1 Introduction: A New Approach to Studying European Integration

Studying European Integration

Many books on European Union (EU) integration or contemporary European issues have been published in the past few years. The vast majority of these books have been generated by the academic disciplines of politics, international relations (IR), geography, economics, and history. The number of books on the EU from the field of political sociology is much smaller. Indeed, very few exist. This itself is an interesting issue. Why should political sociology, and sociology more generally, fail to generate an impressive literature on what most people would agree is an important aspect of our contemporary world? In part the answer lies in the nature of political sociology as a sub-discipline of sociology. So what has prevented political sociology from taking its place in the study of European integration?

Bottomore (1993: 1) claims that it is impossible "to establish any significant theoretical distinction between political sociology and political science," as both are concerned with relations between social and political life. On the face of it this makes political sociology's non-contribution to EU studies more puzzling. But there is one crucial difference between political science and political sociology that Bottomore does not take into consideration. As Nash (2000: 1) points out, political sociology has tended to focus on politics at the level of the nation-state. "It has shared what may be seen as the prejudice of modern sociology for taking 'society' as the unit of analysis and treating it as a distinct, internally coherent and self-regulating entity, organized around the nation-state." On this reading, political sociology is unprepared for a study of social and political life in contexts other than that of the nation-state – the European Union, for example.

Political sociology cannot ignore the European Union. Whatever

aspect of contemporary Europe we wish to investigate – ranging from international relations and domestic politics to welfare policy, the politics of community and identity, unemployment and individual rights – the EU looms large. What exactly do we mean when we talk of the European Union? Strictly speaking, the EU was established by the Treaty on European Union, agreed between 12 member states, and came into existence in 1993.[1] As commonly understood, the European Union denotes several things. Most obviously, an economic and political bloc consisting of 15 member states.[2] It is also synonymous with the project of European integration: the objective of "ever closer union" was enshrined in the founding Treaty of Rome, and the Single European Act of 1986 established that European union was the ultimate aim of integration. Since the mid-1980s the EU has grown much more influential – its role strengthened by the collapse of communism – and has become synonymous with Europe itself, for example when the question of European identity is raised.

The EU has both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand, its origins are associated with the worthy aim of preventing future wars in Europe. Similarly, it is referred to in terms which express the loftiest motives associated with a rejection of a narrow nationalist outlook. The EU is often linked with growth and development and constitutes an economic bloc which can counter the might of the US and Japan. Equally, the EU is deemed to endow European nation-states (particularly the smaller ones) with a political voice in world affairs which they could never achieve on their own. The EU is also strongly associated with the idea of human rights, setting standards which it insists that others follow. On the other hand, the EU is also associated with a "democratic deficit," an idea which draws attention to the lack of accountability of its institutions to its citizens. Similarly, the EU is viewed as distant and remote by its citizens for whom the benefits of EU citizenship remain rather abstract. The EU is often seen as a defensive structure, a "fortress Europe" keeping out immigrants and refugees. To many people the EU remains first and foremost a giant market place, valuing trade and economic growth above all else. The EU is a "capitalists' charter," enabling the owners of enterprises to increase their wealth at the expense of the workers, thereby increasing the gap between rich and poor. To non-members the EU is a hegemon, controlling and regulating trade and aid throughout Europe, increasingly interfering in domestic political and economic affairs, and setting stringent standards for aspirant countries.

This book aims to substantiate the claim that political sociology – defined here as the study of relationships between state, society, and the individual – can make an extremely valuable contribution to thinking about the nature of, and problems besetting, the European Union. One way in which political sociology can do this is by confronting EU studies with a set of concerns and preoccupations not foregrounded in political science or international relations approaches. Existing studies of the EU tend to centre on integration and its implications for European governance, particularly the changing role of member states *vis-à-vis* the institutions of the EU. Within this broad field EU scholars investigate the likelihood of the EU developing a form of political integration to match that already achieved in the economic sphere, the decision-making powers of various EU institutions, the development of European-level democracy, policy developments and conflicts, and a host of technical and constitutional issues such as the balance of power within and between institutions, and the implementation of legislation.

