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**Europioneers in Space:  
the Story of the European Space Agency**

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## Abstract

This paper will examine the underlying identity processes of the European Space Agency. The aim is to discover how this agency is presenting itself and why, by using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis has proven to be effective in coming close to a subject's performed identity. Theories from corporate communications and organisational studies have inspired the portrayal of ESA as a personified agency and, combined with narrative analysis, they will instruct both how the findings were retrieved and how they are presented in this paper. The voice of ESA has been found in certain Europeans' expressions, as they are part of the narrative while they are simultaneously creating it. The results from analysing these voices will not only clarify the function of ESA's narrative, but by using David M. Boje's ideas they will also show aspects beyond the agency's corporate narrative. While ESA wants to be known as an organisation with great experience in European cooperation making it a legitimate, independent and competent actor on the global space market, there are clearly some stories that have not (yet) been included in the consolidated narrative.

*Keywords: narrative analysis, European Space Agency, performed identity, corporate communications*

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# 1. Introduction

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Space has always been an object for our imagination, but not so long ago it has begun to be a subject for real-life science as well. Even though the first and fast space technology developments emerged in the time of the Cold War, the benefits of space science have been immense for all of mankind. Today new players have entered the scene of space technology and its plot proceeds unlike anything seen during the Cold War. What started out as a race between Soviet Union and the United States of America has now evolved into a global, cooperative space market. Countries from all over the world invest in enormous peaceful programmes, like the International Space Station (ISS), which will shape our shared future. The countries in Europe started getting involved in space science at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Rome<sup>1</sup>. The individual countries soon realised they could hardly attain any large and complex space projects on their own and hence they have been involved in cooperative European space from the very beginnings. These initiatives resulted in space adventures radically changing many aspects of life on Earth. Changing conditions and perspectives are emerging due to technology and globalization, two motors that have also changed how we study the world around us. Space science and exploration are inextricably linked with life here on earth where we are forced to consider the implications of humanity and its place and meaning in the universe.

Especially within identity studies can the notions of Earth and outer space be interesting. Many times have early space travellers been quoted on saying how their literally changed position towards Earth changed their whole perspective on humanity<sup>2</sup>. Especially from a European point of view, space exploration thus consists of multiple layers of involvement; individuals like astronauts, Europe as a single space partner as well as the efforts on a global scale all contribute to the progress in unique ways. The interest in this paper is focussed on, what perhaps could be called the ‘middle layer’, Europe. The current organisation representing the European interests is the European Space Agency (ESA). The aim of this paper is to explore identity processes within ESA by means of narrative analysis and my central questions are focused on how the narrative functions in relation to these identity processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Dordain, “A European identity through space – what have we achieved?”, in *European Identity through Space: Space Activities and Programmes as a Tool to Reinvigorate the European Identity*, eds. Christopher Venet and Blandina Baranes (Springer: Vienna, 2013), 25

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Bill Anderson: <http://www.nmspacemuseum.org/halloffame/detail.php?id=71>

## 1.1. The European Space Agency<sup>3</sup>

ESA was founded in 1975, through the signing of its Convention on 30 May 1975 in Paris<sup>4</sup>. This Convention did not fall out of the sky; instead it was actually a result of a feeling ‘amongst member states that to have two organisations looking after space was not really the way the future beckoned’<sup>5</sup>. The two organisations mentioned were the European Space Research Organisation (ESRO) and the European Launcher Development Organisation (ELDO). These organisations came about in 1964, thus about seven years after the launch of the first satellite, Soviet Union’s Sputnik, in 1957. Also, in this year the people of Europe were offered the foundations for what today is the EU. I will come back to the significance of this year later, but for now it is important to see the historical and contextual relevance. International relations at this time were still tense and getting tenser after World War II. The 1960s even witnessed a so-called arms race, which also manifested itself in space technology development.<sup>6</sup> Even though Europe was not really involved in this race, the desire to organise in this area “started all after the launch of Sputnik, in ’57 and the launch of the first American satellite Explorer in ’58, [so] that the scientists in Europe felt, we should also get involved.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the wake of the Cold War and the beginnings of a European cooperation, ESRO and ELDO were set up. The “scientists in Europe” meant in the above quote were in fact Western European scientists and none from the SU or the countries under its influence. ESRO’s and ELDO’s founding fathers, among whom are scientific statesman Pierre Auger and physicist Eduardo Amaldi, had such organisations as NASA, CERN and NATO to take into account and learn from. According to them, it was not only of importance to keep ESRO a purely scientific organisation with regard to commercialisation, but also with regard to militarization of satellites (by NATO for example).<sup>8</sup> The member states have shifted their interests on many

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<sup>3</sup> This section is based on the work of John F. Krige and A. Russo’s voluminous works on the history of ESA. His most recent work was published this year, coinciding with the start of a year of celebrating ’50 years of European cooperation in space’. J. Krige and A. Russo, *A History of the European Space Agency: 1958-1987* (Noordwijk: ESA Publications, 2000)

<sup>4</sup> ESA Convention, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, 101 ([http://download.esa.int/docs/LEX-L/ESA-Convention/20101200-SP-1317-EN\\_Extract\\_ESA-Convention.pdf](http://download.esa.int/docs/LEX-L/ESA-Convention/20101200-SP-1317-EN_Extract_ESA-Convention.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> Roy Gibson in “An extraordinary evening in Paris with Roy Gibson and André Lebeau”, 9’40. <http://www.espi.or.at/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

<sup>6</sup> Krige and Russo suggests McDougall (1985a) and Heppenheimer (1997) for further reading on the arms race in space of the 1960s.

<sup>7</sup> Reimar Lüst, EuroNews’ Space Magazine, 2005

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ESA\\_history/Edoardo\\_Amaldi](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ESA_history/Edoardo_Amaldi)

occasions as the years progressed, resulting in the inclusion of launchers and partly commercial telecommunications application satellites.

ESRO would have establishments spread across the member states, among which for example the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC) in Noordwijk, the Netherlands. Furthermore, the operations control centre (ESOC) would be based in Darmstadt, Germany and the earth observation research centre (ESRIN) in Frascati, Italy. These centres are now also the establishments of ESA, with today additional facilities in Great-Britain (ECSAT<sup>9</sup>) and Spain (ESAC<sup>10</sup>). The headquarters remain in Paris. People from all over Europe, today amounting to more than 2200 staff (not including contract officers)<sup>11</sup>, come to work in these establishments, creating European communities within the member states<sup>12</sup>. All the establishments have directors, while the various programme areas (such as navigation, earth observation, human spaceflight) also have their respective directors. As of today, Jean-Jacques Dordain is responsible for ESA as a whole, acting as Director-General (DG). The organisational structure shows to be intricate and hierarchical, appointing all staff a degree or level of importance, expressed for example in A2/A4 grade bands<sup>13</sup>. In total twenty countries are member states of ESA, all represented by delegations in its governing body, the ministerial Council. In this way ESA is an intergovernmental organisation, empowering European industry by contracting them to execute missions and paying them through a budget of 4.1 billion euros<sup>14</sup>. ESA has chosen to celebrate in 2014 the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of European cooperation, reflecting on what has been achieved and on what lies ahead for European space<sup>15</sup>.

These fifty years of European cooperation that ESA is referring to for its celebratory year thus also includes the preceding organisations as well as all the other partners involved; industry, research centres, governments, national space agencies, but also international space agencies like NASA<sup>16</sup>, Roscosmos<sup>17</sup>,



50 years of European cooperation in space:  
logo. Source:

[http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa\\_multimedia/images/2014/01/esa\\_50\\_logo/13487447-1-eng-GB/ESA\\_50\\_logo.jpg](http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa_multimedia/images/2014/01/esa_50_logo/13487447-1-eng-GB/ESA_50_logo.jpg)

<sup>9</sup> European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications, [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ECSAT](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ECSAT)

<sup>10</sup> European Space Astronomy Centre, [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/ESAC/Overview2](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/ESAC/Overview2)

<sup>11</sup> ESA Presentation, 10, <http://esamultimedia.esa.int/multimedia/publications/ESA-Presentation/>

<sup>12</sup> Stacia E. Zabusky, "Food, national identity and emergent Europeanness at the European Space Agency", *Journal of European Studies*, 22:1 (2006), 203-204

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Careers\\_at\\_ESA/Salary\\_and\\_grades](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Careers_at_ESA/Salary_and_grades)

<sup>14</sup> ESA Presentation, 8, <http://esamultimedia.esa.int/multimedia/publications/ESA-Presentation/>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ESA\\_history](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ESA_history)

<sup>16</sup> National Aeronautics and Space Administration, <http://www.nasa.gov/>

JAXA<sup>18</sup> and ISRO<sup>19</sup>. Even though ESA is primarily a business to business agency<sup>20</sup> and not a commercial organisation, and also has science and technology as its main occupations, it has not progressed without politics and communications added to the formula. The last two decennia have witnessed the increased relevance of corporate branding and marketing for any kind of organisation, as customer desires and expectations change with globalization<sup>21</sup>. It is thus interesting to see what results come up from looking at a technological organisation like ESA from a humanistic perspective.

## 1.2. The research project

Looking at European bodies (preferably non-European Union institutions, organisations, agencies) triggered an interest in European identity processes within these bodies. As I stated in the introduction, the aim here is to look at identity processes. The reasons for singling out ESA as a research subject are threefold. First of all, field work in the form of an internship provided me with the first acquaintance with ESA as an organisation and its internal dynamics. Secondly, the year of 2014 is a special year for ESA as it celebrates fifty years of European cooperation in space, or in other words, the fiftieth anniversary of the merging of its preceding organisations ESRO and ELDO. A special logo has been added to the right corner of the ESA homepage while the history page has been appropriately expanded. This focus on a seemingly European heritage adds to the idea of European identity processes being present. Lastly, the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union (TFEU, Lisbon) has since it entered into force in 2009 established a new kind of relationship between ESA and the EU, which perhaps manifests itself most clearly in projects such as Galileo and Copernicus. These are cooperative projects, named after eminent European scientists, between the European Commission (EC) and ESA, which will establish a citizen-controlled navigation system for Europe<sup>22</sup> and an environmental and security monitoring system<sup>23</sup> respectively. Space in Europe enters a new realm of operating through the 2009 Treaty as ESA is put ‘on the political agenda at the highest

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<sup>17</sup> Russian Federal Space Agency, <http://www.federalspace.ru/>

<sup>18</sup> Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency, <http://global.jaxa.jp/>

<sup>19</sup> Indian Space Research Organisation, <http://www.isro.org/>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Industry](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Industry)

<sup>21</sup> Lars Thøger Christensen, Mette Morsen & George Cheney, *Corporate Communications; Convention, Complexity and Critique* (London: SAGE, 2008), 64

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.esa.int/Our\\_Activities/Navigation/The\\_future\\_-\\_Galileo/What\\_is\\_Galileo](http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Navigation/The_future_-_Galileo/What_is_Galileo)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.esa.int/Our\\_Activities/Observing\\_the\\_Earth/Copernicus/Overview3](http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Observing_the_Earth/Copernicus/Overview3)

level, and it explicitly mentions ESA.<sup>24</sup> More and more projects, think-tanks and conferences have resulted from and aligned to the increased influence of the EC<sup>25</sup>.

Of particular interest is the webpage that gives information on the history of ESA and its celebration of fifty years of European cooperation in space. The menu on the left-hand side shows, among others, a list of links of key figures. The first subheading reads 'European space pioneers' which links to only four people. Further reading suggests that the past director generals of the various founding organisations also play a kind of 'pioneering' role in European space. Questions on what ESA wants to tell us and whether there is more than a story to its history arise. On the right-hand side, a link to the European Oral History Archives provides us with interview transcripts of many key figures ESA mentions on its website. What can be found in the stories of these individuals? Is there perhaps an overall, coherent and consistent narrative pervading the communications of ESA and its individuals? How are the stories of ESA on its pioneers and the stories of the pioneers on ESA connected? If the '50 years of European cooperation in space'-celebration is presented as a kind of life story of ESA, what role do the pioneers play in this story? Are they European, in the sense that they were pioneers of European space cooperation? Could they be called Europioneers? What could narrative analysis reveal of the identity processes behind ESA and its Europioneers found in the communications? These considerations and queries amounted to the following, more focussed and delineated research question:

*What is being accomplished by the European Space Agency's  
narrative on Europioneers in space?*

I have already shown what the European Space Agency is and does and the concept of Europioneers has also been formulated above. Its concept will be further developed along with the concepts of narrative and identity, which will all be discussed both theoretically and methodically in the next section.

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/European\\_milestones](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/European_milestones) . For the Treaty text on this issue, see Article 172a in the Official Journal of the European Union (C 307), page 86-87

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.spaceconference.eu/2014/en\\_GB/welcome.html](http://www.spaceconference.eu/2014/en_GB/welcome.html)



## 2. Narrative Analysis

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Within qualitative research there are various types of text analysis, among which is narrative analysis. Basically it seeks to find the meaning of a text, in an attempt to reveal information on the informant, audience and/or context. It is arguably a highly postmodernist approach through its focus on discourse detail, particularity and multiple truths. These characteristics bring with them known problems concerning research criteria, which either need to be flexibly applied or altered into ones more appropriate to the spirit of the postmodernist age<sup>26</sup>, think for example of its denial of absolute objectivity.

