

The Europeanisation of national political systems: Parliaments and executives

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Accepted on 20 March 2008

Published on 30 June 2008

Living Reviews in European Governance

Published by

Connecting Excellence on European Governance (CONNEX)
and

New Modes of Governance (NEWGOV)

ISSN 1813-856X

Abstract

This article reviews the by now extensive literature on the Europeanisation of the political systems of the EU-15, with an emphasis on parliaments and executives (i.e., governments and ministerial administrations). The Living Review highlights apparently contradictory effects of integration: de-parlamentarisation *vs.* re-parlamentarisation; bureaucratisation *vs.* politicisation; and centralisation *vs.* diffusion. These diverging assessments of the effects of integration do, in part, reflect diversity in the EU-15; in part, they are, however, also a result of differences in the specification of variables, research designs and theoretical approaches. Work that inquires into patterns of Europeanisation – across institutional domains, countries, regions and time – and which seeks to tackle the ‘methodological nationalism’ of the Europeanisation literature promises a clearer picture of the institutional consequences of European integration than we possess at present.



How to cite this article

Owing to the fact that a *Living Reviews* article can evolve over time, we recommend to cite the article as follows:

Klaus H. Goetz and Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling,
“The Europeanisation of national political systems: Parliaments and executives”,
Living Rev. Euro. Gov., Vol. **3**, (2008), No. 2. [Online Article]: cited [<date>],
<http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2008-2>

The date given as <date> then uniquely identifies the version of the article you are referring to.

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1 Introduction

The literature on the Europeanisation of domestic political systems has mushroomed over the last decade (see [Graziano and Vink 2007](#)). Where once the topic was the preserve of research journals, it has, by now, become firmly established in textbooks on European integration and comparative European politics and government, to the extent that it has begun to serve as “an overarching theme and persistent concern” ([Bale 2005](#): xxi). In the process, the study of Europeanisation has matured at three levels:

- *The empirical level*: the maturation of the field is most evident when we consider the breadth of empirical studies that inquire into different aspects of Europeanisation. The number of such studies is now much larger than even a few years back; it is a reflection of the dynamism of the field that most of the contributions reviewed in the following have been published since 2000. There has not only been a proliferation of single-country studies of individual state institutions; we also find increasingly ambitious cross-country comparative efforts (e.g., [Schmidt 2005, 2006](#)) and country surveys that span the polity, politics and public policy dimensions (e.g., [Bache and Jordan 2006](#); [Closa and Heywood 2004](#); [Dyson and Goetz 2003](#); [Miles 2005](#)). The literature on the large West European countries – Germany, France and the UK – is rapidly being complemented by studies of the Europeanisation of Southern Europe and the Nordic countries (see [Goetz 2007](#) with further references). This interest in the domestic effects of Europe shows no sign of abating; at the same time, ‘state of the art’ reviews seek to systematise and assess existing knowledge and take the debate forward ([Graziano and Vink 2007](#); [Holzhacker and Albæk 2007](#)).
- *The conceptual level*: there is no shortage of attempts to turn the notion of Europeanisation from an “attention-directing device” ([Olsen 2002](#)) into an operationalisable concept capable of guiding empirical investigations ([Börzel and Risse 2003](#); for a recent review see [Radaelli and Pasquier 2007](#)). Opinions continue to differ, e.g., as to whether ‘misfit’ between European and domestic arrangements is a necessary precondition of Europeanisation, and whether Europeanisation necessarily implies change at the domestic level (rather than also being compatible with the continuation of traditional domestic practices) (see [Mastenbroek and Kaeding 2006](#), with further references). Despite these differences, there is broad agreement that Europeanisation stands for the consequences of European integration as they are observable within the member states of the European Union (and beyond). It is, as such, usually treated as a ‘dependent variable’, with progressive integration in its many guises as the driving force behind it.
- *The explanatory-theoretical level*: as we shall discuss at greater length in [Section 3](#), causal accounts of Europeanisation draw on a broad range of explanatory and theoretical schemes and there is a lively debate on how best to account for domestic responses to the integration process (see [Bulmer 2007](#) for a recent overview). Most studies make reference to both integration-related factors – such as length of membership or capacity to ‘upload’ national preferences to the European level – and domestic variables, including, in particular, institutions, interests, ideas and identities. The relative weight accorded to them and their specifications differ greatly. Rationalist, but especially historical-sociological approaches are influential in the field. They are sometimes combined in ambitious ways, as, e.g., in [Schmidt’s \(2006\)](#) comparative analysis of national trajectories of Europeanisation, which stresses the linkage between the number of domestic veto points and discourse on Europe.

An expanding base of empirical knowledge, conceptual debate and often considerable theoretical ambition have not, as yet, led to the emergence of a ‘conventional wisdom’ as regards substantive domestic responses, beyond a broadly shared consensus on ‘non-convergence’, i.e., the proposition

that Europeanisation does not imply that the political systems of the EU member states have become increasingly alike over time. The impact of ‘Europe’, it is argued, is ‘differential’ (Héritier *et al.* 2001): it can take many different forms depending on domestic settings. At least as regards substantive institutional effects, our reading of the debate does more than suggest non-convergence: a comparison of substantive findings supports contradictory conclusions. As will be detailed below, authors have variously found evidence of both

- de-parlamentarisation, as national parliaments have ceded powers to the EU and to domestic executives, and the opposite, i.e., re-parlamentarisation, as national legislatures have reasserted themselves in the integration process;
- growing bureaucratisation, as national bureaucrats dominate domestic EU-related policy-making, and the opposite, i.e., politicisation, as executive politicians take control of the EU policy process; and
- increasing centralisation in national governments, with the emergence of powerful EU core executives, and the opposite, i.e., progressive diffusion of integration effects throughout the political and administrative parts of the executive.

We take these conflicting assessments as the starting point of our Living Review. Section 2 sets out key contributions to the debate, with an emphasis on the topics highlighted above. Section 3 then takes a closer look at the guiding questions and design of the studies under review. We contend that the substantive differences highlighted in Section 2 owe much to differences in the specification of variables, research design and approaches. By way of concluding, we suggest in Section 4 that there is much to be gained from paying systematic attention to the patterning of Europeanisation across domains, countries, regions and time and from paying attention to the ‘methodological nationalism’ of much Europeanisation research.

To keep this first edition of our Living Review within manageable boundaries, we have had to restrict the literature to be considered in several ways. First, we limit ourselves largely to the polity dimension of political systems, although we refer to some works that take a more encompassing view (notably books that examine Europeanisation across several domains in individual countries or regions). Issues pertaining to the Europeanisation of public policies are dealt with in the *Living Review in European Governance* on implementation (Treib 2006). Second, we focus on the EU-15; Europeanisation in the new member states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 respectively is the subject of Sedelmeier’s (2006) *Living Review*, whilst Schimmelfennig (2007) deals with Europeanisation beyond the EU’s frontiers. We do, however, take into consideration work that attempts some comparison across the former West-East divide (e.g., Laffan 2003; O’Brennan and Raunio 2007). We hope that in future updates of this Living Review, such studies will feature more prominently, as they can help to shed light on the assumptions that inform many of the studies on the EU-15, notably the supposed explanatory power of deeply entrenched domestic institutions. Finally, in this first edition, we have limited ourselves to English-language material. Such a restriction is not, of course, without costs, for it inevitably skews this Living Review towards the experience of countries that, for a variety of reasons, are better covered in English than others, notably the North-Western EU core, the UK and the Nordic states. We hope to include references to non-English material in future editions.