The extent to which the EU is developing supranational powers at the expense of, or in addition to, those of its member states places integration as the central issue in EU studies. We can see the extent to which an integrative logic is dominant if we consider the following terms associated with EU policy: cohesion, community, competition, enlargement, harmonization, regional autonomy. All of them obtain their current meanings from, and in turn contribute to, the idea of an integrated European Union. Upon examination each reveals a series of issues which are resolved within the dominant discourse on the EU in terms which contribute to the idea that the EU is becoming more coordinated, unified, harmonious, integrated. Even the extent to which the EU is internally divided is frequently interpreted as evidence that the EU has the ability to overcome such problems in such a way as to bring about a greater degree of unification. Thus, harmonization, which acknowledges that a diversity of standards and practices exists, suggests that a system of EU norms is being instituted; the notion of cohesion, which signifies that within the EU there exist great variations in the levels of economic development, is held to represent the means of overcoming such divisions; the idea of regional autonomy, challenging member states "from below," provides the foundation for an integrated "Europe of the regions."

The point is not that a political sociology of the European Union should seek to deny that European integration is taking place or that

it is a process with important ramifications for a multiplicity of interested parties: sectors, interest groups, enterprises, citizens, regions, member states, candidate countries and non-members. Rather, the point is to begin from a different starting point and view the process of integration not as natural or inevitable but to view it as one process, albeit a very important one, occurring within the EU alongside other processes which may run counter to it or exist largely beyond the control of the EU. Murray (2000) points out that "the term integration is used in almost every article written about the EU, yet it is rarely defined." We might want to add that it is even rarer to find a challenge to the idea that integration is the dominant process. Integration needs to be problematized, in the course of which the dynamics of the EU may well start to look rather different and rather more complex. A key element of a political sociology of the European Union then, is that it questions the dominant nature of integration, as currently understood, and questions the extent to which the EU controls and shapes all of the processes taking place within its sphere of influence.

Sociological Studies of European Integration

Is the European Union a strange topic for sociological study? There is no reason why it should be, but at the same time we have already established that there are few existing studies in this field. There are of course many sociological contributions to a broad range of issues pertaining to the EU: unemployment, the welfare state, democracy, social exclusion, networks, citizenship. However, there is no recognizable sociological approach to studying the EU, and other disciplines have tended to ignore sociology when they are looking to borrow concepts and theories in order to explicate processes such as supranationalism, integration, and regionalism.

One noteworthy sociological study of European integration is that of Etzioni (1965), a comparative study of several attempts to create political unification: the United Arab Republic, the Federation of the West Indies, the Nordic Associational Web, and the EEC. His sociological approach to international relations concentrates on the forces leading towards integration, or unification as he terms it, and the role of leaders and elites in this process. The study has two main features which are of particular interest. First, he concludes that in its initial phases EU integration depended very heavily upon US support

mobilized through the Marshall plan on the back of a perception of the Soviet threat. Etzioni establishes that the unifying ambition of the EEC in the early days was not matched by the level of integrating power, and the success of the European Coal and Steel Community was only possible because of its limited practical ambitions: the multinational harmonization of only two industries, steel and coal, rather than whole economies (Etzioni 1965: 264–6).[3] Etzioni sees meaningful integration as something for the future, not something that has been achieved already. For him, unification is conceived in federalist terms and will only be realized when a political community has been instituted.

Second, Etzioni makes a strong case for the European project being bolstered by a series of myths. For example, that the EEC could overcome the political divisions inherited from the past, when it was "hardly more than an evolving customs union" (Etzioni 1965: 253). Also, the relative prosperity, high levels of growth and increasing trade in the period up until the mid-1960s (and which were to continue until the early '70s) gave rise to "a myth of success that was supportive of the Community's institutions and gratifying to its adherents" (Eztioni 1965: 272). Although the real benefits of the EEC do not easily yield to measurement, "prosperity became more closely associated with the formation of the EEC than economic analysis would demonstrate" (Etzioni 1965: 251).

