# Sociology of European Integration

Moodle page:
https://dl1.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=7256

# Course reading: guidelines and expectations

- There are *no set texts* for this course
- *Select freely from the reading* list based on your particular interests or choice of seminar and essay topics
- Devote as much time as you can to reading, but it's better to read *critically* and *carefully* than *widely* and *superficially*
- Lecture slides are designed to *complement* not replace reading
  - You'll learn as much if not more from your reading as you will from lectures
  - *Discuss* and *ask questions* (in class, by email, on Moodle) based on your reading

# Introduction: how do we study Europe sociologically?

# The institutionalisation of European Studies

- Own particular research object (European integration)
- A community of specialised researchers and students
- An infrastructure of learned societies or organisations (ECPR), conferences, journals, University departments and study programmes
- Competing conceptual paradigms (intergovernmentalism, functionalism)
- Earmarked research funding streams, especially from European sources

Self-contained, academically institutionalised social scientific … topic? discipline? ghetto?

# Good reasons for invention / foundation

- European institutional space does not necessarily represent the same kind of opportunity structure for social mobilisation as the national state
  - problematising assumptions of social movement theory / interest representation
- Different logics of social selection and different socio-professional trajectories seems to occur in Europe
  - problematising assumptions of social mobility theory / field theory / sociology of professions
- Institutionalised discourses seem to be less anchored in memory, with more emphasis on vision / future-oriented discourses
  - problematising assumptions of anthropological theories
- Different role played by the media in European public discourse / different rules of political communication
  - problematising assumptions of communication theory

# The sociological critique of European Studies

- Teleological and normative discourses on European integration
  - Linear, evolutionary models of EI (the European 'project', 'constructing' Europe)
- Shared presuppositions with policy-makers
  - An agenda reflecting the concerns of elites: focused on the institutional and regulatory dimensions of the EU system not on Europeanised lives
- Weak theoretical development
  - Reliance on survey research
- Dichotomous framings of public opinion
  - For or against, pro- or anti-, Europhile or Eurosceptic?
- Tendency to 'reinvent the wheel'
  - Ignorance of non-EU focused literature on Europe's social history
- A 'performative' mode of knowledge production
  - Danger of collusion and self-fulfilling prophesies if academic discourses mimic official ones

# (Mis)diagnosing Euroscepticism

Long-term survey research seemed to indicate strong social stratification of 'support' for European integration

*The permissive consensus:*
For a long time, the dominant theory was that there was a lack of awareness of the integration process. The public seemed unaware of the issues at stake, which from their point of view resembled foreign policy matters. This contrasted with the strong and continued support for European integration among the upper socio-economic classes. This configuration – widespread public indifference but enthusiasm from the higher socio-economic classes – was named 'permissive consensus' (Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970; Percheron, 1991).

# (Mis)diagnosing Euroscepticism

*The constraining dissensus:*
"Elites, that is, party leaders in positions of authority, must look over their shoulders when negotiating European issues" (Hooghe & Marks 2009)

A diagnosis that is valid only when we focus on elites/politicised citizens (Hooghe & Marks mapped 'internal party dissent' on Europe):

- Europolarization concerns socially privileged and/or politically interested citizens, active in the public sphere
- Workers and the unemployed feel the 'game' going on at the level of the EU does not concern them

*Wildcard of Brexit: A lasting or passing politicisation of European attachments?*

# (Mis)diagnoing Euroscepticism

The thesis of euroscepticism in lower social classes (as opposed to support or polarisation among higher classes) is deduced from *reticence:*

- from the absence of positive evaluations

 or from *artefacts:*

- from negative evaluations in response to survey questions
- from 'no' votes in referenda (Ireland, France, Netherlands, Britain?)

# (Mis)diagnosing Euroscepticism

- Research instruments assume political competence:
  - Is it reasonable to assume everyone has an *attitude* towards Europe? (Attitude = a structured and relatively stabilised system of opinions)
- Research instruments assume common understandings:
  - But Europe has no common media space (different visibility to 'European' issues)
- Is European integration too recent, too complex or too changeable for most people to form attitudes?
  - Suggestion is that they mobilise opinions based in more stable attitudes (e.g. towards justice and authority) when they *react* to questions about EI
- Does Euroscepticism just reflect changing attitudes towards authority?
  - The EU 'democratic deficit' as a reflection of a loss of trust in national political class

# (Mis)diagnosing Euroscepticism

Qualitative research suggests that it is not support for EI which is stratified but 'political competence' on European affairs:

- Only politically aware people seem to pay enough attention to Europe to have a chance to identify with it. (Duchesne et al)
- Questions on EU produce 'symbolic violence' on socially disadvantaged persons - feelings of incompetence, running out of arguments, lacking 'cognitive short cuts', being unable to 'hold' an opinion (Dakowska & Hubé)
- Whereas higher status groups feel *implicated* in European issues, these are *distanced* from the lives of lower status groups, overshadowed by more *salient* issues (globalisation, post-colonialism, left-right cleavages, cultural liberalism)

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    - *Even in Britain, people did not argue about Europe - at least until Brexit*

Europe as institutional field; Europe as social space and process; Europe as a common frame of reference

# The sociological alternative(s)

A. Epistemological - rehabilitate traditional sociological approaches

   Substitute qualitative for quantitative methods

   (study the 'holding of opinions' rather than the 'seizing of suggestions')

B. Ontological - redefine the objects of study

   The 'practice turn': practice as 'open-ended, spatially-temporally dispersed nexus of doings and sayings' (Schatzki, 2012, p. 14)

   (instead of European integration and European identity, Europe as embedded (or not) in 'salient issues' of *lived experiences* and *ordinary discourse*)

# General principles for a sociology of EI

1.  Make studies less elite-biased
    a.   what does European integration mean for the 'least implicated' groups?
2.  Make studies more actor-centred instead of institution-centred
    a.   how is Europe lived by both insiders and outsiders?
3.  Study Europe as embedded in more basic regimes of socialisation
    a.   how is Europe mobilised in the strategies actors use to solve everyday problems?
4.  Depoliticise European issues and rehabilitate less dignified research topics
    a.   how has Europeanisation affected sport, family, education, travel, etc.?
5.  Decouple transnationalism from Europeanisation as a political project
    a.   what kind of routines and what degree of penetration go with an *everyday* transnationalism?
6.  Take a linguistic/discursive turn
    a.   (how) do people talk about Europe? does Europe matter enough to argue about?
7.  Take a practice turn
    a.   what happens if we make our unit of analysis *situations* and *patterns of action*?

# The institutional field as a space of positions

Researchers in this tradition

- map the geometry of the field (a space of positions is seen as *polarised* between dominant and dominated positions)
- describe the *scripting* of roles as fields get institutionalised (taken for granted)
- trace professional and biographical *careers* of agents, looking at the resources needed to access positions of power and the *convertibility* of capital accumulated outside the field within it, or inside the field beyond it
  - is it an autonomous field, encompassing with regard to careers and rewards?
  - is it a heteronomous field, highly interdependent with other fields, e.g. national political fields (which creates opportunities for brokering / gatekeeping)?

# Toolbox of field analysis

- *Position*: practices and capacities depend on the institutional and social position of agents with respect to positions of domination
- *Disposition/habitus*: social phenomena are the product of an encounter between dispositions to act (inherited, acquired through social and professional paths or offered by the position) and relational contexts
- Forms of *capital*: the probability of obtaining positions has to do with the possession of resources (social, political, economic, cultural, symbolic) specific to a field but - especially in the case of an 'emerging' field like the EU - more or less reconvertible from/to capital accumulated in other fields.
    - It is these reconversions that are of primary interests: what resources procure European recognition? Is 'European' capital valuable in other spaces? Can we understand the decisions of 'Europeanised' actors without taking into account the national context of their actions?

# Practice perspectives (Adler-Nissen)

- 'ordering' approach (top-down) asks *how social practices stabilise the world* and focuses primarily on daily activities of EU policy-makers and EU policies, the people and artefacts populating European institutional sites, participating in stabilised *communities of practice* or *fields*, endowed with *competence*; it maps the forms of capital that count in an institutionalised space with its *scripted practices and roles*
- 'disordering' approach (bottom-up) asks *how social practices destabilise the world* and focuses primarily on ordinary or subordinate people and groups, whose practices are not necessarily recognised as competent, but whose lives are shaped by and shape the EU; it explores how policies are mediated or refracted in these groups' activities and their capacity to change their environment by performing *unscripted practices and roles*

