

MAY 2021

# AN IDENTITARIAN EUROPE? SUCCESSSES AND LIMITS OF THE DIFFUSION OF THE FRENCH IDENTITARIAN MOVEMENT



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# **An Identitarian Europe? Successes and Limits of the Diffusion of the French Identitarian Movement**

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The Identitarian Movement (IM) was born in France in 2002-2003, founded by Fabrice Robert, Guillaume Luyt, and Philippe Vardon in the weeks following the dissolution of the far-right group *Unité radicale*. Over the past 19 years, several associations have been involved in the French IM: *Les Identitaires* (LI) and the *Bloc Identitaire* (BI) have alternated as the “adult” organizations, while *Les Jeunesses Identitaires* (JI), *Une Autre Jeunesse* (UAJ), and *Génération Identitaire* (GI) have successively embodied its “youth” branch.

*Génération Identitaire* (GI), founded in 2012, progressively became the figurehead of the IM before being administratively dissolved by the French government in March 2021. Since then, activists have been barred from carrying out any action in the name of *Génération Identitaire*. If the decision has not affected *Les Identitaires* or local associations (such as the Identitarian bars or cultural associations), it has thrown into jeopardy the GI brand they have successfully diffused throughout Europe.

The French Identitarian movement<sup>1</sup> claims an attachment to a certain civilizational identity linked to the European continent. In addition to structuring their movement into local chapters, each of which is responsible for the defense and promotion of local identities, the activists strive to embody this common European identity at the European level.<sup>2</sup> They have, it seems, succeeded in doing so: since its creation, the French Identitarian movement has effectively maintained links with counterparts in Europe.

*Bloc Identitaire* was the first entity to do so, establishing connections with *Lega Nord* (LN—Italy),<sup>3</sup> *Vlaams Belang* (VB—Belgium),<sup>4</sup> *Plataforma per Catalunya* (PxC—Spain),<sup>5</sup> and the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ—Austria). Its leaders then succeeded in exporting the identitarian model to Switzerland,<sup>6</sup> Portugal (*Causa Identitaria*), and Spain (*Assemblea Identitaria*). *Bloc Identitaire* thus both built a network of European parties and, to a lesser extent, diffused its model to other countries, two dimensions emphasized by Fabrice Robert:

If some movements are clearly inspired by us (*Causa Identitaria* in Portugal, *Assemblea Identitaria* in Spain or *Les Identitaires de Romandie*, in Switzerland), others obviously existed before us, such as the *Lega Nord* or *Vlaams Belang*.<sup>7</sup>

These initiatives around *Bloc Identitaire* gradually faded away before it died out and was replaced in 2016 by an empty shell, *Les Identitaires*.

From 2012 onwards, however, *Génération Identitaire*, which had just been created in France, set up in several European countries: in Austria, where the *Identitäre Bewegung Österreich* (Austrian Identitarian Movement—IBÖ) now has around a hundred activists in seven local sections and three “*patriotische zentren*” (patriotic centers); in Germany, where the *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* (IBD) is now present in every *Land* and has opened the largest Identitarian house in Europe; and finally in Italy (*Generazione Identitaria*—GI-IT). In 2013, a branch of the GI was established in the Czech Republic (*Generace identity*—GI-CZ). In 2016, a Hungarian branch was founded (*Identitas Generacio*—GI-HU). In 2017, *Generation Identity* (GI-UK) was launched in the United Kingdom and

Ireland, as well as in Slovenia (GI-SL), before reaching Denmark (GI-DK) in 2018 and Russia in 2019 (Generation Identity Russia—GI-RU).

But what has actually been “diffused” to these different countries? How did this diffusion occur, and with what effects? And, above all, why did it happen?

## **Framing the Study of the Diffusion of the Identitarian Movement**

Bloc Identitaire (BI)’s European connections have been mentioned occasionally in scholarly research,<sup>8</sup> with the Portuguese case receiving particular attention.<sup>9</sup> The Identitarian movement has also been mentioned in studies on the European far right and its networks.<sup>10</sup> Some of these national sections, have given rise to research<sup>11</sup> that, however, does not question the “how” or “why” behind a group’s foundation in a given country. More recently, Anita Nissen has examined the Europeanization of the Identitarian movement in her dissertation.<sup>12</sup> In it, she interrogates why GI and the Fortress Europe (FE) movement have “Europeanized” their demands. She highlights the longevity of the GI “coalition” in Europe and specifies what is meant by the Europeanization of the movement:

Due to the GI and FE groups’ limited material resources, their focus on diffuse and politicized issues, their prevalent use of demonstrative and, in some cases, disruptive protest forms, and their views on the EU [Eurosceptic and conflictual], they were not expected to seek EU institutional access. [...] The data gathered confirms these assumptions, as none of the extra-parliamentary FE nor GI groups have taken their claims to Brussels or Strasbourg [...] Far-right groups mainly use domestic and outsider strategies for targeting the EU and especially domestic decision-makers. [...] Hence, none of the GI nor FE groups ‘Europeanized’ their collective action to a high extent, except for the mobilization around European issues. [...] while they did hold a few joint ‘transnational protests,’ most of their protests remained at the domestic level, either in the form of domestic protests or domestication, despite the European scope of the ‘crisis’. [...] The two transnational coalitions organize very similarly as transnational movements [...] The extra-parliamentary networking and frame construction thus largely occurs externally from the EU institutions, and instead involves the transnational space.<sup>13</sup>

This last piece of research is decisive for our approach. Nissen’s work is part of a research effort that inquires into the Europeanization of collective action, a question that emerged in the mid-1990s. The hypothesis of her research<sup>14</sup> is that opening up to the European arena (EU) should lead to a shift: in addition to mobilizations of national actors at the national level, mobilizations of European actors ought to emerge at the European level.<sup>15</sup> Some research has confirmed this development, albeit with nuances.<sup>16</sup> According to researchers, Europeanization is a complex phenomenon marked by a diversity of expressions:<sup>17</sup> the actor (is it European or national?), the issue (is it the EU or nation-state related?), and finally the target (is it the EU structures or the national authorities?) must all be considered. Nissen’s work shows that, in the case of GI, even if the actor is transnational, the target is essentially national.

The Europeanization of the movement is therefore limited. This is all the more so because the Identitaires’ definition of Europe is not linked to the EU: when they mention Europe, the activists refer to the continent more than to the European institutions, which they criticize excessively.<sup>18</sup> For them, then, an issue described as “European” is an issue for Europe—for the continent more than for the European Union. Moreover, the movement extends beyond the borders of the EU, as the existence of a section in Russia attests. In view of Nissen’s conclusions on this point and of this definition of Europe’s identity, the analytical framework of Europeanization will not be used in what follows.

Moreover, it should be noted that this framework does not allow us to answer the “how” of the observed transnationalization. What will be explored here is precisely this trans-national diffusion process.

Diffusion is defined by Katz as “the acceptance of some specific item, over time, by adopting units—individuals, groups, communities—that are linked both to external channels of communication and to each other by means of both a structure of social relations and a system of values, or culture.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, explaining the process of diffusion involves identifying these four characteristics (items, actors, mechanisms, and channels) while taking into account their temporal and spatial dimensions.

The question of diffusion is linked to a variety of fields of research in political science, including the diffusion of new technologies, public policies, or political regimes.<sup>20</sup> For Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule, “one of the most prominent areas of research on diffusion, however, is in the field of social movements.”<sup>21</sup> In their opinion, the question of diffusion informs the study of social movements as a whole: “one cannot understand social movements—how they evolve, how they expand, how they engage the political arena—without understanding the dynamics of diffusion.”<sup>22</sup> Successive attempts have been made to explain the diffusion of social movements: using perspectives close to crowd psychology,<sup>23</sup> it was first thought of as a phenomenon of “contagion,”<sup>24</sup> and was later likened to imitation.<sup>25</sup>

These explanations, however, fail to explain why diffusion occurred in some cases and not in others. Faced with these aporias, a more structural trend emerged— notably with the work of Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam—that was linked to the theories of resource mobilization and mobilization cycles.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Isabelle Sommier perceives a more recent trend that draws on the “rediscovery of interactionism,” and is based on the “rehabilitation of the microsociological level.”<sup>27</sup> The framework proposed by Sidney Tarrow in 2005<sup>28</sup> belongs to this last trend; it gives pride of place to questions of information and interactions between actors. This is similar to the approach taken by Sean Chabot,<sup>29</sup> who insists on the importance of dialogue between actors. Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule also adopt this perspective when discussing diffusion and grasping the multi-dimensionality of the process.

There are two reasons why this analytical framework has rarely been applied to right-wing movements. First, social movement scholars tend to focus on “good causes”<sup>30</sup> at the expense of what some call “ugly movements”<sup>31</sup>: most of the literature on social movements has focused on progressive, environmental, anti-globalization, or anti-austerity movements, while conservative, nationalist, and far-right movements have received less attention. These trends are also true in the subfield of social movement diffusion, perhaps reinforced by the fact that nationalist and far-right movements are seen as state-centric and “closed” in nature.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, research on the far right has intensely and extensively studied political parties,<sup>33</sup> but not social movements. As Pietro Castelli Gattinara notes, “few studies have gone beyond electoral politics.”<sup>34</sup> Since researchers that specialize in the extreme right have shown a (relative<sup>35</sup>) lack of interest in extreme right-wing social movements, their diffusion has gone largely unstudied. It thus remains an “unthought”<sup>36</sup> in the field of the extreme right. Tellingly, the framework of analysis of social movements has been applied to this field, but to political parties: Steven Van Hauwaert has used this framework to explain the Front National’s (FN) master frame diffusion in Europe,<sup>37</sup> thereby viewing the FN party provisionally as a social movement.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, scholars of the far right and of social movements focus on political parties and on progressive movements, respectively, leaving the diffusion of far-right social movements in a gray zone. I thus intend to draw on both bodies of literature to shed light on the extra-parliamentary extreme right and explain its organizational diffusion.<sup>39</sup> Based on the conclusions of Steven Van Hauwaert, which are

closest to my analysis, I thus apply the analytical framework of the diffusion of social movements to the Identitarian movement.

## Analyzing Diffusion: Data Utilized

The objective is not to list every GI-influenced undertaking or event in Europe since 2012. Drawing up an inventory would be complicated: not only are there an extremely large number of Facebook pages or websites that use graphic codes and identity themes,<sup>40</sup> but there is no real merit in doing so because these virtual pages hide many variable militant realities (sections without militants, inactive, or very active sections).

The organizations included in this study were chosen because they met two complementary requirements: 1) being Identitarian; and 2) having a similar status. Nine chapters met these criteria; all are national chapters officially attached to the European Identitarian movement. Indeed, all of them are stakeholders of Generation Identity Europe (GI-Europe), a European coordination structure for Identitarian initiatives created at the beginning of 2019, according to the organization's website (generationidentity.eu), which published the list (see Figures 1 and 2).<sup>41</sup>

These nine sections were interviewed between March 2018 and May 2019, through an open-ended questionnaire in English sent via e-mail.<sup>42</sup> Each chapter was contacted first through its official email address, and then, if no response was forthcoming, through official social networks. The objective was to ensure that the person contacted had the authority to speak on behalf of the movement. Each chapter was sent the same initial message, which detailed research that had already been conducted and the objectives of the study, then requested an interview. If agreement was given, the chapter was sent an open-ended questionnaire. Each chapter received the same questionnaire,

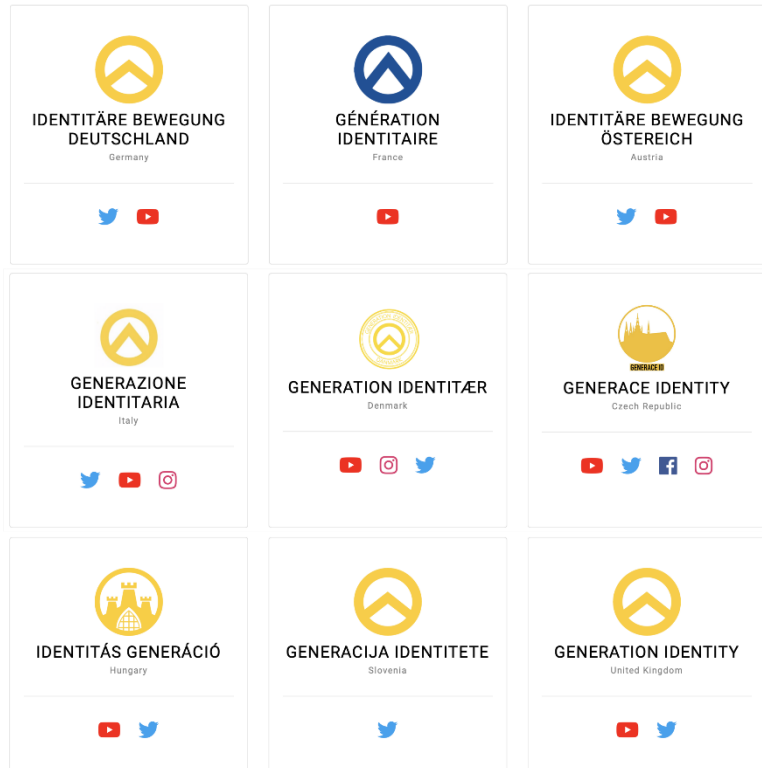


Figure 1. The nine national chapters associated with GI-Europe [Logos]

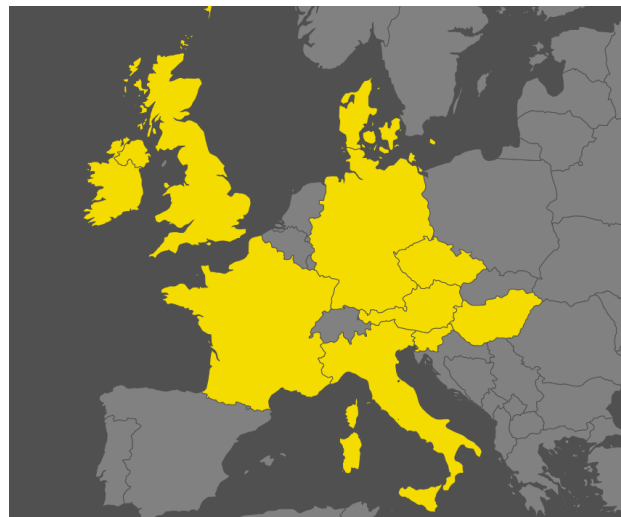


Figure 2. The nine national chapters associated with GI-Europe [Carte]

divided into three themes:<sup>43</sup> creation of the chapter, its current status, and links between European chapters. The questionnaire made it possible to gather the history of each chapter, to get an overview of its functioning in its given country and how it was established, and to evaluate the existence or not of a European network. In most cases, the exchange was conducted with a national spokesperson. In two cases, the exchanges took place with the national secretariat, which took it upon itself to collect answers from several cadres.

The modalities of these interviews were therefore particularly constrained (an exchange of emails conducted in English, which is not the mother tongue of most of the respondents). While all the chapters agreed the interview in principle, two failed to send answers despite reminders (IBÖ, GI-DK) (see Table 1). Finally, in order to verify and complete this information, archives were consulted: the official websites, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and YouTube channels of the organizations, the main leaders, and the militant press,<sup>44</sup> as well as press articles and the websites of their political opponents. This work was carried out on each of the chapters to the best of our linguistic abilities.<sup>45</sup>

The paper aims to answer three key questions: (1) What have the Identitarians diffused in Europe? (2) How did this diffusion occur? (3) And with what effects? By answering these questions and comparing the diffusion of the Bloc Identitaire to that of the Génération Identitaire, I identify the reasons for the latter's "success."

## The French Identitaires: What Have They Diffused?

Classically, the literature distinguishes two categories of diffusion object: *behavioral* diffusions (tactics and repertoires of collective action); and *ideational* diffusions (schemas of interpretation that give a mobilization meaning by defining its stakes, goals, and targets).<sup>46</sup> The natures of the object may be very diverse and thus must be specified.

The first characteristic of the diffusion object is to represent an innovation, i.e. "something that is perceived as new by an adopter."<sup>47</sup> Steven Van Hauwaert, taking up the typology elaborated by Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Marco Giugni,<sup>48</sup> distinguishes several possible kinds of innovation:<sup>49</sup> form of organization (internal structure of an organization, its hierarchy, distribution of militant work, degree of centralization); the mobilization's content (ideology, objectives, ideas); and its form of collective action. These three types of innovation can interact with each other<sup>50</sup> and combine in a "master frame." David Snow and Robert Benford, who forged the concept, explain it as an attempt to name the reality that makes it possible "to articulate and align a vast array of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and meaningful fashion."<sup>51</sup> The constitution of a "master frame" is by nature likely to facilitate diffusion.<sup>52</sup>

The second characteristic of the object is its adaptability. Its adoption is coupled with an adaptation to the "temper of the times and the institutional structures in which the collectivity or the movement is embedded."<sup>53</sup> Independent of the object in question, David Snow and Robert Benford observe the following: "A variety of cultural items were objects of diffusion, including religious rituals, practices and symbols, collective action tactics, political symbols and cultural icons. But none of these items was imported [...] without some modification."<sup>54</sup> In order to grasp what is diffused, one must therefore look not only at the object adopted but also at its modifications. Frameworks are not fixed but are subject to "strategic revisions or innovations as conditions change, an issue evolves or new social actors enter a contentious arena."<sup>55</sup>

What is the diffusion object in the case of the Identitarian movement? Diffusion concerns (1) the forms and symbols of the organization, (2) the mobilization's content, and (3) its forms of collective action.



