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A 'SOCIO-HISTOIRE' OF

EUROPEANIZATION:

PERSPECTIVES FOR A DIACHRONIC COMPARISON

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Monika Eigmüller | Nikola Tietze
A 'SOCIO-HISTOIRE' OF EUROPEANIZATION:
Perspectives for a diachronic comparison

Abstract

During recent years diachronic comparisons and historical references already became quite popular in the study of European integration processes. Talking not only about the political, the juridical or the economic integration process, but analyzing the societal changes in course of European integration, sociological research faces two major problems: Since the terminological arsenal of sociologists is pre-structured by nationally constituted categories, scholars lack clear concepts of the emergent social realities at the European level. Sociology often implicitly equates its concept of society with the nation state instead of conceiving the nation as *one culture-historical period* (Tenbruck 1981: 348; Bielefeld 2003, 2012). Even harder than this lack of terms and categories weights a problem of practical sociological research: Compared to other periods of polity formation, European integration still refers to a very limited time horizon. We are talking about processes of a maximum of 60 years – a very short period for the observation and analysis of societal changes. Therefore, researchers have started to artificially extend their periods of investigation towards the experience of the national welfare state or even beyond in order to be better able to gain theoretical insights and to diachronically compare the different periods under investigation (see Klausen and Tilly 1997; Leibfried et al. 2005; McNamara 2011). Unfortunately in most of these studies pronounced inter-temporal, methodological approaches are missing. But how can we use historical insights fruitfully for decoding current developments within the European Union? What do the concepts of social-history, historical sociology, historical institutionalism and socio-histoire offer us for the analysis of more recent social transformations? And how do we have to reformulate these theoretical and methodological concepts for our purpose of diachronic comparisons? These are the questions structuring our article. In opposition to common socio-historical approaches we will develop a new theoretical approach of historic-sociological analysis, emphasizing not only the macro, but also the micro-sociological level, stressing different actors, interests and ideas and their specific historical contexts as decisive for explaining social processes of change.

1 Introduction¹

In recent years, diachronic comparisons have become quite popular in the study of European integration processes. Such comparisons represent attempts in the social sciences to analyze political, legal, and economic processes of Europeanization and the transformations in society they induce. However, researchers undertaking diachronic comparisons face two major problems. Since sociologists' terminological toolbox is pre-structured by nationally-constituted categories, scholars lack clear concepts for analyzing emergent social realities at the European level. Classic sociology implicitly equates its concept of society with the nation-state instead of conceptualizing the nation as manifestation of a specific cultural and historical period (Tenbruck 1981: 348; Bielefeld 2003, 2012). One result is that the societal transformation generated by Europeanization is assessed on the basis of methodological nationalism (Beck, Sznaider 2006). Moreover, societal transformation is examined only as a consequence of the kind of Europeanization processes that the representatives of nation-states initiate and attempt to control through international treaties, legal harmonization, and legal codification or via regulation and deregulation of markets and competition. That Europeanization processes can also be a response to uncertainty in interactive situations or to a crisis of societal orders and, in particular, the orders of the nation-state is a possibility that has hardly been addressed in current research on Europe.

What weighs even more heavily than the lack of terms and categories and the issue of methodological nationalism is a problem of practical research. Compared to other periods of polity formation, European integration still refers to a very limited time horizon. The processes in question have lasted no longer than sixty years, at most — a very short period for the observation and analysis of societal change. Therefore, researchers have started to extend their periods of investigation to include the national welfare state or even beyond in order to be better able to gain theoretical insights and to diachronically compare the different periods under investigation (Klausen and Tilly 1997; Castles et al. 2005; McNamara 2010). Unfortunately, in most of these studies, pronounced inter-temporal, methodological approaches are missing. Among other things, this means that research on Europe scrutinizes only the *results* of historical processes, such as integration on the level of the nation-state through social policy, but loses sight of the processes themselves. Thus, examination of Europeanization — for example, in the realm of social policy — inevitably becomes a description of

¹ We thank Paula Bradish for her help preparing the English version of this article.

deficits in relation to the focus of historical comparison, such as national welfare state regimes. The methodological challenge of diachronic comparisons is therefore relating societal processes and political developments to one another analytically, in order to ascertain what is unique about a specific Europeanization process and to recognize possible modes of Europeanization.