# Nested social spaces

- Europe through the prism of the local: sociology's traditional interest in micro-scale phenomena invites us to study Europe as it is 'imbricated' or 'embedded' in practices at different scales - the interdependence of the local, national and supra-national, the 'inscription' of European objects and symbolic resources at the local or national level
- Europe as a (new?) transnational activity space: studies of intra-EU migration (Favell) show how spatial mobility is linked to social mobility and, although it is a reality only for a small minority, it can have important institutional feedback effects (health care, pensions, welfare, private law)
  - Mobility an indicator of European integration, but forces us to recognise instability, ambivalency and reversibility (we could also speak of fragmentation)

# Social transnationalism / horizontal Europeanisation

- To what extent does the cartography of mundane, everyday transnational ties and practices correspond with the boundaries of organisations like the EU?
  - Strong correspondence with European boundaries, sorted by geographical proximity and (for East European countries) labour migration flows, whilst historic diasporic and colonial ties also exert an influence for some countries
  - Germans' transnational ties most Europeanised according to EUCROSS data from 2012-13; western Europeans still have only limited familiarity with eastern Europe
- How strongly is social transnationalism stratified by class and cultural capital?
  - Like globalisation, Europeanisation presents more opportunities for people who are better off and better educated
- Is transnationalism necessarily associated with cosmopolitanism as a sense of global rather than local attachment? Does it inoculate against populism?
  - Apparently not, if 'irrational nationalism' can prosper, but Britain unique in having two 'cosmopolitan options' - Brexit does not have to mean isolation

# Different kinds of cross-border practices

International mobilities:
- More important than often assumed
- Stratified by cultural capital and socioeconomic status
  - Education level has the strongest effect (highly educated with low incomes make use of virtual mobilities to compensate for lack of access to travel)
- Men are more physically mobile, women more virtually mobile
- Diasporas are highly mobile not just physically but virtually

The social structure of transnational practices

Table 2.1: Classification of individual cross-border practices

| Physical border crossing? | Dimensions | Indicator |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Yes → Physical mobility | High permanence ↕ Low permanence | Long-term stay abroad (>3 years) |
| | | Medium-term stay abroad (3 months–3 years) |
| | | Short-term stay abroad (3 weeks–3 months) |
| | | Holidaying, short trips abroad |
| No → Virtual-imaginative mobility | Personal ↕ Impersonal | Having a foreign spouse or family member |
| | | Having family/relatives in a different country |
| | | Planning relocation in a foreign country |
| | | Having foreign friends/neighbours |
| | | Having friends abroad |
| | | Sending children study abroad |
| | | Having foreign business partners, clients, colleagues |
| | | Adhering to international associations |
| | | Interacting with foreigners through social networks |
| | | Making foreign investments (house, bank account) |
| | | Buying foreign products online |

Source: Recchi (2014: 128)

# Isomorphism

Are European societies growing more alike via imitation?

- Survey data inconclusive (Recchi 2019), but this is arguably an 'output' measure with too many compounding factors (economic conjunctures, specific post-communist developments)
- Diffusion of the same norms and social practices
  - To assess this we could study (e.g.) school curricula, or at mass and social media content, since the media transmit messages which impact on belief and behaviour, and because we know that there are strong imitative tendencies in national media systems
- Reference to the same benchmarks to evaluate what is fair or viable
  - Assessing this means asking what orders of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot) people orient to especially in situations of dispute: how different or similar are practices of critique and justification and their acceptability, e.g. in political debate? Do the same things count? Are institutionalised European standards used as positive justifications or as a scapegoat?

# Exemplary 'top-down' / 'ordering' studies

Ethnographic research among higher-educated intra-European migrants:

Favell, Adrian (2008) *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Professional sociology (ethnography) of EU civil servants:

Ban, C. (2013) *Management and Culture in an Enlarged European Commission: From Diversity to Unity?* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan).

# Exemplary 'bottom-up' / 'disordering' studies

Project CONCORDE (Conceptions ordinaires de l'Europe): Gaxie, D. & Rowell, J. (2011) Methodology of the project. In: Gaxie, D., Hubé, N. & Rowell, J. (eds.) *Perceptions of Europe. A comparative sociology of European attitudes*. Colchester: ECPR Press: 35-50. Available online at: http://press.ecprnet.eu/documents/sampleChapters/9781907301599.pdf

Project CITAE (Citizens talking about Europe): Duchesne, S. et al (2010) Europe between integration and globalisation, *Politique européenne* 30(1): 67-105

EUCROSS (The Europeanisation of Everyday Life: Cross-Border Practices): Recchi, E. et al. (2019) *Everyday Europe. Social transnationalism in an unsettled continent*. Bristol: Policy Press.