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‘Critique as a vocation’: Reconstructing critical discourses on Europeanization in German sociology, 1990–2018

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Europeanization can be regarded both as a social phenomenon, designating the influence of supranational European Union (EU) policies on the domestic level, and also as a new field of knowledge on European integration processes. In sociology, the historical formation of discourses on Europeanization always included particular forms of critique on its very object of interest, the EU. The strong nexus of theory-building, empirical research and intellectual critique is particularly relevant for disciplinary traditions of sociology that regard critique as part and parcel of its scientific vocation. Applying a sociology of knowledge approach, this small study offers a reconstruction of sociological discourses on Europeanization and the forms of EU critique it includes, based on conference papers of the German Sociological Association from 1990 to 2018. Results of the study refer to historical contexts, structural conditions and cognitive problem choice and content of sociological critique on Europe. Results are useful both for getting a sense of conflicting, often complementary forms of critique in contemporary sociology of European integration, and for understanding some of the critical functions of the social sciences in society at large.

Keywords: Europe, Europeanization, Critique, Sociology of knowledge, Sociology of European integration

1. Introduction

When researchers are asked to give talks on European integration, inevitably they become subject to expectations: they are expected to ‘explain’ Europe to the lay public, to ‘advertise’ the European Union (EU) vis-à-vis potential voters or to ‘defend’ Europeanization against an increasing number of populist and nationalist citizens. To ‘criticize’ Europe, however, occasionally causes irritation, particularly in a public climate of heated debate over recent political events. A self-defeating prophecy, any critical remarks on the EU seem to unintentionally run the risk of promoting Eurosceptic movements and thus contribute to disintegrating Europe.

In contrast, this paper assumes that the critical function of science is constitutive for what researchers do; thus, critique is part and parcel of researchers’ scientific vocation. Reflecting on and criticizing the EU might have started in the legal and political sciences, but it is fed by the work of many scholars from various disciplines: economics, historical and cultural studies, and also sociology. While ‘European studies’ has always been an

interdisciplinary and international endeavour, we should not, however, neglect that our concepts and knowledge claims always carry considerable baggage with them: in terms of particular historical, social and cultural contexts of their use. Thus, taking both disciplinary and cultural contexts of the 'critique on Europe' explicitly into account can provide a more appropriate understanding of what that critique actually means, referring to particular interpretations, their limitations, but also their strengths.

This paper examines the formation of European integration research that has emerged in German sociology in previous decades. More accurately, the German sociology of European integration is analyzed as a definitive stock of knowledge, institutionalized in the conference proceedings of the German Sociological Association (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*, DGS) from 1990 to 2018. By applying a sociology of knowledge methodology, findings show varying meanings of Europeanization and EU critique in its historical contexts, its structural conditions of being institutionalized in the discipline and in its cognitive content and problem choice. Thus, the results provide insights into the interdependent historical, structural and cognitive dimensions of EU criticism and its continuity and social change across distinct phases of the sociology of European integration. For sociologists, this small study stipulates a historically informed account of what is now known as a rather young, but well-established sub-disciplinary branch that three decades ago simply did not exist. For researchers from European studies, the analysis offers a useful understanding of the particular contribution of German sociology and its critique in this new area of research.

Some preliminary considerations on the idea of critique, the critical function of science and varieties of critique are drawn in section two. After outlining the conceptual framework of sociology of knowledge and how it is applied towards discourses of Europeanization in section three, samples and methods are described in section four. The presentation and discussion of findings in section five analyzes the three different phases of Europeanization discourses, making a distinction between historical contexts, structural conditions and the cognitive content of EU critique. Conclusions are drawn with respect to the relevance of the findings on the role of critique in contemporary Europeanization debates, some limitations of the approach are discussed and recommendations for further research given in section six.

2. Varieties of 'critique'

One does not need to be a Marxist, or a fan of the Frankfurt School, to take the critical function of science as constitutive for science itself. To interpret 'critique as a vocation' (Lepsius, 1964) means to develop sociological theory and research as a form of 'applied enlightenment', typically promoted by researchers when active as public intellectuals. Foreshadowing some prominent writings of Max Weber on science and politics, and simultaneously referring to Joseph Schumpeter's (1946, 237) analysis of the structural conditions of intellectual practices, M. Rainer Lepsius (1964) has characterized 'critique as a vocation': Motivated by the debate on the 'Spiegel' scandal in the early 1960s, in which the freedom of public media was threatened by the German nation state, Lepsius asks what is constitutive for the criticism of political actors, journalists and public intellectuals. According to him, intellectuals are people that publicly evoke the power of the written or spoken word, but without enjoying a direct responsibility or mandate for taking practical and political action (thus, distant to political power), and without the expert knowledge of professionals (thus, practising amateur or 'incompetent' critique). Their most promising success exists not in the practical realization of their ideas, but in their actual or potential value as 'disturbing' the normality of social processes, in the consequences of their critique resulting from their writing and talking in the public arena. Lepsius considers the question of the legitimate or illegitimate nature of critique not to rest with its degree of professional

competence, semi-competence or incompetence; rather, he emphasizes the legitimacy of each form of critique that refers to values that are consensually binding as ideas and norms of social action. Thus, many professionals who are busy in socially mediating abstract norms and values actually act as critics. Lepsius also documented a fine-grained sense for the self-reflective needs of a changing discipline. What he held as constitutive for the vocation of public intellectuals, comes close to what Michael Burawoy (2005) more recently characterized as 'public sociology', taking forms of audiences as central to his differentiation of uses of the discipline. How can the recognition of the critical function of science, including social science, be applied to discourses on Europeanization? Which forms of (self-)critique on Europe does the sociology of European integration evoke, in particular in German sociology?