The *socio-histoire* approach offers an analytical perspective for studying processes. This approach developed in France in the late 1980s in a dialog between historians, sociologists, and political scientists (Audren et al. 2003). In contrast to Germany — with its tradition of social history and more recent developments in historical sociology, both of which analyze the relationship between the state and society from a macro-perspective that draws on international comparisons — *socio-histoire* focuses on situations in society shaped by uncertainty. This micro-perspective is used to study public controversies and political negotiations, in which collective, individual, or corporative social actors motivated by economic or power-related interests, technical or scientific/academic progress, or normative orientations call existing orders in society into question and aim to effect changes in them. Like the history of concepts, *socio-histoire* reconstructs the genesis of social and political categories but instead situates this genesis in the interactive situations in which collective, individual, or corporative actors negotiate and assert the semantics of these categories or fail in their efforts to assert specific semantics (Noiriel 2006, Wagner / Zimmermann 2003). According to the central methodological assumption of this approach, institutionalized categories represent a historically constituted core, around which conflict configurations and the coordinated actions crystallize and are stabilized, due to structural conditions that occur at a specific time and in a specific context (Noiriel 1997, 1995). Empirical investigations grounded in *socio-histoire* focus on describing problems as well as solutions to problems with which social actors address their uncertainties in interactive situations and, in doing so, question societal orders. *Socio-histoire* raises the issue of why and to what extent such problem descriptions and problem solutions have been transformed within institutions that structure society and which today we take for granted in certain categories, such as 'unemployment', or for certain spheres of action, such as 'policies related to families' (Lenoir 2003, Topalov 1994, Zimmermann 2006). In other words, *socio-histoire* traces the 'long-distance effects' of a crisis that is addressed by social actors in a specific interactive situation, the so-called *relations à distance* (Noiriel 2006). Since this perspective perceives both problem descriptions and problem solutions as ways of engaging with categories that have already been

established, it also scrutinizes the influence that structural conditions have on the ways in which societal orders are called into question or transformed. With respect to the interdependency of actions and structure, *socio-histoire*, like political sociology, strives to analyze relations of power and domination that determine the social order and, because of the conflicts of interest that result, maintain those orders in a precarious state.

What is the value, for sociological research on Europe, of *socio-histoire*'s analytical examination of (I) the genesis of institutionalized categories, (II) the social actors involved in this genesis, and (III) their descriptions of and solutions for problems? What opportunities does this approach create — with its perspective on studying the creation of categories, stages for social action, and problem descriptions — for diachronic comparison in research on Europe? In the following we will address these questions by taking a closer look at the processes of Europeanization in the realm of social policy, before offering an assessment of the heuristic benefits of *socio-histoire* for the sociological study of Europe.

2 Building categories on the European level: “The European worker”

The Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC Treaty) signed in 1957 created the common European market on the basis of free circulation of goods, people, services, and capital. The treaty's explicit goal is ‘to promote throughout the community a harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increase in stability, an accelerated raising of the standard of living and closer relations between the states belonging to it’ (Art. 2, EEC Treaty). A key aspect with respect to this goal is freedom of movement for employees as defined there: ‘Such freedom of movement shall entail the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States as regards employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment’ (Art.48 (2) EEC Treaty). The prohibition of discrimination based on nationality formulated in this paragraph sets out the fundamental principle of freedom of movement for workers, from which developed the category of the European worker.² From the beginning of the formation of the common Eu-

²Alexander Somek notes that the prohibition of discrimination on citizenship grounds has led — especially since introduction of EU citizenship — to ‘astonishing activism with respect to the extension of social benefits to citizens of the Union’ in court law (Somek 2013: 53).

ropean market, this category competed with the categories that emerged in the individual nation-states' labor orders and social orders. But it was precisely this competition that stimulated processes of interpretation and negotiation, in the course of which the category of the European worker acquired a more distinct profile and was continuously reinforced as a valid claim.

