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Επιχειρήσεων*

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**Constructing diversity in a multicultural workgroup:
the case of an EU-funded project group**

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Περίληψη

Η διαμόρφωση μιας νέας εργασιακής πραγματικότητας στα πλαίσια της παγκοσμιοποίησης, υποστηριζόμενη από την διαρκή ανάπτυξη και διάχυση των επικοινωνιακών συστημάτων, έχει προσανατολίσει το ερευνητικό ενδιαφέρον στη μελέτη της διαφορετικότητας του ανθρώπινου δυναμικού σε πολύ-πολιτισμικές ομάδες εργασίας (Sackmann & Phillips, 2004). Η συστηματική επισκόπηση της διεθνούς βιβλιογραφίας αναδεικνύει τις αποκλίσεις που επικρατούν στον τρόπο θεώρησης της έννοιας της διαφορετικότητας οι οποίες και αποτυπώνονται σε τέσσερις κυρίαρχες προσεγγίσεις. Σύμφωνα με την πρώτη από αυτές, η διαφορετικότητα αποτελεί έννοια στατική, ενώ ως ανεξάρτητη και μετρήσιμη μεταβλητή (π.χ. Cox et al., 1991, Easterby – Smith & Malina, 1999, Dreachslin et al., 2000; Homan et al., 2008) επιστρατεύεται προκειμένου για τη μελέτη της θετικής ή αρνητικής επίδρασης που μπορεί να ασκεί στην απόδοση και στην αποτελεσματικότητα της ομαδικής εργασίας (Mannix & Neale, 2005, van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Στο δεύτερο ερευνητικό ρεύμα, η διαφορετικότητα προσδιορίζεται μεν ως έννοια δυναμική και κοινωνικά κατασκευασμένη (π.χ. Barinaga, 2007, Akkerman et al., 2006, Ailon-Souday & Kunda, 2003), ταυτιζόμενη ωστόσο με την έννοια της εθνικής διαφορετικότητας. Ο δυναμικός και πολλαπλός οντολογικός της χαρακτήρας αναδεικνύεται από την τρίτη προσέγγιση, Έρευνες ενδεικτικές αυτής της θεώρησης, διερευνούν περισσότερο από ένα τύπο διαφορετικότητας (π.χ. Friesl et al., 2009) προσδιορίζοντας ωστόσο τις επιμέρους εκφράσεις της ως ανεξάρτητες και διακριτές κατηγορίες. Σύμφωνα με το τέταρτο ερευνητικό ρεύμα, η διαφορετικότητα αποτελείται από «διαπλεκόμενες ή διασταυρούμενες» (intersectional) κατηγορίες. Οι ερευνητές σε αυτή την προσέγγιση αναγνωρίζουν τη αλληλεπίδραση μεταξύ των κοινωνικό-δημογραφικών κατηγοριών κατά τη μελέτη θεμάτων ανισότητας και διάκρισης (π.χ. Holvino, 2010, Atewologun & Singh, 2010, Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010) αλλά τείνουν να επικεντρώνουν το ενδιαφέρον τους σε συγκεκριμένες κατηγορίες όπως η φυλή και το φύλο (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012).

Ένα κοινό στοιχείο που χαρακτηρίζει τις τέσσερις παραπάνω ερευνητικές προσεγγίσεις είναι ότι οι κοινωνικό-δημογραφικές κατηγορίες επιλέγονται από τους ίδιους τους ερευνητές ως σημαντικό στοιχείο διαφοροποίησης των μελών της ομάδας. Αυτή η *a priori* εστίαση των ερευνητών σε συγκεκριμένες κοινωνικό-δημογραφικές κατηγορίες έχει δεχθεί ευρεία κριτική, καθώς αγνοεί τη δυνατότητα αυτό-προσδιορισμού των ατόμων (Nkomo & Cox, 1996). Σ' αυτά τα πλαίσια υποστηρίζεται ότι η εμπειρική διερεύνηση θα πρέπει να ενθαρρύνει την ανάδειξη του τρόπου με τον οποίο τα ίδια τα άτομα αντιλαμβάνονται και κατασκευάζουν τη

διαφορετικότητα τους (Zanoni et al., 2010, Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012, Janssens & Zanoni, 2005, Mahadevan, 2009, Garcia-Prieto, 2003).

Σκοπός της διατριβής είναι να συμβάλει στην κάλυψη αυτού του κενού της διεθνούς βιβλιογραφίας διερευνώντας από μια *a posteriori* κατεύθυνση πώς τα μέλη μιας πολύ-πολιτισμικής ομάδας εργασίας αντιλαμβάνονται την διαφορετικότητα μέσα στα πλαίσια της ομάδας τους. Η διατριβή είναι η μελέτη περίπτωσης μιας ομάδας εργασίας χρηματοδοτούμενης από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση (Ε.Ε.) και στόχος της έρευνας είναι η διερεύνηση της διαδικασίας μέσω της οποίας τα μέλη της ομάδας κατασκευάζουν τη διαφορετικότητα τους κατά τη διάρκεια μια διήμερης συνάντησης.

Η έρευνα θεμελιώνεται στην οντολογική αρχή ότι ο κοινωνικός κόσμος είναι κοινωνικά κατασκευασμένος (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, Gergen, 1985, Giddens, 1974), με την έννοια της διαφορετικότητας να αποτελεί μια κοινωνική κατασκευή που θεμελιώνεται μερικώς στις αντιλήψεις, στις δράσεις, και στα νοήματα των ατόμων (Giddens, 1974, Geertz, 1973, Gergen, 1985, 1991, 1994). Στη βάση της παραδοχής των αλληλεξαρτούμενων διαδικασιών κατασκευής της διαφορετικότητας και της ταυτότητας του ατόμου (Hall, 1996), η διερεύνηση της διαφορετικότητας γίνεται μέσω της εξέτασης του τρόπου με τον οποίο τα μέλη της ομάδας αντιλαμβάνονται τις διαφορές τους, πώς τις χρησιμοποιούν, και τι νοήματα αποδίδουν στη διαφορετικότητα τους.

Ο μεθοδολογικός σχεδιασμός που επιλέχθηκε συνιστά το συνδυασμό δυο μεθόδων: τη μελέτη περίπτωσης (case study) και την κονστρουκτιβιστική προσέγγιση της θεμελιωμένης θεωρίας (constructivist grounded theory approach) (Charmaz, 2000, 2006). Η συλλογή των δεδομένων έγινε μέσα από τεχνικές έρευνας πεδίου και διήρκεσε πέντε ημέρες (δυο ημέρες πριν τη συνάντηση της ομάδας, δυο ημέρες κατά τη διάρκεια, και μια ημέρα μετά τη λήξη της συνάντησης). Τα δεδομένα αποτελούνται από την ηχογραφημένη ομαδική συζήτηση, δέκα ημι-δομημένες συνεντεύξεις με τα μέλη της ομάδας, σημειώσεις έρευνας πεδίου και συμμετοχικής παρατήρησης, και έντυπο υλικό. Οι ερευνητικές ερωτήσεις που κατεύθυναν την ανάλυση αφήγησης (narrative analysis) (Riessman, 2008) είναι οι ακόλουθες:

1. Ποιες είναι οι κατηγορίες διαφορετικότητας που αντιλαμβάνονται ως εμφανής τα μέλη της ομάδας; Πώς κατασκευάζουν τις κατηγορίες αυτές;
2. Πώς χρησιμοποιούν τα μέλη της ομάδας τις αντιλαμβανόμενες διαφορές τους;
3. Ποια νοήματα αποδίδουν τα μέλη της ομάδας στις αντιλαμβανόμενες διαφορές τους;

Η ανάλυση των δεδομένων δείχνει ότι η διαφορετικότητα στην εξεταζόμενη ομάδα εργασίας αποκτά ποικίλο περιεχόμενο, νοήματα και χρήσεις. Η διαφορετικότητα της ομάδας είναι κάτι

περισσότερο από το απλό άθροισμα των αντιλαμβανόμενων διαφορών τους. Τα μέλη της ομάδας κατασκευάζουν τη διαφορετικότητα τους διαπλέκοντας τις διαφορές εξειδίκευσης, εθνικότητας, και επαγγέλματος (ερευνητικό ερώτημα 1).

Τα μέλη της ομάδας χρησιμοποιούν τις αντιλαμβανόμενες διαφορές με ποικίλους τρόπους (ερευνητικό ερώτημα 2). Συγκεκριμένα χρησιμοποιούν τις εθνικές διαφορές τους για να δικαιολογήσουν επικοινωνιακά προβλήματα και τις επαγγελματικές διαφορές για να νομιμοποιήσουν τις επιδιώξεις τους στην ομάδα. Τέλος, τα μέλη της ομάδας χρησιμοποιούν τις διαφορές εξειδίκευσης για να δικαιολογήσουν την έκκληση τους για τη συμβολή των άλλων μελών σε κάποιο έργο, αλλά και για να αποκτήσουν μεγαλύτερη επιρροή στη διαδικασία λήψης αποφάσεων.

Τα μέλη της ομάδας αποδίδουν ποικίλα νοήματα στη διαφορετικότητα τους (ερευνητικό ερώτημα 3). Αντιλαμβάνονται τις εθνικές και επαγγελματικές διαφορές τους ως ένα σημαντικό «προσανατολισμό» που τους βοηθά να ανταποκρίνονται επιτυχώς στις απαιτήσεις και τις ιδιαιτερότητες που χαρακτηρίζουν τα πολύ-πολιτισμικά εργασιακά πλαίσια. Επίσης περιγράφουν τις διαφορές εξειδίκευσης και τις εθνικές διαφορές τους ως ευκαιρία για ανάπτυξη του εαυτού, τόσο σε προσωπικό όσο και σε επαγγελματικό επίπεδο.

Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας δείχνουν ότι η διαφορετικότητα της εξεταζόμενης ομάδας είναι δυναμική και μεταβάλλεται κατά τη διάρκεια του χρόνου σε όρους περιεχομένου, νοημάτων, και χρήσεως. Η συνεχής αυτή κατασκευή και ανά-κατασκευή της διαφορετικότητας θεμελιώνεται μερικώς στην ανάγκη των μελών της ομάδας να κατασκευάσουν μια θετική ταυτότητα για τον εαυτό τους και να τοποθετήσουν τον εαυτό τους στο σύνθετο, πολύπλοκο πλαίσιο της πολύ-πολιτισμικής ομάδας εργασίας μειώνοντας την αβεβαιότητα. Ταυτόχρονα, η κατασκευή και ανά-κατασκευή της διαφορετικότητας επηρεάζεται εν μέρει από το ποιος είναι ο «άλλος» καθώς και από το πλαίσιο μέσα στο οποίο πραγματοποιείται η αλληλεπίδραση.

Στη διατριβή προτείνεται ότι η διαδικασία κατασκευής της διαφορετικότητας μπορεί να περιγραφεί από τον όρο “differentiation work” καθώς αντανακλά τη δυναμική, συνεχή διαδικασία σχηματισμού και ανά-κατασκευής του περιεχομένου της διαφορετικότητας, της χρήσης της, και των νοημάτων που αποδίδονται σε αυτή. Η έρευνα καταδεικνύει εμπειρικά τη δυναμική, πολλαπλή, σχεσιακή κατασκευή και ανακατασκευή της διαφορετικότητας της ομάδας και επιχειρεί να συμβάλει στην διεθνή βιβλιογραφία προσφέροντας μια καλύτερη κατανόηση της πολύπλοκης, μεταβαλλόμενης, και ασαφής φύσης της έννοιας της διαφορετικότητας.

Abstract

Despite the increasing research on workgroup diversity, diversity itself remains an ambivalent term due to the various and in some cases even conflicting ways in which scholars conceptualize its nature (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). An examination of the relevant literature illustrates four main streams in diversity research. A first stream of research views workgroup diversity as a concept with static nature and treats diversity as a measurable variable (e.g. Cox et al., 1991), focusing on the negative and positive effects of diversity in work-related processes and outcomes in work-teams (Mannix and Neale, 2005). A second stream of research addresses the dynamic, socially constructed nature of diversity (e.g. Barinaga, 2007); yet constrain their conceptualization of diversity focusing on national diversity. A third stream of research explores both the dynamic and multiple nature of workgroup diversity, including more than one type of diversity in a single study (e.g. Friesl et al., 2009), but treats diversity categories as separate and distinct. A fourth school of thought acknowledges the dynamic, shifting relationship between the diversity categories focusing on issues of inequality and discrimination (e.g. Holvino, 2010); yet they predefine the categories of differences and conduct their studies in organizational rather in workgroup settings.

A common aspect in the four aforementioned streams of research is that scholars pre-decide the categories of differences under study. This a priori approach is criticized by many scholars who argue in favour of exploring how people themselves perceive and construct their categories of differences, rather than a priori assigning them in pre-defined categories (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Recently some scholars started following an a posteriori approach, viewing categories of differences as emerging and empirically identified (e.g. Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Mahadevan, 2009), yet so far studies are conducted in multinational organizations. The peculiar setting of multicultural workgroups remains unexplored from an a posteriori direction.

The aim of this study is to contribute in the extant diversity research by exploring from an *a posteriori* direction how the members of a multicultural group themselves perceive their group diversity during their everyday working life. In doing so I conduct a case study of an EU-funded project group to explore how the group members actively construct their group diversity during a two-day project meeting.

Drawing on the assumption that reality is a social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) I view diversity as a three-fold construction partly grounded in peoples' a) perceptions of their differences; b) meanings regarding their differentiation; and c) discursive uses of their

differences. I perceive diversity as interrelated with peoples' identity articulation (Hall, 1996) and view both diversity and identity as dynamic, socially constructed concepts that should be identified from an *a posteriori* direction, instead of being restricted to *a priori* definitions. I explore diversity's construction through the exploration of members' perceptions regarding their differences, what their perceived differences mean to them, and how group members use their perceived differences in their everyday project life.

The research design is informed by a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000). Analysis draws on data collected through ethnographic field work. Data consists of natural occurring data (tape recording of their meeting discussion), 10 semi-structured interviews with group members, field notes, and documents. The research questions guiding the narrative analysis are:

- How members define themselves and others as being different or similar? What categories of differences do members perceive as salient and how they construct their categories of differences?
- How members use their perceived differences as a discursive resource during their everyday project life?
- What meanings do members ascribe to their perceived categories of differences?

Data analysis shows the ways in which members' differentiation takes multiple shapes, meanings and discursive uses during their project group life. Specifically, the analysis shows that *members create their diversity through the intersection of their national, professional, and expertise identities* (RQ1). Group diversity is more than the sum of members' perceived differences; members define themselves and others by negotiating their various identities and intersecting their categories of differences.

During their project meeting members use their perceived differences as a discursive resource (RQ2). Specifically, they use their national differences as an excuse to justify their communication problems and their professional differences to legitimate their goals in the project. Finally, members use their expertise differences to justify a request for involving other members in a task, to gain leverage in decision making, and to position themselves in the project group.

Diversity has several meanings for group members (RQ3). They perceive their national and professional diversity as an important "orientation" for guiding themselves in multicultural contexts. They describe their expertise and national differences as a source for learning and self-development. Finally, members describe themselves as serving a higher goal than the simple creation of the project's outcome.

Constructing group diversity: Doing differentiation work

Analysis shows that members' differentiation is dynamic and changes over time during their everyday project group life: it is fluid and shifting. At one point national differences are in the foreground and at the next point is members' expertise or an intersection of their perceived differences. Throughout their everyday working life members use their differentiations with several ways and ascribe to their perceived differences multiple meanings.

Common processes underlying the construction and re-construction of members' perceptions, meanings, and discursive uses of their differentiation are their need to reduce uncertainty and position themselves in the complex context of the EU-funded project; to create a positive working identity for the self; to enhance their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Members' shifting differentiation is also partly informed by contextual factors and depending on who is the "other".

Based on the above findings I propose that diversity construction can be better described by the term "differentiation work" that reflects the dynamic, ongoing process of forming and re-shaping members' perceptions, meanings and discursive uses of their differentiation. The overall analysis shows that group members construct and re-construct their group diversity through such differentiation work. The study empirically illustrates the dynamic, multiple, relational, intersectional everyday construction and re-construction of workgroup diversity and contributes to diversity research offering a better understanding of the complex, shifting and ambiguity nature of workgroup diversity.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The introduction part of the thesis consists of four sections. In the first section I refer to philosophical premises underpinning the present research, and in the second section I present the scope of the study justifying its' need in diversity research. At the third section I present the aim and the research question guiding the research, and finally at the fourth section I outline the structure of the thesis.

1.1 The philosophical premises of the study

1.1.1 The role of philosophical assumptions in research

Researchers approach the phenomenon under study and design their research with certain philosophical premises or a specific worldview or paradigm that guides their inquiry (Creswell, 2002). The purpose of including the philosophical premises of the study at the *Introduction* part of the thesis rather in the *Methodology* part, is because the influence of paradigm is not constrained in the choice of methodology but diffuses the whole research process in a number of ways (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Cunliffe, 2010). The choice of paradigm informs: the way someone perceives the phenomenon under study; the articulation of the research question; the choice of theoretical framework; the way someone critique extant research; the design of the research; the choice of methodology, data gathering and data analysis methods. Thus, no research is conducted and accomplished within neutrality; the philosophical, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the researcher influence the study from the first stages of forming the research question to the latter stages of data analysis and interpretation of the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

I acknowledge that the choice of the paradigm influence my study in all the abovementioned ways and this is why I wish to make clear from the beginning my own ontological, epistemological, and methodological stance. Before presenting the philosophical premises underpinning my study, I define what a paradigm is and briefly outline three overarching paradigms in social sciences and organizational research (namely, positivism, hermeneutic, and critical realism) that take part in the paradigm debate. Then, I position my study in the paradigm debate declaring my own ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions which are aligned with social constructionism.

1.1.2 The paradigm debate

The paradigm debate refers to distinct philosophical traditions in social sciences and their different – even contradictory in some cases – basic beliefs and assumptions regarding the nature of social world, what constitute as knowledge, and methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

1.1.3 What is a paradigm?

The term *paradigm* originally appears in 1962 when Kuhn uses this term in his book ‘The Structure of Scientific Revolutions’ for referring to the distinct conceptual worldviews (called paradigms) that exist within scientific research. Kuhn (1962) argues that each paradigm consists of assumptions, beliefs, methods, and techniques that offer guidelines for scientists. Although Kuhn’s book has been criticized (e.g. Shapere, 1964; Feyerabend, 1970; Lakatos, 1970, 1978; Laudan, 1977), the term *paradigm* he has introduced is still used in social sciences (see for example Morgan, 1980; Cohen, 1985; Wallerstein, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

In the thesis, with the term “paradigm” I refer to a “set of interrelated assumptions about the social world, [the nature of knowledge, and methodology] which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world” (Filstead, 1979, p. 34). A paradigm is a set of “basic beliefs grounded on [specific] ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.107). Each paradigm is based on different beliefs and assumptions regarding the social world (*ontology*); the nature of knowledge – what counts as valid knowledge and how someone acquires it (*epistemology*); and procedures according to which research strategies are designed (*methodology*) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Methodology determines the tools or practices that researchers can employ in their study (*methods*), such as methods for gathering data (e.g. interviews)

1.1.4 The paradigmatic map

Scholars identify and group the paradigms in different ways. Burrell and Morgan (1979), for example, identify as paradigms the functionalist, interpretive, radical structuralist, and radical humanist. Morgan and Smirich (1980) focus on the distinction between the functionalist and the interpretive paradigms. Bryman (2008) identifies positivism and interpretivism as the main and distinctive research traditions, due to their different and conflicting ontological

assumptions. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) make a further distinction in paradigms and identify three paradigms as the prevalent research traditions: positivist, interpretive and critical, while Crotty (1998) argues that social research can be distinguished between “positivism vs. non-positivism” (p. 41).

In the present thesis I refer to positivism, interpretivism (focusing on social constructionism), and critical paradigm as the overarching research paradigms. I focus, however, mostly on differences between positivism and social constructionism. Although I acknowledge that critical paradigm differ from social constructionism on how each paradigm views the construction of reality and social world (see Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Cunliffe, 2010), yet in my understanding, both social constructionism and critical paradigm share the same emic, idiographic aim of inquiry and the same anti-essentialist view of diversity which is the phenomenon under study in the present research. Table 1.1 summarizes the basic beliefs and assumptions that define each paradigm.

1.1.4.1 Positivism

The positivistic philosophy of science emerged in 19th century when Comte introduced the concept of “positivism” proposing that researchers should approach social phenomena in the same way as natural phenomena (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). According to Comte, social and natural sciences share the same goal of inquiry, which is to discover universal laws that offer explanation and prediction; therefore, social sciences should adopt the hypothetico-deductive methods of natural science (Hesse, 1980, Smith, 1983).

According to the positivist *ontology*, social world is “driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 109) like natural world and is “objectively given and independently exist ‘out there’” (Primez et al., 2009, p. 268). The aim of research, thus, is to see how this objective given world works, to unravel the causal relationships and laws that driven the social world (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Table 1.1: The basic assumptions of Positivism, Social Constructionism and Critical

<i>Paradigms</i>	Positivism	Social constructionism	Critical
Basic beliefs and ideas about nature of social world and knowledge			
<i>Ontological assumptions</i>			
	Objectively given	Social constructed Subjective and Relativist reality	Constructed within social-historical contexts and power relations
<i>Epistemological assumptions</i>			
	Objective Researcher is objective and neutral	Subjectivist Researcher and participants of the study co-create understanding	Subjectivist Researcher and participants of the study co-create understanding
<i>Methodology</i>			
	Quantitative	Qualitative	Qualitative Mixed
Implications of basic beliefs and assumptions in research			
<i>Research Inquiry</i>			
Goal of inquiry	To discover universal laws that drive social world	Understanding of socially constructed world	Help people to change society
Research approach	Deductive	Inductive	Inductive and deductive

Source: adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994); Denzin and Lincoln (1994); Schwandt (1998); Neuman (2003); Denzin and Lincoln, (2000b); Pontorotto (2005); Delanty (2005); Alvesson and Skoldeberg (2009)

The positivist *epistemology* postulates that knowledge regarding the given and objective world can be “conventionally summarized in the form of time-and context free generalizations, some of which take the form of cause-effect laws” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). For positivists, knowledge is objective; they view data as existing “(already) there, and the task of researcher thus becomes to gather and systematize them” (Alvesson and Skoldeberg, 2009, p. 17). Positivists view the researcher as independent from the people under study; as someone who cannot be influenced or influence the phenomenon under study. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) write about positivistic research “when influence in either

direction (threats to validity) is recognized various strategies are followed to reduce or eliminate it. Inquiry takes place as through a one-way mirror” (p. 109). The positivist assumptions of reality as objectively given and measurable are linked with a quantitative *methodology* in which researchers aim to test a theory in order to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Although positivism initially dominated the social science, at the end of 1960 started to receive many critics especially on its assumptions that social sciences should adopt the goals of inquiry and methods of the natural sciences (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Interpretivism and critical realism are two philosophical approaches which developed in response to positivism, and each offer a set of alternative ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions and ideas.

1.1.4.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is also known as anti-positivism; it developed as a response to positivism and its suggestions. Interpretivism is rooted in 19th century at the philosophy of Dilthey and the sociology of Weber (Pontorotto, 2005). Weber and Dilthey rejected the positivistic assumptions of social science’s naturalism and set the ground of an alternative philosophical approach in social sciences – interpretivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Pontorotto, 2005). In interpretivism, social world and reality are viewed as not objective but as subjective (Sarantakos, 1998).

The basic belief in interpretivism is that people and social phenomena are not similar with natural phenomena but have fundamental differences (Blaikie, 1993); therefore social sciences should not mimic natural sciences. Giddens (1974) explains that “the difference between the social and natural world is that the latter does not constitute itself as meaningful” (p. 79); the meanings of natural world are created by people during their everyday life and “as a consequence of their endeavours to understand or explain it for themselves. Social life – of which these endeavours are a part – on the other hand, is produced by its component actors precisely in terms of their active constitution and reconstitution of frames of meaning whereby they organize their experiences” (p. 79).

Interpretivists argue that in natural sciences the aim of inquiry is explanation (Erklaren) of natural phenomena, whereas in social sciences is the empathetic understanding (Verstehen) of social phenomena (Schwandt, 1994, 2000). Scholars in interpretivism, aim to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena (Geertz, 1973; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Orlikowski and

Baroudi 1991) through the meanings that people attach to them (Creswell, 2002). The ontology and epistemology of interpretivism is linked with a qualitative methodology and methods like interviews, ethnography, and participant observation (Neuman, 2003).

Interpretivism – in my understanding – is a broad philosophical tradition in social sciences with several research paradigms developed within (Sarantakos, 1998), such as social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 2009); symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969); phenomenology (Husserl, 1980); ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). In the present thesis I present social constructionism in which the present study is grounded.

1.1.4.3 Social constructionism: the paradigm underpinning the present study

My personal philosophical beliefs about the world are aligned mostly with the corresponding assumptions of social constructionism. Social constructionism – contrary to the positivistic assumption of social world as objective – views reality and social world as social constructed “and re-constructed through the use of symbols in the course of human beings’ interactions with one another” (Gergen, 1985, p. 267). According to Gergen (1985) the world can be “understood as social artifacts. The process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship” (Gergen, 1985, p. 267). Social constructionism has a “pluralist and relativist [ontology]: there are multiple, often conflicting, constructions, and all are potentially meaningful” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 243). According to Schwandt (1998), in order to understand this world of multiple meanings or realities, the researcher has to “focus on the processes by which these meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified within a specific context of human action” (p. 225). Thus, the aim of social constructionism inquiry is to understand social phenomena through the exploration of construction processes (Guba, 1990; Gergen, 2006; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009) employing an emic orientation, i.e. to understand “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 221).

In social constructionism, knowledge is not viewed as objective like in positivism, but as subjective, relative and situational; “there is no Truth, only local truths” (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009, p. 30) and depends on the setting and social interaction within it is created (Gergen, 1994, 2006). Reality is viewed as “subjective and influenced by the context of the situation, namely the individuals’ experience and perceptions, the social environment, and the interaction between the individual and the researcher” (Pontorotto, 2005, p. 130).

Contrary to positivism, the researcher in social constructionism is not viewed as objective and independent from the people participating in the study, neither from the findings of the study. The researcher, thus, plays an active role in the construction of reality and knowledge; researchers together with the people participating in the study co-create the understanding of the social phenomena (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The subjective, relativist ontology and subjective epistemology of social constructionism is linked with a qualitative methodology that enables to “present the actor’s construction of their lived experiences so as to give them voice in the research process and to maintain context” (Thomas and Linsted, 2002, p. 74). Social constructionism tries to understand social phenomena through an *emic* direction, from the insider point of view (Schwandt, 1998); to understand how people make sense of their social world (Schultz and Hatch, 1996).

Social constructionism gained an increasing acknowledgement and acceptance in organizational studies countering the dominance of positivism in social sciences, although it also received critique from scholars advocating critical theory (e.g. Hibberd, 2001a, 2001b; Calhoun, 1995; Burningham, and Cooper, 1999; Willmott, 1994).

1.1.4.4 The critical paradigm

The critical paradigm or critical theory (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) developed in response to positivism and includes several perspectives such as critical sociology, feminism, neo-Marxism, (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Sarantakos 1998). Critical scholars, similarly with social constructionists, view reality and social world as constructed. The ontological assumptions in critical paradigm, however, differentiate from social constructionism because critical scholars view the construction of social world as historically constituted, embedded within power relations (Davis, Nakayama and Martin, 2000) and “shaped by ethic, cultural, gender, social and political values” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130). Critical researchers believe that although people are able to change their social and economic conditions, yet they are constrained by power inequalities within social systems (Sarantakos, 1998).

Critical research aims not only to understand social phenomena (like in social constructionism) but to go “beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves” (Neuman, 2003, p. 81); “to help emancipate oppressed groups” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130).

1.1.4.5 The similarities between social constructionism and critical paradigm

Many critical scholars critique social constructionism emphasizing the differences between social constructionism and critical paradigm (e.g. Hibberd, 2001a, 2001b; Houston, 2001). Other scholars, however, argue that the main differences are between critical realism and the extreme or radical social constructionism, rather moderate social constructionism (Delanty, 2005; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Although I do acknowledge that social constructionism and critical realism differ in many aspects – for example how they view the construction of social world and their focus on inquiry (see more on Ponterotto, 2005; Cunliffe, 2010) – yet I also view them as aligning in the following aspects (Table 1.2).

First, both social constructionists and critical scholars “assume a subjective nature of reality and the importance of contextual knowledge” (Davis et al., 2000, p. 533) contrary to the positivistic conceptualization of reality and knowledge as objective. Second, social constructionism and critical theory both are concerned with the uniqueness of each particular situation (an idiographic direction) contrary to positivism’s concern to discover general laws aiming to prediction (a nomothetic approach). Third, researchers in critical paradigm and social constructionism follow an *emic* orientation, looking for the insider’s perspective. Positivism, on the other hand, follows an *etic* orientation taking an outsider perspective. Fourth, both critical realism and social constructionism share the same anti-essentialist view of diversity and identity. The term *essentialism* refers to the assumption “that various phenomena have some kind of immutable core of properties, their “essence” (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, p.38). In positivism, diversity is viewed through the lens of essentialism: social categories (e.g. race, ethnicity, and gender) are seen as reflecting a given, fixed, essence (Litvin, 1997). For example, people having different ethnicities are seen as having real differences due to belonging in different ethnic groups. Against to that positivistic perspective of diversity, scholars in critical (e.g. Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Zanoni et al., 2010; Omanovic, 2006; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012) and social constructionism (e.g. Brannen and Salk, 2000; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Ailon-Soudan and Kunda, 2003) take an anti-essentialist perspective: they argue that people’s identity is a dynamic and not static concept, and categories of differences constituting the diversity are social constructed, context-specific and time-dependent (Triandis, 1996; Nkomo and Cox, 1996).

Table 1.2: Comparing Positivism, Critical Realism, and Social Constructionism

Paradigms	Positivism	Social constructionism	Critical
Assumptions about reality	Objective	Subjective	Subjective
Research orientation	Nomothetic	Idiographic	Idiographic
Approach of diversity	Etic	Emic	Emic
Nature of diversity and identity	Essentialist	Anti-essentialist view	Anti-essentialist view

For the abovementioned reasons, in my study I focus mostly on the differences between positivism vs. social constructionism and critical paradigm. The second part of the thesis offers a mapping of diversity research which is partly built on the distinction between research grounded in the positivist paradigm and research within social constructionism and critical realism. Within this mapping of diversity research, however, I do point the differences between studies within social constructionism and critical realism.

1.2 Justification of the study in diversity research

The present study aims to understand diversity construction focusing on an EU-funded project group. Diversity became a very popular concept in organizational studies (Shore et al., 2009) and there is a vast literature regarding diversity effects on organizational processes and outcomes (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007), but also about diversity's controversial nature (static vs. dynamic; single or a multiple) (Jonsen et al., 2011; Zanoni et al., 2010). In the majority of diversity literature, diversity is identified as national diversity (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; Bredillet et al., 2010; Barinaga, 2007; Brannen and Salk, 2000; Ailon and Kunda, 2003; Chevrier, 2009; Clausen, 2010; Freeman and Lindsay, 2012); whereas other scholars view diversity as having a multiple nature, consisting from several categories of differences such as gender, race, class, etc (e.g. Lau and Murnighan, 1998; Balkundi et al., 2007; van Knippenberg et al., 2004;

Roberge and van Dick, 2010; Homan, et al., 2010; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Mahadevan, 2009; Bodenhausen, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

There are many studies illustrating the positive effects of diversity on organizational processes and outcomes such as increased creativity, innovation, problem-solving (Bournois and Chevalier, 1998; Milliman and Glinow, 1998; Northcraft and Neale, 1993; Gibson, 2004; Segala, 1998; House, 1998), whereas others demonstrate the negative effects of diversity in individual, group and organizational processes and outcomes such as increased conflicts, communicational problems, group cohesion, turnover, performance (Adler, 1991; Adair et al., 2006; Easterby-Smith and Malina, 1999; Martin and Hammer, 1989; Masuda and Nisbett, 2001; Segalla, 1998; House, 1998). The challenge of these contradictory findings leads some scholars to focus on the variables that moderate these effects (e.g. van Dick et al., 2008; Homan et al., 2010). This research on diversity effects is linked with the conceptualization of diversity as a static and stable concept (Omanovic, 2006; Zanoni et. al., 2010). Scholars in this vein of research treat diversity as an independent variable that influences people' behaviour, and consequently the organizational and workgroup processes and outcomes (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004).

In a different vein of research, diversity is conceptualized as a social construct with dynamic nature. Within this conceptualization, scholars focus on processes of diversity construction or production in workplace, discursive uses of diversity, organizational processes such as collaboration and knowledge creation, management practices, equal opportunities, experiences of inequality and discrimination that may arise to workplace (Barinaga, 2007; Tatli, 2011; Bridgstock et al., 2010; Kamenou, 2008; Friesl et al., 2009; Tartas and Mirza, 2007; Gibbs, 2009; Espinosa et al., 2007; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005).

Given all this research on diversity someone might ask what this study has to offer in diversity research. Despite the vast literature on diversity, what literature lacks is an *a posteriori* understanding of diversity. The majority of studies are locked in *a priori* direction in exploring diversity; the categories of differences are pre-determined rather emerging within a specific context of study. The need of the present study grounds in that research is locked in *a priori* understanding of diversity. Diversity is *a priori* rather *a posteriori* determined as emerged and understood from the perspective of the people themselves. Although there is enormous research on diversity approaching diversity from various and even contradictory perspectives (e.g. single or multiple nature; fixed or social constructed concept), yet in almost

all studies scholars focus their studies in specific, pre-determined categories of differences (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

Although we may know a lot about diversity in workplace, what we know regards categories of differences that researchers assume that are important for the people under the study. Even when scholars focus not only in managers' but also in employees' perspectives of diversity, taking a critical orientation and exploring for example whether (and how) employees experience discrimination or exclusion due to one or more socio-demographic characteristics such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity (e.g. Holvino, 2010; Atewologun and Singh, 2010; Essers and Benschop, 2009), the *a priori* direction is still salient in their studies. Scholars give the opportunity to people to express their voice on pre-determined categories of differences. That *a priori* approach, however, exclude people's freedom to define themselves and categorize others in more ways different that scholars assume (Litvin, 1997; Nkomo, 1996; Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Osland and Bird, 2000; Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Bodenhausen, 2010).

What this study attempts to offer is an *a posteriori* exploration and understanding of diversity in a natural working setting, as it is the case of an EU-funded project group. The decision to focus on this type of multicultural workgroup is due to two reasons. First, the increased presence of EU-funded projects that incorporate the cooperation of diverse institutions (such as corporations, research institutes, universities) from several countries, makes the EU-funded project teams a special and particular interesting setting for studying diversity (Ahonen and Tienari, 2009; Sackmann et al., 1997). Second, despite the increased presence and importance of EU-funded project groups, the majority of diversity research is on the organizational contexts of multinational corporations and internationals merges (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007; Mannix and Neale, 2005). Multicultural workgroups and especially the setting of EU-funded project groups are unexplored in organizational research and many scholars suggest its' exploration (Sackmann et al., 1997; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009; Barinaga, 2007).

The paradox, therefore, is that although there is a lot of research on workforce diversity, diversity itself remains constrained in *a priori* exploration. What diversity research lacks is an understanding of diversity as emerged rather than pre-determined. This study attempts to build on this gap by developing empirical grounded knowledge about diversity construction in a multicultural workgroup. In doing so, I attempt to explore, understand and describe how the members of an EU-funded project perceive, sense-make, and use their group diversity during their everyday project life.

1.3 Aim, research questions, and context

The aim of the study is to explore, describe and understand the diversity construction from the perspective of people themselves and to develop further knowledge about how the members of a multicultural workgroup construct their diversity through the negotiation of their various identities. The main research question guiding the research is: **How the group members construct their group diversity?**

I explore the main research question regarding the process of diversity construction through three sub-questions, focusing on members' perceptions, meanings and discursive uses of their diversity:

1. How the group members perceive the content of their group diversity? Which categories of differences do they perceive as salient and how do they shape each of these categories?
2. How the group members use their perceived categories of differences as a discursive resource?
3. What meanings do members create for their perceived differentiation?

The research aim of the study is such that can be appropriate explored through the use of a grounded theory approach that enables to study the diversity area without pre-determined assumptions or specific theoretical frameworks.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In the next chapters I present my study of diversity construction that consists of three parts. At the first part, I position the study in diversity literature. First, I explain the role of literature review in grounded theory and specify how I use extant research and theories in my study (section 1.1). Then, I present the concept of identity which is my lens in the exploration of diversity construction (section 1.2). After a brief presentation of the relationship between identity and diversity, I present an illustrative mapping of diversity research in organization studies (chapter 2). Finally, I focus on diversity research conducted in multicultural workgroups and specifically in EU-funded project groups which is the setting of the study (section 2.7).

At the second part of the thesis, I present the research design and methodology of the study. Initially, I justify the selection of a qualitative methodology and present the research strategy

that combines a case study with a constructionist grounded theory approach (chapter 3). After the presentation of the research design and the research setting (sections 3.1 and 3.2), I present the methods of data collection (chapter 4) and the data analysis procedures (chapter 5). Finally, I present my self-reflection regarding my role as researcher (section 5.4) that ensure the validity and reliability of the study (section 5.5).

In the last part of the thesis, first I present the research findings of the study (chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), and then proceed to discuss the findings along with existing research (section 13.1). Third, I acknowledge the limitations of the study and propose recommendations for future research (sections 13.2). Fourth, I discuss the contribution of the study in organizational studies literature (sections 13.2), and finally, I offer a brief conclusion (13.4).

Part I
Positioning the study in context

Chapter 2 Framing the Study

2.1. The role of literature review in the thesis

The role of literature review in grounded theory is controversial; the question of “how and when existing literature should be used” (Dunne, 2011, p. 111) when following a grounded theory approach does not have a clear and single answer. There is no agreement regarding at which stage of the research literature review should be done, neither how extensive it should be (Cutcliffe, 2000; Dunne, 2011).

Typically, grounded theory researchers believe that they “should avoid a thorough literature review before beginning the Grounded Theory (GT) process in order to avoid contamination from mediated beliefs, preconceptions, distorted values, and false premises” (Nathaniel, 2006, p.6; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glasser, 1992, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). McGhee et al. (2007) explain that the creation of grounded theory “was seen as an approach challenging the *status quo* in social research, as contemporary studies were dominated by the testing of ‘grant theory’ and were deductive in nature” (p. 334 - 335). The founders of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) initially shared the same perspective about the role of literature review, that researchers should avoid early engagement with the relevant literature before data collection. Later, Strauss deviated from the initial position and together with Corbin argued in favor of an early literature review (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The traditional idea that grounded researchers should avoid early engagement in literature review is criticized by many scholars (Hutchinson, 1993; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 1998; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; McCallin, 2003; McCann and Clark, 2003; Maijala et al., 2003; Henwood and Pidgeon, 2006; McMenamain, 2006) who support a literature review before entering the field. As McCallin (2003) points out “there is a fine line between not doing a literature review in the area of study and being informed so that a study is focused” (p. 61). Dutton (2011) adds that the “idea that any researcher undertakes a study without some level of prior knowledge or ideas is simply unrealistic” (p. 117). Similarly, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) aptly argue that it “is after all not very clever to rediscover the wheel; and the student or researcher who is ignorant of the relevant literature is always in danger of doing the equivalent” (p.157). These suggestions of McCallin (2003), Dutton (2011), and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) are only some examples of the numerous arguments in favour of the early engagement of the researcher with the relevant literature. In overall, the

arguments for the early engagement with the relevant literature can be summarized with the following points.

- provides rationale for the study and facilitates the justification of the research (McGhee et al., 2007; Creswell, 1998; Dunnon, 2011)
- enables to locate the gap in existing research (Cresswell, 1998)
- identifies “if the proposed study or something similar has been done before” (McCallin, 2006, p.11)
- helps researchers to “avoid conceptual and methodological pitfalls” (McGhee et al., 2007, p. 336)
- helps researchers “to prepare a research proposal for an ethic committee” (McCallin, 2006, p.12).
- facilitates the development of “sensitising concepts” (Blumer, 1969; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996)
- helps the researcher “to formulate questions that act as stepping off point during initial observations and interviews” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 51)
- enables researchers to achieve theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Cobin, 1990; McCann and Clark, 2003; McGhee et al., 2007)
- secure the researcher from being criticized (Dunne, 2011)
- enables the researcher to have an open mind, not an empty head (Dey, 1993; Denscombe, 1998)

The above points summarize the main advantages of a literature review before entering the field and as Dunne (2011) remarks “it would be both unfortunate and unconstructive to sacrifice the numerous advantages derived from conducting an early literature review based on a concern about what impact extant ideas *might* have on the researcher” (p.117) (*original emphasis*).

2.1.1 The role of literature review: informing not guiding

The two different views – against and in favour of conducting an early literature review – differ in terms of *when* literature review should be used; both, however, agree that literature review should be used with the aim to inform and not guide the research (Dunne, 2011). The question is not “whether [a researcher] ... use(s) existing knowledge, but how” (Dey, 1993, p.

63) the researcher can “make proper use of [the] previous knowledge” (Strübing, 2007, p. 587). Dunne (2011) explains that “a researcher should try to approach each new project with a mind that is sufficiently open so as to allow new, perhaps contradictory, findings to emerge from the raw data” (Dunne, 2011, p. 117). A grounded researcher starts with a research area and an initial focus, but after entering the field and conducting research, this focus develops or even differentiates towards another direction (McCallin, 2003). McGhee et al. (2007) write that the “grounded theory approach is not linear but concurrent, iterative and integrative, with data collection, analysis and conceptual theorizing occurring in parallel and from the outset of the research process (Duhscher and Morgan, 2004)” (p. 335).

McGhee et al. (2007) note that literature review can enter in two stages of the research process: (a) before entering the field – at the early stages of the research, and (b) after entering in the field – during and after data collection, and during data analysis. An early review of the literature offers the advantages that were mentioned above (e.g. rationale and justification of the study; avoid conceptual and methodological pitfalls, etc). Creswell (1994) points out that reading relevant literature prior to the research is necessary to “frame the problem in the introduction to a study” (p.23). McCallin (2006) writes that “the earliest questions identified in the literature clarify the general research purpose and some of the concepts to be investigated” (p. 16). The review of relevant literature at a second stage (after entering the field) enables the researcher to “link existing research and theory with the concepts, constructs and properties of the new theory” (McGhee et al., 2007, p. 336). McCallin (2006) writes that the latter literature review “becomes an effective analytic tool to stimulate thinking. [...] During analysis the researcher uses literature to heighten theoretical sensitivity, all the while comparing and contrasting interpretations with occurrences in the data” (p. 16). Literature review, thus, is a tool that “furthers conceptual ordering or theory development” (McCallin, 2006, p. 17).

Some researchers in order to “counteract the possible negative impact of early engagement with extant literature on the grounded theory research approach” (Dunne, 2011, p. 118) included in their studies a brief account of their self-reflection concerning their engagement in literature review (e.g. McCallin, 1999, 2003; Dunne, 2011). The idea of reflexivity (Robson, 2002) is a common practice in qualitative research, applied for the role and potential impact of researcher in data collection and analysis. Recently, many scholars suggest that the notion of reflexivity can be applied also in researcher’s engagement with literature review (Dunne, 2011; McGhee et al., 2007). McGhee et al. (2007) argues that “researchers should openly acknowledge the influence of prior work or experience on their perspective (Charmaz, 2000)”

(p. 335). Dunne (2011, p. 118) notes that grounded researchers should “make an informed and justifiable decision regarding how and when extant literature” was employed in their studies. Following the above suggestions, I provide my self-reflection regarding my engagement in literature review before and after entering the field.

2.1.2 Engaging in literature review in a grounded theory approach: a self-reflection

My initial research interest was a broad one: diversity and its role in an organizational context. In my study I engaged in the relevant literature and extant research in two stages: *before* and *after* entering the field.

2.1.2.1 Engaging with extant literature before entering the field

Before entering the field I conducted a thorough and in-depth literature review in order to identify what has already been done in the field of diversity, to spot potential gaps in exiting research, and to develop the rationale and justification for my research. I carefully reviewed existing research in various organizational contexts (such as international organizations, international mergers, and multinational workgroups). That enabled me to identify an organizational context that is unexplored: multicultural work-groups and a particular type of such groups – the EU-funded project groups. Therefore, I decided to conduct a case study on this type of multicultural workgroup.

I did not constrained my early review of extant research in studies that are conducted exclusively within my paradigm (social constructionism). I tried to gain a wider understanding of the ways that diversity is conceptualized, approached, and studied in two other paradigms (positivism and critical realism). This cross-paradigmatic review was crucial because it enabled me (a) to compare the conceptualization of diversity across the paradigms, (b) to have a more broad understanding of diversity and the ways it is explored so far, (c) to develop a critical eye on the field. This initial literature review thus helped me to map the field of diversity research and identify that the concept of diversity: (1) is treated usually as synonymous of national diversity, ignoring other potential categories of differences; (2) is approached predominantly from an *a priori* direction (scholars usually pre-decide which will be the categories of differences under exploration).

After the gap in the existing literature was identified, I decided to follow an *a posteriori* direction in my study – i.e., to explore how people themselves perceive and shape their

diversity, rather than pre-deciding *a priori* the potential categories of differences. This decision critically shaped the study by focusing exclusively on peoples' perceptions of their differentiation. The aim of my study, thus, becomes to explore the construction of diversity in a multicultural workgroup, and more specifically to explore how the group members of an EU-funded project group perceive and shape their diversity in this group. My early engagement in extant research also informed my understanding of diversity as inter-related with identity construction. The latter realization drove me to conduct a thoroughly review in identity research and gain knowledge of theoretical constructs such as social identity theory, self-categorization theory, and identity work.

This knowledge acquired from the early literature review, however, did not guide my research inquiry, neither my data collection nor analysis. I may have entered the field with former knowledge, but that did not necessarily mean that I imposed a specific theoretical framework on my study. My research goal, furthermore, was not to "test" or verify a theory, neither my research inquiry was guided by a particular theory. The design of the study, thus, is not based on predetermined assumptions about the content, meaning, and functions of group's diversity or the processes of its construction. I perceive diversity as an emerging group phenomenon that can be understood from *a posteriori* direction and inter-related with identity construction. My area of study is the workplace diversity and I seek to explore its construction in a real working setting; that is in accordance with what Strauss and Corbin (1990) note: "one does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (p. 23).

2.1.2.2. Engaging with extant literature after entering the field

After entering the field, I was consciously avoiding to use my former knowledge as a specific theoretical framework guiding my study (even though I remained aware of myself and my former knowledge). I thought that it is inevitable after all for researchers, to have former knowledge in their field of study. My lens in my study was to see diversity as interrelated with the concept of identity work; the processes of diversity construction as interrelated with the identity construction processes. I see both diversity and identity as social constructed and dynamic concepts that cannot be *a priori* defined. These, however, are not part of a specific theory but my own ontological assumptions that derive from the ontology of the paradigm adopted, i.e. social constructionism. During data collection and analysis, however, each time I realized that I was viewing the data through the lens of specific theoretical constructs, I tried

to hold myself back and remain open. I was constantly reminding to myself: “see what the data show you and not what your previous knowledge tells you about the data”. Thus, during the data collection and analysis process I struggled to remain with open mind as possible, looking the data without any specific theoretical framework in my mind.

The data collection, analysis and the conceptual theorizing are not discrete steps of a linear process, but simultaneous and integrative constituents of a cyclical process (Duhscher and Morgan, 2004). Throughout this cyclical process I was moving between data analysis, emerging ideas, literature review, writing my findings, and going back to the data. During data collection and analysis I considered how my former knowledge could *help* me in the interpretation of the data, *but not guide me*. Initially I found useful some of the theoretical construct I already knew – such as *identity* (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Jenkins, 1996; Hall, 1996; Ashforth et al., 2008), *identification* (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007; Ashforth et al., 2008) and *self-categorization process* (Turner et al., 1987). The ideas emerging from my data, however, were complex and sometimes even contradictory. During this cyclical research process I repeatedly re-examined some of my assumptions regarding the nature of diversity and identity.

The data and emerging ideas drove me to engage in new rounds of literature review, searching for new theoretical constructs that could help me explain those new emerging ideas. For example, the complex and dynamic ways in which group members constructed and re-constructed themselves and others lead me to view the concept of identity as a dynamic, ongoing process. I found the concept of *identity work* (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996; Snow and McAdam, 2000; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Watson, 2008; Alvesson et al., 2008) insightful and particularly useful compared to my initially conceptualization of identity through the lens of identity and identification concepts.

A second example of how my data informed my engagement in the literature review is my conceptualization of diversity. I entered the field having in mind a generic, abstract view of diversity as a concept with a social constructed, dynamic, and multiple nature. During data collection and data analysis, however, I realized that group members constructed their diversity in an intersectional way. This realization informed my conceptualization of diversity, so I went back to the literature seeking now for new theories, something that finally lead me to the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993, 1994) and several studies employing that concept (e.g., Atewologun and Singh, 2010; Adib and Guerier, 2003; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010; Essers and Benschop, 2009). The notion of intersectionality

was particularly suitable for explaining the ideas emerging from the data, but I realized that it is rooted in a different paradigm – critical realism. I conducted then a more thorough review in intersectionality: how it is used and adapted in different fields and studies (Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Hancock, 2007; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

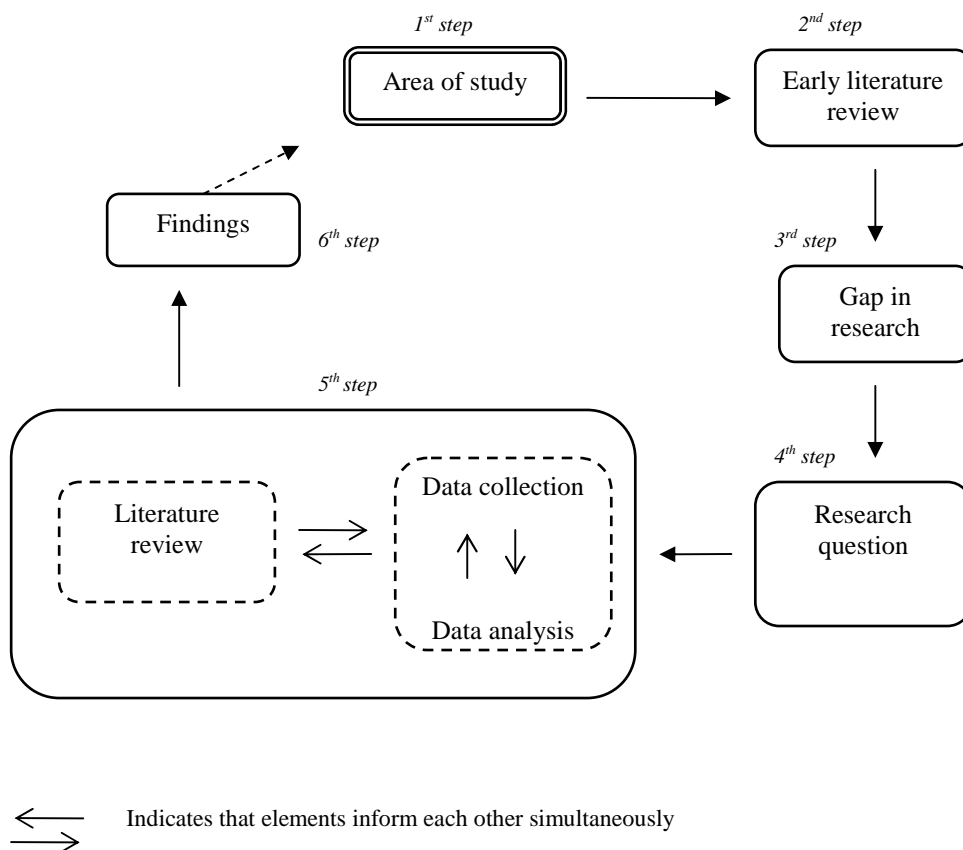
Additionally, I reviewed whether and how researchers combine theoretical constructs rooted in different paradigms (e.g. Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Musson and Duberley, 2007). This review helped me to see that social constructionism and critical realism, although having different ontology, yet they share the same main anti-positivistic assumptions. They both view diversity and identity as concepts with a dynamic and social constructed nature. Their difference enters in the way that social construction or production takes place. That difference, however, does not act preventative for a cautious adaptation of a theoretical construct from critical realism and applying it in social constructionism. I decided, therefore, to employ a circumspect adaptation of intersectionality in my study: keep the idea of intersectionality but detach it from issues such as inequality and power relations, in terms of which intersectionality is usually approached in critical realism.