Etzioni's work can be properly placed within a tradition of socio-logical work on international relations rather than a milestone on the road to establishing a sociological tradition of EU studies, which has remained underdeveloped. Sociology has not taken part in the grand theorizing on European integration that has dominated, some would say disfigured, the study of the EU over the past 40 years. Nevertheless, at the present time the distance between sociological interests and EU studies is much smaller than at any time since Etzioni examined the nascent integration of the EEC. This is not, however, because sociology has oriented itself towards a study of regional integration. It is the result of the fact that EU studies have increasingly coalesced around issues such as citizenship, democratization, social movements, social exclusion, globalization, media and communication, nationalism, and the environment, on which there is an extensive sociological literature. Another contributing factor is the rise of "constructivism," a new IR paradigm that draws upon social theory in an attempt to understand the historical contexts and power relations which inform the structures of world politics (Rosamond

2000: 171–4). Rather than sociology embracing EU studies, the study of the EU has come to sociology.

There is also another key trend. Sociology has become interested in transnational flows, global networks, and society beyond the (nation-) state. A sea-change has resulted from significant efforts within sociology to refocus its concerns, its theoretical underpinnings and the scope of its investigation. Rex (1999) makes the point that events in the world have impacted upon political sociology in such a way as to transform its core concerns. Political sociology no longer focuses on the structure of national societies and class distinctions, and in the contemporary setting "these foci seem inadequate or misleading as we seek to come to terms with a post-national globalised world, as some nation states and empires break up giving rise to sub-national ethnic conflict, and as some of the existing nation states seek to regroup themselves in supra-national but not world wide organisations" (Rex 1999: vii).

The work of the globalization theorists has been especially important in this regard, and we should single out Albrow (1996), Beck (1992), Robertson (1992) and Urry (1999) for their contribution to a redefinition of the range of issues, processes, and relations central to sociological investigation. Beck (2000: 25) points out that one feature of the globalization debate is a "dispute about which basic assumptions and images of society, which *units for analysis*, can *replace* the axiomatics of the national state." In other words, the study of globalization works to undermine the traditional (national) base of sociology, which in turn causes it to seek more appropriate fields of enquiry, one candidate for which is the European Union. In addition, the "cultural turn" in sociology has also contributed to the recasting of the traditional concerns of the discipline (Nash 2001). What this means is that political sociology now has an interest in a much wider range of social and political issues and possesses a much greater range of tools with which to study non-national, transnational and global phenomenon.

Issues for a Political Sociology of European Integration

It would be a mistake to assume that the EU is a "European polity," simply an enlarged version of the nation-state. Nevertheless, the idea of political sociology as a study of the structures which shape the relationship between an individual and the formal institutions of the

society he or she lives in, whether that society be local, national or transnational remains a valid one. In this section we will look at the shifting focus of sociology and how a political sociology adequately equipped to deal with contemporary issues can offer unique insights into the processes comprising and compromising European integration.

Many important issues in relation to the contemporary EU centre on the type of state that the EU represents, the nature of European society, and the role of the individual in European public spaces. In the case of the state, one version of the debate centres not only on whether the EU is a nation-state writ large or an internationalization of the national state, but also the extent to which the EU represents a form of multi-level governance, with sub-national regional government and the supranational EU increasingly carrying out what were previously the tasks of the nation-state. The development of the EU and the advent of pan-European structures of governance cause us to reconsider the whole idea of society, and invite us to consider the structure and organization of social and political life in a globalized world where transnational flows and linkages are becoming ever more important. The corollary of this is that it is increasingly difficult to talk of integrated national societies and we need to recognize the plurality of social groups existing within (and across) nation-states, as well as the formation of transnational communities. As for the individual, there are many considerations invited by the ongoing processes of European integration. Some of the most prominent of these are the changing nature of citizenship, involvement in or exclusion from democratic processes, and the politics of identity. In sum, a sociological inquiry of European integration recasts the relationship between the individual, society, and state to take into account new levels of state power, the existence of societies beyond states, and a reordering of the role and responsibilities of the individual.

A political sociology of contemporary Europe must investigate other, more fundamental, changes. The changing relationship between state and society outlined above assumes that to a significant extent each remains largely unaltered by the processes that have contributed to European integration. They are merely extended and aggregated to a new level, or fractured and divided into new components. Such an analysis also assumes that sociology can continue to employ traditional concepts and theories with which to understand these changes. We must recognize that state, society and the individ-

ual have been fundamentally transformed, and that it is the proper task of political sociology to identify and deploy the most appropriate tools with which to investigate such a transformation.