When the EEC Treaty took effect, this category of the European worker, whose freedom of movement was and is to be protected, applied to all transnationally mobile employees within the common European market.³ However, as policies that aimed to create equal conditions of competition came into effect, this category increasingly influenced regulations pertaining to labor law and social law that also affected *non*-mobile employees. This was because realizing freedom of movement — independent of whether employees actually made use of the relevant provisions or not — meant that the member states' legal orders on labor and social affairs had to be compared and, where necessary, adapted (Wobbe/Biermann 2009). Thus, when the EEC Treaty entered into force, the equivalence criteria that were a prerequisite for comparing had to be formulated and, in turn, the knowledge needed to do so, such as comparable social statistics, had to be generated.

France, for example, — a country in which equal pay for women and men had been constitutionally guaranteed since 1946 — insisted that an article with similar guarantees should be incorporated into the EEC Treaty. Because the other EEC states had little interest in such a provision, they delayed the consultation process by initiating discussions about what constituted equal pay for equal work. Finally, in 1964, the EU Commission was charged with conducting a survey on the structure and distribution of pay in the EEC.⁴ But it was not until the early 1970s that sufficient preliminary studies and data from the member states was available to make a comparison of pay scales in the Community and the development of concepts for classifications and criteria with

³As early as 1955, besides targeting the need to realize workers' freedom of movement, the Messina Conference resolution addressed the question of harmonization of existing regulations on working hours, pay, and length of holidays in the individual member states, thus focusing for the first time on social issues pertinent for workers in the context of European law (see Resolution of the Foreign Ministers Conference of Messina, 3 June 1955).

⁴The Statistics Division for the European Coal and Steel Community was established in 1952. In keeping with its constantly expanding functions, it became the Statistical Office of the European Communities and a Directorate-General (DG) of the European Commission in 1959. Today, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) is under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs. According to its own description, its function is 'to provide the European Union with statistics at European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions';

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/about_eurostat/introduction, date accessed 6 March 2014.

which further data on pay structure could be collected feasible (Lammers 2013).⁵ In the long run, one country's concerns about a competitive disadvantage promoted a process in which the category of the European worker became much more concrete.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (ECJ) also contributed, with its interpretation of European law, to a more precise definition of the category of the European worker. Early on, the court called in its decisions for fundamental definitions of equivalence criteria that could be applied to comparisons in both labor and social law (Colneric 2003). Moreover, in its judgment in the van Gend & Loos case, the ECJ made a direct link between European workers and European law by recognizing the right of citizens of the member states to invoke European Community laws in relevant cases before national courts. In this way, the category of the European worker became a point of reference for comparisons, not only with respect to issues that were clearly transnational such as freedom of movement and freedom of establishment or freedom to provide services but also increasingly with respect to more general issues of labor and social law such as equal rights for women and men. For example, the right to equal pay for men and women established in Art. 119 EGV was the basis for a suit filed in 1970 by Gabrielle Defrenne against her employer, the Belgian airline Sabena, which had fired her because of an age limit that applied to female employees only.⁶ The ECJ's decision in favor of the plaintiff stated that 'the principle that men and women should receive equal pay, which is laid down by Article 119, may be relied on before national courts.'⁷ Thanks to the legal action taken by Ms Defrenne and the ECJ's ruling, the category of the European worker was made more precise, in the sense that it was linked to the comprehensive obligation to ensure equal treatment of men and women.