### 2.1. Theoretical framework

Narrative theory originates in literary studies but has undergone significant changes and adaptations. Theorists in the sixties argued narratives do not only occur in books, fiction or prose but rather anywhere language is used to convey meaning<sup>27</sup>. This widened concept of narrative sparked interest among theorists from other human sciences, as the analysis of narratives could allow them to understand more of human behaviour. Suitable variations to the approach emerged per research field. The more classical structuralist approach to narrative developed for example in anthropology, in which the focus came to lie on the form, or the structure of narrative. These structuralists ask how the narrative's language, for example in myths (Claude Lévi-Strauss<sup>28</sup>) or fairy tales (William Labov<sup>29</sup>), is structured to convey cultural meaning. This established approach and its focus on language eventually ignited a critique of its ignorance of the relevance of such factors as social, historical and political contexts. A functionalist approach emerged in the field of psychology by the work of Jerome Bruner, in which the focus came to lie on what narrated personal experience does for the person, especially regarding identity construction. According to him it was possible to understand one's identity through his or her narrative. In fact, he says that narrative *is* identity. His work has contributed to a movement that

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<sup>26</sup> Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach & Tamar Zilber, *Narrative Research; Reading, Analysis and Interpretations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998), 173

<sup>27</sup> Martin Wallace, *Recent theories of narrative* (Cornell University Press, 1986), 22

<sup>28</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York, 1963)

<sup>29</sup> William Labov, "The linguistic consequences of being a lame," *Language in Society* 2:1 (1973), 81-115

marks the ‘narrative turn’, which implies a theoretical position away from the structural towards the more contextual, cognitive and functional approach to narrative analysis<sup>30</sup>.

More recently, the narrative approach has emerged in organizational and communication studies, business and economics as well as within the medical research field. This brief introduction serves to give insight into and contextualize the theoretical and methodological directions and choices taken in the research presented in this paper.

The contemporary interdisciplinary nature of narrative analysis requires an elaboration firstly on the definition of narrative, as it can take on different forms related to which field of study one is connected. As stated in the introduction, this paper seeks to better understand the nature of the European Space Agency by analysing its communications. ESA is here considered as an organisation and an actor who wants to convey a message to its audience. In other words, ESA communicates a narrative as an organisation. The accompanying definitions of narrative, plot, and story that follow this assumption are grounded in organizational and communication research. Hence the usefulness of theories developed in this field will be discussed while the concepts will also be elaborated in relation to narrative theory.

### **2.1.1. Organisation, identity and communication**

First of all a short introduction to the concepts of organisation, corporate identity and communications is necessary, partly because the expectation to find a narrative in the communications of ESA is grounded in for example corporate communications and identity theory. Neglecting more general communications theory will result in an incomplete picture of narrative in organisational research. Christensen et al write:

“Without some alignment of symbols and messages in a cluttered marketplace, some clarity and continuity in communications, organizations will have difficulties being recognized as distinctive corporate brands. And without a minimum level of consistency between messages, procedures and behaviours, words and deeds, organizations cannot expect to be recognized as legitimate players in a globalized world. Some bodily unity, in other words, is essential in today’s communication. Yet, the ambition to demarcate,

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<sup>30</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Harvard University Press, 1990).

enclose and manage everything the organization says and does within a unified corporate expression is the essential weakness of the perspective."<sup>31</sup>

Corporate communications hence attempts to tackle issues such as identity, legitimacy, unity, branding and recognition. It has to be clear for the target audience who the corporation is and what they do. As corporations usually employ large numbers of people or otherwise consist of multiple establishments the challenge of achieving these characteristics is particularly great and thus it simultaneously articulates the apparent weakness of such an endeavour. For ESA, this means the challenge is to get more than 3000 employees spread across the world to act and express themselves as one and the same. They have to appear as legitimate, consistent, coherent and cohesive. ESA does not ignore this duty; in 2008 they updated their corporate identity to increase awareness among a wider public, as became evident on their website and bulletins<sup>32 33</sup>. ESA's corporate identity is not directly expressed in its communications, but the official brand store mentions shortly "ESA's corporate identity and its underlying values of European, visionary and human values."<sup>34</sup> Corporate identity is not only a concept through which organisations manage communications<sup>35</sup> but it is also a theoretical concept which can explain an organisation's outward stance. "Corporate identity involves the construction of an image of the organisation to differentiate a company's position in the eyes of important stakeholder [parties]"<sup>36</sup>. In other words, one aspect of corporate identity involves the staged image towards the surrounding world<sup>37</sup>, and this staging is manifested in corporate communications. Staged identity will be discussed in more detail and in relation to narrative analysis further on.

The data will be scrutinised by assuming today's striving for a unified corporate expression as a given factor that shapes the narratives. It seems evident that some of the characteristics of corporate identity and communications are similar to the criteria of a story to be a narrative, which will become clear below.

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<sup>31</sup> Christensen et al., *Corporate Communications*, 194

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/ESA\\_Publications/ESA\\_i\\_Bulletin\\_i\\_136\\_November\\_2008](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/ESA_Publications/ESA_i_Bulletin_i_136_November_2008)

<sup>33</sup> The project was executed in cooperation with external professionals in creative art direction, one of whom has an online portfolio available: <http://cargocollective.com/martinnedbal/EUROPEAN-SPACE-AGENCY>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.esaofficialstore.com/brand>

<sup>35</sup> Christensen et al., *Corporate Communications*, 42

<sup>36</sup> Joep Cornelissen, *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (SAGE, 2011), 62

<sup>37</sup> Christensen et al., *Corporate Communications*, 64

### 2.1.2. Narrative, plot and story

What makes a narrative? Barbara Czarniawska, an authority on the narrative approach in the field of organizational research, states that a story is simply a chain of events. For a story to be considered a narrative, “[it] require[s] a plot, that is to say, some way to bring [it] into a meaningful whole.”<sup>38</sup> The plot has a beginning, an action or transformation and an end. The narrative tells us when and why the plot happened in a particular way and what has been accomplished or achieved at the moment of the narrative telling; the why and how of the story. In this view, narrative is a way to organise events, temporally and causally, in such a way that they culminate into a kind of solution. It is important that the narrative is continued, linear, and cohesive in order to make sense. In other words, narrative is a sense-making device within organizational and communication contexts<sup>39</sup>. This implies a closed or minimalist definition of narrative as it only includes narratives which have this specific plot and meaningfulness. Even though narratives are analysed in more varied fields than ever this definition is wielded by most authoritative researchers (e.g. Catherine-Kohler Riessman and Amia Lieblich, whose works will be made clear further on). The continued, linear and cohesive criteria for a narrative in this definition remind us of the consistent, continued and clear (i.e. making sense) characteristics of corporate communications.

David M. Boje criticises the application of this minimalist definition mostly because narrative or narration is a retrospective action, perhaps only performed by the researchers and not even the narrator. The narrative is put onto a story. He argues that the search for plot in narrative is too forced and narrow, leaving out the idea that narrative can be an ongoing meaning-making process for example<sup>40</sup>. Especially organisations are full of these flowing, fragmented, non-static stories, which are not considered in narrative analysis but still important according to Boje. He proposes several types of narrative analysis which are capable of including the multi-voiced and polyphonic nature of organizational narrative. The manner in which researchers, among them Czarniawska, have consistently dismissed multi-story in organizations bother him<sup>41</sup>. According to him, they have relied too much on

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<sup>38</sup> Barbara Czarniawska, *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies* (Thousand Oaks, SAGE, 1998), 2.

<sup>39</sup> Anna Linda Musacchio Adorisio, *Storytelling in Organizations; from Theory to Empirical Research* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 35

<sup>40</sup> David M. Boje, *Narrative methods for organizational and communication research* (London: SAGE, 2001), 3

<sup>41</sup> Boje, *Narrative methods for organizational and communication research*, 8

the influence of corporate communications while Boje observes the weaknesses (to which Christensen et al also point) that come with this forced unification and consistency. In several of his works Boje addresses the issue of corporate communications strategies which exclude and perhaps even forcibly hide voices that divert from the managerially decided narrative<sup>42</sup>. His ultimate goal is “to improve the narrative of organizations.”<sup>43</sup> However, recent theoretical developments have allowed for inclusion of multiple stories in the process of narrative analysis, even though they might still not be considered narratives as such. For this development we need to have an understanding of narrative either as a text or as something other than that, as praxis.

### 2.1.3. Narrative text and praxis

The developments following the narrative turn have strengthened the tendency away from the idea of narrative purely as a text, towards the idea of narrative as praxis. Two approaches, interactional and performative, emerged, which alter the theoretical view on what exactly a narrative is. Riessman’s typology of narrative analysis regards the interactional and the performative as separate approaches<sup>44</sup>, while Michael Bamberg combines them into one analytical layer<sup>45</sup>. In any case, they emphasise the importance of context, situation, locality, audience and setting. It means that the narrative selected for analysis has no scientific relevance unless all surrounding factors are considered to be just as important to the interpretation as the narrative itself. Any kind of stories that surround the narrative, which is as such embedded, should be taken into account when doing analysis. These kinds of stories, still in the broadest sense of “a chain of events”, include not least the audience’s reaction to the actor or performer of the narrative and how the narrative is negotiated in its particular relational setting. I will come back to this in a moment when discussing performative narrative. As Czarniawska points out, it is important to recognize that such contextualization is also a constraint to the analytical process<sup>46</sup>. Because of the many unique surrounding factors, the narrative can as such solely be understood in its current setting and it has no higher relevance beyond that. It cannot be

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<sup>42</sup> E.g. David M. Boje, “Stories of the Storytelling Organization: A Postmodern Analysis of Disney as ‘Tamara-Land’”, *The Academy of Management Journal* 38:4 (1995) 997-1035

<sup>43</sup> Boje, *Narrative methods for organizational and communication research*, 9

<sup>44</sup> Catherine Kohler-Riessman, “Narrative Analysis” in *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life* (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2005), 4-5

<sup>45</sup> Michael Bamberg, “Narrative Analysis” in *APA handbook of research methods in psychology* (Washington, DC: APA Press, 2012)

<sup>46</sup> Czarniawska, *A Narrative approach to organization studies*, 12

singled out to be analysed and compared in other localities, however similar. Yet that does not mean that processes behind these narratives, for example relating to identity perception and construction, are elusive to generalizing analysis<sup>47</sup>.

In fact, because the narrative is assumed to be embedded one has to recognize the existence of multiple narratives. An actor can perform or recount varying narratives depending on the current context within which it resides. In this manner, a narrative is more like an action or a performance, a social doing, than a text, as it would perhaps be under a structuralist approach<sup>48</sup>. It is then possible to analyse this praxis as a general action or process, instead of focussing on the unique and separate narratives the actor presents at different occasions. This approach is particularly useful when analysing communications, as it facilitates research into how a narrator wants to be known and how it is doing its identity for example<sup>49</sup>. The assumed embeddedness of performed narrative is accompanied by other implications that concern for example aspects such as audience and culture. These aspects are the aforementioned stories that surround the narrative. They are factors that instruct and construct the individual narrative. Depending on what the narrator wants to accomplish or how he wants to be known, the audience to whom the narrative is directed delineates the sense-making. The narrative will be performed in such a way that the narrator's intention is conveyed to the audience. Culture is another constraining factor as it instructs how a narrative plays out in a performative setting in general. As Peterson and Langellier argue, in perceiving narrative as a doing one can distinguish what is culturally instructed and what is inventive about it<sup>50</sup>. It is summarily impossible to neglect the role that factors such as those mentioned here play in how the narrative is expressed.

Texts can also be perceived as actions, but more in the sense that they are the product of action and intention while they also cause and affect the production of subsequent texts. Czarniawska clarifies the latter approach by stating that "actions are texts in the sense that they must be legible to qualify as actions at all and not movements or behaviours. No 'agency' is implicated in this notion of action"<sup>51</sup>. Hence it must be kept separate from the narrative praxis approach where text itself is action and performance (and vice versa) in a

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<sup>47</sup> Bamberg, "Narrative Analysis", 17

<sup>48</sup> Riessman, "Narrative Analysis", 5

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>50</sup> Eric E. Peterson and Kristin Langellier, "The performance turn in narrative studies", *Narrative Inquiry* 16 (2006), 175, accessed February 25, 2014, doi: 10.1075/ni.16.1.22pet

<sup>51</sup> Czarniawska, *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies*, 11

continuous, negotiated and unique context. In short, the basic principle of narrative as praxis is that it is not possible to reveal or detect a narrator's identity directly through the narrative. This is opposed to Bruner's functional approach which says that narrative is a direct way of uncovering and understanding one's identity. Rather, as is the aim of this paper, it is possible to see what is being accomplished with such a narrative action.

Riessman's analysis typology has been shortly mentioned with regard to the interactive and performative approach. She adds two more to these, a thematic and a structural approach. Altogether, these four are in no way to be regarded as demarcated and exclusive<sup>52</sup>. Bamberg also emphasizes this notion and defines three layers (where the third is, as mentioned, a combination of interactive and performative) which complement each other. Thematic and structural analyses are the base of the third analytical layer and altogether have the potential to result in a more thick description of the narrative under scrutiny<sup>53</sup>. The focus on the mutuality of the layers dismisses the stricter and more delineated typology of Lieblich et al. They divide the analytical approaches across two axes; one of content versus form, the other of holistic versus categorical<sup>54</sup>. At the same time they recognize the ambiguity and interpretativeness of narrative research in general and their typology has still influenced contemporaries like Riessman. In fact, her typology also differentiates between content (what she calls thematic) and form or categorical (structural) but does so in a less exclusive and essentialist way.

