

## REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

### Neil Fligstein *Euroclash: The EU, European Identity and the Future of Europe*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008

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#### Colin Hay

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Department of Politics, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Correspondence: c.hay@sheffield.ac.uk

Neil Fligstein's *Euroclash: The EU, European Identity and the Future of Europe* (2008) is a characteristically wide ranging, original and theoretically sophisticated addition to the literature on European integration, yet one that is also exhaustively empirical. It is, as the author explains in the introduction, the culmination of a 15-year-long reflection on the determinants and dynamics of European integration. Yet, despite drawing together, inter-weaving and, at least to some extent, synthesizing a number of previously disparate insights with which he is already well associated, it reads less like the rehearsal of a well-established position than it does the articulation of a fresh and analytically distinctive perspective on the interdependent processes of European political, economic and socio-cultural integration. Indeed, what is perhaps most exciting about Fligstein's latest book is the sense that it opens up genuinely new terrain, making a powerful, provocative and timely case for a new more holistic and deeply socialized understanding of the process of European integration and developing a new research agenda—and perhaps even hinting at new methodologies—to take

this forward. That new research agenda is, at times, somewhat implicit in his argument but, for this reader at least, it is clearly there, and this has implications for how we might read, assess and evaluate Fligstein's contribution. As we shall see presently, it is not difficult to take issue with at least some aspects of the specific analysis he offers. But, it would be churlish to make too much of these potential analytical pitfalls if, as I would suggest is the case, his book is more appropriately viewed as a setting of the parameters of a new research programme rather than as a final or definitive statement on the subject. Indeed, in one sense, and somewhat ironically perhaps, it is the very novelty and originality of the contribution he makes theoretically that exposes its limitations empirically. For, relying as he does on existing public sources of empirical data (primarily, in the second and more profoundly original half of the book, on Eurobarometer data), he simply does not have access to the kind of primary evidential basis necessary to explore adequately and to defend thoroughly many of the enticing and deeply suggestive claims that he is nonetheless drawn to make. Judged as a contribution to a developing research agenda, this is no problem—indeed, the at times quite stark disparity between the available attitudinal data Fligstein is forced to work with and the kind of data necessary for a more detailed account of the process of European identity formation might be seen to make a very effective case for the need for a new research agenda. But, judged more narrowly in terms of the ability to substantiate the empirical claims made, the analysis is perhaps somewhat less convincing as a consequence.

The overarching theme of the book is the transition from conflict to cooperation that has characterized the process of integration. Poignantly, the book is dedicated to the memory of Fligstein's father, who was born in the USA following his own father's exodus from religious persecution in the conflict-ravaged Europe of the times. The point is that, thankfully and in less than three generations, Europe has become unrecognizable from its former self. That this is so owes a great deal to the process of European integration and to the institutional innovation and architectural evolution that has made this possible. This much is widely accepted. But what is so frequently overlooked in conventional accounts, Fligstein contends, is the role played by the social, cultural and political subjectivities and identities of Europeans. For it is these absent actors who not only populate the institutions on which conventional accounts lavish so much attention but also—and perhaps more significantly—who have increasingly come to develop their own 'fields' of social, political and cultural interaction, by exploiting the opportunities such institutions have facilitated. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, it is this almost parallel, but largely ignored, process of European integration, Fligstein suggests, on which the future of Europe as a political project will rest. Thus, for Fligstein, whether the solution to the challenges Europe currently faces is a deepening and further

development of the process of integration or a dilution and even a dismembering of the European Union (EU) is likely to be contingent upon the extent to which Europeans are capable of conceiving of collective European solutions to the problems they acknowledge. That, in turn, is likely to be strongly associated with the extent to which they identify with Europe and regard themselves to be European.

This is a bold and provocative thesis, and it serves both to recast conventional understandings of the determinants of European integration to date and, yet more suggestively, to point to the degree to which Europe's future is contingent upon the process of European identity formation and identification. In effect, Fligstein's argument is that the character of what he terms 'European society' will determine the future of the European polity. It is this aspect of his argument that is perhaps the most original, offering as it does—and as he goes to some lengths to explain—a path both between and beyond the liberal inter-governmental versus neo-functional debate. But it is also likely to prove the most controversial aspect of his thesis—both for its suggestion that we need to re-socialize our understanding of the process of European integration by turning our attention to the long-ignored societal dimension to which he points and for what he has to say, more substantively, about the latter. For what it is worth, I buy the argument that we need a more holistic account and understanding of the process of European integration. And I would also accept that a key ingredient of that understanding, sadly neglected in most of the existing literature, is a detailed consideration of citizens' experiences and understandings of Europe itself, of their identification with Europe, and of their engagement and interaction with other Europeans both culturally and politically. But I am somewhat less convinced by the at times rather sketchy empirical picture Fligstein paints of the nascent 'European society' he describes. I will use the albeit limited space that I have remaining to explain my concerns and to suggest how the broader research agenda that Fligstein might be seen to propose suggests a potential way forward.