In scientific debates, critiques of Europe often manifest themselves as competing discourses on Europeanization, the meaning of which, however, is not always clear. This paper analyzes competing discourses, or controversies, on Europeanization and parallel forms of critique within a new stock of knowledge: the German sociology of European integration. The differentiation of that stock of knowledge has taken place in the last three decades in particular; the Europeanization concept's meaning and use can serve as a guideline to reconstruct that specialty and its forms of critique, by applying a sociology of knowledge approach. It is not claimed that this process adheres to the particular developmental model of any particular 'intellectual school'; rather, the study tries to show how and to what extent such a cognitive specialty has been quantitatively growing and qualitatively differentiated in German sociology from 1990 to 2018. This prompts several other questions on the identity and boundaries of neighbour disciplines, on the particularities of German sociology's debates and on the general characteristics of social and intellectual change in this growing field of knowledge.

The study reconstructs discourses and forms of critique on Europeanization at the conceptual, empirical and methodological levels. Conceptually led by a structural analysis in the sociology of knowledge approach, it considers the historical, institutional and cognitive contexts and conditions which have generated these discourses on Europeanization. Empirically, the German sociology of European integration is described by identifying different groups of actors from 1990 to 2018, their structural contexts and intellectual positions within changing historical phases of that differentiation process. Methodologically, particularities of this stock of knowledge are analyzed by applying procedures of Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and of discourse analysis to a sample of conference proceedings of the DGS. The results aim at providing insights into the multifaceted meanings of the concept of Europeanization and critique on Europe. Its cognitive meaning is demonstrated by reconstructing its social form or 'Gestalt' in the discursive struggles of the sociology of European integration.

3. Conceptual framework: A sociology of knowledge approach

In 1928, Karl Mannheim gave a talk to the German Sociological Conference on the topic of 'Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon' (Mannheim, 1928a), after having migrated from the East European provinces to the epicentre of German intellectualism, Heidelberg. Taking the so-called 'value judgement dispute' as a reason for demonstrating the task of a sociology of knowledge as a general sociology of sociology, his speech became highly controversial among the scholars of his time, resulting in a long-lasting debate in the discipline (see Meja & Stehr, 1982; Srubar, 2010). Mannheim's approach towards a sociology of knowledge is peculiar in that he considered a porosity between ideological and scientific explanations, and that he regarded the sociology of knowledge as being in between both, as a programme of (self-)critique and a 'self-reflective therapy' of both areas of knowledge (Kettler & Meja, 2000, 298). According to Mannheim, it is the sociology

of knowledge's task to give a comprehensive account of the dynamic and conflicts of competing styles of knowledge and thinking, by reconstructing their presupposed social and historical constellations, and thus to eventually transcend the difference between (social) science and ideology.

In the same year, Mannheim published an article on 'The Problem of Generations' (Mannheim, 1928b) and, by drawing a general analogy to class as a concept, made the following conceptual distinctions. A generation *location* (*Generationslagerung*) designates the objective opportunity or potential of contemporaries to experience collective historical events in the same geographic, cultural and social space. In contrast, a generation phenomenon *as an actuality* (*Generationenzusammenhang*) refers to the realization of this opportunity or potential, when actors actually have experienced that collective event as contemporaries. A generation *unit* (*Generationseinheit*), however, informs on how this collective experience was intellectually interpreted by social groups of actors, and which structures of thinking and ideological positions result from these for distinct social groups being part of the same generational context. The empirical fact of a generation *series* was less important to Mannheim than the analysis of generational units that characterize contrasting interpretations and intellectual styles *within* one generation. Simultaneously, styles of experience and structures of thinking also create and make visible commonalities *across* generations.

Reconstructing ideal types of styles of experiencing and thinking, Mannheim scrutinized the social situation of actors with reference to class and specific forms of intellectual engagement or interest. Analyzing particular intellectual styles of generation units, he focused on the use of concepts, contrasting and missing terms as a conceptual structure, and also different modi of critique (on the procedures of Mannheim's analysis, see Balla et al., 2007; Barboza, 2009; Endreß & Srubar, 2000; Kettler et al., 1989; Kettler & Meja, 2000; Knoblauch, 2014; Srubar, 2007). According to Mannheim, the main social function of the sociology of knowledge is providing a critical analysis that synthesizes inevitably partial views of particular social interest groups towards a dynamic transformation of contrary ideological positions.

4. Sample and methods

In this study, the meaning and the uses of criticizing Europe, the EU and Europeanization processes are analyzed by taking the particular socio-structural, historical and intellectual conditions that generate these discourses into account. Focusing on the formation of the German sociology of European integration, as data sources I refer to articles published in DGS conference proceedings between 1990 and 2018. Inclusion criteria depended on whether the search terms 'Europe' and 'European' were used in the title; simultaneously this also resulted in excluding similar terms such as 'transnational', 'international', 'transition' or 'global' from the analysis. It is useful to focus on DGS conference proceedings, because they indicate how and to what extent that stock of knowledge has been institutionalized within the discipline. Articles were first presented, then published in plena, lectures and Author meets Critics (AmC) sessions, in ad-hoc groups and poster sessions, and in working groups and sections. In the analysis, I kept these forms distinct, because they seem to serve different social functions in the scientific community.

Plena, lectures and AmC sessions aim at broader conference audiences, thus authors are usually expected to refer to issues of more general 'relevance' to disciplinary identities in a particular situation. These formats typically also include invited speakers from neighbour disciplines and countries, enabling a dialogue beyond the particular frame of relevance of the professional association at national level.

DGS sections represent enduring networks of colleagues working in the same subfield on a long-term basis and are important for understanding long-term developments in a

specific field. The existence and social change of these sections not only illustrates how problem choice and research questions are interpreted (for the history of DGS sections until 1990, see Borggräfe, 2018). Sections also function as an opportunity structure for establishing mentor–apprentice relations between advanced and early career sociologists. Ad-hoc groups and poster sessions enable public interpretations of short-term events and incidents. Due to the flexible format, more innovative debates arise, by creating audiences and establishing new issues of relevance to the discipline. Occasionally they establish themselves as sections, reflecting a process of recognition, integration and institutionalization of knowledge in the community.