If we apply the *socio-histoire* approach to examine the ECJ's decisions in the realm of labor law and social law or to studying European surveys on wage structure, then the focus is not so much on the actual court rulings or the statistical data collected but rather on the process in which equivalence criteria are developed and the entities and classifications for data collection are defined. The conflicts and compromises in this definition process — the difficulties in reaching the latter, the fail-

⁵Étienne Penissat and Jay Rowell (2012) describe a similarly difficult process in the definition of categories for occupations, the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC), or the current process of defining European Socio-economic Groups (ESeG).

⁶Article 119, EEC Treaty has meanwhile been replaced by Article 48, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

⁷See the ECJ ruling from 8 April 1976, C-43/75, Slg. 1976, I-00481.

ures and successes in pursuing one's interests in the former — generate a Europeanization of relations in society on both the cognitive and the discursive level. They force the actors involved to grasp and to describe the societal relations addressed in the political or legal processes of defining norms within a comparative European space. Bettina Heintze has referred to comparison as a constitutive element of order (Heintz 2010: 163). In this respect, the emergence of a category of the European worker, as it has been more clearly defined on a European level by jurisprudence and statistical surveys, has contributed to creating order in the common European market and has, to borrow the words used by Luc Boltanski, constructed its official and visible reality.⁸

Peter Wagner and Bénédicte Zimmermann (2003) have emphasized the significance of legal as well as statistical techniques for the cognitive and discursive integration of societal relations in national welfare states. Thanks to the objectifying language of statistics, the national as a whole have been described and, with the help of political and social rights, principles of belonging to this national whole have been defined (Wagner/Zimmermann 2003: 257). In our opinion, a diachronic comparison of the formation of categories within the context of stabilizing the labor orders and social orders of nation-states and the formation of categories within the context of establishing an order for the common European market offers an opportunity to explore specific processes of Europeanization in the realm of labor and social law.

3 European stages for social action: Social benefits

Referring to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Bénédicte Zimmermann argues that categories that establish social order and construct reality, such as the category of the European worker, are a reflection of relationships of power and domination. She also emphasizes (in contrast to Bourdieu) that these relationships of power and domination result from multi-layered interests as well as complex social constellations (Zimmermann 2003). Scrutinizing institutionalized categories by relating attributions 'strictly to class and habitus' thus falls short of the mark (Zimmermann 2003: 242). According to Zimmermann's understanding, categorizations are grounded in conflicts and compromises, in coordination and negotiation (Zimmermann 2003). In this sense, they create structures of order that are inevitably linked to actions and thus open to

⁸Luc Boltanski (2012) distinguishes between the official, overt reality and the covert but experienced reality that competes with it. Sociological research, in Boltanski's view should address the question of who has the power to determine that reality is the way it is.

change. This implies that European categorizations must be examined in two respects: first, as a bureaucratic act of domination, with which a passive set of people are assigned a place in a specific order and second, as the result of interactions in which social actors with different ideas and complex interests question established rules. If Europeanization is analyzed on the backdrop of this understanding of categories — for example, in the sphere of social policy — then it becomes apparent that the outcome of the Europeanization process is undecided. The act of authority, with which the member states signed the EEC Treaty and initiated the formation of the category of the European worker, did not define principles for constructing European realities. Instead, the states' authority to establish order is in fact a tenuous and precarious kind of power, because it is dependent on the actions of the individual and collective actors it addresses.

To the extent that the European category of the worker orders the common market and constructs its official and perceptible reality, it has also opened up new stages on which social action is shaped that compete with pre-existing ones. Examples of such platforms are the European works councils that have been established since the second half of the 1990s.⁹ Their function is to ensure that non-mobile employees of a specific company are informed and consulted across national borders. In companies in which employees call on management to inform and consult them, European works councils can become the sites of processes of European comparison and adaption to meet common standards (Hauser-Ditz et al. 2010). As the head of the Ford European Works Council explains, the councils offer opportunities to assess 'which problems and issues that [co-workers] run into on the local or national level ultimately have a European dimension' (Tietze / Bielefeld 2012: 57). By examining such aspects, the employees of a company can Europeanize conflicts at the workplace and how they are dealt with, and they can do so outside the framework of the category of the European worker, as it is laid out in European law, and outside the perceptible realities of the common European market.