Fligstein's core claims here are essentially four-fold. First, as he puts it, 'the growing cooperation amongst the people of Europe is now underpinned by a large number of Europe-wide fields of action' (p. 1). Second, these trans-border horizontal linkages 'form the basis for what can be described as a European society' (p. 2). Third, the growing density of such networks of trans-national social interaction, at least for some, contributes to a sense of European identity. As Fligstein explains, 'a European identity is first and foremost going to arise among people who associate with each other across national boundaries... "Europeans" (sic) are going to be people who have the opportunity and inclination to travel to other countries and frequently interact with people in other societies' (p. 16). Finally, this provides the basis for a categorization of European

civil society into three distinct groupings—(i) a highly skilled, highly educated, middle- and upper-class elite (of ‘Europeans’), strongly predisposed to a European identity by virtue of their access to and immersion in European society; (ii) a comparatively uneducated, elderly, lower middle and working class population with little opportunity to travel and to engage in social interaction with other Europeans and which remains, as a consequence, staunchly ‘wedded to the national worldview’ (p. 207); and (iii) a small majority, in most countries, of those who fall into neither category, who travel infrequently, who are intermittent participants in European society and who, as a consequence, have the capacity to identify with Europe, yet who remain for the most part nationally oriented in their social and political identification.

There are, I think, at least four basic problems with such a view of European society. It is unnecessarily crude and presents a somewhat idealized view of European association; it is overly materialistic in its largely implicit understanding of the determinants of European identification; it is derived almost entirely from a consideration of the Western European experience of ‘Europe’—and arguably cannot readily be extended to the experience of the accession states. And it is, oddly perhaps, insufficiently nationally differentiated and, as a consequence, somewhat methodologically regionalist. In a way, writing from the UK context—a context which has, of course, consistently shown itself to be the most staunchly sceptical in its pattern of attitudes towards Europe—exposes these limitations particularly clearly. In what follows, I take each point in turn, illustrating it with respect to the UK case.

The first point is perhaps the most striking when reflecting on the UK experience. There are, of course, very few ‘Europeans’, at least in Fligstein’s perhaps unfortunate terms, in the UK. But there are many whose political identities, whether nationally or more trans-nationally oriented, are framed at least in part in and through some (however mediated) experience of Europe. But these experiences are rather different from those Fligstein considers. When it comes to the constitution of UK political subjectivities and identities, the perception of many, for instance, low-paid service sector workers that they are in direct competition for jobs with in-migrant workers from EU accession states is surely a more salient factor than the extent to which they have travelled within Europe or had access to European-wide social or cultural association. Fligstein, it seems to me, is just too eager to depict all European social interaction as positive and as leading to positive identification with Europe. It is perhaps not surprising that this grates particularly acutely with the UK experience.

This takes us directly to the second point. One does not have to cross borders to experience Europe, nor even European society, and one’s attitudes and orientations towards Europe are not, I would suggest, nearly as narrowly material as Fligstein seems to presume. This can work both positively and negatively.

To extend the earlier example, the perceived threat to one's job, wages or working conditions from an intensification of competition for labour that one associates with a (real or imagined) influx of workers from new member states is no less significant a factor in shaping one's orientation towards and/or identification with Europe if there is no factual basis for the perceived threat. Similarly, though more positively, it strikes me that most of those in the UK who regard themselves actively and enthusiastically as 'Europeans' do so not because of the density of European social networks and interactions in which they are immersed, but out of a profoundly normative commitment to some European political ideal. If this is right—and it would require the kind of attitudinal data that we still so sadly lack to substantiate the point—it would be entirely wrong to see European identification as an index, in effect, of material exposure to European society through travel.

