

A SYNTHESISING APPROACH ON EUROPEANISATION

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Abstract

The current study offers a comprehensive approach for the better theoretical and empirical understanding of the notion of Europeanisation. For this purpose, it establishes a working definition which is the initial step of conceptualisation. The study interprets the research of Europeanisation from an institutional approach, building on the work of Douglass C. North and other authors who heavily relied on his findings. Thus the paper attempts to provide an overview of the concept, functions and types of institutions as well as the theories of the interactions between the different categories. The study identifies the research problem and basic question from the point of view of institutional change, drawing a parallel between these processes and the phenomenon of Europeanisation. The second part of the paper presents a model which contributes to the epistemological understanding of Europeanisation, and through that to the ontological concretisation of the concept.

Keywords: Europeanisation, concept formation, institutionalism, institutional change

Introduction

Recent studies on Europeanisation are dominated by two distinguished approaches (Beichelt 2008, Graziano and Vink 2006, Lombardo and Forest 2012, Trenz 2016). On the one hand there is a strongly normative institutional approach which interprets Europeanisation from a top-down procedure point of view, i.e. how the European Union provides rules and mechanisms to regulate the acts, decisions and behaviour of different national level public and private actors across a great variety of integrated policy areas; and how these domestic actors adapt to and internalise these European governance methods in their way of thinking and doing things. This approach, though, has its potentials to analyse Europeanisation on large scale samples, and by this in a more general sense and through

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comprehensive quantitative statistical methods, yet it has a strict normative framework, it sees the actors as agents in rigid structures, and it interprets the complex impacts of Europeanisation as outcomes of an institutional project (namely the project of European Integration).

On the other hand, the discursive approach is more interested in how the actors perceive and understand Europeanisation; what is the meaning of it for them, how they identify themselves with these understandings, and what are the specificities of their discourse on Europeanisation or European Integration. So it is rather a bottom-up approach, it focuses primarily on the actors, and it tries to grasp the origins and roots of the normative institutional framework which is continuously redefined and developed at the supranational level. However, because of its specific methodologies (mostly qualitative discourse and content analysis) and limited target groups, this approach could hardly provide generalisable research outputs on Europeanisation. Therefore, while the discursive approach aims to catch the sense of Europeanisation and how it is evolving through discussions in different social contexts, its explanatory capacities are restricted.

The authors of this paper argue that the two approaches briefly described above are dealing with two different notions: the institutional one is more focusing on the top-down impacts of the bottom-up processes investigated by the other, the discursive approach. Both notions could be interpreted as Europeanisation or European Integration, yet to elaborate solid scientific terms, it is necessary to differentiate the two strongly interrelating phenomena. This is the first goal of this paper by interpreting Europeanisation as more an impact of European Integration. Therefore, the study commits itself to the institutional approach which is more adequate for the broad investigation of the top-down impacts and influences. The second section presents the institutional theory of Douglass C. North then the third part interprets Europeanisation as a process of institutional change. The last chapter describes a model which aims to synthesise in a certain way both institutional and discursive understandings and methods on Europeanisation as the paper, despite its institutional preferences, finds it important to integrate some specificities of the discursive approach.

Using and Formatting Concepts

"Facts speak from themselves" – sounds familiar for everybody, yet it is a hardly correct statement, as facts could not propose any meaning without interpretations. As Sartori (1985) underlines, to observe is much more than just to register; to sense something means to put what we see into a context

of language-based interpretation. And for this, we need concepts, already existing, alternated or newly elaborated ones. Therefore, concepts are important parts of both everyday and scientific communication; they are tools to create common understandings through constructed systems of signifiers and signified aspects. According to Gerring (1999), in general terms, concepts are made up of three basic elements: firstly, there are the properties or attributes which differentiate one concept from another – these are the intensional components; secondly, there are the pools of subjects and objects as phenomena to be covered – these are the extensional components; and finally, there is the term or label make these various elements or dimensions interpretable. Concept formation refers to the management of this tripartite relationship, must be viewed holistically, as these three elements are interdependent, therefore, through the hermeneutic circle of constructing or alternating a concept it is impossible to separate these fundamentals; modifications regarding to one element necessarily cause changes for the other two as well. For instance, if we add or remove something from the intensional components, i.e. from the aspects that define the given phenomena, then these theoretical steps have to have the same – broadening or narrowing – effects on the extensional components, i.e. on the features which the concept refers to, and also regarding to the term or label as well. And of course, on the other way around, if we make alterations regarding to the extensional components, it needs to be referred from the point of view of intensional (definitional) features and linguistic elements as well. Even if we do revisions about the term or label, we need to adjust the other two elements otherwise the concept turns to be vague and ambiguous.