The theoretical framework that instructs the analysis of ESA's narrative on Europioneers in space will as follows consist of a performative approach combined with the corporate identity and communications approach. The latter is of particular importance as it plays an essential role in how ESA wants to be known and portrayed and consequently affects how the narrative is performed or communicated, i.e. what is being accomplished by it. The combination of these two will reveal such processes as legitimization and identity construction. Also, Boje's concerns on possibly divergent and/or excluded stories are taken into account when analysing the individual Europioneers' narratives. Before we turn to look at how this analysis will be executed it must be noted that this paper does not claim to be able to give a thoroughly holistic picture of the performed narrative; this would require

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<sup>52</sup> Riessman, "Narrative Analysis", 2

<sup>53</sup> Bamberg, "Narrative Analysis", 35-37

<sup>54</sup> Lieblich, *Narrative Research; Reading, Analysis and Interpretations*, 173

in-depth understanding of multiple theories for example on gender, international relations, semiotics, power, knowledge management, ethics, and many more.

## 2.2. Method

What advantages does narrative analysis have over other methods such as critical discourse analysis (CDA), content analysis or any other kind of text analysis, in revealing more about the identity processes behind an organisation like ESA? The following section will discuss how a qualitative approach such as narrative analysis is useful for the aim of this research, while it also recognizes and reflects on what is overlooked or bypassed, especially within text analysis methods. Thereafter the focus will turn to what choices were made when collecting, organising and scrutinising the data, followed by which primary sources were selected and why.

### 2.2.1. Why a narrative approach?

First of all, narrative analysis provides the research with quite a bit of freedom in how to carry out the steps. As Czarniawska points out, “there is no obvious connection between the narrative approach and any specific method of study”<sup>55</sup>. It is then possible, and this is not an uncommon phenomenon among narrative researchers, to formulate a (set of) method(s) that are expected to be appropriate for the research case or issue at hand. Be that as it may, this formula (also called a ‘device’ by Czarniawska<sup>56</sup>) enhances and emphasizes the necessity of a thorough argumentation to justify the process of collecting, selecting, interpreting and analysing primary sources. Because of the eclectic and interpretative nature of the narrative approach, this justification requires substantial concern and perhaps more so than in research adopting methods with a more replicable character (e.g. content analysis or surveys). Riessman nonetheless identifies three criteria of doing narrative analysis that should be met by every researcher, regardless of the research question:

1. Construct texts for further analysis, that is, select and organise documents;
2. Compose field notes, and/or;
3. Choose sections of interview transcripts for close inspection.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Czarniawska, *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies*, 19

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

<sup>57</sup> Riessman, “Narrative Analysis”, 2



The terms ‘construct’, ‘compose’ and ‘choose’ indicate the involvement of the researcher’s (interpretative) actions, which as discussed must be spelled out clearly. Narrative analysis is also in a sense more open compared to CDA, which has a specific research agenda. While the narrative research project usually has no specific agenda, CDA intends to uncover power relations in texts<sup>58</sup>.

The second strength of narrative analysis is the eye for detail it has, in the sense that it exposes opinions and evaluations of reflexive individuals. Particularly performative narrative analysis provides insight into all the factors that shape sense-making and its setting, as opposed to for example structural analytical methods and tools. As discussed in the theory section, this approach inspects the building blocks of a text, the linguistic tools. For example, story network analysis uses software to envision stories as a network or map. On this map, all nodes are different elements (characters, themes, events, etc.) of the story that are thus objectified as essentialist units. This structure of nodes can hide such implications as context, subjectivity and meaning which influence the narrative whole<sup>59</sup>. The narrative turn on the other hand has in fact contributed to the inclusion of such aspects as contextuality, as discussed earlier. Besides within structural narrative analysis, the same danger of decontextualization exists in content analysis. Apart from this being a method which inclines towards the quantitative, content analysis (software) runs the risk of “missing the overall sense of a body of communications”<sup>60</sup>. Moreover, this method would have been more appropriate in the scenario where the research would examine the effects of ESA’s communications<sup>61</sup>.

The strength of detail, particularly in contextuality, discussed above is related to the third advantage, which concerns a so called “human exceptionalism”. The researchers can come to understand the impact of dynamics on a social, cultural and political scale on the individual level. Analysis of narratives maintains an animate representation of the subjects as they make sense of the world and of themselves. The research can result in intimate and fascinating data<sup>62</sup> of which the intensity and quality might not be possible to attain in research adopting other methods. The interview method has the potentiality of coming

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<sup>58</sup> E.g. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: SAGE, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Boje, *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*, 67

<sup>60</sup> Gray et al., *The Research Imagination*, 285

<sup>61</sup> Paul S. Gray et al., *The Research Imagination: An Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Methods* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 290

<sup>62</sup> Musacchio, *Storytelling in organizations*, 16-17

close to the research subject's reflections on his/her own identity. However, this type of method also brings along the risk of bias, for example by affecting the subject's opinion<sup>63</sup>. Taking this risk into account and turning it into an asset, one can assume the researcher is inevitably part of the narrative process and that this does not have to be a disadvantage. The narrative interview is a method that is set to let narratives arise spontaneously because the interviewer does not use predetermined questions, but rather proposes themes. Still the interviewer is a part of the narrative interview and is as such essential (bearing in mind the implications)<sup>64</sup>. On the other hand, performative analysis can have the tendency to assume a distance from the narrator. As mentioned, analysis of performed narrative is assumed to be unable to provide direct insight into the identity of the narrator. Another reason for bypassing the interview as a research method has been practical. In the case of field work at ESA, direct access would not have been a problem for the researcher. The problem lies rather in the area of 'informed consent'<sup>65</sup>. It will become clear when the sources are discussed that most interviews have been revised, which means they have been revised and approved by the interviewee him- or herself, thus by doing so giving consent. In short, this can potentially critically influence the empirical research and its observations.

Another reason for using the narrative approach is the lack of access to certain sources. In a way, ESA is less transparent than for example the European Union. The official documents that have been published are the Convention, ESA rules and regulations<sup>66</sup> and appeals board documents<sup>67</sup>. Some of the latter have to be bought however<sup>68</sup>. The annual reports and bulletins, publications which have just been mentioned, give a little insight by presenting concise but clear overviews of the budget and to what purposes it is used. Yet no public records of any kind of meetings are to be found, for example from the Council or a programme directorate. In any case, our research focus lies not on the governing dynamics but on the individuals that narrate ESA's life story. Conducting interviews would be a logical step, both with regular staff as with board members and directors. However, it is likely that their expressions will be strongly assessed by the media relations and

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<sup>63</sup> Gray, *The Research Imagination*, 172

<sup>64</sup> Elliot George Mishler, *Research Interviewing; context and narrative* (Harvard University Press, 1986), 105

<sup>65</sup> Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 213

<sup>66</sup> These concern for example procurement, contracting and data security and property.

[http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Law\\_at\\_ESA/Highlights\\_of\\_ESA\\_rules\\_and\\_regulations](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Law_at_ESA/Highlights_of_ESA_rules_and_regulations)

<sup>67</sup> These include rules of procedure as well as law cases.

[http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Law\\_at\\_ESA/Appeals\\_Board](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Law_at_ESA/Appeals_Board)

<sup>68</sup> All official documents become accessible 15 years after date issued (used for example by Krige and Russo's *History of ESA* volumes).

corporate identity divisions<sup>69</sup> to see if they are appropriate and consistent with ESA as an organisation. This is the aforementioned “informed consent” that would be required before publishing original data. Again, Boje has pointed to this disadvantage of corporate communications to narrative analysis. Instead, interviews that already exist have been used, taken from the Oral History of European space project in cooperation with the European University Institute<sup>70</sup>. The goals of this project are “to trace[s] the history of the European collaborative space programme from its beginnings in the late 1950s to the creation of a single space agency in the early 1970s and up to recent developments, in the light of its main actors and policies.”<sup>71</sup> History professor John Krige has led the project and has experience from writing similar volumes on NASA’s fifty years of international cooperation as well as CERN’s history<sup>72</sup>. Another, more practical reason for using existing interviews is that many of the relevant candidates to function as Europioneers have passed away or are of very old age, which restrains the opportunities for suitable, effective and data-rich interviewing. A disadvantage is that the research goals are missed out on when using other’s interviews<sup>73</sup>, which were perhaps conducted under distinct circumstances not related to the current research objective. Furthermore, as we have just discussed, these interviews also contain pointers to certain subjects being quite sensitive and the interviews have been accordingly revised, with insight from the interviewees themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Now I will shift the focus to how I decided which sources would be suitable for finding answers on underlying identity processes, as well as where they were selected.

### 2.2.2. Finding the data

As mentioned earlier, Riessman’s first step of narrative analysis should in any case involve the collection, selection and organisation of documents. The collection or gathering of the data has been directed by the question of where to find the narrative. The formulation of the term Europioneers guided the search of voices to be held as representative of this narrative. A substantial amount of exploratory reading precedes this quest, to get an idea of

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<sup>69</sup> <http://www.esa.int/Services/Contacts>

<sup>70</sup> Part of The Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU), European Oral History: <http://www.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/EN/ESAOH.asp>

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ESA\\_history/A\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_European\\_Space\\_Agency](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ESA_history/A_history_of_the_European_Space_Agency)

<sup>72</sup> <http://johnkrige.com/monographs>

<sup>73</sup> Barbara Truesdell, “Oral History Techniques: How to organize and conduct oral history interviews”, <http://www.indiana.edu/~csh/techniques.html>, 1

<sup>74</sup> E.g. Interview with Daniel Sacotte, 3 Feb. 2012, 22 (not wanting or being able to answer, or ... as part of ‘revised’ version). <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT091>

whom and/or what engages in the narrative of ESA. I have stated that ESA is an organisation and as such one actor, keeping in mind the dialectical influence of corporate communications strategies. In this sense, any press-related communications, like a press release, “may be productively approached as an episodic autobiographical narrative genre, by which the organization seeks to establish and negotiate its identity with regard to a generalized external public.”<sup>75</sup> Following this assumption, some bits and pieces from ESA’s corporate publications are regarded as cases of expressed narrative and as such have been included in the analytical process. For example, a relevant and useful press release involving multiple Europioneers as well as ESA’s expansionary activities has been found on the ESA webpage under the tab “For media”.<sup>76</sup> Also, interviews from the video’s produced in cooperation with Euronews for their special Space Magazine<sup>77</sup> have been considered. ESA’s other publications such as the quarterly bulletin or annual report contain interesting materials as well.<sup>78</sup> Both of these publications usually focus on success stories, those projects and events that ESA readily and proudly reports on. Europioneers like Directors and astronauts do not unfrequently contribute with an interview or self-written article. Therefore, such a communication has also been chosen to be the subject of analysis. Lastly, after close inspection of all the links and pathways on the commemorative website, it is evident that 2014 is in no manner the first occasion ESA decides to celebrate an anniversary of any kind. Accordingly, stories and interviews from earlier jubilees<sup>79</sup> have also been included in the pile of to-be-analysed sources. These cases or examples of instances where ESA’s narrative on Europioneers is expected to emerge have not been singled out randomly. At the same time, the Europioneers have actively created the narrative as well. The above description serves thus not least to explain why and how certain sources have been selected and used (the second part of Riessman’s first step). This selection can be compared to information-oriented case study selection as advocated by Bent Flyvbjerg<sup>80</sup>. This approach has been extended also to the way certain excerpts of the texts have been appointed for analysis. Even though the next section will give voice to

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<sup>75</sup> Dawn R. Gilpin, “Narrating the organizational self: Reframing the role of the news release” in *Public Relations Review* 34 (2008), doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2007.08.005, 10

<sup>76</sup> [http://www.esa.int/For\\_Media/Press\\_Releases](http://www.esa.int/For_Media/Press_Releases)

<sup>77</sup> A collaboration programme of ESA and Euronews:

[http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/ESOC/A\\_pioneer\\_reflects\\_on\\_ESA\\_s\\_thirty\\_years](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/ESOC/A_pioneer_reflects_on_ESA_s_thirty_years)

<sup>78</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/ESA\\_Publications/ESA\\_Publications\\_Bulletin](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/ESA_Publications/ESA_Publications_Bulletin)

<sup>79</sup> These include “Thirty years of ESA” and “50 years of humans in space”, while there are still more.

<sup>80</sup> “To maximize the utility of information from small samples and single cases. Cases are selected on the basis of the expectation about the information content.” Bent Flyvbjerg, “Five misunderstandings about case study-research”, *Qualitative Inquiry* 12:2 (2006), 230, accessed 24 March 2014, doi: 10.1177/1077800405284363

some of the collected and organised material, one has to keep in mind the many other sources that have been considered. The presentation of the material is based on for example works by Riessman<sup>81</sup> and Musacchio<sup>82</sup>, who also give voice to some of their material as a way of showing empirical research, followed by or integrated with a discussion of the material.

### 2.2.3. Sources

The Europioneers tell stories about ESA and ESA tells stories about its Europioneers. As discussed, these stories cohere into narratives and have been found in various places. However, these places have in common that they all involve certain celebrated individuals, called key figures by ESA and Europioneers for the sake of this study. The Europioneers will be introduced briefly below in chronological order, starting with the most senior one. The seven individuals marked as the Europioneers can be treated as a homogeneous group for several reasons, to which the analysis of data results will refer back to:

1. They have all played an important role in the construction of a common European cooperative project;
2. They all represent what is the ‘we’ in the narrative (ESA as a European, cooperative organisation), specifically against ‘them’. However, I will show that in the case of Vladimír Remek, there can be an inconsistency.
3. They are all public figures, to a larger or lesser extent. They have all performed their affiliation with Europe and its space endeavours in public more than once, making these instances relevant for the research on narratives.