A third example of how the data collection informed my literature review concerns the nature of the data themselves and the methodological design. Before entering the field I had not taken permission for recording the group meeting; that happened after I entered the field. During and after data collection, therefore, I was facing two contradictory feelings: happy to be able to record their group discussions during the project meeting (and thus have natural occurring data), but also uncertain of how to later analyze a group conversation. The initial design of the research methodology included only interviews, participant observation and collecting documents. The data from the natural group conversation was a welcoming challenge which drove me to review methods of analyzing natural occurring data in the form of group conversations. I identified previous studies exploring narratives, conversations, diversity and identity construction, and found particularly helpful the study of Kärreman and Alvesson (2001) who analyzed the naturally occurring conversation of a meeting by differentiating themselves from the classical conversational analysis (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998). I also found particularly useful other studies doing narrative analysis, such as Spector-Mersel (2011), Georgakopoulou (2006), Beech (2008), Alvesson and Willmott (2002), Watson (2009), and Adib and Guerrier (2003).

Figure 1.1 illustrates that the grounded theory research of my study is non-linear – it is a cyclical and iterative process, and contains some simultaneous phases. For instance, the literature review initially informs my study, but in the later stages it is informed by my data.

This creates the dilemma of “how and when to incorporate a literature review within the overall structure of the written thesis” (Dunne, 2011, p.120). As Dunne (2011) remarks, “the decision of how to structure the written thesis, in a manner that best reflects the focus and the natural development of the study, is often problematic” (p.121). Dunne (2011) suggests that “the researcher should clearly articulate this issue from the outset [...] in order to minimize the potential misunderstanding between the author and the reader” (p. 121). It is worth noting, therefore, that the literature chapter of the thesis includes literature reviewed both *before* and *after* entering the field. I decided to incorporate the latter literature, yet, not thoroughly; the purpose of including this literature is to prepare the reader for the findings. The “after entering the field” literature is discussed in depth later, along with the findings of the study.

Figure 1.1: Engaging in literature review while following a grounded theory approach



The next section 1.2 explains why I have chosen to explore the construction of diversity through the lens of the identity concept, and briefly presents how I view the concept of identity as dynamic, socially constructed, using the concept of identity work. The chapter 2

that follows is an overview of the literature of the study and includes literature that influenced my conceptualization of diversity (and identity) and literature that was later inserted in my study as a response to my findings.

2.2 Why choose identity for exploring diversity

I explore diversity through the lens of identity, a concept that is popular and widely used in organizational studies (Ashforth, 1998; Alvesson et al., 2008). Identity refers to how we define ourselves, how we answer the question ‘Who am I?’ or ‘Who are we?’. Ashforth et al. (2008) and Albert et al. (2000, p. 13) refer to identity as the “root constructs” in organizational studies. In organizational research, the concept of identity is used to the study of almost everything (Alvesson et al., 2008), for example in mergers (Ailon-Souday and Kunda, 2003; Millward and Kyriakidou, 2004), project groups (e.g. Barinaga, 2007), organizational change (Kyriakidou, 2011), project management (Bredillet et al., 2010), behavior of individuals and groups (Brewer and Kramer, 1986; Turner and Oakes, 2011), political participation (Azzi, Chrysochoou, et al., 2011), communication patterns (Clausen, 2010), leadership (Ford, 2006), managerial work (Clarke et al., 2009), control dynamics (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), resistance (Sotirin and Gottfried, 1999), gender and race relationship (Atewologun and Singh, 2010), inequality (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010), and diversity (Zanoni et al., 2010; Tran et al., 2011). Albert et al. (2000) explain that the concept of identity construct can be pretty powerful since it derives “from the need for a situated sense of an entity. Whether an organization, group or person, each entity needs at least a preliminary answer to the question ‘Who are we?’ or ‘Who am I?’ in order to interact effectively with other entities over long run. Similarly, others entities need at least a preliminary answer to the question ‘Who are they?’ for effective interaction. Identities situate the organization, group, and person” (Albert et al., 2000, p. 13). Identity and identity construction is important because through identity construction “people come to define themselves, communicate that definition to others, and use that definition to navigate their lives, work-wise or other” (Ashforth, et al., 2008, p. 334).

According to Albert (1998), “the concept of identity has the advantage of being a concept, construct, or question that can be studied or posed at any level of analysis – individual, group, organization, or industry- because, in a certain sense, the question of identity is at the heart of the idea of level” (p.10). For this reason, identity is described by many scholars as a “bridging concept” (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001, p. 61) both across individual, group, organizational

levels (Ashforth and Mael, 1996; Kramer, 1993; Whetten, Lewin and Michel, 1992) and between self and society (Ybema et al., 2009).

The concept of identity has a key role in diversity theories (Cox, 1993; Brewer, 1995; Sackmann et al., 1997; Boyacigiller et al., 2004; Chrysochoou, 2004; Primez et al., 2009; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007) and in diversity empirical research (e.g. Freeman and Lindsay, 2012; Syed and Pio, 2010; Kalonaityte, 2010; Homan et al., 2010), due to the interconnected relationship between diversity and identity. Diversity is articulated as a dichotomy of *I/we* and the others. Identity conveys “distinctiveness and oneness” (Albert et al., 2000, p. 13); it signifies what Kärreman and Alvesson (2001) call “sameness and distinctiveness” (p. 62; see also Jacobson-Widding, 1983). The concepts of diversity and identity are inter-related (Hall, 1996) and their mutual relationship can be explained in two ways. Someone can view the diversity-identity relationship using the concept of diversity as starting point. Diversity refers to differences between people (Triandis et al., 1994) which entails the articulation of categories of differences. People define themselves and others as different in terms of one or more social constructed difference (Barth, 1969; Hall, 1996); diversity, thus, is formed through the articulation of the dichotomy between “us” and “others” (Barth, 1969; Triandis et al., 1994; Jenkins, 2004; Ybema et al., 2009). Triandis et al. (1994) define diversity as: “any attribute which may lead people to the perception that: that person is different from me” (p. 772). Williams and O’Reily (1998) offer a similar definition for diversity: “any attribute that another person may use to detect individual differences” (p.81). The definitions offered by Triandis et al. (1994) and Williams and O’Reily (1998) put the emphasis not on specific objective characteristics, but recognize that it could be any characteristic in terms of which people perceive themselves to be different than others. These definitions direct researchers to focus on *perceptions of self* as different from others; which lead us to the concept of identity (i.e., sense of self) and specifically to identity construction. Thus, in order to explore and understand diversity creation one has to take into consideration the processes of identity’s construction.

The diversity-identity relationship, however, can also be viewed following the reverse direction and using this time the concept of identity as the starting point. Identity creation refers to defining the self (Ashforth et al., 2008) and is a dynamic and relational process (Blumer, 1969; Hall, 1989; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007). People constantly try to define themselves within social interactions (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005), i.e. to position themselves in the complex situational and relational contexts (Davies and Harré, 1990). The various definitions of identity show that peoples’ self-definition entails the

simultaneous formation of their differences and similarities with other people (Jenkins, 2004): “Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself” (Hall, 1989, p. 16).

Identity is “people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988, p. 2).

Identity “refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities *are distinguished* in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 4) [my emphasis].

People define themselves in relation and through their relationships with Others (Hall, 1996; Alvesson et al., 2008; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007). Identity construction is inter-related with the formation of our differentiation from other people (Hall, 1989, 1996; Jenkins, 1996). As Ybema et al. (2009) writes “identities emerge through the articulation of similarities and differences. Enactment involves the discursive separation of ‘self’ from the ‘other’ and it seems that an intrinsic part of the process by which we come to understand who we are is intimately connected to notions of who we are not and, by implication, who others are (and are not)” (p. 306). Similarly, Hall (1996) writes “identities are constructed through, not outside difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term – and thus its ‘identity’ – can be constructed” (p. 4). What is important, however, is not the starting point in examining the inter-relationship between diversity and identity. Diversity and identity – either seen from diversity or identity as the starting point – have an inter-related, mutual relationship. The one entails the other; the forming of identity is inter-connected and conveys the simultaneous shaping of diversity, and the reverse.

In this study I explore diversity construction in a multicultural workgroup (an EU-funded project group) using the concept of identity as the lens to explore and understand the construction process of group diversity. My understanding of identity best resembles the concept “identity work” which refers to the “active construction of identity in social contexts” (Pratt et al., 2006, p. 237). Identity work is seen as an individual (e.g. Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008) or as a group accomplishment (e.g. Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996; Snow and McAdam, 2000; Langley et al., 2012) and relates with people’s need to have a coherent, distinctive and a positive sense of self (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001; Watson, 2008; Alvesson et al., 2008). According to Alvesson

and Willmott (2002), identity work is the ongoing process through which people “continuously engage in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (p.626).

In my study, I perceive identity not as a “fixed and abiding essence” but as “a temporary, context sensitive and evolving set of constructions” (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 6); as an ongoing, interpretive process. People form their identity not passively through the “relatively straightforward adoption of a role or category” (Pratt et al., 2006, p. 237), but are actively constructing their identity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003) through different paths (Dutton et al., 2010). According to Ybema et al (2009) the identity construction is “a complex, multifaceted process which produces a socially negotiated temporary outcome” (p. 301).

The idea of identity as a social construction is traced back the ideas of Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), Thomas (1937), Goffman (1959), and Stone (1962). These scholars first argued for the conceptualization of identity as dynamic and social constructed. Many recent scholars also advocate the constructed, dynamic nature of identity and conceive it as a social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985; Potter and Wetherell, 1987); as a “social accomplishment” (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001); as a relational concept (Somers, 1994; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007); as a “socially negotiated temporary outcome” (Ybema et al., p. 301); as a “precarious and shifting phenomenon” (Storey et al., 2005, p. 1038); as “constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p. 606).

I adopt, thus, an anti-essentialist view of identity (Cerulo, 1997) conceiving it as an ongoing, dynamic, social construction. I view identity as bounded in the specific context in which social interaction take place (Giddens, 1979; Kärreman, and Alvesson, 2001; Collinson, 2003); crafted through the relationships with Others (Blumer 1969; Mead, 1934; Cooley, 1902; Goffman, 1959); and formed through language (Weedon, 1987; Ybema et al., 2009) such as narratives (Beech and Sims, 2007; Brown, 2006; Czarniawska, 1997), discourse (Ainsworth and Hardy, 2004; Hardy et al., 2005), and conversations (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001). I view discursive activity as a mean through and within which people form, maintain, and re-constructed their identities (Ybema et al., 2009). Following Kärreman and Alvesson (2001) I view identities as “developed, maintained, and reconfigured through accounts” which “may take on the form of narration – a more or less coherent story – or the form of conversation – a more interactive, typically disruptive, form for the production of accounts

about oneself” (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001, p. 65). In my study I look at the process of members’ identity work and try to understand how members construct and re-construct their self and others as different as well to explore the process of constructing group diversity.

2.2.1 How other researchers explore diversity through the lens of identity – mapping diversity research

Many researchers explore workplace diversity through the lens of identity (e.g., van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Homan et al., 2010; Bredillet et al., 2010; Freeman and Lindsay, 2012; Syed and Pio, 2010; Kalonaityte, 2010), employing different approaches that vary depending on researchers’ ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions described in the introduction part of the thesis. These assumptions influence the way scholars view the nature of identity and diversity and how they treat them in their studies. Some scholars, for example, view diversity and identity as socially constructed concepts and explore them through a qualitative methodology (e.g. Freeman and Lindsay, 2012; Syed and Pio, 2010; Kalonaityte, 2010), whereas others conceive them as independent variables and study them with a quantitative methodology (e.g. van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Homan et al., 2010; Bredillet et al., 2010). Chapter 3 maps diversity research and presents the ways diversity is conceptualized and explored through the concept of identity. In general, identity and diversity are typically viewed and studied either as static (e.g. Cox et al., 1991) or dynamic concepts (e.g. Brannen and Salk, 2000) that can have a single (e.g. Clausen, 2010) or a multiple nature (e.g. Holvino, 2010) which is *a priori* determined (e.g. Atewologun and Singh, 2010) or can emerge *a posteriori* (e.g. Mahadevan, 2009).

Chapter 3 Mapping Diversity Research

3.1 History of the term diversity

The term diversity first emerged in the mid-1980 in the US, when the *Workforce 2000 Report* estimated that by the year 2000 the US workforce would be more heterogeneous demographically (Zanoni et al., 2010). According to Kandola and Fullerton (1998), academics and business took into consideration the estimated demographic shift in the workforce and started considering its effects. It was the first time in management's history that diversity was described as a strategic asset that could provide a competitive advantage – with the precondition that it could be well managed (Boxenbaum, 2006; Zanoni et al., 2010). This business rationale about diversity's effects imbued and guided the researchers' interests to study how the demographic diverse identities could affect organizational processes (like communication) and outcomes (like productivity) (Milliken and Martins, 1996; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Williams and O'Reily, 1998).

Today the concept of diversity gains the increasing interest of researchers due to the growing trend of globalization and the increased development of technology and communication systems, and the radical changes in work contexts such as new kinds of work and organizational arrangements (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004). Organizations have employed new strategies in order to remain competitive and take advantage of new opportunities, such as: mergers, acquisitions, strategic alliances, and cross-functional project teams (Mahadevan, 2009; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004). The new emerged workplace reality is characterized by an increased diversity which requires taking into consideration the different facets of diversity (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004).

3.2 Defining diversity

The concept of diversity refers generally to a broad variety of differences between people. Scholars view diversity as variation in a set of socio-demographic characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, age, profession, class, etc (Ferdman, 1995; Shore et al., 2011). The Oxford English Dictionary (1993) defines diversity as “the condition or quality of being diverse, different, or varied; variety, unlikeness”. Hambrick et al. (1996, p. 662) proposed that the heterogeneity of top management teams be defined as the “variation in team members' characteristics”. Pelled et al. (1999) has specified diversity in terms solely of

demographic characteristics as “the extent to which a unit (e.g., a work group or organization) is heterogeneous with respect to demographic attributes” (p.1). Cox (1994) argues that diversity is “the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance” (p. 6). Triandis et al., (1994) offer another broad definition of diversity as “any attribute which may lead people to the perception that: that person is different from me” (p. 772). A similar definition is suggested by Williams and O’Reily (1998): “any attribute that another person may use to detect individual differences” (p.81).

The definitions offered by Triandis et al. (1994) and Williams and O’Reily (1998) put the emphasis not on specific characteristics, but recognize that it could be any characteristic in terms of which people perceive themselves to be different than others. This definition recognizes that diversity is a dynamic and on-going, process, not a fixed concept. The present thesis views the concept of diversity in accordance with the definitions proposed by Triandis et al., (1994) and Williams and O’Reily (1998). Both definitions are grounded on the premise that individuals can potentially use any available attribute in order to self-categorize and also to assign categories for others (Turner et al., 1987; Hogg and Terry, 2000) and are not constrained on specific attributes.

3.3 Mapping the field of diversity research

The purpose of this section is to present the mapping of the field of diversity research according to the way that scholars conceptualize diversity. Diversity has become a buzzword in organizational studies (Shore et al., 2009; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009). Most of the research on diversity has been conducted in organizations and studies in workgroups are less numerous (Barinaga, 2007; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009) while most of the researches in workgroups have emerged the last decade (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007).

The majority of scholars focus on the effects of diversity in work-related processes and outcomes in organizations (for reviews, see Williams and O’Reilly, 1998; Shore et al., 2009) and work-teams (for reviews, see Mannix and Neale, 2005; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Findings from such studies focusing on the “main effects” of diversity are inconsistent and show that diversity has both positive and negative effects (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007, p.518). Other scholars have moved away from studying the mere effects of diversity to explore the processes (e.g. Ely and Thomas, 2001; Harrison, et al., 1998) and

moderator variables that lead into those positive and negative effects (e.g. van Dick, et al., 2008; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Homan et al., 2010). Another stream of research has focused on the inequality and discrimination in workplace on the ground of race, gender, class, and other categories of differences (e.g., Tatli, 2011; Bridgstock et al., 2010; Kamenou, 2008).

Scholars conceptualize diversity in various ways making the concept of diversity a very ambivalent term. So when they speak about “diversity” they speak about different things. Studies focusing on the effects of diversity show that diversity can have both negative and positive effects on organizational processes and outcomes. Many scholars (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Barinaga, 2007; Mahadevan, 2009) argue that the reason for these contradictory findings regarding the effects of diversity is partly due the different conceptualizations of diversity. The different conceptualization of diversity is partly influenced by the paradigms that scholars adopt.

Next, I map diversity research, and the different approaches of diversity, along to three dimensions according to which diversity is conceptualized:

1. The static or dynamic nature of diversity
2. The single or multiple character of diversity
3. The *a priori* or *a posteriori* direction in identifying the categories of differences

The three axes are related facets of the diversity concept referring to its nature, character and direction in identifying its content. The first distinction refers to the *nature of diversity*. Some scholars view diversity as a concept with objective, static nature. They define diversity while focusing on different aspects, such as visible and non-visible diversity (Jackson et al., 1995), surface-level and deep-level diversity (Harrison et al., 2002), individualistic and collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1980). Other scholars view diversity as a dynamic, social constructed concept and focus on the ways that diversity is constructed (e.g. Brannen and Salk, 2000; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Barinaga, 2007).

The second distinction in diversity’s conceptualization is the *character of diversity*: single or multiple. Some scholars view diversity as having a single character and focus on one category of difference, usually nationality or ethnicity or race (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2004; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Barinaga, 2007). Other scholars view diversity as having a multiple character and study the effects of multiple categories of differences, such as nationality,

gender, age, profession, etc. (e.g. Loden and Rosener, 1991; Lau and Murnighan, 1998; Jehn et al., 1999; Homan et al., 2010).

The third criterion refers to the *direction* that scholars follow for identifying the categories of differences constituting diversity. The majority of scholars have themselves pre-decide the categories of differences under study, following an *a priori* direction (e.g. Thomas and Ely, 2001; Ailon-Souday and Kunda, 2003; Barinaga, 2007; van Dick et al., 2008; Homan et al., 2010; van Knippenberg et al., 2011). Recently, other scholars have started following an *a posteriori* direction, viewing categories of differences as emerged and empirically identified (e.g. Garcia-Prieto, 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Bell and Hartmann, 2007; Mahadevan, 2009). The discussion of the literature review that follows is not an exhaustive review of the literature. It is an indicative and illustrative review of the different approaches and streams of research that exist in diversity research.

I present my mapping of diversity research starting with the discussion of the first criterion and then proceed in the second and third dimension subsequently. First, I present the static view of diversity and discuss the critiques that have received. Then I move to the presentation of the dynamic view of diversity that answers the limitations of the static view. Regarding the second dimension, I present how scholars conceive diversity as having a single character by focusing on one category of difference and discuss the critiques that have received. Then, I move forward to present the multiple perspective of diversity that resolves the constraints imposed by the single-dimensional view of diversity. Third, I present the *a priori* direction that scholars follow for identifying the categories of differences under study, and discuss the problems that arise from this approach. Then, I discuss the *a posteriori* approach for studying diversity which resolves the limitations of the *a priori* approach.

The three distinctions according to which I map the diversity research are related facets of diversity. The mapping of diversity research is briefly presented in Figure 3.1 and it is based on my interpretation of the different approaches of conceptualizing and studying diversity. Figure 3.1 also positions my research with respect to the previously mentioned criterions: I view diversity as a concept with dynamic nature; having a multiple character and I follow an *a posteriori* direction for identifying the categories of differences constituting the diversity.

Figure 3.1 Mapping diversity research*

		Diversity as having static or dynamic nature		
		STATIC	DYNAMIC	
Character of diversity	SINGLE	Hofstede (1980) Trompenaars (1993) Scwartz (1994) Cox et al. (1991) House et al. (2004) Randel (2002) Bachmann, (2006) Bredillet et al., (2010)	Barinaga (2007) Akkerman, et al. (2006) Ahonen and Tienari (2009) Clausen (2007) Freeman & Lindsay (2012) Dreachslin, et al. (2000) Tartas & Mirza (2007) Ailon-Soudan & Kunda (2003)	A PRIORI Direction in identifying the categories of differences
	MULTIPLE	Jehn et al., (1999) Thatcher et al., (2003) Lau & Murnighan (2005) Rico et al. (2007) Leonard et al., (2004) van Dick, et al., (2008) Van Dick et al., (2010) Roberge and van Dick (2010) Homan, et al., (2010) van Knippenberg & Schippers (2007)	Ely & Thomas (2001) Sackmann and Friesl, (2007) Kraus & Sultan (2008) Holvino (2010) Atewologun & Singh (2010) Boogaard & Roggeband (2010) Essers & Benschop (2009)	
			Garcia-Prieto et al., (2003) Janssens & Zanoni (2005) Bell & Hartmann (2007) Mahadevan (2009) <i>My thesis</i>	A POSTERIORI
		QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE	
Research methodology				

* The figure 1 includes studies both in organizations and in workgroups. The studies mentioned on this figure are not exhaustive of the diversity research but indicative of the different ways of conceptualizing diversity.

3.4. Diversity as a static or dynamic concept

The first dimension regards how scholars view the nature of the diversity (dynamic or static) and is linked with the ontology that researchers adopted. As it was discussed in chapter 1 (section 1.1), the differences in “paradigm assumptions cannot be dismissed as mere “philosophical” differences; implicitly or explicitly, these positions have important consequences for the practical conduct of inquiry, as well as for the interpretation of findings and policy choices” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 112). When scholars study a concept or a phenomenon, they do it by “wearing” the ontological, epistemological, and methodological lenses of the paradigm they adopt. The paradigm that researchers adopt influences their

research questions, the purpose of their research, the way they conceptualize and study a concept (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The difference between the static and dynamic conceptualization of diversity is also reflected in the choice of methodology. Researchers viewing diversity as a static concept use quantitative methodology and correspondingly methods (such as questionnaires), while those who adopt the dynamic perspective use qualitative methodology and methods, such as interviews, participant observation (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004).

The static view of diversity is rooted in positivism, which dominates organizational research (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Zanoni et al., 2010). Research grounded in the positivism is influenced by its ontology of seeing social world as “objectively given and independently exist ‘out there’” (Primez et al., 2009, p. 268). Positivism assumes “an apprehendable reality [...] [which] exists, driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). “The knowledge of the “way things are” is conventionally summarized in the form of time and context free generalizations, some of which take the form of cause-effect laws” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.109). The inquiry aim in positivistic research is to make predictions. This aim lead researchers to operationalize and objectify diversity because they want to be able to measure the effects of diversity in work-related outcomes and processes (Omanovic, 2006). Scholars in positivistic research, therefore, view diversity as static, fixed concept. Their interest is not on how diversity is created (since they perceive it fixed) but they are interested on how to predict diversity’s effects (Zanoni et al., 2010).

The dynamic view of diversity appears in two paradigms: social constructionism and critical realism. Although social constructionism and critical realism have different ontology (see section 1.2 of thesis for a discussion on this), they share the same non-positivistic, non-static view of diversity because they both see diversity as a concept with dynamic nature (Omanovic, 2006; Zanoni et al., 2010). In the dynamic perspective of diversity scholars do not focus on the effects of diversity but on the ways in which diversity is constructed in a specific social context (Omanovic, 2006).

3.4.1 The positivistic conceptualization: Diversity as a static concept

Diversity in positivism is conceived as a static concept and therefore is treated as an independent variable that affects organizational and group outcomes (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Omanovic, 2006; Primez et al., 2009). Diversity is defined in terms of socio-

demographic characteristics which are viewed as separate, homogeneous categories and people can be objectively assigned to these categories of differences (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). Positivist scholars assume that people form their self-concept passively through their identification with a socio-demographic category they belong. According to this line of thought, all people who share a membership in a socio-demographic category (e.g. nationality), they share the same identity (e.g. national identity). Positivist scholars, therefore, conceive and treat the socio-demographic characteristics as homogenous categories of diversity.

The conceptualization of diversity as static characterizes two streams of research. The first is the “bifurcated” approach (Mannix and Neale, 2005, p. 35) in which diversity is defined in terms of two major types (e.g. visible and non-visible diversity). The second is the cultural dimensional models in which diversity is conceptualized in the form of cultural dimensions (e.g. power distance, uncertainty avoidance, etc).

3.4.1.1 The “bifurcated” approach

In the “bifurcated approach” (Mannix and Neale, 2005, p. 35) diversity is conceptualized in terms of two major exhaustive and mutually exclusive types (visible and non-visible diversity; surface-level and deep-level diversity), and scholars measure and compare the effects of those types of differences in organizational outcomes and processes.

A typical example of such “bifurcated” approach lies in the “primary vs. secondary” differences (Loden and Rosener, 1991). Primary differences are considered to be individual characteristics, like age, sexual preferences, physical abilities, gender and its perception, ethnicity, and race. These primary differences are considered as particularly important since they are both inherent and unchangeable for the individual (Loden and Rosener, 1991). Secondary differences can relate to social status, income level, level of education, work related characteristics (e.g. income); individuals are generally able to change these characteristics and thus secondary differences are perceived as less important (Loden and Rosener, 1991).

Another “bifurcated” perspective is categorizing diversity in terms of differences that can be either visible or non-visible (e.g. Jackson et al., 1995). Jackson et al., (1995) assumed that visible differences are more likely to provoke responses, stereotypes and bias than the non-visible differences (Milliken and Martins, 1996). As visible differences they define race, ethnicity, age, gender, and physical disabilities (Jackson et al., 1995). As non-visible

differences (also called underlying attributes) they consider the education level, personal skills and abilities, values and attitudes, functional background, and general differences in personality (Jackson et al., 1995).

Harrison et al. (1998, 2002) provide a different “bifurcated” perspective by distinguishing between surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity. They define surface-level types of diversity as the differences in demographic characteristics, whereas the deep-level diversity refers to different attitudes, beliefs and values.

Finally, Jehn et al. (1999) categorize diversity in three types - social, informational, and diversity in values. Social-category diversity includes the main demographic differences (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity, etc.), informational diversity mainly includes differences in education, training, and work experience, while the value diversity denotes the various views that people can have regarding work-related issues, like tasks, goals, or mission. Jehn et al. (1999) argue that the different types of work-group diversity can have different effects on group processes and outcomes. Informational diversity can positively influence group performance, social-category diversity can positively influences members’ morale, while, value diversity may decrease member satisfaction and commitment to the group.

3.4.1.2 The approach of “cultural dimensions” models

The cultural dimension approach constitutes another stream of research that perceives diversity as something that is static and synonym with national diversity. In that context, diversity is effectively operationalized as the comparison between different national cultures. The concept of national culture, in turn is conceptualized in the form of cultural dimensions. According to the comparative literature of Osland and Bird (2000), “there are 22 dimensions commonly used to compare national cultures, typically presented in the form of bipolar continua, with midpoints in the first examples” (p. 66).

According to the review of the last thirty years on workgroup research by Zhou and Shi (2011), a large number of studies are still heavily influenced by Hofstede’s work (1980) and use his cultural framework (e.g. Kaushal and Kwantes, 2006; Bredillet et al., 2010). Hofstede (1980) defines national culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 21). The positivistic stream of diversity research is also influenced by the work of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993), Schwartz (1994), and House et al., (2004) who just like Hofstede (1980) view culture as an inherent and stable variable and focus on identifying universally

applicable dimensions (Zhou and Shi, 2011). These cultural dimensions are also considered to be stable over time. According to Hofstede (2001), “cultures, especially national cultures, are extremely stable over time [...] Differences between national cultures at the end of last century were already recognizable in the years 1900, 1800, and 1700, if not earlier. There is no reason they should not remain recognizable until at least 2100” (pp. 34-36).

According to Zhou and Shi (2011) “some studies used a general concept such as nation, race, and ethnicity to measure culture”, while other “studies focused on specific values such as individualism or collectivism” (p. 11). From the 85 studies that the two authors review, “21 studies used nation as a proxy of culture, 19 studies used race or ethnicity, and 34 studies used specific culture values” (Zhou and Shi, 2011, p. 11).

3.4.1.3 Common aspect in the bifurcated approaches and the cultural dimensional models

The common ground in both streams of research (“bifurcated” and cultural dimension models) is that they share at the core an essentialist, deterministic understanding of diversity as static and given. Socio-demographic characteristics are treated as homogeneous categories, diversity is objectified (e.g. national diversity, racial diversity, surface and deep-level diversity) and further operationalized into measurable variables (Omanovic, 2006). The focus is not on the notion of diversity, since they conceive diversity as static and given, but on diversity effects. Diversity in both lines of research is treated as an independent variable that affects the organizational practices and outcomes (for a review, see Milikens and Martins, 1996) and the group processes or group outcomes (for a review, see Mannix and Neale, 2005; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007).

An example of research on the bifurcated approach is Jehn et al., (1999) who choose to study the informational diversity of a group by operationalizing it as differences in perceptions about the group’s real task, goal, target or mission. Jehn et al., (1999) studied how the informational diversity of a group affected both group performance and worker’s morale and commitment. (Zanoni et al., 2010, p. 22). Cox et al. (1991) in their research follow the approach of cultural dimensional models. They studied the ethnic composition of groups, choosing the individualistic-collectivistic dimension. In their study they test the hypothesis that people from collectivist cultures have a more cooperative orientation than those coming from individualistic cultures.

3.4.1.4 Critique of diversity's conceptualization as a static concept

There are many problems that arise from the essentialistic and deterministic view of diversity as a static and given concept. Janssens and Zanoni (2005) points that “the use of socio-demographic characteristics as independent variables to operationalize diversity has de facto lead to an understanding of diversity as a given, fixed individual or group essence (Litvin, 1997)” (p. 312); the focus of scholars on diversity effects abandons “the notion of cultural diversity itself under-theorized (Nkomo and Cox, 1996)” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 312). The main critique is that the positivistic conceptualization can not capture the dynamic nature of diversity since it neglects: first, that people’s identity is a dynamic and not a static concept, and second, that categories of differences constituting the diversity are social constructed, context-specific and time-dependent. Each of these points of critiques is discussed next.

3.4.1.4.1 The positivistic assumption of the monolithic identity

The objectification of diversity into distinct socio-demographic categories is due to scholars’ assumption about the monolithic identity of people (Stanfield and Rutledge, 1993; Zanoni et al., 2010, Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Litvin, 1997, 2002; Nkomo and Cox, 1996). The first critique is that the positivistic approach ignores the dynamic nature of identity. Positivist scholars assume that “the socio-demographic category under investigation reflects essential differences in attitude, personality and behaviour” (Janssen and Zannoni, 2005, p. 313). For the positivist scholars, identity has a specific and “fixed essence” (Litvin, 1997). Socio-demographic characteristics can be included in specific categories in such a way so that each category is homogeneous and unambiguously characterizes its members with the same ‘true’, essential identity” (Zanoni et al., 2010, p. 23). In positivist research, nationality, for example, is assumed to be a fixed characteristic for people who have the same nationality. Scholars assume that all people in the same nation identify in the same way with their nationality, and therefore they share the same national identity. The same assumption is applied to any other socio-demographic characteristic, like race, gender, age, profession, etc. This tendency of scholars to conceive socio-demographic characteristics as homogeneous categories is heavily criticized because it disregards the dynamic nature of identity, the within differences in a category, and the potential similarities across the various categories (Omanovic, 2006; Adler and Graham, 1989; Litvin, 1997; Nkomo, 1996; Nkomo and Cox, 1996).

When someone shares the same socio-demographic characteristic with someone else, it does not mean that they have the same identity. People form their identity in various and different ways. Identity has a dynamic nature and positivistic scholars “exclude people’s freedom to construct themselves in various ways” (Osland and Bird, 2000, p. 315). For example, people may identify with their nation (or any other socio-demographic characteristic), they may dis-identify with their nationality, or they may shape their national identity differently compared with another person having the same nationality. The dynamic nature of identity, i.e. the freedom that people have in constructing their identity (self-concept) with various ways, partly explains why some people are nationalist while others are not (Zimmer, 2003). Another study that challenges the positivistic assumption of monolithic identity regards the professional identity which in positivism is also perceived as a homogenous category, i.e. people with the same profession share the same professional identity. In the study of Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) emerged two different professional identity orientations of nurses: a “patient-centered professional identity” and an “autonomous professional identity”. In the “patient-centered” identity orientation, nurses construct their identity in terms of their relationship with the patients and “patients’ needs, not nurses were of paramount importance” (p. 884). In the “autonomous professional”, nurses of the same hospital unit construct their professional identity in way that it could enhance their autonomy in relation to other healthcare staff. The findings from Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) unravel the complexity of a perceived homogenous category as the profession. They empirically show that people define themselves in terms of their profession or other socio-demographic characteristics in multiple ways.

Rodriguez (1998) and Earley and Mosakowski (2000) urge researchers to dynamically examine socio-demographics through time, either with respect to historical contexts or their historic evolution. The critique that highlights the importance of context in identity creation and for the shaping of diversity categories brings us to the second major point of critique – i.e. neglecting the dynamic and context-specific nature of diversity.

3.4.1.4.2 Ignoring the context-dependent and dynamic nature of diversity

According to Triandis (1996) the categories of diversity are context depended. The findings of Janssens and Zanoni (2005) illustrate the context-specific nature of diversity. Janssens and Zanoni (2005) conducted a comparative case study in four service companies and examined how the organization of the service delivery shaped the service company’s understanding of

diversity. The comparison of the four case studies showed that each organization (a hospital, a call centre, a technical drawing company, and a logistical company) had constructed a context-specific understanding of diversity and developed a diversity management according to their understanding. Diversity in those four service organizations was not defined in terms of the same socio-demographic differences. The categories of differences were chosen based on the way that the service delivery was organized and whether these differences were perceived to hamper or contribute to the attainment of organizational goals.

Janssens and Zanoni (2005) in their study illustrate the dynamic and context-specific nature of diversity. The authors, however, were able to capture and portray the complex nature of diversity because they recognize its dynamic nature. The positivistic conceptualization of viewing diversity as static and given can not capture the context-specific nature of diversity, either its relational nature. Diversity is dynamic and its content transforms depending on the context and who is the Other. People construct and re-construct their identities in interaction with other people (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001). Naylor (1996) notes that “virtually every nation-state of the world is a multicultural one made up of a number of groups [...] As cultural groups increase their interactions and dependencies, every one of them will have to change some of their beliefs and behaviours” (p. 93, 208). The dynamic perspective of diversity which is discussed next, overcomes the limitations imposed by the positivistic conceptualization of diversity as having a static and given concept.

3.4. 2 Toward a more dynamic conceptualization: Diversity as a concept with dynamic nature

The critique on the static conceptualization of diversity has been empirically supported by researchers who although follow different paradigms (such as social constructionism and critical realism), they share the same non-positivistic approach (Brannen and Salk, 2000; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Ailon-Soudan and Kunda, 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Barinaga, 2007). However, in my thesis I adopt the social constructionist paradigm and therefore in this section I focus mostly on the dynamic view of diversity from the social constructionist perspective. A review on diversity’s conceptualization through the lens of critical realism paradigm can be found on various studies, such as Janssens and Zanoni (2005), Omanovic, (2006), Zanoni et. al. (2010), Tatli and Özbilgin (2012).

3.4.2.1 Diversity as a socially constructed concept

A social constructionist perspective views diversity (i.e., differentiation between people) not as a static and given, neither as an objective and measurable concept but as a social construction: a dynamic and ongoing process. The aim of inquiry in social constructionism is not to predict the effects of diversity but to explore and to understand the processes underlying its social construction, the meanings that are ascribed to diversity and the ways that it is used (Gergen, 1985; Somers, 1994; Wharton, 1992). Social constructionism answers the limitations imposed by the positivistic conceptualization, since it recognizes the dynamic nature of identity and diversity. Identity related questions like “who am I?” or “Who is different?” are not answered once during the lifetime. People deal with their need for self-definition continuously during their social interactions (Janssens et al., 2008).

Identity is not perceived as being something that is stationary and unchanged by time (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Shotter and Gergen, 1989) but rather as something that is fluid (Thomas and Linstead, 2002), dynamically evolving (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Brickson and Brewer, 2001), multifaceted (Gergen, 1991), as a “precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted” (Weedon, 1987, p. 33), and socially constructed (Hall, 1992). Identity is viewed as having a “relational and comparative” nature (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, p. 21); it is constructed and re-constructed in interactions with others (Gergen, 1985; Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

The meaning ascribed to identities is not fixed (Thomas and Linstead, 2002) but is context-specific (Janssens et al., 2008). Both the content of diversity and the meaning ascribed to categories of differences is temporary and bounded to the context in which diversity creation emerges. This is clearly illustrated by Janssens and Zanoni (2005), who found that diversity did not have the same meaning across the four organizations they studied. Each organization developed each own understanding: diversity was seen as “marketable” at the hospital, as “valuable” at the call centre, as “negotiable” at the technical drawing company, as “affordable” at the logistical company (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 335).

Although the traditional conceptualization of diversity as a static concept has dominated organizational studies (Lowe et al., 2007), yet there are many studies in which diversity is viewed as social constructed and dynamic. Examples of such empirical research are Ely and Thomas (2001) and Ailon-Souday and Kunda (2003) that show that socio-demographic characteristics – which are perceived as concepts with static nature and universal meaning in positivism – are dynamic and they have varying meanings. Ely and Thomas (2001) study

three organizations and show that diversity is a social construction that can be understood with various ways and that each diversity perspective affects differently the functioning of culturally diverse work groups. Their findings illustrate that it is not the existence of the racial differentiation that affects the work group functioning but the way people perceive and use it. Ely and Thomas (2001) identify three different perspectives on workforce diversity regarding the race. In the first perspective (integration-and-learning perspective) diversity is perceived as “a potentially valuable resource that the organization can use, not only at its margins, to gain entrance into previously inaccessible niche markets, but at its core, to rethink and reconfigure its primary tasks as well” (Ely and Thomas, 2001, p. 265). In the second perspective (access-and-legitimacy perspective) diversity is perceived as “a potentially valuable resource, but only at the organization’s margins and only to gain access to and legitimacy with a diverse market” (Ely and Thomas, 2001, p. 265). Last, in the discrimination-and-fairness perspective, diversity is perceived as “a mechanism for ensuring equal opportunity, fair treatment, and an end to discrimination. It articulates no link at all between cultural diversity and the group’s work and, in fact, espouses a colour-blind strategy for managing employees and employee relations” (Ely and Thomas, 2001, p. 265).

Another study that shows the socially constructed and dynamic nature of diversity is a research of an international merger by Ailon-Souday and Kunda (2003) who focus on national identity. The findings from their study show that Israeli employees constructed and used their national identity as a symbolic source. Israeli employees, specifically, used their national identity not only to express detachment from the American merger partners, but also to show that they were better employees than the Americans.

Clausen (2007) in her study on intercultural communication explored the interaction between Danish and Japanese managers and the emergence of a “negotiated” culture over time. Clausen views “culture as a collective and relational construct that is being redefined in new contextual settings” (p. 321), and as “being embedded in relationships, rather than in predetermined structures” (p. 321).

An example of research conducted on a workgroup and not in organizational contexts – as the majority of the research on diversity (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007) – is the study of Barinaga (2007). She used discourse analysis to explore how members of an EU-funded project group use the references of “national culture” and “cultural diversity”. Her findings show that group members refer and use national diversity with two different ways for organizing their project. Group members use the term “national culture” as a way of positioning themselves in the

group and distinguishing themselves from other members. Simultaneously, they use the term “cultural diversity” for adding value in their project, ascribing the project existence to their “cultural” diversification, but also to justify their random decision regard organizing their project.

Another example of research in an EU-funded project group is the study of Ahonen and Tienari (2009). They view diversity as a dynamic concept but perceive the constructed nature of diversity as a product of power relations and tactics. Ahonen and Tienari (2009) – following Foldy’s (2002) Foucauldian perspective – explore the ways in which diversity is discursively constructed in an EU-funded project group. They argue that in their case study, diversity is produced by the Framework Programme context of EU-funded projects in a way that “reflects not just the particular project task at hand but also the broader political and ideological aims of the European Union (and the European Commission in particular) as an institution” (p.673). According to these scholars, the Framework-Programme set specific boundaries and structural conditions for “the ways in which transnational—‘European’—cooperation unfolds in EU projects” (p.659). Ahonen and Tienari (2009) argue that the officials and unofficial rules, and the practices of European Commission (which in the Foucauldian framework are viewed as the mechanisms through which power creates its effects) inform the creation of project teams and project consortiums. Thus, it is the officials and unofficial rules, and the practices of European Commission that create the diversity in those teams.

The above studies although explore diversity through different paradigms (social constructionism and critical realism), yet they share the common premise that diversity is not static, stable or fixed concept. Their findings illustrate that diversity is dynamic and socially constructed. These scholars, although they acknowledge the dynamic nature of diversity, they ignore the multiple nature of diversity (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Mahadevan, 2009; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). They conceive diversity as a single category concept and focus on one category of difference, usually the national diversity. The single or multiple character of diversity – the second criterion in the mapping of diversity conceptualization – is discussed in the next section.

3.5 Cultural diversity: a concept with a single or a multiple nature?

The second criterion in mapping the diversity research regards the single or multiple character of diversity – whether researchers conceptualize diversity as a single difference or a set of social-demographic differences. The dominant approach in diversity research is the focus on a single diversity category, usually nationality or ethnicity (Mahadevan, 2009). The two different perspectives about the character of diversity (single or multiple nature of diversity) appear in positivism, social constructionism, and critical paradigms. The paradigm that scholars adopt does not influence their perspective on viewing diversity as single-dimensional or multidimensional concept, but whether scholars conceive diversity as a static or dynamic concept.

The first section that follows presents diversity as a single category concept and discusses two different streams of research in this line of thought:

- diversity as having a single and static nature, and
- diversity as having single and dynamic nature.

The subsequent section presents the two stream of research that conceive diversity as having a multiple nature:

- diversity as having multiple and static nature, and
- diversity as having multiple and dynamic nature.

3.5.1 Diversity as a single category concept

In the single dimensional perspective of diversity, scholars view diversity as having a single character, i.e. they focus in one category of difference in their studies. Although a category of diversity can be any socio-demographic characteristic (such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, profession, etc) (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998), in the majority of the studies diversity is predominantly treated as synonymous of national or ethnic diversity (Zhou and Shi, 2011). In this section, therefore, I also focus on national or ethnic diversity since it is the most used category of difference when scholars study diversity.

3.5.1.1 Conceptualizing diversity as having a single character and static nature

In the single and static perspective diversity is predominantly treated as synonymous tonational or ethnic diversity (Zhou and Shi, 2011), while the latter is perceived as a stable, fixed concept. In this line of thought, national diversity is conceived as being fixed and constant over time and as a collection of norms, values and assumptions that guide peoples' actions and behaviours. (Barinaga, 2007). National diversity is further objectified in measurable values and dimensions, while each of these dimensions has two extreme poles (Zhou and Shi, 2011). People are categorized in each dimension and assigned in one of the two poles, for instance, someone could be either individualistic or collectivistic.

Positivist scholars portray the differences in these cultural dimensions as the explanatory lens through which they can study the effects of national diversity (Essec and Brannen, 2000). Several scholars argue that the problems and benefits that may emerge from national diversity are due to peoples' differences in these cultural dimensions (Barinaga, 2007) (for a review see, Millikens and Martins, 1996; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). The most influential work in this stream of research includes Hofstede (1980), Schwartz (1994), and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997). The conceptualization of diversity in the form of cultural dimensional models has already been discussed and therefore, is not repeated here.

A recent example of research adopting the "cultural dimensional models" perspective is the study of Bredillet et al. (2010). The authors used Hofstede's (1980) cultural framework to investigate the role of national culture to explain the disparity in terms of project management deployment in different countries. Bredillet et al. (2010) assume that people are influenced mostly by their national culture and ascribe the differences in project management deployment in project managers' national culture. They posit that "management activity is made by people who are very much influenced by their values and beliefs" and therefore "no management activity can be culture-free" (Bredillet et al., 2010, p. 183).

3.5.1.1.1 Critiques on national diversity's conceptualization as a static concept

The conceptualization of diversity as static and single concept in the form of cross-national comparison, has been widely criticized by scholars who argue that national culture has a dynamic nature (Lowe, 2001; McSweeney, 2002a, 2002b; Williamson, 2002; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Leung et al., 2005; Fang, 2005; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Janssens et al., 2008; Zanoni, et al., 2010). The assumption that nationality "reflects essential differences in attitude, personality and behavior" (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 313), ignores the dynamic

nature of the concept of identity, overlooks “people’s freedom to construct themselves in various ways” (Osland and Bird, 2000, p. 315), and leads “to a view of identity as given, fixed essence” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 313).

McSweeney (2002) points out that the assumption underlying this static conceptualization of national culture is that people cannot escape the effects of national diversity. People are perceived as “cultural dopes” and “mere relays of national culture” (McSweeney, 2002a, p. 103), since national culture is perceived as the only source for determining their values. A consequence of this static perspective is the “stereotyping [of] entire cultures” (Fang, 2006, p. 66), while at the same time “people working across cultures are frequently surprised by cultural paradoxes that do not seem to fit the descriptions they have learned” (Fang, 2005, p. 65).

Fang (2005) argues that positivistic cultural models “bipolarize national cultures in terms of ‘either/or’ cultural dimensions”, whereas the empirical findings focusing on national culture show that it “is intrinsically ‘both/and’, that is embracing both orientations” (p. 75). According to Fang (2005), the use of “bipolar terminologies and definitions and indexing national cultures along the spectrum of cultural dimensions ... misses a fundamental dialectical perspectives that cultures ... intrinsically embrace paradoxes and changes” (p. 75). Fang (2005) addresses the dialectical and paradoxical nature of ethnic groups, and proposes a “dialectical view of culture” (p. 73). He uses the metaphor of an “ocean” for showing the dynamic nature of national culture: “culture can be compared to an ocean. In a given context at a given time, we identify visible values and behaviours just like we identify visible wave patterns on the surface of the ocean. Nevertheless, the culture we see at this moment does not represent the totality and the entire life process of that culture. The ocean embraces not just visible wave patterns on its surface (compared to visible cultural values and behaviours) but also numerous ebbs and flows underneath of amazing depth (comparable to ‘hibernating’, unseen and unknown cultural values and behaviours)” (p.83 - 84).

The critique regarding the “fallacious assumption of cultural homogeneity within nations” (Tung, 2008, p.41) that leads positivist scholars to view national diversity as static and given, is empirically supported by the findings of studies grounded in social constructionism (e.g. Ailon-Souday and Kunda, 2003; Barinaga, 2007; Chevrier, 2009; Clausen, 2010). The findings of these studies illustrate that national culture and national identity are socially constructed and are used by people, for example as symbolic resources to position themselves, or to distinguish themselves from others, or to justify any problems that may arise in workplace.

3.5.1.2 Diversity as having single character and dynamic nature

In the single and dynamic perspective of diversity, scholars also focus on nationality as the diversity category. The main premise is “that national culture is fundamental to interaction and the basis from which non-national cultural groupings emerge” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 377). Although nationality is “considered as the fundamental source of identification” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 374), however “identification is not considered as given as in cross-national comparison research” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 374). Researchers in this line of thought move away from conceiving national diversity as static; they view national diversity as a “social constructed, emergent, and negotiated phenomenon” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 377). The purpose of inquiry in the dynamic and static perspective of diversity is the exploration of “the processes underlying the intercultural interactions in a bicultural setting” (Primez et al., 2009). Examples of such studies are the studies of Barinaga (2007), Brannen and Salk (2000), Ailon and Kunda (2003), Chevrier (2009), and Clausen (2010) who have explored the construction of national diversity and national identity. A more recent example is the study by Freeman and Lindsay (2012) who focus on ethnic diversity and explore how Australian managers interpret their experiences of working in a new and ethnically diverse workplace in Malaysia.

3.5.2 Critiques on viewing diversity as a single dimensional concept

The conceptualization of diversity as a single category concept is criticized by many scholars (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Bodenhausen, 2010; Holvino, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). The first point of critique regards the multifaceted nature of people’s identity. The underlying assumption that only one socio-demographic characteristic is the most important in peoples’ self-concept and that therefore scholars can focus only to that, ignores the “multifaceted nature” (Bodenhausen, 2010, p.1) and “the multiplicity of identities in the organizational context” (e.g. Goodman et al., 1999; Sackmann, 1997). As Osland and Bird (2000) note, people “may identify with and hold simultaneous membership in several cultural groups (e.g. Ashforth and Mael, 1998; Pratt, 1989)” (p.378).

Furthermore, research in intersectionality illustrates that people do not define themselves solely in terms of one identity but there is an interaction of multiple identities (Davis, 2008). People define their self-concept through an intersection of their various identities, such as ethnicity, gender, age, profession, religion, etc (Holvino, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2011). For

example, Atewologun and Singh (2010) explore how black UK professionals (men and women) construct their professional identity and negotiate ethnic/gender identities at work, while facing stereotyping based on the intersection of gender and ethnic social categories. Atewologun and Singh (2010) found that the intersection of ethnicity and gender played an important role in the construction of professional identity. Males draw strength from the “black men” identity and used agentic strategies to promote their careers, whereas women were less agentic, and they reframe challenging episodes to protect their identity. The finding of Atewologun and Singh (2010) show that racial groups are not homogeneous as it is assumed in positivism. The intersection of the various identities leads people to face different workplace experiences and adopt different identity strategies.

A second point of critique regards the failure to cope with the dynamic and multiple nature of diversity. Diversity is not stable but it changes through the inter-group interactions and it is evolving during time (Nkomo, 1996). A diversity category that may be salient and important for people in one situation is not necessarily the same that will be salient and important in other situations. The salient category of diversity that people may perceive as an important difference might change according to the context in which they are and depending on who is the other (Turner et al., 1987). It is not always the nationality or ethnicity that is the salient source of differentiation. For example, in the case study of an international research project group, Tartas and Mirza (2007) found that group members perceive as a salient dimension of their differentiation their expertise and not their nationality or ethnicity, as it may be the expected salient diversity category in an international workgroup.

Janssens and Steyaert (2003) also criticize the conceptualization of diversity as a single category and argue that if we want “to understand the dynamics of a heterogeneous workforce” we must gain a “broad understanding of all types of differences ... without necessarily arguing that all differences are equivalent” but taking into account “the interactive effects of multidimensional diversity” (p. 12). Scholars from all paradigms (positivism, social constructionism, critical realism) have taken into consideration these points of critique and have moved forward to conceive and approach diversity as a multidimensional concept (e.g. van Knippenberg et al., 2011; Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). This line of thought is discussed next.

3.5.3 Diversity as a concept with a multiple character

The recognition of the multiple nature of diversity is less frequent in diversity research, while the majority of such research is grounded in the positivistic paradigm – with the related constraints imposed by its ontology, and which have already been discussed in section 3.3.1.1 of thesis. There are, however, some scholars who conceive diversity as having both multiple and dynamic nature, and take into consideration various socio-demographic characteristics in the creation of the categories of differences (Boyacigiller et al., 2004; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Bell and Hartmann, 2007; Holvino, 2010).