To pick up or to format an already existing concept, or to elaborate a brand new one should be the initial step of every research as theoretical assumptions and interpretations of findings remain more context-dependent and less clarified without proper conceptual background. For Sartori (1985) concept formation is not just a holistic approach regarding to the intensional, extensional, and linguistic (terminological) components, but an attempt that should be based on rules as guidelines. He defines altogether ten rules which should be take into consideration during conceptualization, i.e. throughout drawing up a definition; identifying the theoretical realm (intensions); operationalizing the phenomenal realm (extensions); and choosing the language (terminology).²

² Sartori's (1985) rules are the following ones (based on David Levi-Faur's summary):

In contrast, for Gerring (1999) concept formation is a much more open-ended, dynamic, unpredictable and variable process than to simply follow some crucial rules. Instead of a guideline, he proposes eight criteria that scholars should take into account during concept formation.³ The catch is

"1 - of any empirical concept always, and separately, check (1) whether it is ambiguous, that is, how the meaning relates to the term; and (2) whether it is vague, that is, how the meaning relates to the referent;

2a - always check (1) whether the key terms (the designator of the concept and the entailed terms) are defined; (2) whether the meaning declared by their definition is unambiguous; and (3) whether the declared meaning remains, throughout the argument, unchanged (consistent);

2b - always check whether the key terms are used univocally and consistently in the declared meaning;

3a - awaiting contrary proof, no word should be used as a synonym for another word;

3b - with respect to stipulating synonymises, the burden of proof is reserved: what requires demonstration is that by attributing different meanings to different words we create a distinction of no consequence;

4 - in reconstructing a concept, first collect a representative set of definitions; second, extract their characteristics; and third, construct matrixes that organize such characteristics meaningfully;

5 - with respect to the extension of a concept, always assess (1) its degree of boundlessness, and (2) its degree of denotative discrimination vis-à-vis its membership;

6 - the boundlessness of a concept is remedied by increasing the number of its properties; and its discriminating adequacy is improved as additional properties are entered;

7 - the connotation and the denotation of a concept are inversely related;

8 - in selecting the term that designates the concept, always relate to an control with the semantic field to which the term belongs - that is, the set of associated, neighbouring words;

9 - if the term that designates the concepts unsettles the semantic field (to which the term belongs), than justify your selection by showing that (1) no field meaning is lost, and that (2) ambiguity is not increased by being transferred;

10 - make sure that the defines of a concept is adequate and parsimonious: adequate in that it contains enough characteristics to identify the referents and their boundaries; parsimonious in that no accompanying property is included among the necessary, defining properties."

³ The criteria of Gerring (1999) based on based on Buller and Gamble (2002: 7-9):

"(a) Familiarity. This criterion refers to the degree to which a new concept conforms or clashes with established usage. The further from such usage that a new concept strays, the less likely it is to be remembered and accepted by the relevant academic community. More generally, the lesson would seem to be: avoid inventing or redefining new concepts unless absolutely necessary and then, always provide an accompanying justification for doing so.

(b) Resonance. In simple terms, the 'catchier' the concept, the better. [...] However, a word of caution is in order. The search for a label with (what Gerring memorably calls) 'cognitive click' may lead the researcher to violate one of the other eight criteria. Trying to be witty or trendy may lead to a choice which confuses rather than clarifies.

(c) Parsimony. The formal definition of a concept (as opposed to its properties and attributes) should be as simple and concise as possible. [...]

that these criteria are interdependent, and much of them not in a linear but in a reverse sense, so if we are focusing on one segment to make our concept more precise it could lead to a consequence that regarding to another criterion or other criteria it turns to be less clarified. That is why Gerring argues that to find an actually (from a perspective, in a context, for an explanation, etc.) seems proper balance is the key moment during concept formation. Therefore, concepts usually have relative than absolute characteristics, underlines Gerring, which means that the process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction, or to say the continuous formation, should be vary from a lot of point of view and could not be forced into a pre-shaped sequence. Yet, it does not mean that a blurred concept could be useful; not at all, what Gerring emphasize is that the conceptual background might be altered because of different reasons, however it always needs to be clarified and balanced enough to provide a framework for theoretical assumptions, methodological orientations and interpretations of outcomes.