Third, largely because Fligstein sees European identification as built up through real-time and shared-space social interaction with other Europeans, his conception of European identification almost inevitably privileges the Western European experience. This is not in itself a problem, but it becomes a problem at precisely the point at which Fligstein projects things forward into the future. For even if one were to accept, as he compellingly argues, that Europe's political future hangs on the relative preponderance of those who project for themselves some positive sense of a European identity, it would be profoundly wrong, in a newly enlarged Europe, to extrapolate from trends present amongst long standing EU member states—most of whose citizens have had decades to acquire a sense of European identification. The key question—and one Fligstein scarcely considers at all—is the process in and through which citizens of new member states might acquire, or indeed might already have acquired, a sense of European identity.<sup>1</sup> The maths would suggest that they are the real 'swing group' in determining the future of EU–Europe.

Finally, all of this is to present a strangely undifferentiated view of European identification and identity formation. It is certainly true that too much of the literature on European politics and society is characterized by a methodological nationalism, but Fligstein's problem is one of methodological regionalism. He simply assumes that there is a common mechanism, shared between member states, in and through which European citizens come either to identify with or, indeed, to reject a European identity. In the absence of compelling evidence that this indeed is the case, I, for one, remain sceptical. But the key point is that this has simply not been demonstrated.

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<sup>1</sup>And it might here be noted that, to the extent to which they have already acquired such an identity, they have done so through their participation in rather different social and cultural fields to those Fligstein describes.

And that perhaps brings us to a final observation. We simply do not *yet* know enough about European society, European identification and European identity to infer very much either about the nature of the process of European identity formation in the newly enlarged EU, or its implications for the future of the European polity, society and economy. I am convinced from reading Fligstein's book that we need to know rather more, and I look forward to seeing this impressive, original and phenomenally important research programme develop to answer these key questions.

### George Ross<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, USA and <sup>2</sup>University of Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Correspondence: gross@brandeis.edu

The central point of Neil Fligstein's *Euroclash* argument is that the interpretation and analysis of European integration has too long been dominated by political scientists. Although throughout the book he considers political science arguments with generosity and thoroughness, he believes that their approaches have led to serious distortions in our understanding. In particular, sociology has either been crowded out or silenced, despite the fact that it has a great deal to contribute. *Euroclash* is thus simultaneously a critique of dominant political science approaches to European integration and an effort to provide a different, more adequate, sociological alternative.

Fligstein focuses most on the two opposing political science theoretical approaches that sooner or later pre-occupy most conferences and journals on European integration: functionalism and what is now called 'liberal inter-governmentalism'. The big problem with functionalist analyses, which emanate from comparative politics, is that they see the EU as a 'state in becoming'. This, to Fligstein, is either teleological vision or hope, but, more important, its metrics are derived from ideal-typical models of the modern nation state, a tendentious way of seeing things which assumes a final goal for European integration that there is no reason to assume. Moreover, it has created a misplaced focus on the EU's state-like actions, leading analysts to overlook much that is important in the Europeanization process. 'Liberal inter-governmentalism', which emerged from international relations, considers the EU an international organization, at its core inter-governmental with a few added bells and whistles to facilitate inter-governmental cooperation. To Fligstein, this is also based on *a priori* assumptions

that lead to explanations which miss major dimensions of what is really going on. Inter-governmentalist insistence on focusing on major choice points like treaty changes, he argues, overlooks significant on-going dimensions of European integration. Treaty engagements, European institutions, the Commission and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) have important degrees of autonomy in EU processes. More to the point, the EU is in itself a real and complicated political system, incorporating engaged actors beyond governments, which produces results that cannot be explained only by resorting to inter-governmental actions.

Whether readers are open to such arguments will probably depend on where they stand professionally. Whatever their scientific merits, academic disciplines like today's political science are powerful guilds with zealous gatekeepers. Fligstein argues that what is missing in such quasi-hegemonic analytical discourses, and in much else in how political scientists view European integration, is sensitivity to the actual dynamics of European societies and the roles that they play. In brief, understanding European integration demands more sociology. Critical consideration of *Euroclash* must thus shift from evaluating the author's critique to considering the alternatives that he proposes.

Fligstein's Euro-sociology begins with the concept of social 'fields of action'. States and governments do not make things happen on their own. Rather, they are immersed in social fields, systems of communication, rules and goals, where non-state actors and organizations also try to achieve their purposes. European integration, he claims, has succeeded to the degree that it has because new European social fields have been constituted above and beyond national social fields. The processes are relatively simple: formerly national groups have built new 'horizontal' transnational fields around European institutions and European policies. Put differently, for some individuals and groups European integration has led to mobilization and social action at the European level, which have been essential to the European integration adventure.