2 Substantive domestic effects: Contradictory findings

2.1 De-parlamentarisation vs. re-parlamentarisation

2.1.1 The dual challenge

Arguments about the impact of EU integration on national parliaments are at the centre of the debate on the quality and future of democracy in Europe. The dividing line is broadly between those who regard national parliaments as “losers” (Maurer and Wessels 2001) of European integration and those who argue that national parliaments have more or less successfully “fought back” (Raunio and Hix 2000) and, thus, maintained, if not, in fact, enhanced their position at the level of member states and within the multi-level governance system of the European Union more generally. The literature on the Europeanisation of national parliaments has evolved greatly since the early 1990s, when a first batch of studies identified the challenges that EU integration presented (Judge 1995; Moravcsik 1994; Norton 1996; Schmidt 1997; Wiberg 1997), to a broad base of work that examines not only the ‘differential’ institutional adaptation of national parliaments (Bergman 1997; Kiiver 2006; Maurer and Wessels 2001; O’Brennan and Raunio 2007; Raunio 2005a; Saalfeld 2005), but also behavioural (Auel and Benz 2005; Benz 2004; Holzacker 2002) and attitudinal Europeanisation (Wessels 2005) of parliamentary parties and members of parliament.

Two related observations provide the starting point for much work in this area. First, national parliaments have lost out due to the transfer of policy-making powers, and here, in particular, legislative powers to the EU-level. Detailed expositions of this observation can, e.g., be found in Auel 2005; Hansen and Scholl 2002; Holzacker 2002; Maurer and Wessels 2001 and Norton 1996. Second, European integration has tilted the balance of powers at the domestic level decisively in favour of national executives, leading to a major shift in executive-legislative relations. The latter argument takes its cue largely from Moravcsik (1994), who suggested that the participation of national executives in supranational decision-making and negotiations strengthened their position at the domestic level. He identified four causal mechanisms behind growing executive autonomy, including the shifting of control over domestic agendas towards executives (initiative); the altering of decision-making procedures in favour of executives (institutions); the magnifying of informational asymmetries (information), in particular thanks to executives’ superior access to EU-related information; and the multiplying of the potential domestic ideological justifications for government policies (ideas).

2.1.2 Parliaments’ responses to EU integration

Whereas early contributions focused principally on outlining the challenges to national parliaments resulting from progressive integration, much recent work has provided detailed examinations of their responses. It is through the study of these responses – institutional, behavioural and attitudinal – that some authors claim to have found evidence of a reassertion of parliamentary powers. Melsæther and Sverdrup (2004: 7), for instance, claim that “we have experienced a decade of stepwise strengthening of the parliaments in the EU (...) the national parliaments have reformed themselves enabling them to play a more significant role in formulating and motoring European politics”. Duina and Oliver (2005) go one step further when they argue that the delegation of policy-making functions to the EU as such may benefit national parliaments. In their view, “precedent setting” and “policy transfer” provide two venues through which the “EU has helped national parliaments to fulfil their fundamental function of regulating society. Precedent setting has done so by expanding the *reach* of parliaments, while policy transfer has done so by confirming the *viability* of those parliaments as regulatory institutions” (Duina and Oliver 2005: 176, emphasis in the original). Precedent setting implies that EU integration involves the regulation of issues that had previously been neglected at the national level; gender equality or more comprehensive

anti-trust legislation in countries such as Italy might serve as examples. Policy transfer allows national parliaments to learn from other member states and to increase the effectiveness of their own regulatory frameworks, for instance, as a result of the use of the Open Method of Coordination in the area of social and labour market policy.

a) Institutional responses

Analyses of the institutional responses of national parliaments have long taken the principal form of single-country studies and collections of single-country studies (e.g., [Laursen and Pappas 1995](#); [Maurer and Wessels 2001](#); [Norton 1996](#); [Smith 1996](#)). There was an early focus on the establishment of EU affairs committees as a critical - and readily observable - institutional change ([Raunio and Hix 2000](#)); more recently, growing efforts have been made to classify the institutional responses observed. [Hansen and Scholl \(2002\)](#), for instance, distinguish broadly between (i) systemic and (ii) intra-institutional changes. Systemic changes cover situations where structures or norms that encompass the political system are changed at large; by contrast, institutional changes refer to alterations in the internal working mode of an institution. [Auel \(2005: 308\)](#) classifies institutional changes with respect to their function. She distinguishes institutional reforms that serve to enhance access to information; the capacity to process information (infrastructure, selection mechanisms etc); and the right to participate in policy-making (mainly through shaping the negotiating mandates for government ministers in the Council of Ministers). Institutional reforms that deal with the right to obtain information seem to have gained particular attention, and both [Raunio \(2005a\)](#) and [Saalfeld \(2005\)](#), for instance, distinguish further with respect to information on first, second and third pillar policies.

Other classifications have been developed in the context of comparative studies that provide indicators for the study of parliamentary control capacities ([Raunio 2005a](#)), parliamentary influence ([Saalfeld 2005](#)), or the power of opposition parties ([Holzhacker 2005](#)). [Raunio \(2005a\)](#) and [Saalfeld \(2005\)](#) attempt to capture the overall 'level of parliamentary scrutiny over EU affairs' and the 'influence of national parliaments over EU affairs', respectively. [Raunio \(2005a: 320ff\)](#) develops a three-dimensional indicator that includes (i) the involvement of specialised committees in EU affairs, (ii) the access to information in terms of timing and scope, and (iii) the power to mandate ministers through issuing voting instructions. [Saalfeld \(2005\)](#) develops an even more inclusive indicator of his dependent variable - influence - that covers the presence of a European Affairs Committee (EAC) and the timing of its establishment, the mandating powers of committees, relations to the European Parliament, the jurisdiction of the EAC over first, second and third pillar policies, the requirement of ministers to speak and report to this Committee, the involvement of other committees in EU affairs and the general agenda control of parliament.

Both [Saalfeld \(2005\)](#) and [Raunio \(2005a\)](#) have used their indicators to derive rankings of national parliaments. In this, they build on the work by [Maurer and Wessels \(2001\)](#), who also concentrated on the influence and power of parliaments and distinguished strong policy-making parliaments that are "national players" (as in Denmark or Austria), potential or "latent national players" (as in Germany), would be national players, which are, however, unable to challenge their governments (as in the case of the UK and France) and "slow adaptors". [Raunio's](#) ranking is almost identical to [Maurer and Wessels \(2001\)](#), while [Saalfeld](#) differs on a few countries and eventually dichotomises the parliaments into two groups.

Finally, [Holzhacker \(2005\)](#) has sought to measure the power of opposition party groups when scrutinising national governments' EU-related decision-making. Insofar as the institutional adaptation of national parliaments is concerned, he provides hints at a 'legal (and political) classification' that distinguishes constitutional rights and statutory laws including standing orders of parliaments.¹

¹The other dimensions include the presence of a second chamber, the internal organisation of parliaments with respect to the committee organisation and political dimensions such as the type of government and agenda control

With a view to assessing parliamentary institutional responses, there is by now a broad literature on which to draw. In fact, Raunio (2005a) argues that questions of indicators of levels of scrutiny and rankings of parliament's influence have now largely been resolved. Yet, analysts continue to use different concepts, classifications and indicators with which to gauge institutional responses. It is not surprising, therefore, that assessments of the consequences of institutional reform efforts also vary. There is broad agreement that "national institutions have made substantial efforts in order to cope with the requirements of the Union" (Mittag and Wessels 2003: 414); but whether these efforts have ultimately benefited parliaments is contested. On the one hand, there are studies that stress the "failure of national parliaments" (Judge 1995). In fact, parliamentary reforms may even have advantaged governments rather than parliaments, for governments can use the need for parliamentary approval of their negotiating stance as a bargaining tool in Brussels (Dimitrakopoulos 2001). Mittag and Wessels (2003: 433) argue that "the relative weakness of national parliamentary institutions at the EU level cannot be overlooked. The patterns of national governments and administrations in preparing EU matters have been affected to only a limited degree. Continuous deficits in parliaments' ability to play the multi-level game reduce the influence of national deputies. The involvement of parliaments in the EU policy-cycle remains weak and largely reactive. (...) Despite some constitutional changes most national parliaments have remained 'weak adaptors' with regard to the European policy-cycle (...) some have kept or gained a performance as national performers. Their influence is mostly notable – if at all – in the final phase of implementation and control".