Individual actors have also discovered the European stages for social action created by the category of the European worker and put them to use in their own goals. This was a new option in that it created space to pursue one's own ideas and interests beyond the scope of the usual na-

⁹Companies that employ at least 1000 people in more than one EU member state and at least 150 in each of at least two different EU member states can establish a European works council. The organizational form and function of these councils was first defined by Council Directive 1994/45/EG of 22 September 1994 and replaced some 17 years later, on 6 June 2011, by Council Directive 2009/38/EG of 6 May 2009. For the history of the European works councils, see for example Lecher et al. 1998.

tional and local level. Striking examples are the individual cases brought before the courts, in which single actors have sought to establish their rights by bringing suits before national courts and referring to structures established in European law. Based on the principle of the direct effect of European law (van Gend & Loos, C-26/62), EEC citizens were permitted, beginning in the 1960s, to bring suits against national legal provisions by referring to European law. The number of cases of this kind rose steadily in the ensuing years. For example, more than four hundred proceedings per year are brought before the ECJ as references for a preliminary ruling (see ECJ 2013, Annual Report 2012).¹⁰ As a result of such individual references to the European legal space, that framework has not only been made increasingly precise; a further effect has been the stabilization of the common European market as a site for the actions of *individuals* (see Eigmüller 2013).

The work of European works councils as well as individual cases in which European law becomes the key argument demonstrate that social actors respond to national forms of regulating conflicts that have become problematic for them by referring to European structures. Such a process of Europeanization leads us to ask which actors get involved at the European level, when and why, and what their motives are. 'Were they 'pulled in' by specific incentives provided by the EC institutions or the specific opportunities the institutional framework provided? Or, alternatively, did they 'push' towards the EC level because they realized that they needed to be present, or because they themselves deemed this the best framework for attaining their policy objectives?' (Kaiser and Meyer, 2013:8). Their specific orientations determine how the various social actors make use of structures of European law and, in particular, the political structures created by the EU Commission, which structural deficits they address, and to what extent they develop their own structures. Through their specific use of European structures, individual and collective social actors have a sustained influence on the content of Europeanization, at the same time they themselves create European spheres for action.

To ascertain the specific nature of the Europeanization process, it seems useful to realize diachronic comparisons of these processes with developments at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the

¹⁰Suits are brought to the court from all areas of public life. However, besides tax issues and questions related to the common sphere of freedom of movement, of security, and of legal affairs, social policy questions are frequently the focus of preliminary ruling proceedings (see ECJ Annual Report 2013). Moreover, European legal questions are more frequently addressed beyond the realm of suits brought before national courts, for example when petitions are submitted to the European Parliament and the European Commission in pursuing individual interests (Kelemen 2006).

twentieth century in West European countries such as Germany or France, in which regulations pertaining to the labor market, to relief for the poor, or to the introduction of social insurance systems were nationalized. In the course of these politically initiated structural changes, individual as well as collective social actors utilized these newly-created national platforms for action to pursue their ideas and interests. In these phases, various social actors addressed social problems on the national level, which, as a result, drew sustained attention to problems — such as basic social benefits for workers — that had previously been negotiated exclusively within local or functionally organized contexts (Börner 2013).

4 Defining and Solving Problems: Public Services

National social policy, as the framework within which measures implemented in creating the common European market were assessed and compared, regulates access to the job market and protects workers' health and safety. Moreover, it must also ensure workers' wellbeing outside the workplace and in case they become unemployed. This understanding of the functions of social policy is derived from the definition of problems formulated by social actors in the context of industrialization, infrastructure development, population growth, and urbanization in the nineteenth century. The solutions that prevailed in response to increasingly problematic interactive situations in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century were linked to the model of the nation-state. They served simultaneously as a means of legitimating the nation's prerogative in implementing social policies and its authority more generally (Wagner / Zimmermann 2003, Zimmermann 2001). A core element of this national problem-solving perspective are public services or, as they are called in contemporary discussions of European law, services of general interest.¹¹