Many more individuals have been entitled pioneers by ESA<sup>83</sup>; however they have not made the selection of Europioneers. This is partly because the sources on and from them are limited, but sometimes also because these individuals fall in line with their predecessors and successors; i.e. they voice the same issues and line of argument. This does not mean that they have been left unconsidered entirely, as they function as secondary and/or tertiary sources instead. Also, the above argumentation does not imply that there are no differences

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<sup>81</sup> Catherine Kohler-Riessman, “Performing identities in illness narrative: masculinity and multiple sclerosis” in *Qualitative Research* 3:1 (2003), 5-11, doi: 10.1177/146879410300300101

<sup>82</sup> Musacchio, *Storytelling in Organizations*, 72

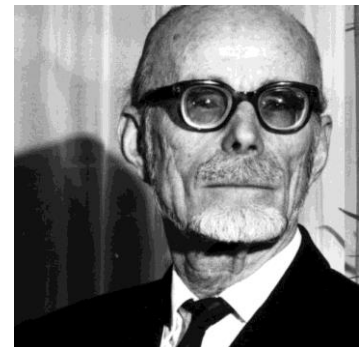
<sup>83</sup> E.g. Peter Creola (Swiss delegate), national government ministers (their influence on delegations and general council negotiations), other European scientists more involved in CERN or national agencies, etc.

between the Europioneers at all and some will be pointed out in the analysis. The voices of the Europioneers are part of the narrative in various (spoken) texts which are the primary sources of this study. Furthermore, some of the primary sources are originally in French. These have been autonomously translated and when excerpts of the texts are cited or quoted in this paper, it has been attempted to maintain and convey the original meaning of the text as much as possible. The presentation of these Europioneers will support the understanding of the narrative as well as create depth in the discussion on performative analysis section above; indeed, who is performing?

Various kinds of texts, visuals and speeches have been used as secondary sources to contextualise the primary sources. These include ESA's brochures, bulletins, websites as well as Professor Krige and A. Russo's works on ESA's history. Both the primary and secondary sources include a small number of autonomously transcribed audio and video excerpts.

### *Pierre Auger*

This scientific statesman has his roots at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he was a quantum physics professor. During the fifties and sixties he helped found and develop several (international) organisations, among which the French national space organisation CNES, but also CERN and ESRO. He held an interview in 1992, a year before his death, when he was ninety-three years old. This interview was not part of the ESA History Project (but part of the overall European Oral History initiative<sup>84</sup>) but he is part of the list of only four people called 'European pioneers in space' on the '50 years of European cooperation in space' website<sup>85</sup>. He talks about his many travels and countless encounters with other icons such as Joseph Stalin<sup>86</sup> and Marie Curie<sup>87</sup>, presenting himself as one of these bespoken individuals.



Pierre Auger. Source:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/8/85/Pierre\\_Victor\\_Auger.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/8/85/Pierre_Victor_Auger.jpg)

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with Pierre Auger, 10 Dec. 1992. [http://archives.eui.eu/oral\\_history/INT064](http://archives.eui.eu/oral_history/INT064)

<sup>85</sup> Pierre Auger, Edoardo Amaldi, Herman Bondi and Robert Aubinière: [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ESA\\_history/European\\_space\\_pioneers](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ESA_history/European_space_pioneers)

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Pierre Auger, 10 Dec. 1992, 63. [http://archives.eui.eu/oral\\_history/INT064](http://archives.eui.eu/oral_history/INT064)

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 16/21

## Reimar Lüst

After three years as a prisoner of war in World War II, Lüst obtained his Ph.D. and chaired numerous scientific committees and organisations. Also present at the foundations of ESRO, Lüst speaks at various occasions on ESA-NASA relations. Most recently, he reflects in an interview for a TV programme on the beginnings of European space cooperation<sup>88</sup>. Besides being DG from 1984 to 1990<sup>89</sup>, he has been the chairman of the Advisory Committee for the ESA History Project, and has as such contributed amongst other things to Professor Krige and Russo's work by means of a foreword. Due to practical issues, his interview conducted for this project (in German) has not been considered. . Many of the other Europioneers, but also ESA staff in general, remember and regard him as 'the true founder of ESA'.<sup>90</sup>



Reimar Lüst. Source:

[http://www.senatspressestelle.bremen.de/bilder/luest\\_iub\\_k.jpg](http://www.senatspressestelle.bremen.de/bilder/luest_iub_k.jpg)

## Roy Gibson



Roy Gibson. Source:

[http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa\\_multimedia/images/2007/11/roy\\_gibson/10139104-2-eng-GB/Roy\\_Gibson\\_medium.jpg](http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa_multimedia/images/2007/11/roy_gibson/10139104-2-eng-GB/Roy_Gibson_medium.jpg)

This self-proclaimed space administrator from the United Kingdom is at the moment of writing 87 years old. He served in Malaysia during World War II and took up various international positions after this. He enters the European cooperation in space-scene just after the setting up of ESRO and ELDO and joins the process of building ESA<sup>91</sup>. He is active and visible up until today in the scientific world, often making media appearances. ESA and many of its other Europioneers often refer to him in almost mythical terms, which we will see later both in the description and the analysis of the narrative. André Lebeau has written his biography called "Memoires/Recollections".

<sup>88</sup> Reimar Lüst in "30 years - A Pioneer looks back", interview by EuroNews' Space Magazine, 23 May 2005. [http://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2005/05/ESA\\_30\\_Years\\_-\\_A\\_Pioneer\\_Looks\\_Back](http://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2005/05/ESA_30_Years_-_A_Pioneer_Looks_Back)

<sup>89</sup> Introduction to INT070 – Lüst, Reimar. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT070>

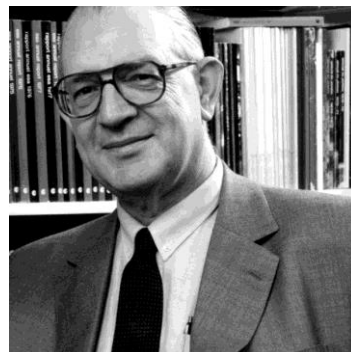
<sup>90</sup> Interview with Daniel Sacotte, 3 Feb. 2012, 27. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT091.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Roy Gibson, 5 Dec. 2007. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT785.pdf>



### *George van Reeth*

Grounded in engineering and law studies, this Belgian enters the European cooperation in space-scene in 1964, when he becomes head of the contracts office at ESTEC (then an establishment of ESRO). This position made him a Europioneer as he was the one to set up a team to introduce and advance contracting methods suitable for European industry<sup>92</sup>. He has been interviewed twice for the same project, but in different years (2002 and 2008) and by different people. He has been a member of the advisory committee for the ESA history project<sup>93</sup>. Van Reeth passed away 25 August 2010.



George van Reeth. Source:

[http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa\\_multimedia/images/2007/12/george\\_van\\_reeth/9501351-4-eng-GB/George\\_Van\\_Reeth\\_medium.jpg](http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa_multimedia/images/2007/12/george_van_reeth/9501351-4-eng-GB/George_Van_Reeth_medium.jpg)

### *Daniel Sacotte*

This individual could be regarded as a rather less famous Europioneer but he is nonetheless just as important as he has much to say on the other pioneers and their roles in ESA's growing up process. After a career at CNES he became Director of administration and thereafter Director of human spaceflight<sup>94</sup>. Not unimportantly, he played a crucial role in administrative developments in the organisation, for example concerning internal security and gender equality.



Daniel Sacotte. Source:

[http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa\\_multimedia/images/2002/05/daniel\\_sacotte/9193390-5-eng-GB/Daniel\\_Sacotte.jpg](http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa_multimedia/images/2002/05/daniel_sacotte/9193390-5-eng-GB/Daniel_Sacotte.jpg)

### *Jean-Jacques Dordain*

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<sup>92</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/George\\_Van\\_Reeth](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/George_Van_Reeth)

<sup>93</sup> Karl-Egon Reuter and Johan Oberlechner, "The ESA History Project", *ESA Bulletin* 119 (2004), 49

<sup>94</sup> [http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/Global\\_Space\\_Exploration/SEMD5WBE8YE\\_0.html](http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/Global_Space_Exploration/SEMD5WBE8YE_0.html)



This Director-General has been selected as a European of interest, firstly, as he is the body “representing the Agency [ESA] in all its acts”<sup>95</sup>, which applies of course for the other DGs Roy Gibson and Reimar Lüst as well. He has not been part of the ESA History project (yet), of which the reason is presumably that he is still in office (since 2003). All his communications used in this paper were found in the context of media relations and consequently in the form of speeches and other well-coordinated and strategically planned utterances.



Jean-Jacques Dordain. Source : [http://www.spacenews.com/sites/spacenews.com/files/images/articles/JJDordain\\_ESA4X3.jpg](http://www.spacenews.com/sites/spacenews.com/files/images/articles/JJDordain_ESA4X3.jpg)

### *Vladimír Remek*

ESA entitles Vladimír Remek, from former Czechoslovakia, as the first European in space, even though Ulf Merbold (first astronaut flying for ESA) is also sometimes called the first astronaut<sup>96</sup>. As will become evident later, the phrasing and context are decisive for the exact title of ‘first’. In any case, Remek flew into space in 1978. At the time of Remek’s flight, Czechoslovakia was ruled by a communist party heavily influenced and dominated



by the SU. He has worked in the European Parliament from 2004 as a member of the Confederal Group of the European Left – Nordic Green Left party (GUE/NGL)<sup>97</sup>. This party includes the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (CPBM) which is the Czech sequel to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, considered a criminal organisation in 1993<sup>98</sup>. He speaks and reports mostly on scientific matters (e.g. nuclear, Galileo) and is a Hero of the Soviet Union through his contribution to cosmonautic space exploration<sup>99</sup>.

Vladimír Remek. Source:

[http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa\\_multimedia/images/2008/11/cosmonaut\\_vladimir\\_remek/9728890-3-eng-GB/Cosmonaut\\_Vladimir\\_Remek\\_medium.jpg](http://www.esa.int/var/esa/storage/images/esa_multimedia/images/2008/11/cosmonaut_vladimir_remek/9728890-3-eng-GB/Cosmonaut_Vladimir_Remek_medium.jpg)

<sup>95</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Law\\_at\\_ESA/ESA\\_s\\_organs\\_and\\_functioning](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Law_at_ESA/ESA_s_organs_and_functioning)

<sup>96</sup> ESA Press release of 5 March 2003:

[http://www.esa.int/Our\\_Activities/Human\\_Spaceflight/25\\_Years\\_of\\_Human\\_Spaceflight\\_in\\_Europe/%28print%29](http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Human_Spaceflight/25_Years_of_Human_Spaceflight_in_Europe/%28print%29)

<sup>97</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28330/VLADIMIR\\_REMEK\\_history.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28330/VLADIMIR_REMEK_history.html)

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/czechrepublic/10404238/Czech-elections-Communists-could-end-up-back-in-power.html>

<sup>99</sup> “Curriculum Vitae”, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28330/VLADIMIR\\_REMEK\\_cv.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28330/VLADIMIR_REMEK_cv.html)

## 3. Data discussion

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Looking at our sources, what is being accomplished by the narrative on Europioneers found in them? What is this narrative? These questions will be presented and discussed in this section, as follow: first of all, a short description of the narrative will be given. Secondly, the sources will be discussed by moving through all three layers as set out by Riessman and Bamberg, while the focus stays on the performative (third layer) approach.

### 3.1. What is the narrative on Europioneers?

The plot development and themes will be discussed only concisely as the emphasis lies on the next step of performative analysis. This paper argues that ESA's narrative of Europioneers as part of its life story '50 years of European cooperation in space' consists of a continued and still continuing, cohesive plot. This plot entails a beginning, a struggle and/or action and an end. It is not a story on the history of ESA, but a narrative with a specific message and purpose. The plot development will be demonstrated by producing excerpts concerning the particular characters, events and themes involved in it. The following section shows that the narrative is an emplotment of the construction of a European organisation in space and we will begin by simply describing the plot.

