

University of Strasbourg Project of Excellence: Strasbourg School of European Studies

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The scientific project of the Strasbourg School of European Studies aims to provide an innovative response to the current debates in the international academic community by structuring its research project around three transdisciplinary themes building on innovations made by researchers of the team.

European studies as a changing field

A few paragraphs obviously do not suffice to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on a subject as vast as European construction.¹ Nevertheless, we have identified three general trends that enable us to specify where we stand and explain how our project will contribute to current and future academic debates.

Moving beyond theoretical paradigms – While the 1990s saw attempts to overcome oppositions between the neo-functional and intergovernmentalist paradigms – with varying outcomes (Schmitter 2004), debates over the last ten years have been characterised by a relative normalisation of discussions around a more traditional cleavage in social science, between advocates of constructivist and (historical and sociological) neo-institutionalist perspectives on the one side and the proponents of more rational choice-inspired approaches on the other. The lines have as a result undeniably shifted, but European studies, often based on a restrictive definition of their discipline of origin, have struggled to include the advances of the general epistemology of social science in this debate (Hacking 1999, or more classically Bourdieu 1980, 1997; Giddens 1984, 1995 or Veyne 1984). Many authors from various disciplines now question the productivity of this new cleavage (and its translation in terms of structure/agency, for instance) and call for more reflexivity (Calhoun 2003, Rosamond 2000, 2007; Hunt, Shaw, 2009; Kauppi, Madsen 2008) and more comparisons with other integration processes, including both a historical and geographical dimension (Mann 2006, Rumford 2009b).

The “interdisciplinary aspiration” (Bourde, Cini 2005) – There have recently been an increasing number of calls for interdisciplinarity on the research agenda, either through a combination of disciplinary approaches on EU institutions and policies (Jorgensen, Pollack, Rosamond, 2006), or a more radical break from existing research frameworks (Rumford 2009a). However, few attempts have been actually made to operationalise, and few projects go beyond a declaration of theoretical principals (on this issue, Cini 2006, Warleigh-Lack 2008, Paterson, Nugent, Egan 2010). More troubling, these positions could form a basis for the emergence of new oppositions and new barriers between “EU Studies” (supposedly centred on political science and law) and “European Studies” (supposedly more sociological and historical) which will do little to further empirical research associating both, make disciplinary barriers more porous or break with traditional academic divisions

¹. As an illustration, over a thousand papers are presented every year in events organised by international European Studies associations.

of tasks and legitimate objects of enquiry. This risk can be illustrated by the coexistence of two Sage handbooks, *European Union Politics* (Jorgensen, Pollack, Rosamond, 2006) and *European Studies* (Rumford, 2009b). Bridging the two approaches and systematically comparing with other geographic or historical integration processes would be more fruitful and allow the scientific community to make headway on the question of the different long-term effects of the integration process.

Decomartmentalising by studying processes – After having focused on the characterisation of the EU’s government (“multi-level governance”, “federalism denied”, “consociationalism”) and the “European model” for several decades, more recent debates have tended to steer away from this nominalist bent to come back to a more realistic and empirical analysis of the *processes* at work. Political, economic and especially the often overlooked societal transformations are now seen as processes that need to be considered together and not constructed as mere (intended, unintended or implied) effects of European integration *a priori*. This causal hypothesis has indeed been a driving force behind the development of a proliferating “Europeanisation” literature which has remained stuck in a debate on “top down” or “bottom up” processes and has insufficiently integrated other interactions and processes, whether local or transnational within the framework. The questions around the circulation of ideas and models, of the uses of norms and the interactions between globalisation processes are therefore key in renewing perspectives in all relevant disciplines. It remains to be seen which concepts and methods will be most productive in integrating these dimensions and will avoid the construction of new artificial oppositions (macro/micro, structuralist/constructivist, top down/bottom up...). While studies on “spatio-temporal assemblages” (Sassen 2006), the dynamics of transnational fields (Fligstein 2008; Bigo 1994, 2011; Dezalay, Garth, 2002, Dezalay Madsen 2009; Vauchez 2008), the historical structuring of transnational networks (Kayser, Leucht, Rasmussen 2008; Schot, Lagendijk 2008; Saunier 2006), or, in law and economics (Slaughter 2004, Menz 2005), the interactions between normative and economic spaces now pave the way for new and potentially converging conceptual perspectives, the challenge is now to acquire a more consistent empirical basis to explore this convergence.² Beyond the original results coming from the empirical cases, this is a crucial challenge both for fundamental research reasons and for getting at the “big picture” of processes and contradictions which will shape the European project in the years to come.