As this paper's starting point is that Europeanisation still lacks a solid conceptual ground, the present study aims to contribute for the ongoing concept formations on the notion, especially based on Gerring's suggestions. For this goal, it provides a definition, identifies intensional components based on a meta-theoretical approach, and provides an epistemological framework of extensional features.

European Integration and Europeanisation – A working definition

A frequently analysed albeit still unclarified issue of European Studies is the relationship between European Integration and the concept of

(d) Coherence. [...] It refers to the extent to which the properties of a concept (intension) and the phenomena it covers (extension) 'belong to one another' or are logically related. [...]

(e) External Differentiation: Internal coherence can be contrasted with the external differentiation of a concept. If the criteria listed above are partly about outlining what a concept is, external differentiation helps to clarify what a term isn't. It is about establishing the limits or boundaries beyond which a concept should not be extended. [...]

(f) Depth. [...] For Gerring, the utility of a concept should partly be judged according to the amount of characteristics it can 'bundle together'. The greater the number, the greater the 'depth' of a concept and, the greater the depth, the better.

(g) Theoretical Utility. This criterion simply means that concepts should help in the formation and development of theories. It reminds us that concepts and theories are inherently related.

(h) Field Utility. This final criterion refers to the disruption that concept formation can do to the rest of the 'semantic field' in which academics are working. [...] those concepts which bring the least amount of disruption to their neighbours are more desirable."

Europeanisation. This is essentially due to the fact that neither concept has been properly identified, there is still no scientific consensus regarding their definition and conceptual foundations (Buller and Gamble 2002, Bulmer 2008). Consequently, the comparison of the two concepts is also problematic. According to mainstream theory, European Integration is a part of Europeanisation, i.e. it is actually Europeanisation understood in a narrower sense, which is only concerned with processes and reforms at a supranational level (conducting and establishing reconciliations, decisions, organisations, regulations, strategies, mechanisms, procedures, measures, etc.). In contrast, Europeanisation – on top of these – includes the following elements: 1) what national level political, economic, social relations (serving as diagnoses of our times) and processes influence the above mentioned supranational reforms (*bottom-up* or *uploading* aspect); and 2) in turn, in what ways do these supranational level changes retroact on the national context (*top-down* or *downloading* aspect). The most recent trend transcends this frame and promotes the idea that Europeanisation should consider broadly interpreted regional as well as global mechanisms of action between the respective nations (as *crossloading* aspects) for the sake of analysing bottom-up (uploading) and top-down (downloading) effects in their integrity (Beichelt 2008, Bulmer 2008, Howell 2004, Wach 2015).

This specific enrichment of the interpretation of Europeanisation can be detected by studying the historical evolution of the definition of the term, the specifics of the employed approaches and methods, as well as the existence of a generational division of the scientific works related to the notion (cf.: Grünhut and Bodor 2016). The necessity to find a universally accepted working definition of Europeanisation requires a clear (subjective and thus criticisable) decision regarding the above mentioned dilemma of the conceptual distinction of European Integration vs. Europeanisation. Based on these considerations, this paper sees preferable not to merge the two concepts but to treat them separately (at least to try to do this). Build on this approach the present study introduces a proposal for a considerably narrower interpretation of Europeanisation than used by mainstream theory. In addition, the clarification of the foundations is deemed equally essential from the aspect of conceptualisation, theoretical hypotheses, choice of method and empirical investigation.

In light of the above, the authors define *Europeanisation as an adaptation of domestic institutions and an adaptive capacity of national level actors to the normative requirements prescribed or recommended by the supranational level in order to facilitate the realisation of integration objectives.*

The precise interpretation of the definition requires a concrete identification of several of its elements. The term *integration objectives* suggests that the impact of Europeanisation can only be measured in light of a supranational requirement facilitating the unification of member states or the European Union and its partner states as a goal. Consequently, it is a priori out of question that a decision in favour of disintegration (dismantling EU law and competences, suspension of community strategies, etc.) might promote Europeanisation. According to the paper's basic premise, as a result of the interrelation between European Integration and Europeanisation, the latter cannot be interpreted in isolation from the former, while the former can occur even in the absence of empirical experience of the latter. This is the very reason justifying the research on Europeanisation which, according to the authors, is the national level manifestation of European Integration, and can be considered as national level (not general, rather targeted) diagnosis of the current state of integration.