By contrast, Raunio and Hix (2000: 159) argue that "national parliaments can wield considerably more influence than before"; that the "overall impact of European integration on parliamentary government in the domestic arena has actually been rather modest" (2000: 143); and that "the parliaments have also improved their position through more effective overall scrutiny of governments, particularly better access to information. In fact, in some countries, European integration has been a catalyst in the re-emergence of parliaments. Legislatures, alarmed by governmental autonomy resulting from integration, have started to invest more resources in holding executive office-holders accountable on EU-related as well as non-EU-related matters" (2000: 143). Whilst noting cross-country differences, the recent edited collection of O'Brennan and Raunio (2007) also points in this direction. This interpretation of a reassertion of national parliaments in the face of EU integration is echoed by Rizzuto (2003, 2004), with specific reference to the French case, whereas Grossman and Sauger (2007) underline the weakness of the French parliament in EU affairs, substantive formal increases in scrutiny powers notwithstanding.

The reasons behind these divergent assessments are not too difficult to identify. Studies that are more confident of the effectiveness of institutional adaptation of national parliaments tend to be focused on parliamentary scrutiny in the area of EU affairs (Raunio and Hix 2000 are paradigmatic here). By contrast, the more sceptical papers often take a broader view and pay attention to the full EU policy cycle (Maurer and Wessels 2001; Wessels, Maurer, and Mittag 2003). Second, as will be further discussed below, the understanding of information, as originally voiced by Moravcsik (1994), is again more inclusive in the case of sceptical contributions. Thus, what matters is not just access to information, but also to the ability to process the information (Auel 2005; Pollak and Slominski 2003).

b) Behavioural and attitudinal Europeanisation

Similar to studies of institutional adaptation, analyses of the behavioural and attitudinal dimensions of Europeanisation lend support both to proponents and opponents of de-parliamentarisation. Auel (2006), Benz (2004) and Auel and Benz (2005) are critical of the de-parliamentarisation thesis. They note that the "process of EU integration challenges the mechanisms of parliamentary systems in Member States, that is the basic logic of interaction between the opposition, the ma-

mechanisms.

majority as well as the government” (Auel and Benz 2005: 373). However, “the institutionalised Europeanisation of national parliaments covers only part of the overall changes in parliamentary systems. In order to assess the true Europeanisation of parliamentary democracies, one has to look beyond the formal institutions and take the strategies into account, which parliamentary actors develop to deal with their power or lack thereof” (Auel and Benz 2005: 388). Thus, they draw attention to adaptation beyond institutions by turning the focus on behaviour/actor strategies as the dependent variable.

Benz (2004) notes that tight control of governments by parliaments may be dysfunctional because it threatens to undermine the bargaining power of governments at the EU level. In order to overcome the control dilemma, parliamentarians have chosen three different strategies: (i) close informal co-operative relations with ministers, as in Denmark; (ii) *ex ante* mechanisms of scrutinising EU legislative proposals in committee settings, combined with the option of voicing disagreements in public, which requires ministers to explain and justify their EU policies in public, as in the UK; (iii) and close direct contacts with MEPs in order to reduce informational disadvantages, as in Germany. Benz (2004) Benz (2004), therefore, suggests bottom-up mechanisms of Europeanisation, in that MPs perceive of the EU as a new opportunity structure that allows alternative usages.

Several authors note that institutional rights are worth little if they are not used and taken up by MPs. Pollak and Slominski (2003: 708), for instance, argue that “unfortunately, most comparative studies on the role of national parliaments focus on the description of what parliaments can do (i.e. their formal rights) rather than on what they really do”. Examining the Austrian parliament, they try to identify dimensions that may hamper adequate control, despite strong constitutional safeguards. They explore five dimensions of the use of the legal powers: motions tabled, motions made binding, documents submitted to parliament, meetings of the main committee, and interaction of parliamentary groups in the committees. They find, *inter alia*, that the number of binding opinions on the Austrian ministers has declined sharply since the mid-1990s; over time, fewer and fewer motions have been passed; and in terms of information the parliament is flooded with documents that it is unable to process effectively. As a consequence, the European Affairs Committee concentrates on key events such as the preparation of IGCs or summits. Similarly, Hegeland and Neuhold (2002) emphasise that the EAC and the EU-related mandate are simply tools of control, whose importance should not be exaggerated. In their comparative analysis of Finland, Sweden and Austria, they note that the selection mechanism for the processing of information is central to the control capacity of parliaments.

To what degree and in what ways formal parliamentary powers are used may depend in part on MPs’ role orientations and attitudes towards European integration. Wessels (2005) has examined the extent to which conceptions of democracy vary in 11 European countries, the evaluation of European democracy by MPs and the changes in role orientations over time. He finds that there is a considerable degree of diversity in the understanding of democracy in the countries under study, with some MPs emphasising the “governance function” and others the “representation function”. The same picture of diversity applies to the evaluation of European democracy. Finally, he compares the attitudes and contacts of German MPs over time (between 1996 and 2003) and argues that they adapt and change only very slowly. He concludes that MPs have actually been very slow adaptors, since during the same period there was a massive increase in the amount of legislation that came from Brussels. Wessels is, therefore, doubtful whether the new institutional powers will be taken up by MPs, because they lack interest in, and understanding of, the EU and its importance. Thus, Wessels (2005: 463) concludes that “national patterns can be expected to persist over a longer period of time. Institutional change, incentives and improvements will most likely have a limited though steady impact on national parliaments and their members. It is an open question whether this identifiable impact will provoke adaptation at a sufficient rate to minimise the danger of declining authority and relevance of national parliaments” (see also Cowley 2000 on British MPs attitudes to Europe).

In sum, studies of behavioural and attitudinal adaptation to EU integration are not necessarily negative on the powers of parliaments. Benz (2004) and Auel and Benz (2005), in particular, hint at the possibility that parliaments may have consolidated their position in the national political system. Yet, the literature on actors' strategies and attitudes certainly indicates that it is insufficient to infer from formal institutional adaptation to actual parliamentary influence.

2.1.3 Determinants of parliamentary responses to EU integration

When it comes to identifying the determinants of parliamentary responses to EU integration, studies have increasingly come to rely on comparative designs, as single-country discussions are complemented by comparative small N or medium N studies that comprise two (Hansen and Scholl 2002), three (Dimitrakopoulos 2001; Hegeland and Neuhold 2002), four (Holzhacker 2005), or the EU-15 countries (Bergman 1997, 2000; Raunio 2005a; Saalfeld 2005). Generally, the Nordic and North-Western EU countries remain over-represented in the small N studies, although the first studies that include both countries from the EU 15 and the new Central and Eastern European member states are now beginning to appear (O'Brennan and Raunio 2007).