3.5.3.1 Diversity as a static concept with a multiple character

Scholars in the multiple and static conceptualization of diversity in a single study usually include more than one socio-demographic characteristic (e.g. Leonard et al., 2004; Mohammed and Angell, 2004; Balkundi et al., 2007; Roberge and van Dick, 2010). Scholars typically focus on the effects that each diversity dimension has in performance outcomes (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

One of the most influential works in this stream of research is the faultline theory by Lau and Murnighan (1998). According to Lau and Murnighan (1998), the term “faultlines” refers to “hypothetical dividing lines that may split a group into subgroups based on one or more attributes” (p. 328). Researchers use the notion of “faultline” to study multiple categories of differences in the same study. The assumption of the faultline theory is that the degree of convergence in the multiple diversity categories determines the degree of strength of the diversity sub-groups that may emerge (Lau and Murnighan, 1998; Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003). Researchers view each of the emerged sub-group as having an in-group homogeneity. The faultline theory (Lau and Murnighan, 1998) has influenced many scholars (e.g. Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003; Thatcher et al., 2003; Li and Hambrick, 2005; Lau and Murnighan, 2005; Molleman, 2005; Polzer et al., 2006; Sawyer et al., 2006; Rico et al., 2007; Homan et al., 2007; Homan et al., 2008; Pearsall et al., 2008) in studying diversity as a multi-dimensional construct. Some scholars provide evidence that there is a negative relationship between faultline strength and team outcomes (e.g., Earley and Mosakowski, 2000; Li and Hambrick, 2005; Homan et al., 2007; Homan et al., 2008) while others demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between faultline strength and team outcomes (e.g. Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003; Thatcher et al., 2003).

Homan et al. (2010) ascribe these inconsistent predictions regarding the contradictory effects of diversity on group outcomes, to researchers' tendency to focus on the "main effects" (van Knippenberg et al., 2004) of diversity. Homan et al., (2010) propose that the notion of "diversity beliefs" as the explanatory mechanism between the objective and perceived diversity. Homan et al., (2010) further argue that people's "diversity beliefs" offers the necessary explanatory power in explaining the mixed findings regarding diversity's effects. Homan et al. (2010) agree with van Knippenberg et al. (2004), arguing that "all diversity dimensions can instigate subgroup categorization and that it therefore does not matter on which dimension people perceive subgroups". They expect that the "more diversity characteristics are aligned within a subgroup, the more salient the subgroups will be (Hewstone et al., 2002)".

3.5.3.1.1 Critiques on viewing diversity as a multiple and static concept

Scholars in the multiple and static stream of research, although acknowledge the complexity of diversity and its multidimensional nature, yet they regard those multiple differences as having static and given nature. Each category of difference is conceived as a homogenous category, while the set diversity categories are seen as distinctive, independent and are treated in "a disconnected and mechanistic fashion" (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012, p. 7). When scholars treat each diversity category (e.g. gender, nationality, ethnicity) as if distinct and independent from the other categories, they do not recognize the interactions within the categories of differences. Many scholars may "overlook that categories of differences are overlapping, blended or ambiguous categories" (Bodenhausen, 2010, p. 1). Hence, the exploration of the multiple nature of diversity "remains at a surface level" because positivist' scholars do not acknowledge the interdependence between the diversity dimensions; they "fail to recognize and offer an in-depth analysis of the co-construction and co-dependence between" (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012, p. 7). Hancock (2007) nicely summarizes the two basic points of criticisms, that refers to the two underlying assumptions in the multiple and static conceptualization of diversity: "this methodological approach also presumes that the categories are static and that the relationship between them is predetermined. More importantly, as I noted earlier, the data involved in these studies collected with assumptions like homogeneity of cases and independence of variables that are contested by the intersectional approach" (p. 70).

The positivistic approach can not give the full picture of diversity since it ignores the intersectional relationship between the multiple categories of difference (Tatli and Özbilgin,

2012). The next section discusses the conceptualization of diversity as having a multiple and dynamic nature. This view of diversity overcomes the constraints and limitations imposed by the static conceptualization discussed earlier.

3.5.3.2 Diversity as having both dynamic nature and a multiple character

A growing number of scholars stress the importance of recognizing the inherent complexity of diversity arising from its dynamic and multiple nature (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Boyacigiller et al., 2004; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Mahadevan, 2009; Bodenhausen, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). In this line of thought scholars propose to move “beyond citizenship-based national identity to unravel multilayer cultures and multiple cultural identities in heterogeneous and pluralistic organizations” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 378). The multiple and dynamic approach of diversity recognize the dynamic nature of people’s identity and take into consideration that individuals “may identify and hold simultaneously membership in several cultural groups (e.g. Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Pratt, 1998)” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 378). Identity is not conceived as “capturing a state of being, a sense of stability” (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 339) but as an on-going process of construction and negotiation between multiple identities (Frable, 1997).

The recognition of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of identity allows scholars to capture the multiplicity within each category of difference. Sackmann and Phillips (2004) acknowledge that “in a multicultural and diverse society, culture can no longer be implicitly defined as a substitute for nation, and members of such societies can no longer be assumed to identify solely or most strongly with their country of national origin or citizenship” (p. 384). Similarly, Lenartowicz and Roth (2001) argue that one should specifically focus on regional cultures in order to gain insight for the increased within-nation diversity that is observed in many nations. Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) call researchers to explore “multiple strands of diversity in order to gain an understanding of difference in a way which is closer to the form in which differences manifest at work” (p. 8).

The conceptualization of diversity as both a multiple and dynamic concept appears in two streams of research which are rooted in different paradigms; the “multiple cultures perspective” (Boyacigiller et al., 2004) which is grounded in social constructionism, and the “intersectional approach” (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Knudsen, 2006) which is rooted in critical realism. The different ontology of these paradigms influences both the goal of inquiry and the research interest in the two streams of research, yet, they share a common understanding of

diversity as a dynamic concept with a multiple nature, recognizing that there is within heterogeneity in each category of difference.

3.5.3.2.1 The “multiple culture perspective”

In the multiple culture perspective (MCP) (Boyacigiller et al., 2004; Sackmann et al., 1997; Primez et al., 2009) the research interest is to examine “the interplay of multiple cultures within organization, group and individual level” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 380). According to Boyacigiller et al. (2004), “the multiple cultures perspective try to shed light on the various cultural influences that exist simultaneously at different levels of analysis, such as nation, industry, and organization as well as cross-cutting groups such as ethnicity, profession, et cetera, including interactions between these levels and cross-cutting groups that may influence individuals’ identity and, hence, their behaviour” (p. 270).

Scholars in this line of thought, try to understand how people “who are central actors in the selected research context” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 380) form their diversity. Scholars do not exclude any “conflicting, contradicting, or paradoxical findings” but they perceive those as “a vital part of the discovery process” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 381). In the MCP, scholars recognize the dynamic nature of identity and perceive that people’s identity can “include multiple and partial identities that may not necessarily build up to a homogeneous all-inclusive identity” (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004, p. 381).

Many scholars incorporated in their studies the cultural complexity suggested by the multiple cultures perspective. Two examples are the studies of Friesl et al. (2009) and Clausen (2007). Friesl et al. (2009) study the cultural dynamics in knowledge sharing and knowledge intensive teams of the German Federal Armed Forces. Friesl et al. (2009) draw on the concept of cultural complexity acknowledging that “project members’ identity may be rooted in multiple contexts ranging from varying nationalities to functional background, hierarchies, professions, gender and age” (p. 2). Clausen (2007) also followed the multiple cultures perspective (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004) in studying the intercultural communication between Danish and Japanese managers, employing the concept of “negotiated” culture (Brannen and Salk, 2000). Clausen (2007) views culture as “being embedded in relationships, rather than in predetermined structures” (p. 322), recognizing that “people identify and affiliate with a multiplicity of values, the meanings of which are socially constructed”.

3.5.3.2.2 Intersectionality

The conceptualization of diversity as dynamic concept with a multiple character also appears in the intersectional approach. According to Knudsen (2006), intersectionality seeks to examine the ways in which various socially and culturally constructed categories interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society: “Intersectionality is used to analyze the production of power and processes between gender, race, ethnicity etc., and is involved with analyzing social and cultural hierarchies within different discourses and institutions. [...] The theory of intersectionality stresses complexity. However, not all categories are necessarily mentioned” (Knudsen, 2006, p. 62 - 63).

The term “intersectionality” was first used by Crenshaw (1989, 1993) to “denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape multiple dimensions of Black women’s employment experiences” (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1244). As Crenshaw (1991) notes, people’s identity “consists of different categories” and “the crossroad of all these different axes is where a person’s identity is constructed” (p. 1296 -1299).

The intersectional line of thought posture that each individual has multiple identities (such as gender, nationality, religion, education, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic class, language, profession, etc) and that these multiple identities intersect (Hancock, 2007). The intersection between race, class, and gender give rise to several other issues that make the examination of diversity implications even more complex and challenging (Hancock, 2007; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

The intersectional approach is more common in social equality-focused workforce diversity research. Scholars in social equality studies are traditionally concerned with specific diversity dimensions (such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class) (Hancock, 2007) but recently there is a tendency to study those traditional diversity dimensions in intersection with additional diversity dimensions. For example, Holvino (2010) examines the intersections of race, gender and class, institutional, and social practices. Atewologun and Singh (2010) explore the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and professional identity. Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) examine how organizational inequality is (re)produced by drawing on intersecting gender, ethnic and organizational identities. Essers and Benschop (2009) explore the intersection of ethnic, gender and entrepreneurial identities in relation to religion.

3.5.4 Common aspects and introducing the a priori approach

The two abovementioned approaches (multiple culture perspective and intersectionality) although differentiate in their ontological assumptions, research interests and frameworks for approaching diversity, yet they share two basic aspects. First, they recognize the multiple and dynamic nature of diversity adopting a non-positivistic approach. Second, researchers in both approaches (multiple culture perspective and intersectionality) choose *a priori* the diversity categories under study. The *a priori* or *a posteriori* approach refers to researchers' direction for identifying the categories of differences constituting the diversity. The *a priori* or *a posteriori* approach is the last criterion in mapping the diversity's literature and is discussed in the next section.

3.6 Following an a priori or a posteriori direction

The third and last criterion in mapping the diversity research is to the direction that scholars follow for identifying the categories of differences: *a priori* or *a posteriori*. In the *a priori* approach, scholars pre-assume which categories of differences are the more important for the people under investigation. Subsequently, researchers focus their study in these specific categories of differences. In the *a posteriori* approach, scholars do not pre-decide which the important categories of differences are. Instead, researchers view the categories of differences as emerging in the context under study and explore diversity from an *a posteriori* direction.

The majority of diversity research is characterized by the *a priori* approach (Garcia-Prieto, 2003; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). The *a priori* approach is used both in dynamic and static conceptualization of diversity. The *a posteriori* approach is in accordance with the dynamic perspective of diversity due to its underlying ontology that recognizes the social constructed nature of identity and diversity. The exploration of diversity from an *a posteriori* direction is gaining increased interest and support by many scholars (e.g., Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010; Mahadevan, 2009) but there is still a small number of empirical studies employing this approach (e.g, Garcia-Prieto, 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Mahadevan, 2009; Bell and Hartmann, 2007).

3.6.1 Identifying the diversity categories from an a priori direction

The *a priori* approach has been used in all the aforementioned ways of conceptualizing diversity: static or dynamic nature (see section 3.4 of thesis) with single or a multiple character (see section 3.5 of thesis). Although the concept of diversity refers to any category

of difference, researchers focus their studies mainly in specific socio-demographic categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, tenure, functional background (Milliken and Martins, 1996; van Dick et al., 2009), as well as in race and class (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

In the *single-dimensional approach of diversity*, scholars both in static (e.g. Cox et al., 1991; Watson et al., 1993; Oyserman and Lee, 2008; Bredillet et al., 2010) and dynamic (e.g. Ely and Thomas, 2001; Ailon and Kunda, 2003; Barinaga, 2007; Clausen, 2010; Freeman and Lindsay, 2012) perspective, focus on a single category of difference which usually is the nationality or ethnicity. Scholars justify their focus to nationality or ethnicity by arguing that it is a category of difference that has been considered as the most salient by previous studies (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). For example, van Dick et al. (2008) justify their choice to focus only on ethnic diversity due to the previous theorization about this category of difference: “we chose this [ethnic] dimension of diversity because it is highly relevant in today’s working environment and business schools, which are characterized by globalization and intercultural collaboration. Ethnic diversity has already been found to be a salient dimension for social categorization in such settings (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004). It thus seems reasonable to expect ethnic diversity to be linked to group identification and to examine it in the current investigation” (p. 1466).

In the *multiple-dimensional approach of diversity*, scholars study a broad but “pre-established” (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012, p. 9) set of diversity categories (such as gender, ethnicity, age religion, etc). Some scholars select the categories of differences based on their relationship with organizational performance, such as nationality, education, gender, functional background (e.g., van Dick et al., 2008; Randel and Earley, 2009; Homan et al., 2010), while others choose those that have been traditionally considered to be categories of disadvantage, such as gender, race, class (e.g. Essers and Benschop, 2009; Holvino, 2010; Atewologun and Singh, 2010; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010).

3.6.1.1 Critiques on the a priori approach

The traditional conceptualization of diversity in terms of pre-defined categories, which are *a priori* chosen by the scholars as important, does not reflect the dynamic (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010) and socially constructed nature (Triandis, 1996) of diversity. The *a priori* approach is criticized in that it ignores how members perceive that they differ and instead it focus on which categories people “objectively fall” (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003, p. 417). Although in the dynamic and multiple conceptualization of diversity, scholars recognize

the multiple and dynamic nature of people's identity in practice they do not take into consideration that identity has a "shifting and multiple (Nkomo and Cox, 1996)" (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 135) nature, neither that people may define themselves in various, different ways (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). In an organizational context there is a multiplicity of identities (Goodman, et al., 1999; Sackmann, 1997) and scholars can not *a priori* choose the identities that people might perceive as important and salient (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003). According to Bodenhausen (2010) the mixed and inconsistent findings regarding the effects of diversity might be a "result from a failure to consider possible divergences between research participants' perceptions of diversity and the distribution of 'objective' group characteristics on which researchers choose to focus their attention in defining group diversity" (Bodenhausen, 2010, p. 9).

The social constructionist perspective is not confined in viewing diversity as not a static, single dimensional concept that can be quantified and measured. The social constructionist framework emphasizes that diversity is socially constructed, multifaceted, with changing content and meaning over time, grounded in the perceptions, meanings and action of people (Nkomo, 1996). Findings from research illustrate that peoples' perceptions about their differentiation is dynamic and change over time. The diversity categories that people may perceive as salient are multiple and shift throughout time (e.g. Harrison, Price, and Bell, 1998) demonstrating that diversity is not stable over time. Scholars, therefore, can not presume which categories of differences will be the most important for people without taking into consideration the context under investigation and people's perceptions (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003).

Scholars adopting the critical realism paradigm add another point of critique in the overall critique of the *a priori* approach: that the *a priori* direction ignores the role of specific organizational contexts (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005) and the role of power relations (Ahonen and Tienari, 2009) in the creation of diversity. Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) argue that "the use of pre-determined categories, irrespective of historical, institutional, and socio-economic context, leads to static account of diversity at work, which ignore the dynamic nature of power and inequality relations" (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012, p. 1-2). According to Janssens and Zanoni (2005) diversity should be approached as "an organizational product embedded in organizational power relations" rather than being considered "a set of five socio-demographic characteristics" (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 312). Janssens and Zanoni (2005) note that although few researchers incorporate in their studies the "conditions under

which diversity affects the organizational processes and outcomes (e.g. Harrison et al., 1998; Ely and Thomas, 2001; Barinaga, 2007) they still identify the categories of differences “prior to the organization” (p. 314).

The abovementioned critiques call for a different approach that could answer the constraints imposed by the *a priori* approach. The next section discusses the *a posteriori* approach which answers the limitations of the *a priori* direction in identifying the categories of differences.

3.6.2 Identifying the categories of differences from an *a posteriori* direction

There are many scholars who argue in favor of using *a posteriori* approach in exploring the categories of difference (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010; Mahadevan, 2009, 2012; Garcia-Prieto, 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Bell and Hartmann, 2007), i.e. to see how these categories of differences emerge, rather than pre-decide them based on previous theorization. The logic of the *a posteriori* approach is compatible with the ontology underlying the dynamic view of diversity since the latter recognizes the dynamic nature of identity and people’s freedom to define themselves in different ways that researchers may presume.

Recently, several scholars in positivism (e.g. van Dick et al., 2008; Homan et al., 2010) have also started to criticize the dominant *a priori* approach and suggest as alternative to take into consideration the “subjective diversity” (Harrison et al., 2002; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Harrison and Klein, 2007) and peoples’ “diversity beliefs” (van Knippenberg and Haslam, 2003; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; van Knippenber et al., 2007). Although their suggested approach does not meet the criteria of the *a posteriori* approach as I define it, I will briefly discuss next their suggested “subjective diversity” and “diversity beliefs” approaches, in order to show why their proposed perspective is not compatible with the logic underlying the *a posteriori* approach.

3.6.2.1 *The static view of diversity and the a posteriori approach in identifying the categories of differences*

The *a priori* approach has also been criticized by scholars who view diversity as a static concept. Homan et al., (2010) notes regarding the *a priori* approach: “previous research has typically examined the effects of diversity by using only the objective composition of the group as a predictor. In these studies, group members are assumed to base their perception of

the group on the objective group composition. However, the assumption that objective diversity is always perceived as such is questionable” (p. 478).

Homan et al., (2010) in accordance with other positivists scholars (Harrison et al., 2002; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Harrison and Klein, 2007; Van Dick et al., 2008) view diversity as having two forms: objective and subjective. They propose that researchers should change their focus from the objective diversity to subjective diversity. The term “subjective diversity” refers to peoples’ perceptions about the value of diversity (van Dick et al., 2008), while the term “objective diversity” refers to the “variation of a certain dimension within a group” (van Dick et al., 2008, p. 1465).

Scholars in this line of thought propose the concept of “diversity beliefs” (van Knippenberg and Haslam, 2003; van Knippenberg et al., 2007, van Dick et al., 2008) as a mediator that is capable to explain diversity’s effects on group processes and outcomes. The term “diversity beliefs” refers to the degree that people perceive that diversity has a value (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). According to Harrison and Klein (2007), the measurement of subjective diversity can give insights to diversity research. They note that findings from previous research (e.g. Harrison et al., 2002) support the explanatory power of subjective diversity.

These scholars recognize the limitations of the *a priori* approach and propose to move forward to explore the ways “in which people construe diversity” (Homan et al., 2010, p. 478). Their positivistic ontology, however, influences them to view subjective diversity again as a static concept. For example, van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007), define diversity as “a characteristic of a social grouping (i.e., group, organization, society) that reflects the degree to which there are objective or subjective differences between people within the group (without presuming that group members are necessarily aware of objective differences or that subjective differences are strongly related to more objective differences)” (p. 519).

The above definition although recognizes and highlights the subjective dimension of diversity in terms of peoples’ perceptions, yet treats diversity as “a characteristic” referring to the “degree” of subjective or objective differentiation. Subjective diversity is not seen as a social constructed, dynamic concept but as a quantifiable, measurable characteristic. The focus of those scholars remains to the “degree” of differentiation.

An example of this line of thought is a recent research by Homan et al., (2010) who note: “...we focus on perceptions of subgroups in general terms, that is, not bound to any certain demographic characteristics. Following van Knippenber at al. (2004), we argue that all diversity dimensions can instigate subgroup categorization and that it therefore does not matter on which dimension people perceive sub-groups” (p. 479). Homan et al., (2010) argue

that “the way in which group members construe their group’s diversity is shaped by group members’ beliefs about the value in diversity” (p. 477). Although Homan et al., (2010) acknowledge the role of members’ perception in the construction of group’ diversity, yet they constrain their conceptualization of diversity to members’ perceptions regarding four specific socio-demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity, education, and professional tenure. Homan et al., (2010) didn’t recognize the dynamic nature of diversity, but focus only to individual perceptions about four socio-demographic characteristics, neglecting that group members could perceive themselves as different in terms of multiple and different categories of differences. Additionally, Homan et al. (2010) focus on members’ beliefs regarding the value of diversity, not members’ beliefs about their group differentiation.

Scholars proposing the “subjective diversity” (Harrison et al., 2002; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Harrison and Klein, 2007) and “diversity beliefs” (van Knippenberg and Haslam, 2003; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; van Knippenber et al., 2007) perspectives, although propose to take into consideration people’s perceptions, yet they constrain their exploration in studying people’s perception about the value of specific socio-demographic characteristics that scholars have pre-decided. Additionally, the use of questionnaires in which researchers ask people to quantify their “diversity beliefs” on a pre-defined set of categories of differences, does not stands for approaching diversity from an *a posteriori* direction. The positivistic ontology constrains scholars from applying *a posteriori* approach in the sense of not using pre-defined categories of differences but instead seeing how these emerge. The ontology underlying the dynamic view of diversity is compatible and features the *a posteriori* approach.

3.6.2.2 The *a posteriori* approach in the dynamic view of diversity

A growing number of scholars argue in favour of adopting an *a posteriori* approach in choosing the categories of differences. These scholars represent two different paradigms, social constructionism (e.g., Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003) and critical realism paradigm (e.g., Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Although they differentiate in some aspects of their ontology (see, the introduction part of thesis for a discussion) they share two aspects: first, the same view of diversity as a dynamic and not a static concept; and second, they suggest the use of an *a posteriori* direction in identifying the categories of differences when exploring diversity.

Drawing on Triandis (1996) suggestion that diversity is socially constructed, Garcia-Prieto et al., (2003) argue that “the salience of diversity categories is culturally bounded: a category

that is defined as important in one context may be defined as less important in another context” (p.417).

Garcia-Prieto et al. (2003) further note that “it is more important to determine to which categories team members subjectively ‘feel’ they belong rather than to determine into which categories team members objectively ‘fall’ ” (p. 417). The authors argue that “diversity is subjectively experienced and cannot be objectively assigned” (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003, p. 432). Social identities are multiple and context dependent and their salience depend on certain motivational and contextual factors (Turner et al., 1987). Garcia-Prieto et al. (2003) proposed to go beyond the *a priori* categorization of people to the categories of differences, and move forward to explore “team members’ own interpretation of their diversity” (p. 432). They argue that it is important to explore not only the interactions between the various identities of the individual, but also examine how these “interactions between certain social identities are perceived by team members in different situations” (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003, p.432). They further suggest using qualitative methods and discourse analysis in order to capture this dynamic nature (Antaki et al., 1996).

The use of the *a posteriori* approach is also suggested by Zanoni et al. (2010) who stress “the need to gain more insight into how diversity is made sense of and experienced by a diverse workforce itself” (Zanoni et al., 2010). According to Zanoni et al., (2010), “actors do not simply take over existing grant, hegemonic discourses of diversity but rather selectively appropriate them, and re-combine them with other available discourses to make sense of diversity, their organization, and of their work, and to construct an own professional identity” (p. 25).

Zanoni et al. (2010) note that people does not “simply step into ‘prepackaged selves’ (Alvesson et al., 2008)” neither “are mechanically put into them by others once and for all” (p. 24). People “continuously engage, as agents, in identity work (Svenningson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008) to construct, maintain and/or disrupt (multiple) identities favorable to them” (Zanoni et al., 2010, p. 24).

Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) also support the *a posteriori* approach in exploring diversity. Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) argue that the investigation of “salient categories as emergent” rather than pre-defined, “enables diversity research to capture the dynamism in the workforce diversity field” (p. 8). They argue that “the multiplicity of salient forms of differences in social and organizational life requires rigorous scholarship that draws on a wide rather narrow set of differences” (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012, p. 8). In order to gain a better understanding of differences, scholars should explore multiple strands of differences “in a way which would be

closer to the form in which differences manifest at work” (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012, p. 8). These authors suggest “an emic approach” according to which the categories of diversity “are emergent and situated ex post, as embedded in a specific time and place” (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

The *a posteriori* approach I discuss in my thesis and the “emic approach” of Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) resemble since in both approaches the categories of differences are viewed as emergent, empirically identified, and not pre-determined. However the *a posteriori* and the “emic approach” differentiate in the way they view the process of construction and the emergence of categories of differences.

The “emic approach” of Tatli and Özbilgin (2011) is rooted in critical realism, in which the power relations play an important and determinant role in the construction of diversity. According to Tatli and Özbilgin (2011) in the “emic approach” the categories of diversity are “empirically identified and locally defined according to their role in generating power, privilege, advantage, disadvantage, discrimination and inequality at work” (p.2).

The *a posteriori* approach I discuss in my thesis refers generally to the direction of identifying and exploring the categories of differences; ontological it does not correspond exclusively in terms of a specific paradigm, such as social constructionism or critical realism. The *a posteriori* approach I follow refers to the direction of identifying the categories of differences, but is not bounded with power relations. The emergence of categories of differences is not determined by their role in producing power, inequality or discrimination. In the proposed *a posteriori* approach the categories of differences are identified through empirical investigation and are rooted on people’ perceptions about their differentiation.

The findings of Tartas and Mirza (2007) support the use of the *a posteriori* approach rather the *a priori* approach, showing that people perceive as salient categories of differences other than the “usual” ones. Tartas and Mirza (2007), in their study of an international research project, found that the category of difference that emerged as salient and important for the group members was the expertise, not the nationality or ethnicity as it is usually assumed for the international workgroups.

The *a posteriori* approach is a relatively new approach, and there are few empirical studies that have employed it for exploring diversity (e.g. Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Janssen and Zanoni, 2005; Bell and Hartmann, 2007; Mahadevan, 2009) comparing to the dominance of the *a priori* approach in diversity research. An example of a social constructionist research is the study of Garcia-Prieto et al. (2003) who explore the “motivational and contextual

conditions” under which social identities become salient. Garcia-Prieto et al. (2003) propose a dynamic model of diversity, conflict, and emotions as experienced by group members. Although they do not provide a detailed description of their methodology, Garcia-Prieto et al., (2003) note that they follow a “feeling” approach (p. 417) according to which “different categories of diversity are more or less salient given different contexts and at different times” (p. 417). Garcia-Prieto et al., (2003) did not take for granted the “category into which team members objectively “fall” (p. 417), but instead they explain “how diversity may be ‘felt’ (experienced) by team members” (p. 417). Garcia-Prieto et al. (2003) used the concept of social identity in their study of a multicultural workgroup of a non-profit organization, emphasizing “the subjectivity and flexibility of team members’ multiple social identities” (p. 420). They argue that the salient social identities “influence appraisals of issues and events” (p.431) and suggest that “different appraisals of the same issue or event can lead to conflict and emotions which may have behavioral consequences that can impact team performance” (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003, p. 431). According to Garcia-Prieto et al. (2003), “the experience of ‘diversity’ may be different for each team member, as each team member belongs to multiple social identity groups that are more or less important to him/her and to others in different situations” (p. 419). As “individual experience of a diversity category” they define “the subjective importance that a team member gives to a particular social identity, at a particular moment, in a particular context” (Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003, p. 420).

Mahadevan (2009) in her ethnography research shows “how a German high-tech workforce makes sense out of their world in times of organizational change and off-shoring to India” (p. 1). Mahadevan (2009) followed an *a posteriori* direction in identifying the categories of differences. She found that the main emergent categories of differences “were engineers and management, not Germans and Indians” (Mahadevan, 2009, p. 1). The findings from her research support empirically that the “emic categorizations of the cultural other might vary considerably from what might be expected from an etic point of view if one relies to quantitative intercultural theory” (Mahadevan, 2009, p. 1).

Another research that employs the *a posteriori* approach is the study of Janssen and Zanoni (2005), rooted in critical realism. Janssen and Zanoni (2005) study four service organizations (hospital, call center, technical drawing company, and logistical company) with the aim to explore how diversity is produced and managed in specific organizational contexts. In their study they didn’t take the categories of differences as given or “relevant a priori, as employees’ fixed essence” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 314) but they perceive them as

emergent through their relation with work. According to their perspective, “diversity is always deeply embedded in the power-laden relations of production between management and employees” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 314). From the analysis of the four case studies, they show that “diversity is understood in relation to the way particular socio-demographic differences affect the organization of the service delivery, and are therefore likely to contribute to or hamper the attainment of organizational goals” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 327). However, as Janssens and Zanoni (2005) themselves acknowledge, their research shows how employees are constructed by the management but not how employees construct their differentiation. They have focused on organizational structure and they have overlooked employees’ agency: “our analysis [...] fails to investigate how employees, as agents [...] manage their differences, actively contributing to the formation of organizational understandings of diversity and approaches to diversity management” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005, p. 337).

A recent sociological research offers another example of using an *a posteriori* approach when exploring diversity. Bell and Hartmann (2007) conducted in-depth interviews in four major metropolitan areas in the US with the goal to explore how people talk about and define diversity. Their study, however, is rooted in critical realism and therefore power relations and inequality are a central focus. According to Bell and Hartmann (2007) their goal was to see “what Americans really say about diversity? How do they understand and experience it? And what exactly does this discourse and these meanings imply about the broader challenges of multiculturalism, solidarity, social conditions and inequality in the U.S.?” (p. 896). Their research shows that while people speak openly (but in general terms) about diversity, at the same time they hesitate to talk “about structural inequality in the context of diversity conversations” (Bell and Hartmann, 2007, p. 902). The authors note that there are “tensions and contradictions surrounding diversity” and that the origins of these tensions came “from assumptions held by respondents about American culture, especially with respect to whiteness and white privilege in the U.S.” (Bell and Hartmann, 2007, p. 896).

Research that is conducted using the *a posteriori* approach shows that following an *a posteriori* direction in exploring diversity can offer new insights in understanding diversity. We can broaden our understanding of diversity if we view diversity through the eyes of the people themselves: how people perceive and define their differentiation, and how they create their diversity.

3.7 Diversity research in multicultural groups

The workplace setting in which diversity is constructed is significant because it informs and shapes the diversity construction (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). As it is already discussed (see section 2.1 of thesis), the literature review at the early stages of the study enabled me to identify that most studies in diversity research are conducted in the organizational contexts of multinational corporations and international mergers (Sackmann and Phillips, 2004). An organizational setting that is relatively unexplored is multicultural workgroups. Multicultural workgroups started to be explored as an autonomous area only in the last decade (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007), and as Mannix and Neale (2005) note “there is much we have yet to learn about what differences make a difference” in workgroups (p. 49). Although research on multicultural workgroups increased over the last years (e.g. Early and Erez, 1997; Early and Mosakowski, 2000; Behfar et al., 2006; Ochieng and Price, 2010; Stah et al., 2010; Rico et al., 2011; Klitmøller and Luring, 2013), yet there is little research focusing on EU-funded project groups (Ahonen and Tienari, 2009; Barinaga, 2007).

3.7.1 Why an EU-funded project group as a case study?

EU-funded projects groups are part of the Framework Programme (FP) system of the European Union (EU) which supports and encourages international and cross-institutional cooperation by promoting and supporting workforce mobility across researchers, academics, and practitioners within Europe. The context of the EU-funded project is a suitable and appropriate workplace setting for conducting a case study exploring diversity construction (Barinaga, 2007; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009). An EU-project group is a pluralist, heterogeneous system, where group members live in a complex society, and they belong simultaneously in many different groups (Sackmann et al., 1997). The members of an EU-project group are diverse in many ways: apart from their demographic heterogeneity (such as age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, gender), group members can represent different countries, organizations, and types of institutions (such as research institutes, small medium enterprises (SMEs), universities, companies, industries). Furthermore, in an EU-funded project group the members can have diverse experience, occupation, and expertise. Sackmann and Phillips (2004) argues that the exploration of the co-existence of multiple differences in “multicultural research teams may yield rich and useful data and insights about the multiple culture workplaces that are the reality of 21st century organizations” (p. 384). Additionally, EU-funded projects – contrary to multicultural workgroups that are embedded in a single

organization – do not have the influence of a specific organizational culture or norm. Diversity construction, thus, in an EU-funded project group is complicated since it involves multiple categories of differences. Ahonen and Tienari (2009) point that the EU-funded projects “provide a particularly timely setting for studying diversity, and that an in-depth study in the EU project setting contributes to the critical literature on diversity and its management” (p. 656). That workplace setting, therefore, is suitable and ideal for the research aim of the study, i.e. to explore the construction of diversity in a multicultural workgroup.

3.7.2 Mapping diversity research in multi-cultural workgroups and EU-funded project teams

A review of diversity research in multicultural workgroups in general and in EU-funded projects more specifically, illustrates that the conceptualization of diversity follows the same patterns as those described in sections 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 in that workgroup diversity is conceived and studied either as a static or a dynamic concept that can have a single or a multiple nature which is *a priori* determined or can *a posteriori* emerge.

Scholars that view workgroup diversity as static, usually study diversity in relation to topics such as performance, effectiveness, communication, conflicts, and project management (Mannix and Neale, 2005). Most scholars viewing diversity as static – either with a single or multiple nature – focus on diversity’s positive and negative effects on group processes and outcomes (e.g., Easterby – Smith and Malina, 1999; Dreachslin et al., 2000; Homan et al., 2008; for reviews, see Jackson et al., 2003; Mannix and Neale, 2005; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007), while others choose to focus on moderator variables that can lead into these positive and negative effects (e.g. van Dick et al., 2008; Homan et al., 2010).

Scholars who view workgroup diversity as a socially constructed and dynamic concept – either with a single or a multiple nature – usually focus in organizational processes such as organizing process and discursive uses of diversity (Barinaga, 2007), knowledge sharing (Friesl et al., 2009), collaboration and knowledge production (Tartas and Mirza, 2007), communicative practice and the negotiation of tensions (Gibbs, 2009), team knowledge and coordination (Espinosa et al., 2007), whereas others view diversity as a product of power relations (Ahonen and Tienari, 2009).

Despite the increasing research on multicultural workgroups and teams, however, there are few studies conducted in EU-funded project teams, which is the focus of this study. An indicative example of such research is the study of Barinaga (2007) who explores how the

members of an EU-funded project group use the references of “national culture” and “cultural diversity” in the organizing process of their project. Barinaga (2007) employs a discourse analysis and demonstrates that the group members refer and use national diversity with two different ways for organizing their project. From the one hand, they use the term “national culture” as a way to position themselves in the group and distinguish their self from other members. On the other had, group members use the term “cultural diversity” during the organizing process of the project for adding value to their project. Group members justify the existence of their project to their “cultural” diversification, but also use their “cultural diversity” discourse to justify their random decisions regarding the organization of the project.

A second example of research in EU-funded project groups is the study of Ahonen and Tienari (2009) who explore the ways in which diversity is discursively constructed in such a workgroup. Ahonen and Tienari (2009) view diversity as a product of power relations and tactics following the Foucauldian perspective of Foldy (2002). Through their Foucauldian framework, Ahonen and Tienari (2009) view the practices of European Commission as the mechanisms through which power creates its effects. Their findings illustrate that diversity is produced by the Framework Programme context of EU projects in a way that “reflects not just the particular project task at hand but also the broader political and ideological aims of the European Union (and the European Commission in particular) as an institution” (p. 673). According to Ahonen and Tienari (2009), the Framework-Programme sets specific boundaries and structural conditions that define “the ways in which translational—‘European’—cooperation unfolds in EU projects” (p. 659). The two scholars argue that the officials rules and unofficial norms, along with the practices of European Commission, inform the creation of project teams and project consortiums.

A third example of research in EU projects is the case study by Tartas and Mirza (2007). They examined an international research project group consisting of firms and university teams with technical and educational expertise from 9 countries. The aim of their study was to explore members’ collaboration processes and knowledge creation. Tartas and Mirza (2007) explore the collaboration process by focusing on diversity – “how and when diversity is made visible, explicit and an object of discussion and negotiation by the project partners themselves” (p. 156). Tartas and Mirza (2007) drawn on Wendger’s (1998) ideas of community of practice and activity theory (Leontiev, 1978); they view “moments of tension and negotiation” as the “key points in the elaboration of collaborative work” that “help the partners to make explicit the psychosocial dynamics at work in the construction of

knowledge” (Tartas and Mirza, 2007, p. 156). In their study, Tartas and Mirza (2007) present the main tensions that arose in three stages of the project: (a) at the software development stage, (b) at the testing of the prototype, and (c) during the analysis of the results of the implementation. The tension that arose in the first stage was between the Pedagogical and Technical teams; in the second and third stages, the tensions were among the Pedagogical partners from the different countries and institutions. Although Tartas and Mirza (2007) do not focus on the perceptions of diversity *per se*, their findings illustrate that the category of difference that emerged as salient and important for the group members was their expertise, not the nationality or ethnicity as it is usually assumed for the international workgroups.

3.8 Summary

The discussion about the diversity research mapping offers a brief but critical review by characterizing previous research according to three criteria regarding diversity’s conceptualization. First, whether scholars have conceptualized diversity as a concept with static or dynamic nature, second, whether scholars view diversity as having a single or a multiple character, and third, whether scholars identify the categories of differences constituting diversity from an *a priori* or an *a posteriori* direction.

The mapping of diversity’s conceptualization facilitates to contextualize and position my thesis in the field of diversity research along the three abovementioned axes. In my thesis I view diversity a concept with a multiple and dynamic nature and I follow an *a posteriori* approach in identifying the categories of differences.

Part II
Research Methodology

Chapter 4 Research approach and setting

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and consists of two sections. Section 3.1 explains the choice for a qualitative research approach and describes the research strategy of the study. Section 3.2 introduces the research setting, explains the choice of the specific EU-funded project as a case study, and introduces the project consortium and the project group. Table 4.1 summarizes the research strategy.

Table 4.1 The research strategy of the thesis

Methodological approach	Qualitative
Methodology	Case study (<i>Instrumental case study</i>) Constructivist grounded theory approach
Methods of data collection	Interviews Group conversation Participant observation Documents
Methods for data analysis	Narrative analysis Constant comparison
Research setting	An EU-funded project group

4.1 A qualitative research approach

The present research is positioned within the social constructionist paradigm as stated in the introduction of the thesis (chapter 1). Social constructionism views reality as socially constructed, subjective and relativist (Gergen, 1985). The aim of social constructionism inquiry is to understand social phenomena through the exploration of its construction processes (Guba, 1990; Gergen, 2006; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009) from an *emic* perspective (Schwandt, 1998).

The aim of the present research is to explore and understand *how* the members of an EU-funded project perceive and form their group diversity. The appropriate methodological approach for this type of inquiry is *qualitative* because enables to understand peoples'

understandings and meanings of experiences (Creswell, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The aim of qualitative research is to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), to “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p. 3). The qualitative research approach enabled me to explore the group diversity construction from the perspective of the group members.

4.1.1 The research strategy of a case study with constructivist grounded theory approach

The research methodology determines the research strategies and the methods that are adopted in a study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The choice of a qualitative research methodology is suitable with a qualitative research strategy and there is a wide range of qualitative research strategies that researchers can employ in their study (for example, ethnography, ethnomethodology, case study, grounded theory, semiotics, action research) (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The selection of an appropriate research strategy is determined by the form and nature of research question (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

The research question of the present study is highly compatible with the research strategies of case study, grounded theory and ethnography. However, the short time of my field work (five days) does not allow me to characterize the study as ethnographic. Therefore, taking into consideration the aim of my study and the available research strategies, I decided to combine a qualitative *case study* with a *constructivist grounded theory approach*. The following sections explain further why the case study and the grounded theory approaches are appropriate for my research aim.

4.1.1.1 An instrumental case study

The aim of the present research is to explore how the group members of an EU-funded project construct their group diversity. The *qualitative case study* is appropriate and useful for the study because it examines a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13) and is suitable for answering the *how* questions (Yin, 2003). The idea that characterizes the case study strategy is “that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there may be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible (Punch, 2005).

There are two basic approaches for employing a case study: a) Stake's (1995) and b) Yin's (2003, 2006) approaches. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003, 2006) propose several types of case study that researchers can use. According to Yin (2003), a case study can be explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive depending on the aim of inquiry. He also categorizes case studies as single, single case with embedded units, holistic case studies, and multiple-case studies (Yin, 2003). On the other hand, Stake (1995) identifies case studies as intrinsic, instrumental, or collective.

The basic difference between the case study approaches described by Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) lies in their ontological beliefs. Yin's (2003) approach grounds in the assumption that there is a "real" reality, whereas Stake's (1995, 2000, 2005, 2006) approach perceives reality as constructed (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). In my study I follow the case study approach of Stake (1995) because his ontological beliefs resemble the ontological assumption of my study. The choice of the *instrumental* type of case study (Stake, 2002) is appropriate for my research because it allows to "provide insight into an issue or to revise a generalization. Although the case selected is studied in depth, the main focus is on something else" (Silverman, 2005, p. 127).

I focus on a single case (an EU-funded project group) and study in depth the specific group with the aim to explore the processes of diversity construction in a multicultural, real working setting. The case study approach involves observing in natural occurring contexts how people perceive, sense-make and form their social reality (Silverman, 2005). In the present study, the instrumental case study entails the exploration of how group members of a multicultural, multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional work group (such as an EU-funded project) perceive and create their group diversity during their group meeting.

4.1.1.2 The design of the case study: a constructivist grounded theory approach

The present qualitative case study is informed by a *constructivist* grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2009) which is a modification of the classic grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to Strauss (1987) the combination of a case study and a grounded theory strategy is appropriate and fruitful when the case study facilitates theory development, while Silverman (2010) argues that "a simple qualitative case study can build social theory" (p. 295).

The grounded theory approach aims to create a conceptual framework that is grounded in the data rather to verify an existing one. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that by using the

grounded theory approach “a theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (p. 23). In doing so, researchers employ systematic but also flexible methods for gathering and analyzing data (Charmaz, 2006, 2009).

Grounded theory is well suitable with the research aim of this study – to describe and explore the construction of diversity in a multicultural group from *a posteriori* direction. My research inquiry is not guided or constrained by a specific theory, neither is to “test” or verify a theory. The design of the study is not based on predetermined assumptions about the content, meaning, and functions of group’s diversity, neither about the processes of diversity construction. However, as I explained in the section 2.1 of thesis, it is inevitable for all researchers to have former knowledge on their field of study.

I have knowledge of extant research and theories on diversity and identity. I view diversity as interrelated with the concept of identity work, and the processes of diversity construction as interrelated with the identity construction processes. I conceive both diversity and identity as social constructed and dynamic concepts that cannot be *a priori* defined. I view diversity as an emerging group phenomenon that can be understood from *a posteriori* direction. For that reason, I explore how members *themselves* perceive and sense-make their differentiations rather than assigning them in predefined categories of differences.

My previous knowledge about diversity and identity concepts does not function as lens constraining my inquiry; on the contrary, it enables me to have a wider knowledge concerning the workforce diversity area. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) point, “one does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (p. 23). Thus, the grounded theory approach is appropriate for the exploration of the research question of this study. The following sections outline the basic differences between the classic and the constructivist grounded theory approaches and explains the choice of the latter as the research strategy of the study.

4.1.1.3 Comparing the classic with the constructivist grounded theory

Glasser and Strauss (1967) created the classic grounded theory after their study *Awareness of Dying* (1965) in which they have conducted intensive fieldwork in the context of hospital care. After publishing their study, Glasser and Strauss faced the request to specify their

methodological processes (Lal et al., 2005) and thus provided their methodology by writing *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967).

Since its publication (1967), however, Glaser and Strauss have followed different paths regarding the grounded theory approach and formed two different versions of grounded theory: the Glasserian (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998) and Straussian (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Corbin and Straus, 2008) approaches. Grounded theory itself is subject to many critique (see, Bryant and Charmaz, 2007) and also many modifications. Although there are many variations of grounded theory (e.g. Clarke, 2005; Schatzman, 1991; Charmaz, 2000), I focus on the differences between the classic and the *constructivist* grounded approach since I use the latter. The *constructivist* (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) differ from the *classic* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) grounded theory approach in their beliefs about reality and the role of researcher. Table 4.2 outlines the major differences between *classic* and *constructivist* grounded theory approaches.

Table 4.2 Comparison of the Classic and Constructivist Grounded Theory approaches

	Classic approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)	Constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2009)
<i>Beliefs about Reality</i>	A single reality	Multiple realities
<i>Epistemology</i>	Objectivistic	Subjectivist
<i>The role of researcher</i>	Neutral, objective observer: Researcher discover reality	Subjective: Researcher co-constructs reality

The *classic* grounded theory is grounded on the assumption that reality is single and researcher can discover it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Many scholars characterize the classic grounded theory as “objectivistic” because it sees the researcher as having “a separate, unbiased, unobtrusive, researcher role in collecting and analyzing data and focus on the content of expressed verbalizations and observable behaviors” (Lal et al., 2012, p. 8). In the classic grounded theory, the theory that emerges is assumed to be an objective portrait of the reality and independent from the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

On the other hand, the *constructivist* grounded theory approach assumes that a) there is not a single reality but multiple (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), and b) reality is not discovered by the researcher, but co-constructed between the researcher and the people under study (Denzin and

Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). The constructivist grounded theory accepts the subjectivity of researchers and their role in the co-construction of reality. Charmaz (2006) points out that the theory that emerged from data is not separate from the researchers, but they “construct ... [the] grounded theories through ... [their] past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and the research practices” (Charmaz, 2006, p.10). “The interpretation of the studied phenomenon is in itself recognised as a construction” (Charmaz, 2006, p.187).

According to Charmaz (2006, p. 185), the constructivist grounded theory critically “adopt[s] the tools of grounded theory” but not its assumptions regarding the single and objective reality. Charmaz (2006) argues that *constructivist* grounded theory approach “retains the rigour of the traditional grounded theory method, whilst it fosters openness and reflexivity and encourages empathetic understanding of the participants’ meanings, action and worlds” (p. 185).

The present study follows a *constructivist* grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) because its ontological and epistemological assumptions are compatible and suitable with the corresponding assumptions of the present thesis that have been discussed in the introduction of the thesis (chapter 1). Furthermore, the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) shares the same basic ontological and epistemological beliefs with the case study approach of Stake (1995, 2006). Both Charmaz (2000, 2006) and Stake (1995, 2006) acknowledge reality as multiple and recognize the role of researcher in the construction of the interpretation. These beliefs are consistent with the corresponding ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study.

4.2 The research setting

The present section describes the research setting of the study which is an EU-funded project group, called “MULTI” which is a pseudonymous in order to keep the anonymity of the project. The first section explains how I got access to a specific workgroup and the second section outlines the goals, objectives, and duration of the MULTI project. The third section presents the project consortium, the project group, and the group members. Finally, the fourth section refers to the creation the specific EU- funded project group.

4.2.1 Getting access to an EU-funded project group: the case of the MULTI project

Setting up the research involved two main decisions: first choosing the type of multicultural workgroup under study, and second to gain access to such group. After deciding to focus on EU-funded project groups I looked for available project groups in which I could gain access. After a long period of contacts (most of them were unsuccessful) I managed to get access to an EU-funded project group through the intervention of a friend. My friend brought me in contact with a Greek researcher participated in a project group that was at the beginning of its “project life” – the group members have made only one introductory meeting in Finland and the second meeting was planned to be held in Greece and specifically at Chania.

The Greek researcher informed me about the project and invited me to join them in their project meeting at Chania. I got some more information about the project and the project partners through the official websites of the project and project partners. The project was funded by the European Commission. The next section presents the EU-funded project group that consist my case study.

4.2.2 Presenting the MULTI project group

4.2.2.1 Aim and goals of the MULTI project

The aim of the MULTI project is to promote language awareness to immigrating workforces in the ICT and agriculture sectors. The project focuses on two user groups: 1) IT teachers from Estonia that want to move and work in Finland and 2) agriculture professionals from Romania that want to move and work in Greece. The main goal is to provide people, who are interested in immigrating for work purpose in Finland and Greece, free access to language learning resources that will help them to be familiar with the terminology and cultural issues in their sectors. Those language leaning resources, however, involve the development and dissemination of a number of language learning exercises; where group member have to collaborate in order to create and disseminate these language learning exercises. Table 4.3 gives a brief overview of the project.

Table 4.3 The MULTI project in a nutshell

Duration:	24 months
Funded by:	EU Commission
Goal of the project:	To develop and online publish free language learning exercises through which candidate immigrants can learn professional terminology and familiarize with cultural issues
The pilot user communities are:	a) ICT teachers living in Estonia who want to move and work in Finland b) Agriculture professionals living in Romania interested to move and work in Greece.
The project consortium:	7 partner organizations
The project group*	11 members

* The project group at the meeting in Chania

4.2.2.2 *The project consortium*

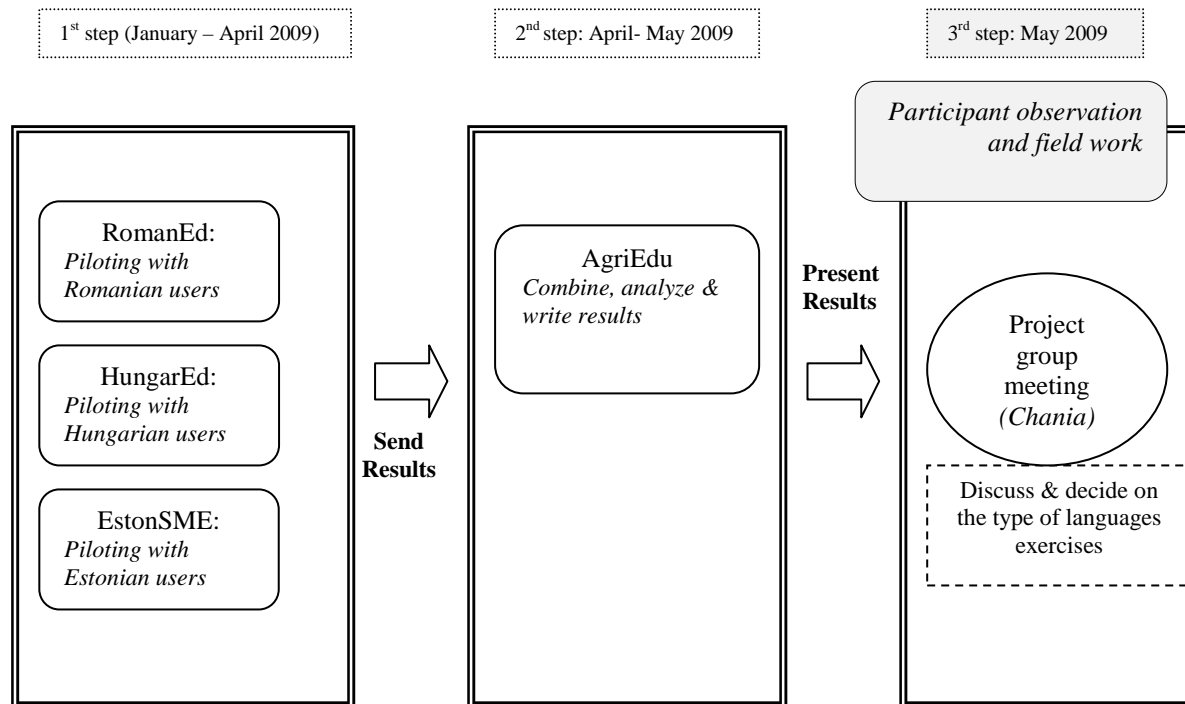
The consortium of the project consists of seven partners from many countries and of different institutional types (such as SME, Universities, NGO). The names are not real but pseudonymous in order to protect the anonymity of the project and the partners:

1. A Finish university (Information Technology Department) (*FinishITD*).
2. An Estonian SME which offers collaborative learning services to learners (*EstonSME*).
3. A Greek research-orientated SME that develops technological platforms and services for the development of rural sectors (*GreekRural*).
4. A Greek institution of higher education that focuses on the post-graduate and vocational training of agricultural professionals in a multicultural environment (*AgriEdu*).
5. A Polish university with large experience on language learning and relevant pedagogies (*PolishEdu*).
6. A Romanian user association (NGO) that delivers language learning services in the Romanian population (*RomanEd*).
7. A user association (NGO) that delivers language learning services in a regional community of Hungarian minority in Romania (*HungarEd*).

Each partner has a distinct role in the project but there is a high inter-dependence between them. The partners' tasks are interdependent, and therefore they have to collaborate and

interact in every work package. Figure 4.1 outlines the interaction among members from January 2009 to May 2009 (the time period corresponding to the project meeting at Chania), and offers a brief example of the group interaction in the second work package and the interdependence among members.

Figure 4.1. Workflow of interaction in the 2nd work-package



From January to April 2009, the Romanian (*RomanEd*), Hungarian (*HungarEd*), and Estonian (*EstonSME*) partners had to make a pilot survey in their communities in order to identify the language needs of their potential users.