The term of *normative requirements* indicates that the supranational level does not only formulate its requirements in terms of *what* it expects to be realised at the national level, it also has concrete ideas concerning *how* the process of implementation should occur. This normative condition is not self-contradictory with the eventual non-mandatory (optional) nature of the requirement which is relevant only from the aspect of accountability.

The distinction between institutional *adaptation* and *adaptive capacity* and their separate treatment constitute relevant aspects from the point of view of this paper. The former refers to adaptation itself, i.e., whether or not domestic institutions meet supranational standards. Adaptive capacity, by contrast, indicates to what extent the adaptive process has been recognised as a necessity by the actors, that is, their own perception of the process. Integrating this aspect is essential in order to avoid the trap of presenting the research outcomes from an outsider's perspective and through a rigid structuralist argumentation, and also to be able to regard agents as real actors by integrating them into the research which is partially related to them.

Institutions

Albeit a wide range of theoretical literature is available for the definition and description of institutions, the authors prefer to rely on the approach presented in the works of Douglass C. North (1990, 1991) in the framework of their synthesising approach. This is justified by two reasons. On one

hand, North's theory – including posterior criticisms and corrections – may serve as a firm foundation, to date, the major statements of North have not been refuted, but subjected to further interpretations and refinements. On the other hand, the research problem hereby presented is also derived from the studies of North, which also justifies the authors' fidelity to his theoretical framework.

North's book entitled *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* begins with the following concise statement: "*Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic. Institutional change shapes the way societies evolve through time and hence is the key to understanding historical change*" (North 1990, 3).⁴ Institutions ensure a number of normative tasks and functions related to social integration. Through their frameworks which are collectively accepted and adopted, they fill everyday life with consistency, repetitions, regularity and routines. By reducing general uncertainty, they make the potential actions of individuals and other agents more predictable, while they also encourage the making of choices and decisions. They provide incentives to engage and participate in interactions, while they also create stability, alleviate the tension of facing new situations as they contribute to individual self-confidence and sense of competence. By virtue of their frameworks adopted and accepted by all, they support the consolidation of individual and group identity, the individual's sense of belonging to a community, her sense of responsibility and commitment to the public interest. Institutions specify the way in which information flows and is gathered, which is an essential aspect in terms of decision making, participation and identification (Fiori 2002).

The above is a normative description, thus the destabilisation of institutions serving as frameworks and pillars and their dysfunctionality render social integration more difficult, and may initiate a process of disintegration. For this reason, one of the fundamental questions of North and those following in his footsteps is how institutional change occurs and how it can be characterised. However, before exposing this process it is necessary to discuss the different types of institutions.

⁴ In the coming paragraphs of the study, we shall refer to North's theory on several occasions, which implies in each case a reference to his book written in 1990 cited above.

North distinguishes two types of institutions which he describes on the basis of formal and informal constraints. Formal institutions are concretely defined and codified, therefore they constitute tangible factors. They include constitutions, laws, contracts, regulations and provisions, strategies, plans, organisational and functional procedures fixed in the form of rules, measures and mechanisms. Besides the fact that these institutions are formally defined, they exist at various levels (international, national, regional, local, organisational, private) in a hierarchical relationship with each other based on super- or subordination. Their transformation always results from a conscious decision and intervention which may generate varying costs (and consequences) depending on the hierarchical level of a given formal institution. The modification of a constitution always involves higher costs than that of a legislation, a legal amendment is more expensive than the modification of a local regulation, and the modification of a local regulation is always more expensive than that of a private contract or organisational and operational regulations. This is due to the (eventual) heterogeneous impact of the modification on the rest of the formal institutions in the hierarchical order.

By informal institutions, North refers to unwritten constraints based on a collective consensus and transmitted from generation to generation (with or without alterations), which can be identified as the various intangible elements of culture and cultural context, its various community patterns. These include values, norms, codes, customs, rules and conventions, behavioural patterns, community sanctions and taboos. These informal institutions are internalised as patterns by members of the collectivity in various forms and to a varying extent, therefore their impact is by no means deterministic but relevant. Thus, informal institutions are unwritten manifestations, extensions and culturally embedded spaces of „constructed“ formal institutions characterised by a slow pace of historical evolution and transformation. The quality of relationship between formal and informal constraints is essential from the aspect of the predictability and order of social processes and interactions.