Since 1990, DGS conferences typically take place every two years at a particular university in Germany, where approximately two thousand members meet and discuss their work. In the period of interest, they met at universities in Frankfurt (1990, 2010), Düsseldorf (1992), Halle (1995), Dresden (1996), Cologne (2000), Leipzig (2002), Munich (2004), Kassel (2006), Jena (2008), Bochum/Dortmund (2012), Trier (2014), Bamberg (2016) and Göttingen (2018). In Bielefeld (1994) the World Congress of Sociology took place, in Freiburg (1998) and Innsbruck (2011) the DGS held its congress in cooperation with the Swiss and Austrian sociological associations. The 1992 conference explicitly referred to social change in Europe in its title. The first conference that took place in former Eastern Germany was in Halle in 1995, followed by those in Dresden, Leipzig and Jena.

Here I focus on four distinct phases that can be kept distinct according to 'turning points' (Abbott, 2001) or historical watersheds, both in general societal development and in the emergence of a sociology of European integration. From the universal set of 16 DGS conferences, a narrower sample of proceedings from each 'round' conference year and the last year was chosen (Zapf, 1991; Allmendinger, 2001; Soeffner, 2013; Burzan, 2019). This gave a sample of $n_1 = 97$ articles (see Table 1), qualitatively bridging historical phases of the specialty's formation, and quantitatively representing a quarter of the universal set. For a more fine-grained analysis, the sampling focused on plena, lectures and AmC sessions, giving a sample of $n_2 = 23$ articles (see Table 2). The sampling was based on the assumption that plenary papers are expected to refer more generally to cognitive aspects of the subfield in relation to the overall discipline. Nevertheless, the author's account is also informed by reading ad-hoc group and section articles, by the experience of being a member of the DGS section since 2010 and by working in the field of concern for about two decades.

Table 1. Quantitative description of a sample of papers from conference proceedings of the German Sociological Association (DGS, n = 97), 1990–2018.

Year of DGS conference	Source	Papers from plena, lectures, AmC	Papers from sections, working groups	Papers from ad-hoc groups, posters	Papers, in total
1990	Zapf, 1991	7	0	9	16
2000	Allmendinger, 2001	2	0	0	2
2010	Soeffner, 2013	8	7	33	48
2018	Burzan, 2019	6	15	10	31
Total		23	22	52	97

Note: Included were papers with the keyword 'Europe(an)' in title.

Table 2. Qualitative description of articles' sample, including papers from conference proceedings of the German Sociological Association, 1990–2018, restricted to plenary papers, AmC and lecture sessions (n = 23).

Source, year	Sample	Author(s), year	Title
DGS, 1990; Zapf, 1991	Plenum	Schäfers, 1991	Einleitung zum Plenum: Westeuropäische Integration oder Desintegration?
	Plenum	Lepsius, 1991	Die Europäische Gemeinschaft: Rationalitätskriterien der Regimebildung
	Plenum	Kaase, 1991	Politische Integration Westeuropas : Probleme der Legitimation
	Plenum	Joerges, 1991	Die europäische Integration und das Recht
	Plenum	Kleinsteuber, 1991	EG-Integration zwischen Wirtschaft und Kultur. Das Beispiel Medienpolitik
	Plenum	Lipp, 1991	Europa als Kulturprozeß
	Plenum	Flora, 1991	Die soziale Dimension der europäischen Integration: Externe Grenzbildung und interne Strukturierung. Zusammenfassung
DGS, 2000; Allmendinger, 2001	Plenum	Sterbling, 2001	Auswanderungsregion Südosteuropa: Ursachen und Folgeprobleme
	Plenum	Oswald, 2001	Die Korruptionstriade. Zur sozialen Beziehungsform der Korruption in Ost- und Westeuropa
DGS, 2010; Soeffner, 2013	Plenum	Bach & Vobruba, 2013	Einleitung: Europa als Konfliktraum. Soziale Konflikte und institutionelle Integration der EU
	Plenum	Wobbe, 2013	Die EU als transnationale Vergesellschaftung. Eine inklusionstheoretische Sicht
	Plenum	Best, 2013	Cui bono? Elite-Bevölkerungsdifferentiale im europäischen Integrationsprozess
	Plenum	Fehr, 2013	Modernisierung und europäische Normen. Legitimationskonflikte in Ostmitteleuropa
	Plenum	Roose, 2013	Was wir von Simmel über Chancen sozialer Integration Europas lernen können. Integration durch Konflikt als Weg für EU
	AmC	Vobruba, 2013	Einleitung zu Author meets Critics: Mehrsprachigkeit in der erweiterten Europäischen Union
	AmC	Gerhards, 2013	Sprachliche versus soziale Hegemonie. Bedeutung des kleinen Unterschieds am Beispiel des Englischen
	AmC	Münch, 2013	Hegemonie des Englischen und Erhaltung kultureller Diversität

DGS, 2018; Burzan, 2019	Lecture	Bhambra, 2019	European colonial entanglements: Questions of historical sociology and progress
	Lecture	Walby, 2019	Rethinking the concept of social system: Theorising processes of societalization, Europeanisation and gender regimes
	Lecture	Phalet, 2019	Religion and national identification: A cross-cultural comparison of Muslim youth in Europe
	Plenum	Lengfeld & Kley, 2019	Sind die Europäer bereit Ungleichheit zwischen den Mitgliedsländern zu reduzieren? Ergebnisse einer 13-Länder-Studie
	Plenum	Gottschall, 2019	Transnationale Dienstleistungserbringung in der Langzeitpflege: Konstruktion von Ungleichheiten in West- und Osteuropa
	Plenum	Gerhards & Priem, 2019	Wer ist bereit Geflüchteten in Europa Aufnahme zu gewähren? Ergebnisse einer 13-Länder-Studie

Note: Included were papers with the keyword 'Europe(an)' in title.

To analyze that particular stock of knowledge with regard to meanings of Europeanization and critique on Europe, the methodical procedures of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge (see section three) and of Grounded Theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) were applied. The latter's axial coding paradigm provides a distinction between: a) conditions and contexts of the social phenomenon under investigation, here: Europeanization; b) strategies of actors dealing with Europeanization; and c) consequences of Europeanization processes (for the case of sociology's formation in two Central European countries, see Hoenig, 2012).