## 1. Diffusion of Organization: Forms and Symbols

The most obvious diffusion in the case of the Identitarian movement concerns the organization itself. Two dimensions can be distinguished here: first (1.1) the structure of the organization,<sup>56</sup> i.e., everything that has to do with an organization's form and internal structures; and second (1.2), the way an organization is embodied in symbols, which comprise its image.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.1. Diffusion of Organizational Forms

Three dimensions characterize the structure of *Génération identitaire* in France: (1) a relatively high degree of institutionalization, on the fringe of the traditional political field but integrated into the extreme right-wing field; (2) weak centralization and autonomous local entities; and (3) a depersonalized hierarchy, the functioning of which revolves around executive offices and which has no official leader but only spokespersons.<sup>58</sup>

The first dimension is one adopted from the French by all the European groups, which unanimously insist on the activist and metapolitical dimension of their commitment; indeed, they reject electoral parties and see themselves as marginal on the electoral field. In Germany, for example, the IBD takes the form of an official association, while its Italian counterpart claims to be “non-partisan” (*apartitica*). For the most part, however, they maintain links of varying intensity with political parties in their country: the AfD in Germany,<sup>59</sup> the FPÖ in Austria,<sup>60</sup> the Lega in Italy,<sup>61</sup> and UKIP in the United Kingdom.<sup>62</sup>

The second dimension is also borrowed from the French model, with the creation of local chapters in various European countries. In Austria, for example, the movement is structured around local branches in seven *Bundesländer*.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, in Italy, there are six sections (*sezioni*), mainly in the north of the country, but also in Sardinia and Rome.<sup>64</sup> In Germany, the movement claims to be present in all the *Länder*. This is also the case in countries where the movement is far less established, such as the Czech Republic: “Here is GI Prague, Brno, Ostrava [in fact including all Silesia], GI North Bohemia, South Bohemia, West Bohemia and GI East, which includes East Bohemia and Moravia.”<sup>65</sup> GI-UK is now divided into four sections: one each in Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. The structuring of local chapters is apparently not yet complete, but the movement has demonstrated its ability to act in several cities simultaneously.<sup>66</sup> The only exception seems to be Hungary, but this seems to be due more to the small number of activists (about 20), most of whom are active in Budapest, than to any will to centralize.<sup>67</sup> This second dimension alone does not present any innovation in itself, as parties are frequently organized around local branches. What is innovative is the autonomy of these chapters, which, with their local/regional identity (claimed by all the groups), are not subject to the initiative of the center.

The third dimension—depersonalized hierarchy—also seems to have been diffused. Indeed, in most countries it is difficult to identify any leader of the established movement. In the German case, for example, the website presents many activists, none of whom are designated as the movement's leader:<sup>68</sup> no distinctions are made regarding the members' status in the association. In Italy, some activists are presented as the association's “representatives” or “spokespersons,” but no pyramidal structure arises from this. The situation is similar in Austria, where Martin Sellner<sup>69</sup> and Patrick Lénart are presented as spokespersons (*Sprecher*). However, the pair benefit from their seniority and their status as founders, which makes them *de facto* leaders of the movement.<sup>70</sup> In the United Kingdom, where Benjamin Jones is presented as the “leader,” the organizational structure appears more pyramidal.

## 1.2. Diffusion of Organizational Symbols

The symbol, as its renown grows, is the visible mark of the organization, whereby the former becomes indissociable from the latter, and evokes it systematically and automatically. Michel Offerlé writes of this crucial dimension:

The first resource that an organization can offer is its brand, its acronym [...] which can have an international scope and value: by guaranteeing through its seniority and notoriety a second identity to whoever can avail themselves of it, it allows one to gather on the political market, and in daily interactions, the profits of distinction that are attached to it.<sup>71</sup>

Concerning the symbols of *Génération identitaire* as they have appeared in France, three types can be identified: (1) the name and in particular the label *identitaire*; (2) the logo, the “lambda”; and (3) the colors of the movement (black and yellow).

On each of these three dimensions, the diffusion is straightforward: the name is sometimes the literal translation of the French name (GI-IT, GI-CZ, GI-HU, GI-UK), or a very similar version (IBD, IBÖ). As Cécile Leconte points out, the retention of the term “identity” in the German-language version is also strategically useful, as it “allows one to escape the much more stigmatizing term ‘völkisch’, or even neo-Nazi.”<sup>72</sup> The different groups have all seized upon this “identity” innovation, taking it up in their respective national contexts.

The logo chosen by the French was also transferred, as were the colors (black and yellow). The other European movements claim this logo “as the symbol of the identity movement”<sup>73</sup> not only at the national but also at the European level (see Figure 3). Revealingly, they employ the same justification<sup>74</sup> for using this logo that the French activists have expressed since 2007:

Painted on a shield, it refers to the city of Lacedemona, Sparta. On a poster, or a flag flying in a demonstration, it is the symbol with which young identitarians have chosen to identify [...] in reference to the mythical Sparta and its heroes.<sup>75</sup>

For example, the British site states, “Our symbol, the lambda, was used by the Spartans at the battle of Thermopylae in 480BC.”<sup>76</sup> In a tweet on August 28, 2018, the Italians commemorated the battle of Thermopylae and added: “Remember the heroes of Europe and the importance of the Lambda.”<sup>77</sup> Sometimes, the symbol is even more explicitly linked with the Spartans: “Our symbol is the lambda, which adorned the shield of the Spartans.”<sup>78</sup> The Germans also refer to “the lambda of the Spartans.”<sup>79</sup> In addition to having taken up the logo popularized by the French, they have also appropriated its origin and meaning of resistance, of a fight to the end. The initial colors of *Génération identitaire* (yellow and black), also from the UAJ campaign, have also been integrated.<sup>80</sup> Even though the French movement changed its visual identity in 2018, preferring blue and white,<sup>81</sup> black and yellow have remained the colors of the other European organizations.



Figure 3. Logos of the European Chapters reading: (from left to right and top to bottom): the former GI logo and the new one, followed by the logos of the IBD, the IBO, GI-IT, and GI-UK.

## 2. Diffusion of Mobilization Content

There has also been a diffusion of mobilization content. The ideational model is one whereby the French movement identifies threats (insecurity, the “great replacement”), attributes them to causes (immigration, globalization, the “system”), and proposes remedies (remigration, localism, rootedness). These themes indeed inhabit the core of the other European sections, and thus attest to the diffusion of GRECE’s notions of “the great replacement” and “ethnodifferentialism.” Deglobalization, a subject that activists in France buy into less and less, is also less of a topic in the other European sections.

All the various national groups refer to the issue of the great replacement (French: *grand remplacement*). The German-speaking world<sup>82</sup> refers to this issue as the *große Austausch*, while in Italy it is called the *Grande Sostituzione*. The GI-IT website, for example, devotes a page to explaining the fear of a “complete replacement of the original peoples of Europe,”<sup>83</sup> attributing the term to the “French sociologist [sic] Renaud Camus.”<sup>84</sup> The Austrian Identitarians make a similar argument, backed by statistics and graphs, on their site: “You will end up being a minority in your own country! We call this process the great replacement, and we will stop it.”<sup>85</sup> The Austrian Identitarians have also made many videos on this theme.<sup>86</sup> Comparable demonstrations are published on the websites of the IBD<sup>87</sup> and GI-UK.<sup>88</sup> All these activists share this fear of the “great replacement,” which in their discourse is linked to Islamization. The source of Islamization is then tied to migration, which is said to represent an ethnocultural risk. Their objectives<sup>89</sup> thus articulate the same dimensions observable in France: 1) stopping immigration and border surveillance; 2) remigration, which, according to GI-UK,<sup>90</sup> is the “humane repatriation of anyone who has entered our countries illegally” and “reversing migration flows”; and 3) re-rooting, which involves the defense and preservation of one’s local, national, and civilizational identity.<sup>91</sup>

Telling here is the diffusion of the notion of ethnodifferentialism, a legacy of GRECE that forms the main distinction between the extreme right and the Identitaires. The ethnodifferentialist argument crops up in the discourse of the British activists, who state, for example, that “we want to preserve the identity of each and every people and culture [...] We want to preserve the identity of our own people in its distinctiveness along with all the other peoples of the world.” Similarly, the IBD defends a “right” to ethno-pluralism: “Each ethnic group has the right to preserve its culture, customs, and traditions, that is to say, its ethno-cultural identity.”<sup>92</sup> As it did for GRECE and the Identitaires before them, this ethnodifferentialist dimension allows them to fend off accusations of racism. This specifically “identitarian” innovation, inherited from the French New Right’s theory of ethnodifferentialism, has thus been diffused.<sup>93</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that some themes that are already waning in France, such as globalization/localism, are not (or are only weakly) taken up by activists in Europe. For the respective national leaders, these questions are not part of the Identitarian movement’s concerns. For Damiano Maris (GI-IT), for example, the identity movement is “exclusively concerned with mass immigration, Islamization and ethnic replacement.” For the Czech leader, the fundamentals are similar: “We are involve [sic] in the same topics like Identitarian movements in France, Germany or Italy. We stand against immigration, great replacement of European people, Islamisation.” A whole section of the initial framing has disappeared: initially, immigration was only one of the effects of globalization and had to be fought in the same way as Americanization, for example. By the time the diffusion process began, this theme was no longer central to the communication of the French Identitarian movement, let alone that of GI. Thus abandoned, it never spread to other European countries or is only found in a very anecdotal way (a few posters advocating localism in Italy, for example).

### 3. Diffusion of Forms of Collective Action

Cécile Leconte observes within the European identitarian movement a “transnational diffusion of repertoires of action.”<sup>94</sup> This diffusion can be illustrated by a few key examples. From this point of view, the French Identitaires represent an innovation within the extreme right because they have seized on the modalities of action specific to certain movements outside their partisan milieu, such as Greenpeace or Sea Shepherd, which they openly claim as inspirations. This dissemination of forms of collective action concerns both their “agitprop” actions and more traditional forms of action. Occasionally, this diffusion extends to adaptations, or even to innovations.

First, there is a noticeable diffusion of agitprop actions. GI activists are known in France for actions that consist of occupying rooftops (the roof of the Poitiers mosque in 2012, that of the Socialist Party in 2014, and that of the Parisian headquarters of the European Commission in 2015). Some actions do not lead to “blocking,” like those that consist of deploying a banner on a bridge over (most often) a highway.<sup>95</sup> These modes of action are found in the various European chapters. For example, in May 2015, Austrian activists occupied the balcony of a European Union building (see Figure 4). In August 2016, German activists climbed atop the Brandenburg Gate (Berlin, see Figure 4) to demand increased border security.<sup>96</sup> Italians have also mobilized by unfurling banners on bridges (see Figure 6). Similarly, for the launch of Generation Identity in the United Kingdom and Ireland (see Figure 5), activists carried out agitprop actions by deploying banners on bridges: this occurred in London (October 2017), Edinburgh (February 2018), and Dublin (in November 2017 and February 2018).



Figure 4. Actions by Identitarians in Vienna (2015) and Berlin (2018). Source: author's screenshot of social media posts



Figure 5. Actions by Identitarians in London (Oct. 2017), Edinburgh (Feb. 2018), and Dublin (Feb. 2018). Source: author's screenshot of social media posts





Figure 6. Actions by Italian Identitarians in 2015 and 2018. Source: author's screenshot of social media posts

Second, European Identitarians draw on more classic forms of action that can also be observed in France. In France, GI organizes demonstrations, such as those it carried out jointly with the BI on remigration in 2014 or those it did unaided around the theme “We are at home” in 2016. The same is true in Italy (Turin, May 2016) and in Austria, where activists have organized several events, like those against the “great replacement” in June 2015 and those to “Defend Europe” in June 2016. The German Identitarians also organized one on the theme “Zukunft für Europa” (A Future for Europe) in Berlin in June 2017. Without taking over exactly the codes of the French Identitarian Summer University, other national chapters have sometimes organized national militant training sessions: in Austria, Martin Sellner brought together his militants for a training weekend,<sup>97</sup> and in Italy, one was carried out together with Slovenian militants.<sup>98</sup> The activists also organize soup runs for the homeless, just as their French counterparts have since the beginning of the movement. GI activists call this “Génération solidaire.” From their creation, the British seized on this practice and ensured the distribution of meals.<sup>99</sup> German<sup>100</sup> and Austrian<sup>101</sup> activists also did, albeit more modestly. In Italy the modus operandi is different, though their campaign does take its name from the French outfit (*Generazione Solidaria*): the activists bring intermittent help to struggling families or single people, and step up during disasters.

As in France, the various groups in Europe also engage in other, more classical dimensions of activism (poster campaigns, distribution of leaflets in the street, etc.). Moreover, in all these countries, actions alone are not enough: the organizations are mediatized, sharing their activities—whether live or recorded—via their websites and social networks. Real activism thus extends into virtual activism.<sup>102</sup> The French idea of working in “networks” with partner organizations, such as the women’s blog *Belle et Rebelle* or the site Novopress, an identity-based press agency, has also spread. A case in point is the creation of structures dedicated to women, which denounce both immigration and feminism while promoting a new feminism: in Italy, *Le identitarie* is the women’s wing of GI-IT, and it deploys such slogans as “Feminism is against women.”<sup>103</sup> The #120db campaign launched in Germany sought to denounce violence against women:<sup>104</sup> the spokesperson of the campaign was a well-known figure of the German Identitarian movement. In addition to associations, the Identitarians have also created brands like *Phalanx Europa*,<sup>105</sup> which sells clothes, books, and posters designed to lead the “revolt with style,”<sup>106</sup> and *Pils Identitär*,<sup>107</sup> “the craft beer of the Identitarians.”<sup>108</sup>

Third, innovations sometimes come from the European sections themselves, which thus contribute to the existing repertoire of actions. This is the case of the so-called IB-Zone, or the “identity zones,” established in Austria, which consist of placing a stand in the middle of a street to promote the association.<sup>109</sup> Also in Austria, activists organize annual conferences during which they bring together activists from all over the country. In the same way, some foreign activists put to good use a means of

communication that the French Identitarians neglected: YouTube. These activists have become “YouTubers,” posting videos on the platform on a weekly or even daily basis to promote their ideas. Martin Sellner<sup>110</sup> was quick to do this, but Hungarian and British leaders also capitalized on it. And these innovations had a knock-on effect: the French themselves began to use YouTube, stage activists, conduct sidewalk surveys, and so on.

The diffusion appears to be complete: all that which makes up the specificity of the French movement has been diffused (forms of organization, content of mobilization, and forms of collective action). The diffusion is not “whole cloth,” since the diffused object has been adapted to the culture, history and politics of other contexts.<sup>111</sup> However, it should be noted that the diffused object did not have to be adapted to an organizational context: in all these cases, the organization was created concomitantly with the diffusion.<sup>112</sup> In the case of the diffusion described by Steven Van Hauwaert, the FN’s “master frame” was adapted to the respective political and organizational culture; the latter is absent in our case. Adaptation here takes place in relation only to a political context and not to an “organizational” context.

There are two explanations for this singular breadth of the diffusion object as well as its poor adaptation. First, diffusion processes are commonly subject to two types of constraints. The first depends on the organization that adopts the innovation: its history, its roots, its ideas. The second depends on the national context in which the organization evolves. Thus, in the case where the adopter is not an existing organization, the organizational constraint is weak or non-existent (there is no pre-existing organizational culture, no prior program to adhere to). Second, the closer the constraining framework is to the original (*organization*), the stronger the imposition and the greater the adaptation required; conversely, the less close it is (*political system, national history*), the weaker the imposition and the adaptation.

Concerning the diffusion of the *Identitaires*, Cécile Leconte talks of the “implementation of a ‘franchise.’”<sup>113</sup> This idea presupposes that, to become established, one must declare one’s agreement with the “brand.” Have the French Identitarians approved these appropriations?

## How the Identitarians Diffused in Europe

In his critical synthesis of works on the diffusion of social movements, Steven Van Hauwaert distinguishes four mechanisms of transnational diffusion.<sup>114</sup> The first one, *coercion*, is rather typical of a vertical diffusion. The process is based on an asymmetry of power between the agent who transmits the innovation and the one who receives it. The transmitter imposes the innovation on the receiver, forcing him to adopt it. The second mechanism is *competition*: diffusion is motivated by the adoption of an object in order to gain or maintain a comparative advantage over other competitors. Van Hauwaert then distinguishes *learning* from *emulation*. Learning is defined as “the mechanism whereby FRPs use the experience of other FRPs to estimate the likely consequence of master fame change.” Thus, the adopter observes the effects of the innovation and adopts it if these prove positive. However, learning is not absolute, nor unlimited, nor necessarily rational. What matters is not that the “master frame” is really the cause of the “success” but that the adopter is convinced that this causal link exists. *Emulation* is presented as “the imitation of the actions of self-identified peers so as to increase shared similarities, regardless of whether this is beneficial or not.” The focus here is not on the object, but rather on the actor, whom the adopter wishes to resemble. Thus, diffusion is based more on the social value attached to it (one imitates a prestigious actor). Learning and emulation are difficult to distinguish in practice, but they differ in several respects. For learning to occur, the success of the object must precede diffusion. Similarly, it usually implies an active role on the part of the transmitter. Emulation, meanwhile, does not require these two elements. The mechanisms are not

exclusive; they can be combined, modulated, in a linear way, or not. To explain the process of diffusion, it is therefore necessary to look for a combination of mechanisms and not a mono-causal explanation.