#### 3.1.1. Plot

In the beginning, the founding of various European cooperative organisations in the field of research, technology and development was the result of extensive meetings and discussions by acclaimed European scientists<sup>100</sup>. These scientists felt the way to go for space science and technology was to initiate a purely scientific organisation, that is to say, an organisation without commercial launchers or telecommunication satellites. As founding father Pierre Auger recounts,

... I started to preoccupy myself with the international aspects of space research. Thus I joined a special committee of the International Council for Science, ISCU, a committee which bore the name of COSPAR and which consisted of scientists from all countries interested in space science. I thought this committee would be a good way to start an organisation of the kind of CERN, and I benefited from a reunion of COSPAR which was

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<sup>100</sup> Krige and Russo, *History of ESA*, 13

held in Nice, to get back together with all the European scholars present, and to suggest to them the formation of a European organisation for space science.<sup>101</sup>

Europioneer Auger tells us he saw the benefit of getting the acclaimed scientists' attention while they were all together for a conference anyway. The idea of pooling all scientific and technological knowledge in Europe was positively attainable for the scientists and engineers involved in the founding process. As Reimar Lüst says it, "as far as the scientists and engineers are concerned all of Europe can work together... the governments are somewhat more difficult, and in the council meeting I once exploded, 'it's worse than dancing with an octopus!'"<sup>102</sup> Thus one of the difficult tasks at hand was to attempt to bridge the gap between the technological ambitions of the scientists and the economic and political reality brought forward by the delegates of the member states. This struggle, one of two which will both be analysed later, particularly evolved towards the establishment of the ESA convention. Due to the cooperative nature within the European initiative, a completely new managerial and organisational structure had to be invented. As Gibson points out, "there was no pattern to follow, perhaps from NASA you could see what they were doing, but [...] many of the lessons that we might have taken from NASA were not really suited for our situation immediately."<sup>103</sup> Also, the particularities of this cooperation in relation to industry required pioneering efforts. Van Reeth says,

I quickly learned why Lines had said that I could do as I pleased. There was no contracting bureau. There was nobody. I didn't even have a secretary. Thus I started alone. I typed the financial annex of the *General contracting Clauses and Conditions* myself with two fingers on a 'typewriter' as we said in those days and I slowly started to set up a contracting bureau with some staff. In the beginning, I had one or two assistants. I have to say that the work was very, very interesting: effectively we were not bound by any regulations or administrative rules. [...] And I could do work which was original and creative. Creativity is not the specialty of administrators. Why? Because ultimately we did things in space which we have never seen done before in Europe. And the technicians, the engineers they went to look for their light in the United States. [...] I went to look for them [approaches to contracts for European industry] in America. In broad lines... in the first place it was the creation of a

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Pierre Auger, 10 Dec. 1992, 52. [http://archives.eui.eu/oral\\_history/INT064](http://archives.eui.eu/oral_history/INT064)

<sup>102</sup> Reimar Lüst in "30 years – A Pioneer looks back", 23 May 2005. [http://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2005/05/ESA\\_30\\_Years\\_-\\_A\\_Pioneer\\_Looks\\_Back](http://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2005/05/ESA_30_Years_-_A_Pioneer_Looks_Back)

<sup>103</sup> Roy Gibson in "Learning from experience: a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau", 15 May 2012. <http://www.espi.or.at/index.php/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

working method, the creation of unprecedented contracting formats, which we borrowed from America, and which we adapted. Because we had to. The European circumstances were not the same as in the United States. Thus, it was necessary to adapt them quite a lot. But ultimately the base was there.<sup>104</sup>

Even though there occurred some copying of contracting methods from the USA during the time of setting up ESTEC, Gibson mentions it was impossible to export these methods as they were directly to a European context. Thus, as van Reeth says above, adaption, integration and persuasion were essential actions towards industry in Europe in order to make them see beyond their national boundaries.

Coming back to the struggle of merging all interests of member states together into one European effort in space, ESA, there was a clear goal and desire amongst them despite the difficult and long way it took to get there. Gibson reminds us,

I think we didn't do badly, we made lots of mistakes, and, but it was, I think it was constructive. The thing I keep coming back on is that the atmosphere of member states was positive. They wanted to do something. And when member states agree that they want to do it, it's such a rare occasion that you really have to seize it and eh, make use of it. And this was certainly the case! There were disagreements between them as to how to do it and how far to go, but the general atmosphere amongst member states was; [determined] we need an agency. And eh, this is a good wind. But to say it [ESRO's management] was perfect would be a vast exaggeration. But I think we didn't do too badly!<sup>105</sup>

Europioneer Gibson emphasizes the cooperative and European nature of the negotiations, which have progressed successfully through the help of important individuals such as himself. Daniel Sacotte even dubs it the era of heroes when looking back at these days of forming ESA and its convention:

You have to know that in the history of ESA, there were founders who launched European programmes and then helped realise the merging of ELDO and ESRO, etc., notably Roy Gibson, elegant, charming and competent. After this you have had a mythical character,

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with George van Reeth, 11-13 March 2002, 4.

<http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT052>

<sup>105</sup> Roy Gibson in "Learning from experience: a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau", 15 May 2012, 26'12-27'27. <http://www.espi.or.at/index.php/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

Reimar Lüst, the real founder of ESA, renowned scientist, a leader of such great quality which I would describe with Wagnerian romanticism. It's the heroic period. Energized by a very high ambition for ESA, he has developed projects, of which the budgets attained billions of crowns<sup>106</sup> for Hermes, Columbus, with thousands of people among whom some 600 have been hired, I believe. All this was superb, grand, and appropriate for an era of growth when we could dream but space time is long and economic cycles are shorter. George van Reeth has urged this... He had to see the problems coming. Thus you had an organisation which had magnitude, but in complete isolation compared to the world on the one hand and to social structure on the other. The world changed and ESA did not see it.<sup>107</sup>

In ESA's life history, the heroes of this period had another struggle to deal with. Europe was to become and remain independent and competitive on the global space market. The struggle consisted for the larger part of relations with the USA. Van Reeth wants to make sure that we understand, as Lüst says as well, that the difficulties between NASA and the European organisations were "not so much NASA though, but often [between] *State Department* and European politics"<sup>108</sup>. Where the USA were inclined to let ESA launch satellites for free in the beginning, "for the pleasure of showing us things they knew how to do"<sup>109</sup>, towards more cooperative projects they demanded a payment in the form of technological knowledge<sup>110</sup>. However, towards the end of the seventies and through the eighties ESA began to feel disrespected and abused by NASA. Lüst says:

I will not discuss in detail the history of how the Agreement on Spacelab was concluded, except to say that it was later felt by some Europeans that the deal was not a fair one in that after completion Europe had to hand over ownership of the Spacelab hardware to the US and now has to pay the full price for its use. In my opinion, this can only be understood in the light of the circumstances prevailing in 1973<sup>111</sup>. In addition, we on the European side should take into account all the opportunities offered to us before Spacelab.<sup>112</sup>

On the other hand, Gibson points out that cooperating in space with other countries 'wasn't a one-way traffic.' However,

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<sup>106</sup> French currency before the euro (d'écus, or ECU, European currency unit)

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Daniel Sacotte, 3 Feb. 2012, 27-28.

<http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT091>

<sup>108</sup> Interview with George van Reeth, 11-12 March 2002, 4.

<http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT052>

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>110</sup> Krige and Russo, *History of ESA*, 75

<sup>111</sup> More on these "circumstances" (a crisis between member states) in Krige and Russo, *History of ESA*, 371

<sup>112</sup> Reimar Lüst, "Cooperation between Europe and the United States in Space", ESA bulletin 50 (1987): 101

With the Americans it was different because they were our main hope of pulling ourselves up, not only the agency but also industry. I remember in the beginning American industry thought that European industry was back in the Stone Age and that they would never be able really to compete. And then as we got closer to them they couldn't really come to terms with our member states and the way we were managed. I remember a senior state department official saying that doing business in space with Europe is like dancing with an octopus. But we learnt a lot from these cooperations! I think industry wouldn't be where it is today if we hadn't had these cooperations with the United States for example, some successful some less successful, we've been let down two or three times for political reasons in the States, but by and large, we've gained a hell of a lot from this cooperation. [...] International cooperation in space, for me, is bread and butter. You can't expect to do something in space without cooperative projects. And you can't do projects unless you got a confidence that people respect.<sup>113</sup>

Vladimír Remek entitled first European astronaut, also pleads for European independence and advancement even today. He not only focuses on autonomy in relation to USA but also to other space powers such as Russia and China.

My experience of life up to now, including the unique cosmonautical one, convinces me of the fact that the money spent efficiently on the development of science and technology linked to space is worthwhile for all those who do so. [...] I'm sure that if Europe does not follow the Galileo project through then we will lose quite a lot and our competitors will gain quite a lot. Satellite navigation will further evolve even without us and we will be doing worse. People won't get along without this kind of service in the future. And then we as Europeans will be forced to buy them from someone else – America, Russia or China.<sup>114</sup>

Again it is understood that Lüst, van Reeth and Gibson all repeatedly conclude the whole cooperative project positively. This is the lesson that ESA's life story seems to want to teach; in spite of the many struggles, which are acknowledged and elaborately recounted, it is important to understand the foundations of the whole adventure. Not only is the foundation scientific, i.e. it is about space and not (solely) about politics, it is also cooperative in its nature. Without these foundations ESA would not have been in the full-

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<sup>113</sup> Roy Gibson in "Learning from experience: a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau", 15 May 2012. <http://www.espi.or.at/index.php/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

<sup>114</sup> Vladimír Remek, "Cosmic Controversy", *The Parliamentary Magazine* 256 (2007): 82

grown and crucial position it is today. Dordain also looks at the importance of focussing on our similarities instead of differences;

... space activities are focused on projects. And we need common projects and common goals to develop an identity. It is then easy to integrate people of different nationalities. When ESA landed Huygens on Titan, a moon of Saturn, no one in the ESA team thought about which nationality they belonged to, no one in the industrial team thought about which organisation they belonged to. All were working together, as one project. That day you could really see the space identity – men and women crying, because we were the first to discover this world, which is almost an Earth-like system.<sup>115</sup>

These struggles have strengthened and refined ESA as a European organisation and they have culminated into the successes of today. Looking back at its maturing process, ESA is proud of its progressive Europioneers and they in turn see a bright future ahead. A jubilee is often an occasion at which one celebrates all the milestones and achievements and after that looks ahead, reinforcing the national or corporate identity for example<sup>116</sup>. Dordain concludes,

I stand here next to the man who drove ESA at the very beginning of its history, and with the symbolic representation of ESA's future building. The UK space sector has been around for as long as ESA, and it is fitting that our first ever Director General hailed from this country, and ECSAT is marking the renewed ambitions of the UK in using space for competitiveness and growth, in particular within the ESA framework. Fifty years of Europe's cooperation in space and the 50th anniversary of the birth of the two predecessors that led to ESA is an important milestone, and I am happy to mark it in such a way.<sup>117</sup>

The end of this narrative shows how the whole plot is more than merely a story, or history, of ESA. The end makes sense of the beginning and the struggle towards the end, as necessary events for today's position of ESA. The struggles and difficulties even among the European member states are made sense of through this plot, as experienced by the Europioneers. It is shown that the plot of struggles reflects a construction of a kind of

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<sup>115</sup> Dordain, "A European Identity through Space", 26-27

<sup>116</sup> Celebrating anniversaries is a well-known organizational tool to create and instill unity, see appendix B for more ESA anniversary occasions. E.g. John T. Seaman Jr. and George David Smith, "Your company's history as a leadership tool", *Harvard Business Review* 90 (Dec. 2012), 46

<sup>117</sup> ESA Press Release. "N° 41–2013: UK Centre stone-laying launches European space celebrations". 5 Dec. 2013, ESA Publications. [http://www.esa.int/For\\_Media/Press\\_Releases/UK\\_centre\\_stone-laying\\_launches\\_European\\_space\\_celebrations](http://www.esa.int/For_Media/Press_Releases/UK_centre_stone-laying_launches_European_space_celebrations)



Europeanness, even a European and/or 'ESA-ean' identity. Indeed, I will now look more closely at how the sense-making in the plot is happening and particularly so in a performative setting.

### **3.2. What is being accomplished?**

So now that the narrative is clear, it is not yet clear what its function(s) actually is/are. It is now the time to look at some of the essential issues related to the research question; why the narrative is performed in this way and why here and now: what is being accomplished?

The Europioneers narrate at different occasions in time and space. Recalling the principles of performed analysis, it is now known that the narrative can differ at these respective occasions. The analysis has to focus on why the narrative is performed in the way it is at that specific moment and place. The analysis of the plot will show a process of identity construction, which is below composed of two parts; legitimization and exclusive or inclusive elements of the narrative. These parts are in no way mutually exclusive processes within the performance of the narrative, but are simply a way to organise the analysis.

#### **3.2.1. Legitimizing European cooperation**

In a way, fifty years of European cooperation or fifty years of serving European cooperation are jubilee slogans that assume something European, which is then also worth this special celebration. It also assumes a tradition and a long-standing experience, lasting no less than fifty years. ESA has a reason for presenting the people who started the whole project as pioneers of European cooperation, the Europioneers. The formulation of the term Europioneer implies a relation to Europe and/or europeanness. The founding fathers, the pioneers, of ESA were scientists. As we have seen above, the narrative poses many instances of legitimizing these scientists as both European and pioneers. The pioneers knew what to do in setting up a European project, but as van Reeth has said regarding contracts (page 23-24) and as Roy Gibson put it (page 25), it was up to the first generation of staff to come up with all kinds of organisational structures specifically appropriate for a European context. It emphasises the innovativeness and uniqueness of the European space project, for which the Europioneers were doing constructive and pioneering work. Their quotes also point to the feeling of independency in Europe, creating an atmosphere among scientists where they felt they needed to take responsibility for the development of



technologies. Van Reeth says “we did things in space we had never seen done before in Europe” (page 24), which points to the extraordinary situation that prevailed in Europe. These circumstances made the project pioneering, but also European, through the special way European nation states worked together in such an important area as space exploration, but also science and technology in general. As we have seen in the narrative, Sacotte also mentions the contribution of Europioneers to the progress and success of ESA (page 25), especially during the first struggling years after the Convention was ratified. He ascribes charisma and progress to them as persons, which brings in an interesting level of perspective in such a large and otherwise complex organisation as ESA; the individual level. Throughout the whole narrative, Europioneers thus do not only speak but are much spoken about as well, even venerated. The individual is the motor of ESA, the central node that binds the organisation together into one whole. The individuals make the successes and learn from their failures, which simultaneously make them part of a larger group as well. An ESA staff member describes this dynamic with an interesting example:

In some ways I found the OTS launch, despite its failure, a more moving event than that of Ariane 1 [first ESA launch]. After the first shock at the disaster you could ‘sense’ the strong feeling of solidarity that grew around the OTS Project Team; no one expressed any doubts about the future, there was just a strong determination to get back to work and continue.<sup>118</sup>

In an official communication on ESA’s website for “30 years of ESA” (2005) this still employed staff member recounts how determined and dedicated the project team was to success, whether on the first try or the next. The growing solidarity after the failure is a way to make sense of the meaning of such a failure; it was necessary for this team, to understand the importance of getting different parties to work together. These mistake-anecdotes construct a European identity and legitimize ESA’s competence. Another example of an individual presented as the engine of cooperation is found in Helen Sharman’s quote, stated in the light of the ‘50 years of humans in space’-celebrations:

On my last night in space, reflecting on my time, I realised that being away from Earth reinforced what my Russian friends had told me on the ground – what’s important is

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<sup>118</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ESA\\_history/30years/ESA - the first 30 years](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ESA_history/30years/ESA_-_the_first_30_years)

personal relationships and what people can do together. Space is grand and being part of it makes people feel grand.<sup>119</sup>

The quote makes clear the centrality of individuals working together, the small communities they form and the uniqueness of space as a working environment. She talks about friendship, which can arise between people of any nationality; especially “away from Earth” where normally other factors such as politics might stand in the way.