The three Research themes of the Strasbourg School of European Studies

At the focal point of these major trends, the question of the nexus between European institutions and European societies (or, more technically, of the interactions between the reconfigurations of transnational power fields and the modes of production of European societies), emerges as a fundamental scientific challenge and research agenda. Instead of attempting to define the European project on the basis of a normative or a nominalist viewpoint, it suggests rethinking the deep-rooted, multiple and competing processes involved in the social, legal, political, etc. constructions of its definition, the definition and dynamics of its moving frontiers, and ultimately the materialisation (sociologically speaking, the objectivation and subjectivation) of its concrete transformative effects on European societies. Relying on the existing strengths of our researchers and focusing energies on emerging problems, the SES will be structured around three lines of enquiry.

THEME 1: THE TRANSNATIONALISATION OF THE FIELDS OF POWER (POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, LEGAL) AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICS.

Studies on the structuring and the segmentation of Europe’s institutional, economic, legal and political spaces are a significant strength of European research in Strasbourg in several disciplines (especially on the trajectories of European actors) within the international academic production.³ As such, they

². One of the technical challenges consists in compiling and combining data constructed in different disciplines with different objectives and methods (individual and collective biographies, resources, public stances, political objectives and instruments, social effects) on a sufficiently wide range of policies, over a sufficiently long timeframe to be able to obtain conclusive results which can be integrated into a general theoretical framework.

³. The originality of the research developed in Strasbourg lies in the fact that historians and political scientists were key actors of this renewal. In history, this renewal has built around the work of the European Union Liaison Committee of Historians in

provide an solid basis for more widespread recognition and are in line with recent trends in international research (for instance on the networks of transnational governance), especially through the use of field analysis, identified by Ernst Haas in his latest preface to *The Uniting of Europe* (2004) as one of the most promising approaches.

Empirical studies focusing on the historical and sociological structure of these transnational fields and their effects on the more general reconfiguration of political processes can make decisive contributions to the understanding of the (competing) modes of the definition of the European project integrate a reflection on the forces driving the European project beyond the simple question of “governance”.⁴ On the conceptual level, we will strive to identify convergences between American perspectives (Stone, Sandholz, Fligstein, 2001; Fligstein 2002, Stone 2007; Jenson, Merand 2010) and European developments based on Bourdieu’s sociology (Bigo 2011; Cohen, Dezalay, Marchetti, 2007; Vauchez 2008) as well as promising developments on the history and sociology of transnational networks (for instance Kaiser 2005, 2008; Rumford 2002, 2005; Egeberg 2006; Favell 2008; Favell, Guiraudon 2009; Vleuten, Kaiser 2006). On the empirical level, **three analytical challenges** must be more specifically addressed:

- **Identify the specific effect of long-term historical and social dynamics in the structuring of networks** where economic and State elites invest their time and resources. Building on studies conducted by Strasbourg researchers on the circles of actors involved in the construction of the Community space (Schirmann, 2008), we will endeavour to comprehend the redefinition of the ties that bind them in light of the recomposition of the political, social and economic spaces. From the economic and social circles (Badel 2005; Schirmann 2006; Bussière, Dumoulin, Schirmann 2006, 2007), we will broaden our perspective to develop a socio-historical study of transnational political, financial and diplomatic networks, at various levels, and seek to compare them with other regional and international integration processes, in order to be able to better assess the dynamic interpenetration of European and global organisations and networks.
- **Analyse the effect of the transformations of the sociological structure of these networks** on the distribution of power over the definition (or the evolution) of objectives and the construction and use of political and economic instruments in various sectors. Studies on the field of Eurocracy (Georgakakis, 2011), socialisation to Europe (Michel and Robert 2010), the space of European interest groups (inter-university Pressure project), the Europeanisation of French employers’ organisations (DARES project), the Europeanisation of health and technical risks and their management (Bonah *et alii* 2009; Boudia *et alii* 2011; Henry 2011), the professionals of Europe on the local level (de Lassalle 2010) or international elites and global governance (Daloz 2010, Kauppi, Madsen, forthcoming) have enabled us to identify structuring forms of competencies and shifts in authority. These initial findings need to be refined and diversified in order to lead to a more precise characterisation of mixed networks (public/private) that cut across existing institutional levels and map their links with legal, economic and technical instruments.
- **Study the change in political behaviour and mobilisations related to the reconfiguration of power** brought about by the increasingly visible role of transnational authorities. This change should be observed both through the long-term history of mobilisations and forms of political engagement, and through the sociology of mobilisations and the construction of

the 1980s (with historians such as Poidevin, Schwabe, Serra and Trausch). Initially relying on a sectoral approach of European construction, these researchers were quick to broaden their horizons to study the economic, political, social and other circles and eventually transnational networks that shaped the European project (Badel, 1999; Bussière, Dumoulin 1998) including increasing collaborations with sociologists and political scientists (Dumoulin, 2004; Badel, Michel 2011), Strasbourg’s political sociologists have in the past fifteen years developed a dynamic of research agenda on the “professionals of political Europe” (Georgakakis 2002; Georgakakis, de Lassalle 2010; Kauppi 2005; Michel 2005, 2010; Michel, Robert, 2010) bringing a new understanding and empirical basis for understanding the practices of the “European government” (Smith, 2010), and beyond, through the interactions between fields that constitute global governance in action (Kauppi, Madsen, forthcoming).

⁴. While this framework has provided new impulses (Hooghe, Marks 2001; Kohler-Koch, Larat 2009), it has ultimately remained a rather abstract reality in much of the international literature.

critical spaces, the critical sociology of opinions and uses of European law to further social causes. This will enable us to move beyond classical approaches in political science in terms of citizen disinterest or “populism” (Gaxie, Hubé, de Lassalle, Rowell 2010; Clavert, Wassenberg, Hamman 2010).

This line of research will benefit from the input of all the disciplines involved in the project. The historians’ contextual and long-term approaches will effectively match the sociologists’ more structural perspectives, and the jurists and the economists’ knowledge of decision-making mechanisms and expertise in certain sectors will be combined with the political scientists’ modelling capacities. Empirical fieldwork will concentrate on:

- The shaping and the structuring of careers and positions within transnational fields of power: circulation of elites between government levels, reconfiguration of national elites and perceptions of the European project, administrative and parliamentary integration, analysis of the transformations of international and European jurists and staff involved in the courts, experts and decision-makers in economic, monetary and budgetary and welfare State governance).
- The functioning of European coordination in contexts of crisis (international crises and setting up of the EU’s External Action Service, links between international and European forums (G8, 20/EU), discrepancies in multi-level economic governance, mechanisms of producing public positions in the field of transnational expertise and crisis management, health and environmental crises).
- The redefinition of citizen mobilisations in transnational contexts, the emergence of alternative and/or critical public spaces, citizen perceptions of their relation to transnational fields of power and institutions and the mapping of constraints or windows of opportunity in collective action on a supranational level.