For example, critique on *conditions and contexts* of European integration might unearth critique on corruption in public bureaucracies when comparing particular countries in West and East Europe (Oswald, 2001). Critique on *strategies* of Europeanization might entail a critical analysis of supranational institutions and potential deficiencies with regard to its democratic legitimization by reference to nation state democracies (Kaase, 1991). Critique can also focus on *consequences* of Europeanization processes, for example, when successful integration in the Single European Market has the unintended effect of transnational labour migration (Sterbling, 2001). As we will see, foci and objects of criticism on Europe are tied both to particular historical phases and structural conditions of that discourse on Europeanization. So the systematic analysis of forms of critique on Europe illustrates at least three interconnected levels: a) the *historical contexts* of discourse formation with the wider cultural context of society at large, circumscribed by the generation concept; b) the *socio-structural conditions* of institutionalizing the German sociology of European integration in the discipline; and c) *cognitive problem choice and content* of EU critique, as manifest in sample articles of the DGS conference proceedings. These different levels of analysis are presented and discussed in the next section.

5. Results: Contexts, conditions and contents of critique on Europe

Applying Mannheim's concept of generations to the German sociology of European integration, three historical watersheds or turning points characterizing its historical context can be identified and kept distinct: the end of the NS-regime in 1945, the upheaval of the students' movement in 1968 and the turnaround of Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. These three historical watersheds were collectively experienced both by the broader population and by social scientists in Europe, thus characterizing the formation of different generations in the sense of Mannheim. Simultaneously, they coincide with certain biographical phases of critical self-reflection among these generations' young adults between 16 and 20 years of age. To characterize these shifting generations and their structural conditions of engaging in sociology as a discipline, let us also assume that scholars of European integration enjoy approximately 30 active academic years, which corresponds to the average employment duration of a senior academic researcher or university professor, between 35 and 65 years of age. This leads us to make a distinction between three generations of authors and four historical phases of Europeanization discourses as follows: the after-war generation of 1945 that set the conceptual frameworks for the pre-historical and pioneering phase of Europeanization discourses before 1990 and then from 1990 to 1999; the protest generation of 1968 which was particularly important in the establishing phases of the sociology of European integration in the 1990s and 2000s; and the turnaround generation of 1989 which characterizes the consolidation phase of the specialty since 2010 in particular, simultaneously being subject to deep structural transformations in public science.

Structurally, *within* each of these generations or phases, different generation *units* manifest, for instance, in the controversy of mostly theoretical, historical-qualitative accounts of Europeanization processes versus mostly empirical, positivist-quantitative approaches towards Europeanization. In addition, it is possible to make a distinction between the structures of experience and thinking of generation units, embodying certain meanings of Europeanization and critique on it, namely as a) *international* comparison of social spaces, territories and societies of Europe; b) *supranational* institution building and elite formation; and c) a special case of *transnational* practices from a cosmopolitan perspective of Europe (for details, see sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). These particular structures of experience and thinking involve cognitive differences both in perceptions of the 'European dimension' of integration processes and in corresponding forms of sociological critique on Europe.

How historical contexts and socio-structural conditions also strongly influence modes of cognitive critique on Europe in the German sociology on European integration, can be shown in detail by a careful study of a sample of DGS articles between 1990 and 2018.

A first variant of EU critique focuses on the *criticism of social inequalities*. Led by a comparative examination of West and East European welfare states, it thus makes visible peculiarities in pathways to modernization, the 'European social model', and informs on perceived deficiencies, both in societal developments and in sociology's capacity to appropriately reflect these. A second variant of EU critique highlights *legitimacy deficits in democratic institution building*. It is based on interpreting Europeanization as a supranational formation of institutions and elites, bounded to particular 'rationality criteria' of institution building in democratic processes as particularly European modes of integration. Accompanied by a theoretically informed critique on 'methodological nationalisms' in sociology's theory-building, empirically it critically examines competencies and functions, procedures and also the 'democratic deficits' of supranational institutions.

A third variant of EU critique refers to *sociology's deficits in reflexively taking transnational dimensions of societal practices* into account: It is associated with transcending both national and supranational frames of analysis towards a micro-social examination of

transnational practices in social spaces such as border regions (for instance, tourism), or in particular sectors or 'fields' of society (such as the labour market and higher education). In theory-building, this approach is often associated with either Beck's cosmopolitanism and a compatible global critique on the (post-)colonial foundations of Europe, or with praxeological or neo-institutionalist 'field theory'. In some tension to this, empirical cross-cultural studies often present findings from quantitative opinion research in internationally comparative analyses. How each of these modes of critique presupposes both a particular meaning of Europeanization and a definite interpretation of the critical function of sociology in Europe, will be shown in the following subsection.

5.1. The pioneering phase, 1990–1999: International comparisons of social spaces, territories and societies

5.1.1. The historical context

The European watershed of 1989 was also the beginning of the sociology of European integration which, in its early phase, was mostly influenced by the first generation of sociologists after 1945 in Germany. In its historical and social structure, these sociologists comprise of birth cohorts between 1927 and 1944 (more narrowly, between 1927 and 1931), who experienced the catastrophic World War II as young adults and were socialized in a first separated, much later unified German nation state. Think of Ralf Dahrendorf (1990), Jürgen Habermas (1998) and Lepsius (1991, 1992) in particular. Their proponents were rather distant to strong political ideologies, but pragmatically oriented towards establishing political institutions and democratic procedures in the evolving German nation state. Some of them were themselves talented in institution building in sociology (on Lepsius, see Rehberg, 2001; Bach, 2015). Early biographical and intellectual experiences of these pioneer sociologists in after-war Germany might partly explain why many of them were enthralled by legal and political questions of the EU after the Maastricht Treaty, and more generally, why the relation of national and European institution building was always at the heart of their theoretical interest. Their criticism should also be interpreted in the light of strong hopes that the EU more and more would prove capable of bridging devastating historical experiences of destruction, separation and conflict in Europe, particularly represented by Nazi Germany's successor nation states (Lepsius, 1989).