“Adopters must identify at some minimal level with transmitters if diffusion is to occur.”<sup>115</sup> An identification (attribution of similarity), the degree of which can vary, is therefore necessary—whereupon diffusion requires channels to take place. Van Hauwaert’s approach is a synthesis of those of Tarrow<sup>116</sup> and of Chabot.<sup>117</sup> He distinguishes three categories of diffusion channels:<sup>118</sup> interpersonal, impersonal, and mediated. Interpersonal channels link actors directly to each other. The intensity of diffusion varies according to the extent of the dialogue between actors<sup>119</sup> and their social proximity.<sup>120</sup> The interest of this approach lies in its dynamism: the circulation of information increases proximity between actors, reinforcing the network—and thus the actors’ capacity to exchange and collaborate—in a virtuous circle of diffusion. Impersonal channels, on the other hand, do not allow interaction between actors. These channels are mainly of two kinds: the mass media and the Internet.<sup>121</sup> The latter has several advantages over traditional media (decentralized nature, low entry and dissemination costs) and allows a shift from impersonal to interpersonal diffusion, since “the Internet can serve as an interpersonal channel of diffusion, for example in the form of email, Skype or any other messaging service.”<sup>122</sup> The third possibility is that a broker, one who has not adopted the innovation himself, intervenes to diffuse it to another actor. In the present case, this channel is not used.

Van Hauwaert formulates three hypotheses that the Identitarian case can be used to either verify or invalidate:<sup>123</sup> 1) the existence of a link between mechanisms and channels, considering that learning is linked to interpersonal diffusion and emulation is linked to impersonal diffusion; 2) impersonal diffusion and emulation occur at the beginning of the diffusion process, while interpersonal diffusion and learning are at the heart of the process; and 3) these two mechanisms are not necessarily linear and exclusive, and can therefore overlap and complement each other.<sup>124</sup>

The diffusion of *Génération identitaire* first occurred through impersonal channels following a mechanism of emulation before it started taking interpersonal channels within spaces of dialogue among militants. This process of horizontal diffusion has, however, relied on mechanisms more typical of vertical diffusion (competition and coercion) according to very specific modalities. These channels were established after the adopters effected an identification with the transmitters.

## 1. Identification: A Necessary Prerequisite

If effective dialogue does not necessarily imply a similarity or proximity of actors, these can nevertheless facilitate diffusion.<sup>125</sup> In the case of the Identitarians, this identification is based primarily on the movement’s ideology, but reinforced by contextual effects.

Indeed, for Identitarian activists, identification is first and foremost an ideological issue. While local chapters materialize the existence of local identities, the European diffusion consecrates the existence of a European identity, a civilizational identity. The other European activists also promote this idea. GI-HU, for example, underlines that “as we share an ethnocultural heritage, it’s common sense to work together.” Thus, the diffusion in Europe appears as a logical continuity of the commitment to a European identity; it even serves to bring the movement into line with its ideological framework. Moreover, the activists consider that this civilizational identity builds a “community of destiny,” one that binds all Europeans. This idea is perceptible in my exchanges with the IBD: “we like to form a feeling for our European heritage, future, and fate.”<sup>126</sup>



Europe is therefore both a common past and a future to be built together, hence the importance of this transnational cooperation. For the Identitarians, this civilizational tropism existed even before links were forged with like-minded Europeans. They understand themselves as among Europeans who share a history, an ethno-cultural heritage, a “community of destiny.” This explains why they seek to spread the movement; it is to actualize this identification. The collective identity of the movement at the European level is grafted onto the belief in this civilizational community. Moreover, the collective identity comes to be reinforced by the setting-up of interpersonal channels in a dynamic of mutual reinforcement.

The identification can be reinforced by the effects of context at the political and social levels. The Austrians of the IBÖ, for example, explain: “We know that, for us Europeans, the 21st century presents difficult problems to solve and many challenges.”<sup>127</sup> The activists feel that they share a common experience, that they face the same problems. These problems are no longer national but European. As such, they require a European response and justify an alliance: “You don’t stand your ground alone in your country, because you know there are people in many countries who think and feel the same way about the important matters of our time” (IBD).

These issues take several forms in the discourse of the different European sections: the Italians mention the beginnings of the migrant crisis in 2012, as do the Slovenians; the Germans observe “the formation of so-called ‘no go areas’ and rising problems with Non-European immigrants.” Martin Sellner’s speech at the Paris demonstration in 2016 provided a synthesis of these issues, allegedly shared by all European countries:

The same fight we are fighting in Vienna is your fight in Paris. We are becoming a minority in our own countries, in our own cities [...] We do not want Europe with immigration, we do not want Europe with open borders, Europe given over to mass immigration, to Islamist terror, we do not want a Europe where our women, our daughters, our sisters are raped.<sup>128</sup>

All the “threats” identified by the French Identitaires crop up here: insecurity, terrorism, replacement—all invariably due to immigration. While these themes have been recurrent in Identitarian discourse since the beginning of the movement, they have found a renewed echo in the context of the so-called “migrant crisis” that Europe has been experiencing since the early 2010s: this migratory phenomenon is perceived as a common threat to all European groups and has worked to strengthen their identification. Terrorist attacks in Europe have had a similar effect. After the attacks in Nice (2016), for example, the German Identitarians demonstrated and complained: “So it’s only a matter of time before major Islamist terrorist attacks are carried out in our country.”<sup>129</sup> This context reinforces the pre-existing conviction of being linked by common issues, issues that must be overcome together.

Thus, identification rests on two sources, ideological and contextual. The contextual elements mentioned reinforce the identification of the activists with each other, and thus facilitate, accelerate, and amplify the diffusion. In the first instance, diffusion takes place through impersonal channels.

## 2. Emulation Through Impersonal Channels

Diffusion first uses impersonal channels. In this first phase of the diffusion process, the media and the Internet play a preeminent role. Indeed, it is thanks to these means that the other European militants first discovered the French movement and began to identify with it. As the Italian cadres explain, a deep impression was left on them by “the publication of the ‘*déclaration de guerre*’ video, following

the occupation of the Poitiers mosque building site.” Similarly, activists in Germany were “inspired by Generation Identitaire, which released a ‘Declaration of War’ and did an action at a mosque in Poitiers.” These two events, one on the Internet, the other with international media coverage, gave the French movement considerable visibility beyond its national borders.

One French cadre recalls the effect of the video:

“[Do you know how the foreign sections were established? How things began abroad?”]

“It all began with two events in 2012: the occupation of the roof of the mosque in Poitiers, which had a monstrous impact, and the launch ‘Declaration of War’ video.

[Which had already been translated?]

“Yeah, it was translated in the heat of the moment. [...] I think it was this video that triggered a lot of motivation for some people in Austria. It was first in Austria that it all began, then in Germany, then a little later in Italy.”

The *Déclaration de guerre* video was published in French on October 5, 2012. By October 13, it had been viewed nearly 60,000 times, and by October 28 more than 110,000 times, which explains why Cécile Leconte describes it as an “ideosystem whose circulation is transnational.”<sup>130</sup> In mid-October, Alban Ferrari, then a cadre of the movement, explained: “the video was copied and reedited with foreign subtitles [...] in German, Spanish, English, Greek, Italian [...] Each time, Europeans unknown to us did it on their own initiative.”<sup>131</sup> He then announced that some individuals had set up an Identitaire Bewegung page on Facebook. A week later, on October 20, the Identitaires occupied the roof of the mosque in Poitiers; the communiqué was distributed in French and English. Information about the event spread far and wide:<sup>132</sup> AFP translated its dispatch into English and Spanish, and it was picked up by Italian and Turkish news agencies the same day, as well as by the Associated Press and Reuters. The French Identitaires appeared in the European press (Spain, Italy, Germany, Portugal, the United Kingdom), in the United States, in Australia, and even in China. In addition to traditional media sites, news about the event was disseminated on the Internet via social networks and sites linked to the Identitarian movement. Outside of this particularly intense period, a similar mechanism is perceptible among Slovenian militants. Indeed, their decision to found a branch of the Identitarian movement in their country came about because they considered it “attractive on social media.”

Thus, prior to any personal links, prior even to the movement’s success, there was real emulation. Activists abroad identified with the French and were seduced by the *Déclaration de guerre* and the Identitarian aesthetic. They therefore decided to broadcast the video, and then to appropriate the movement’s codes. These first impersonal channels remained in place: while the intensity of the media coverage fell subsequently, some activists continued to disseminate information on the Internet that could be used within the network formed.<sup>133</sup> These channels were supplemented by interpersonal channels, which opened the way to several other mechanisms of diffusion.

### 3. Emergence of a Collective Identity via Interpersonal Channels

A second set of diffusion channels, this time of an interpersonal nature, opened up. Two types of interpersonal channels can be identified: “virtual” channels, on the one hand, and “real” ones, on the other.<sup>134</sup>

### 3.1. Interpersonal “Virtual” Channels: Learning and Coercion

In the diffusion process, the Internet played the role of an interpersonal channel, facilitating contact between potential adopters and broadcasters (see Figure 7). Indeed, aspiring Identitarians first got in touch with one or more other national sections, most often by email. The Italians thus wrote to French activists as early as 2012, as did the Germans and Austrians:

They contacted Génération Identitaire via email, asking them whether they could agree on the opening of an Italian branch. The Frenchmen were gladly surprised, as they did not expect to receive such requests, as at the same time some German and Austrian people had contacted them for this very reason.

Similarly, GI-CZ activists made “contact with the French and Austrians” in 2013, and in 2014 the Slovenians turned to the Austrians. The objective of these contacts is clear: to establish a chapter in the country in question.<sup>135</sup> Each new section sought to adopt the movement and import it to another country. This type of contact is quite common, as the various now-established national sections explain. The Italians, the Germans, and the English, for example, acknowledge that they were contacted several times; the Czechs mentioned having had contacts with Poland and Slovakia; young people from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia contacted the Slovenians; and the Hungarians emphasized that they referred the Romanians to French militants, where there is “a militant in charge” of international partnerships.

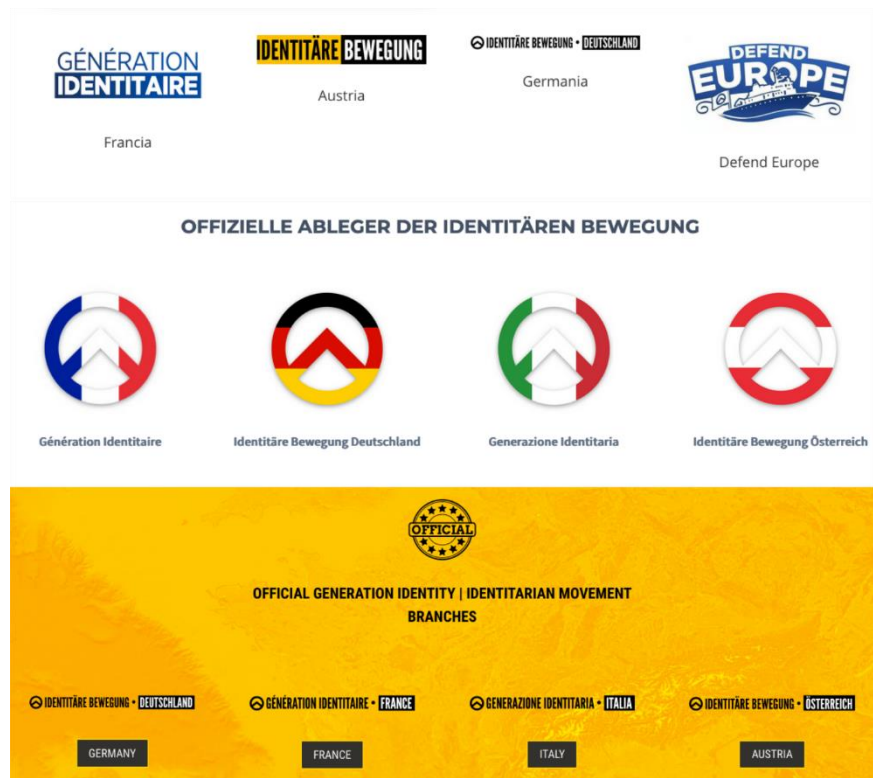


Figure 7. Identitarians present their “allies” in Europe Source: websites of the IBÖ, GI-IT, and GI-UK (screenshots taken by the author)

This suggests that the transmitting agents exert a form of control over the adopting agents. The Slovenians had to obtain the Austrian activists’ “approval” in order to establish their national chapter. The Italians explained that founding a section in 2012 necessitated that specific requirements, or conditions, be met: “The requirements were to observe the guidelines of the French movement.” Exactly what conditions needed to be met were not specified, but comparable elements appear in the diffusion to the Czech Republic: “There were requirements in [the] sense of credibility and potential.” The German militants were more precise: “In order to become a branch of GI, a group had to cut all its ties to the ‘old right’, which all members did before becoming a part of IBD.”

The primary concern is a new branch's lack of capacity to harm the identitarian label. To prevent the "misdeeds" of one European branch from reflecting negatively on the whole movement, it is important to control who is part of it. Benjamin Jones (GI-UK) made this clear when he talked about the process of spreading the movement in a new country: "We look to 1) defend our brand, and 2) ensure that they [the new activists] develop along the right lines in terms of their ideology and practices." This tension can be seen in the history of Identitas Generacio (GI-HU), recounted by Abel Bodi. The structure was founded in 2016, but contacts with European Identitarians only started in 2017. GI-HU did not participate in Defend Europe in the summer of 2017 (which they would in April 2018): for the Hungarian leader, this can be explained by the fact that they "weren't an official GI branch" at the time. Thus, the older branches—France in the case of the diffusion to Italy in 2012, and France and Austria in the case of the diffusion to Hungary in 2017—engage in a form of verification that allows them to exercise a certain degree of control over the adopters. To receive official endorsement, the latter must show their willingness to conform to the ideas and modes of action of the elders; they must prove themselves worthy of the Identitarian label.

Significantly, a form of constraint is exercised here. There is an asymmetry of power between the transmitter and the adopter based on the legitimacy of the former in relation to the latter. This legitimacy comes from the transmitter's being at the origin of the movement or having shown itself able to establish and lead a national chapter. This asymmetry of power tends to be reinforced as the movement spreads: the potential adopter, no longer facing just a national alter ego but a group of actors gathered in a European network, now has to prove their legitimacy to all. However, this is a very different sort of constraint or coercion from the one that Van Hauwaert describes: it is not a question of forcing an agent to adopt an innovation, but rather of prohibiting the agent from adopting it. It is therefore necessary to distinguish in this mechanism of constraint the "imposition of innovation" (defined by Van Hauwaert) from the "retention of innovation" observed here.

In the following, I use the term retention-constraint. If a transmitter cannot really constrain a movement that appropriates its codes on social networks, for example, the transmitter can refuse to officially consecrate this movement or even publicly disavow it. This is, for example, what happened in August 2017 during the white-supremacist demonstration in Charlottesville, during which Identitarian flags were visible. Génération identitaire explained to the *Huffington Post* at the time, "We have no members in the United States and therefore even less of a chapter [...] The symbol can be taken up without us being affiliated in any way with that person."<sup>136</sup> By withholding explicit approval, they were able to prevent the dissemination of the symbol from turning into a diffusion of the movement.

The diffusion process also involves more routine virtual interpersonal channels—that is, spaces for cooperation, exchange, and learning between the different national chapters. Some of these spaces are public, such as social networks or YouTube channels, and enable the existence of the European network to be shown and publicized. Two modalities illustrate this mechanism.

First, these channels may be employed when activists echo an event that has punctuated the life of a foreign section: these activists thus play a relay or support role. Activists or official pages on social networks step in to echo the action of another national chapter.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, when a national cadre has become a subject of controversy, other chapters have taken to social media to publicly express their support. When three French Identitaire cadres were arrested in January 2019, European Identitaires launched a *#FreeOurActivists* campaign on Twitter: activists from Denmark, Italy, Austria, and Germany mobilized to demand the French cadres' release. Similarly, in April 2019, Martin Sellner and IBÖ were suspected of having been connected with the Christchurch terrorist, which they denied. British and German Identitarians expressed their support by taking pictures of themselves with signs

that read: “Solidarity with Martin Sellner.” The British went so far as to express to the Austrian embassy their “disgust at the treatment of Martin Sellner and of the Austrian identity movement.”

Second, members of the network showcase their cooperation on their YouTube channels. Some translate each other’s videos and repost them with subtitles (e.g., GI-HU).<sup>138</sup> Others take the dialogue further by interviewing each other. Martin Sellner, for example, has interviewed Abel Bodi,<sup>139</sup> Lorenzo Fiato,<sup>140</sup> and Tom from GI-UK.<sup>141</sup> The objective here is to share information on the political situation in the countries concerned. This not only increases the visibility of the European dimension of the movement, but also allows for further exchanges and the emergence of a collective identity. Intra-group cooperation is thus simultaneously exhibited and consolidated.