THEME 2: THE CIRCULATION OF THE NORMS AND INSTRUMENTS, THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN SOCIETAL SPACE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETIES

This research theme draws on recently emerging research projects in Strasbourg and aims at bringing together studies on the implementation of European policies and norms (in history, law, economics, political science) and others that shed new light on the analysis of the effects of national and transnational public policies, especially in terms of their relations with social or expert mobilisations and their contribution to the (material and symbolic) production of social orders. In line with the most recent orientations of the academic literature (Alter 2010; Fligstein 2008; Favell, Guiraudon, 2009), these new approaches will be usefully developed in Strasbourg, where researchers cover a wide spectrum: from competition and human rights policy to budgetary and fiscal policy, from education and employment, to family, sports, social policies, health, science and environment...⁵

⁵. Members of the team have made significant breakthroughs in a variety of areas. Strasbourg jurists have, beyond their acknowledge skills on the implementation of EU law (Ritleng et alii, 2007), launched programmes aimed at filling the existing gaps on the socio-political uses of the recourse to European justice by launching a major programme, first, on the examination of the admissibility of appeals to the Strasbourg Court, and secondly, in a more original and “risky” manner, on the barriers to the right of individual application (*European Science Foundation* Exploratory Workshop), on the analysis of forms of collective action including the recourse to human rights justice (pluridisciplinary programme developed with the University of Helsinki’s Centre of Excellence in Foundations of European Law and Polity) and the analysis, in collaboration with European lawyers, of the defence strategies of applicants before the ECHR (Lambert-Abdelgawad, 2011; Dourneau-Josette, 2011; Carey, Kauppi, Michel & Lambert-Abdelgawad, 2012; Binzaru, 2011). In political science, sociology, statistics and communication, researchers have addressed the circulation of public policy concepts and instruments (White Papers, statistics, control policies, public management) and the clients of justice and the administration and their mobilisations (Dubois, 2010; Campana, Henry, Rowell, 2007; Gasparini, Cometti, 2010; Georgakakis, de Lassalle 2010; Rowell 2010; Rowell, Mangenot, 2010; Gilbert, Henry, 2009). SES economists have worked on the monetary union, monetary and budgetary policies, budgetary interactions on the European level, the policy-mix, and the new approaches of the job market (Barbier-Guichard 2008; Meixing, Sidiropoulous 2011; Sidiropoulous, Zimmer 2009). Historians and sociologists of science and technology have studied the procedures and practices for the harmonisation of therapeutic agents and chemical or physical products (Bonah, 2009; ESF-RNP Drug standards-standard drugs) and the mediation between science, technology and society.

Making the most of this potential, we will be able to fill a gap in the analysis of societal effects, or the ability of politics to transform societies within the context of the transnationalisation of exchanges. What does Europe really produce, and, as a result, change? Studies on public policies in Europe, with varying orientations, have shown the agenda-setting role of the Community level, its contribution to the emergence of new problems and to new ways of framing them: environment, gender equality, handicap, innovation and the economy of knowledge, lifelong learning, the activation, etc. (Campana, Henry, Rowell, 2007; Rowell, Mangenot 2010).

The emergence of this European societal space and the structure of these interactions are a challenge for scientific analysis because, although they should not be seen as entirely new phenomena produced by European integration, they require going beyond national approaches to more directly consider the Europeanisation of the social spaces where problems are constructed (Princen, 2009). Indeed, things would be all too simple if, as in the early stages of research informed by cognitivism (Surel, 2000), Europeanisation resulted in a new division of political labour, with the identification of problems and normative framing assigned to the European level, and implementation to the national and local levels. In many areas (such as employment and social policy), the Community level has no binding power, but contributes to framing national policies within a multi-level game, where effects of imitation through the comparison between countries, effects of legitimisation through benchmarking, and effects of importation derived from national political and social power struggles (Dubois, 2007) are combined. Studying the genesis and effects of these “new” European questions thus imply:

- **analysing the integration of Europe** in the anticipations, the systems of perception and actions of “local” actors and **the transnational effects of mobilisations** on national and sub national public policies.
- grasping the complex **processes of circulation of definitions, norms and injunctions** at various government levels and in different spaces of collective mobilisation (including cross-border mobilisation).
- combining **legal, economic and political approaches and methods** to construct models of the relationship between intermediations (uses, interactions, circulations) and substantial transformations of social and economic sectors over the long term.