It is no longer possible to talk of the state – either the nation-state or its sub- or supranational variants – as the primary locus of political power and the exercise of government. A criticism often levelled at traditional political sociology is that its focus was the central state, its powers, and the party politics associated with state rule. Contemporary sociology must examine the state within the wider field of forms of government. In the case of the EU the state is better thought of as but one element in a decentered array of government and authority. To study the EU we must examine the type of government consistent with the ways in which the EU seeks to regulate a harmonized European economic space. In this context the work of the governmentality theorists, sometimes referred to as the Anglo-Foucauldians, is of great relevance. They hold that government is accomplished not simply through the apparatuses of state but via a multiplicity of actors and agencies (Dean 1999 and Rose 1999). When applied to the EU this insight enables us to see how EU policies encourage responsibility and self-regulation in a whole range of actors: regions, enterprises, citizens.

A sociological study of the EU offers an opportunity to examine the nature of European societies under conditions of globalization. A study of contemporary European societies must begin with the recognition that in the same way that the state has undergone many changes, society too has been transformed. If the EU is not a nation-state writ large then neither can European society be simply an enlarged and expanded version of that found within nation-states. We must accept the need for a new conceptual approach to the study of societies. One of the key elements of such an approach is to problematize the notion of civil society. Civil society is a frequently used concept in sociology, political science and other discourses and is taken to represent a sphere of democracy, autonomy and freedom, distinct from (and in some versions protected by) the state. The idea has also been taken up by some globalization theorists who argue for an emerging global civil society. This book argues against the usefulness of the idea of civil society, finding it too liberal and optimistic, and too heavily associated with the sociology and imagery of the nation-state. The idea of society developed in this book is one which emphasizes the existence of a multiplicity of social spheres and public spaces not patterned according to the logic of an overarching prin-

ciple. This frees us from the necessity to study the EU in terms of either an integrated supranational entity or the aggregate of its member states. This idea of a constellation of European public spaces also allows us to move away from a rigid cartographical notion of the EU. We can begin to think of the EU not as a totality or an integrated whole, but as a series of overlapping networks and diffuse power centres.

Thus far we have addressed some key features of, and new relationships between, society and the state occasioned by the European Union. The need to go beyond an approach that merely refocuses sociological inquiry to accommodate the existence of new levels of state power and the existence of societies beyond states has been emphasized. To this end a political sociology which acknowledges changing forms of political governance and the concomitant reordering of society is a prerequisite. However, there is still another dimension of political sociology that we have not yet discussed: the role of the individual. We can say that one of the most important aspects of a whole range of theorizing in the field of political sociology (especially work associated with postmodernism and post-Marxism) has been to challenge established notions of the individual (the subject). The notion of the subject associated with modernity, the purposive, self-conscious, reflexive, rational human agent has given way under the influence of postmodern thought (broadly construed) to a notion of the decentered, fragmented and partial subject whose identity is neither given a priori nor fixed, but open, contingent and malleable. This has implications for the individual both as a political actor and as a member of a collectivity. In the same way as societies are no longer thought to be unitary with respect to ethnic and national identity, our collectives selves are increasingly seen as fractured, fragmented and multiple. These shifts have several consequences. First, the object of politics is no longer what it was under conditions of modernity. Collective political action is no longer centered on the politics of state power: it is increasingly an ethical politics centered on the expression and furtherance of self-identity. Second, political and social transformation does not necessarily proceed according to previously accepted models. The politics of emancipation have given way to a politics of identity recognition in the passage from modernity to postmodernity and post-materialism. These changes have a particularly important bearing on the way we study social exclusion, citizenship, and the nature of European democracy.

Organization of the Book

This book aims to establish a framework within which a sociological study of European integration can be conducted. To this end the book advances three central propositions. The first is that European integration confronts political sociology with two major problems. These are that it poses questions which fall beyond sociology's traditional field of competence – state-centric political rule and nationally bounded cleavages – and that there exists a weak sociological tradition in the field upon which to build. In order to study European integration from a political sociology perspective we need to construct political sociology afresh and demonstrate its relevance and applicability.

The second proposition is that a political sociology informed by recent contributions to social theory can be made adequate to the task.[4] Political sociology may not feature large within the field of EU studies but this should not be taken to mean that it is not capable of making a significant contribution. Borrowing from social theory, or more accurately drawing upon the productive debates between sociology and social theory that have taken place over the past 20 years or so on issues such as modernity, postmodernity, globalization, subjectivity, and identity is a good way of enhancing the contribution that sociology can make.