Fligstein's vision of European-level fields and field-building is not that far from some earlier versions of political science functionalism, as he occasionally recognizes. For both, the first step forward was the constitution of European policy competencies and the specific institutions to pursue them. As these political innovations demonstrated seriousness, they created incentives and benefits prodding previously national interest groups and organizations to shift activity toward Europe, engaging in interaction with counterparts and colleagues from other parts of Europe. These new European fields, mainly economic and market oriented, led actors within them to become players in Euro-level political struggles, pushing back against European institutions and member states often to promote greater and different Europeanization. Fligstein's basic hypothesis is that these mobilized European social actors, quite as much as EU institutions and member states, ought to be viewed as important promoters of the EU's

historical mission creeping. Quite as important, participation in these Euro-level fields has also developed European identities above and beyond national identities (although also co-existing with them).

Fligstein provides data purporting to show how all of this has happened. He begins, in Chapter 4, with three historical case studies of the formation of European-level markets and the ways in which they stimulated the emergence of social fields focused on them in defense industries, the telecom industry and professional football. The stories in each case are different. In defense, under EU stimulation, national industries consolidated into larger European consortiums to form what Fligstein sees as a nascent European military–industrial complex. Telecom firms Europeanized directly after EU-generated market liberalization and privatization, creating a Europe-wide industry based on highly modified national champions engaged in tough dealings with one another. Football Europeanized followed an ECJ ruling on free agency which completely transformed the game from a local to a continental and even global sport. In each case, the process involves national actors mobilizing in response to particular EU-level carrots and sticks and shifting to European levels to become EU-level actors sharply focused on the particular policy areas and most pertinent EU administrative units.

Chapters entitled ‘Who Are the Europeans?’ and ‘What is European Society?’ follow, first reviewing the literature on political identity formation and then considering a range of data, including that from Eurobarometer polling. Here, although the data are sometimes thin and open to different interpretation, he finds general confirmation of the patterns revealed by the case studies. We also learn something which alert Euro-analysts already knew very well: that there is strong sociological differentiation between the kinds of people who become ‘Europeans’ through participation in European fields and those who do not. The former, relatively small in number, are better off and better educated. The latter, whose fields of social action and identities remain national, are a large majority who, in comparison, are poorer and less well educated. If, in the abstract, this makes Europe look as if it has been built around something like class conflict, it also means, as Fligstein notes, that the EU has persistent difficulty forming cross-class alliances of the kind that some theorists of nation-building hypothesize are essential.

The data, slim at best, do help us to understand why the book is entitled *Euroclash*. While there may be vigorous and serious European social fields that play a key role in the unfolding of European integration, Fligstein knows that they often ‘clash’ with multiple, persistent and very strong national social fields which often nourish resistance to European integration. In national situations, governments and public authorities are themselves enmeshed in swirling social fields, which makes their political and policy initiatives subject to powerful feedback to which they must respond, given democracies and elections. Governments

are thus caught between the ongoing momentum of European integration to which they are legally and procedurally committed, given treaty obligations and European institutions, and national-level social actors who often do not support what they do, largely because less well-off and well-educated parts of national populations will have little sympathy for European integration unless it provides large and tangible immediate benefits. Recent European integration, with its constant enlargement and incessant mission creep, may have prevented worse outcomes for Europe in general, but it has not provided these benefits, hence the EU's present troubles. The results are frequent 'Euroclashes', in which national governments, however disposed they might otherwise be, are obliged to reflect national negativity about the EU generated in domestic politics and domestic social fields. National elected leaders must often talk Eurosceptically in public, therefore, whatever they may actually think, say, and do in the EU Council of Ministers. In a strong dig at the inter-governmentalists, Fligstein adds that it is national electorates and opinion polls, not national governments and states, who determine the limits of European integration. Whatever national elites may desire, most national citizens are not enmeshed in EU-level fields and remain resolutely national in their responses to events.

We can hope that Fligstein's call to do more sociology in studying European integration is well and duly heard. But whether this sociology should be of the kind that Fligstein himself undertakes is another question altogether. His concept of 'social field' is overgeneral and vague; for example, useful more for illustrating the need for sociological thinking than as theory. Redolent of Bourdieu, it lacks most of the dynamic elements that make Bourdieu's work interesting and controversial, however. Bourdieu sees social fields as areas of struggle where symbolic violence based on unequal endowments of social capital creates chronic conflict. Fligstein's fields are more like gathering spaces where groups and organizations with things in common congregate to get on with business. On the EU level, this translates easily into organizational, intellectual and expert elites who push forward, and/or push back against, European institutions working in clear policy fields. The institutions are thereby constrained, and the elites are likely to become more 'European' in the process. On the national level, it translates into organized or semi-organized groups, often representing lower levels on the social ladder, who act in similar ways but on issues that national governments can deal with, whether European or national. The results limit government responses to Europe. Put more simply, European and national political lives are limited and sometimes shifted by different 'peoples' in different 'fields'. This is a story that even we political scientists already knew, which Fligstein often supports using data of the 'we already knew that' kind.