This public cooperation is coupled with private exchanges. The national chapters are “in contact, of course” (GI-CZ) and work together: “It is very important to coordinate with each other and stay in touch” (IBD). According to Abel Bodi (GI-HU) these contacts are regular, even daily: “The connection is daily between the leaders and it’s very important to discuss ideological and missions where every country is involved.”

The virtual interpersonal channels thus allow for the first contacts between transmitters and potential adopters, and initiate both the mechanisms of constraint-retention and learning. In a second phase, they become a means to publicly stage the cooperation of national sections and engage in private exchanges about coordination. While they do allow for the initiation of the learning process, this role mostly gets carried out through “real” interpersonal channels.

### 3.2. “Real” Interpersonal Channels: Learning, Collective Identity, and (Internal) Competition

The first physical meetings that follow the virtual exchanges seem particularly crucial to the diffusion process. As activists from the GI-CZ communicated: “Austrian identitarians visited Prague and met the Czech group.” Subsequently, spaces for meetings and exchanges between European activists began to emerge.

One of these spaces of dialogue is of central importance for the movement’s diffusion: the Identitarian Summer University (UDT), which runs for one week in August every year. Though the first UDT was organized in 2003,<sup>142</sup> it was only in October 2013 that the French announced that “for the first time this summer university was also a European meeting since Austrians, Swedes, Flemings and Germans participated in it.”<sup>143</sup> Martin Sellner was present, as shown in the photos illustrating this article. In an interview with GI, he talks about why he came:

I came to get to know the people in the French movement, of course. It was a very important experience for the Austrians and Germans who came because the fighting spirit here and all the formations did not disappoint us. [...] It is really a fighting community. [...] This is a big plus for us, we will take a lot away and we have benefited a lot from this summer school.<sup>144</sup>

The UDT experience plays a structuring role in the movement’s diffusion in Europe, serving three objectives. First, it is a means for the activists “to get to know each other”—that is, to meet one another, especially when their network is in its initial stages. After the passage from impersonal to interpersonal channels, the diffusion thus passes from the “virtual” to the “real.” Second, it deepens the existing network by creating, through cohesion, a collective identity beyond borders. This is the meaning behind the idea of “fighting community,” which Sellner says he felt during this week of training. Finally, it is a place of political and technical transmission, i.e., a place conducive to learning

through training in the mode of monologue rather than of dialogue. Martin Sellner found the experience enriching, and as he, in his own words, “[took] a lot away” from it, the IBÖ as a whole stood to benefit.

The UDTs constituted the first stone in the “real” network and contributed to deepening it. At the same time, they promoted innovation diffusion through a dynamic of learning that at first was essentially unidirectional. After a time, all the European sections came to participate. The IBÖ’s annual reports, which mention its participation in these “Summer camps in France,” underline the diversity of the participants: “French, German, Italian, Czech, Spanish, Dutch and Austrian identitarians also met.”<sup>145</sup> A French activist in attendance at the Summer University in 2017 detailed this European dimension at length:

The summer university of Génération identitaire, which was just... exceptional. It really was a fantastic week. We were also able to see all the identitarians of Europe. It was really great to be able to meet activists from Norway... to be able to meet a Norwegian, from so far in the north, and to be able to talk with him about identity, European culture, “How is it going in your country?” “Ah well, in mine there is the problem but twice over!” And to be able to talk a little bit about all that with them was great. [...] It was really great to spend a week with like-minded people [...] from all over Europe. Apart from the Norwegian, there were a lot of Italians who were very nice, Austrians, Germans. [...] There was a Scotsman and an Englishman, too, at UDT. We have more and more contacts now in England. [...] It’s really... it’s also very galvanizing. “They can do that, now it’s up to us to show them that we are the best.” So this allows us to meet them, to talk a little about the situation in their country and everything, it was very interesting. [...] And then to be able to talk about that, but also about the problems that, in Austria, in Italy, in Germany, etc., they may have encountered, it is true that we can also say to ourselves, “Ah, well, in our country we have the same thing, but we haven’t looked into it. We haven’t seen things in the same way.” So it was very interesting to be able to meet them, to be able to talk a little bit about our problems and how we acted etc. It was really important and very interesting.

What this excerpt primarily highlights is the existence of real dialogue at the UDT, which marks an advance from the time of the interview with Martin Sellner. Here, a dialogue was really formed: in addition to “seeing” and “meeting” each other, they “speak” with one another. This activist pointedly insists on the fact that at the UDT they “can talk” (stated four times)—and declares these moments of exchange and discussion to be “very important and very interesting” (stated three times). His insistence was illustrated by the fact that he restaged some of these dialogues.

Second, this dialogue is conducive to a form of learning, both about the “situation” in other countries—the “problems” they face—and about the ideas and strategies they have put in place to respond to them. Through simulated dialogues, the activist expressed the emergence of new ideas (“we hadn’t thought about it”), new framings (“we didn’t see things the same way”), and even new practices (“they manage to do that”). That learning, as a mechanism of diffusion, takes place is clearly visible here.

Finally, another mechanism is revealed in this excerpt: competition. The European activists are both allies and rivals, the presence of whom is “hyper-galvanizing.” Thus, a sort of competition is organized for the best national chapter, which serves as a catalyst for diffusion. It is necessary, in the words of one activist, to “show that we are the best.” This reveals a need to surpass oneself by adopting or adapting the strategies learned—or, even better, to surpass the others by innovating. Here, without

an official arena, national chapters compete with each other to see who is the best.<sup>146</sup> Competition does not exist at the beginning of the diffusion process, but emerges during the process itself due to the increasing proximity of the actors. Moreover, this competition does not take place in a new framework, but remains internal to the European activist arena. It does not harm anyone and potentially benefits all, because it maintains the dynamics of the process.

Demonstrations are a second meeting-place for European activists and have come to operate as a real interpersonal channel. Indeed, activists all cross borders to go to each other's demonstrations. The German activists explain, for example, that "when there are rallies, we invite each other along," something the Czech cadres confirm by evoking "demonstrations [...] with international attendance."

Some French activists mentioned these visits during interviews, underlining, for example, that they "went to Austria to go to the demonstration" in Vienna. In May 2016, the IBÖ's Martin Sellner attended the Paris demonstration along with other activists who came to support the idea of the "Austrian youth." In June 2017, Italian activists joined the *Zukunft für Europa* demonstration held in Berlin:<sup>147</sup> it was described as a "pan-European Identitarian demonstration [at which] all European sections were present." In November 2017, Abel Bodi came to France to participate with another Hungarian activist in the demonstration *Face aux islamistes défendons l'Europe* (Let's defend Europe against Islamists), together with Austrian, British, Irish, German, and Danish activists.<sup>148</sup> More recently, in January 2019, many European groups joined Parisian GI activists during the "Paris Pride March." Benjamin Jones (GI-UK) announced in a video posted on Telegram: "I am here in Paris today, with a sizable delegation from the UK branch, to participate in the Sainte Genevieve patriotic march."<sup>149</sup>

These meetings continue to fulfil several objectives and thus ensure diffusion through various mechanisms. Some consider them an opportunity to travel and observe another national<sup>150</sup> or activist reality. Benjamin Jones explains that he went there to "learn from those groups, especially Génération identitaire obviously in France,"<sup>151</sup> highlighting a mechanism of learning. According to the Hungarian activists, these meetings are primarily a way to strengthen the existing network and to deepen relationships: they enthuse that it permitted them to "build our relationship with our allies, establish friendships which later will be useful in the fight."<sup>152</sup> The goal is thus to encourage the emergence of a collective identity.

Actual interpersonal channels activate several mechanisms, including learning but also competition between chapters. But above all, the effect of these channels and mechanisms is training. Activists meet to discuss in fora that allow for the construction of a transnational collective identity that in turn encourages diffusion. So, far from being the end result, these spaces participate in deepening the diffusion process.

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The IM's diffusion thus occurs through a variety of channels and appears to be structured around four phases. I put forward the following diagram of analysis (Figure 8). The first phase (T1) relies on an emulation mechanism, and, occurring through impersonal channels, depends on the potential adopter's identification with the diffuser—that is, on proximity between the actors involved. Following a first contact, undertaken through virtual personal channels, a second phase begins (T2). This latter marks the beginning of the learning process and a first form of coercion-retention, which tends to illustrate the control exercised by the "old" over the "new," as the former give the latter the right to fully participate in the European movement.



The first in-person meeting marks the beginning of the third phase (T3): real interpersonal channels are added to the previous ones, thus reinforcing the process of learning and keeping the dynamic of coercion-retention intact. The power relationship remains asymmetrical, as the adopter still has to “prove himself.” Marking the transition from the third to the fourth phase (T4) is the dropping of coercion-retention and thus the end of this asymmetrical relationship. Real cooperation is born and exchanges ensue. Adopters become disseminators and disseminators can, in turn, adopt foreign strategies. Because of the diversity of the spaces of exchange—sporadic, routine, or daily; virtual and real—the European activists are in constant dialogue with one another, which transforms identification into collective identity. This phenomenon is strengthened by diffusion and cooperation: diffusion, based on identification, forges the collective European identity of the social movement, which reinforces proximity and, in turn, encourages further diffusion and cooperation.

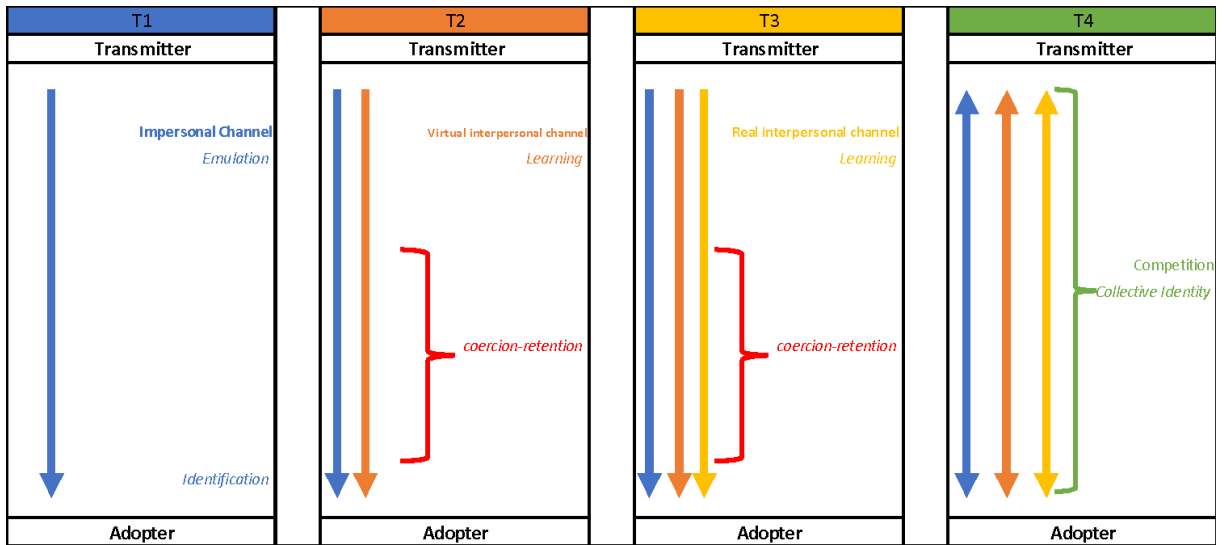


Figure 8. The four phases of diffusion of the French Identitarian movement in Europe

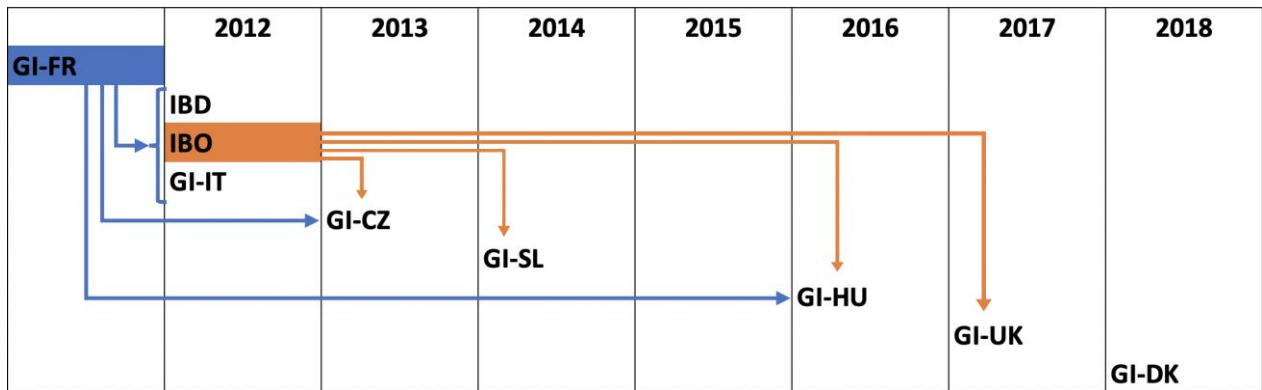
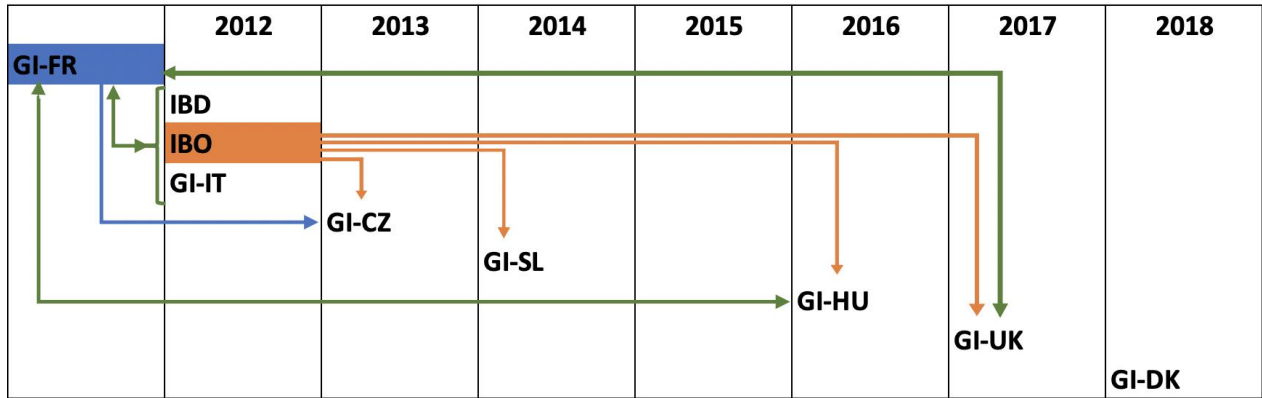


Figure 9.1 Contacts between chapters for phases T1 to T3. Interpretation: the position of a chapter corresponds to the year of its founding; the arrows indicate the contacts that, to the best of my knowledge, were established between the chapters during their foundation.



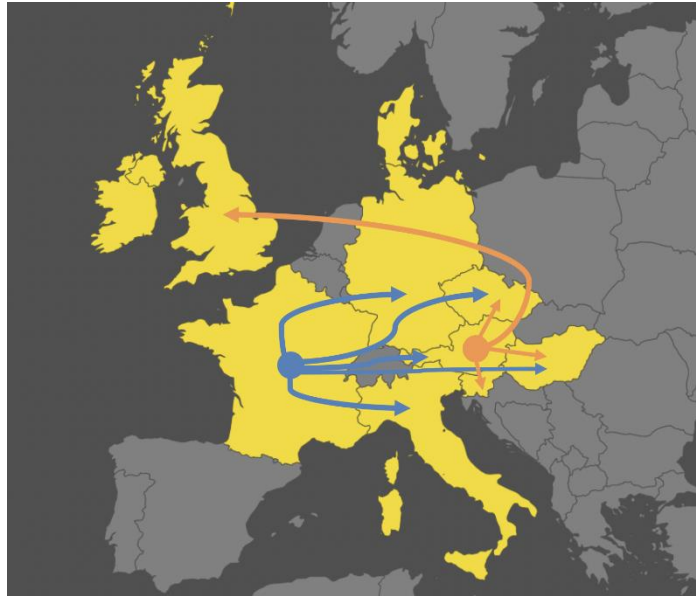


**Figure 9.2 Contacts between chapters for phase T4. Interpretation: This schema updates the preceding one, taking feedback into account. It corresponds to phase T4. The green double arrows symbolize these exchanges. These exchanges were featured where there is proof of their existence. For example: GI-UK and GI-HU diffused some uses of social networks to GI-FR, GI-IT diffused some practices of “solidarity,” etc.**

This part of the analysis contributes to research on the European far right by enriching our knowledge about the Identitarian movement in Europe and its diffusion. It contributes, on the theoretical level, to research done on the diffusion mechanisms in social movements, first of all by confirming several of Steven Van Hauwaert’s results relating to the diffusion of the Front National’s “master frame”:

- A correspondence is established between channels and mechanisms, linking impersonal channels to emulation and interpersonal channels to learning.
- Impersonal channels and emulation are identified as typical of the beginning of the diffusion process, at the heart of which are personal channels and learning.
- This study confirms the interest of a processual approach to diffusion. It rejects the supposed linearity of the latter, and shows that it takes place via several channels and mechanisms. This confirms the need, when explaining the diffusion of a social movement, to look for the diversity of channels and mechanisms through which it proceeds, far from any mono-causal explanation.
- Finally, this study confirms that the asymmetry between actors does not exist only in the framework of a vertical diffusion.