The third proposition is that the resulting political sociological framework is potentially a very productive one with which we can begin to understand the EU. To this end a political sociology of the EU must engage with the existing literature on the EU, stemming mainly from political studies and international relations, and demonstrate that it has something new and relevant to say. More than this it has to establish that the dynamics of European integration, its problems and prospects, can be better apprehended and revealed through a sociological analysis.

The book is organized in the following way. Chapter 2 looks at the EU from the perspective of globalization. Globalization is central to this study not only because it is possibly the most important process acting upon and shaping the EU, but also because it is a crucial issue from the perspective of how to study the EU. A number of different sociological approaches to globalization are examined (Castells, Albrow, Robertson) and compared with the chief alternative represented by the work of Held. It is shown that sociological studies of

globalization can yield important insights into the dynamics of integration and it is argued that it is essential to place globalization centrally within a political sociology of the EU. The usefulness of the model of globalization advanced in the chapter, and which serves as a framework of interpretation throughout the rest of the book, is demonstrated in an exploration of the oft-quoted idea that "capital is global, workers local," which is shown to be weak, sociologically speaking. This is linked to a discussion of the recent revision of the German nationality law and the closely related issue of European and German immigration policy and the need to recruit skilled workers from abroad. This section links arguments about globalization and the Europeanization of immigration policy to the discussions about unemployment and labor developed in chapter 5.

The idea that the EU represents a "super-state" is a common one, at least in popular and journalistic discourse. It rarely features in academic studies, although attempts to classify the EU as some kind of a state are a noticeable feature of the literature. However, the EU is not a monolithic entity and comprises several institutions: the European Commission, the Council and the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. Chapter 3 deals with the thorny problem of what kind of state the EU represents (although it should be stated at the outset that it does not concern itself with the detailed workings of the above mentioned institutions). Various non-sociological approaches to the question of the European state are considered (Stone-Sweet and Sandholtz, Majone, Anderson, Dehousse), all of whom are orientated toward the debate on the extent to which the EU is an intergovernmental or supranational organization, and these are then compared to sociological approaches which deal with the EU as an "internationalization of the state." It is argued that sociological approaches to globalization (especially Albrow) offer a particularly useful way of looking at the EU, not as a state but in terms of forms of rule. Additionally, the governmentality theorists (Dean, Rose) demonstrate that the EU is best conceived of not as a state, or a multi-level polity, but as a multiplicity of agencies involved in the business of governing. The advantages of the preferred sociological approach are demonstrated in an analysis of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), until recently dominated by statist forms of intervention and supranational protectionism but increasingly aligned with new forms of European governance.

Many sociologists profess to study society – information society, civil society or network society, for example – or features, character-

istics or elements imputed to society. This book actually does study society: its very form and existence in contemporary Europe in its specificity and diversity. The question of whether a European society exists is a pertinent one for political sociology, particularly as it is commonly asserted that European integration has proceeded in the economic and, to a certain extent, political direction, but that there is no evidence of a European society in the making. Moreover, the very status of the sociological meaning of society is in some disarray as a result of the impact of globalization on sociological thought. As Nash (2000: 47) points out, globalization has problematized "the founding sociological image of society as a bounded and coherent set of structures and practices governed by the sovereign nation-state." Chapter 4 reviews recent sociological literature on the possibility of a European society (Delanty, Mann). It also advances a critique of the notion of civil society, for so many the cornerstone of political sociology, and looks at the ways in which the idea of civil society has been used to characterize democratic developments in national, supranational, and global contexts. The contributions of globalization and governmentality theory are utilized in order to advance the idea that European society should not be seen as a unified and coherent whole but as a series of non-integrated, fragmented, and autonomous public spheres. The chapter also explores how the issue of society is a growing preoccupation of the EU, particularly in relation to the problem of the "democratic deficit." The shifting constructions of society within EU discourse are examined to reveal a perceived need to develop new forms of governance.