From April to May 2009, a Greek partner (*AgriEdu*) had to combine and analyze the data of the three pilots studies and write the results regarding the users' language needs.

At the end of May 2009, during the project meeting, a Greek partner (*AgriEdu*) had to present the results and then all the partners had to discuss and decide on the type of the language exercises they would develop.

After the meeting, the Polish partner (*PolishEdu*), would have to design some examples of language exercises based on the users' need (identified from the piloting) and the decision taken from the group meeting at Chania.

At September 2009, the Polish partner (*PolishEdu*) would present these examples of language exercises to the rest partners and they would design a second piloting.

4.2.2.3 The project group

The representatives of the partners meet every six months for a project meeting that usually last two days. The representatives of the partners are not always the same people in every meeting; therefore, the composition of the project group participating in project meetings is not always the same. In EU-funded projects it is a common phenomenon that some people are replaced and other represent the partner institution. For example, in the first project meeting (that was held in Finland) the project group had a slight different synthesis compared to the second project meeting (that was held in Greece). Table 4.4 shows the different synthesis of the project group in the aforementioned meetings.

Table 4.4 The composition of the project group at the first and second meeting

Project meeting	First meeting (Kick off meeting)	Second meeting
Date	February 2009	May 2009
Location	Finland	Greece
Partner	Group members	Group members
Finish university	<i>Jan</i> <i>Marjo*</i>	<i>Jan</i> <i>Kirsi*</i>
Greek SME	<i>Michalis</i>	<i>Michalis</i>
Polish university	<i>Marta*</i>	<i>Teresa*</i> <i>Irena*</i>
Greek research institute	<i>Dimitrios</i> <i>Mary</i>	<i>Dimitrios</i> <i>Mary</i>
Romanian NGO	<i>Camelia</i>	<i>Camelia</i> <i>Marku*</i>
Romanian NGO	<i>Margit</i>	<i>Margit</i> <i>Lajos*</i>
Estonian SME	<i>Martin</i>	<i>Martin</i>

*The symbol indicates a change in the person representing the partner

4.2.2.4 Project members

I use the term “project members” or “group members” or “members” to refer to the representatives of partners that participate in a project meeting. In my thesis I focus only in the second project meeting in Chania, Greece. The project group participating in the Chania meeting consists of 11 members (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Profile of group members at the second project meeting (Chania)

Name of member*	Gender	Country representing	Ethnicity	Education	Profession
Klaus	Male	Finland	German	PhD	University professor
Fiona	Female	Finland	Finland	PhD candidate	PhD candidate
Michalis	Male	Greece	Greece	PhD	Owner of the SME & Researcher at a research institute
Dimitrios	Male	Greece	Greece	PhD	Researcher
Mary	Female	Greece	US	Master	Researcher
Martin	Male	Estonian	Estonian	Not stated	Owner of the SME
Camelia	Female	Romania	Romanian	PhD	Director of the NGO & University professor
Marku	Male	Romania	Romanian	Master	Project manager
Margit	Female	Romania	Hungarian	Bachelor	Director of the NGO
Lajos	Male	Romania	Hungarian	Master	Researcher
Teresa	Female	Poland	Polish	Not stated	Teacher
Irena	Female	Poland	Polish	Not stated	Teacher

* The names of the members are pseudonymous in order to maintain the anonymity both of the project and the group members

4.2.2.5 History of the project

The MULTI project was “born” from some initial ideas and thoughts of Michalis (*GreekRural*) and Martin (*EstonSME*). Michalis and Martin ask later Klaus (*FinishITD*) to join them in writing the project proposal and invited him to be the project coordinator. To my understanding, the rest of the partners joined later, after the main body of the proposal was already written.

Chapter 5 Data gathering process

There are many methods that can be used for data collection (Creswell, 2002) but it is important to choose methods that will yield rich data (Charmaz, 2006). The data collection process of this study resembles the grounded theory ethnography (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) describes her approach of ethnography as “recording the life of a particular group and thus [such approach] entails sustained participation and observation in their milieu, community, or social world. It means more than participant observation alone because an ethnographic study covers a round of life occurring within the given milieu and often includes supplementary data from documents, diagrams, maps, photographs, and, occasionally, formal interviews” (p. 21). Charmaz (2006) differentiates her approach from ethnography in terms of the aim and priority of observation: grounded theory ethnography “gives priority to the studied phenomenon or process- rather than to a description of a setting”, whereas ethnography follows a more structural approach aiming to obtain a full “description of a setting” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 22).

5.1 Differentiating from the typical cyclical process of collecting and analyzing data in grounded theory studies

Creswell (1998) describes the process of collecting and analyzing data in grounded theory as a “zigzag” process: the researcher goes “out to the field to gather information, analyze the data, back to the field to gather more information, analyze the data, and so forth” (p. 57). This process of going to the field to gather more data ends when “theoretical sufficiency” (Dey, 1999, p. 257) is accomplished or “when your data is ‘saturated’ ... [i.e.] “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113).

The present study, however, differentiates from the typical process that grounded theorists follow and the data analysis is not followed from a second round of data collection. I focus on a single event following the suggestion of (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001) to focus “on a specific organizational event [...] described in some detail” (p. 60). I focus on a single meeting of an EU-funded project group and collect data in a single round that consists of five days (although I did some additional interviews in a latter time after the project meeting).

In their ethnographic study, Kärreman and Alvesson (2001) focused on a single event – an employee meeting in a Swedish newspaper. These authors argue that “doing in-depth studies of micro events” provide “a close and detailed interpretation ... [that] combined with sufficient background and context knowledge, open up a new window for broader understanding of organizations” (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001, p. 59). Kärreman and Alvesson (2001) further argue that “some situations in organization may be seen as the organization in miniature (‘written small’), and that we can learn a lot about organizational processes through the detailed study of a specific situation” (p. 61). They advocate that focusing on a single, specific organizational event can “contribute to a situational understanding of organizational phenomena [such as workgroup diversity], one that is ‘closer’ to the empirical phenomena in organizations (everyday practice)” (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001, p. 60). Following their suggestions I view the single event of a meeting in a EU-funded project group as the group “in miniature (‘written small’)” (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001, p. 61). The aim of the study, thus, is to develop theoretical ideas about diversity construction in a specific work organizational setting.

5.2 Methods of data collection

In the present study I gathered data by doing field work which involved participant observation of their group meeting, tape-recording their group discussion, taking field notes in situations outside the meeting room in the days before and after the project meeting (e.g. during breakfast, dinner, social events), conducting semi-structured interviews with the members, and collecting documents (such as minutes of the meeting) as supplementary data.

The methods of participant observation and field work are used and cited by many scholars. The relationship, however, between participant observation and field work frequently overlaps leading to confusions. Bryman (2001) explains that scholars often refer to ethnography (and thus doing field work) both as a distinct methodology for designing research (like ethnomethodology) and as participant observation – which is a method for data collection.

Denzin (1989b), for example, defines participant observation as “a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection” (p. 157). Silverman (2010), on the other hand, describes participant observation as the actively engagement in a setting, without relating participant observation to interviewing or any other methods for data gathering.

In my understanding doing field work entails participant observation but doing participant observation does not necessarily involve doing field work. In my study I conduct both: my immersion in the project group life was not constrained in observing their project meeting, but extended both in terms of time and natural occurring situations and settings. My field work engagement with the group members, however, lasted a short time period – two days before and one day after the project meeting.

In the thesis, I use the term *participant observation* to refer to my participation as an observer in their group meeting. I use the term *field work* to refer to my immersion in the field in events and situations outside the setting of the project meeting such as taking breakfast with them and join them in dinners and social activities. My type of engagement although carries characteristic of an ethnography, yet, cannot be categorized as such since my overall engagement in the field lasted only 5 days (23 May – 27 May).

5.2.1 Field work and participant observation

Before entering the field I became familiar with the suggestions of Spradley (1979), Silverman (2005), and Mitchel (2001) for doing field work and participant observation. Spradley (1979) advises researchers to keep different types of notes during observation: short notes during their actual observation, more expanded and detailed notes after each field session, a journal for keeping track of problems and ideas emerging during field work, and another journal with notes on initial data analysis. According to Silverman (2005) the researcher should be concerned with “what participants take to be ordinary and unexceptional [since it] gives a clear focus to making and analyzing field notes” (p. 174). Mitchel (1991) (found in Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001, p. 163), similarly, offers a wide range of questions that could facilitate the field work of the researcher among which are the following:

- “What is going on?”
- “What is the distribution of participants over space and time in these locales?”
- “How are group members organized?”
- “How are members stratified? Who is ostensibly in charge? Does being in charge vary by activity? How is membership achieved and maintained? ”
- “What do group members pay attention to? What is important, preoccupying, and critical?”
- “What do group members pointedly ignore that other persons might pay attention to?”
- “What symbols do group members invoke to understand their worlds, the other members and processes within them, and the objects and event they encounter?”
- “What names do they attach to objects, events, methods of operation do actors employ?”

- “Which theories, motives, excuses, justifications or other explanations do group members use in accounting for their participation? How do they explain to each other what they do and why they do it? ”
- “What goals do group members seek?”

Regarding the process of taking field notes I took into consideration the suggestions of Charmaz (2006) and Spradley (1980). According to Charmaz (2006, p. 22) the field-notes of observation in a grounded theory should:

- “contain full, detailed notes with anecdotes and observations”
- “emphasize significant processes occurring in the setting”
- “address what participants define as interesting and/or problematic”
- “attend to participants’ language use”
- “place actors and actions in scenes and contexts”
- “become progressively focused on key analytic ideas”

Spradley (1980, p. 69-72) recommend that researchers keep four different types of field notes:

- Short accounts from conversations
- Notes about the general impressions and feelings that the researcher gains during field work and interviews
- A fieldwork diary recording the “experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems that arise during fieldwork” (Spradley,1980, p. 71)
- Notes regarding the data analysis

5.2.1.1 Entering the field

As Charmaz (2006) writes the “grounded theory adventure starts when we enter the field where we gather data” (p. 13). My “research adventure” thus started the moment I arrived at the educational and research institute at Chania where the group meeting was going to be held. The institute’s facilities included dormitories in which most of the group members were staying and therefore I decided to stay there. I went two days before the project meeting because I was informed that many group members had arranged their arrival earlier. My field work *before the project meeting* during these two days involved joining group members in breakfast, dinners and social activities. I had the opportunity to discuss with many of the group members, introduce myself and answer questions about who am I and about my PhD, make them feel comfortable with me and gain their trust. This familiarization facilitated my later observation of their project meeting and also to get their permit to tape-record their group discussion.

During the fieldwork I had the opportunity to immerse in the project group life across different situations and keep extensive field notes. My engagement during this time was not

constrained in observation since I was participating as an “unofficial member” of their group. Table 5.1 describes my chronological immersion in the field that includes: two days before the project meeting; two days during the project meeting; and one day after the project meeting.

Table 5.1 The chronological immersion in the field

<i>Date</i>	23 May	24 May	Project meeting		27 May
			25 May	26 May	
<i>Methods of gathering data</i>	Field work <i>(dinner)</i>	Field work <i>(breakfast, dinner)</i>	Participant observation <i>(meeting)</i>	Participant observation <i>(meeting)</i>	Field work <i>(breakfast, lunch)</i>
			Tape-recording naturally occurring group conversation	Tape-recording naturally occurring group conversation	Interviewing
			Field work <i>(coffee, lunch breaks, dinner, transportation)</i>	Interviewing	
				Field work <i>(coffee, lunch breaks, dinner, bar, transportation)</i>	

5.2.1.2 Doing field work

Charmaz (2006) notes that researchers should “enter their settings and situations to the extent possible. Seeing research participants’ lives from the inside often gives a researcher otherwise unobtainable views. You might learn that what outsiders assume about the world you study may be limited, mistaken or wrong” (p. 14). During my five days of field work I had the opportunity to observe them in different situations and settings: breakfast, coffee and lunch breaks during the meeting, dinners, cafés, and social gatherings. I was keeping notes on any interactions, conversations, incidents, I perceived as critical.

In settings outside the project meeting situation I had the chance to discuss with them, observe how they interact in social settings, how they discuss, how they speak to each other. Keeping field notes during these occasions was a difficult and tricky thing. I did not want to interrupt the unofficially and friendly atmosphere by having a notebook and keeping notes because this

would make them uncomfortable and distance me from them. My mobile phone enabled me to keep short notes and simultaneously not ruining the relaxing atmosphere. When I returned in my room I was making more detailed notes of my observation, impressions, and ideas.

5.2.1.3 Participating as observer in the project meeting

The project meeting lasted two days. The first day, the meeting began with the self-presentation of each member to the rest group. They stated their name, the institution-partner they represented, their role in the project and some of them mentioned their nationality. I introduced myself and my role briefly. I ensured them about the anonymity both of the project and their own, and thanked them for allowing me to participate as observer in their meeting. I asked them, additionally, if I could tape-recorded their group discussion during the project meeting, and they agreed. Later, in an informal talk with the coordinator of the project, he commented that he liked my discrete introduction and that I did not involved in their meeting but remain as invisible as possible.

During the meeting and breaks some members were taking photos and I got access to these photos too. During the breaks most of the group members were leaving the meeting room to get some fresh air or to smoke, while other remained in the room having unofficial conversations. During the breaks I recorded a project-related discussion of three members, but usually I was keeping short notes of my observations during the breaks because I understood that the members did not feel comfortable with me recording their discussions during breaks. Finally, although I was participating in the group meeting as an observer, at some cases they invited me to participate in some of their activities related with the project, for example to test their online platform like the group members did.

5.2.1.4 Recording natural occurring data of group discussion

Tape-recording their group meeting was an unexpected and very welcomed method for gathering natural occurring data. The tape-recording offered me the possibility to draw my attention away for what people were saying, and also keep notes on the way members were speaking and discussing, facial expressions, what members were doing when another member was speaking or presenting, and other processual aspects. Another great advantage of tape recording was the type of data: a naturally occurring group conversation of seven hours. Jonsen et al. (2011) reviewed the workforce diversity literature and commented that what

characterizes most diversity research is the “artificially constructed research settings that cannot address a variety of cultural contexts” (p. 35). While most studies use focus groups (i.e. groups that the researchers themselves create and guide the group conversation), I had naturally occurring data from a group conversation in a natural working setting without any intervention from my side in the production of these data.

Participant observation and field work are the primary methods for data collection in the study. Both are appropriate methods for the study since they offer the possibility to “gather first-hand information about social processes in a naturally occurring context” (Silverman, 2005, p. 113) such as the group meeting. As I discussed in chapter 3 of thesis, the diversity of a workgroup is not a concept with fixed meaning and content – it cannot be identified by the researcher from an *a priori* direction. Diversity is a group phenomenon that can be understood from an *a posteriori* direction. The researcher should try to understand how the group members actively construct the diversity of their group. Field work and participant observation – along with tape-recording the natural occurring group conversation – is particularly suitable methods because they offer rich insights in the processes of diversity construction in a real, working setting.

After entering the field and gaining data such as the natural occurring group conversation, I decided to focus the inquiry of my study on how group members perceive and construct their group diversity during this specific group meeting. My research inquiry after entering the field became:

How group members construct their diversity during their group meeting and how diversity is entering in the project group’s life?

5.2.2 Interviews

Interviewing – and particularly the semi-structured technique – is the most widely used method in social sciences (Silverman, 2010). The use of interviews in a grounded theory approach is an appropriate and suitable method for data collection (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2002; Silverman, 2010) and complements other methods such as participant observation. As Charmaz (2006) points out “interviewing is suitable for a grounded theory approach since both grounded theory and interviewing are open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted” (p. 28).

I decided to include the technique of semi-structure interviews in the design of the study in order to gain deep understanding of group members’ ideas, perceptions, and meanings.

Following a more constructivist approach on interviewing (Charmaz, 2006), during the interviews I gave emphasis on how the group members perceive, define, and sense-make events, situations, accounts, actions.

5.2.2.1 Designing the interview

Prior to entering the field, I designed a semi-structured interview guide with few, broad and open-ended questions that would enable the group members to offer their own perspectives, but also allow unexpected accounts and stories to emerge (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002).

I avoided to impose preconceived concepts in my questions or to use questions that can be answered with a “yes” or a “no”, but rather use questions starting with “tell me about”, “how”, and “what”, so that could help the group members to elaborate on their ideas and meanings. Prior to the interviewing process I also prepared probes – such as “it’s interesting, tell me more about it” – that would facilitate group members to elaborate further on their meanings. The purpose of pre-preparing such probes was to enhance my concentration during the interviews and to reduce distraction or frustration – thinking “what to ask next and how to ask it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29-30).

The initial interview guide addressed broad topics such as group members’ perceptions of their differences and similarities, their perceptions and meanings of diversity, the role of diversity in EU funded projects, their role in the project group, how the project was created, their views about the project and their collaboration between the partners, any critical incidents they remember. The complete interview protocol is available in Appendix I. After observing their group meeting, however, I became familiar with group members’ terms, language, meanings, and used them to inform the interview guide. I also asked them about their understanding and perceptions on specific events that took place during the group meeting.

5.2.2.2 The interviewing process

Before each interview I ensured group members for anonymity, confidentiality and also provided them with the opportunity to make any questions. Finally, I asked – and all group members agreed – if I could digitally record their interview. During interviews I also took notes but I was stopping whenever I felt that note-taking was distracting either me or the participant. The interviews were conducted in two languages; in Greek with the two Greek

members and in English with the rest. The interviews typically lasted between 50 minutes to one hour and a quarter. After each interview I kept a sort record about the interviewing experience with each member, ideas, impressions, and incidents that emerged during the interview.

During the interview, the interview guide was flexible and not fixed. As Charmaz (2006) writes, “interviewing is a flexible, emergent technique; ideas and issues emerge during the interview and interviewers can immediately pursue these leads” (p. 29). Although I used the same interview guide, all interviews are not the same because I was revising the interview guide throughout the interviewing process. As Holstein and Gubrium (2004) note interviewing is an active process in practice (p. 140). I removed questions that appear not to be useful and added new questions, depending on the emergent ideas from the previous interviews.

5.2.2.3 The interviewing time-schedule

The interviews took place after the group meeting was over, at the second day of the project meeting. The project group meetings are characterized by tight schedule, time pressure, full agenda, and lack of free time. The project meeting overall lasted two days. Each day the meeting started early in the morning and lasted until late in the afternoon. At the end of the first day of the group meeting all the group members met for dinner. After the end of the second day of the group meeting, some members remained in the city while others returned to their home-countries.

The available time, therefore, for conducting the interviews with the group members was scarce. The interviewing schedule was dictated by the availability of the group members. Due to the lack of time and the busy travel schedules of the group members –leaving immediately after the project meeting was over – I was not able to interview all the members immediately at Chania. I interviewed 6 group members at the project meeting at Chania and 5 members at the period after the project meeting at Chania.

Concerning the interviews conducted at Chania, I conducted four interviews at the café place of the institute where the group meeting was held, one interview in the veranda of a member’s hotel room, and one interview in a group member’s office. All interviews were individuals, except from two Polish members who suggested interviewing them together during their breakfast the last day before leaving.

Concerning the remained members with whom interviews were conducted after the project meeting at Chania, one member agreed to give me an interview in Athens (where he lives), so I travelled there to have a face-to face interview in a settled date and time by him. Regarding the rest three members, they lived in different countries and travelling to their countries for interviewing was not financially affordable. Due to the geographic and financial constraints, therefore, we agreed to conduct the interviews through skype. Although, interviewing through skype does not provide the same feeling of the face-to-face interview, yet was the only solution. Table 5.2 outlines the time and the type of interviewing with each member.

Table 5.2 Time and type of interview

Group member	Time period	Type of interview
Camelia	May 2009	Face-to-face
Margit	May 2009	Face-to-face
Teresa & Irena	May 2009	Face-to-face
Lajos	May 2009	Face-to-face
Dimitrios	May 2009	Face-to-face
Mary	May 2009	Face-to-face
	November 2009	Face-to-face
Michalis	August 2009	Face-to-face
Klaus	September 2009	Face-to-face
Martin	May 2009	Face-to-face
	November 2009	Skype
Marku	November 2009	Skype

During and after the transcription of each interview I engaged in self-reflection about the type of questions and the way I posed them. I tried to be aware of any potential assumptions and perspectives I might imported in the interview questions. I also double checked the transcriptions for accuracy by hearing the recorded interviews and reading the transcriptions.

5.2.3 Documents

Before entering the field I had collected documents related to the project such as sources from the official website of the project, reports and profiles of each institutional partner from the partners' websites. I also collected reports and documents regarding the EU-funded projects. *After entering the field* I collected documents such as the proposal of the project, minutes of the meeting, presentations of the group members, and any other document that was distributed during the project meeting.

Chapter 6 Data analysis procedures

6.1 Introduction

This section describes the data analysis process and the methods used in the analysis. First, I outline the methods employed in the data analysis (narrative and constant comparison) and how I combine them later during the data analysis process. Then, I detail the process of analyzing the data that consists from 4 phases:

- a) A thematic approach to narrative analysis,
- b) A performance approach to narrative analysis,
- c) A comparison of the thematic and performance narrative analysis,
- d) Theoretical development.

6.2 Methods of data analysis

The aim of the study is to understand how the members of an EU-funded project group understand and construct their group diversity. The analysis included data in three main forms: a) transcripts of the tape-recorded interviews and the discussions of the group meeting (naturally occurring data); b) fieldnotes, and c) documents. I employed two methods for analyzing the data and exploring the aim of the study: narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) and constant comparison of the constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

6.2.1 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis is a general term for “a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form” (Riessman, 1993, p. 1) and has gained an increasing recognition in organisational research (Czamiawska, 1998; Boje, 2001, 2002). Narrative analysis enables “a holistic approach to discourse that preserves context and particularity” (Smith, 2000, p.327). In narrative analysis, scholars analyze the stories and narratives that people tell, focusing on peoples’ experience and meanings (Riessman, 1993). According to McAdams (1993) “stories are less about facts and more about meanings” (p. 28). Gabriel (2000) similarly notes that “the truth of a story lies not in the facts, but in the meaning” (p. 4). Byatt (2000) emphasizes the importance of stories and narratives in peoples’ life arguing that narration “is as much part of the human nature as breath and the circulation of the blood” (p.

21). McAdams (1993) similarly points out that “human beings are storytellers by nature [...] The story is a natural package for organizing many different kinds of information. Storytelling appears to be a fundamental way of expressing ourselves and our world to others” (p. 27). Narration is present in everyday peoples’ life both in home and in workplace, in “every age, in every place, in every society” (Barthes, 1977, p. 79). Scholars use the term “narrative” often as synonymous of the term “story” (Riessman, 2008). Georgakopoulou (2006) refers to narratives as small stories, such as the example offered in Chappell et al. (2003) “we teach and they learn” (p. 45). Other scholars suggest that “narrative” and “story” have different meanings (e.g. Genette, 1980; Gabriel, 2000; Riessman, 2008). They argue that a story has a distinct start and end, whereas narratives connect events in a temporal causal way (Riessman, 1993, 2008). Riessman (2008), who argues in favour of a distinction between stories and narrative, describes what a narrative is and how it functions: “In everyday oral storytelling, a speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story. Events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience” (Riessman, 2008, p. 3)

Riessman (2008) identifies four methods for doing narrative analysis: thematic, structural, dialogic or performance, and visual. The *thematic* analysis focuses on the content – the “*what*” is said, whereas the *structural* analysis focuses on “*how*” the speaker organizes the content. The *dialogic or performance* combines aspects of thematic and structural, but also addresses the context and focus on what people achieve through their narrative. Finally, the *visual* analysis is not constrained only in the analysis of written and spoken words but also considers other types of communication, such as images, body movements and gestures.

In this study I employ the *thematic* and *performance* narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). The narrative analysis is particularly appropriate and suited for the exploration of diversity construction, which is the aim of the study; the focus of the study is on members’ meanings and perceptions about their group differentiation and the method of narrative analysis focuses on “subjective meaning-making, social processes and the interpenetration of these in the construction of personal narratives around breaches between individuals and their social contexts” (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 9).

6.2.2 The constant comparison analysis

The second method I employ in the data analysis process is the constant comparative method of the constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). The constant comparison analysis involves the constant examination of the data looking for similarities, contrasts, variations within the data (Glaser, 2001) and the emergence of patterns. In grounded theory data analysis is based on coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2005) describes coding as the “analytical scaffolding” that enables the researcher to “build [...] theory” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 517.) Coding is “the process of “attach[ing] labels [called codes] to segments of data that depict what each segment is about” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 3). These segments of data can be words, sentences, or entire paragraphs (Miles and Huberman, 1994). “Coding distils data, sorts them, and gives [the researcher] ... a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 3). The data analysis in constructivist grounded theory consists of three iterative steps: 1) the initial or open coding, 2) the focused coding, and 3) theoretical coding.

Initial or *open* coding is the first stage of data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher attaches labels (i.e. codes) to segments of the data. These labels are provisional, not fixed, and can be revised later (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) suggests to “code data *as* actions” (p. 48, original emphasis) and to create “short, simple, active and analytic” codes (p. 50).

Focused coding is the next phase, although “moving to focused coding is not entirely a linear process” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 58). In focused coding the researcher decides “which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize [the] ... data incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). The researcher analyzes the initial codes and creates categories into which initial codes are grouped. These categories – called analytical or conceptual categories – assist the later theoretical development. “Categories explicate ideas, events or processes in [the] ... data – and so in telling words. A category may subsume common themes and patterns in several codes (Charmaz, 2008, p. 98). Charmaz (2008) advises to “make [...] categories as conceptual as possible” while “simultaneously, remain consistent with [the] ... data” (p. 98).

The third phase is *theoretical coding* and has a central role in theory building in grounded theory. In focused coding, the researcher analyzes the analytical or conceptual categories (created during focused coding) and identifies potential relationships between them (Charmaz, 2006). Theoretical codes are one or more core categories and facilitate the researcher to “tell an analytical story that has coherence. Hence, these codes not only conceptualize how [the] ... substantive codes are related, but also move [the] ... analytic

story in a theoretical direction” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). In grounded theory studies, theoretical coding typically enlightens a new round of data gathering, reflecting the circular relation between the data analysis and data collection (Charmaz, 2005). The present study, however, as it is already explained in the previous chapter, does not include a second wave of data collection. The theoretical coding, thus, in this study is not linked with gathering data.

The whole coding process in constructionist grounded research could be summarized as follows: First, the researcher creates labels (referred to as codes) that “best capture what [...] happening in [the] ... data” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 98). Then, the researcher groups together these initial codes in analytical or conceptual categories “giv[ing] them conceptual definition and analytical treatment” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 98). In this way, the researcher goes “beyond using a code as a descriptive to view and synthesize data” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 98). Finally, the researcher moves from the analytical categories and the analytical framework to develop a “more abstract theoretical framework” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 98). Thus, through initial, focused, and theoretical coding, the analysis moves from the ground (i.e. the data) to a higher theoretical level and the creation of a theory. Table 6.1 outlines the three coding phases in grounded theory, the produced codes of each phase, and explains what each code includes.

Table 6.1 The coding process in constructionist grounded theory

Coding phase	Produced codes	What codes include	
Initial	Initial codes or <i>Codes</i>	Segments of raw data	Moving from data
↓	↓	↓	
Focused	Focused codes or <i>Analytical or conceptual categories</i>	Multiple initial codes	to
↓	↓	↓	↓
Theoretical	Theoretical codes or <i>Core categories</i>	Conceptual categories	theoretical development

6.2.3 Memo writing

Memo writing is another important part of the research process in grounded theory (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Memos may have the form either of text or diagrams. Charmaz (2006) refers to memos as the researcher’s “informal analytical notes” (p. 72) during the research process: the researcher analyzes any emerging ideas about data, codes, categories. In a sense,

memos “reflect the researcher’s internal dialogue with the data at a point in time” (McCann and Clark, 2003, p. 15). Charmaz (2006) distinguishes between early and advanced memos. She argues that writing memos facilitate the research to raise focused codes into abstract categories, and further to identify relationships between the data.

6.2.4 Combining the narrative and constant comparison methods in analyzing the data

I combine narrative and constant comparison in each of the four phases of the analysis. The main method of analyzing the data is narrative and the constant comparison complements data analysis by structuring this process of analysis. Narrative and constant comparison methods differentiate in their coding processes. In grounded theory coding is word-by-word and line-by-line, whereas in narrative analysis coding does not involve coding “segments of narratives” but “keep the ‘story’ intact for interpretive purposes” (Reissman, 2008, p.74). In the study, I employed the three coding phases of constant comparison (initial, focused, theoretical) but coded the narratives following the recommendation of Reissman (2008).

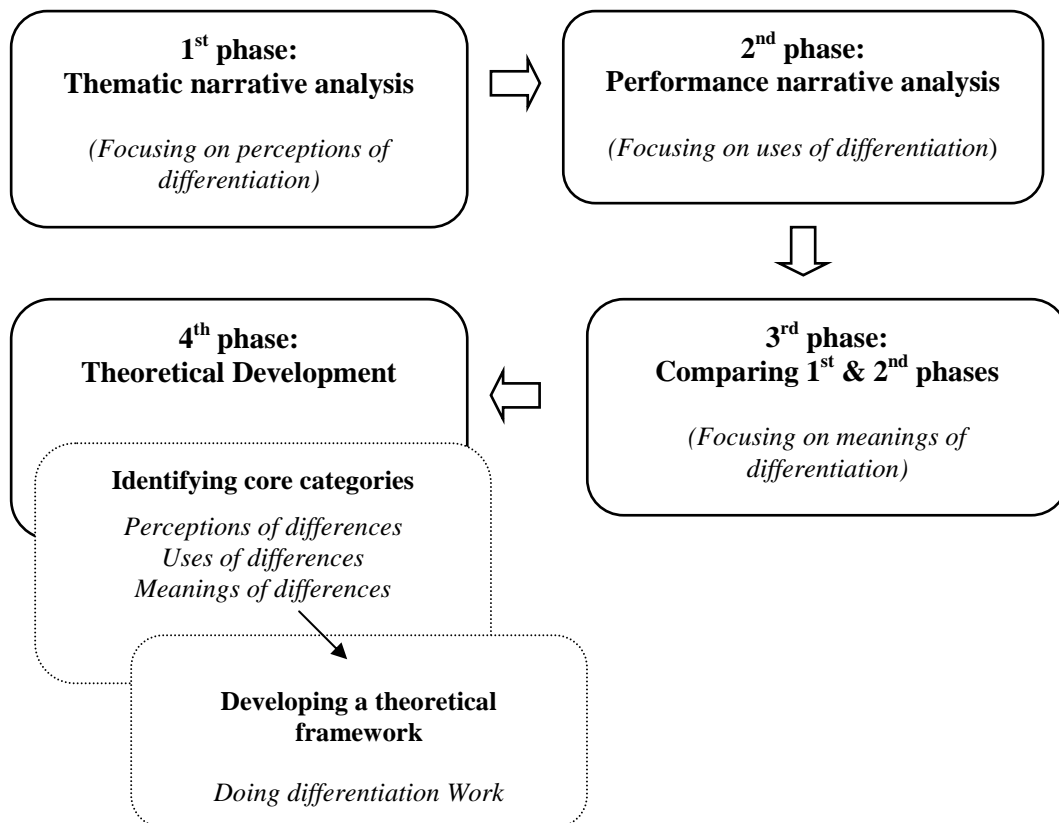
6.3 Analyzing the data

Initially I transcribed the interviews and the group discussion of the project meeting in a high level of detail. When the transcription was completed, I checked the transcripts for accuracy while listening to the audio-tapes. Before starting the data analysis, I read and re-read the transcripts while listening to the audio files in order to gain familiarization with my data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Simultaneously I was writing down in a memo my thoughts, initial ideas and insights about the data. I also repeated the step of listening the audio-tapes and reading the transcripts during the analysis of the data.

The data analysis was an emergent, iterative process and consisted from 4 phases. At the first phase I followed a *thematic* approach to *narrative analysis* focusing on members’ *perceptions* about their group differentiation. In the second phase, I employed a *dialogic or performance* approach to *narrative analysis* focusing on how members *use* their perceived categories that were identified in the first phase. In the third phase, I *compared* the findings of the *first and second phase* (thematic and performance approaches to narrative analysis respectively) focusing on the *meanings* that members create for their differentiation. Finally, at the fourth phase I moved from the core categories towards to theoretical development and attempted to create an abstract theoretical framework regarding diversity construction in an EU-funded

project group. Figure 6.1 outlines the four phases of the data analysis. Each of the four phases has several steps which are described next.

Figure 6.1: The four phases of the data analysis process



Phase 1: A thematic approach to narrative analysis

The first phase in data analysis includes a *thematic approach to narrative analysis* (Riessman, 2003) in which the emphasis is “on the content of the data” – in “what was said” (Riessman, 2003, p. 2). I start my analysis focusing on the content of narratives and specifically on members’ *perceptions* regarding their differentiation. The research questions guiding me in the first stage of analysis were:

- How the group members perceive their self and others as different?
- What types of categories of differences do they perceive as salient and how do they construct these categories of differences?

This first phase of the thematic narrative analysis of members' narratives involves four steps: (a) open coding, (b) creation of analytical or conceptual categories, (c) comparison across and within each category and with extant research and theory, and finally (d) writing a report on the findings of this phase. I detail these four steps in the next sections.

Step 1.1: Initial or Open coding in phase 1

Initially, I did an open coding across the entire data and identified the narratives regarding members' perceptions of their differentiation in the group. I looked, for example, on the members' perceptions of their self and others, perceived differences and similarities among them, members' views for the project and their cooperation. Table X offers an example of open coding.

Table 6.2 Example of initial or open coding for phase 1

Narratives	Codes
Για τις ανατολικές χώρες υπάρχει γενικά η εικόνα ότι ακόμα δεν δουλεύουν με τον τρόπο τον οποίο ας πούμε δουλεύουν οι χώρες της Κεντρικής Ευρώπης. Όπως και για εμάς υπάρχει η αίσθηση ότι είμαστε λίγο πιο πίσω, πιο χαλαροί με τα deadlines και αυτά... λιγότερο professional (Michalis's	East countries work differently than West
I think there is not very much difference from Romania and Greece. For example, Yannis' approach to <i>let's do this</i> , to me seems very natural. So they were asking who is going to do this task and I said 'I am going to do it'. It is just 15 pages and this is my personal reaction to that too; when in northern countries perspective or in western Europe, for example, Austrians and Germans, are approaching the thing, <i>'15 pages it is not included in the budget, I don't have people to do that, I am not spending extra one hour of my working time to do it for free'</i> . This is working culture. We [Souths] are doing like, <i>'it is not a big deal, come on, we are doing it'</i> . My first question in my mind is not if I am getting paid, my first reaction is <i>'let's do it, let's make it work'</i>	Norther/Western countries work differently than Romanian & Greece
For example, in Finland's case we have German coordinators, so we can't exactly speak what is the national Finnish influence in this. We are quite mixed, so also Mary has a lot of US background and this makes her not very Greek one. And also Michalis has a lot of influence from... he was born as far as I know in Canada. [...] we are... quite mixed in this project and also other partners, including me. I am not sure I am fully Estonian by my accent and by my character.	"we are quite mixed"
Yeah well... actually professional culture is obvious to me. Because there is strong difference between the academics in the group and the people that are working for the companies, non-academics so... <i>Me: Academic are...</i> -Like working in the universities [...] and is certainly like... There is a difference between... Well, I'll give an example. This literature review that we're working on? I think a lot of the academics are like 'Oh, this is a big... Literature review is a big, you know, thing and it has to be... You have to make sure you have references that are relevant' [...] They just like the Polish reaction 'Oh, that so much work and blablabla' and I think from the Romanians was more like 'We don't quite understand what it is that you want' and then... they were like 'Oh, so it's pragmatic' you know... 'So it's not that you are looking for us to do research that is not relevant', you know. They automatically saw this pragmatic and sort of simple....	Distinguishing between academics and non-academics

Step 1.2 Focused coding in phase 1: creating conceptual categories

After the open coding I proceeded in focused coding. I grouped several initial codes together creating analytical or conceptual categories, such as “*constructing national diversity*”. Table 6.3 gives an example of focused coding.

Table 6.3 Example of focused coding for phase 1

Codes	Analytical or conceptual categories
Romanians are not very different from the Greeks, but very different from Northern/Western Europe	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 20px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> <i>constructing national diversity</i> </div>
Northern/Western countries work differently than Romania & Greece	
Dis-identifying with ethnicity and defining self as North	
“Northern” people don’t need reminders but they are not easy to communicate with	
“The Finish guy is German”	
“North” are more strict than people in “Southern” Europe	
Constructing German stereotypes as efficient, professionals	
“we are quite mixed”	
“East” people work differently than the “West” people	
Finish and Estonians have the same behaviour and culture	

Step 1.3: Comparing across - within categories with existing theory in phase 1

The third step of analyzing members’ perceptions for their differentiation involves two iterative steps: the comparison a) *within* and b) *across* categories that were both created during focused coding (step 1.2). During this across and within category comparison, I also compared my data with extant research and theories such as self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Turner, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979), theorization on identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001; Alvesson et al., 2008; Watson, 2007; Ybema et al, 2009).

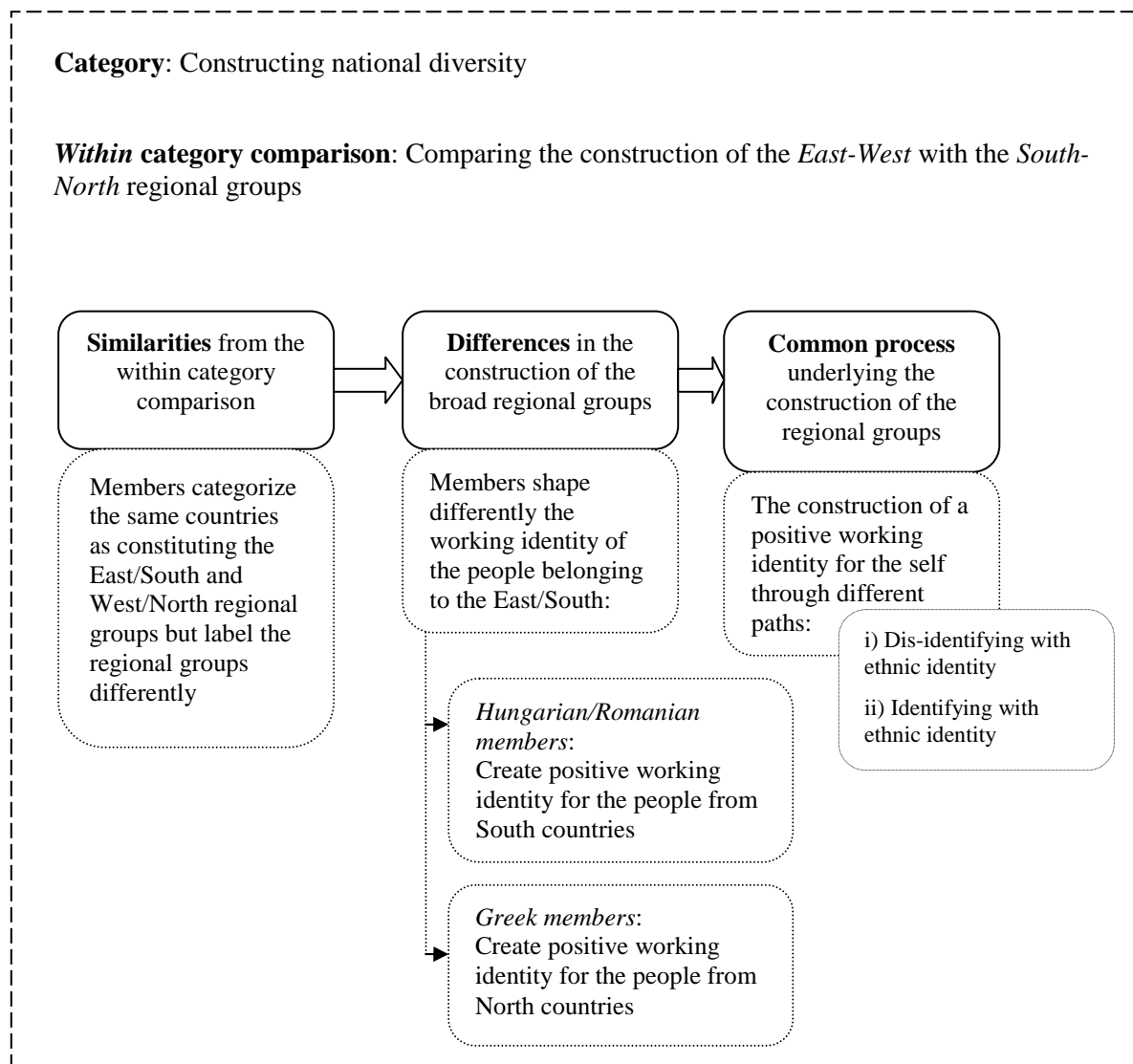
Step 1.3.1: The within category comparison in phase 1

First, I conducted a comparison within the conceptual or analytical categories to identify similarities, differences, and patterns that may emerge. I looked how members construct each

of the emerged categories of difference allowing within variation to emerge (“deviant” responses).

For example, in the case of the conceptual category “*constructing national diversity*” I saw that the Greek, Romanian, and Hungarian members construct their national diversity in terms of broad regional groups. I looked further how each member constructed these regional groups and how defined her/himself in relation to these regional groups. This within category comparison enabled me to identify the variation and heterogeneity existing in the “National Diversity” category but also to see the common processes underlying the diversity construction. I have also drawn on existing research and theories to compare my data and help me to interpret them. Figure 6.2 outlines an example of a within category comparison in the category of “*constructing national diversity*”. The same steps were repeated for the categories “*constructing professional diversity*” and “*constructing expertise diversity*”, thus enabling the heterogeneity of each category to emerge.

Figure 6.2: An example of *within* category comparison in the category “*constructing national diversity*” for phase 1

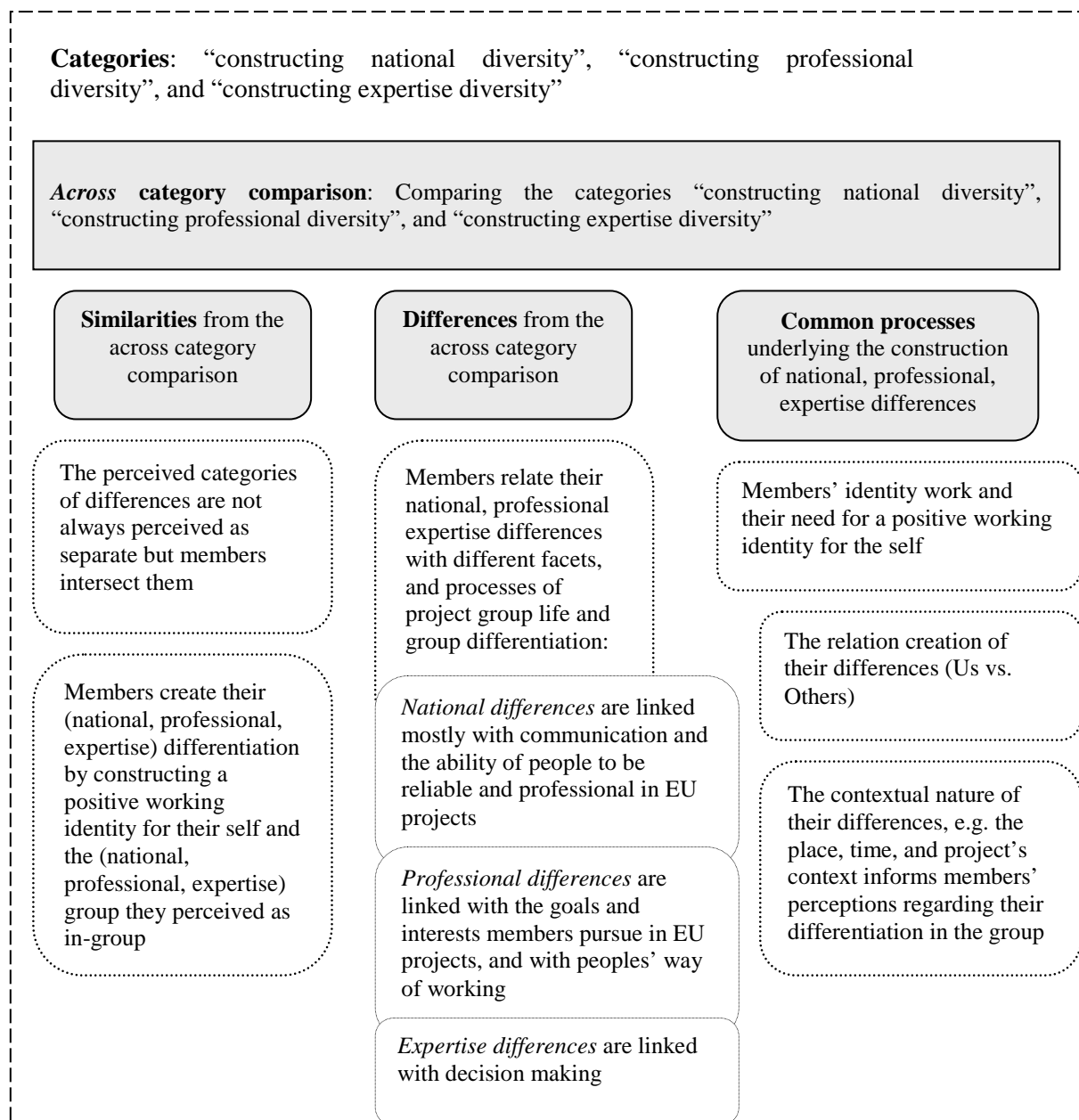


Step 1.3.2: The across category comparison in phase 1

After I completed the within category comparison I proceed to compare across the conceptual categories in order to see which are the themes and patterns that emerge. I have also drawn on existing research and theories to compare my data and help me to interpret them. Figure 6.3 outlines an example of an across category comparison. The research questions guiding me at this step were:

- Which are the relationships between the emerged categories of differences? What patterns emerge?
- Under which circumstances members perceive the one or the other category of difference as salient?

Figure 6.3 An example of comparison across categories between the categories “*constructing national diversity*”, “*constructing professional diversity*”, and “*constructing expertise diversity*” for phase 1



Step 1.4: Writing a report on findings from phase 1

The last step of the first phase was to write a report regarding the findings of the thematic approach to narrative analysis, referring to members' perceptions regarding their differentiation.

Phase 2: A performance approach to narrative analysis

After the exploration of members' perceptions about their group differentiation I proceed in the second phase employing a performance approach to narrative analysis and focusing on what members achieve through their narratives. According to Chase (2005) narratives are produced for particular purposes in a particular setting. People adjust their stories with the relational setting (Chase, 2005) and "argue with stories" (Riessman, 2008, p. 9) presenting their views and challenging others. Analyzing narratives through the lens of a performance approach enables the researcher to explore and understand the discursive recourses that people use to shape their narratives and why they tell the stories the way they do (Riessman, 2008).

I employ the performance narrative analysis to look across the data focusing on how members *used* their perceived categories of differences as a discursive resource. This second phase of analysis, involves the same steps as in the first phase: (a) initial coding, (b) creation of conceptual categories, (c) comparison across and within category comparison and with the literature review, and (d) a report regarding the findings of the performance approach to narrative analysis.

Step 2.1: Open coding in phase 2

Initially, I read again all the data trying to identify narratives on which members used the three perceived differences and the intersection of their differences as a discursive resource. I drew on common narratives to create initial codes and categories (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Example of initial coding for phase 2

Narrative	Initial coding
So, we see evaluation as a kind of a service that we try to work together and evaluate our own world. And we can't do that on our own <i>because you are the experts for the language learning</i> [my emphasis]	Using expertise of others to justify request
Έχει να κάνει με το background και με τον οργανισμό στον οποίο δουλεύει ο κάθε ένας. Δηλαδή ο Εσθονός θέλει να δουλέψει όσο λιγότερο γίνεται και να αποδώσει η επένδυση που θα κάνει, εταιρεία. [...] Λογικό, λογικό είναι... Και ένα πανεπιστήμιο ούτως άλλως έχει κάποιους ανθρώπους που μπορούν να κάνουν κάποια πράγματα πιο χαλαρά, πιο οικονομικά. Το ενδιαφέρει και ερευνητικά να κάνει κάτι. Τον Εσθονό δεν το ενδιαφέρει η έρευνα. Τον Εσθονό τον ενδιαφέρει το προϊόν του, να προωθηθεί ένα προϊόν παραπάνω. Είναι διαφορετικές επιδιώξεις ανάλογα με το είδος του φορέα. Αυτό που λέγαμε και πριν... Αλλιώς θα το καταλάβει ο δήμαρχος και αλλιώς ο...	Business people want to work less and gain more

Step 2.2: Focused coding in phase 2: creating analytical or conceptual categories

After the open coding I proceeded in focused coding. I grouped several initial codes creating analytical or conceptual categories, such as “using expertise differences”. Table 6.5 gives an example of focused coding.

Table 6.5. Example of focused coding for phase 2

Codes	Analytical or conceptual categories
We have made thousands of exercises We are professionals in didactics – we know the quality standards Using expertise of others to justify request I'm not an expert, you are the experts	⇒ Using expertise differences

Step 2.3: Comparing across - within categories with existing theory in phase 1

The third step of analyzing how members use their differentiation involves the comparison in two iterative steps: a) *within* and b) *across* categories, that were created during the second step of focused coding. In this third step I also compared my data with extant research (e.g. Barinaga, 2007; Ailon-Souday and Kunda, 2003) and theories such as positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990).

Step 2.3.1: The within category comparison in phase 2

I conducted a comparison within the conceptual categories to identify similarities, differences, and patterns that may emerge. I looked how members *use* each of the emerged categories of difference, allowing any within variation to emerge.

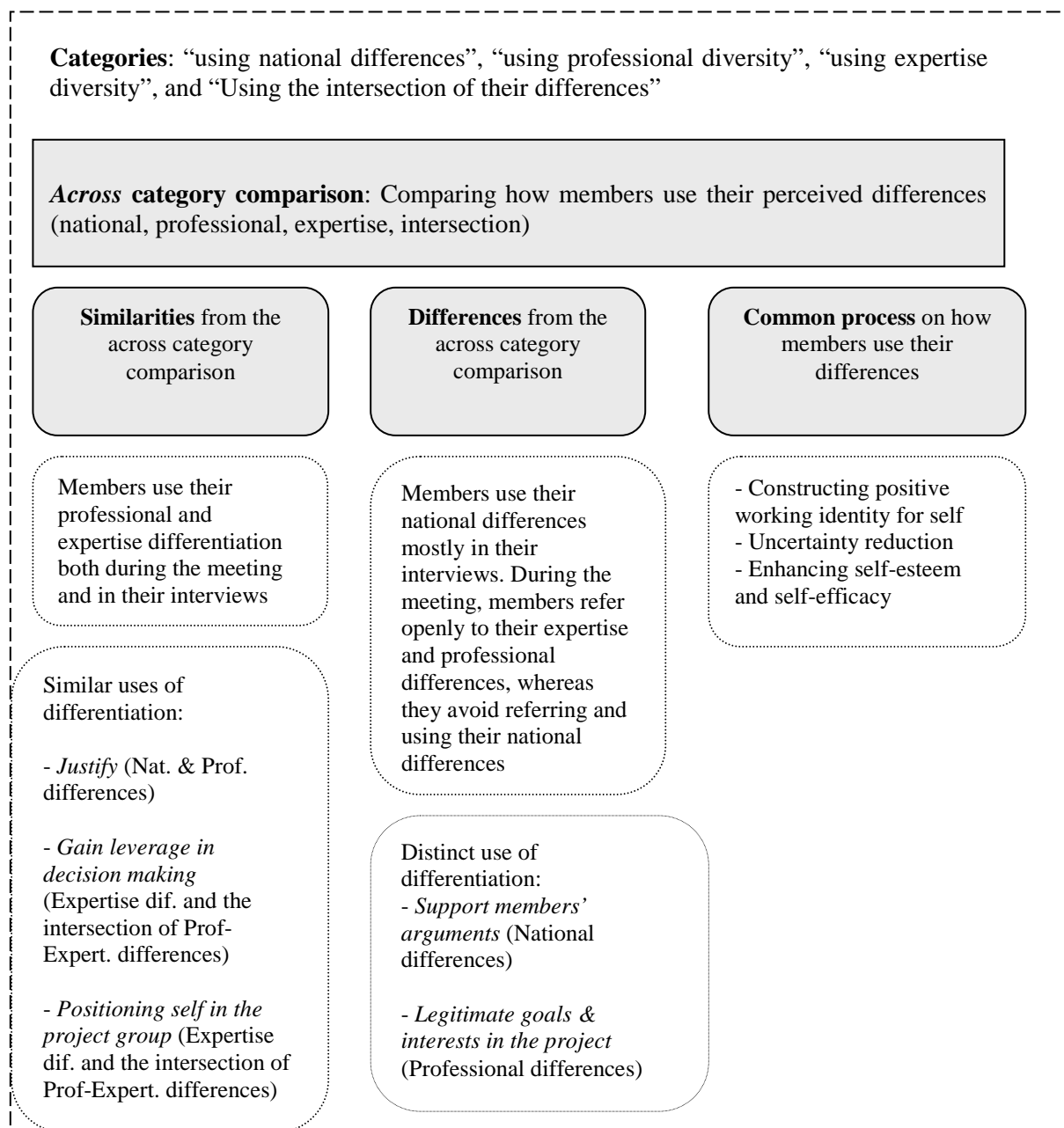
Step 2.3.2: The across category comparison in phase 2

After the within category comparison, I proceed in comparing the categories in order to see which are the themes and patterns that emerge. Figure 6.4 outlines the *across category* comparison. The question guiding me in this step was:

- Under which circumstances members use the one or the other category of difference?
What patterns emerge?