In terms of explanatory methods, we find a good deal of variation. Many (comparative) case studies use process-tracing techniques (e.g., Dimitrakopoulos 2001; Holzhacker 2002) or classic small N techniques, such as the most-similar to most-different systems design. Raunio (2005a) applies Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), especially Ragin's 2000 fuzzy-set methodology, which allows him to identify necessary and sufficient conditions, while conceptualising his variables at the ordinal level of measurement. Wessels (2005) and Saalfeld (2005) use quantitative techniques, but in the case of Saalfeld this generates insignificant results due to the small number of cases, which suggests that a within-unit analysis at a lower level of aggregation or simply another unit of analysis is necessary to use quantitative results effectively.

Third, explanations of institutional adaptation cover the range of neo-institutionalist approaches in political science. Dimitrakopoulos (2001), for instance, adopts a historical-sociological institutionalist perspective to explain institutional change in Greece, France and the UK. Hansen and Scholl (2002) apply Börzel and Risse's (2000) approach to Europeanisation and distinguish between rational choice institutionalist and sociological perspectives to explain the institutional adaptation in Germany and the UK. Saalfeld (2005) and Raunio and Hix (2000) rely on rational choice approaches, notably informational theories of legislative choice, which were originally developed for the study of the US Congress. Other rational choice perspectives include Orr (2003) and Pahre (1997). Most studies are not, however, very explicit in the choice of their theoretical assumptions.

Fourth, and following on closely from the previous point, explanations of institutional adaptation have emphasised domestic variables that are well known from comparative politics and government. In particular, studies have underlined the importance of the prevalent type of government in a particular country, which determines the influence of opposition parties and of governing parties' backbenchers, the modes of executive-legislative relations and thus the level of parliamentary influence irrespective of EU integration. Public opinion on EU integration has also been noted as an important (bottom-up) determinant of levels of parliamentary control, as have 'critical junctures' in the sense of particular EU events (accession, treaty revision, etc.) and historically contingent political constellations (see below).

Raunio and Hix (2000) have argued that the EU has provided a catalyst for domestic institutional reforms. Institutional adaptation resulted from the pressure of (i) opposition parties and (ii) governing parties' backbenchers to gain access to EU related information. Holzhacker (2005) concludes that parliamentary power in the area of EU affairs scrutiny is dependent on the type of government with minority governments producing stronger parliamentary scrutiny than coalition governments; in turn, the latter are more conducive to parliamentary scrutiny than single-party majority governments. He, therefore, effectively attributes tighter scrutiny procedures to the power

of opposition parties over policy-making. Yet, he makes no special reference to the EU and how it interacts with the domestic variables. EU affairs effectively seem to be just another policy area under more or less parliamentary control.

Bergman (1997), in one of the first comparative studies of institutional adaptation, included five explanatory factors: (i) the power of parliaments, (ii) political culture/traditions, (iii) federalism, (iv) minority government, (v) and evidence of strategic action. He concluded that political culture measured along a North-South division could explain much of the variation in parliamentary scrutiny procedures. Moreover, he argued that one of the control variables, namely, the timing of accession, was associated with tighter parliamentary control.

Raunio (2005a) in his EU-15 study includes (i) the role of parliaments independent of EU integration, (ii) public opinion on EU integration, (iii) party positions on EU integration (Euro-scepticism), (iv) minority government status and (v) political culture, referred to as Catholic versus non-Catholic proportions of the population. He finds in his qualitative medium *N* study that tighter scrutiny procedures are implemented if parliaments are stronger regardless of integration and if the public is more Eurosceptic. A strong parliament is a necessary condition for tight scrutiny and a strong parliament together with a Eurosceptic public are sufficient conditions for tight scrutiny. He thus allows for bottom-up processes of adaptation, in that public Euroscepticism serves as an incentive for MPs to tighten control in the area of EU affairs.

In a similar vein, Saalfeld (2005) has examined four factors, including (i) intra-party conflicts, (ii) coalition government, (iii) minority government, and (iv) the salience of EU membership. He applies quantitative techniques and finds that all four factors point in the right direction, but are not significant. His arguments are based on the application of rational choice delegation studies and suggest, in a nutshell, that the level of parliamentary scrutiny is a function of the level of trust between backbenchers of governing parties and government ministers. The level of scrutiny should, therefore, be higher the more risky the delegation of policy-making discretion for backbenchers to ministers. Under conditions of coalition government, this risk increases and under conditions of minority government, the risk of shirking by ministers is even higher. He, therefore, comes back to something that we have long known: the type of government shapes the power of parliament.

There is also an interesting discussion surrounding the impact of the timing of accession to the EU. As discussed above, Bergman (1997) found this factor to be relevant, as does Saalfeld (2005). The latter does not test the 'timing factor', but applies it as an indicator for the salience of EU integration. He assumes that a later point of accession increases the contentiousness of EU integration, for instance, due to the larger *acquis* and a concomitantly higher degree of adaptive pressures. Raunio (2005a), by contrast, omits the timing factor, because in his view, it is obvious that parliaments adopted tighter scrutiny procedures in the 1990s because the EU by then was much more powerful than from the 1950s to the early 1980s. Moreover, historical institutionalist approaches quite naturally attach greater importance to temporal factors. Dimitrakopoulos (2001), for instance, refers to the importance of EU accession for reforms in the UK. However, in the Greek case, institutional adaptation lagged behind accession to the EU by almost ten years, suggesting that the timing of accession is not necessarily a critical juncture for institutional reforms, but requires other conditions to be met. Moreover, in the case of France, it took European elections in 1979 to institutionalise the tools for the scrutiny of government in the area of EU affairs.

The moment of accession is also stressed in explanations of individual institutional reforms, such as the mandate in Austria and Denmark. In Austria, the mandate is traced to the need of the then governing grand coalition to secure a qualified majority for the constitutional changes associated with EU accession. The mandate was a way to buy off the opposition parties (Pollak and Slominski 2003). In Denmark, the mandate was the result of the early post-accession period, when the then Agriculture Minister failed to secure a beneficial deal for Denmark, leading MPs to demand a binding voting instruction for the next negotiations in Brussels (Raunio 2005a). Both explanations point towards the combination of temporal external and domestic political and

constitutional constellations as key mechanisms of adaptation.

A very similar conclusion emerges from studies of behavioural Europeanisation. Both Pollak and Slominski (2003) and Hegeland and Neuhold (2002) emphasise domestic political constellations. They argue, for instance, that by the time the Austrian government no longer needed a two-thirds majority for constitutional changes in the context of accession and especially after the end of the grand coalition, the Austrian parliament went into an inter-party mode and EU affairs were effectively absorbed into the domestic political game. A similar argument is raised by Holzhaecker (2002), who points out that as EU integration moved out of the traditionally non-conflictual foreign policy field and as MPs and parties realised that many policies are affected by the EU, they switched into an inter-party mode, which largely domesticated the parliamentary control of EU affairs.

2.1.4 Conclusion

As one might expect, the ongoing debate over the impact of European integration on national parliaments has been marked by growing differentiation over time and it mirrors changes in the integration process. In fact, widening – the accession of new countries to the EU – and changes in EU integration largely fuel the debate. Thus, e.g., several recent papers (Cooper 2006; Cygan 2004; Fraga 2005; Raunio 2005b) have examined the potential impact of the draft Constitution on the position of national parliaments. Similarly, the increasing importance of soft law and policy-making mechanisms such as OMC have been identified as important influences on national parliaments (Duina and Raunio 2007). Duina and Oliver (2005) have highlighted their potential as a source of parliamentary empowerment through policy transfer; by contrast, Duina and Raunio (2007) emphasise “contradictory effects”: OMC further privileges executives and risks marginalizing parliaments, but it also improves the knowledge bases of national MPs.