Beyond such immediate thoughts one wonders why Fligstein has chosen the particular sociological approaches that he has, as opposed to the many that are

on offer. Sociology is a rich and highly pluralist discipline these days, and Fligstein's ways of doing things are far from the only ones available—indeed today's sociology, unlike the golden past when it was preoccupied with grand theory, probably suffers reduced visibility in areas like EU studies because it is home to so many different ways of doing things. Explaining why one decides to shop in one rather than another store in the sociological mall therefore calls for explanation. Moreover, there may be a great deal more political sociology of Europe being done in contemporary political analysis than Fligstein is willing to grant. Whatever their limitations, and there are many, the various institutionalisms that motivate many political scientist students of European integration are very often quite sociological in their approaches. For these, and other, reasons, providing some justification for one's point of departure would be useful.

There are other quibbles that one could make. The fact that relatively elite groups whose interests are presently better played out at European levels seem to have developed European identities does not tell us much about whether such identities are strong or evanescent. That certain kinds of people tell Eurobarometer pollsters that they see themselves as primarily European is not a very good indicator that a robust European identity has been created. It is not difficult to imagine, for example, that the big business interests who so strongly supported the programme to complete the single market in the 1980s and who thereby looked more European than thou at that moment might shift their economic, political and identity investments elsewhere, or at least become less dedicatedly European, with the coming of greater globalization. European integration created a space protected by a common external tariff where such interests might tarry, play and Europeanize, for a time. Such affectations could dissipate quickly in the light of more recent reductions in tariffs through global trade negotiations, however. One could easily conceive of analogous disaffections among intellectuals and experts. Who then would be left except bureaucrats and intellectuals captured by the seductive power of European research funding to animate Fligstein's Euro-level social fields? Simultaneously, the reactions of lower social orders to globalization have clearly enhanced their resistance to European integration. To his credit, Fligstein has tried to develop a picture that does not claim that European integration is likely always and ever to move forward, as functionalists imply, or that it has reached a placid constitutional equilibrium, as some liberal inter-governmentalists claim. EU Europe's fate depends in part, he hypothesizes, on relationships between European and national social fields, and outcomes are thereby uncertain. Still, the likely volatility and possible reversibility of European actors and identities deserves to be acknowledged.

This is a good book. In addition to its inherent qualities, it does yeoman work to underline how unfolding academic disciplines can fragment and truncate the worlds they claim to analyse scientifically. For this, we owe Fligstein a lot.

How much value added new sociological approaches can and will bring remains to be seen, however. Much will depend on whether other sociologists will now take up the cudgel and engage the debate that Fligstein has begun. We hope that they will.

## Wolfgang Streeck

*Max Planck Society, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, Germany*

*Correspondence: streeck@mpifg.de*

A clash, according to the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, is ‘a collision, a conflict, especially of hostile opinions, a disagreement, being at variance or incompatible’. We have heard, arguably too much, of Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilizations’ (Huntington, 1996). But what is a ‘Euroclash’?

Interestingly, the concept, so prominent on the book’s cover, appears only once in the text (pp. 217–218). When it comes up, preceding chapters have prepared the reader for Fligstein’s claim that the progress of European integration will depend on Europeans exchanging their national identity for a European one. This is to say, departing from neofunctionalism and returning to the Karl Deutsch tradition of integration theory (pp. 16f., 130f.), Fligstein considers European integration to be a process that is social rather than political–economic in nature: for interest to drive it, it must be converted into identity. The way such conversion occurs is through rewarding personal interactions between citizens from different European countries, in particular in trade, tourism and education. As people experience the benefits of free trade of all sorts, they will become more European in outlook and support more ‘European rules’, which Fligstein identifies with more free markets (p. 217, Figure 7.2). Such progress, however, may be stalled if ‘European-level coordination’ produces too many ‘economic losers’ who tend to insist on protection by their national governments, opposing further Europeanization which, after all, is about expansion of rather than protection from markets. If the two groups, winners and losers, collide, there will be ‘Euroclash’ (p. 218, Figure 7.3). For European integration to advance, then, the losers it produces must remain a minority, small enough to be bought out by national social policies or relegated to the fringes of national political systems, until they die out in the course of generational and industrial change.