Moreover, this study makes it possible to broaden the theory of the diffusion of social movements in two respects. First, it allows us to highlight another mechanism of the diffusion of social movements: coercion-retention, as distinct from the coercion-imposition already identified by previous works. This amounts to taking into account the control that the disseminator exercises over the diffusion process by trying to control its appropriation. This control can go as far as interrupting the process if the disseminator considers that it is not in their interest for a particular actor to take it up. This mechanism seems to explain the extent of the diffusion: the more the diffuser controls the process, the greater the possible magnitude of object diffusion.



**Figure 10. Initial contacts between chapters. Interpretation:**  
The arrows indicate the contacts that, to the best of my knowledge, were established between chapters at the time of their foundation.

Second, the results argue for a distinction between “real” and “virtual” interpersonal channels. Beyond their difference in nature, their effects on the diffusion process do not

seem identical. Indeed, it appears that virtual interpersonal channels are useful for making contact and then maintaining a link between two “real” exchanges. The “real” exchanges are the only ones capable of ensuring learning—in a dialogical way—but also, and above all, of forging a collective identity conducive to cooperation, or even the establishment of a European movement.

The extent of the diffused object thus appears to be conditioned by the establishment of *certain* channels that are more conducive than others to a “total” diffusion.

## Toward a “European” Identitarianism?

According to Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule, the main effect of diffusion is the dynamics of scale shift, which Sidney Tarrow considers one of the most important processes of contentious political action.<sup>153</sup> Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly define this process as “a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to a broader contention involving a wider range of actors and bridging their claims and identities.”<sup>154</sup> Diffusion and scale shift seem to be linked to such an extent that some authors find it difficult to distinguish between and theorize them: the only characteristic systematically noted is a shift in the direction of diffusion from horizontal to vertical.<sup>155</sup> Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule have refined this definition, arguing that scale shifts occur when actors “begin to coordinate with one another, or create new representatives or coordinating bodies to articulate their claims in larger political arenas.”<sup>156</sup>

This allows us to identify differences between the two processes. Diffusion consists in *the exchange of information or objects* between actors, *each of whom* make their claims in *their own* arena; a scale shift involves the *coordination* of these actors, who make their claims *together*, in a *new* arena. The two thus differ on three criteria. Sidney Tarrow considers the third criterion—entry into a new arena—to be the most decisive: “Scale shift [...] creates instances for new coordination at a higher or a lower level than its initiation [...] It leads to new coordination at a different level and thus involves

new actors and institutions.”<sup>157</sup> He distinguishes between downward scale-shift and upward scale-shift. These entries into new arenas do not mean that actors abandon the old one:<sup>158</sup> internationalization, for example, does not necessarily mean abandoning the national or local level.<sup>159</sup> Tarrow considers that scale shift takes place through five levels:<sup>160</sup> 1) coordination through the organization of joint collective action and the creation of coordinating bodies; 2) the construction of links between activists; 3) the construction of a mobilization framework that adapts to different contexts; 4) an evolution of the targets of the social movement; and 5) an adaptation of demands to these new targets.

The diffusion of GI in Europe has allowed for the construction of links between activists, as well as of a common framework of mobilization, which has been adapted to different contexts. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the other three characteristics are fulfilled. Has the Identitarian movement become a “European” movement (in the sense that the activists understand it)? Have the activists succeeded in creating a “civilizational” level of mobilization, in addition to the local and national levels? To question the existence or non-existence of this scale shift amounts to raising several questions: (1) Do the national branches coordinate together, during actions or by creating new organizations? And have their (2) demands and/or (3) targets changed?

## 1. Signs of Coordination: Actions and European Organizations

In 2017 the Identitaires launched what they called the “Defend Europe” missions, first in the Mediterranean (1.1), and then, in 2018, in the Alps (1.2). These two actions were the first manifestations of nascent European coordination (1.3).

### 1.1. *The Identitarians at Sea*

The first European campaign took place in the Mediterranean in the summer of 2017. Its beginnings date back to May 2017, when activists from several European countries tried to block the *Aquarius* (the boat of the NGO SOS Méditerranée<sup>161</sup>) from leaving the port of Catania, Sicily.<sup>162</sup> The next day, the website *defendeurope.net* was created. It hosted a crowd-funding campaign to finance an “Identitarian SAR mission”<sup>163</sup> with a goal of US\$60,000. The stated objectives of this mission were as follows: “to monitor the boats of NGOs,” which were allegedly the accomplices of smugglers and human traffickers; “to destroy empty boats”; “to save migrants in danger of drowning”; and to return them “to a non-European port.” The aim was thus to stop migrants from Africa and the Middle East from entering Europe. The fundraising campaign encountered obstacles: after several associations rose up in protest, the Identitarians’ Paypal and bank accounts were closed. On June 14, Martin Sellner announced that they had found “a guy who’s willing to charter us an ocean-going ship.”<sup>164</sup> The closure of their account then became an argument to motivate donors: “If you try to silence us, we get louder. If you try to ban us, we come back stronger. So, make it an example for them, and go to the link below, make a donation!”<sup>165</sup> The end put to the fund-raiser lasted but a moment: on July 13 the fund reached US\$100,000<sup>166</sup> and it eventually rose to more than \$230,000.<sup>167</sup>



The activists set sail on July 29 and announced the end of the mission on August 17, 2017. During these few weeks, they crisscrossed the Mediterranean on the *C-Star*, which displayed banners aimed at NGOs (“Stop human trafficking”) and migrants (“No way, you will not make Europe your home”). They transmitted messages to other ships that they believed were overstepping their rights, even

denouncing some of them to the Libyan authorities. Above all, they communicated extensively on their website and on social networks.

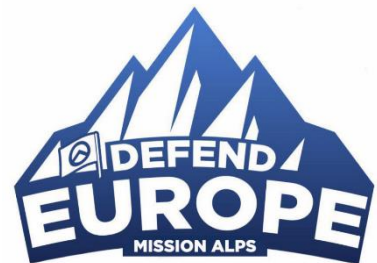
The European dimension (in the sense that the activists understand it) of the action is perceptible at two levels. First, it is declared and assumed in the communication around this action. The name of the action campaign, *Defend Europe*, is enough to show this will to undertake a “European” action. All the communications follow a similar line, as expressed by their permanent multilingualism. The website was available in English, French, Italian, and German; messages on social networks, in particular on the dedicated Twitter account @DefendEuropeID, were translated into all these languages; videos—most of them presented by Martin Sellner, a native German speaker—were posted in English; and the press conference at the end of the mission was also presented in all these languages by activists from across Europe. From this point of view, no national group takes the lead. On the contrary, the emphasis is on its collective dimension.

Second, it is perceptible in the preparation and the realization of the action, as the composition of the boat’s crew attests: Martin Sellner is Austrian; Clément Galant is French; Thorsten Gorke and Robert Timm are German; and Lorenzo Fiato is Italian. Further upstream, the French and foreign activists interviewed confirmed that the preparations for the action brought together activists from all countries. Laurent explained in an interview that the action was a “joint idea of the French, Austrians, and Italians.” The German IBD activists claimed that “Defend Europe was planned on a European level,” as did Damiano Maris (GI-IT). Other European groups also participated in the action, though in a more indirect way: GI-CZ, for instance, supported the mission “by collecting money and promoting it.” For the activists, the concern was to popularize their approach to the topic of immigration.

This first action opened the door to subsequent actions, as the German activists interviewed before “Mission Alps” predicted: “We have to expand this idea and work on with the experience made during Defend Europe.” This first action was also an opportunity for the movement to make itself known beyond Europe. The presence of two “independent journalists” from the North American Alt-Right, Lauren Southern and Brittany Pettibone, who followed the action from the beginning and interviewed the activists, allowed the information to reach the other side of the Atlantic.

### 1.2. *Identitarians in the Mountains*

The second campaign, called “Defend Europe,” took place in the Alps in April 2018. On April 21, 2018, the Twitter account @DefendEuropeID posted a simple message, “We are back.” While the Asylum-Immigration Law was being debated in the French Parliament, 150 activists undertook to block the Col d’Échelle on the French-Italian border, a mountain pass considered a passageway for migrants. The activists present materialized the border by setting up a construction site fence and two tents reminiscent of border posts. The activists “patrolled” by car, quad, helicopter, and plane. The banner that they unfolded on the hillside read: “Closed border, you will not make Europe home! No way. Back to your homeland!” At the same time, on the Italian side of the border, activists warned migrants that the border was closed and that they would not be able to cross it. After this weekend of massive presence, the cost of which is estimated by the militants at €30,000,<sup>168</sup> the Identitaires for the most part left the Col d’Échelle, although some of them stayed on to continue the “mission.”



On the night of April 26-27, they arrested and brought to the (real) border post some people who were trying to cross; the following night they denounced to the police a group of seven people arriving

through the Col de Montgenèvre. Some activists were still on patrol duty in the vicinity of the Col d'Échelle in mid-May. They officially ended the mission with a press release on June 29, 2018.<sup>169</sup> It is impossible to know if they were there permanently, or if they went from time to time to keep up a presence and communicate from the Alps, because communication—done live through communiqués, photos, and short video clips—was part of the campaign. In a second phase, the Identitaires commented on the political reactions—mainly French—that the action had provoked, responded to the media, and produced a video-review of the campaign.

The European dimension of this action is apparent on three levels. First, it is visible in the communication: the information shared on Twitter was translated into French, English, Danish, Hungarian, Czech, Italian, German, and Spanish—proof of its transnational dimension. Similarly, videos were subtitled in English so that they could be understood by as many people as possible. Nevertheless, as we will see, the impact remained essentially French, which is also clear on social networks.<sup>170</sup> Second, the action's preparation relied upon a French-Italian coordination effort and, as on the previous occasion, involved activists from all over Europe. According to Martin Sellner, it was “organized by French and Italian activists but they invited all of the European guys of GI.”<sup>171</sup> Abel Bodi [GI-HU] was there with other Hungarian activists; besides the French and Italians, there were also Austrians, Germans, Brits, and Danes.<sup>172</sup> Third, the campaigners themselves insisted that the issue was European: “We don't want migrants to come to France anymore. We don't want them to stay in Italy, we want them to go back to Africa.”<sup>173</sup> An Austrian activist, Luca Kerbl, voiced the same sentiment: “It's not only a problem of France; it's a European problem, the migration problem!”<sup>174</sup> Thus stated, the matter is not one of blocking a border, but of defending the whole of Europe against the entry of migrants, and therefore of fighting against immigration. Technically, this assertion makes little sense in this case, as the migrants were actually in Europe, both in Italy and in France. This mountain pass on the French-Italian border thus became, for a weekend, the symbol of the continental border that must be closed to migrants.

### 1.3. European Institutionalization?

On June 11, 2018, an application was filed with the Rhône prefecture for the creation of another association chaired by Clément Galant and whose headquarters are located at 5, Montée du change (Lyon), the address of La Traboule<sup>175</sup> and headquarters of Génération identitaire. This association is called “GI Europe” and its purpose is “the promotion of European culture on French territory and internationally.”<sup>176</sup> Its activity is said to pertain not to a “political association,” but instead to a category of associations involved in “representing and defending economic interests.” The statutes specify that “members will be required to travel internationally in order to give conferences, to develop the association, to organize meetings.”<sup>177</sup> Article 9 of these statutes also provides for a status of affiliation, specifying that “the association is intended to welcome other associations which will then be affiliated” after the establishment of a partnership agreement. This same article implicitly specifies that the affiliated association may be foreign: “an affiliated association domiciled abroad is subject to the rules of French law for acts performed by it within the framework of the activities covered by GI Europe.” Interpreting the name, the object, and the statutes together, this association seems to have been created to serve as a federative structure that would allow for formal coordination between the various national sections of Génération identitaire in Europe. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know how active the association really is. To date, the association has not officially carried out any campaign, nor has GI publicized it in any way.

The first half of 2019 saw the emergence of *generationidentity.eu*, the homepage of which states: “We are Generation Identity Europe [...] the biggest patriotic youth movement in Europe. With active sections in many European countries we have become a driving force to defend and save our



European identities and traditions.”<sup>178</sup> Generation Identity Europe (GI-Europe) claims authorship of the “Defend Europe” campaign actions, which are two of the three projects it promotes. The third is “Generation Identity Europe (G.I.E.)—Foundation of Patriotism,”<sup>179</sup> an association founded and domiciled in Poland<sup>180</sup> that aims to support “patriotic projects and organizations in Europe” and to ensure the “international networking of patriotic organizations and projects.” The bank accounts of both GI-Europe and G.I.E. are domiciled in Poland.<sup>181</sup> GI-Europe appears to be the real coordinating structure at the European level and on its website provides a list of the official chapters of the European Identitarian movement, of which there are nine (see Figures 1 and 2). Yet it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions concerning these new structures except to say that they demonstrate a desire to structure the Identitarian movement at the European level.

This state of affairs leads us to consider, on the one hand, that transnational coordination exists sporadically during certain actions and, on the other hand, that the Identitarians try to perpetuate this coordination by creating organizations. We therefore observe transnational coordination that is characteristic of a scale shift. Are there also changes in the demands and their targets?

## 2. Reframing of the Identitarian Message

Is the Identitarian message changing? Several elements lead us to believe that the movement’s demands have indeed been undergoing “Europeanization.”

First, the two “Defend Europe” campaign actions put the European dimension of the Identitarian struggle at the heart of their message. Perceptible in the name of the actions, it is also visible in the slogans used (“You will not make Europe your home”). Thus, even if migrants land in Italy, it is Europe that cannot become their home: the port of arrival becomes a symbol of all Europe. In the same way, the French-Italian border, which they block, symbolizes Europe’s border.

Second, Europeanization is visible on the GI-Europe website, where the identity message is rewritten at the European level. The association’s demands are summarized as follows: “We demand a future as Europeans in Europe.”<sup>182</sup> And they insist: “The demand of Generation Identity is to keep Europe a European continent.” The objective here being: “To secure a future for Europe.” In the same way, it is the Europeans who are undergoing a “great replacement,” “multiculturalism” is felt everywhere in Europe, and remigration is the departure of “non-Europeans” from “our soil,” i.e., from European soil. National identity is mentioned only once—that is, as local identity. When they refer to a state, it is either to point out that GI-Europe is present there or to plead for a reconciliation of European peoples in order to fight against these “threats”: “Antagonisms between European peoples or countries may exist but must be overcome as we’re facing a struggle for our common civilization.” This European dimension holds the same meaning as it does in France: for the activists, Europe is Europe as civilization, as continent, and not the European Union. They underline: “Our struggle for Europe must not be confused with a defence of the European Union, a bureaucratic structure devoid of identity and roots, without real and protected borders.”<sup>183</sup>

Third, this reframing involves focusing the message on the political common denominator of Identitarians across Europe: illegal immigration and the migration crisis. Both actions aim to re-establish impassable borders (sea and land) that are secured and monitored. The reaction to the “migration crisis,” a structuring event in the political life of these countries in recent years, is obvious. The question of European borders appears to be a central axis of their discourse. They call for the establishment of real European borders and an end to illegal immigration: “we want to end mass immigration and Islamization of Europe. We want secure borders and the remigration of illegals and we demand an Australian ‘No way’ policy.” If there is no intervention, then they aim to ensure this

themselves, and their actions are designed to display their determination: “As long as Europe’s leaders refuse to protect the European borders, the youth will turn out to protect them.”<sup>184</sup> Their actions and speeches tend to refocus on this border issue and concentrate on illegal immigration.

For these three reasons, we can see a “claim shift”: their claims as a European movement are extended to Europe (continent) and restricted to the issue of borders and illegal immigration.

### 3. Absence of Arena Shift

Despite this modulation of demands, their targets remain unchanged. While the activists demanded a “European” response, it was the states that they successively addressed. The first “Defend Europe” action was addressed at the Italian government and the activists’ “main demand”<sup>185</sup> concerned the closure of Italian ports to boats carrying migrants (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Tweet from Defend Europe about the closure of ports

Moreover, when the Italian government banned the *Golfo Azzurro*, a ship carrying migrants, from its ports because it had entered Libyan territorial waters, the activists were delighted and even took credit for it. Their mission report states their belief that they helped to raise “the voice of concerned Italian citizens”<sup>186</sup> by forcing “the Italian center-left government” to act. The EU is mentioned only by reference to its constituent parts, and only as having a duty to support Italy: “We call on the European authorities, both local and national, to stand behind Italy.”<sup>187</sup> Afterwards, they congratulated

themselves for having “made governments back down.”<sup>188</sup> One year later, the activists were still addressing governments, asking “the executive [to] show coherence by ceasing all collaboration with NGOs and by putting an end to mass immigration.”<sup>189</sup>

Similarly, the Alps action focused on a national—in this case, French—target. This was clear from the very date of the action, which was timed to coincide with the parliamentary examination of the Asylum-Immigration Law. Moreover, the Identitaires addressed their demands directly to the government:<sup>190</sup>

The Macron government refuses to secure the border [...] Rather than releasing funds to create new reception centers for illegal migrants, it is the budgets of the PAF [Border Police] that should be beefed up. Génération Identitaire demands an end to mass immigration and the definitive blocking of the Col d'Échelle. No more illegal immigrants should be able to enter France illegally through this route.<sup>191</sup>

After the action, they were delighted with its success: “Our operation [...] forced politicians from all sides to take a stand on identity-related issues. We have made the highest levels of government react.”<sup>192</sup> In the same communiqué, they hail the situation in Italy and the “unwavering determination” of Matteo Salvini, in which they perceive “the promise that our common border with Italy will be better guarded.” Despite a claim of a European nature, the targets of their actions remain essentially national governmental actors.