On a formal level, the EEC Treaty and the subsequent European treaties that aimed to stabilize and deepen the common European market did not affect the member states' national jurisdiction with respect to social policy. However, various measures — and especially the principle of freedom of movement that was a constitutive element of the common market — have led to a situation in which the national definition and provision of services of general interest linked to social policy goals

¹¹The EU differentiates between 'services of general economic interest' (SGEIs) and 'services that are not of general economic interest' (see Mitterlehner 2013). German legal language also uses the phrase *öffentliche Daseinsvorsorge*.

have become problematic (Ferrera 2003). On the one hand, member states are unable to guarantee access to the labor market to a sufficient extent and, above all, in an equal fashion. But this guarantee is a necessary dimension of social policy that is defined, as in the individual EU member states, by labor relations (Offe 2003). On the other hand, for EU institutions that regulate the common market and equal conditions of competition, problems of legitimation arise from these deficits, as well as from disparate guarantees regarding the provision of services. This was demonstrated by the French referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, as well as by attempts to anchor the provision of services of general interest in European law through incorporation of an appropriate paragraph in the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 14 TFEU; Krajewski 2013). Where these two problems intersect, Europeanization processes can be observed and described on various levels and with respect to their different trajectories with the help of the *socio-histoire* approach.

One such Europeanization process with respect to social policy was, for example, initiated by the EU Commission, when, within the framework of its competence for labor relations in the common market, it defined a social issue on the European level and attempted to combat it by implementing a European policy of inclusion (Bernhard 2010). In programs that at first bore the label 'poverty' (in the 1980s) and later referred to 'exclusion' (1990s) and finally to 'inclusion' (following implementation of the Lisbon Strategy in the year 2000), EU Commission representatives commissioned statistical surveys and academic research and fostered European networks of academic experts and specialists working in charitable organizations.¹² In this way, the EU Commission was able to formulate social policy aims, which it justified through the production of increasingly differentiated and enhanced indicators and the development of European problem-solving approaches. In what was in a certain sense a circular sphere of action, the Commission established the open method of coordination (OMC), which created an instrument for regulating social policy within the framework of European employment policies. This Europeanization process must be viewed without a doubt in the context of the necessity — in the realm of EU politics — to legitimate the common market and its institutions with arguments that go beyond the production of economic growth. This necessity is, last but not least, a result of the ongoing conflicts played out between EU institutions and member states over acquiring and maintaining their respective areas of competence.

¹²See for example the European Anti-Poverty Network, the network of European social NGOs.

At the intersection of the problems that emerge, on the one hand, from increasing European inequality and, on the other, from the legitimation gaps that pertain to both national and European authority, we can observe a further Europeanization process — one that is completely different in its direction. In the course of the austerity policies that have been developed within the framework of the common European market and especially as a result of the monetary union, the EU member states have restructured their social policies. This has in turn led to new territorial forms of organization for services of general interest and to an increase in service providers. Yuri Kazepov has shown that, due to this development as well as for other reasons, municipalities, regions, and other institutions now play a more important role in financing and implementing public services on the local level (Kazepov 2010). As a result, some social policy measures are available in a specific city or region within the same EU member state but not in others.

This process is a partial organizational separation of what was formerly bound together politically on a national level in the first half of the twentieth century, when the model of the welfare state conceptualized within the nation-state was realized. The resulting inequalities on both the European and the national level and the problems of legitimation for European and national forms of statehood lead actors on various stages for social action to formulate nationalistic problem definitions and nationalistic solutions. The successes of radical right-wing parties in recent European Parliament elections are an important indicator of this trend. Within this Europeanization process, which is manifested in a tendency towards renationalization and nationalistic radicalization, there is a tragic element, since, as Somek notes, it will not ‘promote a healthy left-vs.-right controversy over European economic policy but instead widen the gap between the diverse national cultures of production and distribution’ (Somek 2013: 68).