Like many progressive Americans, Fligstein has great sympathies for the European integration project, which he associates with the end of the civilizational catastrophes of the first half of the twentieth century and, indeed, with nothing less than the Kantian tradition of Enlightenment (p. 178, *passim*). Understandable as it may be, however, such sentiment translates into a remarkable normative bias in Fligstein's sociological and political analysis. To Fligstein, European society is divided into three groups: the owners of transnational economic and cultural capital, with their European and indeed cosmopolitan identity, or as he calls them: 'the educated elites pushing forward their enlightenment project' (p. 179); the fence-sitting middle class; and the losers prone to a resentful nationalism that may wreck it all (p. 250, *passim*)—as it were: the good, the undecided and the ugly. There is also an astonishingly unqualified confidence in the social and political virtues of a free-market economy—in what Hirschman (1992) has described in his inventory of 'rival views of capitalism' as its *doux commerce* aspect. This is reflected in particular in Fligstein's treatment of the welfare state which, although arguably another central achievement of enlightened European politics, Fligstein invariably associates with economically and politically outdated nationalist parochialism. For example, he repeatedly speaks of 'privileges' (p. 248, *passim*) when what he means is what used to be called rights of social citizenship (Marshall, 1965 [1949])—'privileges' for those unable or unwilling to make it in the international economy. Fortunately, they are bound to become dispensable once the brave new world of a supranational European market society has fully materialized.

In an intriguing way, Fligstein's image of the European political construction resembles that of its left-wing critics, except that Fligstein finds nothing to complain about in what he sees. For example, he plainly states that united Europe as it has developed is 'clearly a social class project' (p. 251) with a strong 'class bias' (p. 187, *passim*), and he dispassionately observes that the European Union is about trade and business and nothing else (p. 247, *passim*), which is why Brussels rightly listens to business interests only:

The main reason that business organizations dominate lobbying in Brussels is because these topics (trade, common currency, single market) are inherently of interest to businesses. The issue of European social rights, the rights of labor to organize, welfare states, pensions, and healthcare have all stayed under the purview of governments, with the result that most citizens and national level interest groups who are not interested in issues around trade have simply not gone to Brussels to participate (p. 228).

Moreover, that social rights continue to be nationally based is, according to Fligstein, the result of a free choice of governments and voters (pp. 239, 245,

247). Losers in the integrated market, to the extent that there still are any, simply prefer being assisted by their national welfare states, for whatever reasons. Of course, if economic integration produces the benefits it can be expected to produce, their numbers will be small. As European identity replaces national identities, and United Europe supersedes national states, market society will rise and social protection will decline *because it will no longer be needed*: economic and cultural progress plus demographic turnover will happily wipe out the lower classes with their nationalist hangups. Liberal utopia becomes real, in the shape of the United States of Europe. In the meantime, as I understand Fligstein, there is no reason why the European market and national social protection should not peacefully coexist: being mutually independent policy fields (p. 19) they can be configured any way governments and voters want. The only problem, perhaps, seems to be that as long as there are people who depend on national welfare provisions, they may remain overly attached to their national identities and resist becoming more European.

For others, including this reviewer, there are far more difficulties here, and indeed quite profound ones. Recently, Fritz Scharpf (2009) has described united Europe as a combination of two types of polity, ‘republican’ and ‘liberal’, with a bottom layer of national ‘republics’ enveloped in a top layer of a consolidated liberal market order. While national republics embody different historical class compromises enshrined in specific catalogues of rights and obligations of citizenship, integrated Europe essentially consists of the famous ‘four freedoms’ of international markets, for goods, services, labour and capital, *and not much else*. In particular, the social obligations required for social rights to become real, e.g. obligations for employers to pay taxes to the state and union wages to workers, admit workforce representatives to company boards, or refrain from firing workers for going on strike, are vested exclusively in the lower, national level. By contrast, the upper level constitutes a veritable *Reich der Freiheit*—a unique ‘empire of freedom’ giving its subjects rights, as it were, *for free*, although of course not in relation to itself since it has no means to redeem them, but in relation to the national, political and social systems underlying it. At the same time, the capacity of the latter to grant rights by creating obligations is increasingly emaciated under liberal supranationalism—by competitive pressures among the states embedded in the free market and bound by its rules as well as by a legal construction, if not constitution, under which the ECJ may subject national social rights and obligations to the test of whether they respect the primacy of the four supranational freedoms of trade (Scharpf, 2009).