Although changes in integration as marked by Treaty revisions, ‘interstitial institutional change’ (Farrell and Héritier 2007) or the spread of new policy modes provide rich justification for revisiting and, perhaps, revising long-established arguments regarding the European effect on national parliaments, there is rarely much explicit discussion of ‘Europe’ as an ‘independent variable’. Some (Auel 2005) equate it with treaties and declarations, accessions, summits, and EU institutions; some emphasise the influence of the European Parliament, in particular (Neunreither 2005); still others (Benz 2004) conceptualise the EU as a new opportunity structure for national MPs. With such diversity in the assumed driver of domestic responses, it is not surprising that different authors come to very different conclusions about response patterns.

Finally, the range of parliamentary responses that have so far been studied systematically remains quite narrow. Thus, we still know little about the EU impact on interpellations, questions, plenary debates, party cohesion and discipline, delegation patterns to committees, processes within committees or parliamentarians’ relations to their constituencies. Considered against the backdrop of mainstream legislative studies, many key questions still remain to be asked.

2.2 Bureaucratisation versus politicisation and centralisation versus diffusion

In contrast to students of legislatures, analysts of the Europeanisation of national executives seem to be universally agreed that European integration has implied “a shift in the internal national balance of powers towards governments and administrations” (Wessels, Maurer, and Mittag 2003: xvi; emphasised in the original). What is much less clear is how power relationships *within* national executives – notably between the political and the administrative parts of the executive and between ministries and the centre of government – have been affected (Goetz 2000). There are arguments to suggest both bureaucratisation, based on the predominance of unelected officials in the European policy process, and politicisation, as ministers and heads of government devote increasing time

and attention to EU-related business. Similarly, whilst some observers equate Europeanisation with centralisation in national governments and administrations – as evidenced by the growth of an “EU core executive” and “prime ministerialisation”, others note the growing diffusion of EU-related powers and responsibilities across the range of ministries in the capitals of the EU member states.

2.2.1 Bureaucratisation versus politicisation

The very intensive engagement of national officials in EU policy-making is well documented (e.g., [Wessels, Maurer, and Mittag 2003](#)) as are the socialising effects of regular participation in EU policy-making bodies – e.g., Council working groups – on national officials (e.g., [Beyers 1998, 2005](#); [Beyers and Trondal 2004](#); [Lewis 2005](#); for a recent critical overview see [Quaglia, De Francesco, and Radaelli 2008](#)). Work centred on the emergence of a ‘European administrative space’ and accounts of the emergence of a “multi-level Union administration“, thought to hail a “transformation of executive politics in Europe“ ([Egeberg 2006](#); see also [Curtin and Egeberg 2008](#)) stress the central position of national ministerial officials throughout the EU policy cycle. The oft-noted executive dominance in EU affairs is, thus, tantamount to administrative dominance.

[Læg Reid, Steinthorsson, and Thorhallsson \(2004\)](#) note that the political leadership is more involved in policy-making in EU states than in non-EU states such as Norway and Iceland, but that officials usually do not have enough time to clear policy issues with the political leadership and that volume of EU business and time pressures prevent them from involving the political leadership. This latter point is further supported by their finding that, overall, the political leadership is more involved in non-EU related policies than in EU-related policies.

In addition to references to the sheer volume of EU-related business and the fact that elected executive politicians are, of course, greatly outnumbered by bureaucrats, some arguments found in the literature also point to a discretionary loss of political steering and control. Thus, with specific reference to the German Federal ministerial administration, [Goetz \(2003\)](#) has argued that whilst the administrative parts of the executive are, indeed, part of an integrated multi-level system, European integration promotes a bifurcated government. Governing takes place at both national and EU levels, but the two governing levels are much less closely connected than along the administrative dimension. Key governing features – notably party, coalition and parliamentary government – show few signs of Europeanisation. Whilst national administrators increasingly become multi-level players, executive politicians also play at different levels, but rarely in the sense of a linked ‘two-level game’. And whilst the EU offers national administrators many incentives for the national usage of Europe, these incentives are weaker for executive politicians, whose party-based career paths are hardly affected by Europe.

Whether bureaucrats are amongst the domestic winners of integration will at least in part depend on power relationships at EU level. Thus, [Larsson and Trondal \(2005\)](#), with reference to Norwegian and Swedish examples, argue that the interactions between the Commission and national ministerial administrations activate/mobilise primarily the working level of ministries. “By contrast, the Council of Ministers arguably strengthens domestic politico-administrative leadership, the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister’s Office” [Larsson and Trondal \(2005: 3\)](#). Thus, a more intergovernmental policy process may advantage the political leadership, whilst a supranational process, centred on the Commission, may work to the benefit of line officials.

The emphasis on bureaucratisation found in much of the Europeanisation literature stands in contrast to an influential strand of discussion in Comparative Public Administration, which suggests that Western European bureaucracies have been subject to growing functional politicisation over the last two decades or so ([Page and Wright 1999, 2007](#); [Peters and Pierre 2001, 2004](#)), as the capacity of elected politicians to monitor, steer and control the behaviour of unelected officials has increased. European integration as a potential explanation of growing politicisation does not

feature prominently in these accounts, which tend to emphasise, instead, the rise of cartel parties (Katz and Mair 1995), which insert themselves deeply in the institutions of the state, and, in particular, the impact of the ‘new public management’ (Peters and Pierre 2001, 2004). Thus, it has been noted that the attempt to let managers manage appears to imply a de-politicisation of public administration (e.g., Hood 1995) and does, indeed, initially lead to loss of political control, but that this loss of direct control is likely to be compensated for by increasing political control over managerial appointments (e.g., Hood and Lodge 2006; Maor 1999).

2.2.2 Centralisation versus diffusion

Executive Europeanisation has often been associated with dual centralisation (for detailed overviews see Goetz 2000 and, most recently, Laffan 2007 and Trondal 2007). This centralisation is said to be observable at two interconnected levels: an administrative level, in the form of an ‘EU core executive’; and at the political level, through the strengthening of a small number of key ministers and, in particular, heads of government, who are supported by the EU core executive institutions. The strengthened role of Prime Ministers as a result of EU integration was highlighted by King (1994) in the context of a broader study of heads of government. He argued that there was trend towards an enhanced role for prime ministers due to the growing role of ‘summitry’, including EU summits. This position was echoed by Rhodes, Ferrera, and Hemerijck (2000) who identified EU integration as a key force behind the centralisation of core executives in Europe.

Work that has been more narrowly focused on the EU effect has underlined this conclusion. Thus, Mittag and Wessels (2003: 424–434) note as result of their 15-country comparison:

“In all Member States of the European Union, prime ministers or chancellors, as the heads of government, have become key actors in EU affairs (...). Given the need to act assertively and coherently in making key decisions, which are increasingly taken through the European Council, prime ministers have gained power *vis-à-vis* their ministerial colleagues”.