More recently, they have collectively taken up issues with a genuinely European dimension: on the occasion of the European elections of May 23, 2019, they broadcast a video co-produced by French, British, German, Austrian, Czech, and Italian activists titled “On May 26, Brussels must fall.” But calls such as these, addressed to all European countries, remain rather atypical; they also, like the other campaigns, seek dialogue with state actors! In this, the movement remains centered on the national level and does not try to take its demands to another arena (the European Union, for example) that would mark a real scale shift.

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In sum, if the Identitarians’ demands are partly related to this European dimension, the same cannot be said for their targets. The interpellations are addressed to states and it is governments that are called upon to act. In a manner consistent with their vision of Europe (valuing Europe as a continent, while being critical of the EU and Eurosceptic), they do not appeal to the Parliament or the European Commission, nor do they organize actions in Strasbourg or Brussels aimed at directly targeting the latter. This limits their scale shift, as “continental” Europe has no representative bodies. The process is therefore unfinished. On this point, let us note that despite taking a completely different approach, we reach the same conclusion as Anita Nissen: there is indeed transnational coordination of Identitarians in Europe (beyond EU borders) that occasionally tackles European issues (issues concerning continental Europe and sometimes even the EU); however, its collective actions continue to aim at the national level. The scale shift is therefore incomplete and could only be completed if the Identitarians decided to consider the EU as a relevant actor and to take it as a target for their demands.

## **Concluding Remarks: Why Has This Diffusion Taken Place?**

There is no theoretical framework for thinking about the “why” of diffusion. This question is, according to Van Hauwaert, “largely ignored and remains unanswered.”<sup>193</sup> He urges future research not to avoid this issue. We take up this proposition, and answer it on the basis of the present case. In



reality, this single *why* comes in many forms: why is this an object of diffusion? Why does diffusion succeed with such actors? Why at this time? These questions are not independent of one another, but answering them separately allows us to frame the analysis. To consider these questions, we compared two different disseminators, namely Bloc identitaire and Génération identitaire. We have described BI's diffusion: if it was not a failure, it is nevertheless incomparable to that of GI today. The exchanges and partnerships set up by BI with pre-existing political parties were never of the order of coordination. National movements based on the BI model did not last. So *why* did one succeed and not the other? By explaining this difference, we can shed light upon the *why* question.

### Why Does This Object Diffuse?

The two movements are close in several respects. First, they share the same ideas and the same ideology, such that the content of the mobilization is comparable. Second, they both have the intention to diffuse, since their intention is to defend a European identity. Third, their internal organizational structures are similar (decentralized, not very hierarchical, etc.). However, they differ in at least two respects: first, their forms of collective action, and second, the fact that GI is a youth movement. These differences partly explain why the diffusion of GI has been so successful while that of BI has been more limited.

While BI oscillates between electoral action and agitprop, GI has developed a repertoire of actions outside of electoral politics. In this respect, and in contrast to the hesitant and changing framework of BI, GI has a clear and stable framework for collective action—this represents a real innovation for the European far right. The example of BI's diffusion in Portugal is revealing on this point. When the movement was established in Portugal, the Portuguese intended to “reproduce the street militancy of the French Identitaires.”<sup>194</sup> At that time, the French were focused on this militant, truly activist dimension. When BI took the electoral route and distanced itself from some of its former partners, who were considered too radical,<sup>195</sup> it indirectly participated in the split of the Portuguese movement.<sup>196</sup> The strategic disagreement in France spread to Portugal, where it was transformed into an ideological disagreement, and this led to the end of the Portuguese Identitarian experiment. Conversely, Génération Identitaire proposes an innovation that remains unchanged to this day. It thus appears necessary that the diffused object's first form of organization remain stable.

GI has chosen a specific public that has not been targeted for mobilization: “patriotic” youth who want to engage “differently.” The Italian activists explained that the founders of GI-IT, young and politicized people with no previous political commitments, “could not recognize themselves in any existing political reality.” For the Czech founders, the point was to “‘refresh’ Czech patriotism. In GI we saw [...] new ideas, new strategy and tactics.” In the various chapters contacted, the activists were unanimous: a movement like GI had not previously existed. Creating an Identitarian chapter meant offering young people an alternative, “a new hope” (GI-CZ), “a new movement” (GI-HU), breaking with the history of the national extreme right (GI-IT). The explanation of the German militants synthesizes these different stakes:

Our country lacked any kind of real alternative for young patriots. Young people could either participate in liberal society or get pulled into the “old right” swamp. We liked GI from the very beginning because it actually is a real alternative and not just an imitation of certain past political movements.

By proposing a “different” policy—in its modes of action but also because it broke with the political parties of the past—GI's innovation was able to meet unsatisfied demand. By contrast, BI provided no real alternative, no new political platform that was likely to arouse any particular enthusiasm. Parties

that advocated a comparable line existed in several countries and it had allied itself with them; there was no particular demand for a new extreme right-wing party. In this respect, BI's search for alliances was more of an electoral strategy than a diffusion strategy: to ally with extreme and nationally well-established right-wing parties—and if possible ones that already have elected representatives—as a means of gaining credibility in France.

To conclude, unlike BI, GI offered something both *stable* and *new* in a context where demand existed but remained unsatisfied.<sup>197</sup>

### Why does the Adopter Embrace the Object?

The “why” question also invites us to look at the other actor, namely the adopter of the innovation. Whatever the context, “old” sections sought to control any uptake to avoid associating with activists who might harm the movement. Thus, diffusion could occur only if the founders of local movements were considered reliable. Diffusion would simply halt if the European partners were not recognized as such. Both BI and GI meet this criterion, which is a necessary one but lacks explanatory value in the present case.

In a broader sense, actors aiming to adopt the movement had to be able to ensure the diffusion of the movement in their space. They therefore had to possess certain resources and cultural (linguistic) and militant capital. This invites us to turn to the militants themselves: to show the importance of these national relays, let us retrace the (archetypal) path of Martin Sellner, founder of the Identitarians in Austria. The son of an English teacher and a doctor, Martin Sellner was involved in politics—in neo-Nazi networks—from his adolescence. He justified this later, arguing that he had no alternative at the time: “There was no alternative. There was no right-wing patriotic movement.”<sup>198</sup> The Identitarian movement, which he founded in 2012, changed this situation. During his university studies (philosophy and law), he belonged to an academic fraternity, the Wiener akademische Burschenschaft Olympia, which is reputedly linked to the extreme right. He was also a member of a choir reputed to be close to the extreme right, the Barden zu Wien, in which he rubbed shoulders with other future Austrian identitarians. Locally, therefore, he was already established in far-right networks and quickly established links with the French Identitarians, as shown by his participation in the GI UDT from August 2013. He also has the particularity of speaking German, English, and French, which has enabled him to engage in dialogue with the various parties involved. He appears to be an absolutely central actor in the adoption process in Austria and Germany and has played a key role in the movement's diffusion, especially toward Great Britain. For example, he was present in London at GI's official launch there. As a result, the Austrian movement is now presented, including by French activists, as the “locomotive”<sup>199</sup> of the Identitarian movement in Europe.

This path shows the role that the adopter plays in the diffusion process: for diffusion to take place, the adopter must not only invest in the process, but also have the capacity, skills, networks, and capital necessary to carry out this importation.

### Explaining Diffusion: Four Answers

We arrive at four answers to the “why” question, which are situated at three distinct levels: micro, at the level of actors; meso, at the level of organizations; and macro, at the level of the political and social context.

- At the micro level, diffusion occurs because there is (1) a political platform put forward by actors with sufficient capital to become diffusers and (2) unmet political demand from actors

with sufficient capital to become adopters. The success of a diffusion (or even its magnitude) thus depends on a small number of actors and on their capacity, insofar as they have sufficient capital (cultural, linguistic, militant) to transmit and receive the innovation.

- At the meso level, diffusion occurs because there is (3) a new platform that, at that moment, an organization maintains in a stable way. The organization responds to this demand. The reason that this object—and not another—is diffused is that it is new, stable, and meets the demand.
- At the macro level, diffusion occurs because there is (4) an institutional context that is conducive to the emergence of such a demand. Whether that context is social (migratory crises, attacks, etc.), economic (economic crisis, austerity policies, etc.), or political (legitimization of extreme right-wing ideas, crisis of representation, questioning of intermediary bodies, delegitimization of political parties, etc.), this new demand cannot be disconnected from the context that causes it to emerge. It would be interesting to have more systematic studies to measure its effects.

This study should thus also be read as an invitation to favor multi-level (micro-meso-macro) approaches to analyzing, understanding, and explaining the diffusion process. It also supports an approach based on a mix of data collection and analysis methods. The richness of the analysis stems from the diversity of the data used: interviews, open-ended questionnaires administered by e-mail, archives, and social network analysis.

## Appendix

**Table 1. Diffusion of GI in Europe: case studies and data collected**

Country	Name	Acronym	Questionnaire / Interview
<b>France</b>	Génération identitaire	GI	Yes—40 interviews with spokespersons, cadres and militants (2014 and 2017-2018)
<b>Germany</b>	Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland	IBD	Yes—questionnaire via email with the secretariat [March 2018]
<b>Austria</b>	Identitäre Bewegung Österreich	IBÖ	<i>No—agreement in principle in January 2018, but no response was ever forthcoming.</i>
<b>Italy</b>	Generazione identitaria	GI-IT	Yes—questionnaire via email with the spokesperson, <i>Damiano Maris</i> (March 2018)
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Generace identity	GI-CZ	Yes—questionnaire via email with the spokesperson, <i>Adam Berčík</i> (February 2018)
<b>Slovenia</b>	Generacija identitete	GI-SL	Yes—questionnaire via email with the secretariat (March 2019)
<b>Hungary</b>	Identitas Generacio	GI-HU	Yes—questionnaire via email with the spokesperson, <i>Abel Bodi</i> (July 2018)
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Generation identity UK and Ireland	GI-UK	Yes—questionnaire via email with the spokesperson, <i>Benjamin Jones</i> (May 2019)
<b>Denmark</b>	Generation Identitær	GI-DK	<i>No— agreement in principle in April 2019, but no response was ever forthcoming</i>

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<sup>1</sup> Understood in a restricted sense, the Identitarian movement includes a limited number of associations (Les Identitaires (LI), Bloc Identitaire (BI), Jeunesses identitaires (JI), Une autre jeunesse (UAJ), and Génération identitaire (GI).

<sup>2</sup> The cadres insist on this dimension. See “Interview de Fabrice Robert: ‘Pour nous, le social est consubstantiel de notre identité française et européenne,’” Bloc identitaire, September 2008, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/actualite/628/nous-social-est-consubstantiel-notre-identite-francaise-et-europeenne.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/actualite/628/nous-social-est-consubstantiel-notre-identite-francaise-et-europeenne.html); “Interview with Philippe Vardon of Bloc identitaire,” Bloc identitaire, December 2010, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/actualite/1631/interview-with-philippe-varдон-of-bloc-identitaire.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/actualite/1631/interview-with-philippe-varдон-of-bloc-identitaire.html)

<sup>3</sup> “Initiatives,” Bloc identitaire, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/courant-identitaire/initiatives.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/courant-identitaire/initiatives.html), accessed June 1, 2016; “Convention identitaire 2007,” Bloc identitaire, 2007, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/video/7/convention-identitaire-2007-ii.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/video/7/convention-identitaire-2007-ii.html), accessed June 1, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> “Visite au Parlement flamand,” Bloc identitaire, 2007, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/album/2/visite-au-parlement-flamand.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/album/2/visite-au-parlement-flamand.html), accessed June 1, 2016; “Convention identitaire 2007,” Bloc identitaire, 2007, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/video/7/convention-identitaire-2007-ii.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/video/7/convention-identitaire-2007-ii.html), accessed June 1, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> “Ive Congrès de Plataforma per Catalunya,” Bloc identitaire, November 2008, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/album/8/ive-congres-de-plataforma-per-catalunya.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/album/8/ive-congres-de-plataforma-per-catalunya.html), accessed June 1, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> The situation in Switzerland is unique: the founder and leader of the Genevan Identitarians, Jean-David Cattin, is now “Directeur à la formation” of LI. The ties with France are very strong; indeed, the Genevan chapter presents itself as a French section. Switzerland also served as a relay for the youth movement when the JI was banned in France.

<sup>7</sup> “Discours de Fabrice Robert lors de l’Université de rentrée du Bloc identitaire à Vernon (26-28 septembre 2008),” Bloc identitaire, [www.bloc-identitaire.com/actualite/624/universite-rentree-bloc-identitaire-1.html](http://www.bloc-identitaire.com/actualite/624/universite-rentree-bloc-identitaire-1.html), accessed June 1, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Yves Camus, “Die Identitäre Bewegung oder die Konstruktion eines Mythos europäischer Ursprünge,” in *Europäische Identität in der Krise?*, ed. Gudrun Hentges, Kristina Nottbohm, and Hans-Wolfgang Platzer (New York: Springer, 2017), 233-247.

<sup>9</sup> Riccardo Marchi, “La réutilisation de symboles, références et actions par les groupes identitaires portugais,” in *Organisations, mouvements et partis des droits radicaux au XXe siècle [Europe-Amériques]*, ed. Olivier Dard (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 153-174.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Yves Camus, “La structure du ‘camp national’ en France: la périphérie militante et organisationnelle du FN et du MNR,” in *Les croisés de la société fermée : l’Europe des extrêmes droites*, ed. Pascal Perrieneau (La Tour-d’Aigues: Éditions de l’Aube, 2001); Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, *Les droites extrêmes en Europe* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2015); Nicolas Lebourg, “Le Front national et la galaxie des extrêmes droites radicales,” in *Les faux-semblants du Front national: Sociologie d’un parti politique*, ed. Sylvain Crépon, Alexandre Dézé, and Nonna Mayer (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2015); José Pedro Zúquete, *The Identitarians: The Movement against Globalism and Islam in Europe* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 72-91.

<sup>11</sup> Christine Eckes, “Ausbreitung der ‘Identitären Bewegung’ in Europa und ihre ideologischen Grundzüge,” *Journal Exit-Deutschland* 4 (2016): 100-114; Gudrun Hentges, Gürçan Kökgiran and Kristina Nottbohm, “Die Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland (IBD)—Bewegung oder virtuelles Phänomen?” *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegung* 3 (2014): 1-26; Fabian Virchow, “The ‘Identitarian Movement’: What Kind of Identity? Is it Really a Movement?” in *Digital Media Strategies of the Far Right in Europe and the United States*, ed. Patricia Anne Simpson and Helga Druex (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 177-190; Camus, “Die Identitäre Bewegung.”

<sup>12</sup> Anita Nissen, “Europeanization of the Far Right: A Case Study of Generation Identity and Fortress Europe” (PhD diss., University of Aalborg, 2019). I would like to thank the author for transmitting me the manuscript prior to publication.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 355-356.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22 and pp. 105-106.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Angela Bourne and Sevasti Chatzopoulou, “Europeanization and Social Movement Mobilization during the European Sovereign Debt Crisis: The Cases of Spain and Greece,” *Recerca* 17 (2015):

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33-60; Doug Imig and Sidney Tarrow, eds., *Contentious Europeans: Protest and Politics in an Emerging Polity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Pierre Monforte, *Europeanizing Contention: The Protest Against "Fortress Europe" in France and Germany* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2014); Sidney Tarrow, "The Europeanisation of Conflict: Reflections from a Social Movement Perspective," *West European Politics* 18, no. 2 (1995): 223-251.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Donatella della Porta and Manuela Caiani, *Social Movements and Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> On this point, see the seminal work of Doug Imig and Sidney Tarrow ("Political Contention in a Europeanising Polity," *West European Politics* 23, no. 4 (2000): 73-93). Other typologies have since been put forward. See, for instance, Manuela Caiani and Paolo Graziano, "Europeanisation and Social Movements: The Case of the Stop TTIP Campaign," *European Journal of Political Research* 57 (2018): 1031-1055.

<sup>18</sup> I elaborate on this point in my dissertation: Marion Jacquet-Vaillant, *Le mouvement identitaire français. Pour une approche mixte des marges en politique* (PhD diss., Université Paris 2 – Panthéon-Assas, 2021). See Chapter 2 in particular.

<sup>19</sup> R. Katz, "Diffusion [Interpersonal Influence]," in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. D.L. Shils (London: Macmillan, London, 1968), 78.

<sup>20</sup> Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule, "Introduction: The Dimensions of Diffusion" in *The Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms and Political Effects*, ed. Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1; Erin R. Graham, Charles R. Shipan, and Craig Volden, "The Diffusion of Policy Diffusion Research in Political Science," *British Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 3 (2013): 673-701; Steven Van Hauwaert, "Trans-National Diffusion Patterns between West European Far Right Parties: Towards a Systematic Framework of Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Science Po Paris, 2013), 34-37.

<sup>21</sup> Givan, Roberts, and Soule, "Introduction. The dimensions of diffusion."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *La psychologie des foules* (1895); Gabriel Tarde, *L'opinion et la foule* (1901).