Describing problems in interactive situations within an EU context inevitably implies engagement with ideas about the European order of societal relationships. Collective or individual social actors who are engaged in addressing the problems of a specific interaction or who are involved due to structural conditions — for example, as actors on the job market or by claiming public benefits — also participate in Europeanization processes. With their descriptions of the problems and other ideas expressed in this context, these actors contribute to stabilizing categories defined by the European bureaucracy that have been established through action taken by the authorities but are also involved in transforming such categories. If we employ the perspective of *socio-*

histoire and take as our starting point the problem of definitions and solutions that are suggested or realized by the unemployed seeking work, by those who receive social benefits, by voters, by the providers of public services, or by civil servants in the context of an interaction that has become problematic, then Europeanization processes come into focus as ‘co-constructions of thinking, acting, and describing’ (Alain Desrosières 2005). *Socio-histoire* thus offers opportunities to differentiate between various ideas of the social in Europeanization processes and to analyze these ideas with respect to the practices of gaining and maintaining power to which they are connected.

5 Conclusion: The value of the *socio-histoire* approach for sociological research on Europe

As has been demonstrated above, thanks to its analytical perspective on processes, *socio-histoire* offers opportunities for sociological research on Europe to explore the formation of European structures and institutions as they relate to the actions of collective as well as individual social actors. We argue that, on the macro level, the Europeanization process is not simply the sum of discrete situations studied on the micro level (Collins 1981). Rather, social scientists must investigate when, where, and in what manner social and political action leads to the Europeanization of societal orders and, conversely, how Europeanized orders change social and political action. To this end, the categories that are created — the development and transformations of classifications and equivalence criteria, as well as statistics and legal provisions — must be examined. Institutionalized categories bind social actors’ activities to the social order and, conversely, link the social order to actions. By analyzing the process in which institutionalized categories are formed in the context of the European Union, social scientists can address the interactions between social and political actions and established European structures.

An examination of the process in which European categories are formed that employs the *socio-histoire* approach and addresses the interactions between action and order reveals the diversity of actors who participate in Europeanization processes. Collective and individual actors are drawn into a specific Europeanization process by structural incentives or opportunities or, alternatively, empower themselves to make use of established European structures. According to the *socio-histoire* perspective, in analyzing the Europeanization process, it is irrelevant whether actors are forced to participate in activities on a European platform or enter

such an arena because of their own, self-set goals. What is instead decisive for analysis are the form and content that social actors develop in addressing uncertainty in the interactive situations that affect them. We argue here that sociological research on Europa should investigate the problem definitions and problem solutions of the diverse social actors who are involved in processes of Europeanization and probe the relations of power and domination that are manifested in the way these crises are addressed.

Investigation of the formation of European categories and of stages on which social action occurs and problem descriptions in the EU context reveals Europeanization processes that compete with one another, refer to one another, or reinforce one another on various levels and at various times. Sociological research on Europe should, we suggest, examine these complex relationships, as a basis for investigating the constitutive conditions for public interventions on a European scale.

With its perspective on studying categories, stages for social action, and problem descriptions, *socio-histoire* offers an inter-temporal set of instruments for analyzing processes. These tools are a means of historicizing societal change through and in the EU; that is, societal change can be related to the spatial and temporal intersection of different structures and actions. Sociological research that is founded on studies implementing the tools of *socio-histoire* thus avoids limiting analysis to the development of European institutions or reducing it to a comparison with an integration model rooted in the nation-state. Moreover, *socio-histoire* creates opportunities for comparing various historical processes in terms of their respective formation of categories, platforms for action, and the interactive situations they address. In this context, the heuristic value of *socio-histoire* for sociological research on Europe lies in its potential for facilitating diachronic comparisons without a reductionist orientation towards results. By adopting a sociological-historical perspective in comparing national orders and EU regulations diachronically, sociologists can avoid implicit teleological assumptions as well as the potential pitfalls of methodological nationalism.

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