Kassim (2000, 2003), who focuses on policy co-ordination, likewise identifies a growing role for heads of governments as a key trend in EU policy co-ordination. As one might expect, many authors qualify this general assessment to some extent. Thus, it has been noted, e.g., that next to heads of governments and their offices, finance ministries, too, have benefited from progressive integration, notably since “the net effect of EMU has been to strengthen the domestic power of finance ministries over structural economic reforms” (Dyson 2002: 16). This has, e.g., been evident in Germany, where a major shift in EU-related powers from the Ministry of Economics to the Ministry of Finance has been identified as a “caesura” (Bulmer and Burch 2000: 277) in the institutional setup for EU policy-making in the Federal administration (although key competences were shifted back to the Economics Ministry following the Federal elections of 2005).

Others have noted that the EU policy process may not uniformly favour centralisation. Thus, as noted above, Larsson and Trondal (2005) have pointed out that the Council strengthens the political leadership of the national executive and the centre(s) of executive decision-making, while the Commission strengthens the lower echelons of professional civil servants in the national line ministries. In the absence of close links between the Council and the Norwegian administration, integration contributes to sectorisation and de-hierarchisation in the Norwegian administration. By contrast, the sectorisation push in the Swedish administration is counter-balanced by the co-ordination pull from the centre, including the prime minister’s office and the foreign ministry. These findings chime with Egeberg’s (1999) earlier argument that participation in the Council working groups invokes stronger loyalties of national officials in support of their national governments, whilst participation in Commission working groups invokes a stronger sense of loyalty along sectoral and functional lines. The Commission, therefore, has the potential to contribute to fragmentation and segmentation in national governments. Studies of Germany (Derlien 2000) or the Netherlands (Harmsen 1999) have likewise found evidence of persistent, if not in fact, increasing sectorisation

rather than centralisation as a consequence of further integration.

Still others have found that the trend towards prime ministerialisation, whilst evident in some countries, is by no means uniform. Thus, Laffan's (2006) study of core executive adaptation to the EU in Ireland, Greece and Finland, points out that although one can identify two basic co-ordination models, prime ministerial or foreign ministry-led, there is no clear evidence of progressive convergence towards the former.

2.2.3 Patterns of responses

As Laffan (2007) has noted, much work on executive Europeanisation, whether focused on one or two dimensions, such as patterns of interministerial co-ordination or the socialisation of officials, or more broad-ranging in its empirical scope, is guided by the overarching question of whether integration is associated with cross-national convergence in executive arrangements (see also Page and Wouters 1995). She suggests that "the dominant conclusion found in the existing literature on executive adaptation points to the continuing diversity of domestic responses to EU engagement" (Laffan 2007: 136). In a similar vein, Olsen (2007: 239), on the basis of a review of much of the relevant literature, concludes that

"While there are competing interpretations, the main findings (although with many nuances) are, first, that 'Europe matters' and second, that there is domestic persistence and enduring diversity (...). There has been no general trend towards isomorphism and no significant convergence towards a common institutional model homogenizing the domestic structures of the European states (...) established domestic patterns have been resilient but also flexible enough to cope with changes at the European level, and no new and unified model of dealing with Union matters has emerged. In general, EU arrangements have turned out to be compatible with the maintenance of distinct national institutional arrangements and there are even cases of reconfirmation and restoration of established national structures and processes."

Proponents of convergence are in the minority (Albert-Roulhac 1998; Burnham and Maor 1995; Cardona 1999; SIGMA 1999), whilst continued diversity within the EU-15 and now EU-27 is stressed by many (Bossaert *et al.* 2001; Harmsen 1999; Olsen 2003; Page 2003; Page and Wouters 1995; Siedentopf and Speer 2003; Spanou 1998).

Lack of convergence does not, of course, imply absence of change. But change is rarely seen to challenge basic administrative traditions. Studies of Southern European executives, for instance, have tended to emphasise the resilience of informal rules, norms and cultures as opposed to more adaptable formal structures (e.g., Aguilar-Fernández 2003; Spanou 1998). Conversely, Læg Reid, Steinthorsson, and Thorhallsson (2004), who examine the Europeanisation of central administrations in the Nordic states, and Adshead (2005) in her study of governance in Ireland, emphasise stable formal executive structures, but observe adaptation of "informal norms and cultures" as well as "external networks" (Læg Reid, Steinthorsson, and Thorhallsson 2004); and of "rules and procedures" as well as broad "cultures" of officials and the interaction of society and public administration (Adshead 2005). More generally, studies that concentrate on formal institutional structures tend to highlight resilience (Bulmer and Burch 1998), whereas analyses of the 'software' of the executive – cultural norms, values, assumptions, roles and identities of officials – underline the transformative power of Europe (Jordan 2002, 2003 provides a paradigmatic case).

Studies that focus tightly on national EU policy co-ordination (e.g., Albert-Roulhac 1998; Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000; Laffan 2006) and, more generally, domestic EU policy-making and implementation (Jordan 2002, 2003; Larsson and Trondal 2005) seem more prone to observe change or even transformation than analyses of core structures of the executive that cut across domains, most notably the civil service (Page 2003; Page and Wouters 1995). Similarly, more in-depth and fine-grained studies of the responses of individual institutions are also more likely to pick up change than analyses at a higher level of aggregation. For example, Jordan (2001, 2002,

2003) in his study of the Department of Environment in the UK argues that the UK's participation in EU policy-making and implementation has transformed key features of the domestic executive. Schout's (1999) Schout's (1999) inquiry into institutional and procedural change in the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the Netherlands and Maor and Stevens' (1997) study of recruitment and training in three UK ministries under the influence of integration reach similar conclusions.

In sum, the findings just summarised caution against over-generalisation from studies based on individual domains. Where there is strong exposure of national executives to EU institutions, as in the case of national co-ordination units, a degree of convergence in national arrangements seems scarcely surprising, not least because these co-ordinations units are often planted onto existing institutions at the centre of government.

2.2.4 Determinants of responses

The dual emphasis on institutional resilience in the face of integration and, as a consequence, continued cross-national divergence in executive institutionalisation at least in part reflects the dominance of historical-sociological approaches in the study of executive Europeanisation. Incrementalism, the importance of path dependencies, and historical continuity feature prominently in much of the writing on this topic.

Set within this theoretical context, what are seen to be the drivers of mostly incremental and path-dependent change? One important driver is the perceived need of the EU member states to prepare for the effective participation in EU decision-making ("projection") and the effective implementation of EU policies within the domestic context ("reception") (see, e.g., Bulmer and Burch 1998, 2001; Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000; Laffan 2003). Member states need to be able to participate fully in all stages of the EU policy cycle and in all policy-making modes (Wessels, Maurer, and Mittag 2003).

How projection and reception requirements impact on domestic institutional time and, by implication, power relations within the executive has been examined by Ekengren (1996, 1997, 2002). He stresses that there are not only many devices – such as EU meeting schedules – “for the standardisation of a common administrative clock for European governance” (2002: 79). Critically, there is evidence to suggest that this leads to a ‘squeezed national present’. This ‘squeeze’ not only implies the need for often extremely speedy responses on the part of national administrations; “timetables are made much more explicit in European governance than in national coordination. One of the most important characteristics of these timetables is the fiction of deadlines, which provides the basis for the feeling of a very marked and distinct European presence” (2002: 86). According to Ekengren, one notable reaction to this ‘squeezed present’ is the strengthening of central coordination units: “This is one of the main reasons what an active ‘EU Secretariat’ is needed. There is simply not enough time, no natural national interval, to achieve a general consensus among all the units concerned on all details of policy. The result is that the sequence of governmental actions previously taken for is now interrupted in the name of coordination” (2002: 84).