Institutional Change and Europeanisation – The research question

According to North's theory, social processes and changes – which are obviously characterised by a certain temporality – can be grasped through analysing the relationship and interaction between formal and informal institutions, that is, the transformation of institutional framework. North points out that a certain interplay between formal and informal institutions

always exists, therefore it is wrong to assume that the two types of institutions can be investigated separately. The relationship between the two types of institutions can be identified in terms of graduality and discontinuity. According to the former criterion, the development of institutional framework is describable by continuity, in a sense that formal constraints, their prevalence and enforceability is determined by informal institutions conceived as unwritten, tradition based cultural specifics, as these latter are characterised by a historical past and social embeddedness, whereas the former only reflect the state of affairs at a given period of time. This of course does not imply that formal institutions cannot influence informal ones. Of course, this is not merely a theoretical possibility but a well-grounded practical eventuality as well, albeit these effects are limited due to the tradition dependence of informal institutions.

The theory of discontinuity accepts this argument to a certain extent, however, it highlights the fact that the fundamental transformation of institutional frameworks, and the profound social changes it entails cannot be comprehended on the basis of continuity, on the contrary, in the light of sudden, drastic interventions, which latter are primarily conscious reforms affecting formal institutions. In other words, comprehensive social change is initiated by the transformation of formal institutions, while the modification of informal constraints is reflexive compared with this process.

Among the two approaches presenting a causal order of the transformation of institutional framework, North preferred the theory of continuity in the course of his research. As he himself has put it: *"[I]nstitutions typically change incrementally rather than in discontinuous fashion. How and why they change incrementally and why even discontinuous changes (such as revolution and conquest) are never completely discontinuous are a result of the embeddedness of informal constraints in societies. Although formal rules may change overnight as the result of political or judicial decisions, informal constraints embodied in customs, traditions, and codes of conduct are much more impervious to deliberate policies. These cultural constraints not only connect the past with the present and future, but provide us with a key to explaining the path of historical change"* (North 1990, 6). By the above statement, North suggested that informal institutions are accorded logical priority within the institutional framework, and on the other hand, change is unidirectional and linear, proceeding from informal to formal constraints. However, he did not commit himself entirely to this argument, and suggested that the process of change might differ from this scheme in some cases, therefore it is more

appropriate to conceive it as a reciprocal, dynamic interaction. With this statement, North did not question the dominance of continuity over discontinuity as he depicted the interaction between informal and formal institutions as a certain type of dynamic continuity without major interruptions.

The issue of continuity versus discontinuity is essential from the perspective of understanding institutional change, yet this statement does not influence certain theoretical premises. For instance, the higher change resistance and more time consuming process of transforming informal institutions, i.e., the prevalence of a dynamic tension between the capacity to modify informal and formal constraints is irrefutable. In the same way, it is an established fact that informal institutions exist in the form of traditions and collective cultural patterns endowed with social roots and a historical past, in contrast with formal institutions reflecting only their specific era. Thus it is impossible to determine in advance which type would enjoy higher legitimacy among the majority of society in case of eventual tensions between informal and formal institutions, however, it is reasonable to state that informal ones, due to their internalised character, may influence the implementation and enforceability of new, or at least newer formal constraints. If this is so, then it can also be declared that formal institutions that are not in harmony with informal ones are a source of inconsistency and various types of dysfunctionalities in the institutional framework. However, this does not necessarily imply that formal institutions which can be changed overnight are inconsistent with informal constraints as they change more slowly; it might occur that while these latter have already changed, the formal ones failed to reflect this tendency.

From the aspect of the main question of the present study, the aforementioned theoretical foundations are prioritised over the dichotomy of graduality versus discontinuity. The problem stems from the fact that we are currently faced with an *accelerated pace of history*. A wide range of social theories depict this tendency or its various aspects, however, the scope of this paper does not allow for a theoretical summary of this phenomenon (see, for instance: Beck 2003, 2005, Giddens 1984, 1990, 1991, Lash 1999). The acceleration of time requires the establishment of an increasing number of new formal institutions due to their being a reflection of the actual state of affairs. A significant share of formal constraints, being subject to permanent changes, deviate from the continuous course of a reciprocal, dynamic interaction depicted by North. Due to the rapid pace of their