At this step I also compared my findings with existing research and theories. For example the way members use their differences to position themselves in the group resembles the concept of positioning by Davies and Harré (1990). A second example refers to the way members use their national difference to justify communicational problems. This use of their differentiation is similar with the findings of Barinaga (2007) who demonstrate how the members of the EU-funded project group used their national differences to justify their communicational problems in the group.

Figure 6.4. The across category comparison in phase 2



Step 2.4: Writing a report on findings from phase 2

The last step in the second phase of data analysis was to write a report on how members *use* their differences using their differentiation as a discursive resource.

Phase 3: Comparing the findings from *thematic* and *performance* approaches to narrative analysis

After I completed the *thematic* (first phase) and the *performance* (second phase) narrative analysis, I moved on to the comparison of the categories that emerged from the first two phases. In this third phase the focus was to identify the *meanings* that members created for their perceived differences within their narratives, either when members construct their perceived differentiation and/or when they use their perceived differentiation as a discursive resource.

Step 3.1. Looking for diversity meanings in members' perceptions of their differentiation

Initially I looked at the produced categories from the first phase (thematic narrative analysis) and analyzed them focusing on the *meanings* members created for their perceived differences. I looked what meanings members created for their national, professional and expertise differences but also for the intersection of their differences. I created initial categories such as “meanings ascribed to national differentiation”, “meanings ascribed to professional differentiation”, “meanings ascribed to expertise differentiation”, and “meanings ascribed to the intersection of their differences”.

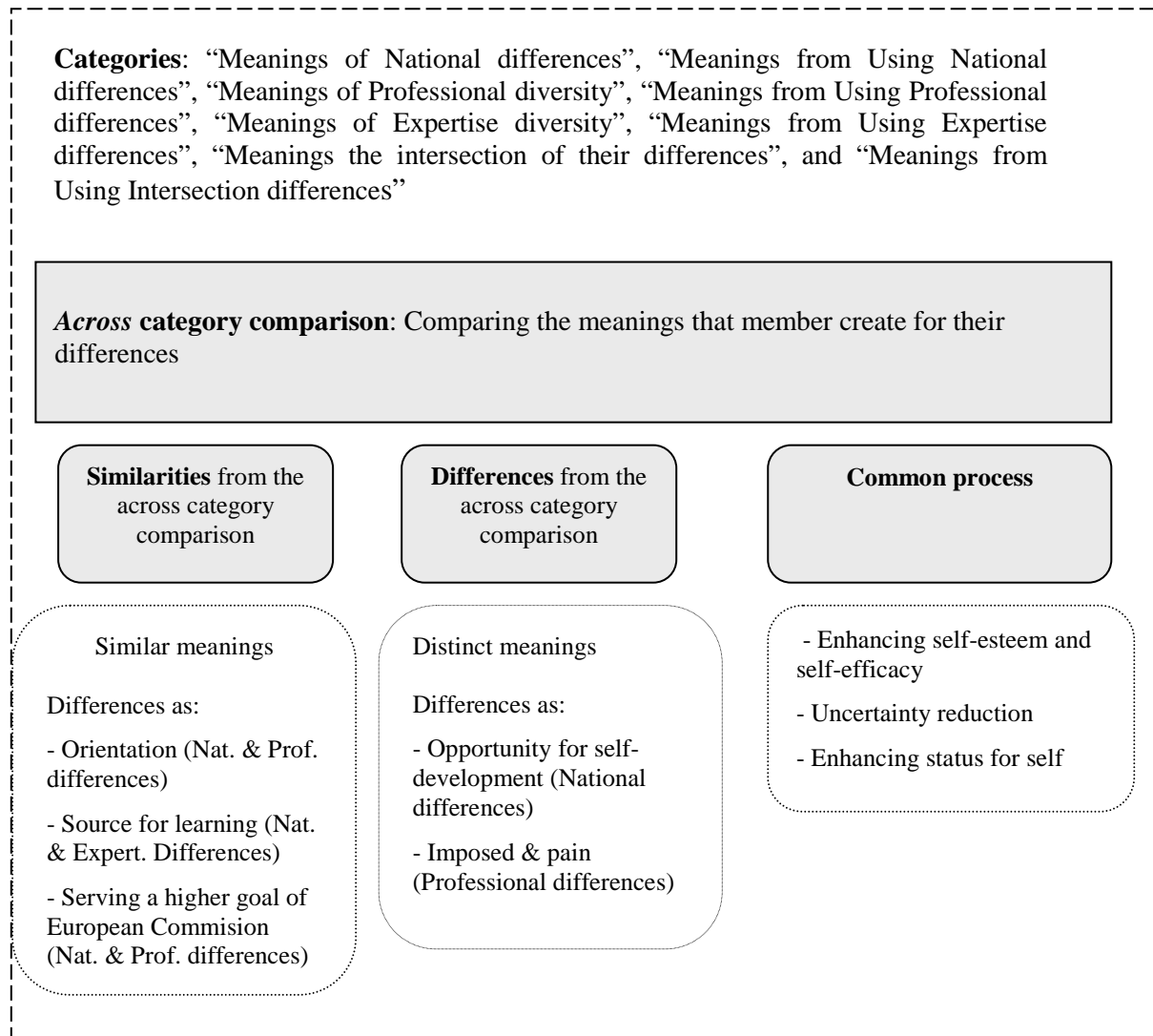
Step 3.2. Looking for diversity meanings in the discursive uses of members' differences

The second step was to look at the produced categories from the second phase (performance narrative analysis). I analyzed these categories focusing on the meanings that members created for their perceived differences while they use their differences. I created categories such as “meanings from using national differences”, “meanings from using expertise differences”, “meanings from using professional differences”, and “meanings from using intersection differences”

Step 3.3. The across category comparison in phase 3

The third step was to compare the categories produced from the previous two steps. I compared for example, the category “meanings ascribed to national differentiation” (produced in step 3.1) with the category “meanings from using national differences” (produced in step 3.2) and looked for similarities, contrasts, and patterns that may emerge concerning the meanings of national diversity. At this step I also compared the produced categories with extant research and theories. Figure 6.5 illustrates the result of the overall comparison between the categories produced at the first step 3.1 and those created at the second step 3.2.

Figure 6.5 Comparing the meanings that members create for their differentiation



Step 3.4 Writing a report on findings from phase 3

The last step of the third phase was to write a report on the findings regarding the *meanings* members created for their perceived differences within their narratives.

Phase 4: Theoretical Development

In the first three phases the analysis moved from the “ground” (i.e., the data) to the creation of analytical or conceptual categories. At the fourth phase the analysis proceeds from the analytical categories towards a higher and theoretical level, thus attempting to create a theoretical framework regarding the construction of diversity in an EU-funded project group.

The fourth phase consists from two main steps: (4.1) identifying the core categories, and (4.2) developing an abstract substantive theoretical framework. The second step, however, contains three sub-steps: (4.2.1) the creation of the terms “differentiation” and “differentiation work”, (4.2.2) the identification of the relationship between the core categories created at the (4.1) step, and last (4.2.3) moving towards the shaping of an abstract, substantive theoretical framework.

Step 4.1 Identifying the core categories

First I analyzed the conceptual categories created during the first three phases (thematic, performance narrative analysis, and the comparison of thematic with performance narrative analysis) and raised the conceptual categories in four core categories:

1. “Perceptions of differentiation”
2. “Uses of differentiation”
3. “Meanings of differentiation”
4. “Processes underlying diversity construction”

Step 4.2 Developing an abstract substantive theoretical framework.

I looked at the four core categories identified in the previous step (4.1) and asked myself:

- What my findings (these emerged categories) show about diversity and diversity construction?
- How these core categories interrelate?

I answered these questions in two iterative, non-linear steps (4.2.1 and 4.2.2) which are detailed in the next sections.

Step 4.2.1. Forming “differentiation” and introducing “differentiation work”

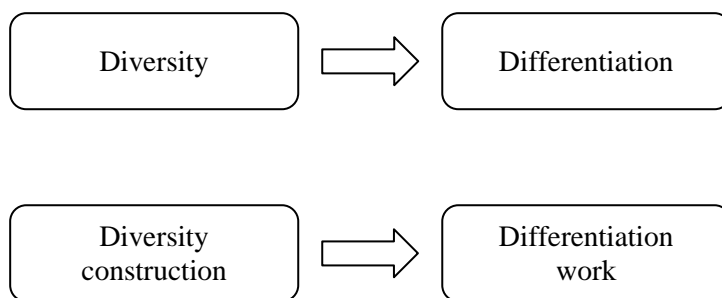
The first question I asked myself was what I learned from my data about diversity in a multicultural workgroup. The answer is that diversity is a highly dynamic concept and often I found myself using the term “differentiation” rather the term “diversity” that typically appears in the literature. In my understanding the term “diversity” denotes a more static sense, whereas the term “*differentiation*” can better depict the dynamic and shifting nature of members’ differences. This dynamic and shifting nature of members’ difference derives from the constructed nature of those differences. Members shifted their perceptions about *who* and

how someone was different from them and used their differences in several ways during their project life; members constantly constructed and re-constructed their differences. That constructed nature of members' differences lead us to the *process* of differentiation construction.

The findings from the first three phases of data analysis illustrate that the process of differentiation construction is complex, relational, contextual, and involves several processes such as members' identity work and the construction of a positive working identity for the self. I found the term "*work*" from the concept "identity work" to be inspirational since it aptly depicts the ongoing, dynamic, complex process of creation and re-creation of members' differentiation in the EU-funded project group. I coined, thus, the term "*differentiation work*" to describe the ongoing process of differentiation construction in the multicultural workgroup. To the best of my knowledge, the term *differentiation work* is not used as a specific term in diversity research, neither is defined as *an ongoing, complex process of forming and re-constructing people's perceptions, meanings, and uses of their differentiation*.

To summarize this step, the first question I asked myself regarding what my findings say about diversity, along with the comparison of my data with extant research and theories, lead me to view *diversity* and *diversity construction* as *differentiation* and *differentiation work* (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6. Differentiation and differentiation work



Step 4.2.2. Identifying the relationships between "Perceptions", "Meanings", "Uses", and "Processes underlying diversity construction"

The second question I asked myself was how the core categories "Perceptions", "Meanings", "Uses", and "Processes underlying diversity construction" (created in the step 4.1) are interrelated. While I was trying to connect the core categories I realized that during my

analysis unconsciously I focused on perceptions, meanings, and uses of members' perceived differences that were partly influenced by the ontological assumptions of social constructionism. Social constructionism views social world (and social phenomena such as diversity) as a socially constructed concept (Gergen, 1985; Giddens, 1974) and its construction partly lies in peoples' perceptions, actions and meanings (Giddens, 1974; Geertz, 1973; Gergen, 1985, 1994, 2006). This conceptualization helped to identify the relationship between the four core categories.

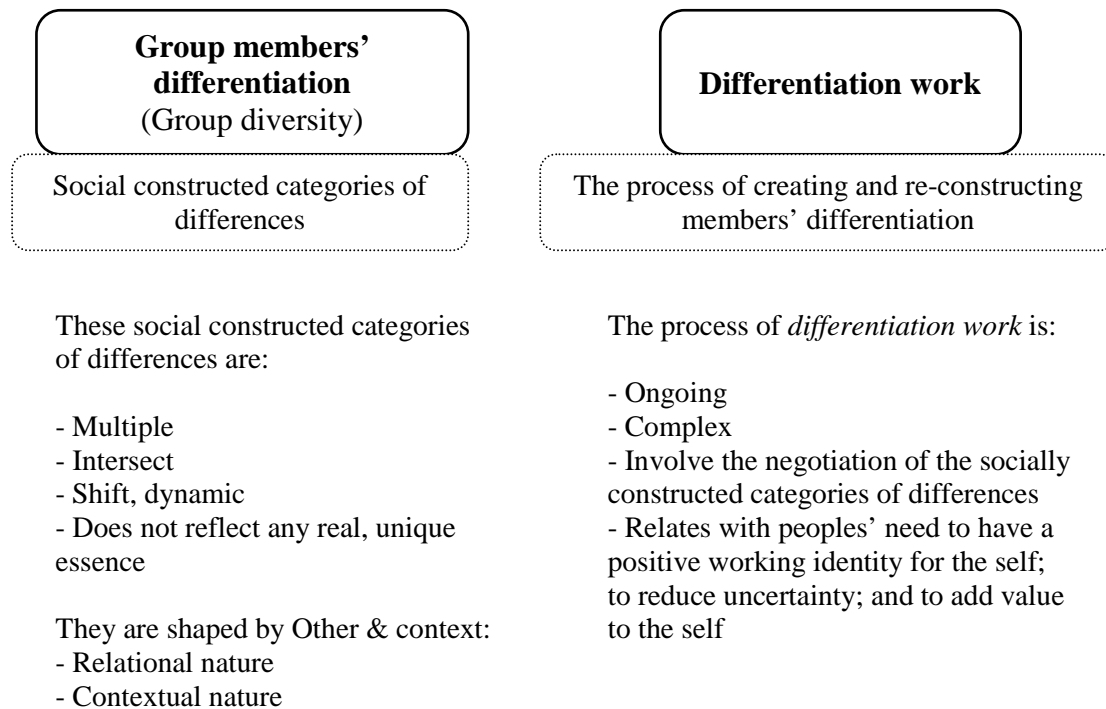
Group diversity or group differentiation is a social construct, and as such its construction is not constrained in peoples' *perceptions*. Group diversity or group differentiation can be better understood through the simultaneous examination of how people *use* that construct and what *meanings* they create for it. Thus, the perceptions, uses, and meanings that members create for their differences are inter-related facets of their group diversity.

Step 4.2.3. Towards the shaping of an abstract, substantive theoretical framework

In the two previous steps (4.2.1 and 4.2.2) I clarified what my findings say about diversity construction and identified the relationships between the core categories. These two steps were important because they facilitated my attempt to articulate an abstract, substantive theoretical framework. Figure 6.7 illustrates the interpretation of the findings and outlines the main theoretical terms (differentiation and differentiation work) derived from the data analysis.

To summarize, in my understanding *differentiation* can be better understood as a multi-faceted, dynamic, complex construct partly consisting of members' perceptions, uses, and meanings of their group differences. *Differentiation work* refers to the ongoing, complex process of construction and re-shaping of members differentiation and serves peoples' need to have a positive working identity for their self, to reduce uncertainty, and to add value to the self.

Figure 6.7. The concepts of “differentiation” and “differentiation work”



6.4 Reflexivity

An important feature of qualitative research is “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Guba and Lincoln, 2005, p. 210) that is called *reflexivity*. Reflexivity plays an important role in the constructivist grounded theory approach since this approach views the researcher not as an objective or neutral observer but as part of the world that studies (Charmaz, 2005). The constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher – the researcher co-constructs reality with the people who participate in the study (Charmaz, 2006) – and encourages the researcher to reflect on the effects she/he might bring in the study (Neill, 2006). According to Etherington (2006) the researcher even by “simply [...] being there [...] influences the research that is being carried out” (p. 77).

6.4.1. My self-reflection

My reflexivity starts with the understanding of my assumptions and values that I bring in the research process. In the introduction of the thesis (chapter 1), I reflected on how my ontological and epistemological assumptions influenced the way I view the phenomenon

under study (i.e., workgroup diversity) and how I categorized diversity literature. The section 2.1.2 in chapter 2 of thesis includes a brief self-reflection concerning the role and use of extant knowledge in grounded theory studies, and more specifically how my previous knowledge of extant research and theories on diversity and identity might influence the study. Initially I was concerned regarding how group members might feel about the presence of the tape recorder in the middle of the table. My worries however, soon dissolved, because not only group members did not seem to be bothered, but often they took the initiative to move the tape-recorder closer to the member that was speaking in order to tape what he or she was saying and help me to capture as many things as possible.

During my participant observation I tried to be “invisible” as possible in order not to affect the meeting and make them feel uneasy that I tape-record everything they were saying. I was surprised at some cases, when during the meeting or in the breaks (usually after a big debate) they were joking saying to me that “you will have a lot of data!”. Although they did not seem to notice me during their meeting, they were still aware of me and included my role as observer in their jokes.

Regarding the process of data collection I feel that my gender (female), ethnicity (Greek), and my affiliation (PhD candidate) might have influenced the research process in a number of ways. During the interview process I felt that some female group members were more open with me because they felt as belonging to the same gender category. During my field work I also became aware that being a PhD candidate was an aspect that made some group members to “connect” with me connected me and find similarities between me and them. That happened mostly with members that had a PhD or a Master education. They understood the importance of the study for me and my professional development and often they shared experiences and stories from their own PhD and Master studies.

My ethnicity was an “easy/salient” frame of reference used by group members in categorizing me. Specifically, my Greek ethnicity entered in the research process with two ways: a) by creating a bonding among me and some members and/or b) distinguishing me with group members. I felt that my Greek ethnicity served as a common bond not only between me and the Greek members but also with the Romanian and Hungarian members. Romanian and Hungarian members often categorize themselves and me as the “South” people. During her interview a Romanian member said to me “you know what I mean” implying that we had “common” understanding due to our national similarity derived from our belonging to South Europe. Often I felt that the intersection of my gender and ethnicity made the female Romanian and Hungarian members to be more open to me during the field work. At other

cases however, my ethnicity functioned on a different way. Often, during the interview process and field work, members referred to me categorizing me in terms of my Greek ethnicity and used that categorization for contrasting their own ethnicity in order to give me an example of what they wanted to say about national diversity.

Overall group members made me to feel that I was a member of their group and did not kept me in distance in informal social activities, breakfast, dinners. Often I was worried whether and how my feeling of being a member of their group was influencing my perceptions, ideas, thoughts and notes I was taking during field work, participant observation, and data analysis. I found helpful to write my thoughts and feelings in a research diary as a way of self-reflection that would helped me to be aware of my subjectivity.

6.5 Reliability and Validity

The decision to make a qualitative instead of a quantitative study is not “a soft option” (Silverman, 2005, p. 209). Researchers who do qualitative research have to show “the procedures [they] ... used to ensure that [their] ... methods were reliable and that [their] ... conclusions are valid” (Silverman, 2005, p. 209). Reliability and validity are two central concepts in qualitative research. Hammersley (1990) defines validity as the “truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (p. 57). Hammersley (1992) refers to reliability to “the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category of different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (p. 67).

In order to ensure validity in the study, during the analysis I took into consideration and included deviant-cases (such as the narratives of Martin in which he offered a construction of their differentiation that challenged my initial data analysis). Additionally, in the reporting of research findings I included many exemplary instances (Silverman, 2005). My detailed self-reflection of my role as researcher, which diffuses the thesis in several sections (chapter 1, chapter 2) also ensures the reliability and validity of the research. Finally, the detailed presentation of the procedures followed both in data collection and analysis enhances the reliability and validity of the study since I offer a detailed account of the whole research process enabling the audience to follow my “research path”.

Part III

Research Findings and Conclusions

Introduction of Research findings

In the second part of the thesis I introduce the main theoretical category “differentiation work” that emerged as an insight from the overall data analysis. Then, I present in detail the core categories (members’ perceptions, meanings, and uses of their differentiation) that constitute differentiation work in order to further facilitate its understanding.

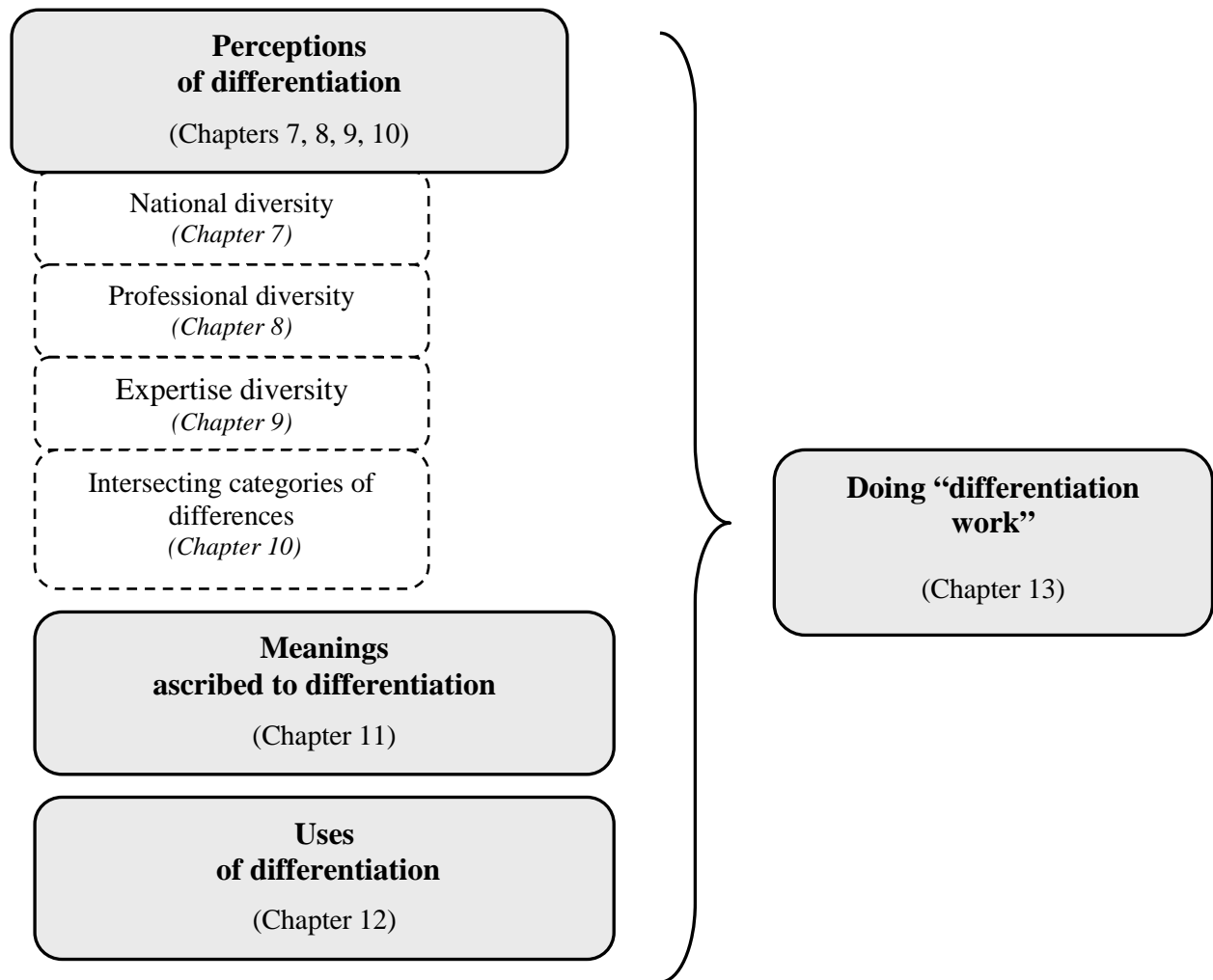
First, I introduce the proposed theoretical term “differentiation work”. Then, I present the core category “perceptions of differentiation” in four chapters in order to demonstrate the multiple perceptions of members regarding their differentiation. In chapter 6, I present the perceptions of group members regarding their national differentiation, and the professional differentiation is presented in chapter 7. In chapter 8, I present the perceptions about expertise differences and finally in chapter 9 I explain how the group members intersect those differences.

Then, I move on to the presentation of the core category “uses of differentiation”. In chapter 10 I present the several ways members use their differences drawing on them as a discursive resource.

At chapter 11, I refer to the core category “meanings of differentiation” and describe the multiple meanings that members ascribe to their perceived differences. After the detailed presentation of the three core categories (perceptions, meanings, and uses of differentiation) I move on to establish the proposed theoretical term “differentiation work” in chapter 12. In this chapter I also explain the process of differentiation construction (differentiation work) and refer to the functions that this process serves.

Finally, I briefly summarize the research findings of the study and then proceed to discussing the findings that are the next part of the thesis. Figure I outlines the findings of the study in a nutshell.

Figure I: The structure of research findings



Doing *differentiation work*: perceptions, meanings, and uses of differentiation

Data analysis, presented in chapter 5, facilitated the development of grounded theoretical knowledge regarding the process of diversity construction in an EU-funded project group. The main theoretical category that emerges from data analysis is “*differentiation work*” that reflects the on-going process of forming and re-shaping members’ perceptions, meanings and discursive uses of their differentiation. Members do *differentiation work* during their project life as they construct and re-construct their perceptions about the content of their differentiation, as they shift the *meanings* ascribed to their differentiation, and as they *alter* the use of their differences. The next six chapters present in detail members’ perceptions, meanings, and uses of their differentiation, and the seventh chapter explains thoroughly the *differentiation work* construct.

Chapter 7 Doing differentiation work: perceptions of national differentiation

7.1 Introduction

The term “national” rather than “ethnic” is used to describe the particular type of their perceived differentiation, because members categorize each other not only in terms of their ethnicities, but also in terms of their nationality (or citizenship) and in terms of the country they represent. Therefore, the term “national” is perceived to be broader in order to encompass the type of their perceived differentiation.

National diversity is the most salient category of differentiation in members’ interviews. The comparison of members’ interviews with their group discussion during the project meeting, however, shows a contradiction. In their interviews group members construct national diversity as a salient type of differentiation, but they do not refer to their national differences during their group meeting. National differences appear to be a taboo to talk about during their group meeting.

In their interviews all group members emphasize the importance of being aware of the national differences in EU-funded projects. Most members speak openly about their national differences in the specific project but few avoid referring on specific national or ethnical differences. The members that speak more specifically about national differences are the Romanian, Hungarian, and Greek members. In their interviews, those members construct their national diversity as differences between broad regional groups, but they do not articulate those regional groups with the same way.

Hungarian and Romanian members, similarly, create national diversity as differences between people from *South* and *North*. They perceive that nationality informs the working identity of people but not their quality to be “reliable” partners in EU-funded projects. Greek members create national diversity as differences between people from *East* and *West*. Greek members – contrary to the Hungarian and Romanian members – relate nationality with the quality of people to be “professional” in EU-funded projects. Table 7.1 gives a brief outline of the ways that the Hungarian, Romanian and Greek members shape the national diversity in their group.

Table 7.1 Constructing national diversity as differences between broad regional groups

	Perceptions of Hungarian and Romanian members (<i>South</i>)*	Perceptions of Greek members**
<i>Defining self and others</i>	South vs. North	East vs. West
<i>Countries belonging to the regional groups</i>	Romania vs. Germany Greece vs. Finland Hungarian vs. Estonia Poland	Romania, Greece vs. Germany Finland Hungarian vs. Estonia Poland
<i>Differences between the regional groups</i>	The way people do their work Both <i>South</i> and <i>North</i> people are “reliable” partners	The quality of people to be “professional” in EU funded projects People from <i>East</i> countries are “not so professionals” as the <i>West</i> people

* *Camelia, Margit, Marku, Lajos*

** *Dimitrios, Michalis*

7.2 Creating national differences between the South and North regional groups

7.2.1 The South and North

Romanian and Hungarian members shape the working identity of the *South people* in comparison with the working identity of the *North people*. As *South* regional group they categorize the Romanians, Greeks, Hungarians, and Polish, while as *North* they refer to Germans, Finish, and Estonians. The construction of these regional groups is relational and context bounded. They define the *South* regional group in terms of how it differs from the *North* group. The existence of the *South* group has meaning only through the comparison with the *North*. One member points out in her interview that the main in-group similarity of people belonging to the South group is their differentiation from the North group:

“our feelings [...] approach to things is different from, for example Finland, Estonia, and Germany, Western Germany”.

The political history and the religion, additional, are also perceived as in-group similarities of *South* group and used to support the in-group similarity within the *South* group. Hungarian

and Romanian member argue that the “same historical experience...shapes the people the same somehow”. They note that Polish, Hungarian and Romanian people share “common past...in terms of politics”; and add that Greeks and Romanians have the “same religion” and that “culturally... [they] are not so different”.

The main construction of the *South* group, however, is based on how *South* people distinctly differentiate from the *North* people. The existence of the *South* group has a meaning only through the inter-group comparison with the *North* group. Through this inter-group comparison, Hungarian and Romanian members, construct for their perceived in-group (*South*) a positive working identity in aspects they consider to be better than the *Norths*. Romanian and Hungarian members, for example, point out that the *North people* are “hard working” but are willing to “make extra effort” only if they are getting extra paid for their efforts. On the other hand, they perceive that the *South people* are keen to do overload work, guided by the need to “make it work” and not by the money. As one Hungarian member said:

“This is working culture. We are doing like, it is not a big deal, come on, we are doing it. My first question in my mind is not if I am getting paid; my first reaction is, let’s do it, let’s make it work”.

A Romanian member says that the *North people* do not need many reminders as the *South people* and further comments about the *North people*:

“I don’t even need to worry if I don’t get a message from them until the deadline. Because I know before the deadline, I’ll receive the outcome”.

However, he does not construct a negative working identity for the *South people*, although he perceives that *South people* need constant deadline reminders. Later, in his interview, he argues that *South people* may “have a different way” of working but still they are reliable. Additionally, he points out that *South people* are easy to communicate with, whereas “communicating with them [North] it’s not easy”. He adds that the *Norths* “don’t accept easily that things could be done sometimes differently” and that he experiences often “difficulty in convincing them to do things differently”.

The perceptions of the Hungarian and Romanian members about national differences affect also their future expectations. When they work with *North people* they expect them to be

“very rigid”, “very army” and not very cooperative; they are surprised when they see mis-confirmation of their expectations.

“...to my biggest surprise I found that they were very warm, very friendly and very cooperative even, very hard working -which was not a surprise- but the first thing, the first thing about the warm and the welcoming thing so...”

When then Hungarian and Romanian members work with people from the *South*, they expect that will “communicate and work very well”. One Romanian member illustrates this in her interview:

“I found out how nicely we work with people that belong to the Romans language family [...] It was a sort of confirmation that we seem to have common roots, which is interesting, which is interesting, and it makes us feel nice definitely.”

The Romanian and Hungarian members overall create their national diversity in terms of the differences in the working identity of the *South* and *North people*. They perceive that nationality affects the way people work, but it doesn’t affect the quality of their work. As one member put it:

“we all perform at an appropriate quality level. So the outcome of each partner is the desired one. But the way in which we reach that outcome is sometimes very different”.

Hungarian and Romanian members create both the *South* and the *North people* as “reliable” partners in EU-funded projects but having different working identities. A reliable partner is perceived as someone who does the assigned job in the project and performs well in her or his role in the project group. Table 7.2 outlines how the Romanian and Hungarian members create national diversity as differences between two regional groups: *South* and *North*.

Table 7.2 Perceptions of the Romanian and Hungarian members regarding the South and North regional groups

Perceptions of the Romanian and Hungarian members about the South and North regional groups	
South (Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, and Greeks)	North (Estonian, Finnish, and Germans)
They do extra work even if they don't get paid for it	They are hard working; but willing to do extra effort only if they are getting paid for it
They may need more deadline reminders than the <i>Norths</i> , but they are reliable and they do their job	They don't need deadline reminders
Communicate and work nicely together	Very rigid, very strict, not flexible in accepting to do things differently
Easy to communicate with them	Not easy to communicate with
Reliable	Reliable

7.2.2 The East and West

The Greek members construct national differences in terms of the people's quality to be professionals in EU-funded projects. As "professional" they define someone who keeps deadlines and who performs well in the assigned task. The two Greek members shape the national diversity as differences between the East and West regional groups. As *East* regional group they categorize the Romanian, Greek, Hungarian and Poland people, while as *West* they refer to German, Finish, and Estonian people. The construction of these regional groups is relational and context bounded. They define the *East* regional group in terms of how it differs from the *West* group. Table 7.3 outlines the construction of national diversity by the Greek members.

Table 7.3 Perceptions of the Greek members regarding the West and East regional groups

Perceptions of the Greek members regarding the West and East regional groups		
<i>Regional groups</i>	The <i>West</i> group	The <i>East</i> group
<i>Ethnicities included</i>	Estonians, Finnish, and Germans	Romanian, Hungarian, Polish, and Greeks
<i>Working identity of people in these groups</i>	They don't need deadline reminders	They need deadline reminders
	They are professionals	They are not professionals (compared to the <i>West</i>)

The Greek members embrace the national stereotypes they perceive as dominant for the *East* and *West* people: people from the *East* are not so professionals as the *West*. Greek members construct the *West* people as “professionals” (my translation) who even though ask a lot of money for their work, they worth it because they do what they promised. In his interview Michalis notes, “ανατολικές [...] χώρες για να δείξεις ας πούμε στην κοινότητα ότι απευθύνεσαι και σε αυτούς. Αλλά το κάνεις πάντα με φόβο ότι θα συνεργαστείς με φορείς οι οποίοι δεν θα είναι αυτό που θα περίμενες, δεν θα είναι τόσο τυπικοί όσο οι εγγλέζοι, οι Γερμανοί που είναι χώρες που ξέρεις ότι είναι professional, δηλαδή αυτό που θα πούνε θα το κάνουνε. Θα το κοστολογήσουν ακριβά αλλά θα το κάνουνε ρε παιδί μου”.

Greek members often refer to the *West* people using the categorization “they are not Balkanians” (my translation) to draw the distinctiveness of West people from the *East* people. For the Greek members the term “balkanian” is synonymous with not being professional. In his interview Michalis illustrated this clear when he refers to the Estonian member, who is categorized to the *West* group:

“Τον Εσθονό τον ήξερα. Γενικά οι Εσθονοί έχω την αίσθηση ότι είναι και αυτοί στη δουλειά τους καλοί, δηλαδή έχουν έτσι μια σωστή αντιμετώπιση, δεν είναι βαλκάνιοι”.

The Greek members ascribe the quality of being professional and keeping deadlines to peoples’ national culture. As one member said:

“Δηλαδή ειδικά όταν μιλάμε για φορείς που δεν είναι στην κουλτούρα τους και χώρες που δεν είναι στην κουλτούρα τους το να είσαι επαγγελματίας να τους κυνηγήσεις, να τους θυμίσεις ημερομηνίες και όλα αυτά [...]”.

He argues that people from the *East* need constant deadlines reminders, “κυνήγι σε προσωπικό επίπεδο” and therefore a different project management approach compared to the *Norths*:

“ανατολικές, οι μεσόγειοι, όλοι αυτοί. Βαλκάνιοι ειδικά [...] θέλουνε τον τρόπο τους. Να τους υπενθυμίσεις, κυνήγι σε προσωπικό επίπεδο. Να αισθάνεται ο άλλος ότι απευθύνεσαι προσωπικά σε αυτόν και του λες ξέρεις αυτό και αυτό”.

Michalis justifies his perception that people in the *East* countries are not professional due to the economic situation in these countries. He uses as example, the university professors in the

East countries. He ascribes their lack of professionalism and their interests for gaining money that he perceives as salient, to the low salaries they get in their home countries. He notes that the *East* university professors have low salaries and argue that they perceive it as a lack of acknowledgement to their achievements. He perceives that the *East* university professors use the money they get from the EU-funded projects, as a way to gain the desirable acknowledgment. Hence, their interest in EU-funded projects is mainly the pursuit of money.

Similarly, with the Hungarian and Romanian members, the perceptions of Greek members about the national differences, influences their future expectation. The two Greek members have different expectations when they work with people from the *East*, than when they work with people from the *West*. Dimitrios says that he communicates in a different way with a German compared to a Romanian. He expects that when working with a *West* member “things are more solid, more politically correct” (my translation) than when working with an *East* member:

“Ναι, γιατί να μην είναι τόσο επαγγελματίες όσο οι Γερμανοί (*referring to Romanians*); οπότε βλέπεις ας πούμε [...] όταν μιλάς με έναν Γερμανό, τα πράγματα είναι λίγο πιο συγκεκριμένα, πιο solid, πιο politically correct, ενώ ξέρεις ότι με τους Ρουμάνους και λίγο λιγότερο politically correction δεν θα έβλαπτε, αλλά αυτό είναι ένα assumption, οπότε πάλι επανατοποθετείσαι ανάλογα με τις περιστάσεις”

However, the expectations of both Greek members regarding the *East-West* differences are mis-confirmed in the MULTI project. They argue that the national differences they have constructed in terms of the East – West dichotomy are not salient in the MULTI project. Instead, they perceive that the Romanian and Hungarian members in this project are very professional. As Michalis says:

“Και όμως εκεί διαψεύστηκα. Δηλαδή νομίζω ότι οι άνθρωποι είναι που είναι μέσα στο MULTI είναι επαγγελματίες, ξέρουν το αντικείμενο τους. Ανταποκρίνονται, είναι σωστοί.. δηλαδή ξέρουν για πιο πράγμα μιλάμε”.

Dimitrios also constructs the *East* members of MULTI as professionals and adds that all people in EU-funded projects “σε αυτό το επίπεδο τείνει να είναι επαγγελματίας”:

“Έε νομίζω ότι από την μια είναι αναπόφευκτο να φέρουνε και είδα ότι φέρανε. Από την άλλη όμως βλέπω ότι υπάρχει μια σύγκλιση όλων των

χωρών της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης σε αυτό το επίπεδο να είναι ομοιογενές το υλικό. Δηλαδή είτε Γερμανός, είτε Φιλανδός, είτε Ρουμάνος, είτε Ούγγρος της μειονότητας της Ρουμανία, είτε Έλληνας εε.. ” (Dimitrios)

Although the two Greek members construct the working identities of the *East* and *West* people with similar ways (i.e., people from *East* are not as professional as people from the *West*), they differentiate in whether they include their own ethnicity (Greeks) to the *East* regional group. Dimitrios forms national differences as differences between *East* and *West* but he does not refer to the Greek working identity at all. On the other hand, Michalis categorizes the Greek people to the *East* regional group and constructs them as not professionals comparing to the *West*. Michalis embraces the negative stereotypes that he perceives as dominant for the Greek working identity. As he says:

the “*Έένοι*” perceive that Greeks are “*πιο πίσω, πιο χαλαροί με τα deadlines...λιγότερο professionals*”.

Michalis adds that when he works with a Greek institute he expects that people from this institute will not be professionals:

“...και εγώ έχω αυτήν την αίσθηση ότι είναι ελάχιστοι οι φορείς στην Ελλάδα με τους οποίους ξέρω ότι θα συνεργαστώ και θα έχω professional αντιμετώπιση. Δηλαδή στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις περιμένω αντιμετώπιση που θα είναι πιο... αν και σαν φορείς οι Ελληνικοί φορείς είναι ενεργοί και είναι σε διάφορα πράγματα, δεν μπορώ να πω ότι ξέρεις είμαι ικανοποιημένος από αυτά που έχω δει από τη συνεργασία μαζί τους”.

The differentiation between the two Greek members partly lies to the way they define themselves in terms of their ethnicity. Dimitrios does not dis-identify with his ethnicity and he chooses not to refer to the Greek working identity or the Greek national stereotypes at all. On the other hand, Michalis dis-identifies with his ethnicity and the Greek working identity that he perceives; he defines himself in terms of the working identity of the *West*. In his interview Michalis notes:

“Νομίζω ότι δουλεύω –νομίζω- ότι δουλεύω περισσότερο με ένα ευρωπαϊκό στυλ πάρα με ένα ελληνικό στυλ. Δεν μου αρέσει να έχω ας πούμε εκπλήξεις στη δουλειά μου και πράγματα που θα σκάσουν τελευταία στιγμή και τα οποία θα πρέπει να τα αντιμετωπίσουμε γιατί κάτι που δεν περίμενες προέκυψε, και θα αφήσεις όλα τα άλλα που κάνεις γιατί πρέπει να κάνεις αυτό. Μ’ αρέσει να μπορώ να κάνω σχέδιο. Να προγραμματίσω ποιοι άνθρωποι θα δουλέψουνε, τι θα βάλουμε, τι θα κοστίζει. Να είναι ένα περιβάλλον δηλαδή

στο οποίο θα είναι μετρημένα τα πράγματα. Σίγουρα θα έχουμε πάντα και το απροσδόκητο αλλά δεν είναι αυτός ο τρόπος που δουλεύουμε έξω. Έξω δουλεύουμε συγκεκριμένα με ένα σχέδιο, θα πάρει 1, 2, 3 χρόνια”.

7.3 Summary

The chapter presented members’ perceptions about their national differences, how they construct their national differentiation in their interviews and during the group meeting. Although in their interviews all group members emphasize the importance of being aware of the national differences in EU-funded projects, however few members avoid referring on specific national or ethnical differences. The Romanian, Hungarian, and Greek members did speak openly about their national differences and construct their national diversity as differences between broad regional groups, *South/East vis-à-vis North/West*. Although Hungarian and Romanian members categorize the same countries in these regional groups like the Greek members did, yet they articulate the working identity of people belonging to these regional groups differently. Hungarian and Romanian members construct a positive working identity for themselves and their perceived regional group, the *Souths*. The Greek members articulate a negative working identity for the people belonging to the *East (South)* countries. Although they construct a different working identity for the East/South people, the process underlying these constructions is the same: members’ need to have a working identity for the self. The Hungarian and Romanian members shape a positive working identity for themselves by identifying with their nationality and forming a positive working identity for their national group. The Greek members, contrary, pursue to shape a positive working identity for themselves by dis-identifying with their nationality and the negative working identity they perceive as associated with it. Members’ differentiation work apart from this function that serves (i.e., members’ need for a positive sense for self) is also informed by contextual factors (such as the context in which their social interaction takes place, dominant discourses like national stereotypes) and who is the Other.

Chapter 8 Doing differentiation work: perceptions of professional differentiation

8.1 Introduction

Professional diversity is another salient category of differentiation in the MULTI project. The professional diversity construct, however, is not a homogenous one – group members perceive differently their professional differences. Two members shape their professional diversity in terms of the different way members are working: they perceive their professional differentiation to be between the *practitioners* and the *academics*. Most members, however, create their professional differences in terms of the different goals that members pursue in the EU-funded project, and yet, they do not articulate their professional differences in the same way. Some members discuss the differences between academics and business, while others focus on the differences between NGO, SME and universities. The construction of their professional differences takes three different forms: differences between (a) academics and business, (b) universities, NGO and SMEs, and (c) practitioners and academics. A common process that seems to partly underlie the creation of the different forms of professional differentiation is members' identity work and their need to create a positive sense for their self.

Although in their interviews members construct their professional diversity as differences between the academics, practitioners, business, and NGOs, during the group discussion, the salient professional differences were between Martin (business/SME) vs. others members. The different interests and goals that Martin and other members pursue in the project informed many debates during their group discussion. The main topics of their debates are two:

- (1) Who is their target group, and
- (2) How to design the exercises. This topic entails two issues:
 - (2.1) whether they will design simple (that will include only vocabulary) or sophisticated (with introductory text, etc) exercises.
 - (2.2) whether the main body of the language exercises would be in English or it would be translated to all partners' languages.

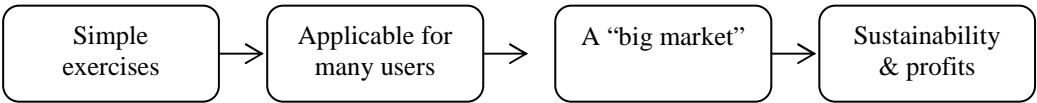
In order to gain a better understanding of the ways in which members construct their professional differentiation, I briefly explain the goals and interests of members in the project.

Their first topic of debates (who is their target group) is partly informed by their different interests. Martin wants a product that will be applicable for many users because a “big market” will ensure profits. During the meeting, Martin comments to the rest members that he contacted two Estonian communities in Finland in order to see who their “real target group” is. He perceives that – contrary to what is written on the proposal – there are not many ICT teachers living in Estonia interested to move in Finland. Hence, they should expand the project’s scope and add other types of users too. The debate emerges because the NGO members (Margit, Camelia, Marku) want to design a product that will be useful for the users’ category with whom have already conducted the need analysis – and which are their users too. Academic members (Michalis, Jan, Teresa) are also skeptical and do not agree with Martin’s suggestions.

The second topic of their debate concerns the design of the language exercises. Martin is the only members suggesting and arguing in favor of doing “simple exercises” (i.e., including just vocabulary) while all the other members are in favor of doing more “sophisticated exercises” (that will include learning scenarios).

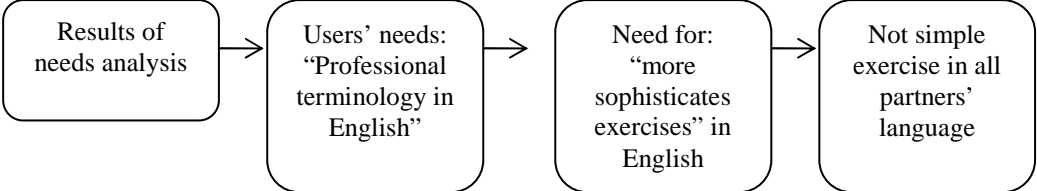
Martin perceives that the sustainability plan for their product is a more difficult and important task than the design of their language exercises. He does not see any value in putting a lot of effort for making “sophisticated exercises”. Moreover, if they design “sophisticated exercises” then their product will not be applicable to many users and hence he will not have a big market for the product that will ensure profits. Figure 8.1 illustrates Martin’s argument during the group meeting.

Figure 8.1 The argument of Martin for doing simple exercises



The suggestions of Martin to add new user groups and to design simple exercises in all partners’ languages, are infused by his interest to have a big marker for their product and hence profits. However, the results from the users’ need analysis shows that Romanian and Hungarian users are interested to learn professional terminology in English language. Camelia, Margit and Marku (NGO members) want to design a product that will be useful for their users and hence they are arguing to design sophisticated exercises in English. Figure 8.2 illustrates the argument of the NGO members during the group meeting.

Figure 8.2 The argument of NGO members for doing sophisticated exercises



The *academic* members, like Klaus, are also interested in designing “more sophisticated exercises” because this type of exercises meets the academic requirements for doing a “researchable” product (Figure 8.3). Figure 8.4 summarizes the perceptions of group members regarding their professional differentiation in the group.

Figure 8.3: The argument of Klaus (academic) for doing sophisticated exercises

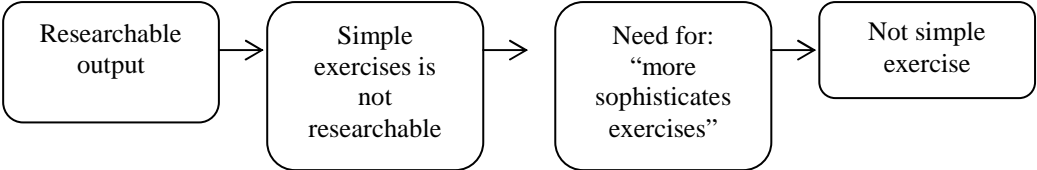
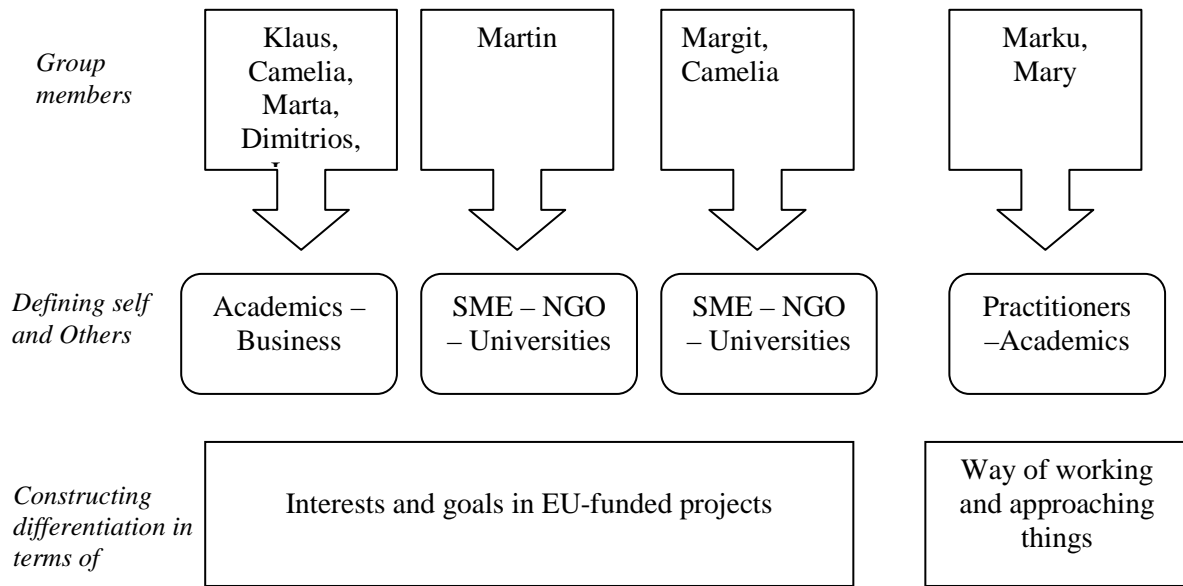


Figure 8.4 The perceptions of members regarding their professional differentiation in the group



Comment: Camelia’s accounts have been used both in academics’ and in NGO’s constructions of professional differences since she defines herself both as academic and as NGO. Members have the freedom to define themselves as they want and not to be constrained in one identity. Instead of categorizing her in one of the two professions, I choose to encompass the particularities in her self-definition.

8.2 Academics’ perceptions: focus on differences between academics and business

Members with academic affiliation (Camelia, Klaus, Michalis, Teresa, and Dimitrios) perceive their professional diversity as differences between the *academics* and the *business* people. In his interview, Klaus, an *academic* member explains the academics interests:

“people coming from an academic culture [...] they want to have some project run in a good way, but they also want publications out of it, because that’s how we are measured. So that’s clearly something which is behind all our activities. We need, we want to do research. That’s why we are academics. And we need to get an appropriate research output. And well, that’s definitely the point which is common to us”.

Klaus ascribes and justifies the interest to have “an appropriate research output” to their profession, being “academics” and not to the type of institution they may work – for example a university or a research institute. He emphasizes that some members in the project group

belong to the same professional group (i.e., the *academics*) and construct their in-group similarity in terms of their common interest to do research.

Camelia, Klaus, Michalis, Teresa, and Dimitrios align themselves with the academics although two of them do not represent a university in the MULTI. They craft *business* as their out-group, in which they categorize only Martin distinguishing between their academics and his business interests.