<sup>24</sup> André Siegfried, *Itinéraires de contagions. Epidémies et idéologies* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1960).

<sup>25</sup> Isabelle Sommier, "Diffusion et circulation des mouvements sociaux," in *Penser les mouvements sociaux. Conflits sociaux et contestations dans les sociétés contemporaines*, ed. Éric Agrikoliansky, Isabelle Sommier, and Olivier Fillieule (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), 101-120.

<sup>26</sup> Doug McAdam, "'Initiator' and 'Spinoff' Movements: Diffusion Processes in Protest Cycles," in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. Mark Traugott (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Sommier, "Diffusion et circulation des mouvements sociaux."

<sup>28</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Sean Chabot, "Dialogue Matters: Beyond the Transmission Model of Transnational Diffusion between Social Movements" in *The Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms and Political Effects*, ed. Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 99-124.

<sup>30</sup> Johanna Siméant, "La transnationalisation de l'action collective," in *Penser les mouvements sociaux. Conflits sociaux et contestations dans les sociétés contemporaines*, ed. Éric Agrikoliansky, Isabelle Sommier, and Olivier Fillieule (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), 127.

<sup>31</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 14.

<sup>32</sup> This idea has been challenged recently thanks to the emergence of works on the transnationalism of the far right: Tamir Bar-On, "Fascism to the Nouvelle Droite: The Dream of Pan-European Empire," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 16, no. 3 (2008): 327-345; Manuela Caiani and Patricia Kröll, "The Transnationalization of the Extreme Right and the Use of the Internet," *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 39, no. 4 (2015): 331-351; Caterina Froio and Bharath Ganesh, "The Transnationalisation of Far-Right Discourse on Twitter: Issues and Actors that Cross Borders in Western European Democracies," *European Societies* 21, no. 4 (2019): 513-539; Andrea Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015); José Pedro Zúquete, "The New Frontlines of Right-Wing Nationalism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 1 (2015): 69-85.

<sup>33</sup> Cas Mudde, *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2016).

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- <sup>34</sup> Pietro Castelli Gattinara, "The Study of the Far Right and Its Three E's: Why Scholarship Must Go beyond Eurocentrism, Electoralism and Externalism," *French Politics* 18 (2020): 314-333.
- <sup>35</sup> There are counterexamples: in addition to works on the Identitarian movement, there are some on Pegida [Fabian Virchow, "PEGIDA: Understanding the Emergence and Essence of Nativist Protest in Dresden," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37, no. 6 (2016): 541-555] and Casapound [Catarina Froio, Pietro Castelli Gattinara, Giorgia Bulli, and Matteo Albanese, *CasaPound Italia: Contemporary Extreme Right Politics* (London: Routledge, 2020)].
- <sup>36</sup> Van Hauwaert, "Trans-National Diffusion Patterns," 255-256.
- <sup>37</sup> Jens Rydgren, "Is Extreme Right-Wing Populism Contagious? Explaining the Emergence of a New Party Family," *European Journal of Political Research* 44, no. 3 (2005): 413-437.
- <sup>38</sup> Van Hauwaert, "Trans-National Diffusion Patterns," 190; Cécile Leconte, "Contribution à l'étude des régimes circulatoires transnationaux au sein des milieux partisans. Circulations et recompositions au sein des extrêmes droites ouest-européennes: Autriche, France, Allemagne, 2011-2017" (thesis submitted in view of a Habilitation à diriger des recherches, IEP de Lille, Université de Lille-II, 2017), 113-123.
- <sup>39</sup> The relevance of an organizational approach has already been shown elsewhere, although the two fields are not known for their interactions: Gerald F. Davis, Doug McAdam, W. Richard Scott, and Mayer N. Zald, *Social Movements and Organization Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9; Michael Biggs and Kenneth T. Andrews, "From Protest to Organization," in *The Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms and Political Effects*, ed. Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 188-190; Frank G.A. de Bakker, Frank den Hond, and Mikko Laamanen, "Social Movements: Organizations and Organizing," in *Handbook of Social Movements across Disciplines*, ed. Conny Roggeband and Bert Klandermans (New York: Springer, 2017), 213-231.
- <sup>40</sup> Eckes, "Ausbreitung der 'Identitären Bewegung.'" In this article the author states that "Even though the Identitarian movement operates predominantly on the Internet, it cannot be assumed that its activities are limited to this virtual space. Outside the Internet, its largest activities have been recorded in Germany, Austria and France". In our view, any such inventory would be tantamount to assuming that online activities automatically translate into offline ones, which cannot be done either. Thus, it seems more relevant to focus on the nine chapters gathered under Generation Identity Europe, which are officially "labelled" as identitarians. See also Hentges, Kokgiran, and Nottbohm, "Die Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland (IBD)."
- <sup>41</sup> Note that GI-RU is not on this list. As we shall see, chapters must prove their "goodwill" before being officially integrated into the network.
- <sup>42</sup> This is an imperfect method that is biased for at least three reasons: (1) the nature of the exchanges is different from that of an interview, as it is far from a conversation. The additional questions we sent to the chapters were never answered; (2) English is not the mother tongue of all the interviewees, a fact that could condition their answers; (3) in some cases (see Table 3), we did not know exactly who was behind the keyboard, as the messages came from a general address and were signed by the Branch.
- <sup>43</sup> One additional question was asked following the occupation of the Col d'Échelle, namely whether national activists were present.
- <sup>44</sup> *ID Magazine* (2005-2009) then *Identitaires* (2009-2016) and the *Revue Identitaire* (2017-).
- <sup>45</sup> As a result, less information is available on the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, and Denmark.
- <sup>46</sup> Givan, Roberts, and Soule, "Introduction: The Dimensions of Diffusion," 3-7.
- <sup>47</sup> Van Hauwaert, *Trans-National Diffusion Patterns*, 248.
- <sup>48</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni, "New Social Movements and Political Opportunities in Western Europe," *European Journal of Political Research*, 22, no. 2 (1992): 219-244.
- <sup>49</sup> Van Hauwaert, *Trans-National Diffusion Patterns*, 248-249
- <sup>50</sup> See Givan, Roberts, and Soule, "Introduction: The Dimensions of Diffusion," 2.
- <sup>51</sup> David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 137-138.
- <sup>52</sup> Givan, Roberts, and Soule, "Introduction: The Dimensions of Diffusion," 7.

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<sup>53</sup> J.E. Stobaugh and David A. Snow, “Temporality and Frame Diffusion: The Case of the Creationist/Intelligent Design and Evolutionist Movements from 1925 to 2005” in *The Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms and Political Effects*, ed. Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 54.

<sup>54</sup> David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Alternative Types of Cross-National Diffusion in the Social Movement Arena,” in *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*, ed. Donatella della Porta, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Dieter Rucht (New York: Springer, 1999), 38.

<sup>55</sup> Givan, Roberts, and Soule, “Introduction: The Dimensions of Diffusion,” 5.

<sup>56</sup> Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni, “New Social Movements and Political Opportunities in Western Europe.”

<sup>57</sup> Underlying this is the idea that communication is “constitutive of the organization.” This notion is the object of growing interest in North America. We are simply grasping this emerging concept and reducing it to an analysis of the symbols of the organization, which is sufficient for demonstration. For more details on this point see James R. Taylor and Elizabeth J. Van Every, *The Emergent Organization: Communication as its Site and Surface* (London: Routledge, 1999); Daniel Robichaud and François Cooren, “The Need for New Materials in the Constitution of Organization,” in *Organization and Organizing: Materiality, Agency and Discourse*, ed. Daniel Robichaud and François Cooren (New York: Routledge, 2013); James R. Taylor, “Organizational Communication at a Crossroad,” in *Organization and Organizing: Materiality, Agency and Discourse*, ed. Daniel Robichaud and François Cooren (New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>58</sup> Indeed, if Clément Galant is presented as the “President” of Génération identitaire, it is primarily due to the association’s statutes rather than any de facto presidency. On the site, he is presented as a “spokesman” on the same level as Romain Espino.

<sup>59</sup> See Leconte, “Contribution à l’étude des régimes circulatoires transnationaux”; Cécile Leconte, “La carrière militante du ‘grand remplacement’ dans les milieux partisans extrême-droitiers en Allemagne: l’Alternative pour l’Allemagne [AfD], 2013-2016,” Colloquium of the Group “Histoire sociale des idées politiques” de l’AFSP, Sciences-Po Paris, May 23-24, 2017.

<sup>60</sup> For instance, “Das Netzwerk der Identitären mit der FPÖ,” *Die Presse*, June 10, 2016. We can observe distancing from the FPÖ at the beginning of 2019 following the investigation into links between the IBÖ and Brenton Tarrant (the Christchurch terrorist).

<sup>61</sup> For instance, “Salvini, Borghezio e l’alleanza con il neofascismo europeo nel libro-inchiesta ‘Europa identitaria,’” *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. [www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/07/06/salvini-borghezio-e-lalleanza-con-il-neofascismo-europeo-nel-libro-inchiesta-europa-identitaria/4472482/](http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/07/06/salvini-borghezio-e-lalleanza-con-il-neofascismo-europeo-nel-libro-inchiesta-europa-identitaria/4472482/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>62</sup> For instance, “Undercover: Inside Britain’s New Far-Right,” *ITV*, November 9, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> “Wir Identitäre sind in sieben österreichischen Bundesländern vertreten,” Identitäre Bewegung (AT), [www.identitaere-bewegung.at/organisation/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.at/organisation/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with GI-IT, *Generazione Identitaria*, [generazione-identitaria.com/dove-siamo/](http://generazione-identitaria.com/dove-siamo/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Adam Berčík, Spokesperson of GI-CZ.

<sup>66</sup> On April 14, 2019, British activists carried out an action that was staged simultaneously in London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, and Edinburgh.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Abel Bodi, spokesperson of GI-HU.

<sup>68</sup> “Unsere Aktivisten,” Identitäre Bewegung [DE], [www.identitaere-bewegung.de/category/unsere-aktivisten/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/category/unsere-aktivisten/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> We tried several times to contact him either through the movement or directly, but without success.

<sup>70</sup> Martin Sellner presents himself on social networks as a “Co-Leiter.”

<sup>71</sup> Michel Offerlé, *Les partis politiques* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2018), 37.

<sup>72</sup> Leconte, “Contribution à l’étude des régimes circulatoires transnationaux,” 121.

<sup>73</sup> Lit. “als symbol der Identitären Bewegung”—see “Der Klagenfurter Luftraum wird identitär,” Identitäre Bewegung [AT], [www.identitaere-bewegung.at/der-klagenfurter-luftraum-wird-identitaer/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.at/der-klagenfurter-luftraum-wird-identitaer/), accessed April 23, 2019.



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<sup>74</sup> This justification is partially mythical: if the capital lambda was indeed the first letter of the (Greek) name of Sparta (Lacedemon), it is not certain that the Spartan shields were decorated with it. In any case, it seems more like a reference to the movie *300* (Zack Snyder). All in all, it is a clever mix of ancient history and pop culture. See Bodo Mrozek, “Sous une fausse bannière. Comment l’extrême droite adopte des symboles antiquisants de la culture-pop dont l’histoire a pourtant tout pour lui déplaire,” *Antiquipop (Blog hypothèse)*, [pop.hypotheses.org/3596](http://pop.hypotheses.org/3596), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>75</sup> P. Vardon, “Lambda,” *Éléments pour une contre-culture identitaire*, 143. (In the same volume, see also the articles on “Léonidas,” “Sparte,” and “Thermopyles”).

<sup>76</sup> “FAQ,” Generation Identity (UK), [www.generation-identity.org.uk/faqs/](http://www.generation-identity.org.uk/faqs/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Lit. “Ricordare gli eroi d’Europa e l’importanza della #Lambda.” Tweet by @GenerazioneID, [twitter.com/GenerazioneID/status/1031866215936020480](https://twitter.com/GenerazioneID/status/1031866215936020480), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Lit. “Il nostro simbolo è la Lambda, che ornava lo scudo degli Spartani.” Tweet by @GenerazioneID, [twitter.com/GenerazioneID/status/276736228165046273](https://twitter.com/GenerazioneID/status/276736228165046273), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Lit. “Das Lambda der Spartaner.” Tweet by @IBDeutschland, [twitter.com/IBDeutschland/status/953305922239115264](https://twitter.com/IBDeutschland/status/953305922239115264), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> It is perceptible in the logos as well as on the sites of the various movements (yellow and white) and in the majority of the leaflets which they distribute.

<sup>81</sup> Questioned on this point, some French activists explained that this change corresponded to a quest for “normalization,” as black and yellow were, according to them, the colors of a “groupuscule.” They thus consider that they were compelled to opt for white and blue. As red, green, and orange are markers of the left and the center, blue was the obvious choice.

<sup>82</sup> Cécile Leconte, “La carrière militante du ‘grand remplacement’ au sein du milieu partisan de l’Alternative pour l’Allemagne [AfD],” *Politix* 126, no. 2 (2019): 111-134

<sup>83</sup> Lit. “completa sostituzione degli elementi etnici e dei popoli originari dell’Europa.” See “Grande Sostituzione,” *Generazione Identitaria*, [generazione-identitaria.com/grande-sostituzione/](http://generazione-identitaria.com/grande-sostituzione/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>84</sup> Lit. “sociologo francese Renaud Camus.” See “Grande Sostituzione,” *Generazione Identitaria*, [generazione-identitaria.com/grande-sostituzione/](http://generazione-identitaria.com/grande-sostituzione/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>85</sup> Lit. “Sie werden letztlich zur Minderheit im eigenen Land! Wir nennen diesen Prozess den ‘Großen Austausch’ und werden ihn aufhalten.” See “Der Grosse Austausch,” *Identitäre Bewegung [DE]*, [www.identitaere-bewegung.at/der-grosse-austausch/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.at/der-grosse-austausch/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Some examples: Martin Sellner, “Der Große Austausch,” YouTube video, April 11, 2015, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4gHQ00wBGQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4gHQ00wBGQ), accessed April 23, 2019; P. Lenart, “Der Große Austausch und die Tendenzwende,” May 24, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5UeHB\\_3z3w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5UeHB_3z3w), accessed April 23, 2019; P. Lenart, “10 Lügen über den Großen Austausch – widerlegt,” March 24, 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=k78W2F\\_56r4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k78W2F_56r4), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> “FAQ,” *Identitäre Bewegung*, [www.identitaere-bewegung.de/faq/was-meint-der-begriff-grosser-austausch-und-wer-ist-schuld-daran/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/faq/was-meint-der-begriff-grosser-austausch-und-wer-ist-schuld-daran/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> “FAQ,” *Generation Identity [UK]*, [www.generation-identity.org.uk/faqs/](http://www.generation-identity.org.uk/faqs/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> “Politische Forderungen,” *Identitäre Bewegung*, [www.identitaere-bewegung.de/category/politische-forderungen/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/category/politische-forderungen/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>90</sup> “Demands,” *Generation Identity [UK]*, [www.generation-identity.org.uk/demands/](http://www.generation-identity.org.uk/demands/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>91</sup> The Identitarian triptych is also taken up.

<sup>92</sup> Lit. “Jede Ethnie hat das Recht, ihre Kultur, ihre Bräuche und Traditionen, also ihre ethnokulturelle Identität, zu erhalten.” See “FAQ,” *Identitäre Bewegung (DE)*, [www.identitaere-bewegung.de/faq/was-meint-der-begriff-grosser-austausch-und-wer-ist-schuld-daran/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/faq/was-meint-der-begriff-grosser-austausch-und-wer-ist-schuld-daran/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>93</sup> A novelty underlined by Jean-Yves Camus: “the specificity of their history is to have created from scratch a concept [that of Identitarian], where the other trans-European networks diffuse already existing ideological references: national-populism, nationalism-revolutionary or neo-fascism” (Camus, “Die Identitäre Bewegung,” 233-247. [www.tempsresents.com/2019/04/03/les-identitaires-et-la-recomposition-des-droites/](http://www.tempsresents.com/2019/04/03/les-identitaires-et-la-recomposition-des-droites/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>94</sup> Leconte, “Contribution à l’étude des régimes circulatoires transnationaux,” 121.