The above individuals are not the only ones honouring the invaluable contribution of certain Europioneers to the progress of European cooperation in space. “The cooperation of a few astronauts of different nationalities in space triggers the close cooperation and build-up of trust among thousands of people on the ground, bringing nations closer together.”<sup>120</sup> This quote comes from the DG’s agenda for 2015, which is written by the communications department, not Dordain himself. It is a representative text by ESA presented in a personal way, emphasising the Europioneering role of the DG. Above, Sharman and Dordain suggests that a few individuals preoccupied with and symbolising space cooperation can and should be an example for the rest of Europe, and the world. In this case, the individuals represent larger parties such as member states. What ESA does up in the air is simultaneously a reflection of and an example for cooperation among European citizens and their governments. Dordain, in the presence of Gibson, also relates the individual to ESA’s history and its member states in his announcement of the fifty years celebrations and the UK’s new European space centre (quote page 27). This quote comes from an ESA press release which was issued in relation to the opening of a new ESA facility in the UK called ECSAT (see appendix B). Present at this special ceremony were Roy Gibson, Jean-Jacques Dordain and David Willets (UK minister of Universities and Science). The three characters connect the past with the future, the British with the European and the technological with the civilian in a special opening ceremony<sup>121</sup>.

Such references and relations indicate a process of justifying the veneration of Europioneers as individual people, presenting a seemingly blocked and complex organisation as more personal and as such bringing it closer to everyday life of European

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<sup>119</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ESA\\_history/50\\_years\\_of\\_humans\\_in\\_space/Dr\\_Helen\\_Sharman](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ESA_history/50_years_of_humans_in_space/Dr_Helen_Sharman)

<sup>120</sup> DG’s Agenda 2015, 37. <http://esamultimedia.esa.int/multimedia/publications/BR-303/pageflip.html>

<sup>121</sup> ESA Press Release, “N° 41–2013: UK Centre stone-laying launches European space celebrations”. 5 Dec. 2013, ESA Publications. [http://www.esa.int/For\\_Media/Press\\_Releases/UK\\_centre\\_stone-laying\\_launches\\_European\\_space\\_celebrations](http://www.esa.int/For_Media/Press_Releases/UK_centre_stone-laying_launches_European_space_celebrations)

citizens. This personalization phenomenon is also expressed through personal blogs of astronauts on (the brink of) a mission, recounting almost mythical experiences<sup>122</sup> that they, representing ESA, personally go through.

### *The struggle: internal cooperation*

Not only is space cooperation in the form of ESA European through pioneering work, it is also European through the dedication and obstacles overcome. The two struggles mentioned in the plot, internal cooperation and establishing autonomy versus other space powers, are actually declared to be crucial elements of (the success of) ESA today. Dordain describes the first struggle as follows:

The [first] characteristic is the well experienced governance in space. Yes, it has evolved and is still evolving, but it has always led to success. With a much smaller budget in Europe we are in a leading position on a lot of space activities in space, meaning our governance cannot be that bad. [...] I have said before that it is hopeless to try and make Europe simple. So let's use the complexity and diversity. But in fact, the organisation of space activities in the US is not so simple either. And to understand how the Chinese space sector is organised would be very interesting... We have in Europe 50 years of experience, with the regions, nations, the intergovernmental and communitarian levels... In the end, it works and this diversity is one of our strengths.<sup>123</sup>

Dordain speaks here at a conference on European identity through space, organised by the European Space Policy Institute in Vienna on 12-13 Nov. 2009. From pictures and other sources one can tell the size of the conference was quite modest but nevertheless, the speech setting was formal. The DG of ESA was the first keynote speaker on the conference, linking the theme of a European identity through space to ESA and its past and future achievements. The subject of the conference obviously commands the emphasis on such themes as integration and Europeanness in general. However, in the above excerpt the struggle for European cooperation in space comes to the fore through phrases such as “well experienced”, “evolving”, “complexity and diversity” and “in the end”. This kind of speech is also found in Gibson's dialectical account of member state negotiations, simultaneously acknowledging and defending such processes, to which I will come back in

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<sup>122</sup> <http://blogs.esa.int/astronauts/>

<sup>123</sup> Dordain, “A European identity through space”, 28

a moment (page 34). Although there has been a long way to where we are today, at the end of the road ESA ‘work[s]’ and is thus “twice as successful”<sup>124</sup>. Dordain also puts ESA’s complexity into perspective by stating that other space powers are not such oiled machines either. He defends, and perhaps sets straight, the complex organisation as it apparently has led to significant achievements. It simply “cannot be that bad”, as if to downplay criticism on a supposed bad governance. It is not unlikely that this position is taken in relation to the current trends of rising Euroscepticism<sup>125</sup>. The common atmosphere among citizens is often that these European projects are simply costing citizen’s money without seeing any tangible results in return. Dordain’s speech serves as an example to prove that the point of the ESA narrative is that space organisation in Europe has taken the difficulties as assets and ways to work with. Dordain portrays ESA as a strong and mature organisation, having overcome and incorporated complex and diverse assets. He admits in an interview for example that during the last days of ESRO and the first of ESA (the seventies and eighties), “at that time ESA was not the fantastic organisation it is today”<sup>126</sup>. This emphasises the idea of progress and dedication to the European project that has permeated the individuals involved in ESA.

The notion of “50 years of experience [in Europe]” to which Dordain repeatedly refers, consisting of dedication and survival, also legitimises ESA as a competent player on the global space market. By now, the organisation knows what it is doing and what is best for the European citizens. The legitimisation of the ESA project is invoked at other instances of the narrative as well. For example, Roy Gibson also stresses the ultimate success resulting from difficult negotiations on the text of the Convention between member states;

I think you get the flavour of the time where civil servants and delegates from member states met, oh God knows how many times, 20, 30, 40 times, to look at the text, and to refine it as André has said. [...] It really worked from the very beginning. I think people wanted a solution. This is a great thing to remember I think about those days, the delegates wanted a solution, and they wanted the very limit of their instructions from governments, in order to

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<sup>124</sup> Dordain, “A European identity through space”, 25

<sup>125</sup> Jose Ignacio Torreblanca and Mark Leonard, “The continent-wide rise of Euroscepticism”, *Policy Memo* 79 (European Council for Foreign Relations, May 2013)

[http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79\\_EUROSCEPTICISM\\_BRIEF\\_AW.pdf](http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79_EUROSCEPTICISM_BRIEF_AW.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> In an interview with David Carroll from Policy Review, a website stating its purpose to be to collect current information on European affairs:

[http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/DG\\_s\\_News\\_and\\_VIEWS/The\\_European\\_Space\\_Agency\\_director\\_general\\_in\\_interview](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/DG_s_News_and_VIEWS/The_European_Space_Agency_director_general_in_interview)

get that solution. So when the text was agreed, it really, we didn't have any ambushes, it worked, and it's still working.<sup>127</sup>

This source, from which the quotes from Gibson on page 24, 25 and 26 also stem, is a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau, here presented as a transcript from a YouTube video<sup>128</sup>. Even though the dialogue is led by someone else, this transcript comes closest to Gibson as an individual; his body language, both physically and verbally, has been included as well as a deeper understanding of the context in which the dialogue took place. The performed narrative is important here; the audience is considered to be in need of entertainment which influences the speakers. This becomes clear when Lebeau quotes Article 5.1 of the ESA convention, which is still in force and which is a result of the difficult discussions leading up to the signing of the convention. Roy Gibson adds, “The second law of international relations states that no international agreement is possible without a certain amount of misunderstanding<sup>129</sup>” upon which the audience bursts out in laughter. In the case of the previous quote, it is important to stress that the performance was realised in front of quite an internal audience, embodying various European space representatives. This is perhaps why Gibson often admits to the fact that the cooperative efforts were challenging, thus acknowledging the hard work people put into ESA as of today, but all the while he immediately adds how the underlying spirit was always “good” and “willing”. He is eager to see this in the group in front of him as well, sometimes addressing colleagues so as to show that they also remember and are (still) part of this spirit.

Both Dordain and Gibson hence do not only explain why ESA as a space organisation is legit and competent, but through this legitimization mechanism they also emphasize the way the European cooperative spirit present at the foundations of the organisation has survived and still thrives as of today. However, as van Reeth admits, “I am of the kind... which was at that time: Schuman, Spaak, de Gasperi, Adenauer, Monnet... that kind of

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<sup>127</sup> Roy Gibson in “Learning from experience: a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau.” 15 May 2012, 15’59. <http://www.espi.or.at/index.php/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

<sup>128</sup> As mentioned, André Lebeau has written a biography of Roy Gibson, “Mémoires/Recollections”, of which signed copies were handed out at the end of the evening on which this particular dialogue took place. <http://www.espi.or.at/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

<sup>129</sup> Roy Gibson in “Learning from experience: a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau.” 15 May 2012, 14’17. <http://www.espi.or.at/index.php/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

Europeans...’’<sup>130</sup>. So are the other Europioneers, reflecting on how the member state negotiations and other struggles have led to the Agency of today. The Europioneers present ESA as an organisation having its roots in the same context and time, which was around the significant year of 1957 as I have mentioned, as the foundations of the European Union. This affiliation is also noted by Dordain, who says that “ESA is at the crossroads of space and Europe.”<sup>131</sup> These roots make the agency specifically European, and is as such indisputably and undeniably so. As mentioned, it is not the place and the time to ponder on such enormous subjects as European identity. It is however interesting just to point out that being European at ESA means being of a nationality within the territory of Europe. Today we know that the dynamics of identity are often oscillating processes between multiple facets, creating negotiated identities in various contexts<sup>132</sup>. This also happens in the narrative of ESA, where the emphasis sometimes lies on the desires of member states and at other times on the cohesion and solidarity of ESA staff and operations, where nationality is completely unimportant. The latter notion comes to the fore in Dordain’s quote on astronauts on mission in section 3.2.2.

### *The struggle: autonomy*

The second struggle in the narrative that legitimises Europeanness is the notion of being independent and autonomous, complementing the competent and legit player notion. Especially Lüst, the hero nominated by Sacotte, has always held a strong position towards relations with the USA:

“We live in a world where commercial competition is important and cooperation with the United States has never been possible, the United States were never willing to give to our European industries some information. Therefore, the industries have to develop all the new technology for themselves. ESA gives orders to European industry and in this way really helps the European industry to start new development and to become or to remain competitive.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with George Van Reeth, 11-13 March 2002, 10.

<http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT052>

<sup>131</sup> Dordain, “A European identity through space”, 25

<sup>132</sup> E.g. Douglas R. Holmes, “Experimental Identities (after Maastricht)”, in *European Identity*, eds Jeffrey T. Checkel & Peter J. Katzenstein (2012), 72

<sup>133</sup> Reimar Lüst in “ESA 30 years – a pioneer looks back”. 23 May 2005, 08’57-09’18.

[http://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2005/05/ESA\\_30\\_Years\\_-\\_A\\_Pioneer\\_Looks\\_Back](http://www.esa.int/spaceinvideos/Videos/2005/05/ESA_30_Years_-_A_Pioneer_Looks_Back)

The fact that the USA would not share technological information has actually helped Europe to be more independent and innovative. Industry now had to develop technologies themselves, and even though this would take more effort and resources, the result would be completely European; no strings attached (to the USA). This autonomy is treasured and highlighted by all Europeans. Van Reeth acknowledges that some higher officials at ESA might have been too suspicious of Americans<sup>134</sup> while others were naïve and based their opinions on the Americans they knew personally.<sup>135</sup> In any case, political relations with the USA in the time of the founding fathers were always decisive for whether ESRO/ESA would be allowed to launch European satellites. This is a point made even today, by Remek in the European Parliament (see page 27). His point on why we should invest money in Galileo not only refers to autonomy, but also to Europe as a competent and competitive player on the global space market. People's life standard in Europe will decrease compared to the rest of the world without a European citizen-owned navigation system<sup>136</sup>. His comments in the fortnightly Parliament Magazine are a form of political discourse and are possibly also part of his party's political narrative. The publication also requires a different analytical perspective due to its discursive nature<sup>137</sup>. The title of his article, *Cosmic Controversy*, is rather paradoxical if we see his pro-European independence rhetoric in the light of his party's affiliations with the former SU and communism in general<sup>138</sup>. From ESA's narrative point of view, he has been named European retrospectively as Czechoslovakia was under the SU's influence in the year he flew into space (1978), thus being less involved with (Western) European identity at that time. Today, ESA wants to include what used to be Eastern Europe in its European cooperative organisation. Remek himself celebrated the communist take-over as the start of an adventure in which he now could partake, and he is also described as a "social brother" by the (communist) radio commentator<sup>139</sup>. Also, support for space activities is relatively low in the Czech Republic compared to the rest of ESA's member states<sup>140</sup>. These aspects are

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<sup>134</sup> Interview with George Van Reeth, 11-13 March 2002, 29.