The academic members articulate *academics* and *business* as two different worlds in terms of the different interests and goals they pursue in the EU-funded projects. They perceive that the *academics* pursue to have a “researchable output” in order to do publications, while *business* people pursues a sustainable “sale-bone” product because they want to sell it and have profits out of it.

Academics form the *business* interests in contradistinction with their *academic* interest. One member argues that “business” is “not interested in research” but is interested to “to sell the platform” and “make money with educational material”. Another member notes in her interview:

“it’s Martin who is business person and he wants to sell the platform, and he wants to makes it sale-bone, and he wants to make it sustainable and interesting for him, to *earn* from this. [...] and I remember that in the first meeting Martin for example he said “well I am a partner of this project, *if* we worked this with my platform then I am devoted partner, if we work with a different platform I am a partner”.

As Michalis said”

“Είναι διαφορετικές επιδιώξεις ανάλογα με το είδος του φορέα. (there are different goals depending the type of institution).”

Academics do not challenge their professional differences, either the nature of their interests. They construct their own working identity through the comparison of academics and business interests. They infuse to their working academic identity a sense of creativity and adding value: *Academics* (or researchers) are *doing* research, while the *business* people *exploit* the work of the *academics*.

Their different interests are reflected on their perceptions of the EU-funded projects and their role in them. In his interview Jan (*academic*) perceives the EU-funded projects to be “common political program for research exchange” and that their role is to do and exchange research – which entails to do publications. On the other hand, Martin (*business*) characterizes

the EU-funded projects as “project business” and perceives that their role is to do business. As it is discussed in the next section, for Martin doing business entails to pursue profits. Table 8.1 outlines how the *academics* construct the professional diversity in their project group.

Table 8.1 The construction of professional differences by the *academics*

Perceptions of the “academics”		
Professional differences between	<i>Academic people</i>	<i>Business people</i>
Interests and goals in EU funded projects	Research and publications	Profits
	“Researchable outcome”	“Salebone”

8.3 Practitioners’ perceptions: Focusing on differences between academics and practitioners – “it is two different ways”

Two members (Marku and Mary) create the professional diversity of the project group as differences between *academics* and *practitioners*. They argue that *academics* and non-academics (*practitioners*) have a different way of working. Marku works for a NGO and Mary works in a university, but they both align themselves with the “practitioner” way of working and differentiate themselves from the “academics”.

In her interview Mary points out:

“What I mean is that in working environments I think is something very obvious to me. That there’s definitely an academic culture and there is a culture of practitioners, and it affects processes, and how they approach problems, and problems solving. It’s two very different ways”.

Mary and Marku shape the working identity of *practitioners* in comparison with the working identity of the *academics*. As *practitioners* they categorize Margit, Camelia (NGO members) and Martin (SMEs), while as *academics* they refer to Klaus, Teresa, and Irena. In his interview, Marku describes Mary also as *practitioner*, although she works in an educational and research institute:

“On the other hand, let’s say our Greek partners – AgriEdu partners- they seem to have a more practical approach on things. And it’s the same with the Estonians partners. I mean, what is needed and for whom – we need this for

the target group. So let's do it that it meets the really needs of the target group, not for the academic requirements we envisage”

Mary – although she categorizes the research and educational institute she works as university – describes herself as having the same line of thought with the *practitioners*:

“Like working in the universities. [...] The Finish, the Polish, and I guess AgriEdu [...] And is certainly like there is a difference between. Well, I'll give an example. This literature review that we're working on? I think a lot of the academics are like ‘Oh, this is a big literature review is a big – you know – thing and it has to be... You have to make sure you have references that are relevant [...] just like the Polish reaction [...] and I think from the Romanians was more like ‘We don't quite understand what it is that you want’ and then they were like ‘Oh, so it's pragmatic’ [...] They automatically saw this pragmatic and sort of simple [...]”.

In her account she distinguish herself from the *academic* way and aligns herself more with the *practitioners* line of thought who view things more “pragmatic and [...] simple”. Through the inter-group comparison between the *practitioner* and *academic* way of working, Mary and Marku construct a positive working for their in-group (*practitioners*) but also for themselves. They distinct their working identity from the *academics* and the perceives “*academic or very elaborated approach*” that requires more time, and they define themselves as having more “*practical approach*”; seeing and approaching things as “*pragmatic and [...] simple*”.

In his interview Marku points out that *academics* usually forget the “real needs” of user, while they focus on their academic requirements:

“Academic people of course, when they work they do a very elaborated work. But sometimes it's not the best thing. I mean it's the best, it's of course desirable to have something that it's high, high quality. But sometime in the academic world, as – I think that is a general rule – especially in the field of languages, they seem to forget who their target really is. They do things more academically than needed and tend to forget the most important part of [...] that is the final user. [...] And doing things very, very elaborated things, takes time. So it needs to be a careful planning in terms of time, resources and outcome.”

Marku acknowledges that *academics* do “elaborate work” of “high quality” but adds that they also tend to “forget [...] the final user”. He perceives that the aim of academics when doing “highly quality” and “elaborate work” is not to answer the users’ needs but their own “academic requirements”:

“I mean, what is needed and for whom – we need this for the target group. So let’s do it that it meets the really needs of the target group, not for the academic requirements we envisage” (Marku)

During the meeting Marku refers to the professional differences in terms of members’ different way of working. The following vignette takes place in the last session of their first day of the meeting. Marku uses the example of a children book to explain his suggestion that they don’t need to make their exercises “very academic” in order to show that they have worked a lot in the project:

“Have a comparison in mind. When we look at a textbook or a book for children aimed at teaching them something, it is colourful, it is full of drawings, full of all these things that are appealing to children. This doesn’t mean that it’s not a serious product, because the methodology behind it is huge”.

Then Marku continues:

“It’s the same with our exercises. We don’t need to make something *very academic* [my emphasis] and sophisticated let’s say, because this is the power play of the day... in order to present something, in order to show that we’ve worked a lot in this project, because it can be explained in the guide”.

“And we need to make it as appealing as possible for a student that has a low level, because we assume that they have a low level of foreign language knowledge. Because if they don’t, probably we address them in vain”.

In that previous vignette Marku distant himself from the “very academic” approach. His account reflects his concern – that has also expressed in his interview:

[academics] “especially in the field of languages, they seem to forget who their target is. They do things more academically than need and tend to forget the most important part [...] that is the final user”.

The professional diversity construct, however, is not static but dynamic and changes. The comparison between the interviews and the group meeting data shows that members’ perceptions about their professional differentiation are not static but dynamic. In their interviews Mary and Marku categorize Martin as their in-group member (*practitioner*), during the meeting, however, they have a constant disagreement with him about the product design and they do not seem to share a same line of thought. In their interviews Marku and Mary reflect to their overall cooperation to the project and create professional differences in terms of the different way of working. They categorize Martin as their in-group member (*practitioner*), but only in terms of the perceived similarity in their way of working when compared to the *academic* way. The context in which the professional diversity construction takes place, however, is different. During the meeting, the topic of discussion is the product design and the discussion is intense. The goals that Mary and Marku pursue are different than Martin. Table 8.2 outlines the construction of professional differentiation by the practitioners

Table 8.2 The perceptions of Marku and Mary (*practitioners*) regarding their professional differentiation in the group

		Perceptions of Marku and Mary (<i>practitioners</i>)	
		Academics	Practitioners
Professional differences between			
Differences in the way of working		Have an “ <i>academic or very elaborated approach</i> ”, i.e. they do “ <i>things very, very elaborated things, [which] takes time</i> ”	Have a “ <i>practical approach</i> ” i.e., view things as “ <i>pragmatic and [...] simple</i> ”
		Often they “ <i>forget [...] the final user</i> ” and focus on their own “ <i>academic requirements</i> ”	Focus on “ <i>what is needed and for whom</i> ”

8.4 Universities – NGO – SME

Three members (Martin, Margit, and Camelia) create their professional diversity as differences between *universities*, *SME* and *NGO*. This construction of professional diversity, however, is not homogenous: Margit and Camelia articulate differently their professional diversity than Martin.

8.4.1 Focusing on differences between SME and universities

Martin creates their professional diversity in terms of the different goals and interests members pursue in EU-funded projects: he points out that there are different “reasons why people join the project”, what group members “really want to get out of this project” and ascribes those differences to the type of institution people represent. Martin recognizes as salient the differences between NGO, universities and SMEs. He notes that the NGO interest is “to improve the world”, while the interest of the *SMEs* is to have profits and a sustainable project product. Although Martin discusses about the differences between the NGO, the universities and the *SMEs*, his focus is mainly on the differences between *SMEs* and *universities*.

Professional diversity becomes a relational construction of *universities* in terms of *SMEs*. Martin contrasts *SMEs*’ interests with those of the *universities*. He constructs the *SMEs* as “putting most of the gun powder in creating things” while universities as focusing more on “evaluation and piloting”, imbuing in the *SMEs*’ identity a sense of creativity. Martin, however, does not clarify what he perceives to be the interests of the *universities*. He only constructs *universities*’ interests in contrasts with his interests:

“Universities for example don’t care much about the profits and how to put this project work after the project time is over and so on. I mean on commercial level”.

Martin portrays the *SMEs*’ (and his own) interests by using a metaphor of a “good tree” that will give “fruit after the project”:

“Let’s put it in like a picture. [...] If I want to plant a tree, it would be an olive tree and if I have to plant it in Estonia. And if I have to do that because it is my contractual obligation, Ok, I can plant this tree. But I won’t contribute much my own energy and time, I won’t go and water it by night because I know this olive tree won’t grow in Estonia. [...] But if I see that ‘Ok, this project is really going to take off, this can be used somehow and so on’, then it is another story. Then I can wake up at night and I won’t ask for another additional funding whatsoever. And also I am responsible for paying salaries for several people, so it has to bring somehow [profits]. [...] Also if it is used and it is beneficial for users, then there has to be some kind of mechanism which supports sustainability. So, in

one or another way, they will pay you or government will pay you or it has to be some sustainability model.”

Martin explains that he is willing to put a lot of effort if he perceives that the product –they will create in the project – will be sustainable. The motive for him is the product’s sustainability – i.e., that someone will “pay” them for using the product after the project is over. Martin also justifies his interest for having profits by arguing that he is “responsible for paying salaries for several people”. He is the owner of the SME and has to ensure the sustainability of his organization. Table 8.3 outlines the construction of professional differences by Martin (SME).

Table 8.3 The construction of professional differences by Martin

Professional differences between	Perceptions of Martin (SME)		
	Business	– Universities	– NGO
Interests and goals they pursue in the EU funded projects	Profits and product’s sustainability	Not interested in profits	Improve the world – they are not interested in profits

Martin creates their professional differences not only in his interview, but also during the group meeting. The following vignette illustrates how Martin crafts his interest for sustainability during their group discussion.

Klaus and Martin are discussing how they would design the exercises. Martin argues that their main work in the project is not the exercises *per se*, but the sustainability of the project’s product:

“If we want to go into more sophisticated scenario, believe me, we will end up with a quite difficult trouble, because language exercises are like basic exercises and the main work [...] is for us to find how we can start to use them. So, it’s the real situation, how we connect those people who are really willing to take those exercises and if we focus not only on this smaller thesis.”

He continues by using as example the product of Coca Cola for supporting his argument:

“Coca-Cola is actually crap, its two cents a litter, but the main money is how to get people to drink it; that’s the main money. And also in this project the language exercise itself is easy to do, but it is very difficult to show and to deliver all these networks how to find the language learning programs and how to figure out all the rest”.

The coca-cola example that Martin uses, reflects his perspective for the role of the language exercises. In his narrative he makes salient that his interest is where “the main money” is and not to design a necessarily good product, but to have profits from the project. For him, the “main money” is to design a good sustainability plan for their product, not to design good exercises. Furthermore, according to Martin they should not focus so much on the exercises *per se*. His interest is different and contrary both to what Margit and Camelia pursues – to design good language exercises that will answer the needs of their users – but also to the academics’ interests – to design exercises in a way that they could be “researchable”.

8.4.2 Focusing on differences between NGOs and SMEs

Margit and Camelia, also create professional differences in terms of the different interests and goals members pursue in the project. Their interests, however, are slightly different from Martin’s (SME) interest to have a “big marker” for their product, rather than to answer the users’ needs. The interest of Margit and Camelia (to do a product that will be useful to their users) is informed both by the type of their organization and their role in the project. They represent NGOs that work with students; and as user organizations their primary concern is to do a product that will answer the users’ needs.

Both of them are the presidents of the NGOs they represent in the project. Although they recognize the differences between the NGO, SME and universities, they focus mostly on the differentiation between NGO and SMEs. In her interview Margit, for example, refers to professional diversity as differences between NGO, universities and SMEs and the adding value that each offers to the project:

“You bring something to the project which nobody else can bring. Those who work in universities bring something. Those who have private enterprises bring something. Those have very small organizations with different type of people bring something. So I think it’s... just positive to the whole”

Although in her interview, Margit refers to *universities*, *NGO* and *SME*, yet she does not perceive that *academics'* interests are in conflict with her interests as *NGO*. Margit, similarly with Camelia, perceives that her interests are mainly different from the *SME's* interests, not the *academics*.

The following vignette from their group meeting shows how Margit constructs her interest in the project as informed both by the type of her institution and her role in the project. The vignette takes place at the beginning of the meeting, when the coordinator invites members to be “open and explicitly state” their interests and how they see the whole project. After his request, each member speaks up in turn according to the way they seat around the table. When it is the turn of Margit, she says:

“From the learning, from the target group point of view and as user organization and piloting a course I think at this moment I’m very curious. How this is going to be working for us. The reality is not exactly what we thought in terms of Romanian agriculture professionals immigrating to Greece. It’s very challenging and lets leave this challenging quite there because I don’t want to have any negative or skeptic approach to this but [...] try to do our best in terms of the project”.

Margit defines her role in the project in terms of her relationship with their users. She does not categorize herself only as “user organization” but identifies herself with “the learning, from the target group point of view”. In her interview also she defines herself in terms of her relationship with the users:

“The idea [of the project] has to match.....mmm a real need, if this is something or somebody’s. Because then the satisfaction from the target group makes you feel very well and very good. That’s also something very important for me and for us, as an organization”.

Margit defines her role in the project in terms of her relationship with the users. Their satisfaction is what makes her feel good, and therefore her role in the project is to design a product that will be useful for the users.

Camelia is the second member who focuses on the differences between *NGO* and *SMEs*. Although in her interview, Camelia focuses on the professional differences between *academics* and *business*, during the meeting she also constructs differences between *NGO* and *business*.

Camelia is president of the NGO that she represents in the project but also is a university professor (*academic*) (her identities intersect). The following vignette that takes place at the beginning of the meeting and illustrates the intersection of Camelia's identities. Klaus invites all members to be open and "explicitly" state which their interests are. When it is the turn of Camelia to speak, she defines herself and her interest to the project to be informed by both her academic and NGO identity. She starts her narrative commenting that "it is an interesting project from our perspective" and it "also meets purely...very important points on the agenda of our organization". She continues that they are interested in the "research directions" but adds that "the research is going to be relevant to the needs analysis".

In her account, Camelia emphasizes that her interest is not only to do "research" but specifies that their research will "be relevant to the needs analysis" they have conducted. Her interest is not only informed by the type of organization she represents (NGO), but also by their role in the specific project (being a "user organization"). She is interested to design a "researchable" product that will also be useful for their users. Camelia is interested to have a "researchable outcome" therefore she does not perceive any conflict with the academic interests.

The NGOs' interest – to design a useful product for their users – appears to be in conflict with the interests of Martin (SME). During the project meeting, there is a constant debate between the NGO members and Martin. The following vignette shows how Camelia articulate their different interests with Martin.

Camelia discusses with Martin regarding the language exercises. She responds to his insistence for translating the exercises in all partners' languages by raising her voice and reminds him that they had "exactly the same discussion" in their kick-off meeting and calls to have "a little progress with the discussion that we are having" in the second meeting. She emphasizes that at end of the kick-off meeting they decided to design exercises in "foreign language for professionals who need to use the language in their profession".

In her account, Camelia reflects her interest in the project and the criterion for designing the language exercises. She emphasizes that exercises should be designed in a way that would satisfy the users' needs, i.e. designing exercises with specific professional terminology in English.

Camelia comments:

"it seems that here in Greece at this moment the language needs is English, because AgriEdu teaches in English".

She adds that “nobody in Romanian knows Greek” and hence it will be really difficult to teach them highly level of Greek. She points out that what their users need is some basic Greek words, as “goodbye, hello, thank you”.

Then Camelia asks Martin:

“Then why we need the same exercises in Romanian? The exercises which we will create will be in English, which is professional English, professional English for computing. Who is going to need professional Romanian info in computing and agricultural sector?”

“The idea is just for example if there are some kind of interactive exercises, then for example Romanian is needed because this is like”, Martin replies.

“Martin is needed only for instructions”, Camelia comments to him.

“No, no”, Martin answers.

Camelia insists: “For instructions”.

Martin tries to explain: “For example, the exercises. Maybe the exercises would be: ‘the word this is in the Romanian word. What’s the answer in English?’”

Camelia with a tense voice says to Martin: “*You want bilingual multilingual dictionary*” [*my emphasis*]

Martin tries to explain that those languages are needed for the interactive exercises. He says that “Romanian is necessary [...] because you need to ask the words Romanian what’s would you ask in Greek”.

Even though Martin disagrees with Camelia’s comment that he wants to design a “multilingual dictionary”, later he says so himself: “No, no...If we really do it as simple, it’s like the dictionary style of thing...There’s no problem to translate this dictionary words into whatever languages”.

The account of Camelia that Martin wants a “bilingual multilingual dictionary” reflects Camelia’s comment in her interview that Martin as “a business person wants to makes [the platform] a sale-bone [...] to earn from this”. Like other members, she perceives that Martin wants the exercises to be simple because it will be easier for him to sell it after. At the same time, Camelia through her account articulates her own interests in the project which are in alignment with Margit’s (NGO), i.e. to design a product that would be useful for their users.

8.5 Summary

This chapter presented members' perceptions regarding their professional differentiation. Members shape their professional differentiation in terms of two criteria: (a) most members create their professional differentiation focusing on the different interests and goals that members pursue in the project. These members articulate their professional differentiation as differences between academics and business, and between NGO, SME and universities; (b) other members, however, focused on the different ways of working and not in the goals that members pursue in the EU-funded projects; these members portrayed professional differentiation in the group as differences between practitioners and academics. Although the construction of their professional differences takes different forms, yet a common process that seems to partly underlie members' differentiation work is members' need to create a positive sense for their self.

Chapter 9 Doing differentiation work: perceptions of expertise differentiation

9.1 Introduction

Expertise diversity is the third category of differentiation that members perceive as salient in their project group. The creation of expertise diversity partly entails members' relational identity work; members define their expertise in terms of who the other is and the field of expertise they perceive as out-group. Although group members recognize three field of expertise in MULTI ("IT specialists", "agriculture specialists" and "language experts"), they create their expertise diversity focusing on the differences between "ICT" and "language experts". These sub-groups, however, are not homogenous; members articulate them differently.

Camelia, Marku, Margit, Teresa and Irena perceive they belong to the same field of expertise (language education) compared to the field of expertise of other members. These members also categorize themselves as '*educators*' or "*language experts*". As their out-group perceive the "*ICT people*", in which they categorize Michalis, Jan and Martin. Although *educators* categorize Michalis, Klaus and Martin as '*ICT people*', these three members do not define themselves as belonging to the same ICT expertise group. Michalis, Jan and Martin construct their group expertise diversity without focusing on their own field of expertise.

Jan and Michalis define themselves as belonging to the same "not language experts" group, while as "language experts" they categorize Teresa, Irena and Camelia. Michalis and Klaus define who they are in contradiction to what is not their field of expertise: they are "not language experts". Martin, both in his interview and during the group meeting, does not focus on expertise differences and does not make clear how he defines his expertise to be.

In the thesis I use the broad term "ICT" (the categorization that *educators* use) to refer to Michalis, Klaus, and Martin although they do not perceive themselves as ICT; I avoid to use the label of "not language experts", because it is very broad and could possibly lead to an incorrectly inference that includes other members also, like Mary, Dimitrios, or Lajos, who are not language experts either. Table 9.1 presents briefly the perceptions of the *educators* and the *ICT* experts for their group expertise diversity.

Table 9.1 Expertise differences according to group members

	According to the “educators”*	According to the “ICT people”**
Defining self and others	Educators vs. ICT	Language experts vs. not language experts
Expertise differences are in terms of	Different definition of what the term “exercise” means	[Nothing mentioned]
	Different perspective on how they should design the exercises	Different leverage in decision making regarding how they should design the exercises

* Camelia, Margit, Teresa, Irena, and Marku are referred as “educators”.

** Michalis, Klaus, and Martin are referred as “ICT people”. I use the categorization that *educators* gave to these three members

9.2 Expertise differences from the “educators” perspective

The label “*educators*” is used by Camelia during her interview, and reflects her perceived in-group similarities: they are all involved in language education. In her interview Camelia discusses her perception about the creation of expertise diversity during the group meeting:

“It was very interesting to see that according to the field of expertise that people have...little [...] emotional empathetic teams were formed. It was obvious, for example the educators: the Polish ladies, and myself and I could see that Margit as well, because she manages an educational center and her management definitely have a feeling on the emphasis put on teaching. We all more or less, felt somehow together, understanding in the same way, the same. Yeah, it was interesting in this point of view [...] But definitely there were people... who thinking along the same lines probably. So they were somehow more glued together”.

This perception is shared by all the members who define themselves as belonging to the *language* expertise group. Margit, for example, in her interview forms their in-group similarity in terms of their common engagement in language education:

“Polish are experts in creating the language exercises [...]. And we are, let’s say experts or we have 14 years of experience in working with students, which is the target group [...] they have adult learners and we are active in this area”.

In his interview Marku shapes their educators similarity, and identifies who belongs to the language expertise group:

“We, Romanians and the Polish people are [...] involved in language education: education, language teaching and learning. And we share the same values, Polish and Romanians partners”.

Members shape their expertise differences also during the project meeting. Camelia comments, for example, during their group discussion:

“we haven’t heard good of people who are linguistics. And we haven’t heard good of ICT people. I suggest that we do some a little, tomorrow when we have more decision making on the product. That we do some parallel work, perhaps”.

In her account, Camelia constructs their expertise diversity in terms of the “linguistics” vs. “*ICT people*”. When she refers to the fact they haven’t heard of the linguistic and ICT people indirectly she constructs them as having two different perspectives that they should both be heard in the decision making process for their project’s product.

The *language experts* form expertise diversity in terms of the different conceptualization of the term “exercises” and the different knowledge that members have for designing a good exercise. For the *language experts or educators*, an *ICT* member is not a “specialist” in languages, which means that it does not understand or know what should be done to design a good exercise. Marku (*educator*) illustrate this in his interview:

“and the only specialists in the partnership are the two Romanian partners and the Polish University. So we presented our vision on what learning materials mean, and it was definitely differently from the Estonian and the Finnish and probably the Greek partners”.

Marku (*educator*) in his account does three things: first, he constructs the expertise differences in terms of the different conceptualization of what an “exercise” means, second, he constructs himself and other educators as the “only specialists”, and third, he ascribes special status on the language field of expertise compared to other fields.

Camelia, similarly, creates the expertise diversity in the project group partly in terms of the different conceptualization of the term “exercise”. In her interview, she refers to the misunderstanding that existed during the group meeting regarding what an “exercise” means:

“So I expect to be as it is seems now [...] that it would be ten at least ten lessons or units which are developed according to the classic strategy of lesson of a unit in a foreign language, and the ladies in Poland and myself know very well [...] So, I am happy that today the definitions of the concept happened, you know”. [...] Yes, exactly the definitions that Klaus clarify his point of view. Because yesterday I was not very sure where his point of view was, you know. And I was just thinking that he would not being a specialist with foreign languages, he may not be well aware [...] we were went some very, very schematic exercises, and in the same time I was amused reflecting on my own educator experience”.

Camelia describes Klaus (*ICT*) as someone who “is not aware” of how to design a language exercise, and simultaneously remarks how she “was amused reflecting on [her] educator experience”. Camelia enhances her self-esteem and self-worth by constructing herself as an expert in language who knows “very well”, just like the two content developers the “classic strategy of lesson of a unit in a foreign language”.¹

Both in their interviews and during the group meeting, the *educators* make salient that they share a common understanding and perspective regarding the design of the language exercises. In her interview Teresa (*educator*) reflects how she felt after she finished her presentation regarding the design of the exercises. She notes that the “Romanians” [referring to Camelia, Marku and Margit] understood “correctly from the very beginning” what she presented “as something they expected”. Teresa points out that accepting someone’s perspective as something natural is different than simply understanding someone’s perspective. The former emphasizes a *shared* understanding and *common* perspective. In her account she points out that these members not just simply understood her perspective on language exercise, but furthermore they were also expecting that her perspective would be like that.

¹ That is in one of the processes that underlie the construction of expertise diversity in the group. The creation of expertise diversity is not randomly constructed but is driven by the need to have a positive working identity for the self. Through my findings I show how the processes underlying the identity construction comes into the construction of the diversity.

During the meeting, the *educators* show that they share the same perspective on the design of the language exercises. In most debates during the project meeting, *educators* were supporting and supplementing each other's arguments as the following vignette illustrates. The vignette takes place in the second session of their meeting, where members are discussing how they should design the language exercises. Martin discusses with Teresa about the design of the language exercises. Teresa interrupts him and comments that in order:

“to create the exercises we need some resource material which should be very relevant and it needs to have copyright. So we cannot produce, you know just taking some knowledge from the internet and making it just together.”

Martin replies with a comment that reflects his perspective regarding the way an exercise is designed:

“Gather it up. Terminology is not copyright”.

Teresa, slightly surprised and annoyed replies to him:

“we can't take, you know, some words from heaven, and then just say, ‘well, this is the exercise you have to do’. It must be text oriented, or whatever”.

“A text”, adds Camelia complementing Teresa, and Teresa continuous “a text, and what we will expect from partners”.

After a while, Camelia clarifies that they will need “an authentic text”, and Teresa complements Camelia:

“An authentic, sensible text, which will include the vocabulary.”

Some minutes later another member argues that if they use text then they will “be into grammar” and adds that “you want to avoid grammar”.

Camelia and Irena replies to him simultaneously by saying “no”.

Irena tries to explain that they can neglect grammar and they need the text as a way to “have something to start on, to make your words...”.

Marku interrupts her to illustrate Teresa's argument and offers an example:

“For example, ‘identify the trees in the following two paragraphs’. And you provide the text, where you...”, he clarifies.

Camelia joins in the discussion and supports Irena's, Teresa's and Marku's previous arguments:

“No, we need text. Because when you develop a material for a language, it starts a text”.

“So we can, you know, make the text easier. However, some crucial text from different departments would be really, really helpful, I mean...” Teresa complements.

That previous vignette shows how members form their expertise differences during their group discussion regarding the design of the language exercises. The *educators* (Camelia and Marku) support and complement the arguments of the two language developers. They have a shared understanding on how they should design the exercises and what is the role of the text in the exercise.

The continuity of the vignette illustrates the different perspectives between the *ICT* and the *educators* on how language exercises should be designed.

Martin and Teresa are discussing when Jan intervenes in the discussion and comments:

“I am sorry, but I think we are now again, like two steps ahead, because I am not sure whether text, for example, is the right way for us”.

Camelia and Teresa answer simultaneously that the use of text in the exercises is “definitely” the right thing.

“Definitely. From the linguistic point of view, definitely”, Teresa adds and Camelia agrees with her.

Jan argues:

“Sorry, again we are aiming at providing new competencies for work professionals, so there might be a different approach than having a text. Maybe, we might, we really need to look at the target groups and analyze what are the work situations, where they use this stuff. And then...”.

Teresa interrupts him,:

“But still, you have to introduce the vocabulary in a way”.

The *ICT* members (Klaus and Martin) have a different perspective than the *educators* about the design of language exercise understanding. At the beginning of the last vignette (3.2) Martin, although he is not a language expert, suggests to Teresa how she could design the exercises. For him, designing the exercises is a “simple task” (as he says in another part of the meeting) and that reflects in his suggestion to Teresa to “gather it up”. Klaus (*ICT*) who is interested to have “innovative solutions” perceives that having “a text” is somehow a less innovative solution than he has envisioned. The *educators* reply to Klaus by supporting their own suggestion and arguing that using a text is “right” from the “linguistic point of view”. They construct their expertise differences in terms of who knows what is “right” for designing a linguistic exercise.

The *language experts* or *educators* through the comparison between themselves and *ICT* people, construct a positive working identity for themselves. They enhance their self-worth stressing that they are the “only specialists” who know how they should design the exercises. In the project group all members are experts and specialists in their fields. However, *educators* do not distinguish between the different experts or specialists that are in the project group. When they use the term “specialists” they refer only to their field of expertise, the *educators*.

9.3 Expertise differences from the “ICT” perspective

9.3.1 Defining self as “not a language expert”

The broad term *ICT* that is used in this section refers to Michalis, Klaus, and Martin. Those three members have been categorized as “*ICT people*” by the *educators*, although they did not define themselves as belonging to the same expertise group (*ICT*).

Klaus and Michalis refer to their expertise differences by defining themselves in terms of what is not their expertise. For example during their group meeting Klaus comments to Camelia:

“I mean, I am just asking to understand how you see it and how you, as language experts, see it, because I am an expert language learner but not a trainer at all”.

In other vignette from their group meeting, Michalis refers to Martin categorizing both of them as “not language experts”:

“...and I understand also that in my way of thinking even if I am not an expert, even say ‘hello’, or ‘goodnight’ would very good. This is my understanding and your understanding, and we’re not language teachers.”

Klaus and Michalis define themselves as belonging to the same “not language expert” group, while as “language experts” they categorize Teresa, Irena and Camelia. However, the term *ICT* is used in this section rather than the “not language experts” label, because the latter is very broad and could possibly lead to an incorrectly inference that includes other members also, like Mary, Dimitrios, or Lajos, who are not language experts either.

Michalis and Klaus shape their expertise differences in terms of the different leverage that *language experts* have, compared to the “not language experts”, in decision making for the design of the language exercises. The following vignette from their group meeting shows how Michalis articulates their expertise diversity in terms of members’ different perspectives of what an exercise means. The vignette is from the last session before the meeting ends. We are in the meeting room and later the project group will move to the computer lab in which Martin will present his web portal and the type of exercises that it supports. Michalis at the beginnings addresses to all the members:

“Then we can discuss about what an exercise is from the expert side of view”.

Then he address to the two content developers:

“If you have some example to show us or find online some example. You can show us ‘This is the exercise that we have in mind’ and then we will discuss about how the two worlds, the exercise from the expert side of view and the interactive, let’s say side of view can come together”.

Although both the “language” (*educators*) and the “interactive” (*ICT*) are fields of expertise, Michalis categorizes as “experts” only the language experts. He acknowledges that the language experts have special status in the specific project, since it is highly related with their core aspect of their expertise.

During their meeting the *ICT* members point out that their misunderstanding with the *educators* (regarding the term “exercise”) was due to their different field of expertise. Klaus, for example, comments during their meeting:

“Yeah, but I think we have all different things in our minds when we are talking about exercises. Maybe you mean something different than you would mean (*referring to Teresa*). When I talk about, providing workplace learning and providing scenarios, probably I have something different in mind than you do. So, we really need to see which the situations are for our learners or our targeted groups”.

In their interviews, however, the *ICT* members do not refer to the “what an exercise means” misunderstanding, neither to the wrong term they used in the project proposal they wrote. *ICT* members refer to *language experts* as having a special leverage in decision making about the design of the exercises, and further point out that *educators* use that leverage. Klaus notes in his interview:

“you can observe that in any project meeting that in the beginning, there’s always a lot of people trying to position themselves and showing their strengths. [...] Every partner tries this. And if you have partners who are special in this project. [...] [for example, a] linguistic department. Of course they are unique and they also really show that they are unique. And they also show that they have unique ways to handle things. And this sometimes also leads to the fact that they don’t accept other opinions on how to do things, because they are by nature the specialists in these fields”.

In his account, Klaus categorizes the language experts as “by nature the specialists in these fields” acknowledging their special status. He also comments that using “their strengths” is something that all members do. Through his account, Klaus constructs the language experts as having special leverage in their project because of their field of expertise, but also articulates the use of the expertise differences as a mean to position self in the group. However, this is a use of expertise differences and it is discussed in the next section.

9.3.2 Defining self both as “we have thousands of exercises” and “not good in language”

Martin is the third member that *educators* categorized as *ICT* expert and he has different perceptions about their expertise differences than Klaus and Michalis have. In his interview, Martin does not make any reference to their expertise differences. During the meeting – contrary to Michalis and Klaus – Martin seems that he does not acknowledge that educators

have special leverage in the decision making for designing the language exercises. That partly derives from his self-perception that he is also an expert in language learning. During the meeting, Martin defines himself as having experience in “lingua projects” through his organization and therefore language expertise. The following vignette from their group discussion shows how Martin defines himself as language expert although he does not categorize himself directly as such. The vignette (3.7) takes place in the third session of their project meeting. Group members discuss their ideas about several, potential occasions in which their users may use the language exercises. Klaus presents his scenario of what he understands as an exercise:

“a learning situation where people can create some kind of knowledge and get some background information for a specific situation.” As an example of “situation” proposes the job interviews, job conflicts, etc. He perceives that these issues could be the “learning situations” in which they “could provide background materials and vocabulary and terminology to deal with”.

Teresa makes an attempt to comment to Klaus, and he replies:

“Well, I don’t know how many [exercises] we create, but they also have learning situations which I would understand as one exercise.”

“Yeah, but...”, Teresa tries to comment to Klaus, but Martin who perceives that the design of an exercise is a simple task, interrupts her:

“But if it is 100 words each, it is not that huge. I don’t think 20 exercises”, Martin notes.

Teresa seems a little disturbed and interrupts Martin with intense voice:

“Have you ever prepared any linguistic....?”.

She feels slightly annoyed by Martin’s comment which implies that her task is a simple one. Her question emphasizes her field of expertise and her experience in designing language exercises. By asking him if he has ever prepared any language exercise she makes salient who is the expert in those issues.

“I have participated...we have thousands of exercises”, Martin replies. However, he responds using the experience of his organization and not referring to his own. Then he continues:

“We may think differently, what we mean under “exercise” and notes that for him an exercise includes grammar and that it is a supplementary activity for language learning courses. He argues that an exercise “in one lesson and not a set of lesson” and that it can be done in “fifteen, twenty minutes”.

In another vignette from their project meeting, Martin also defines himself as having expertise in languages while he discusses with an *educator* member, Teresa. Teresa is a language teacher and her role is to design language exercises and to teach foreign languages in university students. The vignette takes place in the computer lab where Martin presents the web platform that his SME will provide to the project for uploading the online language exercises.

Teresa argues that language exercises should not be boring, and notes that the type of exercises which Martin have shown in his platform “seems to be very boring”.

Martin argue to Teresa:

“...as I wrote in one article, if the thing is already very interesting in visual, then this means that it is sometimes, also be careful, it is not education, because education, learning, is never integrated”.

In his account, Martin articulates himself as someone who knows what is and therefore what is not education and hence, as someone who has expertise in language learning. Martin although he discusses with a language expert as Teresa, he perceives that he has the knowledge and the experience to argue what is “education” and how they can design the exercises. Although Martin does not directly categorize himself as a language expert, he defines himself as having experience and knowledge in language education.

There is, however, an exception to how Martin constructs himself as language expert during their group discussion. In the next vignette Martin categorizes himself as “not good in languages”. That happens during the first break of the project meeting, when Teresa, Camelia, Irena and Martin were discussing the language exercises. Martin was arguing to the content developers (Teresa and Irena) that they should not include grammar in the language exercises because grammar will make difficult to translate after the exercises.

Teresa and Camelia replied that the passive voice is similar in English and Romanian, and Teresa asks him how the passive voice is in Estonian language. Martin do not answer but instead replies:

“I’m not good in languages” and adds that they have “definitely to consult”.

That self-categorization of Martin as “not good in languages” is the exception in the way he defines himself during the whole project meeting. That self-categorization as “not good in

languages” partly facilitates Martin to avoid to answer Teresa’s question. Martin is not interested to include grammar in their language exercises and possibly he does not see any reason for discussing the differences between the Estonian and English grammar.

Interestingly though, during the project meeting one of Martin’s main arguments is that their languages are very different and hence including grammar would make difficult the translation of exercises. When he was asked about the Estonian grammar, however, he avoids answering by replying that he is “not good in languages”. Martin partly uses that self-categorization to avoid discussing grammar even though at the same time argues about the grammar’s big differences in members’ languages.

9.4 Summary

This chapter presented members’ perceptions about their expertise differentiation. Although there are several fields of expertise in the group, members focus on the differences between the “ICT” and the “language experts”. The members who categorize themselves as “*educators*” or “*language experts*”, perceive as their out-group the “*ICT people*”, in which they categorize three members. These three members, however, do not define themselves as belonging to the same ICT expertise group. Michalis and Klaus, although acknowledge the distinction between the *ICT* and *language experts*, they define who they are in contradiction to what is not their field of expertise: they are “not language experts”. Martin does not focus on expertise differences and does not make clear how he defines his expertise to be. In the few cases in which he does refer to the expertise differences, he portrays himself as either having *experience in languages* or as not.

The findings presented so far, in overall show how group members construct their diversity in three inter-related categories of differences (national, professional, and expertise) and how they create each of their perceived diversity categories. Group members, however, do not always form their differentiation as separate or distinct categories of differences. In many cases members create their diversity to consist of intersecting categories of differences. In many cases both in interviews and during the project meeting, members define themselves and others intersecting their various identities. The next chapter illustrates the intersectional nature of members’ differentiation and how it unfolds in their interviews and during their group meeting.

Chapter 10 Doing differentiation work: intersecting the categories of differences

10.1 Introduction

The previous sections discussed how group members create each of their perceived categories of diversity in their group. Group members, however, do not always form their differentiation as separate or distinct categories of differences, but also form their diversity to consist of intersecting categories of differences. In many cases, both in interviews and during the project meeting, members define themselves and others through the intersection of their various identities. The construction of their identity and their differentiation is partly a relational process. How they define themselves and others as different (both in type of difference and the content of each difference) is influenced by who is the other and the situation.

The intersection of their differences leads to a complex group dynamic, either diminishing or enhancing the in-group –out-group dynamics (such as between South vs. North or between ICT vs. language experts). Apart from the national, professional, and expertise differences, other types of differentiation enter in the intersectional construction of their differentiation, such as the gender. The intersection of gender with expertise, nationality and profession either enhances the in-group and out-group dynamics between the *Language* and *ICT* experts (e.g. in the group the language experts are female while the ICT experts are male);, or it creates in-group differentiation in the *Academics* (e.g. Finish academics with ICT expertise are different than Polish academics with expertise in language learning).

In his interview Klaus portrays the complexity of their group diversity. His narrative illustrates the intersection of nationality, ethnicity, profession, and organization.

[...] I think we need to distinguish here and – well of course – we can also see aspects on the national culture, as the project partners from Estonia, Romania, Greece and Poland [...]

But of course even within the countries – as you know – we have partner which comes from the Hungarian minority in Romania. So we have people from very different national cultural contexts and also regional cultural contexts...

Additionally, we can observe a lot of differences in terms of professional cultures, organization cultures. We have academic partners as well as business partners. And well additionally there are those differences in working cultures, in different institutions. So this is kind of mixture between the national culture and the professional one [...]

10.2 Intersecting professional, national, and expertise differences

All members form their group diversity to consist of intersecting various categories of differences. This intersection however does not follow a single direction or pattern. The intersection of differences both enhances the in-group similarity and creates in-group differentiation within a category of difference. There are, however, other cases in which members form their intersecting differences as additive differences. It appears that the type of differences itself is not so important, but rather the process that the intersection serves. That draws attention to the process of differences creation: to the way members intersect their different identities.

10.2.1 Enhancing homogeneity within a category of difference: “what [...] we have in common here a number of us”

Some times the intersection enhances the perceived in-group similarity. For example, during their group discussion members who have *language expertise* and also teach in a university (*academics*) use their profession in intersection with their expertise. These members often do not distinguish between their two identities (*professional* and *expertise*) but define themselves in terms of the profession-expertise intersection. The following vignette from the project meeting is an example of how members enhance their perceived in-group similarity with other members. The vignette illustrates the intersection of expertise with profession and specifically shows how Camelia (*educator/ academic/ NGO*) negotiates her intersected identities towards Martin (*business*). The vignette takes place in the third session of the meeting. Klaus explains his understanding of what an exercise means, and a discussion between Teresa, Martin and Klaus follows. Camelia intervenes in the discussion:

“What I think that we have in common here a number of us, is that we’ve been doing the *teaching profession in languages* for a long time and we know what the profession requires in terms of quality standards for what good unit in teaching foreign languages mean, is like. So, that’s why we clearly see that there is no similar understanding of the process of how we introduce the product... and what the product is like” [*my emphasis*]

Martin tries to argue to Camelia, but she continuous:

“But we need to know... We are *professionals* in the *didactics of teaching foreign languages, in foreign languages*, so we can’t...we have to process the information that comes to me. *You are the external world* that has to *benefit from* the product that *we create*, but we need to keep the benchmarks which we know have to be there. So, you understand what I am saying”, Camelia address to Martin. [*my emphasis*]

In this vignette Camelia categorizes herself and the two Polish content developers as the “professionals in the didactics of teaching foreign languages” and distinguishes themselves from the rest members. Camelia shapes their differentiation in terms not only of their expertise but also of their professional differences. She perceives Martin as the “businessman” (as she categorizes Martin in her interview) who will benefit from the project by selling the product that the “professionals in the teaching foreign languages” will “create”. Camelia uses both her profession as a teacher and her expertise in language to gain leverage towards Martin. She stresses that “we need to keep the benchmarks which we know have to be there” emphasizing that they are the ones who know how the exercises should be done. Camelia through the use of her intersecting expertise and professional identities tries to enhance both her position in the group and the leverage of academics who are language experts.

10.2.2 Creating within-category differentiation: “Observing [...] how different academic professional cultures are”

In other cases, however, the intersection of the differences creates a heterogeneity within a category of difference. For example, expertise (*ICT* vs. *language*) is used as a way to stress the heterogeneity among the *academics* members. In his interview Klaus, categorizes the Polish members, himself and Michalis as different in terms of their country, ethnicity, and expertise. Klaus notes that all are *academics* but also points out they are not a homogenous group. He creates their in-group academic differentiation in terms of their expertise (*Language – Agriculture – Information System*).

Well just observing [...] how different academic professional cultures are. Like [...] we deal with the *language department* in a Polytechnic, and then we have the *Agriculture University* in Greece, and then we have the University of FinishITD, with the *Information System Department* and I can see that things are handled in different way. (*my emphasis*)

In his interview, however Klaus focuses in differences between *ICT* and language experts, and creates their differences in terms of the way they publish and share the language teaching materials that will develop in the project.

So, the way how you publish, how you would share materials. So that’s quite a good example I think. So, *we are in Finland* very free and very cooperative regarding our teaching materials. In this project we are developing teaching materials. So for me it’s totally clear that things should be shared, that should be published openly, that we receive even critical reviews to make our materials better. Uh, in other

professional cultures there are more focusing on keeping their rights and keeping their materials for themselves. Which is totally understandable. So of course there's always intellectual property issues. But that's something which comes out of the *tradition of an academic culture* but also of the *professional culture*. Let's say for us, for *Informational System* versus *Language Department*. [my emphasis]

Klaus creates a positive identity for the ICT experts as “*free and very cooperative*”, interested in publishing openly their teaching materials in order to get review and make them better. At the same time, he refers to *language experts* as “*keeping their materials for their selves*”, concerned with intellectual property rights. Klaus makes an inter-group comparison (ICT vs. language) positive for his in-group (ICT); he shapes a positive working identity for the ICT group and partly enhances his self-esteem and status.

In his account Klaus intersects not only expertise (ICT – language) with profession (academics), but also inserts in the above intersection their national differences. He uses the country he represents to compare with Poland and not his ethnicity (German). Contrary to this comparison, when he refers to Michalis he uses his ethnicity to form their intersectional differentiation:

And then you have of course partners who have already worked together long, like us and Michalis. [...] where we have already developed a kind of common working base which has developed in the last 8 years or something like that. So, that's again different. You cannot say that this is still the culture of *my German background* from *Information System* or Michalis *Agriculture Science background* in *Greece*. So that's already, again the different. You need to achieve this common working base. You need to clearly reflect on what background do people have in terms of an national culture, organizational or professional culture. [my emphasis]

In his narrative Klaus points out that previous – and especially long-term – cooperation develops a “common working base” among members that makes less important their differences (national, professional, expertise) and reduces the effects of their differences. The creation of differences is dynamic – perceiving someone as different is not a static perception but changes. Klaus notes that he and Michalis have different expertise and national “backgrounds” but he does not perceive Michalis as different from him, since through time they develop a shared, mutual understanding and a common working base.

In other cases the intersection of profession (*practitioner* vs. *academic*) with expertise creates *heterogeneity* among the *language experts*. Marku, for example, perceives the two Polish content developers as having the same expertise with him (*language experts*) compared to the agriculture and *ICT* expertise of the rest members expertise. He categorizes them as in-group members, sharing the same “values”.

We are not very [different]... We are different definitely, but the variation is not very big. Because if you look at the partnership composition... We have Greek partners; we have Romanian partners... then Polish, Finnish and Estonians. And *Finnish and Estonians* seem to have the *same behavior* and the *same culture*. And we *Romanians* and the *Polish* people are... but only because of the profile of the partners. Because *we are involved in language education*. Education and language teaching and learning... And *we share the same values* – Polish and Romanians partners – ... and please don't forget that we are part of the same whatever communist bla, bla... you name it.

Additionally, Marku perceives that contrary with the *North* members, he shares more with the Polish members as belonging to the *South* regional group. In these occasions, Marku creates his in-group similarity with Teresa and Irena, creating a positive working identity for himself and his perceived in-group through the comparison with other members he perceives as out-group.

In the case of the profession, however, Marku categorizes Teresa and Irena as out-group members because of their “very academic” working approach. Marku constructs a positive working identity for himself by contrasting his approach with the *academics*:

a “serious product” doesn't need to be “very academic [...] in order to show that we worked a lot in the project”.

For Marku (*practitioner*), the most important is to remember the final user and to design a product for the users' needs, not for the academic requirements of the *academics*. He creates a positive working identity for himself – and his perceived professional in-group (practitioners) – compared to the perceived out-group, the *academics*.

10.2.3 Intersecting differences as additive: “We are quite mixed in this project”

In other cases the intersection of categories of differences does not enhance in-group similarity, neither creates within category differentiation. Members articulate the intersecting differences as additive differences that shape a complex differentiation in the project group. In his interview Martin points out that he does not divide members according to their nationality or profession, but he perceives others as “a whole set of information”.

We can't overestimate those [national differences]. It depends also on the human situations and on the situation which organization they are working in and I normally don't divide. I look more organization types, plus the country they come from, plus what are their interests, so it is like a whole set of information, then I see what kind of partner.

In his interview Martin describes their differentiation as context depended. The categories of differences and the creation of their overall differentiation are influenced by the “human situations” members confront with within the EU-funded projects. As Michalis explains in his interview, the context of an EU-funded project is highly dynamic. Michalis points out how both the “Other” and the situations that members face, change throughout time:

Δηλαδή σε κάθε φάση του έργου, ξανακάθεσαι, βλέπεις.. γιατί ξέρεις αλλάζουνε... είναι δυναμικό το περιβάλλον. Όταν μιλάς για ένα έργο που κρατάει τρία χρόνια, οι οργανισμοί αλλάζουνε, οι προτεραιότητες αλλάζουνε, οι άνθρωποι φεύγουν, έρχονται, αλλάζουνε πόστα. Είναι ένα δυναμικό περιβάλλον. Είναι αυτό...

The intersection of differences is influenced both by who is the Other and the context. The intersection is ongoing, constant and illustrates how identity work and differentiation construction processes are dynamic and relational. Members’ perceptions, self-definitions and categorization of others are not static or fixed.

An example of the dynamic process in which members form their intersectional differentiation is the following vignette from members’ project meeting. The vignette takes place at the beginning of their meeting. In his narrative Klaus forms their professional diversity as differences between two groups: researchers and business. He creates specifically their differentiation in terms of their different interests: research vs. exploitation of research.

“[...] we still need to work on common ideas, common vision and common perspectives [...]. *So it’s clear that we are all have some kind different focuses and maybe different interests, whether it is research or whether its exploitation of those activities.* So let’s just make that very explicit and very open in this meeting here. For every work package when we run an activity, when we promise an activity, please also state what do we expect, and what we want to do. [my emphasis]

In the continuation of his narrative, Klaus categorizes himself as “researcher” and notes that as a researcher he wants to find “new innovative solutions to publish about it”.

So in fact, in our term, of course we are researchers. For us it’s extremely important to *find new innovative solutions to publish about it.* [my emphasis]

Although his interest is informed both by his expertise in e-learning and his profession as a researcher, Klaus shapes their interests as informed only in terms of their professions.

“So for us the *business interests* of course it’s not so focused but more innovation and related to this partnership interests of course” [my emphasis].

At the certain time of the meeting, Klaus shapes their differentiation as differences between the *academics* and the *business* members. Later, however, when the project meeting discussion evolves around the design of the language exercises, Klaus re-forms his perceptions about their differentiation and portrays their differences in terms of between expertise.

“I mean, I am just asking to understand *how* you see it and *how you, as language experts, see it*, because *I am an expert language learner but not a trainer at all* [my emphasis]. So, this means we say, ‘Ok, the context is a work situation, there is certain knowledge which we know the learners usually have and we train additional stuff’. ‘Is that how you would imagine it?’, Klaus asks.

Klaus with his comment introduces again the expertise difference to their discussion. In his account, Klaus construct their differentiation in relation of their expertise. He defines himself as not an expert in teaching languages, and categorizes others as “language experts”. He refers to their expertise differentiation in the group in another part of the meeting when he presents the evaluation task – for which his organization is responsible. Klaus says to the group members:

“We don’t see evaluation as something one partner does [...]. We see evaluation as a kind of a service that we try... to work together and evaluate our own world. *And we can’t do that on our own...because you are the experts for the language learning* [my emphasis], this is on us. [...] So this is why I am mentioning this in the beginning, so that we just see evaluation not so separate, but very closed and attached to the work-packages and working in... very close cooperation”.

10.3 Intersecting national, professional, expertise differences with other differences

The detailed exploration of the intersectional construction of members’ differentiation allows for the emerging of other types of differences (that were less salient in members’ perceptions), like gender and the size of their institutions.

10.3.1 Inserting gender in differentiation work

Gender is a category of difference that is not perceived as salient by all members. Gender enters in the process of differentiation work through the intersection with expertise, nationality and profession. Its intersection with these differences in some cases enhances the in-group and out-group dynamics, while in other cases it creates in-group differentiation.

10.3.1.1 Intersecting gender: enhancing in-group similarity with some members

In her interview, Camelia intersects expertise with gender. On the one hand, Camelia categorizes herself and other three female members as in-group members in terms of their same expertise “educators”:

It was very interesting to see that according to the *field of expertise* that people have little, *little emotional empathetic teams was formed*. It was obvious for example *the educators*: the Polish ladies, and myself and I could see that Margit as well, because she manages an educational center and her management definitely has a feeling on the emphasis put on teaching. We all more or less, felt somehow together, understanding in the same way, the same. Yeah, it was interesting in this point of view.

At this point, during her interview, I remember myself thinking that I was expecting Camelia to point “the ICT people” as the expertise out-group *of educators*. But to my surprise I realize that differentiation is much more complex than I thought. Camelia continue her interview and forms their out-group to be “men”. Gender is used to reinforce *educators’* distinctiveness from the *ICT* but also the “*men*” group:

“I could also see for example that *men* stacked together more obviously, you know.

I *wouldn’t think* that the *Polish ladies and us* [refers to herself and Margit as Romanians] *are stacked together because we are females*.