5.1.2. The structural conditions

Sociology on European integration in Germany is closely linked to its reunification in October 1990. In historical coincidence with this, the DGS conference on the 'modernization of modern societies' took place in Frankfurt (Zapf, 1991; Glatzer, 2013). Structural transformation of the discipline itself was remarkable in that process and included: a unification of the professional associations from West and East Germany (Schäfers, 2016); the founding of the journal *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* as an important communication organ; and the foundation of an ad-hoc group on 'East and Central East European sociology' with long-lasting effects. Based on that group, a permanent working group was later built, led by Bálint Balla and Anton Sterbling, which in 1994 became established as a DGS section chaired by Balla (1994–1999), Ilja Srubar (1999–2004) and Anton Sterbling (2004–2008). Renamed in 2008 as 'European sociology', it was chaired by Maurizio Bach (2008–2014), and since then its chair has been Monika Eigmüller.

The working group's initial name was intended to appeal to the entire region of East Europe while simultaneously expressing an explicit distance to the state socialism of formerly Soviet-dominated East Europe (Sparschuh, 2003, 389). It also transcended the usual separation of East and West Europe when trying to lay the foundations for a new

phase of sociological analyses of the region (Balla, cited in Sparschuh, 2003, 389). Research on East and Central East Europe continually increased during the 1990s (see Kaase et al., 2002; Keen & Mucha, 1994; Sterbling, 2001), referring to social change, modernization and transformation, sociology of work and of science, of nationalism and of migration (Sparschuh, 2003, 390). From 1996 onwards, the book series *Beiträge zur Osteuropaforschung*, edited by Sterbling and Balla, was published by the Krämer publishing house. While in 1992 the DGS organized its conference on the theme of 'Living conditions and social conflicts in new Europe', in the same year sociologists from several European countries met in Vienna, resulting in the foundation of the European Sociological Association (Haller & Richter, 1994). Sociology flourished, in particular by developing historically informed, internationally comparative research on the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Flora, 2000; Rokkan, 1999). Stein Rokkan's historically, theoretically and empirically encompassing comparative analyses of the formation of modern nation states in Europe was especially highly influential in that regard. Still, there are many reasons to assume that it is the historical formation of 'the European social model' of welfare states that can be interpreted as a particularly European historical experience (for a historical account, Judt, 2005). Research on internationally comparative analyses on European welfare states presumably has been the most internationalized at an early stage of the discipline. It promotes the steady innovation of new research methods, contributes to more encompassing cross-national databases and is recognized for considerably altering the professional strength of the sociology on European integration (Haller, 1990; Gerhards, 1993; Hradil & Immerfall, 1997).

5.1.3. The cognitive content of critique

The first variant of criticism on Europe can best be understood when taking a common understanding of Europe as illustrating the development of particularly European welfare states into account. Generated by a comparative analysis of European social spaces, territories and in particular social policies, a more informed criticism on Europe's deficiencies in terms of social integration becomes visible. Comparative research unearths massive social inequalities and regional disparities between West and East European states, but also commonalities and differences in terms of specific pathways towards modernization, transformation and institution building processes.

The 1990 conference consists of a plenary discussion on 'West European integration or disintegration', including papers from sociologists (Schäfers, Lepsius, Flora), political (Kaase, Kleinsteuber) and legal scientists (Joerges) and historians (Lipp). In addition, the formation of an ad-hoc group on 'East and Central East European sociology' indicates that the comparison of traditional and evolving new nation states is of special importance, unearthing complex West–East relations in the sociology of European integration. Europe as a single term, without any specification, is rarely used and seldom criticized, perhaps because in these early days its meaning is rather vague.

Schäfer's (1991) plenary introduction illustrates that uncertainty and a corresponding need for construing a common history of interpretation. He starts from early pre-sociologists such as Saint-Simon and Schelling, frames modernization theory and comparative research of the 1960s as explicitly European, and emphasizes recent developments in which sociology aims at 'those social mechanisms institutionalized in the structures and processes of societies that promote integration or result into disintegration' (Schäfers, 1991, 306, translation added).

Additional speakers rather focus on supranational dimensions of European integration by discussing the idea of rationality criteria constitutive for institution building and the formation of new elites (Lepsius), criticizing problems of democratic legitimacy (Kaase) and emphasizing European integration by law (Joerges). Moreover, a cultural understanding of

integration (Lipp) and transnational practices in media politics (Kleinsteuber) is illustrated. Independent of their own research affinities, however, all speakers recognize that the international comparison of social spaces, territories and societies of Europe is an indispensable stream of empirical research, rooted in a rich tradition of investigating European welfare states.

In particular, Kaase (1991) points out a rather critical view on problems of legitimacy in the political supranational integration of Western Europe. Hinting to respective *Eurobarometer* data, he considers a broad permissive consensus of Europe's population in supporting political elites as tenuous. Moreover, he calls attention to huge regional disparities within Europe. Lepsius (1991) highlights that the term 'West Europe' loses its distinctiveness when properties of Western political systems, economic marketization and institutional structures are universalized across the continent. Implications of this universalism are also critically discussed in the ad-hoc group: Points of critique concern perceived deficiencies both in societal developments and in sociology's capacity to appropriately reflect and investigate East European specific pathways towards (West) 'Europe'. Can sociology's modernization theories grasp deep transformations after 1989? How can its explanatory weaknesses when scrutinizing historically grown structural differences and commonalities in an evolving 'European social model' be avoided?