Chapter 5 examines the interrelated issues of unemployment, social exclusion, and citizenship. The phenomenon of "jobless growth," often associated with the EU, is investigated to highlight the importance of a political sociology informed by globalization theory. The work of Esping-Anderson on welfare regimes is considered and its contribution to understanding the dynamics of unemployment in Europe assessed. The issues of social exclusion and citizenship are then considered within a framework which builds upon the work on globalization and the nature of society undertaken in earlier chapters. The connections between work, citizenship and participation in society assumed by "traditional" sociology, are shown to be in need of substantial revision in the light of developments in contemporary Europe.

The image of a "Europe of the regions" has become an important metaphor of integration. The idea that the EU has worked to

empower and bring autonomy to sub-national regions which are increasingly "being disembedded from their national states" (Smith 1999: 247) is a pervasive one. Regional autonomy and cohesion (EU attempts to reduce regional disparities) are considered in chapter 6. Both are subjected to a critique from a globalization and governmentality perspective and the idea that Europe's regions contribute to integration is called into question. It is suggested that the sociological notions of "subpolitics" (associated with the work of Beck) and autonomization (driving from the work of the governmentality theorists and designating that neo-liberal economic policies tend to fragment and divide in their pursuit of growth) are particularly useful in understanding the way in which regions are animated in contemporary Europe. It is argued that an investigation of the role of regions in the EU and the workings of the EU's cohesion policy reveal a dynamic of growth and development which is concealed by more orthodox accounts.

Europe's core/periphery relations come under consideration in chapter 7, in the context of the model of growth that the EU assumes derives from this relationship. Stated simply, the orthodox view is that the peripheries are dependent upon the core for growth, and EU policies are devised accordingly. The globalization-inspired critique of the EU's regions developed in the previous chapter is employed to demonstrate that core/periphery hierarchies have become destabilized and that territorialist assumptions about integration need to be revised. It is argued that the idea of peripherality deployed by the dominant discourse on the EU serves to legitimize EU policies on regional development, competitiveness, and growth. An approach to peripheries based on a theory of networks rather than territory is proposed. To this end a number of sociological and political science theories of networks and flows (Appadurai, Axford and Huggins, Barry, Castells, Urry) are introduced in order to develop a different model of the dynamics of EU growth. The idea of a "Europe of the network" is rejected in favour of an understanding of networks which emphasizes their openness and fluidity and the ways in which global flows impact on EU structures.

The idea of a "democratic deficit" in the EU is considered by many commentators to constitute a major barrier to greater integration and is frequently linked to the lack of a true European identity. Chapter 8 deals with the question of democracy, and more particularly Europe's democratic identity. The issue of what European identity comprises or should comprise is a fraught one, and it is often conceived in

terms of exclusivity borrowed from the language of nationalism. Key approaches to this issue in the literature are reviewed, particularly the work of Laffan, Giorgi, Siedentop, and Moravcsik. Two alternative approaches to the issue of democracy and democratic identity in the EU are considered. Cosmopolitan democracy (Held and Archibugi) argues for new international institutions of democracy to sit alongside existing nation-states with a view to ensuring that the democratic nation-state is the global norm. These theorists argue that the EU is an example of cosmopolitan democracy and by further extending postnational democratic practices the EU's "democratic deficit" can be eradicated. Another model, agonistic democracy (Mouffe), emphasizes the need for Others in the democratic process (struggle between contending forces is central to democracy), and demonstrates the impossibility of maintaining a strict "us and them" approach to outsiders. Both approaches enable us to think about democracy beyond the nation-state.

Will the EU double its membership over the new few years? EU enlargement is the theme of chapter 9, in which one key element of the enlargement process, the Copenhagen criteria in respect of democracy and human rights, is considered in relation to one country, Turkey. The EU believes that its human rights values are universal values and that it has a moral duty to impose these on candidate and non-member countries. There are several important sociological approaches to the question of universalism, most (but not all) deriving from a globalization perspective. The work of Beck, Laclau and Robertson on universalism is applied to an understanding of human rights and democracy in Turkey in particular, and the enlargement process in general, and the contested and contingent nature of human rights norms are asserted. The chapter investigates the reasons why the norms and principles of the EU, as codified in the Copenhagen criteria, and the way in which the EU projects these values and expectations as universal, remain largely unchallenged within the accession processes. Chapter 10 concludes the book and aims to draw together some of the main themes developed in the preceding chapters. In particular, it addresses the key issues of how best to study European integration, and the contribution that political sociology can make to the future of a subject for so long dominated by political science and international relations.