I am thinking Klaus, Michalis, and Martin... [pause] and I think that Dimitrios was somehow neutral I think. That’s how I felt it...”. [my emphasis]

Nevertheless, after some seconds of small pause Camelia comments that Dimitrios and Marku were neutral and notes that maybe was not a “male thing” as she was thinking at the beginning.

Dimitrios, probably he somehow was more neutral. Marku I think that Marku [...] So, I don’t know if this was a male thing... But definitely there were people who are thinking along the same lines probably. So they were somehow more glued now together.

Camelia defines herself, the Hungarian female member and the two Polish female members as intersecting their gender and expertise. The cross-cutting of gender, expertise (but also nationality – although not referred in this quote) in overall enhance Camelia’s perceptions about her similarities with the specific female members of educators. Although Marku (a male member of her team) works in adult education (her NGO) she does not refers to him as an in-group expertise member. Having the same gender with Margit and the two Polish members intersects and informs the creation of the language experts group. Camelia infuses gender in

her accounts also during their project meeting. In most of the cases, when Camelia refers to the two Polish, females, and language experts she uses the term “ladies in Poland” or “Polish ladies” or “the ladies”:

So I expect to be as it is seems now, is going to be around in this idea that it would [...] at least ten lessons or units which are developed according to the classic strategy of lesson of a unit in a foreign language [that] *the ladies in Poland* and *myself know* very well...

10.3.1.2 Intersecting gender: creating in-group differentiation

Although gender enhances the in-group similarity within a category of difference (such as the language experts), in other cases the intersection of gender with other differences creates an in-group differentiation within a category of difference (e.g. the academics). An example is a narrative from the interview of Klaus, in which he intersects gender, nationality and profession to articulate the identity of a female academic. Indirectly, Klaus creates a within category heterogeneity in *academics* between women and men, but also between equal vs. less equal societies (*national differences*).

Why you change your working style or why you don't change it. Sometimes [...] it's the environment. Sometime, I mean...They can be so many different motivations. It can be for example. Agenda related issue. We had a discussion that when you have a female professor in her fifties, of course she has a totally different background, because in the time when she was entering this academic world it was much harder for a woman to be successful. And she probably at that time had to be much more strict, much more straightforward. And much tougher in a way than, let's say maybe it's today in a very equal society, like Finland. That's totally different.

Klaus uses the phrase “much more strict, much more straightforward” to refer to the working style of a middle age, woman, academic. Klaus indirectly compares a *female academic* to other *academics* (women and men) from “more equal societies”. In comparison he ascribes the “much more strict, much more straightforward” – compared to other academics men or women – working style of a female, academic woman in middle age in her experiences when she entered the academic profession. In this comparison, however, he does not use his country (Germany) but the country he represents (Finland).

A closer examination of his narrative shows that entails a double, simultaneous comparison between:

- Women (in equal societies) vs. women (in not equal societies): comparing the same gender across different countries

- Women vs. men (in the same country): comparing different genders in the same country

From one hand, his account involves the comparison of *women academics* in different *countries*. A *woman academic* in more *equal societies* does not face the same difficulties that another *woman academic* faced before many years in a *not equal society*. This indirect comparison portrays the *national differences* (in terms of equal societies) intersecting with *profession* (academics) and creating a *heterogeneity* within the profession of *academics*. Not all women academics share the same working style and partly this is due to their different countries and consequently their experiences when entering academia.

On the other hand, his narrative also entails the comparison of *women* with *men academics*. When Klaus notes that “it was much more harder for a woman to be successful” when entering in the “academic world”, he portrays the differences between *women* and *men* in the same profession (*academic*) not necessarily in different countries. A man academic (both in equal and less equal societies) does not face the same difficulties that a woman might face when entering in academia. *Women* and *men* academics do not share the same working style, and partly this is due to different *gender roles* in their *country* and consequently their different experiences when entering academia.

In the above narrative Klaus intersects gender with nationality through the comparison of the different *gender* roles across different equal vs. less equal *countries*. He ascribes the working style of the academics to the intersection of their gender and their country. Through this intersection of profession, gender and nationality Klaus shapes the identity of a middle age, woman, and academic from a not-equal society as “much more strict, much more straightforward”.

In his interview, Klaus argues that gender’s role is perceived differently across different national contexts and can affect the professional experiences of women. In his account, he compares the working style and gender roles of the country he represents (Finland) with the working style of a woman academic, middle aged from a not “equal society”. Hence, it is perceived that in order for a woman to be successful she had to strict and straightforward.

10.3.2 Inserting the size of institution in differentiation work

Another category of difference that members use in their differentiation work is the size of the institution that members represent in the project. Martin categorizes AgriEdu as a university in terms of the interests and goals it pursues in EU-funded projects and as an out-group member, distinctively different from himself as SME. As it discussed in chapter 8, Martin creates professional diversity as differences between universities and SMEs in terms of their different interests and goals they pursue in EU-funded projects.

When, however, Martin discusses members' way of working, although he still portrays the differences between universities and SMEs, he changes his perceptions about who is categorized as university. Specifically, Martin changes his perception about AgriEdu and categorizes AgriEdu as "not that much working as a University" when compared to the working cultures of PolishEdu and FinishITD:

Sometimes we feel that. For example, AgriEdu is not that much working as a University. AgriEdu seems much more flexible or maybe small University. In PolishEdu case it's quite somehow, it's feasible that it's a University, also in FinishITD, how the management goes and so on, because they have to get approach to the lawyers and you know, this takes always quite a number of time. So, its organizational life is quite similar to PolishEdu and FinishITD. (*Martin*)

Martin categorizes AgriEdu as "small university" and ascribes its perceived flexibility to the size of the institution. Martin argues that the flexibility differences in decision making processes between academics and universities are due to the size and structure of the institutions. He categorizes SMEs as having flexibility in decision making because of their small size and the fact that the decision is made "*normally [by] the one who represents*".

And a very important part is also the size of the company, because the SMEs, one small company, you can get decisions made very quickly and flexible. So, it's not a problem to make changes or "OK, I got a new idea, well, tomorrow morning, we start to implement that.

[In SMEs] is much more quicker, because normally the one who represents is very quickly able to make decisions, it is five minutes and it is done.

Martin notes that university's big structure is an obstacle in deciding and implementing quickly the necessary changes in EU-funded projects.

In universities you have to go through very high and rectorate level and so on. It takes maybe 2-3 months before the idea is turned into something in action, because organization is bigger, you are just not that flexible. And in small equations it affects quite a lot sometimes.

Mary also refers to the *size of institutions*. She relates, however, the institutional size with whether the members of each institution perceive the specific project a high or low priority. She further connects the degree of institutional priority with members' "efforts" in the project:

There's an obvious difference to me between the smaller organisations and the larger universities and what their involvement is and how they perceive the project. For the Romanians, for example, this is a big project for them and its something that they put a lot of effort towards, whereas maybe PolishEdu and FinishITD and to a certain extent [AgriEdu] as well, it's not such a big part of their overall organisation and not such a priority and that sort of shows up in the work. [my emphasis]

10.4 Summary

The findings presented in this chapter illustrate that diversity is not just the sum of members' perceived national, professional, and expertise differences. Members create their diversity by negotiating their multiple identities (like ethnicity or profession) and intersecting their various categories of differences (professional, national, expertise). Group members intersect the perceived most salient differences (professional, expertise, national) with less perceived differences – like gender and the size of institution that members represent in the EU-funded project. There is not a single or unique pattern on how members intersect their differences. The intersection at some cases enhances members' in-group similarity in a diversity category, while in other cases it creates in-group differentiation, or even in other cases it was described as adding differences that make members' diversity more complex.

Chapter 11 Doing differentiation work: Using differentiation as a discursive resource

11.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the various ways in which members use their differentiation. Members’ differentiation takes multiple shapes, content, meanings, and uses. Differentiation work – the process of differentiation construction and re-construction – involves not only the shifting perceptions of members regarding their differentiation but also the ways they use their multiple, shifting, dynamic differentiation during their everyday project life, such as: to justify their communication problems, a request for the involvement of other members, and to legitimate their goals in the project. Table 11.1 outlines how members use their categories of differences during the group meeting and in their interviews. Each way of discursive use is presented in the next sections.

Table 11.1: How group members use their differentiation in their interviews and during the project meeting

Differentiation as a discursive resource to:	Type of perceived differentiation that is used
Justify - Communication problems - Request for involvement of other members in a task	National differences
	Expertise differences
Supporting members’ arguments	National differences
Legitimate goals and interests in the project	Professional differences
Gain leverage in decision making	Expertise differences Professional/expertise intersection
Positioning self in the project	Expertise differences Professional/expertise intersection

11.2 Using differentiation as an excuse to justify

Although in their interviews all members related the national diversity with communication problems, during their group discussion they did not use their national differentiation to justify any communication problem. National differences, contrary to the other categories of

perceived differences, seem to be a taboo and members don't speak openly about them during their group meeting.

11.3 Justifying communication problems

In their interviews members use their national differences to justify their communication problems. They perceive that if they are aware of national differences they can reduce communication problems in multinational contexts.

When you go out, when you communicate you need to know how to behave so as not to interfere with the culture, both of the country and the behavioural culture of the individuals. It is very important to know in general how to approach representatives of various cultural backgrounds differently.

As it was discussed in chapter 7, members ascribe communication problems to the national differences.

Yeah, I mean...Because it's the communication like I was saying before. Because they are all from different countries and different professional cultures they have different ways of seeing things, so you add onto that maybe a limited language ability and then communication becomes extraordinarily difficult because you know, it's not only like different perspectives but now you're talking about... like the ability to express those different perspectives is also somewhat limited

This use of national differences to justify communication problems reflects also the meaning of "orientation" that members ascribe to national diversity.

Martin: And nationality plays also role, of course...

Me: In which manner?

Martin: The Mediterranean people are much more open, much more...they express much more actively than people from the North. The Swedes are very calm, they discuss a lot; Italians normally disagree with everything in the beginning.

11.4 Justifying request for involving others in work task

Members use their expertise differences to justify a request to involve other members in a work task. They used their self-categorization as "not expert" in a field to justify their need for the *experts'* contribution.

The *ICT* and *agriculture experts* categorized themselves as *not being experts in language* and uses this categorization when asking other members to actively participate in a work task. During the project meeting Klaus uses the categorization of others as "experts for the

language learning” to justify his request for involving them in the evaluation process, which is a task of his organization:

“So, we see evaluation as a kind of a service that we try to work together and evaluate our own world. And we can’t do that on our own *because you are the experts for the language learning*”. [my emphasis]

In another vignette from the meeting, Mary, an agriculture expert categorized herself as not an expert in language learning, and further used this self-categorization to justify her request for help from “people who have this expertise”: “I want the content to be valuable. So I want to make sure that this is what you guys really want to include. And in addition my expertise here is not language learning. So we need the content from the people who have this expertise”.

The *educators* also use their self-categorization as “not experts” to justify their request for contribution by other members. For example, Irena who is responsible for designing the exercises for the ICT users, during the project meeting asks ICT experts to “think out” areas which she could use for designing the exercises: “As far as IT is concerned, I also think that we should come up with certain areas, as in the case of agriculture. For example, like computer architecture or web creating, hacking, or peripherals or some other things. I am not an expert, so I am just making some hints for you to think it out as experts on IT”.

Other *educators* use their self-categorization as “not experts” for the same purpose. The following vignette from the project group discussion shows how Teresa and Marku (both *educators*) construct themselves as *not experts in ICT and agriculture* and how they use this for asking help by others. The vignette takes place in the computer lab. Martin presents his web portal and the type of exercises that supports. After Martin’s presentation a discussion starts between the group members. Teresa has some objections regarding the type of exercises that Martin’s web portal imposes. Michalis asks Teresa to explain how she has envisioned the design of the exercises.

Teresa responds by referring to her role as a teacher in a university. She explains that they don’t teach their students just the English language, but they design language exercises which are always connected with some introductory text and in that way they help their students to learn new things in their fields. Then, she explains what she perceives as the adding value of their exercises. She quotes what their students say:

“Uh, you know, we haven’t learned it during our studies and we are referred here. [...] English classes *are* the places where we learn something new from our field”.
[her emphasis]

After Teresa refers to their good practice as language teachers, she adds that she and Ireen were thinking that it will be a good idea to do this type of exercises in this project. Then she clarifies that they need the introductory texts from the partners. While Teresa means the agriculture and the ICT experts, she doesn’t explain which partner she means, as something that would naturally be understood by others.

“Especially since *we are not specialists* and we don’t have any experience *in agriculture, IT, neither do you*”, Marku complements Teresa.

Expertise differences are used by all members to justify requests for help. They feel the need to justify and ground their request in something that cannot be challenged. For example, the language experts could have asked for those comprehensive texts without mentioning their expertise differences. However, they use their differentiation to justify their request and possibly to prevent a negative answer by others, since what they request implies more work for the *ICT* and *agriculture* experts.

11.5 Supporting members’ arguments

Martin uses their national differentiation to support his argument about the design of the language exercises. The following vignettes show how Martin shapes their national diversity in terms of their different languages and how he uses this differentiation in order to support his suggestions. Martin constructs national differences in terms of members’ different languages. Martin articulates these differences either as a salient, as less important or not existing differences among them depending to how he uses their language differentiation to support his suggestions.

On one hand, Martin highlights the differences between partners’ languages to point their national differentiation and to support his argument to design simple exercises without grammar; he argues that their huge language differences would make difficult the translation. Martin infuses their national differences to their group discussion for the design of their product by using them to support his arguments.

On the other hand, Martin suppresses the national differences between Hungarian and Romanian by diminishing the language differentiation between them. The following vignette from their project meeting shows how Martin overlooks the national differences between Romanians and Hungarians. The vignette takes place during the second session of their group meeting. Margit presents the results from the users' needs analysis that her organization has conducted. When Margit finishes her presentation, Martin asks if she has "tried the labor market pool in the region" and explains that by "labor market pool" he means "the organizations who hires". Martin ascribes Margit's difficulty to find Romanians interested to move in Greece for work, to the fact that those interested are already working in Greece. He explains that it is possible there are already Romanian in Greece working either in agriculture sector, or in other sectors like the tourist industry.

Martin uses the results of Margit's need analysis as an opportunity to introduce his suggestion to broaden the scope of the project and include other types of user groups. He says that "I had this idea in Estonia but I didn't wan to press on FinishITD too much because that's definitely a new idea". Then he invites the members to "see what can be done, because...that's 30.000 Estonians in Finland". He mentions that he didn't want to "press on FinishITD too much", but he doesn't refer to other partners.

"The labor immigration is very close going on with the language knowledge", Margit replies to Martin and she adds:

"In our region all Hungarian speaking people go to Hungary. All professionals go to Hungary. Well, ok maybe not 100% but much percentage".

As "region" she refers to the region in which she lives and in which she has conducted the needs analysis. "It seems 2 Romanian in our hotel", Martin tries to argue, but Margit interrupts him. She distinguishes between the Hungarian and the Romanian speaking people in Romania. She seems a little frustrated and argues that "Hungarian speaking people" goes to Hungary. She continuous that for the Romanian speaking people

"I guess they go to Italy or Spain. Because of the language again... The Romanian with Italian and all those things".

She emphasizes that language is a very important condition in choosing the country for immigration:

"the language issue is crucial when you want to go and work abroad".

However, Martin insists on his suggestion to contact the labor markets in Greece and looking for Romanians who are already in Greece:

“There’s definitely has to be done, there’s definitely a need for Romanians to go to Greek language. Even if it doesn’t in the local region. We may search from an other perspective, from a Greek perspective and I’m sure there’s quite a lot of Romanians earning money in here.”

The two previous vignettes show that national differentiation and language differences have different meanings and uses during the group meeting. National and language differentiation becomes a useful social construct; Martin articulates their language and national differences either as a salient, as less important or not existing difference among them depending to how he uses their language differentiation to support his suggestions.

11.6 Legitimizing their interests

Members speak openly about their professional differences in their interviews, but not during their group discussion. Even though their professional differences are infused to their group discussion (see, chapter 7), there are few vignettes in which members use their professional differences during their meeting. Specifically, they use their professional differences for justifying their goals and interests in the project. An example of such use of professional differences is in the narrative of Klaus (the project coordinator) at the beginning of the meeting. The following vignette shows how Klaus uses the perceived professional differences (between researchers/academics and business) to justify and legitimate the interests and the goals that members pursue in the project ascribing their different interests to the professional differences he perceives as salient.

The vignette takes place at the beginning of their meeting. Klaus, who is the coordinator constructs their different interests as a continuum with two extremes (research and exploitation of research) that are informed by their professional differences, i.e., researchers vs. business. He further categorizes himself as “researcher” and notice that as a researcher he wants to find “*new* innovative solutions to publish about it”.

Later, Klaus asks the other members to be

“very explicit and very open in this meeting here” and to “state what we expect and what we want to do [...] for every work package when we run an activity, when we promise an activity, please also state...what do we expect, and what we want to do.”

Klaus further comments:

“let’s just say and make it explicit ‘we are going to do this way, because we would like to achieve this. Because we would like to do something in the future’ and then we can align our [interests]... a little bit better”.

The coordinator constructs as salient and legitimated that researchers pursue to do publications, while business people exploit the research that academics do. He invites the other members to be open and “explicitly” state their interests.

Klaus raises as salient that members pursue different type of interests and tries to make members feel comfortable and “state” their real interests in the project. Klaus uses their professional differences to legitimate that they pursue different type of interests. Their professional differences become a useful discursive resource that members’ can draw on during their group meeting to legitimate their goals and interests in the project outcome.

11.7 Gaining leverage in decision making

During the meeting the *educators* use their expertise to support their suggestions regarding the design of the language exercises. Specifically they use their self-categorization as “specialists in foreign languages” to enhance their leverage in the decision making process on the design. The following vignette during the group discussion illustrates how educators try to gain more leverage in the decision making process by using their expertise. The vignette also follows from when Teresa asked Martin if he has ever prepared any linguistic exercise. After the short discussion between Martin and Teresa, Klaus joins the project group discussion regarding what “exercise” means. He suggests that they could “introduce some more scenarios [in which users could use our exercises], because we will get many more other opinions. And I think you have prepared like more detailed scenario, where we also can get a better understanding how an exercise, what an exercise could be”. “So, my opinion... might be totally stupid also, so I don’t know”, Klaus adds.

Camelia replies and comments to him:

“No, it is not stupid, only that we haven’t reached a common vision on what we have to do, what we have to prepare as a final deliverable. It is not clear for any of us, what we have really... I mean the ladies (she refers to the two content developers) and then we, ourselves.”

Teresa comments that they talk for different things than they were expecting and from what their team leader has prepared them. She asks whether they have to “imagine the whole situation” (e.g. a job interview) or if they will “just introduce more vocabulary” and “one or two exercises” in which they will “put vocabulary in use”.

“That is why we are here, to discuss this”, Klaus replies to Teresa. “Maybe you can also explain later on your scenario of what you envisioned to be”, he adds.

Camelia intervenes in the discussion:

“What I think that we have in common here a number of us, is that we’ve been doing the teaching profession in languages for a long time and we know what the profession requires in terms of quality standards for what good unit in teaching foreign languages mean, is like. So, that’s why we clearly see that there is no similar understanding of the process of how we introduce the product... and what the product is like”,

Martin tries to argue to Camelia, but she continuous. She uses her language expertise towards Martin, underlying that the language experts are the ones who know the quality standards for having a good unit in foreign languages:

“But we need to know. We are professionals in the didactics of teaching foreign languages. So we can’t, we have to process the information that comes to me. You are the external world that has to benefit from the product that we create, but we need to keep the benchmarks which we know have to be there. So, you understand what I am saying”.

Camelia doesn’t give Martin the opportunity to challenge the leverage of *educators* in the decision making process on the design of the language exercises. She uses her expertise in not only to gain more leverage, but also to increase the leverage of all the *educators* in the project group. Camelia constructs the *language experts* or *educators* as the ones who know how to design a quality language exercise. Through her construction she enhances *educators*’ status in the project and she uses that enhanced status to support the arguments and the position of *educators* in the group. Camelia also distinguishes Martin from the educators and positions him as an out-group member of the language experts group.

11.8 Positioning self in the group

Group members use their expertise to justify why they are in the MULTI project, but also “to position themselves and show their strengths” as Klaus said. In his interview Klaus notes:

“you can observe that frequently in the meetings and the kick off meetings that the partners are trying to position themselves. You can see that in discussions, discussions of them not longer only about the topic but it’s about positioning the person, of positioning the organization in this consortium”.

Their expertise differences rather than any other type of differences is perceived to be more related with their role in the project. The following vignette shows how Klaus, himself justified his role in the project in terms of his expertise. The vignette takes place at the beginning of the meeting. Klaus who is the coordinator has taken the lead and comments that the first session of the meeting is for “setting the contracts of the meeting, what we are trying to figure out, what we would like to achieve”. Then he directs the attention towards their different expectations on the project and positions himself in the project group. He justifies his role in the project through his field of expertise in “designing e-solutions in the field of e-learning”.

“So this is why we are in this project and why is particularly interesting for us to find interesting solutions and some innovative”, Klaus adds to the rest members.

Their project is an e-learning project and as an expert in e-learning he is enrolled to be in the project. Klaus not only positions himself in the project, but also constructs which are his interests in the specific project. He is interested to “find interesting solutions and some innovative solutions”.

During the group meeting members define themselves mostly in terms of their expertise while they communicate it to others. Expertise appears to be an important identity in members’ self-concept and Mary illustrates this in her interview: “I mean a lot of the meeting was ‘this is who we are, and this what our expertise is’ for each of the partners, just to give an introduction about what, why. [...] we wanted to get an idea who was the expert in whatever areas and sort of where they were coming from and how they fit to the whole view of the project”.

11.9 Summary

This chapter presented how members draw on their diversity *using* their differentiation as a discursive resource in various ways throughout their everyday working life. Both in their interviews and during the project meeting members use their national and expertise differentiation as an excuse to justify their communication problems but also to justify a request for involving other members in a task. Members use their national differences also for supporting their arguments during the project meeting. They use their professional differentiation to legitimate their goals in the project. Finally, members use both their expertise and an intersection of their professional - expertise differentiation to gain leverage in decision making and to position themselves in the project group.

The findings discussed in the present section regarding the multiple ways members use their differentiation as a discursive resource empirically illustrate that diversity is not an independent variable that passively influences people, but people that are actively construct their differentiation and use it in various ways. The findings of the study complement the findings of Barinaga (2007) who showed how the members of the EU-funded project group she studied, used their national diversity as discursive resource to excuse communication problems and other conflicts arising in the group, but also to position themselves and others along the line of “cultural constructs” and the stereotypical labels attached to the cultural constructs.

Chapter 12 Doing differentiation work: the various meanings ascribed to differentiation

12.1 Introduction

Members' differentiation is a social construction and part of this construction refers to the meanings that members ascribe to their differences. The creation of differentiation is an active process of meaning making. This chapter presents the various meanings that members create for their differentiation. Members refer to national differences as an "orientation" that helps them to guide themselves in multinational contexts, but also as adding value to themselves. This added value derives from their perceptions that national differences help their self-development both in personal and in professional level. Moreover, members note that national diversity is one of the reasons that the EU-funded project exists. They perceive that one of the higher goals of the EU Commission is to "reduce the nationalism" in Europe. Each of these meanings is presented in the following sub-sections and briefly outlined in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1 The meanings that members ascribe to their perceived differences

The meaning ascribed	to their perceived differentiation
Orientation	National differences Professional differences
Source for learning	National differences Expertise differences
Opportunity for self-development	National differences
Serving a higher goal	National differences Professional differences
Imposed and pain	Professional differences

12.2 Differences as an "orientation"

All members perceive national differences as an "orientation" that is important to have in order to be prepared of what to expect, how to react, and communicate. The following account from Jan's interview, illustrates the meaning of "orientation" that members ascribe to their national differences:

"Well, if we related this to cultural models, you have these very abstract models of Hofstede for example. [...] And for the first time those abstract high level models are very good orientation. That you see how the hierarchies are handled differently,

that you see that people deal differently with uncertainty and those typical categories that you have. So, in the beginning those models are enough, because they reduce the complexity of cultural issues. But then, when you get more involved to projects you see many differences [...] So, with every project you do, you see, you notion of how different... and then you should try to incorporate to your own activities and to your own actions because you need to react.”

In his account, Klaus makes salient the need for reducing “the complexity of cultural issues” and the need to “be able to react to those [cultural issues]”. He is familiar with the cultural models of Hofstede and notes that these are a “good orientation” which “in the beginning [...] are enough”. However, the diversity in the EU-funded projects is much more complicated than the simple taxonomy that Hofstede’s model provides. He argues that those models are not so helpful because there are “many differences which are more complicated. In his account, Klaus articulates the awareness of national differences as an *orientation*. This orientation reduces the uncertainty that someone may feel about what to expect when he enters in a multicultural group.

All members portrayed the awareness of national differences as a way to orientate themselves in the complex diversified context of EU projects, to be prepared of what to expect when entering to a EU-funded project and how “to react”. Not being aware of national differences gives rise to negative feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. As one group member said, she felt “very nervous” when she first participated in an EU-funded project, because she wasn’t “aware very much of the huge cultural differences”.

Another member notes that the awareness of the national differences helps because “είσαι κάπως προετοιμασμένος για το τι να περιμένεις”. Being prepared for what to expect also reduces potential communication problems in multinational groups, since they know “how to approach representatives of various cultural backgrounds differently”. Another member notes that it is “very important” to be aware of differences in order to “find communicational channels that makes everybody happy [...] to avoid to walk like an elephant in a China Shop thinking that is only your truth that is valid because this doesn’t work”.

The construction of the awareness of national differences as having the meaning of *orientation*, serves the members’ need for uncertainty reduction but also it enhances their self-efficacy. Members use their perceived orientation to construct a positive working identity for themselves: they are able to work and communicate properly both in EU-funded projects and in other multinational working contexts too. In her interview Mary notes:

“The same thing that happens with this project, that for some reason I have the ability, because I’ve worked so much with people from different backgrounds, I have learned how to really understand when two people are coming at the same thing from different perspectives and are not communicating properly, and I find myself bringing attention to that point”.

Members perceive their orientation as an “ability” that enhances their competence to work in multinational environments. As Klaus comments, he is “used to all those European differences” and therefore he is “well prepared” for working in “Asian contexts” with Korean people, although this is a different context than Europe:

“we are still already well prepared because we are used to all those European differences so we are quite in a good situation”

Members perceive that they gain this orientation by actually experiencing the national differences, and not just by learning about them. In his interview Marku emphasizes the importance of the awareness of national differences. He explains how he perceives that someone can gain this orientation (which derives from the national difference awareness):

“Cultural aspects are not something that you learn. I could learn about the Greek culture and know everything about it, but when I come to Greece I make a mistake because I don’t know how to approach them, such as make an appointment or plan a business meeting at 7.30 am. I could get killed for that of course! Planning a meeting with a Swedish colleague at 7.30 am wouldn’t be a crime. You understand what I mean?”

Marku points out that this cultural awareness is gained only through experiencing the differences:

“Culture isn’t something that you learn; it’s something that you experience and you only learn these things by being directly exposed to them.” [my emphasis]

The meaning of orientation that members created for their national differences is also formed for their professional differences. Members perceive that this *orientation* regarding their professional diversity helps them to be prepared for what to expect and how to act. Martin argues that it is important to “keep in mind” that professional differences may affect workgroup processes and create some misunderstandings. He adds that he doesn’t perceive as

salient their professional differences in this project because “a lot of partners have taken these kinds of things into account, including us. So, we are already prepared for such things, but normally these kinds of issues appear when the partnership is new and when the organizations are new in this project business, so to say”.

In his account Martin forms the awareness of professional differences as an orientation which helps them to be “prepared for such things”. He perceives that when someone has this orientation reduces the potential misunderstandings in the group.

Other members also articulate on this awareness as a prerequisite for building a better working base between the group members. As Klaus say:

“We try to found out what the partners really want to get out of this project. This is much more concrete than the values. But if you find the similarities there you have much better basis on working together when you know that people coming from an academic culture or they want to have some project run in a good way, but they also want publications out of it”.

Klaus does not focus on their professional differences *per se*, but on the awareness of the professional differences in EU-funded projects: professional differences become a useful orientation.

Even though members perceive that “these cultures business versus academics sometimes clash”, all members (except Martin) do not consider this “clash” as something negative. Klaus notes that the important is “to know before the project which the strategic interests are, what are they key issues for people and what are their ideas and their personal motives behind it”. Klaus perceives that the negative effects of their professional differences may be reduced when they are aware of their professional differences. At the beginning of their meeting which has discussed in chapter 8, Klaus after he constructs their professional differences in terms of their different interests between the researchers and the business, he invites the rest members to “state” openly their interests. Klaus infuses to his project management approach the meaning of orientation for their professional differences.

Camelia constructs the professional differences awareness both as a necessary orientation and as legitimating their interests. In her interview she notes:

“So I think that it’s important from the very beginning to try to have very open discussions everybody to see where you meet with this. And if you remember yesterday when Klaus spoken he said ‘well, we have different visions and lets see how we all come to meet to one. There are research interests here, there are pragmatic, business interests here, so let’s see. Let’s talk the same kind of

language at the moment’. And this is running, this is what makes a project interesting. Because there are universities, who want to publish, they want to do research [...] its Martin who is business person and he wants to sell the platform, and he wants to makes it sale-bone, and he wants to make it sustainable and interesting for him, to *earn* from this. So everybody has to... and I remember that in the first meeting Martin for example he said ‘well I am a partner of this project, *if* we worked this with my platform then I am devoted partner, if we work with a different platform I am a partner’.

In her narrative Camelia highlights the importance of the awareness on professional differences: it is important to be aware of others’ interests in order to see how they can “meet”. When Camelia refers to different interests and goals that exist in the project she constructs as salient and implicit that universities “want” research and publications, while business “want” to “earn” and have profits. She doesn’t challenge those interests either she relates them with another perceived differences. She legitimates the interests they pursue in the project but also perceive that being aware of the different interests is required in order to see where they can “meet with” and hence to build a good working base in their project.

12.3 Source for learning

Members construct national differences as an opportunity not only for their personal development, but also for their professional. They perceive national diversity as a source for learning new management and communication practices. Martin notes in his interview: “...you can really learn different positive active aspects of the project management and also on the working culture. So, that’s one really pretty positive thing”.

As Michalis said,

“100% κάθε μέρα μαθαίνω από την επαφή μου με τους άλλους. Δηλαδή στη δουλειά με τον τρόπο που κάνω κάτι, θα πάρω ιδέες από το πώς το κάνουν οι άλλοι, θα δω πως το αντιμετωπίζουν άλλοι λαοί”.

In their group meeting Michalis applied a practice that aims to create group bonding and to facilitate the construction of a shared vision in the group. In his interview he notes that he has learned this practice from another project, and adds that he always learns new things from his contact with other people who have studied in other national contexts:

“Πράγματα τα οποία εγώ δεν τα’μαθα, δεν μου τα διδάξανε στο πανεπιστήμιο, δεν δουλεύουμε εμείς έτσι στο πανεπιστήμιο όπως είναι να κάνεις μια ομάδα εργασίας, να λύνεις κάποια προβλήματα κάποια θέματα. Το είδα να το εφαρμόζουμε για

παράδειγμα - αυτό που είδες και εσύ - σε κάποια συνάντηση, το δανείστηκα, το δοκίμασα, μου δούλεψε. Το προσαρμόσα στον τρόπο με τον οποίο μπορώ εγώ να το χρησιμοποιήσω και το χρησιμοποιώ στη δουλειά μου (Michalis)”

Camelia perceives as source for learning the expertise differences. In her interview she explains how she views the expertise differences of their group as a source for learning both new management practices and new things in fields different from her own. She argues that their project is “different” and “interesting” for her, because “it offers me new perspectives on project management”. Camelia ascribes the project management of their coordinator to his field of the expertise (ICT): “it is a project management system which is very close, I think, to the procedures which make the IT system [...] where all the procedures are recorded, and codified, and explained and standardized. So, I am not surprised because I think the coordinator [...] himself has studied and produced a PhD, I think, in that kind of things. So now he is implementing the findings and the work he has produced in his PhD to real life.”. Camelia explains how she perceives that the project management approach of Klaus is “different”:

“it is not a simple approach [...] it’s involves a lot of dedication and time to procedures and things that otherwise in other projects they wouldn’t have happen in that format”. Camelia perceives that this different project management is “interesting” but she is also curious to “see how it will go”.

Camelia adds that other members in the project group have the same “curiosity” with her, and comments that “there is some “anxiousness [in the group] about this approach”. She explains that the “anxiety” is related with the project management approach of Klaus, which Camelia characterizes it as “let’s focus more on forms”. Camelia is worried about his project management approach that focuses more on “forms” rather “on content”. Although Camelia discusses her anxiety about the “different” approach of Klaus, she repeats that she perceives also “interesting” his management approach:

“this is what makes differential interesting and definitely it is reflection of the way in which management sees all these procedures”.

She quotes what she has told to Marku and the rest of her team in her organization:

“Well this is an interesting lesson, this is an interesting initiative and we have to pay a lot of attention and try to learn things that we can also perhaps implement”.

In another part of her interview Camelia again articulates the expertise differences as a source for learning things from different fields of expertise than her own. She notes that she has learned many things regarding “platforms, e-learning, and about distance education [...] simply by participating in projects”, and that she can “very comfortably [talk] about such kind of issues” with ICT experts at her university. Camelia emphasizes that to her “big surprise”:

“ [people in the university] who were the experts at the level of other co-departments have no idea about these things. They didn’t know things which we knew from projects you know. They are not participating in such kind of projects. And this is good feeling to see that how much you learned by participating in projects you know, because we are not ICT people”.

Camelia compares herself (*educator*) with ICT experts in her university and realizes that she has learnt things in the field of ICT, that the ICT experts in her university don’t know. She emphasizes that she has learned these things from participating in projects. The expertise diversity that exists in EU-funded projects is perceived as a source for learning things in different field of expertise than hers. Camelia enhances her self-esteem through the comparison with “[ICT] experts” at her university. As she says, she feels “good” realizing that she learns new things that enables her to “talk comfortable” with others experts.

12.4 Self-development

Members portray their national differences as an opportunity for self-development. Dimitrios articulates national differences as a frame in which he has the opportunity to compare and evaluate himself with other nationals. Dimitrios notes in his interview that if he wasn’t exposed to many different others, he couldn’t be able to “*tap on the shoulder*” and assess his achievements, since he wouldn’t know what other people do.

Ναι, φυσικά... γιατί πάλι ας πούμε στο τέλος μιας χρονιάς, λες «για να δούμε πού πήγαμε.., τι κάναμε, πώς τοποθετούμαι στο χώρο σαν άνθρωπος, σαν επαγγελματίας, σαν άποψη για τις σχέσεις.. για το πόσο ανοιχτός είμαι στο να συναναστραφώ με άλλους ανθρώπους» Αν σε αυτή τη σούμα δεν είχες εκτεθεί και δεν έπαιρνες ερεθίσματα από τόσους πολλούς, διαφορετικούς ανθρώπους με τα αντίστοιχα background, δεν θα ήσουν ικανός να κάνεις tap on the shoulder ότι πήγαμε καλά είμαστε καλά, ας τραβήξουμε μια γραμμή για το που θα πάμε από εδώ και εμπρός. Θα έβραζες στο ζουμί σου χωρίς αρχή και τέλος χωρίς να ξέρεις ακριβώς που πάει ο κόσμος... ενώ τώρα ας πούμε έχεις τόσα ερεθίσματα...

Dimitrios pursue the comparison that multinational context offers him, because through this comparison he is able to self-evaluate. He perceives that self-evaluation is very important since it is one of the prerequisites for developing himself, both personally and professionally.

Είναι ένα από αυτά που μου αρέσει πάρα πολύ [...] είναι το πολύ-πολιτισμικό [...] Γιατί μπορείς να επανατοποθετηθείς ο ίδιος όταν είσαι μέσα σε ένα τέτοιο [πολύ-πολιτισμικό] περιβάλλον... γιατί άμα είναι όλοι ίδιοι [...] δεν μπορείς να συγκριθείς με διαφορετικά σταθμά, ενώ άμα [...] βρεθείς και να εργαστείς σε ένα εργασιακό περιβάλλον που [...] γίνεται ένα brainstorming από όλο τον κόσμο. [...] Το μέτρο σύγκρισης είναι αυτός που έχει μεγαλώσει σε τελείως διαφορετικό περιβάλλον. [...] Εε αυτό είναι ένα πράγμα που σε κάνει να επανατοποθετείσαι και να βελτιώνεσαι. Συν τα άλλα που βέβαια [...] που είναι τροφή για το μυαλό...

Michalis also perceives national differences as an opportunity for his personal self-development. As he says, “αισθάνομαι ότι έχω αλλάξει πάρα πολύ. Ειδικά και σαν άνθρωπος έχω αλλάξει. Σαν προσωπικότητα δηλαδή”. He perceives that through his participation in multinational project groups and his contact with others he developed his communicational ability and increased his “social intelligence” (*my translation*).

Δεν είχα καθόλου ευκολία στην επικοινωνία με τους άλλους. Η κοινωνική μου νοημοσύνη είναι, ήταν below zero. Και επιπλέον όλο αυτό το έχω καλλιεργήσει και μέσα από αυτές τις δουλειές

Members, however, perceive national differences as an opportunity not only for their personal development, but also for their professional. They perceive national diversity as a source for learning new management and communicational practices. Martin notes in his interview:

“...you can really learn different positive active aspects of the project management and also on the working culture. So, that’s one really pretty positive thing”.

Michalis points how he develops professional from working in multinational contexts:

“100% κάθε μέρα μαθαίνω από την επαφή μου με τους άλλους. Δηλαδή στη δουλειά με τον τρόπο που κάνω κάτι, θα πάρω ιδέες από το πώς το κάνουν οι άλλοι, θα δω πως το αντιμετωπίζουν άλλοι λαοί”.

12.5 Serving a higher goal of the EU Commission

Many members perceive that national diversity is one of the reasons that the EU-funded projects exist. They perceive that through participating in such projects they serve one of the higher goals of the EU Commission which is beyond the project scope. In her interview Camelia notes:

“I think that one of the *very* important things for which all of these money are spent is to show all of us how similar we are. Of course it is a product, of course we can do for other people who are not directly in the project, but to *us* who are directly in the projects is just to see how well you can communicate with other people. And I think that’s why European Commission wants people to be offered *mobility*.

Because by moving around you learn this. The less you travel, the less you think that you are the center of the universe. [...] You are very ignorant about everything else. [...] And you learn all these things and you think “yes, it is acceptable to be different and you *enjoy* to see differences, that’s why you travel, to see that these different things *exist* and you are one of *them*. You are one of the very many examples of different things.

That’s why it’s interesting. Otherwise it would be very boring to find *exactly* the same things. You wouldn’t have the effort of travelling, to find out that is exactly like home. So, you know... you appreciate the differences and you embed the differences into to you, and you find out that you are one of those items that makes the differences interesting.”

In her narrative Camelia articulates nationalism and prejudice as the main reason for the creation of EU-funded projects. Camelia distinguishes this goal of EU Commission from the apparent goal which is the product of the project. She portrays national diversity as one of the main reasons why the EU Commission created these EU-funded projects at the first place. Camelia rationalize the funds for doing projects and travelling, to EU Commission’s goal to make people from different nationalities to travel, work and communicate, and to make them realise they “are not the centre of the universe”. In her interview, Mary also constructs the EU-funded projects as a way of EU Commission to reduce the nationalism and prejudice in Europe:

“...*if* the objective of the EU is to develop projects on international level then *really doing* these cross-cultural relationships, I mean... It sort of an added value to things that have be on the project itself. Beyond the objectives that are written in the grant is that, you know. I think the EU does suffer a little bit from too strong nationalism. And maybe there are nations too strong and results in some prejudice and close mindedness about other cultures. And by having these projects [...] they’re actually working on something that people coming interested, and most of the individuals are involved in language learning, so they have common interests in work area and then

the added value is that they come from different cultures and they learn about the history of [each other]”.

The perception that national diversity is the main reason of the existence of EU-funded projects is salient by many members. Members perceive that through their participation in these projects they serve the higher goal of EU Commission: to bring together people from different nationalities. Through this meaning that members create for national diversity, they also enhance their status and their self-esteem. They articulate their self as serving a higher goal than simply design a product. Their feelings that contribute to a higher goal, such as the reduction of nationalism in Europe, enhance their own self-esteem since they become part of this higher goal. Martin notes in his interview:

“The rationale is quite on the higher level. [...] I feel this is one of the way how Europe keeps different cultures in Europe together. That’s the highest rationale I see, that this kind of let’s say requirements are put in the European international projects. Because if you can get an Irish man and a British guy to sit around the table and drink beer even in frames of an educational project, that’s already a big leap forward, towards common Europe. That’s, I think the rationale we get from putting different organizations and different countries together.”

In his account Martin intersects national and professional differences. For him, professional differences are a very important aspect of EU-funded projects and he perceives that there is a higher reason why the EU Commission wants businesses with universities to cooperate.

12.6 As “imposed” and “pain”

Although Martin perceives professional diversity both as legitimating their interests in EU projects and as an orientation for himself; he also perceives professional diversity to be a “pain”. He constructs professional diversity as a “pain” that has to take and which is “imposed” by the EU Commission.

Although in interviews I was asking general questions about the differences they perceived as salient in their group, Martin during his interview focuses mostly to their professional differences and the negative implications that those differences have for the project. Martin perceives that professional diversity is a “requirement” imposed by the European Commission

which however makes more difficult for the partners to reach a common vision. In his interview he emphasizes that:

“But *if there was no such requirement* from European project side or European Commission side to put as possible diversified partners together and if we focus only on the project’s results that we want to do something, then definitely I don’t see any rationale in putting very different partners and organization types together. I think *it is* finally more difficult to achieve the common, let’s say tangible output of the project with different partners and different organizations, than having more or less same organizations and same markets together.”

Martin in another part of his interview again articulates diversity as *imposed* arguing that “same type goes together in nature normally”. He notes:

“Because it’s really difficult to... when we have different goals. [...] and if we put this all together it’s possible to work, but it’s much more difficult, because same type goes together in nature normally”.

Martin does not perceive that their diversity adds something to their project product, but the opposite:

“So, if you were asking about how it is good for the project or the project output that different cultures and different partners are together, I don’t see any justification in that field”. He perceives that if “only universities gather together or only small companies or big companies and so on, who share the same vision” gather together, then they could create “a new service or new something...a new kind of platform or whatever”.

Later Martin explain further that as “vision” he perceived the economic interests that the partners pursue in the EU-funded project:

“it is just communicating and working with people who share *your vision*, even on the economical ways or so on.”

The “pain” that Martin perceives from their professional diversity partly is due to the different interests and goals from the partners. Martin is the only “businessman” (as academics categorize him) and other members (both from NGO and universities) don not share his interest to profit from the project. During the meeting most of the debates were mainly

between Martin vs. the others members. Martin was trying to convince them for two things: first, to broaden the scope of the project (to add new user groups), and second, to design language exercises that include only simple vocabulary (because in this way it would be applicable to many potential users and it would ensure profits).

His narrative in the following vignette from their group discussion shows the “pain” and the frustration that Martin felt in their meeting. Camelia and Martin are discussing regarding the design of the language exercises. Camelia comments on Martin that if they design the exercises like Martin suggests then “nobody is going to use it”. Martin disagrees with Camelia’s argument and replies by redirecting their discussion towards the topic “who are our users”. Martin argues to the rest group members:

“there’s a lot of market, but just we have defined our target groups in a wrong way”.

Martin argues that they can be “focused on 35.000 Estonians who are in Finland, and who are now for example in construction business and they are loosing their jobs in Finland, they’re coming back home, they are looking for new opportunities in Finland”.

He continues by saying that “for those people, who know already a little bit Finish, these exercises can be very much used, if there is a job opportunity”. Then, Martin calls the other members to consider that there is “a market for their exercises” if they broaden the scope of the project:

“this is now” and “now we have to take this into consideration of course because we won’t change the partnership and so on, but there is a market if we broaden the scope a little better”.

Martin continues to raise his concerns regarding the relationship between their users’ profile and the market size for their product. He argues that if they define their target group to be only “highly educated people”, then they will have small number of people as users.

“My suggestion is we still keep the target group, but to say we open the scope and we found out that there’s much more need also for other user groups”, Martin suggest to the other members.

“So we [...] still focus on the main small target group in Romania and teachers in Estonian, but we found out also that there are other needs and other target groups and so we open the same door to all the other target groups. That will make us a little bit more safe, and we can demonstrate it also”, Martin continuous.

Martin feels frustrated by the possibility of not adding new target groups and he declares his frustration to the group:

“Frankly if this is only, if this would be the only target group it’s very difficult to make at least viable exploitation plan, I’m sorry. It’s I have to drink 10 beers as minimum to make exploitation plan for such a narrow target group”.

The vignette takes place at the half of the first day of their meeting, in which Martin was having constant debates with Camelia, Marku, and Margit regarding the design of their user groups and the decision on who will be their users. In his narrative Martin construct his interest to ensure a big market for their product. His suggestion to add new target groups is his interest to have a big market which will “make” them “a little bit more safe”. Martin seems that he is frustrated by the negative answers he gets from the other members to his suggestion for broadening the project scope. He expresses his frustration by emphasizing to the rest members that he has to be drunk “to make a viable exploitation plan for such a narrow target group”.

In his interview, Martin notes that MULTI entails some ideas that are not applicable to his organization since those ideas serve different goals and interests than his interest. Nevertheless, he has to compromise as he says, e.g. to accept influences from others in the design of the project product: “It contains some ideas which are important to us. But of course it’s a compromise, because some parts of the proposal and activities they are brought by other ideas and other influences, which are not that particularly, 100% our way to go but this is the name of the game, it’s a compromise”.

For Martin, professional diversity “is one of the *pains* but is still worth taking this pain and proceeding with the project, because it’s just one of the things which you have to solve as good as possible.”

“So, I am very positive to it, even though...because if there is one of the requirements, one of the high requirements I know they want to get the different partners, different countries and so together this is... this is one of the *pains* but is still worth in taking this pain and proceeding with the project, because it’s just one of the things which you have to solve as good as possible”

Martin perceives that professional and national differences affect negatively the project outcome, but as national diversity he refers to the “different markets” for the product of the project and not to the national differentiation between the group members:

I think *it is* finally more difficult to achieve the common, let’s say tangible output of the project with different partners and different organizations, than having more or less same organizations and same markets together. [...] But I do support the Commission decisions *to mix* European projects, different cultures and different

partners in areas because it is good for Europe in general. Because it unites Europe and it creates common understanding

Martin points out that it is important to be aware of the organizational, professional, and national differences and the problems that may arise in communication and understanding:

I can't that quickly remember, but in general yes, there are things related to the different organizations and different institutions and different cultures to put together. There is a reason, anyway, to keep this in mind in MULTI, as in any other project. So, there definitely have been quite some maybe, miscommunications or misunderstandings, but I don't think it's much important. (Martin)

However, Martin does not distinguish between the effects of national and professional differences. He perceives them as equal and just enhancing the overall complexity and diversity in the project:

A little bit. It is different cultures. There are differences between different countries, but another part of the difference is there are the different organizations and I can't even say which plays the bigger role... (Martin)

Let's say there are some differences in cultures, but normally in project world [...] quite a lot depends on not just the culture or the country originally, but also a lot of things depend on the type of the organizations partners are in...

12.7 Summary

Members create various meanings for their differences and do not perceive their differentiation as having either positive or negative effects. Group members perceive and describe their professional and national diversity as an *orientation* that helps them to navigate themselves in the complex and ambiguous context of the EU-funded projects. They perceive their national and expertise differences as a *source for learning* and an *opportunity for developing* themselves. Members describe their national diversity as the reason for the EU-funded project existence. They perceive their national differentiation to be the higher goal of the European Commission, i.e. to bring together people from different nationalities and reduce nationalism in Europe. They view their participation in the project as serving a higher goal than the creation of the project's product. One member, however, perceives their national and professional differentiation as "a pain" – an imposed requirement by the EU Commission that someone has to take in order to participate in EU-funded projects.

The creation of these various meanings is through processes related with members' identity work process. The meaning of "orientation" that members ascribe to their diversity partly

relates with members' need to *reduce uncertainty*, enhance their *self-efficacy*, and create a positive sense of self as capable to work, communicate and cooperate in multicultural contexts. Through the articulation of their differentiation as a source for learning and self-development members *add value to themselves*. Although Martin describes national and professional differences as an “imposed” “pain” from the European Commission, the same time – like all members – Martin *enhances his self-esteem and status* through his perceptions that he serves a higher goal than the creation of a product. Barinaga (2007) similarly demonstrates how the members of an EU-funded project, referred to their national diversity to define and enhance their individual worth but also to justify the existence of the group and its worth. In addition, the meaning of *orientation* that emerged in this study is also present in Barinaga (2007) and specifically on the ways that members use their national diversity as “a sensemaking device [...] to make sense of each other” (p. 329) and to position themselves along a line of “cultural constructs” and the stereotypical labels attached to the those.

Chapter 13 Constructing group diversity through “differentiation work”

The findings illustrate that in the examined project group diversity is dynamic and changes over time during the project life: diversity takes multiple shapes (chapters 7, 8, 9, 10), meanings (chapter 11) and discursive uses (chapter 12). What is important in diversity creation is the process of forming and re-shaping members’ differentiation and not just the labels (categories) of differences *per se*. I propose that this process of diversity construction – which I call “*differentiation work*” – is ongoing, complex, and involves the forming and re-shaping of the content, shape, meanings, and discursive uses of members’ differentiation.

I propose that group members construct and re-construct their group diversity through “*differentiation work*” a process that is contextual and relational: members’ perceptions, meanings, and discursive uses of their differences are informed both by contextual factors (e.g historic relationships) and who is the “Other”. What appear to be important in members’ *differentiation work* are the functions that the creation of their differentiation serves – what members accomplish through *differentiation work* in the EU-funded project. Through their differentiation work members reduce their uncertainty and situate themselves in the complex context of the EU-funded project; they create a positive working identity and add value to themselves.

13.1 The dynamic nature of group differentiation and the process of doing differentiation work

Members’ *differentiation work* partly involves members’ perceptions about *who* and *how* someone is different from another. Their differentiation is not a natural quality, static and fixed, but socially constructed and dynamic. Members change their perceptions regarding how they differ in the group, both in terms of context and type of differentiation. This ongoing process of constructing and re-constructing members’ differentiation in the group reflects the essence of the proposed concept “differentiation work”. The next sections illustrate the dynamic, shifting nature of members’ differentiation. The critical presentation and discussion of narratives (some of them are presented in previous chapters) within members shifts their perceptions, meanings, and uses of their differentiation, and shows how the group members engage in *differentiation work* during the project life.

13.1.1 Doing differentiation work: shifting the self-definition

Members' differentiation is dynamic and fluid: members alter not only the *meanings* ascribed to their differentiation and the ways in which they *use* their differentiation, but also their *perceptions* of how someone is different than them. An example of the dynamic, shifting ways members define themselves as different or similar in relation to other members, is found in Michalis' interview. In his interview Michalis describes the working identity of people sharing his Greek ethnicity as negative and wishes to distinct himself from that negative working identity. Michalis constructs his own working identity by dis-identifying with his ethnicity and identifying with the working identity of *Western* people.

“Νομίζω ότι δουλεύω – νομίζω – ότι δουλεύω περισσότερο με ένα ευρωπαϊκό στυλ παρά με ένα ελληνικό στυλ.