establishment, obsolescence and transformation, they neither rely on informal constraints as their foundations, nor are they capable of influencing those in a direct manner, only indirectly, since their lifespan is too short. Hence, it is not the transformation of individual formal institutions which is critical, but the overall internal coherence and consistency of the reform process. The basic premise of North, according to which there always exists a certain kind of relationship between formal and informal institutions, implies in this case that the *secession* itself is the essence of the relationship: the two types of institutions live a separate life, while still maintaining their interaction. Inconsistency prevails, which induces considerable tension, uncertainty and unpredictability in the institutional framework, social processes, interactions, while at the same time it also promotes active agency. Actors are presented with two theoretical alternatives. Either they choose to adhere to formal institutions, especially provided that their transformation demonstrates an internal coherence and a specific trend despite the constant changes. This entails the weakening of informal constraints due to the determining role of formal institutions. This process can also be perceived as a reflexive adaptation of traditions and cultural milieu to formal institutions in the form of the establishment of a universalising cosmopolitan cultural context shaped by global impacts (cf.: Beck and Grande 2007, Benhabib 1996, 2002, 2004, 2006, Habermas 2009, 2012). In the opposite way, especially in case when a reform lacks internal coherence, actors, instead of adhering to quickly changing formal institutions, may stick to informal constraints demonstrating a higher stability. However, this can easily lead to dysfunctionality as the functioning of the institutional framework may exhibit permanent tensions.

The above alternatives were deliberately presented in an extreme form, in addition, it is impossible to state that actors consistently follow a specific path in each situation. The empirical experience related to their decision can be positioned somewhere between the two extremes. *The objective of this approach is to find out to what extent formal and informal constraints exhibit consistency at a specific fixed moment in the permanent process of institutional change.*

In what fashion are changing institutional frameworks related to the phenomenon of Europeanisation? Europeanisation, as already put forth in the working definition, in addition to being conceived as the adaptation of domestic institutions to supranational normative requirements based on the objectives of integration, must also be examined through the lens of

adaptive capacity. European Integration undoubtedly forms a part of the accelerating pace of history, these very global-regional processes justify the statement according to which the continuity of the institutional framework is affected by constant changes brought about by rapid, external effects, which may produce a tension between formal and informal constraints. Hence, according to this paper's interpretation, Europeanisation shows: 1) whether inconsistency occurs in the national institutional framework due to supranational normative requirements; and if so, 2) can it be traced back to formal institutions, informal constraints, or the overall insufficient adaptation of the institutional framework.

As has already been underlined in the working definition, Europeanisation ought to be considered not only as an adaptation of domestic institutions, but also as an adaptive capacity. This distinction is crucial to determine to what extent deliberate compliance or deviation (beyond its voluntary nature) is a process recognised by the agents. This shall be analysed as follows. Adaptation refers to the compliance of the two types of institutions, i.e., formal and informal constraints with supranational normative requirements. By contrast, adaptive capacity can be grasped in the manner institutional compliances represented and to what extent adaptation is acknowledged by actors, whether it has some omitted or partially recognised aspects from their point of view. In more precise terms: how do they perceive the adaptive process which they are a part of.

The Model Framework

The synthesising approach of this paper is based on two pillars. One of them considers formal institutions as its basic unit of observation. Recalling the working definition: Europeanisation is the adaptation of domestic institutions and an adaptive capacity of national level actors to the supranational normative requirements based on the objectives of integration. Hence, during the first phase, supranational level formal institutions must be identified serving as a context for the investigation of institutional adaptation. This implies the selection of one or several strongly interrelated formal institutions among the wide range of mandatory or recommended formal institutions acknowledged by various organs of the European Union. A possible way for this is to identify the units deemed relevant from the aspect of our research among the set of operative formal institutions of a specific sector or policy area. Therefore, a *dimension of integration* – i.e. the selected sector, policy area must be discussed first. Within this framework, the second phase involves the

identification of one or several mandatory or recommended interrelated formal institutions acknowledged by the supranational level. This model enables the analysis of adaptation at the national level to these *supranational level formal institutions*. For this purpose, an identification of formal institutions relevant at the national level has to be performed through a similar procedure. More precisely, the selection of *national level formal institutions* related to supranational level formal institutions included in our research must proceed along the same dimension (sector, policy area).

Hence, the first pillar incorporates three elements: the given dimension of integration; the supranational level formal institutions identified therein and the related national level formal institutions. The quality of adaptation can be determined by the means of a secondary analysis, primarily through qualitative method, i.e. a comparative document and content analysis. A text, a textual material constituting the subject of our analysis is therefore crucial. In the case of formal institutions, this may not pose a challenge since this is one those criteria which distinguish them from informal constraints (i.e. their being codified and tangible). To enrich our results, a quantitative procedure can also be employed in the course of the research, *inter alia* for the purposes of determining the existence of rhetoric harmony for instance.