5.2. The establishing phase, 2000–2009: Supranational institution building and elite formation

5.2.1. The historical context

The first post-war generation of sociologists in Germany, briefly outlined in the previous subsection, strongly influenced the academic socialization of its students, and often identified with the aims of the student protest generation, at least partly distancing themselves from their academic forefathers and teachers. Members of the 'student movement generation' comprise of birth cohorts between 1945 and 1964 (more narrowly, between 1948 and 1952). As young adults they both experienced the pervasive conservatism in German society at large and searched for ways of realizing innovative ideas of the students' protest movement at expanding institutions of higher education. However, forms and consequences of social protest manifested themselves very differently in western and eastern parts of Europe. Many scholars of that generation also contributed to systematically theorizing and empirically scrutinizing the East–West relationship within German sociology. Starting from the 1990s onwards, and in the course of the 2000s, sociologists of this generation strongly influenced the developing German sociology of European integration.

Several of them also made fortunate use of the opportunity to study in explicitly European scientific environments and were inspired by teachers and researchers who were active in European institutions. A prominent example is the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence (on the EUI, see Boncourt & Calligaro, 2017): Founded in 1972 as an interdisciplinary, highly international, small-sized academic context, the EUI promotes social scientific research in European integration, and offers PhD curricula in European history and law, political science and sociology. The EUI was strongly influenced by (neo-)functionalist and institutionalist models of interdisciplinary social science, in particular from political science and legal studies, which from the 1950s onwards were transferred from the United States to Europe. Emigré scholars such as Ernst B. Haas and Karl W. Deutsch maintained their interest in European integration and from the point of neo-functionalism reflected on new forms of supra-nationality (Haas, 1958; Weiler, 1981; Schmitter, 2005), federalism (Scharpf, 1985), inter-governmentalism (Moravcsik, 1999) and transactionalism (Deutsch, 1953). That stream of research also influenced institutional

sociologists from Germany (Nedelmann & Sztompka, 1993; Lepsius, 1990; Bach, 2000). Since its inception, the EUI has been, and still is, a core institution of graduate study and of research on European integration at international level. Its highly interdisciplinary character might also contribute to a more encompassing understanding of institutions and institution-building developed by sociologists who did not find it plausible to distance themselves from the innovations of neighbour disciplines in which they were taught and in which they received their qualifications.

5.2.2. The structural conditions

In line with that phase of (neo-)functionalist and inter-governmentalist understanding of the EU, these scholars interpret the specifically European dimension of integration as the supranational formation of European political institutions and a corresponding elite of administrative personnel and experts, for instance embodied in the European Commission or the European Court of Justice. This stream of research can be characterized as a sociological theory of institution influenced by modernization theory and political sociology in the tradition of Max Weber. Its strengths certainly are in analytical theory-formation, in the historical and qualitative comparison of social structures and milieus, in the critical reflection of processes of power and domination and in the reconstruction of procedures of legal and political integration. Its highly interdisciplinary nature, or at least its conceptual openness for insights of neighbouring legal studies, political science and economics, can be explained by the understanding of this particularly European dimension, but also by locating its origins in a historical phase in post-war Germany, in which sociology as a professionalized discipline was only beginning to be institutionalized and has hardly drawn strict boundaries against these also evolving neighbour disciplines.

Simultaneously, the 2000s were years in which the young specialty of the sociology of European integration received much more attention and public interest than ever before. This was partly initiated by broader debates on the meaning of the Europeanization concept, such as in a volume on the Europeanization of national societies that presents and discusses several social sectors according to the influence of Europeanization processes in such different fields as the law and the media, the public and the agrarian industry, migration control and the role of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policies (Bach, 2000). Further important collective volumes of that decade were a conference proceeding on theories of societies in Europe (Eigmüller & Mau, 2010) and a more empirically oriented handbook volume (Immerfall & Therborn, 2010). Important cognitive debates evolved around the concept of Europeanization and in particular referred to the still controversial idea of a European society or societies (Hettlage & Müller, 2006; Münch, 2008; Müller, 2007; Offe, 2001) and its dynamics (Vobruba, 2007). Both debates gained a stimulating impulse from the work of Beck on a cosmopolitan vision of Europe (Beck, 2005; Beck & Grande, 2004). At the congress in Jena in 2008, the section ‘East and Central East Europe’ was renamed ‘Sociology of European integration’ in order to develop a more encompassing and more general sociological approach towards explaining Europe and European integration. While Bach chaired the section between 2008 and 2014, since then the section has been led by Eigmüller and a younger team of scholars particularly busy in promoting transnational cooperation in the new scientific specialty.

5.2.3. The cognitive content of critique

The second variant of EU critique is based on a supranational understanding of institutions and elite-formation as particularly European modes of institutional integration, accompanying a critique on ‘methodological nationalisms’ in sociology’s theory-building in particular. Empirically, this line of research is particularly interested in critically examining

competencies, functions and procedures of supranational institutions such as the European Commission and the Parliament, the European Council and the European Court of Justice. This line of research is also most critical towards the persisting 'democratic deficit' of the EU and its respective supranational institutions.

Contributions to the DGS conference in 2000 already illustrated the critique on several unintended consequences of Europeanization processes that, rather successfully, took place during the 1990s. In particular, Sterbling (2001) emphasizes the negative effects of transnational migration practices towards Western labour markets, leading to a massive brain drain in East European states. On the same plenary question of what constitutes social justice in European societies, Oswald (2001) critically reflects on the case of corruption in (mostly national) public administration and bureaucracies, developing a model strongly based on Georg Simmel's formal sociology. In the same year as the 2000 conference, a special issue of the *Kölner Zeitschrift* on the 'Europeanization of national societies' (Bach, 2000) was published, which also illustrates the extent to which the field of knowledge has been differentiated since then. It should only be a couple of years before Beck publishes his visionary book on 'cosmopolitan Europe' (Beck & Grande, 2004; Beck, 2005), which will reframe the sociology of European integration as particularly relevant for understanding the young 21st century, insofar as it transcends the pervasive 'methodological nationalism' of the discipline as its most important issue of critique.