Later in his interview, however, Michalis shifts his perceptions about his working identity and his ethnicity; he chooses to distinguish himself from the Western way of work in aspects he considers himself to be “better” than the *Western* people. Michalis argues that contrary to the Western people he has the ability to adjust in unexpected situations and ascribes this ability to his Greek ethnicity. In his interview Michalis explains:

“Αν θες αυτό που θεωρώ εγώ σαν εθνικό στοιχείο, που έχει να κάνει με το πώς θα προσαρμοστώ σε μια δύσκολη κατάσταση θα αλλάξω κάτι για να το φέρω κάτι πιο κοντά στο πώς είναι τα πράγματα. εε.. Ίσως το φέρνω και το κουβαλάω μαζί μου - και είναι ένα από τα καλά πράγματα τα οποία φέρνω- ότι μπορώ κάτι το οποίο το έχω σχεδιάσει με έναν άλφα τρόπο να το επανασχεδιάσω ώστε να το προσαρμόσω στο πώς είναι τα πράγματα σήμερα. Ίσως, ίσως λέω, ένας Εγγλέζος ή ένας Γερμανός να σου έλεγε «όχι αυτό υποσχθήκαμε, περιγράψαμε στην αρχή, με αυτό θα κολλήσουμε μέχρι το τέλος» Για μένα δεν ισχύει αυτό. Προσπαθώ συνέχεια να το προσαρμόσω, να το βελτιώσω. εε.. ναι, εκεί ίσως ο τρόπος δουλειάς μου να μην είναι τόσο αγγλικός, γερμανικός. Αλλά γενικά θέλω να λέω, να νομίζω ότι δουλεύω πιο ευρωπαϊκά”

The perceptions of Michalis regarding his national differentiation from other members are dynamic and fluid. His need to have a positive working identity partly informs the shift of his self-definition. The way Michalis shapes his differentiation from others partly also depends on who is the Other, the situation of comparison, and the need of a positive comparison for himself. At one point he chooses to define himself as belonging to the *West* regional group shaping a positive working identity for himself compared to the working identity of *Eastern* people that he perceives to be negative. At another point Michalis changes his self-definition

and points that he carries some influence from his Eastern (Greek) ethnicity that distinguishes him from the Western people in aspects he perceives to be better.

A second example of the multiple and shifting ways members define themselves as different in relation to Others, is offered by Martin during the group meeting. Martin shapes his expertise diversity with two controversial ways: at some point he defines himself as having experience in developing language exercises, while in other cases defines himself as “not good in language”. In his narrative, the expertise differentiation acquires both different contents and meanings.

During the meeting, Martin does not acknowledge any special leverage in the decision making process regarding the design of the language exercises in relation to members who are language experts (like Teresa and Irena). He perceives – at least partly – that there are not any expertise difference between him and the members who are language experts. The vignette from their group discussion between Teresa and Martin shows how Martin defines himself as language expert although he does not categorize himself explicitly as such. Teresa teaches foreign languages in a university and her role in the project is to design the language exercises. Teresa, who is slightly annoyed by a previous comment of Martin implying that her task is a simple one, asks Martin:

“Have you ever prepared any linguistic [exercises]...?”

The question that Teresa address to Martin emphasizes her field of expertise and her experience in designing language exercises. Teresa through her question – asking Martin if he has ever prepared any language exercises – wants to stress who is the expert in those issues. Martin replies:

“I have participated...we have thousands of exercises”.

However, Martin responds using the experience of his organization and not referring to his own. Then he continues:

“We may think differently, what we mean under exercise”.

Martin notes that for him an exercise does not include grammar and that grammar is a supplementary activity for language learning courses. He argues that an exercise “in one lesson and not a set of lessons” and that it can be done in “fifteen, twenty minutes”.

In another vignette from their project meeting, Martin again defines himself as having expertise in languages while he discusses with Teresa. The vignette takes place in the computer lab where Martin presents the web platform that his SME will provide to the project

for uploading the online language exercises. Teresa argues that language exercises should not be boring and notes that this type of exercises that Martin presents in his platform “seems to be very boring”.

Martin replies to Teresa:

“...as I wrote in one article, if the thing is already very interesting in visual, then this means that it is sometimes, also be careful, it is not education, because education, learning, is never integrated”.

In his narrative, Martin articulates himself as someone who knows *what is* and therefore *what is not education*, and hence, as someone who has expertise in language learning. Martin although he discusses with a language expert as Teresa, he perceives that he has the knowledge and the experience to argue what is “education” and how they can design the exercises. Martin makes salient that he does not perceive any expertise differences between him and the Polish members who are the language experts in the project through the way he portrays himself as having experience in languages.

During most of the project meeting, one of the main arguments of Martin is that the languages of the group members are very different and hence if they would include grammar in the language exercises, then it would make difficult the translation of those later. Martin, through that argument, implies that he *knows* which the *language differences* are (thus, he has knowledge on languages) and based on that he suggests not to include grammar.

In another vignette of their group meeting, however, contrary to the above vignettes in which Martin define himself as having experience in languages, Martin changes his self-definition and the way he shapes their expertise differentiation. Martin now defines himself as “not good in languages” shaping a different expertise differentiation between himself and the others. The next vignette is from the first break of the project meeting when Teresa, Camelia, Irena and Martin are discussing about the language exercises. Martin argues to the content developers (Teresa and Irena) that they should not include grammar in the language exercises because grammar will make difficult the translation of the exercises. Teresa and Camelia reply that the passive voice is similar in English and Romanian, and Teresa asks Martin how the passive voice is in Estonian language. Martin do not answer but instead replies:

“I’m not good in languages” and adds that they have “definitely to consult”.

The self-categorization of Martin as “not good in languages” is the exception in how defines himself during the whole project meeting. That self-categorization also partly helps Martin to

avoid answering the question of Teresa since he does not appear to be interested to include grammar in their language exercises.

On the one hand, Martin argues that he knows about languages and their language differences, while on the other he argues that he does not have knowledge regarding the grammar in his native language. The comparison of the above incidents shows that language knowledge regarding the design of language exercises and the expertise differentiation in the group does not have a static content, neither meanings, nor uses. Expertise differentiation is a dynamic, relational and context specific social construction. At one point Martin portrays himself and the Polish members as having the same expertise – and hence same leverage in decision making –countering the expertise differentiation among members. At another point Martin portrays a totally different image of their expertise differentiation by distancing himself from the language expertise in order to avoid a discussion on a topic (grammar) that he wants to take the focus off. Expertise differences become a useful discursive resource that members draw on, depending the situation they confront with.

13.1.2 Doing differentiation work: changing perceptions about others

The dynamic and shifting nature that group differentiation has is illustrated not only in the ways members define themselves as different from one another, but also in the way they perceive and categorize the other members. An example of the shifting perceptions and categorization of others as different is found in members' narratives about their national differentiation. Group members are aware that in EU-funded project groups it is typical to have a disparity between a member's ethnicity and the country this member represents in the project. In the MULTI project, the difference among members' ethnicity and the country they represent existed for four members (Klaus, Mary, Margit, Lajos) (Table 13.1).

Table 13.1 The ethnicity of group members and the country these members represent in the project

Name of the member	Member's ethnicity	The country the member represents in the project
Klaus	German	Finland
Martin	Estonian	Estonia
Michalis	Greek	Greece
Dimitrios	Greek	Greece
Mary	US	Greece
Teresa, Irena	Polish	Poland
Camelia	Romanian	Romania
Marku	Romanian	Romania
Margit	Hungarian	Romania
Lajos	Hungarian	Romania

As one member said,

“Well sometimes is like here. Mary for example, is from AgriEdu (*Greek institution*), but actually she is American. So also in another project I met 2-3 French people, but most of them were Canadian, the other ladies were British. But actually they worked for a French institution and they represent French people.”

However, members categorize each other mostly in terms of the country they represent rather than in terms of their ethnicity. As a group member put it:

“We did know that the Finish guy is German. He is only one year or one and half he is in Finland. So, he is German.”

In his interview Martin categorizes Mary – an American who represents a Greek institute – both as “Greek” and as “not Greek”. Martin at one point notes that Mary has “a lot of US background” which “makes her not very Greek one”, while at another point he categorizes Mary as a Greek:

“Mary, yes [...] If we say our standard limits, how normally Europe and other countries treat, they are Greeks”

Lajos and Margit are usually categorized by others as “Romanians” although they belong to the Hungarian minority of Romania. In his interview Lajos acknowledges that other members perceive himself and Margit as “Romanians” and ascribes this categorization in their Romanian citizenship. He points, however, that “they all know” that his ethnicity is Hungarian.

The categorization of a member in terms of the country that this member represents –instead of her or his ethnicity – reduces the complexity that members feel in EU-funded projects and makes easier their categorization process. Furthermore, in the project’s proposal it is typically mentioned the institution’s country of origin and not the ethnicity of the person who represents that particular institution. In the MULTI project, the partners are institutions from five countries. However, the members who participated in the project meeting at Chania, are of eight different ethnicities. It is easier for members to categorize each other in terms of the country they represent, since this sometimes functions as an indirect reflection of the partner institution which the member represents. During their meeting and also later in their interviews, members refer to other members using the country that the member represents as a way to refer to the partner organization.

13.1.3 Doing differentiation work: when “us” becomes “they”

The sense of belonging to the same in-group as opposed to an out-group (that interrelates with members’ perceptions about their differentiation) is dynamic, relational and contextual. An example of the shifting nature of members’ differentiation is offered by Marku. In his narratives, Marku intersects the national, expertise, and professional differences between himself and the Polish members offering an illustrative example of the differentiation work process. In his interview Marku points that the two Polish content developers share the same expertise with him (language experts), while the rest of the project group are agriculture and ICT experts. Marku categorizes the Polish members as in-group members, sharing the same “values” both in terms of their national and expertise similarities compared to other members.

We are not very [different]... We are different definitely, but the variation is not very big. Because if you look at the partnership composition, we have Greek partners, we have Romanian partners, then Polish, Finnish and Estonians. And *Finnish and Estonians* seem to have the *same behavior* and the *same culture*. And *we Romanians* and the *Polish* people are... but only because of the profile of the partners. Because *we are involved in language education*. Education and language teaching and learning... And *we share the same values* – Polish and Romanians partners – ... and please don’t forget that we are part of the same whatever communist bla, bla... you name it.

At another part of his interview, Marku points out his similarity with the Polish members because of their common expertise:

...the only specialists in the partnership are the two Romanian partners and the Polish university. So we presented our vision on what learning materials mean and

it was definitely differently from the Estonian and the Finnish and probably the Greek partners.

During the meeting Marku often supported the Polish members as experts in language learning.

Marku: [...] this [is] linguistic component and they [Polish members] are specialists and they know what works best when you need to teach a foreign language, even if it is ESP language for a student. That's my opinion, we should allow more freedom to the creators, because it is their job!

Margit: Exactly.

Marku perceives and categorizes himself and the Polish members as sharing the same expertise in language learning and therefore belonging to the same expertise group compared to the expertise of other members. When, however, Marku intersects expertise with profession, he differentiates himself from the approach that the Polish members have regarding the design of the language exercises. Marku categorizes Teresa and Irena as out-group members because of their “very academic” working approach. During the meeting, Marku comments that they should not have to design very “academic” and “sophisticated” language exercises, but rather focus on the practical needs of their users. Marku uses as an example a teaching book for children.

“Have a comparison in mind. When we look at a textbook or a book for children aimed at teaching them something, it is colourful, it is full of drawings, full of all these things that are appealing to children. This doesn't mean that it's not a serious product, because the methodology behind it is huge”.

And he adds later,

“It's the same with our exercises. We don't need to make something very academic and sophisticated, let's say – because this is the power play of the day – in order to present something, in order to show that we've worked a lot in this project, because it can be explained in the guide. And we need to make it as appealing as possible for a student that has a low level, because we assume that they have a low level of foreign language knowledge.

For Marku (*practitioner*), it is most important to focus on the needs of their users and design a product for these needs, rather than to design language exercises that could meet the academic requirements of the *academics*. At this part of the meeting, Marku distinguishes himself from the approach that the Polish members – as academics – have regarding design of the language exercises.

13.2 Functions of “differentiation work”

The presentation of the findings in the previous chapters shows that the two main functions that members’ differentiation work serves, is uncertainty reduction and the construction of a positive working identity for the self. The next sections illustrate in detail these two functions of differentiation work.

13.2.1 Creating a positive working identity through differentiation work

Members create their differentiation as having various forms (national, professional, expertise) and shape each diversity category differently. It appears, however, that a common process underlying members’ differentiation (either in the form of national, professional or expertise differences) is members’ need to have a positive and distinct sense for self. The need of people for a positive working identity is discussed by many scholars (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Alvesson et al., 2008; Ashforth et al., 2008; Dutton et al., 2010) who point out that identity construction is not accidental, neither “neutral or benign process. It is invariably colored by emotions, moral judgments and approbations” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 307). Scholars studying identity work (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Alvesson et al., 2008) argue that people need to have a coherent, distinctive and positive sense of self. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2011) note that people seek “to achieve a feeling of a positively valued self-identity as well as basis for social relations, necessary for coping with work tasks and social interactions” (p. 161). The various ways in which the members of the project shaped their national, professional, and expertise differentiation while pursuing to have a positive working identity for the self, empirically supports the argument raised by Ybema et al. (2009) that there are “various and sometimes circuitous discursive routes and differential mechanisms through which [the construction of a positive validation of self] may be accomplished” (p. 313).

Members of the MULTI project group created a positive working identity for themselves through various and different paths. For example, Romanian and Hungarian members articulate their national differences creating a positive working identity for their perceived in-group (South) challenging the dominant stereotypes that Southern people are not professionals compared to the Northern people. Romanian and Hungarian members identify with their nationality and form a positive working identity for their nationality and their perceived regional group. On the contrary, Michalis creates a positive working identity for

himself through his dis-identification with his ethnicity. Michalis embraces the negative stereotypes he perceives as salient for his ethnicity and the rest Southern/Eastern people and distinguishes himself from this negatively perceived working identity by dis-identifying with his ethnicity. Michalis repeatedly emphasizes that he works like “Norths”.

The need of people to have a positive identity is well documented in organizational studies (Dutton et al., 2010) and there are many studies illustrating the construction of positive identities in organizational contexts (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Gibson and Papa, 2000; Lamont, 2000; Lucas and Buzzanel, 2004). The creation of positive identity – that group members accomplish through their differentiation work – is supported theoretically both by the self-categorization theory (SCT) (Turner et al., 1987), and the social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1974; Turner, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Both theories have been criticized for adopting a functionalist stance viewing identity as fixed (Zagefka, 2009). However, Alvesson et al. (2008) argue that SCT and SIT should not be characterized as static models since they are “amenable to situational and processual interpretations” and have “the capacity to accommodate structure as process and product, the promiscuous and contradictory texture of meaning, ongoing social construction processes and constant contextual shifting” (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 14). One basic principle of self-categorization theory is the belief that “individuals seek to achieve or maintain positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their in-group from a comparison out-group on some valued dimension” (Haslam and Ellemers, 2005, p. 43). This becomes apparent in the way group members constructed their categories of differences. Klaus, for example, creates a positive working identity for himself and ICT-academics through the inter-group comparison between the language and ICT academics in aspects he perceives that are favorable for him. Specifically, Klaus forms differences in terms of the different perspectives regarding sharing teaching materials and intellectual and copyright issues. He creates a positive working identity for ICT academics as open sharing, while he portrays language experts as keeping materials for themselves.

The need of members to have a positive working identity characterizes the construction of their professional diversity too. Martin, for example, creates professional differences through the inter-group comparison between academics-SME. He creates a positive working identity for the SMEs as interesting to “create” things, whereas he portrays academics as focusing mostly on “piloting” rather than creation.

13.2.2 Reducing uncertainty through differentiation work

A second function that differentiation work serves for the members of the MULTI project group is uncertainty reduction that is related with peoples' need to situate self (Weick, 1995; Collinson, 2003; Ashforth et al., 2008). The concept of uncertainty reduction is also discussed in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Turner, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979), self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), and uncertainty reduction theory (Hogg, 2000). The need to reduce uncertainty partly informs identity construction (Ashforth et al., 2008) and the interrelated construction of peoples' differentiation. Ashforth et al. (2008) note that "every entity needs to have a sense of who or what it is, who or what other entities are, and how the entities are associated. Identities situate entities such that individuals have a sense of the social landscape" (p. 326).

The need of group members to reduce uncertainty by situating themselves in the "social landscape" of the EU-funded project is salient in the meaning of "orientation" that members ascribe to their national and professional differences, but also to the way members use their expertise difference to position themselves in the group. According to SIT and SCT, people have the tendency to classify themselves and others in social categories (Turner, 1984). The members of the project classified themselves and others into several social categories, such as national, professional, expertise categories that also intersect with gender. These constructed categories of differences "operate as cognitive tools" for the group members "for ordering the social environment" (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001, p. 64) of their project. Group members, furthermore, use these constructed categories of differences as "devices" that help them to make "sense both [of] the social environment" and their position "within it" (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001, p. 64).

Ashforth et al. (2008) writes that through identity construction people shape "a sense of order in their world, not only by establishing in-groups and out groups (SIT/SCT) but [also] by reducing uncertainty through the deeper meanings provided by the collectives they associate with. These deeper meanings help provide a sense of connection as well as a source for defining" and redefining self (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 336). What Ashforth et al. (2008) write about identity construction, appears to apply also for the findings of the present study describing how the members of the project construct their group differentiation. In the examined project, group members through their differentiation work, create in-groups and out-groups (e.g. South vs. North, ICT vs. educators, academics vs. business) shaping categories of differences (e.g. national, expertise, professional) in a way that facilitates

uncertainty reduction both by defining themselves and categorizing others. The creation of their differentiation, however, also serves other functions such of adding value to the self. In a similar vein, Barinaga (2007), illustrates that the members of the EU-funded project she studied, construct and use their national diversity as a discursive resource in a way that was also adding value to themselves.

The function of uncertainty reduction, that differentiation work serves, is salient in the meaning of “orientation” (chapter 11) that members ascribe to their differences. In their interviews, members emphasized the importance of being aware of national and professional differences, explaining that this awareness orientates themselves – prepares them for what to expect and thus reduces their feelings of anxiety of what to expect. Klaus, for example, explains in his interview:

“Well, if we relate this to cultural models, you have these very abstract models of Hofstede for example. [...] And for the first time those abstract high level models are very good orientation. [...] So, in the beginning those models are enough, because they reduce the complexity of cultural issues. But then, when you get more involved to projects you see many differences [...]

Camelia, another member, pointed that she felt “very nervous” when she first participated in an EU-funded project, because she was not “aware very much of the huge cultural differences” and did not know what to expect and how to approach others.

The function of uncertainty reduction characterizes not only the way members understood their differences as an “orientation”, but also the way Romanian, Hungarian, and Greek members create their national differentiation in terms of two broad regional groups (East/South compared to West/North). In multinational contexts, such as the setting of an EU-funded project, the creation of two broad regional groups partly serves the need of the members to reduce uncertainty because it is more “easy” and “simple” to categorize others by choosing between two broad categories instead of several. The construction of national diversity based to a regional division of Europe in two part, facilitates the categorization of others since it make more simple the categorization process. This is also illustrated in chapter 7 that presents how the group members often categorize Mary, Margit, Lajos, and Klaus in terms of the country these members represented and not in relation to their ethnicities. The most salient example of this categorization is the case of Mary who although is from the US, she is categorized by others as “Greek” because she represents a Greek partner in the project.

Summary of the Research Findings

The present part of the thesis presented the research findings deriving from members' perceptions, uses, and meanings of their differentiation. The findings jointly illustrate the ongoing process of constructing group diversity, a process that I refer to as "differentiation work".

Members' *perceptions* about their differentiation are presented in chapter 6, 7, and 8. These chapters show that members construct their group diversity as a multi-dimensional concept. Members shape their group diversity in terms of three inter-related categories of differences: national, professional, and expertise. Although group members perceive as salient the same categories of differences, yet, they articulate those differences differently. Each category of difference (national, professional, expertise) is not homogenous but has a variation within.

The findings presented in chapter 10 illustrate that diversity construction appears to be much more complex than the sum of the three categories of differences. Group members construct each category of difference both as separate from the other categories and also in an intersectional way. In many cases (both in the interviews and during the project meeting) members define themselves and others through the intersection of their various identities and shape their group diversity with intersecting categories of differences.

Chapter 11 described the various ways in which group members used their perceived differences as a discursive resource: to justify communication problems during the project life, to legitimate their goals in the project, to justify a request for involving other members in a task, to gain leverage in decision making, and to position themselves in the project group.

Finally, chapter 12 shows that over time group members ascribe multiple *meanings* for their diversity. The meaning of diversity is not single-dimensional or in the dichotomous terms of positive or negative, neither is fixed. Members actively portray their differentiation as an important "orientation" for guiding themselves in multicultural contexts as well as a source for learning and self-development. Finally, members describe themselves as serving a higher goal than the simple fulfillment of the project.

Differentiation work involves the negotiation of the socially constructed categories of differences, it is informed by who is the Other and the broader context in which the social interaction takes place, and serves peoples' need (a) to have a positive working identity for the self, (b) to reduce uncertainty, and (c) to add value to the self. Overall the findings show that group diversity consists of multiple, socially constructed categories of differences that

intersect, shift, and at the same time do not reflect any real, unique essence. The next chapter offers a discussion of the research findings.

Chapter 14 Discussion, Limitations, Contribution, and Future research

In this chapter I discuss the research findings, present the limitations of the study and propose recommendations for future research. Finally I refer to the contribution of the study in the organizational research literature.

14.1 Discussion

The present section is the discussion of the research findings in relation to the research question of the study – how the group members of an EU-funded project group construct their group diversity. The discussion is divided in sections according to what the findings show with respect to: (a) the nature of group diversity, and (b) the process of diversity construction in a multicultural group. In the first sub-section I discuss the multiple, intersectional, anti-essentialist nature of group differentiation² – a term I use instead of group diversity as argued in chapter 13. In the second sub-section I discuss the established concept “differentiation work” presented in chapter 13, along with the relational, contextual processes that are part of the differentiation work process. The discussion of both sub-sections positions the research findings in extant diversity research, and shows how the findings connect, contradict, and converge with existing research and theoretical frameworks.

14.1.1. Discussing the multiple, intersectional, anti-essentialist nature of group differentiation

14.1.1.1 The multiple nature of group diversity

The findings presented in the chapters 7, 8, and 9 regarding the national, professional and expertise differentiation of group members, challenge the traditional approach treating diversity as synonymous to national diversity (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2004; Brannen and Salk, 2000) and the positivistic assumption regarding the monolithic identity- i.e., people mostly define themselves in terms of nationality. Members’ multiple, shifting perceptions regarding their national, professional and expertise differentiation empirically supports the arguments of many scholars that diversity cannot be reduced to national diversity

² The terms group differentiation and group diversity are used interchangeable

(Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Litvin, 1997, 2000; Zanoni et al., 2010) since people have multiple identities. In their interviews the group members emphasize that in their group (but also in EU-funded projects in general) there are additional categories of differences, other than the national differences, that are also important - for example professional and expertise differences. Members themselves point out that they have multiple identities and that they created their group diversity by intersecting these multiple identities. These findings complement the well grounded recognition – both in sociology (Burke, 1937, 1980; Stryker, 1987, 2000; Jenkins, 1996) and psychology (Mead, 1934; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Hogg, 1996) – that people have multiple identities since each person is member of multiple social groups. The research findings also offer empirically support for Collinson (2003) and Ashforth et al. (2008), that people “appear capable of simultaneously and even holistically defining themselves in terms of multiple identities” (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 347) and therefore conceiving diversity as a concept with a single nature ignores “other, potentially important features of self that may intersect in complex ways” (Collinson, 2003, p. 534).

The present study is not the only study showing that people create their differentiation in terms of socio-demographic characteristics other than nationality or ethnicity. Tartas and Mirza (2007) show that the members of an international project group defined themselves and others in terms of their expertise differences between the “pedagogical” and “technical” teams. Mahadevan (2009) in her ethnographic study of an Indo-German cooperation in a global high-tech company, illustrates that the salient category of differentiation was professional differences between “engineers” and “management”, not national differentiation between Germans and Indians. The present study, however, explores three categories of differences in the same workgroup showing how national, expertise and professional differences interchange in salience, depending on the context. Members’ differentiation is not static but changes over time during their meeting and hence group diversity emerges as having a multiple, dynamic and shifting nature.

14.1.1.2 The intersectional nature of members’ differentiation

The findings presented in chapter 10 illustrate that diversity is not just the sum of members’ perceived national, professional, and expertise differences. Members create their diversity by negotiating their multiple identities (like ethnicity, profession, expertise, gender) and intersecting their various categories of differences. The intersection of members’ identities creates a complex picture for their differentiation that cannot be reduced on a simple

dichotomy such as the enchantment (Lau and Murnighan, 1998) or the reduction (Brewer, 1991, 1993) of the “boundaries” between the group members. Faultlines theory (Lau and Murnighan, 1998) postulates that a convergence in diversity categories enhances the creation of sub-groups within a workgroup creating anxiety and problems (see for example, Earley and Mosakowski, 2000; Li and Hambrick, 2005; Homan et al., 2007; Homan et al., 2008). The cross-categorization approach (Brewer, 1991, 1993), on the contrary, suggests that the cross-cutting of people’s identities and categories of differences tends to reduce conflicts and in-group bias within a workgroup because it contributes to the reduction of the in-group – out-group boundaries.

The findings of the present study, however, show that there is not a single or unique pattern on how members intersect their differences. At some cases, the intersection enhances members’ perceived in-group similarity in a diversity category. The intersection of expertise (for example, language), with the same gender (female) and sense of belonging to the same national regional group (South) enhances the feelings of belonging to the same expertise group (educators) between Camelia, Margit, Irena, and Teresa. At other instances, however, the intersection of categories of differences creates a differentiation within a category as in the case of expertise and professional differentiation: the language experts who are practitioners differ from the language experts-academics. Similarly, the ICT academics differ from language academics. Finally, in other cases the intersection is described by group members as adding differences and thus make members’ diversity even more complex.

The findings regarding the intersectional nature of group differentiation align with the idea supported by many scholars that peoples’ multiple identities are not separate, neither distinct, but negotiate and intersect (Butler, 1990; Collinson, 1992, 2003; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Hall, 1996). The notion of diversity’s intersectionality and multifaceted identity that emerges from the data is a central aspect in intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993) which is grounded in critical paradigm. Scholars employing the intersectional theory illustrate the intersectional nature of diversity, i.e. how people create their differentiation through the negotiation of their identities (e.g. Holvino, 2010; Atewologun and Singh, 2010; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010; Essers and Benschop, 2009). Holvino (2010) examines the intersections of race, gender and class, institutional, and social practices. Atewologun and Singh (2010) explore the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and professional identity, while Essers and Benschop (2009) explore the intersection of ethnic, gender and entrepreneurial identities in relation to religion. Similarly with these studies, my findings also offer an empirical illustration of the intersectional and complex nature both of diversity and identity. My study, however,

differentiates with studies adopting intersectional theory in whether intersectionality emerges from the data analysis or informs data analysis. Contrary to my *a posteriori* research approach, the majority of studies exploring intersectionality follow an *a priori* direction. Intersectionality is the framework that guides their study, i.e. researchers focus their research inquiry in the exploration of many – but yet pre-decided – categories of differences. Recently, Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) criticized this tendency of researchers to pre-determine the categories of differences under study and called for a different approach that will enable to “capture the dynamism in the workforce diversity field” (p.187) by exploring “the multiplicity of salient forms of differences in social and organizational life” without drawing on a predetermined set of differences (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012, p. 187). According to Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) the categories of diversity “are emergent and situated ex post, as embedded in a specific time and place” (p. 180) and therefore cannot be *a priori* determined.

The intersectional nature of diversity emerging from my finding is not a pre-established assumption or a pre-determined theoretical framework that guided my study and the way I looked into my data. The *a posteriori* direction of my study enabled the emergence not only of the various categories of differences but also their interlocking relationship. Thus, the intersectionality of group diversity that emerges in my findings is not a preliminary or an *a priori* assumption that guided my data analysis, but rather a finding by itself.

14.1.1.3 The anti-essentialist nature of group differentiation

The findings show that contrary to what researchers in mainstream research assume (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Jehn et al., 1999; House et al., 2004), social categories (such as nationality, profession or expertise) do not carry an essence, and the differences of group members in these social categories do not reflect or carry real differences; differences are rather socially constructed. Michalis uses the perceived money-motive of "East" academics to shape the national differentiation between the “*East*” and “*West*” regional groups, creating a negative working identity for “*East*” academics compared to the “*West*”. On the other hand, when the discussion moves to professional differences, Michalis ascribes his perceived money-motive of the Estonian member to his profession (being a *businessman*) and justifies the money-motive as something natural for “a business”. The same motive (pursue for money) which Michalis describes as a negative characteristic in the case of Romanian academics, is perceived as justified and legitimate in the case of an Estonian businessman. In the first case, Michalis focuses on peoples’ nationality, while in the

second he focuses on the profession. Members' differences in terms of nationality and profession do not reflect any real or unique essence: the same aspect (money motive) is perceived as legitimate or negative depending on the "other" with whom Michalis compares himself.

The comparison between Camelia's and Marku's narratives offers another example of the anti-essentialist nature of members' differences. Camelia ascribes the project management approach of Klaus to his ICT expertise, while Marku perceives that the management approach that Klaus follows is affected by his nationality. The same aspect (the project management approach of Klaus) is perceived differently by Camelia and Marku who use it as a criterion to shape two different categories of differences – Camelia shapes expertise differences, whereas Marku creates their national differentiation. The above examples illustrate that the expertise and national differentiation in the group does not reflect or carry unique essence but are socially constructed by the group members.

A third example regards the differences and similarities between the project partners PolishEdu and FinishITD. Martin (owner of a SME who is not affiliated with a university), views the two universities (PolishEdu and FinishITD) as having similar organizational cultures and decision making processes as opposed to a SME. Martin, thus, categorizes PolishEdu and FinishITD as similar in terms of their decision making processes. If someone, therefore, views professional differences from Martin's point of view, then she could argue that universities share a common decision making process and hence differences between universities and SMEs reflect "real" differences in the decision making processes. On the other hand, Klaus (who is an academic) articulates PolishEdu and FinishITD as having different decision making process and ascribes these differences in peoples' nationality and more specifically to the national context in which the universities were founded and developed. The comparison between these two perceptions regarding the differences between PolishEdu and FinishITD show that these differences do not reflect a unique essence that each university carries, but depend on members' subjective perceptions.

14.1.1.4 The heterogeneity of categories of differences

Group differentiation refers to the perceived categories of differences. The findings show that – contrary to the positivistic assumptions – these constructed categories of differences are not homogenous but dynamic and heterogenous. The heterogeneity within categories of differences partly derives from the intersection of the multiple identities and the negotiation of social categories (such as nationality, profession, expertise, gender). Social categories are

interconnected and inter-dependent, and the categories of differences are not homogenous, neither unified nor fixed, but rather heterogeneous, differential, and shifting (Connel, 1995). The social category of academics, for example, is not further homogenous. Klaus distinguish academics in terms of their field of expertise and points out that there is a variation within the academic group in intersection with their expertise diversity. Expertise diversity itself is not a homogenous category either. For example, the socially constructed category “language experts” is not homogeneous but has a within variation: Marku, points out for example on the differentiation between the language experts who are academics and those who are practitioners. The intersectional way in which group members shape their differentiation supports previous theorizations on gender (Butler, 1990, 2004) and race (Litvin, 1997, 2002) that reject the view of race, gender, ethnicity as homogenous, separate and essentialist categories.

Another source for the within category heterogeneity is the dynamic way in which group members define themselves. Members may share the same socio-demographic characteristic (e.g. nationality, profession, expertise) but not the same identity. For example, Michalis and Dimitrios share the same Greek ethnicity but they define themselves differently in terms of their ethnicity. Michalis – contrary to Dimitrios – dis-identifies with his Greek ethnicity and creates his working identity through his identification with the “West” working identity, where “West” is articulated as opposite to “Greek” identity. Another example of the heterogeneity within a category of differentiation regards the professional diversity. Mary, who works and represents a university is categorized by other members as someone working and representing that university, and thus an academic. Mary, however, defines herself as a *practitioner* and distinguishes herself from the *academics* and the *academic* way of working.

The way members define themselves is therefore not fixed but dynamic: *how* and *who* is different from another is not a natural quality or an inherent characteristic. Members’ perceptions, for example, about their expertise differentiation differ and shift. During their meeting Martin at one point defines himself as having expertise in languages and therefore capable to make suggestions about the design of the language exercises. In other vignette, however, Martin changes his self-definition and categorizes himself as “not good in languages”. The findings of the study showing empirically the heterogeneity within categories of differences are consistent with the findings presented by Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) who also illustrate the heterogeneity in social categories. Although the two authors focused on a single category of difference (profession) and their study is on a different organizational context (a hospital), yet their findings are significant because they unravel the complexity of profession,

which is usually perceived as a homogenous category. Their findings further illustrate how people define themselves with their profession in various ways and the heterogeneity in the category of profession. The heterogeneity of categories of differences illustrates that the construction of group diversity is a complex process. The next sub-section discusses what the findings of the present study show regarding the ongoing process of group differentiation construction, the established concept of “differentiation work”, and the complex processes involved in members’ differentiation work.

14.1.2. Discussing the process of group differentiation construction and the “differentiation work” construct

The process of diversity construction is the focus of several studies (e.g. Barinaga, 2007; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). The present study aligns with the findings of these studies showing the socially constructed, fluid, and complex nature of diversity, but differentiates in the examination of the diversity construction process. Whereas most studies explore diversity construction focusing on the discursive construction (Barinaga, 2007) or contextual production (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005) focusing on power relations (Ahonen and Tienari, 2009), the present study approaches group diversity construction exploring three interrelated facets of diversity: (a) the content and structure (shape of diversity) (chapters 7-10), (b) the use of diversity as discursive resource (chapters 11), and (c) the meanings ascribed to perceived differences (chapters 12). In chapter 13, I explained how these three interrelated facets are combined in the established concept “differentiation work”. What the “differentiation work” concept attempts to offer in diversity research is a more thorough understanding of the complex, ongoing process of group differentiation construction. Differentiation work addresses diversity as a three-fold construction and enables the examination of this three-fold construction. The findings show that members’ differentiation work (the process of differentiation construction) is partly related with the need of group members to have a positive working identity and to reduce uncertainty. The two basic functions that differentiation work serves, align with Ybema et al. (2009) who argue that identity and diversity construction are neither a “neutral or benign process ... [but] ... is invariably colored by emotions, moral judgments and approbations” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 307). Members do not just do differentiation work but through their differentiation construction and re-construction achieve a positive working identity for the self, reduce uncertainty, and generally add value to the self. These functions of differentiation work are

discussed by theories such as self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), and uncertainty reduction theory (Hogg, 2000). Furthermore, empirical research on identity construction shows peoples' identity work is linked with their need to shape a positive working identity (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Gibson and Papa, 2000; Lamont, 2000; Lucas and Buzzanel, 2004).

Members' differentiation work in the MULTI project is informed by the need of group members to have a positive working identity and to reduce uncertainty. These two functions, however, are not the only important processes involved in the construction of group differentiation. Differentiation work also partly involves relational and contextual processes: *who* and *how* someone is perceived as different is shaped both by who is the Other and the contextual setting.

14.1.2.1 The relational process involved in members' differentiation work

The findings of the study demonstrate the relational process of differentiation work: members define who they are in relation to who is the Other. In the case of their national differentiation, some members define themselves as belonging to the same South regional group in contradiction to the North regional group. The creation of the South regional group, thus, acquires existence and meaning when it contradicts with the North regional group. Margit illustrates this aspect in her interview by pointing out that people in *South* countries are very different from people in *North* countries. The relational process of members' differentiation work is apparent in professional differences too. Members create their professional identity and shape their professional similarity in juxtaposition to Others' profession. *Academics*, for example, define their professional identity through the juxtaposition to the *business* people. The same pattern emerges in the creation of members' expertise differences. Members define themselves as *language experts* or *educators* through the contrast with the "ICT experts".

The relational processes involved in members' differentiation work is theoretically supported by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) who argue that identity is "never autonomous or independent" (p. 598); identity is constructed through the social interaction and relationships with other people and "acquire[s] social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p. 598). People form and reshape their sense of self and articulate their differentiation through and within their relationships and interactions with others. As Hogg et al., (1995) put it: "people come to know who they are through their

interactions with others” (p. 256). The study of Ailon-Souday and Kunda (2003) also demonstrates empirically the relational facet of identity construction that underlies the creation of national differentiation. In their study of an international Israel-American merger, Ailon-Souday and Kunda (2003) show how Israeli employees constructed their sense of self in terms of what they are not. Specifically, Israeli employees formed their national identity in a way that expressed detachment from their American merger partners, but also to show that they were better employees than the Americans. The findings of the present study demonstrate the relational process involved in group differentiation construction and the relational nature of identity, supporting numerous scholars who argue that identity should be viewed as “the social positioning of self and others” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p. 586), constructed “in response to others” (Josselson, 1994, p. 82), “formed by social processes [...] maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 194).

14.1.2.2 The contextual process involved in members' differentiation work

Another significant insight from the study regards the contextual nature of group differentiation. In the MULTI project group, the emergence of national, professional, and expertise differences is influenced by contextual factors such as the type and topic of the specific EU project, historical relations between nations, the time and place of the group meeting, and the “meta-narratives” (Ybema et al., 2009) or “macro-systemic discourse” (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000, p. 1133) that group members perceive as dominant, such as the national stereotypes.

The findings demonstrate that group diversity is a contextual phenomenon. People live, work and interact in real social contexts, not in an isolated setting of a laboratory or experiment (Blomberg et al., 1993) (e.g. Walther, 1997; Spears et al., 1997; Kelly, 2011). The context in which people live, interact and work influence the way they define themselves and others (Kyriakidou, 2011). Furthermore, the relationship between people and their context is mutual (Kyriakidou and Özbilgin, 2006) - “people may select and make their contexts or they may adapt to their contexts by changing themselves” (Kyriakidou, 2011, p. 574). Giddens (1979) stresses the importance of social context and social relations in the construction of identity, arguing that “society” and “individual” are interconnected. The context in which social interaction emerges “shapes the meanings, expectations and roles that particular identities

carry” (Adib and Guerrier, 2003, p. 415); identity and diversity construction, thus, is “grounded in specific contexts at specific times” (Ashforth, 1998, p. 268).

The type and topic of the EU project informs members’ perceptions regarding their differentiation. In a different EU-funded project group, other categories of differences might become salient, or even the same categories (national, professional, expertise) could be created differently by group members. Members shape their expertise difference describing the language experts as the “only specialists” in the project, since the language field of expertise is relative to the project’s goal - i.e., to develop language exercises. The goal of the project informs members’ perceptions: the creation of group’s expertise diversity is based on the relativity of members’ expertise with the project goal. The findings of the study complement what Janssens and Zanoni (2005) demonstrate regarding the dynamic and context-specific nature of diversity. Janssens and Zanoni (2005) in their comparative study of four service companies, illustrate that each organization has shaped a context-specific understanding of diversity.

Other contextual factors that influence members’ perceptions regarding their differentiation are the historical relationships between countries along with the place and time that the social interaction takes place. For example, the place (Poland) and time that the interview with Klaus (German) was conducted (the anniversary of the invasion from the Nazis) informs the way Klaus created their differences. In his interview Klaus avoids to compare directly Poland with Germany. When he creates the differences between himself and the Polish members, he does so by choosing as his frame of reference the country he represents (Finland) which lacks any negative memories from WWII. At another point of his interview, however, when he refers to a Greek member, Klaus uses his ethnicity (German) as his frame of reference to compare himself with the Greek member. The way Klaus creates his differentiation in the group is partly influenced by contextual factors such as the historical relationships between Germany and Poland, the time and the place in which the project meeting was held. Historical relations are a contextual factor discussed by many scholars who emphasize its importance in the process of creating peoples’ identity and diversity. Alvesson et al. (2008) argue that the way people “understand ourselves is shaped by larger cultural and historical formations, which supply much of our identity vocabularies, norms, pressures and solutions, yet which do so in indirect and subtle ways” (p. 11). Davis et al. (2000) argue that identity cannot be understood without understanding historical conditions because they are a central feature of the context in which identity is constructed. Musson and Duberley (2007) similarly suggest

that identity entails a retrospective nature: people “rely on what has happened in the past to make sense of present and future events, and vice versa” (p. 147). Ybema et al. (2009) also claim that identity work “involves processes” not only “between social actors and institutions, between self and others, between insider and outside” but also “between past and present” (p. 303).

Another contextual factor that informs members’ differentiation work is the dominant meta-narratives (Ybema et al., 2009; Esser and Benschop, 2009; Clarke et al., 2009; Watson, 2009) or macro-systemic discourse (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000, p. 1133) in which people draw in order to shape their identity and form their differentiation. Group members create their national differences in a way that brings to mind the point raised by Ybema et al. (2009) about “whether actors constitute themselves *through* discourse or are choreographed *by* discourse” (p. 308) (original emphasis). Ybema et al. (2009) further argue that people attempt “to differentiate themselves from the ‘other’ in the context of meta-narrative discursive structuring” (p. 308). People draw “on discursive resources to enact identities while simultaneously appearing to be subject to those same (re)sources” (p. 308). Greek members, for example, shape national diversity by drawing on the negative stereotypes they perceive as dominant for people from *Eastern* Europe. The macro-systemic discourse (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000) that Michalis uses (e.g. “they are not from the Balkania”) as synonymous to “they are not from East – they are professionals”, illustrates how Michalis draws on a specific discourse that he perceives as dominant to create national differences in the group.

The findings of the study, also illustrate people’s freedom to define themselves and others outside these macro-systemic discourses. Group members do not always draw on macro-systemic discourse (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000) or meta-narratives (Ybema et al., 2009) to shape their identity and their group differentiation. For example, Romanian and Hungarian members create their working identity and shape the national differentiation in the group without drawing on dominant meta-discourses, such as the negative stereotypes for people from Southern countries. Romanian and Hungarian members articulate a positive working identity for themselves and their perceived in-group (i.e. *South*), contrary to what the Greek members did.

My study complements with the findings of other studies (e.g. Essers and Benschop, 2009; Clarke et al., 2009; Watson, 2009; Down and Reveley, 2009) that empirically demonstrate that although meta-narratives “are a permanent and powerful ingredient of everyday sense-making ... [that] set distinctive limits on individual discretion in constructing identity”, yet

there “is always the possibility of self-defined meaningful escape through agential choice” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 311). Thomas and Linstead (2002) contribute in the discussion on meta-narratives, arguing that people do not “merely pick off an identity from a shopping list of discourses – consciously selecting and manipulating from a 'menu' of discursive recourses” (p. 75).

14.1.3 Summary of discussion

The present section discussed the findings and the proposed theoretical framework of doing differentiation work, for understanding diversity construction in an EU-funded project group, along with extant research and theories. The several categories of differences (e.g. professional, national, expertise) that emerged as interrelated facets of group differentiation, show the multiple nature of diversity that contradicts with the dominant approach that identifies diversity as synonymous to national diversity (e.g. Hofstede, 1980), while is in agreement with other scholars who argue that diversity is a multidimensional construct (e.g. Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Litvin, 1997, 2000; Zanoni et al., 2010) and therefore should be approached from an *a posteriori* direction (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) facilitated the interpretation of the complex, intersectional nature of members' differentiation, while at the same time helped to position the present study along with the other studies using intersectionality as theoretical lens (e.g. Holvino, 2010; Atewologun and Singh, 2010).

The discussion of the findings further illustrates the anti-essentialist, socially constructed nature of members' differentiation countering the positivistic assumption that social categories carry an “essence” and therefore members' differences in these social categories reflect real differences (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars, 1993; Jehn et al., 1999; House et al., 2004). The empirical illustration of the constructed, anti-essentialist nature of members' differentiation supports previous theorization proposing that social categories are not homogenous, but heterogeneous, as well as differential and shifting (Connel, 1995; Butler, 1990, 2004; Litvin, 1997, 2002). The discussion of the shifting nature of group differentiation illustrates the relational and contextual processes that are part of the differentiation work process, and support both theorization (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Josselson, 1994; Ybema et al., 2009; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Alvesson et al., 2008) and empirical research (Ailon-Souday and Kunda, 2003; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005) on the relational and contextual nature of identity and diversity. The discussion proceeds in the next section that offers the

acknowledgment of the limitations of the study and propose recommendations for future research.

14.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study has several limitations. The first limitation regards my role as researcher during the field work and my potential impact in the research process. I have discussed in detail my concerns regarding this limitation in sections 1.1 and 5.4, where I offer my self-reflection on my role as researcher. Another limitation regards the rather small duration of my field work, which was five days in total. Future research could include a research design with a long-term immersion of the researcher(s) in the field: starting from the first stages of its creation and extending to the last stage of the project completion. A long-term study of a multicultural workgroup could offer more insights on how the group members perceive, use, and sense-make their group differentiation during time. A third limitation is that research took place in the setting of a specific EU-funded project group that may differ in terms of purpose and structure from other multicultural workgroups. The findings are not easily transferable to other settings although they could offer useful insights in studying diversity in other EU-funded project groups or multicultural workgroups in general. This last limitation produces a recommendation for future research to include additional EU-funded project groups in the single study. The comparison between different multicultural workgroups could enable a more fruitful exploration of the role that the contextual and relational settings play in the construction of group diversity. A fourth limitation regards issues like power relations that are not addressed in the study. Future research should explicitly take them into consideration since power relations could further enhance our understanding of diversity construction process in a workplace (Zanoni et al., 2010).

14.3 Contribution of the study

The present study attempts to make a contribution in the field of workforce diversity in the organizational studies literature. Taking into consideration the suggestions of several scholars (Sackman et al., 1997; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004; Mannix and Neale, 2005; Barinaga, 2007; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009) who point out the need for additional research on diversity in the setting of multicultural workgroups, the study attempts to contribute to the existing literature surrounding diversity in multicultural workgroups. To the best of my knowledge,

the present study is one of the few studies studying diversity in EU-funded projects groups – a particular and unexplored type of multicultural groups (Barinaga, 2007; Ahonen and Tienari, 2009).

The research question of the study addresses the concept of diversity itself – something that is often neglected or taken for given (Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Litvin, 1997; Janssen and Zanoni, 2005; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). The study attempts to address a gap in group diversity literature that derives from the traditional *a priori* identification of the concept of diversity that has dominated diversity research. This *a priori* approach characterizes studies that view diversity either as static or dynamic concept (Tatli, and Özbilgin, 2012). Several scholars criticize the predetermination of categories of differences and suggested to approach diversity as an emergent rather as a predetermined phenomenon (Litvin, 1997; Nkomo, 1996; Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Osland and Bird, 2000; Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003; Bodenhausen, 2010; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010; Mahadevan, 2009; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). The study attempts to address this gap employing an *a posteriori* approach that enables a fruitful exploration of the complex nature of group diversity without focusing on specific, predetermined categories of differences.

The *a posteriori* direction in the exploration of group diversity offers significant insights regarding the complex and constructed nature of diversity in a workgroup. Group members themselves emphasized that they differ not only in terms of nationality or ethnicity, but repeatedly referred to the intersection of their national, professional, expertise, and gender differences. The study offers, thus, significant findings and insights regarding the multiple and intersectional nature of diversity, showing empirically how the group members of a workgroup intersect their several constructed categories of differences.

Furthermore, the study approaches the construct of diversity not only in terms of the content and structure that diversity has (intersection of categories of differences) but also addresses how the group members used their perceived differentiation and the meanings they created for their differences. The study, therefore, addresses simultaneously several facets that a social constructed concept (as group diversity) could have. It explores the content, structure, discursive uses, and meanings of a construct (group diversity) offering a more thorough understanding of the diversity's construction process. The findings of the study further highlight the role of the contextual and relational setting in diversity construction, along with the social psychological functions that this construction serves.

The study further offers empirical support to the well-established critique towards the positivistic assumptions of diversity and identity that addresses them as static and given. The

research findings position the present study along other studies in the literature of diversity that also emphasize the multiple, intersectional character of diversity (Atewologun and Singh, 2010; Adib and Gueerier, 2003; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010; Essers and Benschop, 2009) and its contextual and relational nature (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Barinaga, 2007; Mahadevan, 2009; 2012). Finally, the creation of the main theoretical term “differentiation work” that reflects the dynamic process of diversity construction, contributes to diversity research by drawing the focus in the *process* rather to the *labels* of categories (Nkomo and Cox, 1996; Litvin, 1997).

14.4 Final conclusions

The study offers significant insights regarding the process of diversity construction in an EU-funded project group, which although are not directly transferable to other organizational settings, they can nevertheless offer useful insights for future research on diversity in similar settings, such as international research teams, international management teams (Henderson, 2005), and R&D teams (von Zedtwitz and Gassmann, 2002). What this study mainly offers is first, an empirical demonstration of the multiple, intersectional, constructed nature of diversity and the ongoing process of group diversity construction, and second, an attempt to contribute in the relevant diversity literature with the introduction of a new theoretical term – “differentiation work” – as the lens for future research exploring diversity construction in workplace.

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Appendix

Interview protocol

Prompts to be used when appropriate:

- Tell me more about....
- Can you think of a specific example of that?
- What did you do then?
- What makes you say that?
- I don't understand what you mean there. Could you explain it in another way?
- Whatever you can remember is fine...
- Take your time...I'm just going to give you some time to think...

Introduction questions

Do you want to talk a little about yourself? (Where are you from - where have you studied - where have you worked)

Have you ever worked in contact with Greeks, Polish, Finish, Estonians, Hungarians, in the past?

- How was your cooperation?

What were your perceptions about the characteristics of people from those nationalities?

- How this has been created?
- Can you tell me a story?

Role in the Project Team

What is your role in the project?

Objectives of the project

What are the aims of the project?

How did the project got into existence?

- Who participated in the idea development?

How is the work coordinated within the project group?

What are the procedures in terms of formal and behavioral rules that everyone has to follow as the project proceeds?

- How well do they seem to work?

Expectations regarding the project meeting

Have your expectations about the meeting in Chania and the work progress of this WP been fully met?

- Why?

What is your impression about the meeting?

Do you feel that there are some problems in the project group?

- If yes, which ones?
- How do you think those have been created?

Critical incidents

During your experience in the MULTI project which are the incidents that you remember more vividly?

Could you tell me some critical experiences during the 1st and 2nd work packages that were important, surprising or problematic?

- What led to this situation?
- What did you do?

Understanding of group diversity (*types of perceived diversity*)

What kind of different backgrounds / cultures do you perceive that we have in the MULTI project?

What are the characteristics of each partner that make him/ her unique, and in what ways it is similar to other partners?

What are the differences and similarities you find between the partners?

Working in the MULTI project with people from universities, people from private organizations like Martin, and from organizations like yours. Which are they differences and similarities you find?

In which manner do you think that her/his nationality/profession affect her/his work/behaviour/cooperation in the project?

Rationale of diversifying

What is the rationale of diversifying in this project (in projects general)?

Do you think that there is any value from the multi-cultural diversity from the project?

What do you view as the benefits and costs of working with people from different ethnicities, professions?

- Why?

Do you think that the project group would have operated differently if it was less cultural diversified?

- Why?

What are the differences between a multicultural project and a project in national level?

Cooperation during the work-packages

Who was the partner that you worked more closely in wp1 and wp2?

How would you describe your cooperation with those partners?

Who was the partner that you had good cooperation?

- Why?
- Could you give me an example of good cooperation?

Any partner that you didn't had a good cooperation?

- Why?
- Could you give me an example of a not good cooperation?
- How did you handled it?

With which MULTI partners would you prefer to work with in another project?

- Why?
- Or why not?

Role expectations and meaning ascribed to different identities

What does it mean to be an "expert"?

- What characteristics (qualities) do you have as an expert?
- What characteristics (qualities) do you think the other partners show?

What do you think being a "professional" means? What does it mean to be a "professional"?

- What characteristics (qualities) do you express as a professional?
- What characteristics (qualities) do you think the other partners express?

What do you think being an academic/ researcher/ businessman in a multicultural project means?

- What characteristics (qualities) do you express as an academic/ researcher/ businessman?
- What characteristics (qualities) do you think the other partners express?

Self

Do you feel that you have changed (as a professional, as a researcher, as a person), that you have become a little different from your experience in multinational projects?

What have you learnt in this MULTI experience?

- Professionally?
- Personally?

Did it ever happen in a project to refine your goals or motives?

- If yes, when did this happen?
- Why did that happen?

Closing questions

What do you expect to happen (workgroup development) until the next project meeting?

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

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