The units of investigation of the second pillar of the model are *actors* themselves. Who may be considered among the relevant actors? The identification of the target group has a crucial importance in the course of the analysis. The more general the set of the observed supranational and national level formal institutions is, the more likely that the relevant actors can also be generally selected. To illustrate this statement: if our objective is to find out how the prohibition of capital punishment appears at supranational and national level in the case of various formal institutions, any inhabitant of a given country may be a relevant actor; whereas if we want to analyse the nature of adaptation, that is, the various aspects of Europeanisation, apropos of any particular type of formal institution of a given sector, then we are required to limit the range of relevant actors to this sector. This implies that the two extremes in the case of actors are generally the inhabitants of a country or the directly involved members of a narrow community of a sector or a policy area. These latter may be constituted by decision makers, epistemic communities, advocacy groups, stake- and experience-holders, project managers, project beneficiaries, etc.

As it figures in the working definition, integration requirements are normative, hence, they do not only fix the *goal* (*what has to be achieved*), but also the *method* (*how it has to be achieved*). This needs to be determined in the course of the comparative study of formal institutions. From an empirical sense, if goal and method cannot be clearly distinguished and the demarcation line between the two is symbolic, their identification can still be theoretically justified. The identification of the *method* or the *how* is crucial as it fixes the normative conditions and criteria related to the behaviour and attitudes of actors (i.e. individuals in charge in light of the formal institutions). Hence, it refers to *informal institutions* deemed desirable by the actors, more precisely, to values, norms, codes, customs, behavioural rules and conventions to be represented during their interactions.

As far as the second pillar of the model is concerned, two elements have been discussed: actors and informal institutions. From the aspect of Europeanisation, our objective is to determine in the case of these two elements what adaptive mechanisms connect normative integration requirements – manifested at various supranational and national level formal institutions, which, in addition to fixing goals, also determine conditions and criteria related to the method of implementation – with the relevant actors, i.e. informal institutions of actors charged with the realisation of the objective in light of this method. The model analyses the national level institutional adaptation to integration requirements in two steps: first, in the form of a comparative analysis in the case of selected supranational and national level formal institutions, and second, from the aspect of the normative method fixed therein and how it correlates with the relevant actors' informal institutions. The latter can only take the form of a primary analysis, i.e. adopting qualitative and/or quantitative methodologies, such as interviews, surveys and/or participant observation.

At this point, two important remarks must be made. On one hand, the description of the model reveals that Europeanisation is not investigated in general terms, but in concrete cases. Therefore, our statements only apply to the supranational and national level formal institutions and examined informal constraints of relevant actors identified in selected dimensions of integration (sector and policy area). According to our interpretation, this is not a limitation; on the contrary, it renders the phenomenon of Europeanisation a scientific concept suitable for concrete analysis.

On the other hand, it must be emphasised that the topic of Europeanisation has only been discussed so far in light of national level institutional adaptation, while the importance of adaptive capacity was also highlighted in the working definition. The latter, as has already been mentioned, is understood as the extent to which the adaptive process is recognised and the manner by which it is represented in the eyes of the relevant actors. Therefore, the adaptation of national level institutions to supranational ones is a matter of a conscious decision and requires taking concrete steps. Whether informal constraints are adopted by actors as patterns meet the normative criteria fixed by formal institutions is less dependent on simple decision making as the modification of the cultural context occurs more slowly due to deep social embeddedness. However, what is really crucial is whether the relevant actors are aware of the extent of adaptation, from which aspects it is sufficient and from what aspects it is insufficient. Namely, adaptation is never achieved without an awareness of these facts.

The adaptation level of formal institutions is the easiest aspect to evaluate and it is performed by the various organizations of the European Union through regular monitoring measures. The level of adaptation of informal institutions is a more complex issue, hence these questions constitute the object of scientific investigation rather than expert reviews, albeit – as has been demonstrated – the explicit and implicit aim of integration is to influence informal constraints. Nevertheless, adaptive capacity, i.e. analysing the extent to which adaptation is a process recognised by the relevant actors, is a rather neglected issue compared with the former. Focus solely on formal institutions is the most superficial level, since – as has already been mentioned – these institutional factors are the easiest to transform, hence they are the least capable of authentically reflecting the criteria of Europeanisation. Each country is capable of adopting new formal institutions and introducing them according to integration requirements. As for the practical enforceability and implementation of these formal institutions (the realisation of the objectives and the normative methods), these can be influenced significantly by the informal institutions of a given society. Thus, the inclusion of these latter into the research may provide a considerably more nuanced view of the specifics of Europeanisation. However, analysing adaptive capacity, – i.e. whether the process of adaptation is recognised by the relevant actors, whether they perceive what functions are working well and what does not efficient enough – is a source of added value compared with informal institutions.