5.3. The consolidation phase, 2010–2018: Europeanization and critique as a special case of transnational practices from a cosmopolitan perspective

5.3.1. The historical context

The most recent phase in Europeanization discourses can be characterized as a phase of consolidation of the German sociology of European integration. Its most productive authors are part of a new generation of researchers who were collectively influenced by the 1989 turnaround in Europe and the following reunification of Germany. Having studied at German graduate schools, also using opportunities for students' mobility such as provided by Erasmus, among them there seem to exist an increasing awareness of the need to promote European scientific mobility. A 'generation of the 1989 transformation' comprises birth cohorts between 1965 and 1984 (more narrowly, from 1969 to 1973), who have experienced the transformation of Europe as young adults. Compared to the student movement of their academic forefathers and teachers, they encountered very different conditions of science and research, for instance in project-based research as part of multiannual research programmes. On the other hand, they also contribute to the normalization and consolidation of the sociology of European integration within the scientific community.

The most encompassing European enlargement took place in the mid-2000s, when 10 new members joined the EU, so that transnational practices within civil society began to alter in importance, both in public discourse and in the sociological community. Moreover, a massive global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009 manifested in most European member states and led to massive social inequalities with devastating long-term consequences, in particular in southern European countries, and promoted political disintegration by populist, Eurosceptic movements in so many states of Europe. This general social development motivated sociologists to more intensely reflect on social phenomena of conflict, crises and disintegration of the EU. The Euro-crisis not only shifted sociology's attention towards analyzing phenomena of social disintegration, economic crises and the severe effects of the financial market upon EU institutions and European societies; it also significantly decreased trust in political institutions at large.

5.3.2. The structural conditions

Structurally, the sociology of European integration started to consolidate the cognitive field by developing two central streams of institutional resources, namely research funding and early career students. Both the German Science Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, *DFG*) and European funding programmes continuously feed comparative large-scale research on Europeanization processes. An important long-term programme in that regard has been the DFG-financed consortium on 'Horizontal Europeanization: the transnationalization of daily life and social fields in Europe' (Heidenreich, 2014 and 2019), integrating researchers based at several universities. They investigate transnational practices in different sectoral fields such as employment and higher education, migration and citizenship, trade unions and public health, social trust relationships and cultural memories. The general consolidation of the field has also led to its stronger differentiation in various graduate schools and study curricula, newly founded specialized journals and book series. While empirical project-based research flourishes, not least in the context of the large projects mentioned above, the development of integrating and encompassing theories on European integration is less pronounced, apart from a strong reception of Bourdieu's theory of fields and of neo-institutionalism.

Some additional critical and reflective accounts of the sociology of European integration in German-speaking countries should be mentioned here. Franz Heschl (2013) gives a detailed overview of the sociological literature on European integration; his empirical research focuses on a critique of the European Commission's political rhetoric that have emerged in EU-enlargements rounds since the 1990s. From rather different perspectives, Stefan Bernhard (2011), Sebastian Büttner (2011), Jan Delhey (2005) and Anja Keutel (2011) account for historical and conceptual developments in the sociology of European integration. The volume edited by Bach and Hoenig (2018) is one of the most recent collective works accounting for a consolidated stock of knowledge called the sociology of European integration.

5.3.3. The cognitive content of critique

In the sociological research of the last decade, Europe has been increasingly considered as a special case of transnational practices of cosmopolitan societal forms. Succeeding Beck's 'Cosmopolitan Europe' (Beck & Grande, 2004) and also post-colonial critique on Europe, the historical and global embedding of European modernity, and forms of global translation and circulations of knowledge are critically reflected. Thus, the third version of EU criticism identified here to a large extent focuses on sociology's existing, or assumed, deficits in critically reflecting its own methodological assumptions when doing research on Europe. There is emphasized an increasing need to transcend national and supranational frames of analysis towards a micro-social examination of transnational practices. This refers to studies on transnational practices in social spaces such as border regions (mobility by tourism and consumerism), or in sectoral 'fields' of society (such as the labour market and higher education, the asylum system and public health). While in theory-building this approach is often associated with either Beck's cosmopolitanism and a compatible global critique on the (post-)colonial foundations of Europe, or with praxeological or neo-institutionalist 'field theory' (Bourdieu, Fligstein), empirical cross-cultural studies often present findings from quantitative opinion research in internationally comparative analyses of welfare states.

While the focus on transnational societal practices also inspired the name of the DGS 2010 conference, the plenum discusses 'Europe as a space of conflicts', and tries to establish a conflict-theoretical view on critically reflecting the most recent phenomena of the Euro-crisis of 2008 and 2009. The volume on 'Theories of societies and European politics' edited by Eigmüller and Mau (2010), published in the same year, can also be understood as part

of this explicitly critical theoretical effort. In their plenary introduction to the DGS 2010 conference (for all papers discussed here, see Soeffner 2013, and Table 2), Bach and Vobruba emphasize the value of a conflict-theoretical perspective on European integration insofar as it reflects self-descriptions of European institutions from an explicitly critical perspective instead of simply reproducing them in research. In addition, the authors focus on supranational institutions of conflict-regulation, on social inequalities and structural cleavages between West and East European territories. Theresa Wobbe outlines a concept of social inclusion in the tradition of Simmel and Luhmann, for theorizing transnational societal processes. She critically reconstructs the nexus between transnational societal process and social inclusion in the Single European Market by examining 'person' categorizations such as 'employee', in Europe. More particularly, her critique of Europe refers to its gendered scripts of work and employment underlying divisions of labour in the Single Market, and she highlights opportunities of anti-discrimination strategies to combat social inequality and discrimination. Jochen Roose also refers to Simmel's conflict theory and tries to show its relevance for interpreting Eurobarometer data on social trust, media behaviour and the potential of conflict integration among European populations.