Pressures for institutional responses have been classified in a variety of ways. Siedentopf and Speer (2003), for instance, distinguish legal and functional requirements of EU integration, whilst Page and Wouters (1995) pointed to legal or formal requirements, but also informal or indirect pressures. As regards the mechanism of change, Page (2003: 166), e.g., has identified “four specific mechanisms which would lead us to believe that Europeanisation will have increased”, including coercion, imitation, adjustment and polydiffusion. These mechanisms are similar to those that have been advanced in the policy literature. These general accounts are complemented by domain-specific analyses of adaptive pressures and functional challenges (see, e.g., Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000 for national co-ordination systems and Kassim *et al.* 2001 for national permanent representations in Brussels); and attempts to distinguish Europeanisation pressures and incentives

emanating from different parts of the EU political system (notably the Council versus the Commission) (Larsson and Trondal 2005) and linked to different policy modes (notably the Community method versus the Open Method of Coordination).

The heavy reliance on historical and sociological institutionalist analysis means that national political contexts and administrative traditions are the most popular domestic explanatory variables, in particular, in order to explain diversity and stability (Kassim 2003; Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000; Knill 2001). By contrast, change is usually explained with respect to crises (e.g., Adshead 2005; Jordan 2003) or major events, such as changes of government (Bulmer and Burch 2005). For example, Laffan and O'Mahony (2007: 186), in their analysis of the management of EU business by the Irish core executive note, that

“ the electorate’s rejection of the Nice Treaty (. . .) was the first considerable shock encountered by the Irish political and administrative system and led to significant systemic change. The critical juncture created by the Nice ‘No’ led to increased formalization of the structures and processes that were in place to manage EU business (. . .). Nice I was a major domestic shock to the system of core executive management of EU business in Ireland”.

2.2.5 Conclusion

Despite a proliferating literature on executive Europeanisation, some key empirical questions are only beginning to be asked. The long-standing interest in how European policy is co-ordinated at the national level and whether integration spells centralisation has tended to overshadow other important questions, notably about the impact of integration on the politics-bureaucracy nexus. Thus, the literature has not yet taken a decisive turn towards some of the central themes in the study of comparative public administration, notably as regards patterns of political steering, guidance and control vis-à-vis officials, changes in bureaucratic recruitment and career paths. We also know next to nothing about how EU business has affected the time budgets and patterns of time allocation of elected executives and how their networks of communication have changed over time.

As regards centralisation – at administrative and political levels – both writing about the emergence and strengthening of an EU core executive and prime ministerialisation encouraged by the growing importance of the European Council, in particular, chime with dominant themes in the study of comparative government and public administration about the progressive concentration of power in European executives; but the empirical evidence to support these claims is less compelling than proponents of the ‘presidentialisation’ of European democracies suggest.

3 Explaining diversity – diversity in explanations

Comparative Europeanists will not be unduly surprised, still less concerned, by the apparent cross-national diversity of patterns of Europeanisation. Yet, given the dominant scholarly emphasis on persistent divergence in the core institutions of European democracies, despite decades of political and economic integration, it is worth probing these findings somewhat more deeply. Might the diversity in Europeanisation effects be caused as much by diversity in frameworks of analysis as by the empirical facts ‘on the ground’? In raising this question, our intention is not to deny differences in the reactions that have been observed. Rather, we want to explore to what extent and in what ways the apparent diversity in Europeanisation experiences might be conditioned by variations in empirical foci and conceptual and theoretical lenses. In this regard, the definition of institutions, powers and European integration as well as theoretical frameworks, geographical coverage and periods of observation deserve some comment.

Defining institutions: A common focus on parliaments and executives notwithstanding, analyses of the polity effects of progressive European integration do, in fact, cover many different institutional dimensions, which are not always tightly defined or made explicit. Thus, institutional analyses of parliaments and executives have variously focused on tasks, powers, competences, resources, structures, procedures, personnel, organisational behaviour, attitudes and, albeit rarely, norms and values. There is a strong tendency to generalise from the findings on one or two of these dimensions so as to arrive at broader conclusions regarding ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Moreover, there is a great deal of work that, empirically, looks at parliaments or executives only, but draws conclusions about shifts in parliamentary systems more broadly.

Defining power(s): The domestic distribution of political power is at the heart of polity analyses of Europeanisation. Yet, how power is best defined, how it can be measured and what conditions the exercise of power are, of course, all deeply contested issues. In the study of parliaments, e.g., whilst some authors equate power with access to information, the ability to draw on ideological resources or agenda-setting power and make these the yardsticks of their assessments, others draw their conclusions on the basis of observations about MPs’ strategic behaviour or attitudinal change amongst parliamentarians and parliamentary parties.

Defining EU integration: Given the predominant understanding of Europeanisation as a response to European integration, it is, perhaps, surprising that students of Europeanisation rarely define explicitly what is meant by integration and the EU as the supposed driving force behind domestic change. For example, at least in polity related writing, there has, so far, been little attempt to draw out the implications of different policy modes, as set out, e.g., by Wallace (2005) who distinguishes the traditional Community method from an EU regulatory mode, an EU distributional mode, policy coordination and intensive transgovernmentalism. The EU is variously conceived as an actor and an arena; a set of structures and of procedures; or a legal, political, economic, social and cultural entity. It is, of course, all of these things, but, depending on which dimensions are highlighted, its domestic effects can be expected to differ substantially. Analyses that stress the domestic “usages of Europe” (Jacquot and Woll 2003), in particular, are often less concerned with the hard edges of EU integration than with its ideational dimensions and its legitimacy uses in domestic discourse (Schmidt 2005, 2006).

Differences in theoretical approaches: Europeanisation research has been a laboratory for the application of new institutionalist frameworks in institutional and policy research. Very broadly, one can distinguish, first, between rationalist *vs.* historical-sociological approaches; and, second, between frameworks that stress either a top-down or a bottom-up perspective. Different theoretical approaches are, of course, highly selective in terms of the empirical evidence of Europeanisation they are likely to capture; in terms of the explanatory apparatus they employ; and in terms of the mechanisms of change they tend to highlight (for a recent summary see Bulmer 2007). This selectivity of theoretical lenses is inevitable, as theory is a tool for selection. Yet, given a pronounced

tendency in the Europeanisation literature to ‘customise’ theoretical frameworks (rather than to employ and, where necessary, refine tried and tested frameworks in new empirical contexts), there is more than an element of arbitrariness in many of the findings (something that is reinforced by continuing debate surrounding the conceptualisation of Europeanisation itself – see Radaelli and Pasquier 2007).

Differences in geographical coverage: The great majority of Europeanisation studies put ‘domestic’ variables – be they institutions, interests, ideas, identities or discourses – at the heart of their explanations of patterns of Europeanisation. To the extent that these domestic explanatory variables vary, patterns of Europeanisation can also be expected to diverge. Our knowledge of Europeanisation in different parts of Europe is unequal, a fact that counsels circumspection when it comes to discussing wider European trends. In the English-language literature at least, the Europeanisation of core polity institutions in the Nordic countries, the UK, Germany, France and the Benelux countries has been much more extensively covered than Southern Europe. The literature on the countries that joined the EU in May 2004 and January 2007, respectively is also, by necessity, still fairly limited (see Sedelmeier 2006). What matters here is not just that the picture of Europeanisation that we have so far is, in parts, still very sketchy. The fact that few studies cover both North and South and West and East is also likely to lead to a rather skewed picture. For example, a study that only includes Nordic countries in a comparative analysis of parliamentary Europeanisation is more likely to show some parliaments as ‘losers’ than a more encompassing analysis that also includes Southern European parliaments, which are often regarded as ‘weak adaptors’. Thus, both the number of cases included in Europeanisation analyses and their selection matter when it comes to assessing diversity. It may seem paradoxical, if only at first sight, that the small N studies that prevail in Europeanisation research, combined with the fact that they tend to focus on neighbouring countries (or relatively homogeneous regions) bias analyses towards the finding of diversity rather than convergence.