The analysis of this capacity is envisaged along three dimensions focusing on the identification of the relevant actors, their perceptions and discourses. As concerns identification, the model's aim is to detect the level of knowledge of the relevant actors about the content of formal institutions included in the research. Are they capable of identifying the goals and normative methods formulated in these institutions? To what extent do they consider the goals and normative methods to be adequate? To what extent do they regard the goals and normative methods as realistic? To what extent are they able to identify with these goals and normative methods? Do they consider the modification of these goals and normative methods necessary? If so, then at which level: supranational, national or in a general sense?

In terms of perception, the model's aim is to find out if the relevant actors perceive or sense any inconsistencies between supranational and national level formal institutions. If so, do they consider it to be a problem? If so, does it apply to the goals, the normative methods, or the overall content? In their opinion, do normative methods reflect on informal institutions (namely, the collective patterns of the cultural environment)? According to their view, do informal institutions influence by any means the enforceability and implementation of formal institutions?

Finally, the dimension of discourse focuses on how relevant actors view the relationship between their own identification and perception based on their views and the (supposed or real) general trend of the identification and perception of the analysed formal institutions. Do they share the mainstream view or do they sympathise with a particular voice? From what aspects do they feel that they belong to the majority or a minority in terms of the experienced discourses?

A key element of the analysis of adaptive capacity is to detect the type of knowledge relevant actors have about formal institutions. In order to be able to formulate identifications, perceptions and discourses about formal institutions, they must, in all cases, possess some prior knowledge. This, of course, may seem to be an unrealistic expectation. Thus, from a methodological aspect, it is justifiable to establish focus groups from the actors and facilitate their active participation in the research, i.e. to provide them textual material on the relevant formal institutions which they are free to absorb, and afterwards they would be inquired to present their own identifications, perceptions and views on the discourses contained therein.

Summary

The model of the present approach on Europeanisation consists of two pillars. The first one incorporates three elements: the dimension of integration (sector, policy area); the selected supranational formal institutions and the closely related national level formal institutions. In terms of the three elements, a favourable outcome from the aspect of Europeanisation is demonstrated in case supranational and national level formal institutions related to the given dimension of integration establish harmonised and converging requirements on the basis of goals (what has to be achieved) and normative methods (how it should be achieved).

The second pillar also contains three elements (and one of them consisting of three sub-dimensions). These are the following: relevant actors as observational units; informal institutions of actors, namely the cultural patterns they adopt; and the adaptive capacity of actors, namely their awareness of institutional adaptation (identifications, perceptions and discourses). In the case of the second pillar, a favourable context in terms of Europeanisation emerges if the informal constraints of relevant actors comply with normative methods established by supranational and national level formal institutions; furthermore, if the adaptive capacity of actors enhances institutional compliance, i.e. if both their identifications, perceptions and discourses demonstrate a certain awareness presenting on one hand their capacity to understand properly the criteria of the interrelatedness of integration requirements and national level institutional adaptation, and on the other hand, their capacity to react to these adaptive processes in an incentive manner.

The description of the model reveals that it does not study Europeanisation from the perspective of a causal relationship between elements, but rather in the light of normative criteria. Instead of scrutinising the reason for why national level formal institutions harmonise or fail to harmonise with supranational ones; what counts is if they harmonise with them or not. Similarly, it is indifferent to know why the informal institutions of relevant actors comply with or deviate from the normative methods fixed by the formal institutions; what counts is only if they meet the requirements or not. Furthermore, in the case of actors' identifications, perceptions and discourses, it is not necessary to pose questions investigating the causes behind factors. Undoubtedly, these are crucial problems, however, in order to be able to reflect on the causes, first we have to be aware of things as they are. One of the principal novelties of this approach is that it removes

the phenomenon of Europeanisation from the context of the cause-effect relationship difficult to unveil and resolve, which constitutes not only one of the most pressing challenges, but also the main sources of error for current analytical and empirical studies (Exadaktylos and Radaelli 2009).

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