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- <sup>95</sup> For example, from May/June 2013 (with the “Hollande dégage!” campaign) and again after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, the activists waved banners stating “Je suis Charlie Martel.”
- <sup>96</sup> Their banners bore such slogans as “*Sichere grenzen, sichere Zukunft*” (Secure Borders, Secure Future) and “*Grenzen Schützen, Leben Retten*” (Close the Borders, Save Lives).
- <sup>97</sup> Tweet from @Identitaere\_B, [twitter.com/Identitaere\\_B/status/867061603874811904](https://twitter.com/Identitaere_B/status/867061603874811904), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>98</sup> Tweet from @GenerazioneID, [twitter.com/GenerazioneID/status/904396123133104132](https://twitter.com/GenerazioneID/status/904396123133104132), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>99</sup> Tweet from GID\_England, [twitter.com/GID\\_England/status/957348509245693952](https://twitter.com/GID_England/status/957348509245693952), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>100</sup> “Wir helfen den vergessenen obdachlosenhilfe,” *Identitäre Bewegung*, [blog.identitaere-bewegung.de/wir-helfen-den-vergessenen-obdachlosenhilfe-teil-ii/](http://blog.identitaere-bewegung.de/wir-helfen-den-vergessenen-obdachlosenhilfe-teil-ii/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>101</sup> Tweet from @Identitaere\_B, [twitter.com/Identitaere\\_B/status/808377178106851328](https://twitter.com/Identitaere_B/status/808377178106851328), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>102</sup> This observation is not limited to the Identitarian movement; most activist groups now use the Internet and social networks in a complementary fashion.
- <sup>103</sup> Italian: “*Il femminismo è contro la donna.*”
- <sup>104</sup> “Frauen wehrt euch 120 dezibel,” *Identitäre Bewegung*, [blog.identitaere-bewegung.de/frauen-wehrt-euch-120-dezibel-120db/](http://blog.identitaere-bewegung.de/frauen-wehrt-euch-120-dezibel-120db/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>105</sup> Phalanx Europa, [phalanx-europa.com/fr/](http://phalanx-europa.com/fr/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>106</sup> German: “*Revolte mit Stil.*”
- <sup>107</sup> “*Pils Identitär,*” [pils-identitaer.de](http://pils-identitaer.de), accessed April 23, 2019. It was for sale on “BLaden,” the online shop of the German Identitarians: [ibladen.de/craft-bier/pils-identitaer/](http://ibladen.de/craft-bier/pils-identitaer/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>108</sup> German: “*Das Craft-Bier der Identitären.*”
- <sup>109</sup> This practice was taken up by the Hungarian Identitarians.
- <sup>110</sup> Established in September 2013, his YouTube channel hosts several hundred videos that had attracted a total of 19 million views as of April 2019.
- <sup>111</sup> This dimension has already been highlighted by Stobaugh and Snow: “different institutional contexts may impose different sets of constraints on framing processes that in turn affect the character of what is diffused.” Stobaugh and Snow, “Temporality and Frame Diffusion,” 34-55. IBD cadres explain that there has been a refocusing of stakes on immigration given their country’s supposed absence of a colonial past: “As an example, French and English activism needs other narratives than German activism, mostly because of the big colonial history, which Germany doesn’t have.” There is certainly a modification here. But it is carried out with reference to national history, not to an organizational culture.
- <sup>112</sup> With the notable exception of Austria, where an association, “WIR,” had existed since the beginning of 2012, but was dissolved in favor of the IBD at the end of 2012. This association never had time to structure itself properly, so it is difficult to speak of a pre-existing organizational culture.
- <sup>113</sup> Leconte, “Contribution à l’étude des régimes circulatoires transnationaux,” 121.
- <sup>114</sup> Van Hauwaert, *Trans-National Diffusion Patterns*, 271-283.
- <sup>115</sup> Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht, “The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528 (1993): 56-74, 63.
- <sup>116</sup> Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, 103-106.
- <sup>117</sup> Chabot, “Dialogue Matters.”
- <sup>118</sup> Van Hauwaert, *Trans-National Diffusion Patterns*, 300.
- <sup>119</sup> Chabot, “Dialogue Matters.”
- <sup>120</sup> Van Hauwaert, *Trans-National Diffusion Patterns*, 320.
- <sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.
- <sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 346-349.

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<sup>124</sup> This hypothesis has already been argued for elsewhere: “We think cross-national diffusion depends more on the interplay of relational and non-relational channels than on the replacement of the former by the latter” (McAdam and Rucht, “The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas,” 74.)

<sup>125</sup> Chabot, “Dialogue Matters,” 108.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with the IBD's secretariat (march 2018)

<sup>127</sup> German: “Wir wissen, dass das 21. Jahrhundert für uns Europäer vor allem schwer lösbare Probleme und zahlreiche Herausforderungen bereithält,” IBÖ, Jahresbericht, 2017, [www.identitaere-bewegung.at/berichte/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.at/berichte/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>128</sup> “Discours de Martin Sellner à la manifestation ‘On est chez nous,’” *TV Patriote*, May 28, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZa6tslMXU8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZa6tslMXU8), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>129</sup> German: “Es ist also nur eine Frage der Zeit, bis auch in unserem Land die ersten großen islamistischen Terroranschläge durchgeführt werden.”

<sup>130</sup> Leconte, “Contribution à l’étude des régimes circulatoires transnationaux,” 120-121.

<sup>131</sup> Alban Ferrari, “Avec le succès de sa vidéo ‘Déclaration de guerre’, la Génération identitaire part à la reconquête de l’Europe,” *Novopress*, October 13, 2012, [web.archive.org/web/20121015061137/http://fr.novopress.info/122326/avec-le-succes-de-sa-video-manifeste-la-generation-identitaire-part-a-la-reconquete-de-leurope/](http://web.archive.org/web/20121015061137/http://fr.novopress.info/122326/avec-le-succes-de-sa-video-manifeste-la-generation-identitaire-part-a-la-reconquete-de-leurope/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>132</sup> This information is based on a search of non-French articles in the Factiva press database.

<sup>133</sup> Occasionally, reactions seem to be modeled on those of Identitarians in other countries. For example, when the Austrians were investigated for the Christchurch terrorist’s donation, they donated to an anti-fascist organization (Hope Not Hate) to show that they could not control the sources of donations. When the French realized that Brenton Tarrant had also donated to them, they immediately gave to La République en Marche, for similar reasons. The impersonal channel was enough to give them that idea.

<sup>134</sup> Here, “real” is opposed to “virtual” in the sense that these notions are opposed in web culture, where a distinction is made between online, dematerialized (“virtual”) contacts and so-called IRL (in real life) contacts.

<sup>135</sup> The notable exception is the British case: GI-UK was founded by the will of the “continental branches, who decided it was time to seek out Identitarians in the British Isles.” Young British people responded to this call from the “continental” branch. This makes the British chapter a very special case.

<sup>136</sup> “Charlottesville: le logo du groupuscule français Génération identitaire repéré à la manifestation suprémaciste,” *Huffington Post*, August 14, 2017, [www.huffingtonpost.fr/2017/08/14/charlottesville-le-logo-du-groupuscule-francais-generation-iden\\_a\\_23076642/](http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2017/08/14/charlottesville-le-logo-du-groupuscule-francais-generation-iden_a_23076642/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> For example, the Viennese demonstration in April 2019 was broadcast on British, Hungarian, and German social networks. More symbolically, the donation of the French Identitaires to the repairs of Notre-Dame de Paris was reflected on almost all official pages.

<sup>138</sup> Identitas Generacio (YouTube channel), [www.youtube.com/channel/UCA3dPIg405gl-PsgG3auFNw/videos](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA3dPIg405gl-PsgG3auFNw/videos), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>139</sup> “Generation identity Hungary – Abel Bodi,” Martin Sellner, October 22, 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuuVNsYxokw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuuVNsYxokw), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>140</sup> “Lorenzo [Leader of GI-Italy] about Defend Europe,” Martin Sellner, June 15, 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLwmmevUktE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLwmmevUktE), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>141</sup> “England Explained—with Tom from Generation Identity,” March 29, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcrkqxxbNhl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcrkqxxbNhl), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>142</sup> For the first few years, it was called the “Camp identitaire.”

<sup>143</sup> “Les jeunes identitaires en route pour Ithaque,” *Identitaires* 16: 7-8.

<sup>144</sup> “Interview avec Martin Sellner de Génération identitaire Autriche,” *Génération identitaire*, September 21, 2013, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wWIHmKfk40](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wWIHmKfk40), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>145</sup> In German: “Trafen sich auch diesmal Identitäre aus Frankreich, Deutschland, Italien, Tschechien, Spanien, Holland und Österreich,” IBÖ, *Halbsjahresbericht*, 2/16, [www.identitaere-bewegung.at/berichte/](http://www.identitaere-bewegung.at/berichte/), accessed April 23, 2019.

<sup>146</sup> This rivalry also existed during the UDT between the various French chapters, but also throughout the years (number of actions, militants, etc.).

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- <sup>147</sup> “Manifestazione Identitaria a Berlino: un successo scomodo,” *Generazione identitaria*, June 22, 2017, [generazione-identitaria.com/2017/06/manifestazione-identitaria-berlino-un-successo-scomodo/](http://generazione-identitaria.com/2017/06/manifestazione-identitaria-berlino-un-successo-scomodo/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>148</sup> “Újbalos terror Párizsisztánban / Antifatererror in Parisistan,” Abel Bodi, [Video subtitled by the creator], [youtu.be/dQfTlZJOFrQ](https://youtu.be/dQfTlZJOFrQ), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>149</sup> Ben Jones, Video from January 12, 2019, posted on Telescope and relayed on Telegram, [telesco.pe/GIIrelandandtheUK/202](https://telesco.pe/GIIrelandandtheUK/202), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>150</sup> For instance, Abel Bodi drew from his weekend in Paris an overall reflection on the political and social situation in France and Western Europe more broadly.
- <sup>151</sup> Ben Jones, Video from January 12, 2019, posted on Telescope and relayed on Telegram, [telesco.pe/GIIrelandandtheUK/202](https://telesco.pe/GIIrelandandtheUK/202), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>152</sup> “Újbalos terror Párizsisztánban / Antifatererror in Parisistan,” Abel Bodi, [Video subtitled by the creator], [youtu.be/dQfTlZJOFrQ](https://youtu.be/dQfTlZJOFrQ), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>153</sup> Sidney Tarrow, “Dynamics of Diffusion,” in *The Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms and Political Effects*, ed. Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 215.
- <sup>154</sup> Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, eds., *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 331.
- <sup>155</sup> Givan, Roberts, and Soule, “Introduction: The Dimensions of Diffusion,” 3.
- <sup>156</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>157</sup> Tarrow, “Dynamics of Diffusion,” 214.
- <sup>158</sup> Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, “Scale Shift in Transnational Contention,” in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, ed. Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 121-147.
- <sup>159</sup> Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, 139.
- <sup>160</sup> Ibid., 139; Tarrow, “Dynamics of Diffusion,” 215.
- <sup>161</sup> An NGO involved in sea rescue, notably of migrants.
- <sup>162</sup> “Sicile: des militants identitaires tentent d'empêcher le sauvetage de migrants,” *Le Parisien*, May 13, 2017, [www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/sicile-des-militants-identitaires-tentent-d-empêcher-le-sauvetage-de-migrants-13-05-2017-6945771.php](http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/sicile-des-militants-identitaires-tentent-d-empêcher-le-sauvetage-de-migrants-13-05-2017-6945771.php), accessed April 23, 2019. The activists filmed and published a video of this campaign: “Identitarians Block NGO Ship in Catania - the Video,” *Defend Europe*, May 31, 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JZHJrJjmnY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JZHJrJjmnY), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>163</sup> SAR stands for “Search and Rescue”
- <sup>164</sup> “Paypal Canceled Our Account - but We Got a Ship!,” *Defend Europe*, June 14, 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4oCeSWdPa0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4oCeSWdPa0), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>165</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>166</sup> As they had already used some of the funds before the Paypal account was closed, this fundraiser turned out to be a good business operation.
- <sup>167</sup> The (shut-down) fundraising site announced this final amount on the site “wearchr.” See [web.archive.org/web/20171207060038/www.wearchr.com/bounties/defend-europe-identitarian-sar-mission-on-the-libyan-coast](http://web.archive.org/web/20171207060038/www.wearchr.com/bounties/defend-europe-identitarian-sar-mission-on-the-libyan-coast), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>168</sup> According to the activists, the campaign was financed wholly by private donations.
- <sup>169</sup> “La mission Alpes de Defend Europe prend fin, le combat pour l'identité continue,” *Génération identitaire*, June 29, 2018, [generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/29/la-mission-alpes-de-defend-europe-prend-fin-le-combat-pour-lidentite-continue/](http://generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/29/la-mission-alpes-de-defend-europe-prend-fin-le-combat-pour-lidentite-continue/), accessed April 4, 2019.
- <sup>170</sup> Analyzing the tweets posted between 9am and 11pm on the day of the campaign that contained the campaign hashtag (#StopMigrantsAlpes), more than 80% were made from French-speaking accounts.
- <sup>171</sup> “Defend Europe Alps Mission,” Lauren Southern, April 22, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlJpl3pVtSM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlJpl3pVtSM), accessed April 23, 2019.

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- <sup>172</sup> See the various videos posted, such as “Blocking Illegal Migrants in the French Alps,” Brittany Pettibone, April 24, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdF0wv\\_UYHI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdF0wv_UYHI), accessed April 23, 2019; “Defend Europe blockiert französischen Alpenpass—Mein Bericht,” Martin Sellner, April 24, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbvRQsb221g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbvRQsb221g), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>173</sup> Clément Galant, interviewed by Brittany Pettibone, “Blocking Illegal Migrants in the French Alps,” Brittany Pettibone, April 24, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdF0wv\\_UYHI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdF0wv_UYHI), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>174</sup> Luca Kerbl (IBÖ), interviewed by Brittany Pettibone, “Blocking Illegal Migrants in the French Alps,” Brittany Pettibone, April 24, 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdF0wv\\_UYHI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdF0wv_UYHI), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>175</sup> La Traboules—Maison de l’identité lyonnaise is a bar in Lyon.
- <sup>176</sup> GI Europe, “Procès-verbal de l’assemblée générale constitutive,” available from the Rhône prefecture.
- <sup>177</sup> GI Europe, “Statuts,” available from the Rhône prefecture.
- <sup>178</sup> Generation Identity Europe, [generationidentity.eu/](http://generationidentity.eu/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>179</sup> G.I.E. Foundation, [generation-identity.eu](http://generation-identity.eu), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>180</sup> This is what its statutes show. See [generation-identity.eu/statut-web.pdf](http://generation-identity.eu/statut-web.pdf), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>181</sup> The bank details are published online to allow donations directly via bank transfer.
- <sup>182</sup> “The Successes of Defend Europe,” Defend Europe, August 23, 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpsDDtOC-yc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpsDDtOC-yc), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>183</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>184</sup> Ibid. This dimension was also perceptible in the latest GI campaign in France: “Stopper l’immigration, c’est possible,” printed on a photo of the “Defend Europe” action in the Alps.
- <sup>185</sup> Tweet from @DefendEuropeID, [twitter.com/DefendEuropeID/status/891331556572364800?s=20](https://twitter.com/DefendEuropeID/status/891331556572364800?s=20), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>186</sup> “Today, 17th August, Defend Europe just ended its first mission,” Defend Europe, August 17, 2017, [twitter.com/DefendEuropeID/status/898273603971678212](https://twitter.com/DefendEuropeID/status/898273603971678212), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>187</sup> “Migrants clandestins en Méditerranée: face au chantage des ONG, faisons bloc!” June 12, 2018, [generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/12/migrants-clandestins-en-mediterranee-face-au-chantage-des-ong-faisons-bloc/](http://generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/12/migrants-clandestins-en-mediterranee-face-au-chantage-des-ong-faisons-bloc/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>188</sup> “Génération identitaire lance sa nouvelle campagne ‘Avec de la volonté, tout est possible,’” Génération identitaire, September 2, 2018, [generationidentitaire.org/2018/09/02/generation-identitaire-lance-sa-nouvelle-campagne-avec-de-la-volonte-tout-est-possible/](http://generationidentitaire.org/2018/09/02/generation-identitaire-lance-sa-nouvelle-campagne-avec-de-la-volonte-tout-est-possible/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>189</sup> “Complicité des ONG avec les passeurs de migrants: un an après, Macron donne raison aux identitaires !” Génération identitaire, June 27, 2018, [generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/27/ong-pro-migrants-complices-des-passeurs-macron-contraint-de-reprendre-les-constats-de-generation-identitaire/](http://generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/27/ong-pro-migrants-complices-des-passeurs-macron-contraint-de-reprendre-les-constats-de-generation-identitaire/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>190</sup> The government is not the Prime Minister’s in this statement but the President’s.
- <sup>191</sup> “Route des migrants clandestins – Col de l’Échelle – Hautes-Alpes: Génération Identitaire bloque le passage de la frontière franco-italienne,” *Génération identitaire*, April 21, 2018, [generationidentitaire.org/2018/04/21/route-des-migrants-clandestins-col-de-lechelle-hautes-alpes-generation-identitaire-bloque-le-passage-de-la-frontiere-franco-italienne/](http://generationidentitaire.org/2018/04/21/route-des-migrants-clandestins-col-de-lechelle-hautes-alpes-generation-identitaire-bloque-le-passage-de-la-frontiere-franco-italienne/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>192</sup> “La mission Alpes de Defend Europe prend fin, le combat pour l’identité continue,” *Génération identitaire*, June 29, 2018, [generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/29/la-mission-alpes-de-defend-europe-prend-fin-le-combat-pour-lidentite-continue/](http://generationidentitaire.org/2018/06/29/la-mission-alpes-de-defend-europe-prend-fin-le-combat-pour-lidentite-continue/), accessed April 23, 2019.
- <sup>193</sup> Van Hauwaert, *Trans-National Diffusion Patterns*, 361.
- <sup>194</sup> Marchi, “La réutilisation de symboles,” 160.
- <sup>195</sup> Ibid., 168.
- <sup>196</sup> Ibid., 169.
- <sup>197</sup> The economic metaphor is borrowed from Mayer and Klandermans, who use it to explain the *motives* for militant engagement.
- <sup>198</sup> “Martin Sellner: The New Face of the Far Right in Europe,” *BBC News*, September 20, 2018, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-45572411](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-45572411).

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<sup>199</sup> The expression is taken from an activist from Rouen.