Far from being independent of each other, the two layers of the compound European polity thus interact intensely, giving rise to an inexorable drift toward liberalization. In light of this, there should be no need to invoke

nationalist xenophobia to account for the ‘Euroskepticism’<sup>2</sup> of those wishing to uphold a version of social solidarity that is based on complementary rights and obligations of citizenship (Höpner and Schäfer, 2007). Nor does one necessarily have to explain the Europhilia of the owners of economic, social and cultural capital by a moral commitment to Kantian universalism. The European construction, such as it is, offers the mobile attractive opportunities to escape from obligation—imposing national political regimes, or to put pressure on them to liberalize, by threatening to move out and up into a European lightweight version of a social order. Indeed, the way united Europe has evolved, it consists of two separate but related political circuits, one with rights only and another with rights and obligations, connected by a staircase through which those who prosper in free markets can remove themselves from the reach of the immobile losers—a supranational circuit for market individualism and a set of national circuits for the collectivism of politics, *with the former constraining the latter*, e.g. by curtailing its capacity to tax the lucky few and collect from them a tribute in exchange for the rest of society dutifully accepting the role of loser. In this world, supranational Europe stands for a concept of politics that knows only rights, and obligations only if entered into voluntarily, while the social constraints that are also needed for a functioning society and economy—the price societies must charge members for the license to pursue rational—egoistic interests—remain confined to national systems, rendering such constraints increasingly ineffectual, not least by making them look old and outdated and easy to discredit by associating them with reactionary nationalism.

This construction, incidentally, was far from intended by European labour, unlike what Fligstein claims. To this reader, it is a mystery how Fligstein, well informed as he otherwise is, should have come to believe that it was the Left, unions and Social Democrats who insisted that social protection remain a national domain. In fact, until the early 1990s, when the EU under the second Delors presidency was finally converted to supply-side economics, one labour-led attempt followed another to establish ‘Social Europe’ or, more modestly, a ‘Social Dimension’ of Europe. It is true that there were concerns, and perhaps ultimately insurmountable ones, among national unions and social-democratic parties about different historical versions of social protection being submerged in a common European welfare state. But this was nothing in comparison with the violent resistance against a European social policy that was put up by business, especially American business, when it came to fighting projects such as the

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<sup>2</sup>‘Skepticism’ has become a dirty word in Eurospeak, although ‘doubt as to the truth of some assertion or fact’ (The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary) is of course licensed and indeed encouraged especially in the tradition of Enlightenment. On the other hand, we note that in older English usage a ‘skeptic’ was ‘an unbeliever in Christianity’ (ibid.), who obviously had to be dealt with harshly.

so-called Vredeling directive on worker participation. By the mid-1980s, the opposition of business to what it perceived as a social-democratic bias in European integration had become so strong that business was about to defect from the integration project altogether and had to be 'brought back in' by the skilful diplomacy of Jacques Delors. For European capital, it was crucial after the many defeats it had suffered in national political systems since the late 1960s that these be exposed to competition inside a supranational European market, so as to be properly disciplined economically. In fact, this desire was so strong that German employers closed ranks with employers from the rest of Europe to fight the extension of German-style codetermination to the EU as a whole, although this would have neutralized the competitive disadvantages it allegedly imposed on German firms. That trade became a European matter while social protection remained nationally based was the first choice, and indeed the only acceptable choice, for *business*, not for labour. For the latter, it could never be more than a second-best solution, even though it may in part have been because of its own disunity that it became stuck with it. Indeed, this became one of the factors that helped trigger the slow erosion of the postwar national welfare state that has been underway for about two decades now.

But cannot everyone—in principle at least—simply abandon their national limitations, adopt a proper 'European identity' and achieve unbounded mobility and prosperity in the European free market? Behind what is represented in European market ideology as the reactionary parochialism of a declining minority that lacks human capital there lies nothing other than the fundamental tendency of human beings to attach themselves to territorially rooted local and regional communities, making it hard for them to move where the jobs are and inclining them to demand instead that the jobs move, or be preserved, where they are. When in 2008 Nokia closed its highly profitable cell phone factory in Bochum to relocate production to an even more profitable factory in Romania, workers conspicuously failed to celebrate the event as a successful step toward European integration, although there were economists and European officials who tried to persuade them to do exactly that (see also Fligstein, p. 253). For a time, Nokia management offered Bochum workers jobs in the Romanian town of Cluj, until it realized that this was perceived not as kindness but as cynicism. Workers, it turned out once again, are quite imperfect commodities, since unlike capital they tend to feel pain when they are displaced. Capital differs from workers in that it has no parents that it must take care of (or leave behind); it has no children that must find new friends and a new school; and it speaks no mother tongue other than the universal language of numbers. While capital can well do without national politics, 'living labour', to use Marx's term, has a fundamental interest in the existence of politicians, national ones if others are not available, that it can blackmail if need be into fiddling

the market and bending its iron rules for the sake of human beings whose lives may end before the 'long-term' economic equilibrium returns.

