To study or to construct European Identity – That is the Question.

On everyday perceptions, constructed categorizations and identities.

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Following F. Cooper's and R. Brubaker's distinction between identification and categorization, the author poses the question whether researchers study identification processes in the EU or they impose types of categorization with which European citizens *should identify*, thus constructing European identity. The author argues that the researchers should keep in mind the differentiation between categorization and identification, because if they study identities while categorizing them, there is a danger to create an utopian "reality" and to miss the real identification processes. In search of the answers of the posed question, the author analyzes the RECON methodology, using as example its application in a Bulgarian study, which compared the statements, used in the Q questionnaire, with the association test on the main concepts, used in the RECON model – "Europe", "European Union", "the European", "democracy", "citizenship", "Bulgaria", "national state", "patriot". Comparing the associations given to the European group of concepts with those given to the words, related to the nation state, the conclusion is that they follow different logic. The first group refers to categories of practice, the most institutionally operationalized is 'the EU" ; the most value based is 'the European'. With the exception of few answers for the word "The European", the associations could not be related to subjective identifications. The associations given to the words, related to the nation state ('Bulgaria', 'nation state', 'patriot') "catch" more identifications modes, feelings of affection and belonging, than categories of practice. A very few of the respondents think in political categories, which is the main RECON presumption, related to the different types of European identity. The conclusion is that as a whole the RECON methodology tries to construct this identity instead of reconstructing it.