Differences in time periods: When it comes to the role of time in Europeanisation research, three closely related points deserve highlighting. First, most studies consider only short periods of time, so that it is difficult to say anything about phases or stages of Europeanisation or to explore the possibility that trends might be reversed. What may look like diversity in a ‘snapshot’, may well turn out to possess a high degree of similarity once developments are studied over time. Second, hardly any studies pay attention to ‘relative timing’ (Goetz 2006), e.g., by comparing executive Europeanisation during pre-accession negotiations across different enlargement rounds. Analyses that cover the same time period, but neglect relative timing (notably relative to the date of accession and relative to the domestic consolidation of democracy) are, again, in danger of overstating the diversity of Europeanisation experiences. Finally, as Bulmer (2007: 56) has noted, it is “surprising that there has been so little work that has sought to attend to the impact of time, timing and tempo at EU level upon the domestic level. Have national governments and parliaments, for example, made a perfect adjustment to the non-linear pattern of constitutional development in the EU? And if not, why not?”.

4 Searching for patterns

The preceding section has given some pointers as to explanations for the finding of diversity or, at times, even contradictions in patterns of Europeanisation. As we have indicated, this finding is, to some extent, the result of analytical frameworks and research designs employed in studies of Europeanisation. The dominant strand of Europeanisation literature has stressed the ‘differential impact’ of Europe: diversity in domestic responses – across countries and institutions – constitutes a key theme in Europeanisation research. In fact, it has become something of an article of faith that Europeanisation is not associated with convergence (Wessels, Maurer, and Mittag 2003). Whilst all this may advise against the search for broader patterns, it is through identifying such patterns that the full implications of integration for national democracies become apparent. Four types of patterning, in particular – domestic, cross-country and cross-regional and temporal – deserve further examination.

Domestic patterning: The integrative or disintegrative effects of European integration on national ‘formulas of democracy’ (Schmidt 1997) (Schmidt 1997) are not easy to assess, not least since work that cuts across polity, politics and public policy is still rare. In one of the first attempts to undertake such a cross-cutting analysis, Dyson and Goetz (2003: 386) noted the disjuncture between “progressively Europeanized public policies, a semi-Europeanized polity, and a largely non-Europeanized politics”. Bache and Jordan (2006), in their study of the Europeanisation of the British political system, in important respects modelled on the Dyson and Goetz volume, note that “what works as a short-hand, admittedly simplified, description of the domestic effects of the EU in Germany works significantly less well for Britain” (Bache and Jordan 2006: 278). Thus, neither the polity, policy or politics domain “can be easily categorised as Europeanized, semi-Europeanized or non-Europeanized” (2006: 278). Schmidt’s (2006) monographic comparative treatment of the Europeanisation of national institutions, policy-making and representative politics in France, Germany, Italy and the UK is the first major attempt to compare both across dimensions and across countries. As such, it constitutes an advance in the search for broader patterns, although her distinction between simple and compound polities will certainly be called into question.

Cross-country and cross-regional patterns: work that seeks to detect patterns along one or several dimensions – such as the organisation of parliaments or executive Europeanisation – is often centred on particular regions of Europe. Such a regional focus does, as indicated above, carry both risks and potential. The risk of regionally-focused studies is that they magnify differences amongst country experiences, as they might exclude more extreme cases. The potential is that through the accumulation of regional studies it becomes possible to inquire into “clustered Europeanisation” (Goetz 2006), i.e., to ask whether Europeanisation differs not just across countries but also across different parts of Europe.

Temporal patterns: When it comes to temporal patterns, there are at least two issues that deserve further study. The first has to do with phases or stages of Europeanisation. Do the institutional responses of national parliaments or national executives to European integration follow a similar chronological pattern? If that is, at least to some extent, the case, then what may appear as cross-country variation may have more to do with countries being at different stages of Europeanisation than enduring cross-national variations. Second, temporal factors may shape Europeanisation experiences. In this respect, what matters is not only when a country joined the EU (different phases of integration are likely to be associated with different phases of Europeanisation; countries that have joined the EU more recently are likely to pass through phases of Europeanisation in an accelerated fashion); but also the ‘relative timing’ in terms of domestic conditions, notably as regards the state of domestic political institutions (Goetz 2006). For example, a country that joins the EU with a fully consolidated, historically validated set of polity institutions is likely to experience greater adaptive pressures on its long-established representative institutions than a

country in which Europeanisation coincides with democratic consolidation.

Enquiring into cross-sectoral, cross-country, cross-regional and temporal patterning raises another fundamental problem in Europeanisation research, which in Comparative Politics is discussed under the label of “methodological nationalism” (Beck 2003): does it make sense to privilege individual countries as the basic unit of comparative analysis? European integration involves the progressive opening of domestic political systems and their growing interdependence, yet the bulk of Europeanisation research is concerned with ‘domestic political systems’ assumed to react largely independently of each other to integration processes.

There are several problems with this narrow emphasis on domestic responses. First, the ‘opening of the state’ means that country borders lose some of their erstwhile significance in structuring social and political phenomena. Studies that take countries as the basic unit of comparative analysis are in danger of missing out one of the arguably most prominent features of integration and Europeanisation, namely their impact on the territorial structuring of politics and territoriality as a fundamental ordering principle of political life embodied in the modern nation-state (see Goetz 2007). Analysts disagree as whether the “restructuring of territoriality” (Ansell and DiPalma 2004) strengthens functional-sectoral organizing principles at the expense of territory. But whatever the direction of the territorial effect, comparative analyses are well advised to extend their scope to the Europeanisation of political, social, economic and cultural ‘spaces’ other than those defined by country borders (for an instructive example see Caramani and Mény 2005).

Second, with its focus on comparing reactions to integration within individual states, the Europeanisation literature is not well positioned to pick up ‘transnational’ integration effects. Its near-exclusive focus on the domestic is bound to underestimate the changes brought about by intensified integration, such as the emergence of new modes of transnational administration, as discussed, e.g., in recent work on the transformation of executive politics in Europe (Egeberg 2006, 2008; Curtin and Egeberg 2008).

Finally, there are good reasons to expect that ‘domestic’ systems do not react independently of each other to progressive integration. The issue here is not that the domestic reactions have a common cause: integration, but rather that ‘domestic’ variables – be they institutions, interests, ideas or identities, which tend to dominate in the explanatory accounts of Europeanisation – interact across borders.

To overcome the limitations of ‘methodological nationalism’, Europeanisation research will, therefore, need to advance both empirically and theoretically: in their empirical focus, students of Europeanisation will, first, need to pay closer attention to political-institutional spaces that cut across state borders and, second, the increasingly dense institutional sphere between the EU and the domestic levels, i.e., transnationalisation. This empirical broadening makes it necessary, at a theoretical level, to re-examine critically the hitherto dominant emphasis on domestic explanatory variables. It is probably inevitable that – as Europeanisation research engages more intensively with the study of integration and transnationalisation – the heuristic advantages and restrictions of Europeanisation as a concept will continue to be the subject of critical debate.

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