Unlike what Fligstein hopes for, I am afraid there will not be a peaceful transition from national social protection to supranational free trade, made possible by more and more people experiencing the attractions of socializing with Europeans from different countries and as a result cheerfully abandoning the old-fashioned national welfare state. It seems much more likely that, in the name of European internationalism, the supranational free trade regime will continue its attacks on the national social protection regimes underneath it and further undermine the defenses of social communities against the vagaries of the market and the instabilities they inflict on human lives. Rather than being pulled into international competition, people will increasingly feel pushed, seeing social citizenship at the national level crumble away without anything at the European level to replace it. What Fligstein describes as a possible 'clash' between Europeans with a European identity and those with a national one will, I suggest, turn out in an important way to be a contemporary European version of the perennial tension under capitalism between the freedom of markets and their social and institutional containment. Given the way the European polity has come to be structured, that tension will make itself felt mainly in the relationship between European institutions and national states. While the supranational political economy of the EU has developed distinctive traits of a Hayekian economic constitution, the nation-states have remained the only possible access point for popular claims for political protection, although such claims are increasingly likely to be frustrated, either by European policies pre-empting national ones or by national governments calling upon 'Europe' to relieve them of obligations they are no longer willing or able to discharge. This basic framework, I maintain, is now firmly in place, and no radical change or historical rupture is to be expected in the foreseeable future.

*Pace* Helmut Kohl and, perhaps, Neil Fligstein, the decline of the 'permissive consensus' on 'more Europe', which since the mid-1980s had come to mean more markets and less protection, does not signal a return to the European wars of the twentieth century. All it means, and this is not bad news at all, is that, shocked by the French, Dutch and Irish referenda, the Euro-elites will feel compelled to tread more carefully. Even if the Treaty of Lisbon is eventually ratified, it is highly unlikely that there will be a repetition of the bombastic attempt to dress up an international treaty as a 'European Constitution' to sit on top of European national constitutions. Even the ECJ may be inclined to watch its step, especially during and immediately after the current world financial crisis when free market policies can be expected to be soundly discredited for a while.

On the other hand, no major change also means that no ‘social dimension’ will be added to the European construction. Not that this would be much of a surprise. It is not for nothing that the term has disappeared almost entirely from Eurospeak over the past decade, and in a sense it is among the merits of Fligstein’s book that it never even mentions it. Indeed, given the profound economic differences between countries like, say, Sweden and Bulgaria, a common social policy for the enlarged EU is completely out of the question today and for all practical purposes forever. Deadlock, then, is the most likely scenario—not because of a lack of European identity, but because of the institutional lock-in of decisions made in the 1980s and 1990s when European integration became firmly bound up with economic liberalization (Streeck, 1995). Perhaps, the only visible change in coming years may be that national governments and EU officials will find it less expedient than in the past to try to de-legitimize ‘Euro-skepticism’ by identifying it with right-wing nationalism.

In the longer run, much if not all will depend on whether the current recession causes a lasting change of mood in political economy. Rhetoric aside, it was the elected leaders of the three major European nation-states that organized the political response to the financial and industrial crisis, not Mr Barroso. Will they continue to exercise their rediscovered responsibilities? ‘European rules’ (Fligstein) have certainly done nothing to prevent the crash, even though ‘Europe’ should theoretically have been in a much better position than its member states to see things coming. If European national governments take the lesson of the crisis to heart, they may finally consider putting the ECJ, the running dog of European neo-liberalization, on a leash, perhaps by selecting the judges they appoint more carefully. Jurists do understand the language of political power, if it speaks loudly and clearly enough. Or are European governments really willing, in the face of the crisis, to pay the political and economic bill for the Court continuing its crusade for liberalism and against republicanism, for the de-politicization of the European economy to make life more comfortable for the mobile, the educated and the well-to-do, i.e. those with, according to Fligstein, an enlightened ‘European identity’, including presumably a habit of setting up bank subsidiaries out of sight of national regulators to deal in American subprime mortgages?

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