In order to achieve this, we will first conduct a series of coordinated case studies that will provide a sound basis for consolidated knowledge on the relative capacities of European institutions to weigh on processes of transformation of societies (in differentiating between sectors and social spaces affected in different ways) inscribed in more global exchanges and dynamics. Among these case studies, there will be a focus on various specific policies and social spaces (culture, education, science and universities, sports, health and environment, competition, territories, urban planning, social policies) and the uses of various instruments and mobilisations around them (rankings and benchmarks, controversies on economic and social statistics, managerialisation of administration, development and effects of new instruments of government from a distance, social appropriation and uses of European law and human rights, indicators of “competitive territories”...).

THEME 3: METHODOLOGY OF INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK ON EUROPEAN MATTERS

While the overall objective of the project and the first two research themes are conceived to encourage the transgression of disciplinary boundaries, they will be supported by a third overarching line of research aiming at favouring the cross-fertilisation of the different approaches and methods for analysing transnational phenomenon in the different areas being examined. Through seminars, annual meetings, and other tools (see below), the goal is here to support a concerted effort to move, as far as pragmatically possible, from pluridisciplinarity to interdisciplinarity over the medium and long term.

There is a particularly abundant literature on pluridisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity.⁶ Recently, the growing interest in these questions in the field of European studies has shed light on what is at stake in

⁶ A strong tradition exists in France, particularly within the context of epistemological debates (Bachelard, Koyré, Canguilhem) and through the merging of different schools and disciplines in the Paris MSH and Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociales and College de France (Braudel, Bourdieu, Morin, Veyne) that have produced long-lasting effects,

this aspiration (Cini, Bourne, 2005), but also on the practical obstacles (including the fact that disciplines have opened up to others to unequal degrees and at different paces) and challenges involved in moving from a juxtaposition of viewpoints to the integration of different disciplines through the confrontation of knowledge and research questions, the definition of a common vocabulary and the elaboration of new models (Cini 2006, Warleigh-Lack 2008, Warleigh-Lack, Phinnemore, 2009, Paterson Nugent Egan 2010). While our project creates the necessary preconditions by bringing together representatives of several disciplines around common objects and questions, our strategy seeks to go further by working on - and expanding – methodological and conceptual points of convergence in order to promote a genuinely interdisciplinary perspective.

This overarching research objective will be driven by the definition of common research projects on methodological aspects facilitating the practice of interdisciplinarity on Europe and the reflexive appraisal of methodologies used in empirical studies. Thus, for instance: What does the history and sociology of elites mean in a transnational context? Why and how can we build international statistical variables and categories in macro-historical and socio-economic studies? These issues are generally raised in converging terms within different sub disciplines, such as the study and use of biographies, which reflects the common interests of historians, political scientists, sociologists, economists and jurists. Beyond purely methodological concerns, this will also be an opportunity to reflect on the concepts we use and contribute to the goal of achieving converging definitions and categories and move towards the production of shared models around the concepts of field and transnational networks.

To stimulate innovations through the increased permeability of the borders of knowledge, we will also work with researchers whose preoccupations may initially seem remote from those of the SES. For instance, on conceptual questions like the imperial analogy, we may welcome the input of medievalists who have produced research on empires (for instance the Roman-Germanic empire), in order to examine and refine the multiple analogies that have cropped up in the literature in the past few years (Zielonka 2006; Delanty 2009; Beck, Grande 2007). Specialists of statistics and modelling will also be sought out to contribute. Lastly, this research orientation should encourage reflexive discussions on the practice of a science of Europe at the nexus of emerging international references and first approaches developed by members of the team (Georgakakis 2009; Kauppi 2010; Schirmann 2008). To achieve this, we will set up working groups on the circulation of concepts between disciplines, and, on a very practical level, on the principles of interdisciplinary writing, the biases and limitations of the pooling of data, etc. These objectives will structure the yearly cross-disciplinary workshops and the yearly seminars bringing together the School's researchers and doctoral students.

particularly in more recent disciplines like Political Science with a strong integration of sociological and historical perspectives. For an introduction on the subject in English, see Klein 1997 and Newell 2001.