<http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT052>

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 26

<sup>136</sup> Remek, "Cosmic Controversy", 80-84

<sup>137</sup> Shaul R. Shenhav, "Thin and thick narrative analysis: On the question of defining and analyzing political narratives" in *Narrative Inquiry* 15:1 (2005), 75-99

<sup>138</sup> Member of GUE/NGL (which includes the Czech communist party of Moravia)

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28330/VLADIMIR\\_REMEK\\_history.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28330/VLADIMIR_REMEK_history.html)

<sup>139</sup> David Vaughan, "Soyuz 28 and the Cosmic Brothers", Radio Praha, broadcasted 20120519

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/archives/soyuz-28-and-the-cosmic-brothers-1>

<sup>140</sup> However, they are a relatively young ESA member state. The Gallup Organisation, "Space activities of the European Union", *Flash Eurobarometer* #272, 7



not elaborated on in any ESA communications except for the references to Remek's Czech (thus non-SU, non-American) nationality.

Simultaneously, there is no Europioneer that also acknowledges the inevitable and crucial benefits resulting from cooperation with the USA and other global space powers. According to the same, almost anti-USA Lüst, Europe is autonomous exactly because of “the immensely unselfish help given to it by the US. The Europeans, who in some fields needed 40 years to recover from the disastrous Second World War, are very much aware of this help and they thankfully acknowledge America's contribution to that recovery.”<sup>141</sup> Where the narrative mostly wants to show Europe's pride and greatness which has been achieved, this is both thanks to and in spite of the USA. Important here is to see the difference that is often made between NASA as a scientific organisation, and its political and managerial structure, led by the State Department (see quote Van Reeth, page 25). The help and free resources given by the USA has been an important factor in the independence of the EU as a whole<sup>142</sup>. It is however still an ongoing process, where European space law is still very dependent on US regulations such as ITAR<sup>143</sup>. The latter also has a high influence on the European component industry; an industry that is essential for any space project to come off the ground<sup>144</sup>.

### **3.2.2. Exclusive or inclusive narrative; living stories**

The narrative is there to include and direct various perspectives, with the help of corporate communications, while it sometimes also excludes certain ideas or issues from the narrative entirely. It thus does not only establish who is the ‘we’ and who ‘them’ in the narrative, it also makes sure to have the right story of itself. As we have seen above, this means mostly being a strong and independent European organisation, having worked hard for and thus deserving the international position ESA takes today.

However, precisely because of the roots the Europioneers have in the period of time during and just after the Second World War, these same individuals simultaneously tell extensive stories on how the interests of the member states have frequently created overly tense relations both within and outside of Europe. These times witnessed the evolution of the

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<sup>141</sup> Lüst, “Cooperation between Europe and the United States in space”, 104

<sup>142</sup> Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, *European Integration Theory* (Oxford, 2009), 225-226

<sup>143</sup> See documents: [http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/ECSL/SEM3MR58BOG\\_0.html](http://www.esa.int/SPECIALS/ECSL/SEM3MR58BOG_0.html)

<sup>144</sup> <https://spacecomponents.org/webdocument/showArticle?id=899>



predecessors of the EU, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC). The first body did not include Britain or then Czechoslovakia<sup>145</sup>, where two Europioneers are from; Gibson and Remek. As of 2014, these two Europioneers are unquestionably part of ESA's narrative and thus also part of the construction of European space identity. I have already mentioned how Remek is an interesting and controversial example of retrospective inclusion and I will comment on Gibson in a moment.

That is to say, they sometimes focus on the downsides of nation states, seeing them as competing and ultimately unique entities<sup>146</sup>. For example, Auger interestingly describes how member states were sometimes protective of their status and economic investment, especially related to launchers (which were an enormously risky investment). He talks of the importance of "le juste retour"; fair return for what each member state had invested<sup>147</sup>, so as not to upset anyone (see Gibson's quote on the member state's satisfaction, page 39-40). The focus on member states as separate and competitive parties is included in the fixed narrative as well, but in a way that their behaviour is always made sense of. In that case, the internal struggles support the "so what" of the narrative as they are considered crucial building blocks of European cooperation. The struggle is ultimately a way to come to a cooperative compromise, making it part of the plot, which embodies the construction of a European space organisation. On the other hand, the stories which pressingly develop these internal tensions further do not really make sense in the narrative of ESA on its fifty years of cooperation. This is an indication of the fact that the fragmented interests sometimes did not and are not contributing to the construction, thus not to the plot. The intergovernmental character of the organisation becomes more of an obstacle than an effective cooperative structure. The Europioneers have their personal experiences which have shaped their idea of certain member states or certain operations within ESA and so it happens that some of these perspectives or stories oppose or are inept to the corporate identity. After all, the Europioneers' experiences are extremely contextual and personal which automatically creates unique and varying stories. In Boje's theory of ante-narrative, the potential paradox that resides in this multivocality is not to be excluded. As has been mentioned earlier, it is dangerous to consider the corporate communications, which support the corporate identity,

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<sup>145</sup> Elizabeth Bomberg, John Peterson and Richard Corbett, *The European Union; How does it work?* (Oxford 2012), 28

<sup>146</sup> Wiener and Diez, *European Integration Theory*, 70

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Pierre Auger, 10 Dec. 1992, 53. [http://archives.eui.eu/oral\\_history/INT064](http://archives.eui.eu/oral_history/INT064)

as the only right narrative in the organisation. In this paper I do however assume a certain fixed narrative, but this does not mean I leave contesting stories unconsidered. Furthermore, according to Boje, it is possible to see to which degree divergent stories are accepted or even included in the narrative of the organisation by looking at the “level of contestation among stories”.<sup>148</sup> Also, these divergent stories together with the narrative are “in narrative flux”<sup>149</sup>, or as Musacchio puts it, a so-called “rough fragment[s]”<sup>150</sup>.

These contestations should be seen in the light of the important difference between the EU and ESA, which should be specifically remembered here; the degree of integration, to which Gibson’s dialogue partner André Lebeau also points<sup>151</sup>. While the EU is considered by these Europioneers as an overall supranational institute, ESA treasures its intergovernmental structure as it is of vital importance to both its member states and industry. From an international relations point of view, Gibson’s comments on the member state relations within ESA are in line with the intergovernmental, negotiated organisation<sup>152</sup>. In the light of the highly advanced technology, the risky nature of space operations, the sensitive nature of the security aspects and the extensive budget required for all this to come off the ground, it is all but unexpected to find a less integrated structure than in the EU. In this respect, ESA presents its member states as being quite distinct and individual players within the organisation. The fact that a person or project is explicitly French, German or British automatically means that they are European as well.<sup>153</sup> The Europioneers also talk about how the member states can sometimes even obstruct ESA as an oiled machine. In Gibson’s opinion for example, “the French are often like that [...] in international organisations. They’re always trying to pull the blanket too far over.”<sup>154</sup> This refers to projects of which the strings are desired to remain under a member state’s supervision for such reasons as technological secrecy and/or commercial profit. This is not a surprising comment coming from a Brit of the “European generation” (see quote Van Reeth, page 34). For example, even though Great Britain was active in proposing and

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<sup>148</sup> Boje, “Stories of the Story-telling Organization”, 1001

<sup>149</sup> Boje, *Narrative Methods for Organizational & Communication Research*, 135

<sup>150</sup> Musacchio, “Storytelling in organizations”, 150

<sup>151</sup> André Lebeau in “Learning from experience: a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau.” 15 May 2012, 55’58-56’46. <http://www.espi.or.at/index.php/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>

<sup>152</sup> Wiener and Diez, *European Integration Theory*, 68-69

<sup>153</sup> E.g. Hartmut Kaelble, “Identification with Europe and politicization of the EU since the 1980s” in *European Identity*, ed. Jeffrey T. Checkel & Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 201

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Gibson, 5 Dec. 2007, 12. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT785>

realising a European launcher<sup>155</sup>, it has never been portrayed as one of the most pro-European integration member states<sup>156</sup>. The support among Brits for the EU today can be said to have evolved substantially further<sup>157</sup>. It is thus especially interesting that ESA today promotes its newest centre ECSAT and Europioneer Gibson as British actors, emphasising that they are as such included in the narrative. We can also refer again to the idea of a scientific community being able to work together, in spite of any current, changing political realities (see quote Lüst page 23).

Another story that concerns the exclusion of certain groups of people from the narrative is one we have touched upon as the beginning of the narrative; that there is a supposed disparity of the ‘true’ operations of ESA and the scientists preoccupied with these versus the political and communicative practices with its professionals. The last group is presented as a kind of ‘necessary evil’ when Lüst says that “the governments are somewhat more difficult” than the scientists and engineers of Europe. Van Reeth also makes a difference between Europioneers that have kept purely to science, such as Auger<sup>158</sup>, and those who have tried to incorporate (industrial) politics, and make these work together. The difference between these two camps is acknowledged in the narrative in the sense that even though the politicians and their demands usually stand in a bad light, they are able to take the scientists and their dreams of cooperation as an example. After all, Dordain suggests that “no one up there [space] really cares about their [astronaut’s] nationality or who they work for”, even though astronauts are considered to be the most nationalised aspects of ESA<sup>159</sup>. Member states are keen on claiming the mythical greatness of astronauts and their achievements, presenting them as their own national heroes. This is exactly why Dordain uses the reference to cooperating astronauts, to strengthen his argument on how smooth and natural any group of people can and should be able to work together for a common purpose. The higher-level indifference towards national background points to the idea that even the most politicised characteristics of ESA are still always grounded in the desire to cooperate. The idea relates to the oscillating identity mentioned in the section on internal cooperation as a struggle (p. 34).

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<sup>155</sup> Krige and Russo, *History of ESA I*, 33

<sup>156</sup> Bomberg et al., *The European Union; How does it work?*, 30-33

<sup>157</sup> Torreblanca and Leonard, “The continent-wide rise of Euroscepticism”, 3

<sup>158</sup> Interview with G. Van Reeth, 11-13 March 2008, 7. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT563.pdf>

<sup>159</sup> E.g. Tim Peake (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/space/5413169/Britains-first-official-astronaut-Tim-Peake-defends-sending-humans-into-space.html>), Christer Fuglesang ([http://www.esa.int/Our\\_Activities/Human\\_Spaceflight/Celsius\\_Mission\\_-\\_English\\_version/Sweden\\_s\\_space\\_hero\\_returns\\_home](http://www.esa.int/Our_Activities/Human_Spaceflight/Celsius_Mission_-_English_version/Sweden_s_space_hero_returns_home)) and André Kuipers (Sander Koenen. *Droomvlucht*. Dutch Media uitgevers, 2012)

Lüst's and Gibson's voices are not the only ones that do not fit into this corporate identity narrative, where everyone and every aspect of ESA is working for and towards European cooperation. Sometimes this desire to cooperate in every aspect with every party suggests that all labels should be dropped and we work towards humankind as a whole, a global community (of technology)<sup>160</sup>. This thinking goes as such beyond competition and international relations and is a rough fragment still being developed alongside the narrative. After all, the purpose of the fifty years of European cooperation celebration is to focus on Europe and its achievements and perspectives for the future as an entity, seemingly not yet ready to consider what is beyond that. Dordain as a Europioneer dares to go there, to suggest the next step Europe should take. It is a "living story", current but not taken up in the "dominant" narrative<sup>161</sup>.

An interesting example of the winding way towards achievement through cooperation is the appointment of a site for ESTEC. Almost half of all the Europioneers referred to in this paper remember the process of choosing a site, which makes it an organisationally "shared stor[y] that survive[s] in the orality of"<sup>162</sup> ESA. Auger implicates himself in the process of choosing an appropriate site within the Netherlands by saying he was part of the committee which had to make a decision<sup>163</sup>. While Gibson summarizes the appointment process as a "political nightmare" where "nobody was happy and nobody was more unhappy than anyone else"<sup>164</sup>, van Reeth prefers to conclude the "political decision" (which he elaborately describes and like so still emphasises its intricacy) on a more positive note: "But this did not pose any problems, in the end; it worked out very well."<sup>165</sup> These references point to a shared story and are as such only relevant in their context, the narrative. It is an example of the negotiations, compromises and dedication it took to proceed ahead. Recalling the embeddedness of stories discussed in the theory section, we have to look at how these stories are situated in their respective localities. Gibson for example, is specifically asked for a reflection on the possible siting of ESRO's technical centre in the UK, but before this question Gibson started on the story of ESTEC himself<sup>166</sup>.