Both Heinrich Best and Helmut Fehr present research on elites and elite-differentials in different EU member states and thus provide important insights in one of the most controversial issues of critique on Europe. Best's results from quantitative opinion research on the EU orientation of nation-based elites do not show a broad, cross-cultural consensus of elites supporting European orientations; the latter rather must be interpreted by national contexts of action, and elites much stronger loyalty vis-à-vis their nation states. Fehr develops a historical-qualitative approach for examining nation-based elites and their support for European norms as part of modernization processes; comparatively he reflects problems of legitimacy in educational systems and environmental politics in Poland and Czech Republic. His conceptual framework is that of a 'partial modernization' theory that avoids weaknesses both of functionalist and reflexive modernization theories: While the former does not take crises of transformation into account, the latter does not refer to transformations in Eastern Europe. Thus, Fehr's research on elite-formation in East European societies simultaneously functions as an empirically and theoretically highly elaborated critique of particular streams of research in the German sociology of European integration. Finally, the AmC session on Jürgen Gerhard's empirical study on multilingualism in Europe (Vobruba; Gerhards; Münch) articulates critique against English as a hegemonic language and makes a point for maintaining cultural language-diversity, both in social life and in academic discourse.

Interestingly, the most recent DGS conference in 2018 (see Burzan 2019) illustrates a quite huge hiatus of sociological forms of critique on Europe. We find historically informed, but rather epistemologically oriented lectures criticizing sociology's historical Eurocentrism (Bhambra), androcentrism (Walby) and deficits of the discipline to deal with religious diversity in contemporary societies of Europe (Phalet). On the other hand, in the plenary sessions very specialized forms of expert knowledge and critique based on quantitative large-scale research are presented and discussed, encompassing data from more than 10 different nation states (Lengfeld & Kley; Gerhards & Priem). Gottschall's account on regimes of long-term care work in West and East European states, informed by a social constructivist gender perspective, takes inequalities by gendered forms of labour and West–East relations in care regimes as a point of departure from her multifold critique on social inequalities in Europe and the EU. In addition, the DGS conference of 2018 shows the highest female share of authors or speakers (50%) when compared to previous phases of the specialty such as the DGS 1990 and 2010 conferences' samples, where speakers were exclusively male. There is hope that critique of social inequalities in Europe will both

provide a refreshing outlook on the future of the specialty and have some long-term effects in more appropriately understanding multiple inequalities in Europe.

6. Conclusions

This small study has analyzed a presumed dynamic of competing discourses on Europeanization and EU critique within the specialty of the sociology of European integration in its formative phase in German sociology between 1990 and 2018. More particularly, DGS conference proceedings between 1990 and 2018 were analyzed in terms of the historical contexts, structural conditions and cognitive problem contents of sociological critique on Europe and the EU. In historical terms, there can be identified at least three different generations that contributed to the formation of a sociology of European integration from 1990 to 2018, while structurally three generational units – or styles of thought – simultaneously exist across these generations. Each of these streams of sociology developed its own meanings and interpretations of what is particular to European integration, and also distinct perspectives of critique on Europe.

By making use of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and his distinction of generations and generation units, distinct criticisms on Europe are interpreted in the light of historical contexts and structural conditions of their use. Though other conceptual frameworks, such as those of Bourdieu's field theory or Foucault's discourse analysis might also provide some tools for reconstructing symbolic struggles on Europeanization and EU critique, Mannheim's sociology of knowledge approach is specific in its strengths: It embeds the discursive analysis of a certain stock of knowledge in a historically and structurally informed investigation of particular generational contexts and structural styles of sociological thinking on Europe. Thus, the analysis enables us to come to a complementary vision of these intellectual styles of thinking and critique, their particular historical and structural presuppositions.

In terms of the *historical contexts* of discourses on Europeanization, distinct generations or social groupings were identified that contributed to the formation process of the German sociology of European integration. Pioneer sociologists of post-war Germany had a significant influence on the early phase of the 1990s in particular, which was characterized by the reunification of Germany and the deep transformation of West–East relations in Europe. In contrast, their former students represent the second generation in the German sociology of European integration that engaged in establishing the new cognitive specialty throughout the 1990s and 2000s, in a phase where EU enlargements and global crises significantly changed factors contributing to European integration and disintegration. The most recent grouping of sociologists was socialized by the second generation of European integration research in an already highly differentiated, consolidated field of research. Simultaneously, in their qualification and employment opportunities they are subject to more (trans-)national competition, but also new forms of cooperation increasingly characterized by large-scale projects.

Regarding the *structural conditions* of the specialty's formation, *across* these historical phases three styles of thinking about Europe are kept distinct, each with its particular interpretations of 'the European dimension'. First, there is a research tradition of internationally comparative research on European welfare states, historically and theoretically informed by modernization theory and empirically sophisticated in applying mostly quantitative research methods. Second, an additional research stream investigates supranational institution building and elite formation, primarily inspired by neo-functionalism and Weberian political sociology. Third, a line of research most prominently associated with Beck's cosmopolitan vision of sociology and its criticism on the discipline at large, focuses on studying transnational practices in social spaces or fields.

In terms of the *cognitive content* of critique, three corresponding forms of criticism on Europe are identified and kept distinct: critique on deficient social integration of Europe and its particular pathways towards a 'European social model' of welfare states, mostly manifesting in increasing social inequalities and regional disparities between West and East Europe; criticism on political deficiencies in a missing democratic legitimacy of supranational institution building and institutions decoupled from its nation-based democratic processes; and criticism on sociology's reflective deficiencies in rethinking Europeanization and its unintended effects, challenging both national and supranational levels of analysis by drawing attention to transnational practices and cosmopolitan visions of Europe itself.

There is no doubt that in the contemporary German sociology of European integration the third mode of criticism is currently the dominant one. It provides a fundamental criticism of the theoretical and conceptual repertoire of sociology, and does so by confronting theory-building with findings from empirical studies on Europeanization processes. As a detailed empirical analysis of DGS conference proceedings shows, its particular modes of EU critique, however, in part seem to manifest either as 'expert critique' of a highly professionalized and specialized empirical sociology that has already got rid of its more (self-)reflective forms of knowledge. Or sociological criticism presents itself as strongly influenced by cosmopolitan debates on Europe, including its (post-)colonial 'other', illustrating an epistemologically fundamental, possibly 'amateur', 'incompetent' critique on Europe.

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