises, social changes and catastrophes in European history have repeatedly led to social learning experiences. Following Habermas, we will only be able to meet the "challenges of globalization" in a sensible way if we succeed in "developing new forms of a democratic social self-control" in the postnational constellation (2001, 67-69). Facing the consequences of financial crises, conservative-liberal administrations suddenly vote for the introduction of a financial tax transaction, as promoted by NGOs for decades. It remains to be seen to what extent this initiative is to be regarded as a late success of the transnational civil actors' new modes of deliberative participation and "learning opportunities" (Steffens 2010, 35). These social learning processes, however, should become a central issue in social science lessons. Political education *in this sense* could become itself part of a bottom-up process in constitution-making.

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