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<sup>160</sup> As suggested by Dordain, "A European identity through space", 26

<sup>161</sup> Boje, "Narrative Analysis", 22

<sup>162</sup> Musacchio, *Storytelling in organizations*, 154

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Pierre Auger, 10 Dec. 1992, 55. [http://archives.eui.eu/oral\\_history/INT064](http://archives.eui.eu/oral_history/INT064)

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Roy Gibson, 5 Dec. 2007, 7.

<http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT785>

<sup>165</sup> Interview with George Van Reeth, 19 Sept. 2008, 8. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT563.pdf>

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Roy Gibson, 5 Dec. 2007, 8.

<http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/bin/CreaInt.asp?rc=INT785>

Van Reeth is also specifically asked for it<sup>167</sup>. In Auger's case, we cannot be sure as the questions are not included in the transcript. The ESTEC case is in short a shared story which shows how the member states were constructing European cooperation. The fact that it is shared does not however command it to be an actual part of the narrative. The story of how ESTEC came about is discussed for example in the ESA bulletin of November 2012<sup>168</sup>. In this article, none of the coincidental political decisions on the location of ESTEC are discussed. Yes, the member states are presented as each having a strong will and say in the matter, but the best won simply by being the most convincing. However, the sceptical notes on politics invoked in all three of the *Europioneers'* depictions can in fact be seen as strengthening the idea of the struggles gone through during those fifty years. Everybody had to live with a certain decision of compromise and make the best of it, or as we recall Dordain saying it, "use the complexity and diversity". ESTEC, presented as the centre of advanced European technology, is often part of success stories like the one we have seen in the *ESA Bulletin*. Even though this article does not spell out all the details of European negotiation, as we know them from the *Europioneers*, Dordain at least hints at the truth of its intricacy. There is room for these details in the narrative, which suggests that the corporate identity and communications do not "exclude" or "marginalize"<sup>169</sup> multiple voices which might exist. If we take ESA's official communication to be the official, corporate narrative, the shared story among the *Europioneers* reflects the multiplicity of voices within ESA. These have however not been accepted in ESA's corporate communications, for the reason that they undermine the legitimacy and logic of a beneficial European cooperation, a happy story, worth celebrating<sup>170</sup>. In this case, the shared story is still part of ESA's narrative as the *Europioneers* in this way make sense of the way European cooperation.

The narrative includes those who stand positively towards cooperative projects with any global partner. We have seen before that in the field of science, everybody can and should work together for the better of mankind. Partnerships are created in all corners of the universe. On the other hand, there is no room for politically sensitive issues, such as relations with Russia and China and the sharing of technology. Especially with the arrival

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with George Van Reeth, 19 Sept. 2008, 8. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT563.pdf>

<sup>168</sup> Franco Ongaro et al., "ESTEC: ESA's Technical heart", *ESA Bulletin* 152, ESA Communications Department (November 2012): 2. <http://esamultimedia.esa.int/multimedia/publications/ESA-Bulletin-152/>

<sup>169</sup> Boje, "Stories of the Story-telling Organization", 998

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 1030

of an operational Galileo, ESA is now and then expressing itself on the front of possible ESA involvement in security and defence missions<sup>171</sup> and even almost openly discussing the “for exclusively peaceful purposes” clause in the Convention<sup>172</sup>. Almost, because the narrative has not included this aspect of discussion yet. For example, in the light of the recent drone discussion, ESA is expected to take a stand on such a related and current sensitive issue. Except for the occasional (internal) information evening<sup>173</sup>, no official, corporate communication on this subject has yet been established. At most, ESA is simply continuing its cooperations with Russia as before, because or in spite of current political realities<sup>174</sup>. Dordain’s speech is a clear example of the importance that is still put on the European characteristic of peace. According to him, “the best thing the EU has done is bring peace to Europe”<sup>175</sup>. He is happy and proud to say that the European space policy has ensured that ESA works for the same purposes as the EU does. However, Sacotte points to changing times and relations which might put the peace clause in a different light<sup>176</sup>. Also, Remek stresses the necessity for Europe to stay up to date in a rapidly changing world. Otherwise, “we will be forced to buy [them] from someone else - America, Russia or China”<sup>177</sup>, including all the security consequences attached to such a purchase. The voices that acknowledge the potential issues with “exclusively peaceful purposes” for future space projects are existent, but not in the narrative. They are rough fragments, and as we mentioned before, are current living stories in the organisation. They are still being negotiated and have not been taken up in the narrative, which in this case only includes conflict in the form of internal struggles towards a common peaceful goal. As we have just seen above, Dordain is currently negotiating the idea of incorporating other than exclusively peaceful purposes for ESA missions. This living, negotiated story is just as important for the understanding of the functions of the dominant narrative, for example as we have done by looking at why these rough fragments are just that, and not yet (part of) a consolidated version of the narrative.

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<sup>171</sup> E.g. Dordain on the possibilities for ESA on a military level, in cooperation with the EC: <http://www.spacenews.com/article/military-space/37902military-quarterly-dordain-esa-pact-doesn%E2%80%99t-rule-out-defense-work>

<sup>172</sup> “ESA Convention and Council rules of procedure”, *ESA Communications*, 11-12.

[http://download.esa.int/docs/LEX-L/ESA-Convention/20101200-SP-1317-EN\\_Extract\\_ESA-Convention.pdf](http://download.esa.int/docs/LEX-L/ESA-Convention/20101200-SP-1317-EN_Extract_ESA-Convention.pdf)

<sup>173</sup> [http://www.esa.int/dut/ESA\\_in\\_your\\_country/The\\_Netherlands/Drones\\_op\\_Woensdagmorgen.nl](http://www.esa.int/dut/ESA_in_your_country/The_Netherlands/Drones_op_Woensdagmorgen.nl)

<sup>174</sup> <http://en.itar-tass.com/world/727459>. On the other hand, NASA also seems to have a contesting stance on the issue: <http://en.itar-tass.com/russia/727434>

<sup>175</sup> Dordain, “A European identity through space”, 25

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Daniel Sacotte, 3 Feb. 2012, 31. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT091.pdf>

<sup>177</sup> Remek, “Cosmic Controversy”, 82



A topic for which there is very little or no room in the narrative is gender. There is no room in this paper either to extensively elaborate on this subject further than to touch upon a few interesting points. After all, the complete list of Europioneers as well as any other pioneers present at the foundations of European space cooperation includes only men. Even though a reference is made to the first European woman in space, Helen Sharman<sup>178</sup>, the role of women is not emphasized nor explicitly celebrated. Sharman is known for stating that “there is very little difference between men and women in space”<sup>179</sup>, while Dordain also commits to this gender equality; “men and women crying”, unconcerned with their differences and working together as one team<sup>180</sup>. It seems gender is not at all an issue in the European cooperation jubilee, but many instances indicate that ESA is in fact concerned with it. Sacotte speaks on the struggle of convincing all the directors of the necessity and benefits of setting a quota on women hired<sup>181</sup>. Furthermore, a general pro-active position in hiring women is taken as set out by ESA’s human resources department, but no relevant and up-to-date statistics are available<sup>182</sup>. Lastly, ESA’s education office is participating in a European-wide effort to promote STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) topic interest among girls and women<sup>183</sup> which is related to a wider effort to engage and promote women into higher research positions<sup>184</sup>. All these instances considered in relation to the narrative, gender (equality) is not (yet) part of the consolidated narrative. Gender, and also race, is a more prominently included theme in the narrative of NASA, who celebrates its achievements and firsts in a similar fifty years jubilee<sup>185</sup>.

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<sup>178</sup>[http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Welcome\\_to\\_ESA/ESA\\_history/50\\_years\\_of\\_humans\\_in\\_space/European\\_women\\_in\\_space](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Welcome_to_ESA/ESA_history/50_years_of_humans_in_space/European_women_in_space)

<sup>179</sup> “There\_is\_very\_little\_difference\_between\_men\_and.” Dictionary.com. *Columbia World of Quotations*. Columbia University Press, 1996 (quote from Independent on Sunday, 09 June 1991).

[http://quotes.dictionary.com/There\\_is\\_very\\_little\\_difference\\_between\\_men\\_and](http://quotes.dictionary.com/There_is_very_little_difference_between_men_and) (accessed: May 08, 2014).

<sup>180</sup> Dordain, “A European space identity”, 26

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Daniel Sacotte, 3 Feb. 2012, 30. <http://apps.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT091.pdf>

<sup>182</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Careers\\_at\\_ESA/Recruitment\\_policy2](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Careers_at_ESA/Recruitment_policy2). Percentage of women at managerial level is 17.4% as of 2010 (ESA Annual Report 2010)

<sup>183</sup> [http://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/Careers\\_at\\_ESA/ESA\\_supports\\_Girls\\_Day\\_2011](http://www.esa.int/About_Us/Careers_at_ESA/ESA_supports_Girls_Day_2011)

<sup>184</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/gender-equality-and-gender-mainstreaming\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/gender-equality-and-gender-mainstreaming_en.htm)

<sup>185</sup> Miriam F. Williams, “Reimagining NASA: A Cultural and Visual Analysis of the U.S. Space Program”, *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 12 (2012), doi: 10.1177/1050651912439698, 379

## 4. Conclusion

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Ultimately, the narrative of Europioneers in space has shown many interesting aspects which are not all to be found in the narrative itself. Boje's and Musacchio's theoretical contributions on consolidated narrative, rough fragments and stories in flux have allowed me to see more than the corporate communicative practices which present ESA in a decisive way. Mostly, ESA wants to be known as a European organisation that has a specific history of cooperation, often ascribed to charismatic individuals that we have called Europioneers. They are, as Gibson puts it, of "vital importance" as they are "independent, qualified staff who are devoted to European space"<sup>186</sup>. This quote captures the function and meaning of the narrative, which presents ESA as a European, autonomous and competent global space actor.

Besides the consolidated narrative described above, I have shown that rough fragments exist alongside this narrative which have not (yet) been incorporated. One of these stories concerns security and international relations. There seems to be some degree of contestation among organisational stories, where the issue is still mostly entirely avoided. The increased cooperation with the EC is starting to change and shift perspectives and ideas on what ESA should focus on. This also becomes clear in the issue of gender, where ESA negotiates alignment with EU policy for example. In these cases, it has been especially useful to apply performative narrative analysis as it has revealed how ESA has not decided on a consolidated narrative here yet. It shows how ESA is a living organisation, constantly negotiating how it wants to be known and how its narrative should function.

To the outside world, the audience, ESA is a fully integrated, unified body representing European space. However, it is another thing whether the everyday realities of the internal structure of and relations between cooperative member states align with ESA's corporate communications and identity. Has ESA really evolved in a more integrative and progressive way since the beginnings of ESRO and ELDO? This kind of question can also be posed in relation to the EU. The foundations of both these cooperative organisations

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<sup>186</sup> Roy Gibson in "Learning from experience: a dialogue between Roy Gibson and André Lebeau." 15 May 2012, 1.08'44-1.10'00. <http://www.espi.or.at/news-archive/809-15-may-2012-an-extraordinary-evening-in-paris-with-roy-gibson-and-andre-lebeau>



were aimed at one specific area; for the EU this was the economy, for ESA it was science. Both have evolved into incorporating more than was initially thought out. I have shown what processes lie behind ESA's legitimisation of its European corporate identity and the organisation it presents itself to be today.

The combination of narrative analysis and corporate communication theories have thus provided this research endeavour with particularly innovative and unconventional details on ESA's identity processes. In order to provide more validity, many narrative studies are carried out in groups. In this way, one takes into account the possibility of different readings and interpretations to various texts (narratives).<sup>187</sup> The interpretative character of narrative analysis remains problematic in the face of validity and replicability.

ESA is not the only agency narrating europeanness, as the EU is a well-known example of another such body<sup>188</sup>. It can be interesting to compare these narratives and this will be especially important towards the future, not only in relation to security. It is also important to keep in mind the influence and relation with NASA and the USA as a whole, which has similarly been discussed in European identity theories.

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<sup>187</sup> Bamberg, "Narrative analysis", 10

<sup>188</sup> The EU is actively discussing and negotiating such a narrative for Europe:  
[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-676\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-676_en.htm)

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# 6. Appendices

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## A. Abbreviations

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CERN	Conseil Européene pour la Recherche Nucléaire / European Organisation for Nuclear research
CNES	Centre Nationale d'Études Spatiale (French Space Agency)
CPBM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
DG	Director-General (of ESA)
EC	European Commission
ECSAT	European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
ELDO	European Launch Development Organisation
ESA	European Space Agency
ESAC	European Space Astronomy Centre
ESOC	European Space Operations Centre
ESRIN	European Space Research Institute
ESRO	European Scientific Research Organisation
ESPI	European Space Policy Institute
ESTEC	European Space Research and Technology Centre
EU	European Union
EUI	European Union Institute
FKA/RKA	Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos)
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left
HAEU	Historical Archives of the European Union
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organisation
ISS	International Space Station
JAXA	Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

## **B. Timeline of ESA's "50 years of European cooperation in space"**

1964	Founding of organisations ELDO and ESRO
1975	Entering into force of the ESA convention
1976	First European, Vladimír Remek, in space
1979	First Ariane (commercial rocket from European industry) is launched
1983	First ESA astronaut, Ulf Merbold, flies into space
2003	25 years of human spaceflight in Europe
2005	30 years of ESA
2008	Columbus (Europe's contribution to the ISS) installed
2009	50 years of humans in space
2012	20 <sup>th</sup> Member State (Poland) accedes
2014	50 years of European cooperation in space