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Author(s): Kauppi, Niilo

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Producing Transnational Social Fields¹

Taking as its starting point field theory (see for instance Bourdieu 1982, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1990) and Bourdieu's critique of neoliberal reason (2000), this chapter develops a political sociology approach to the study of the evolving relationship between the redistribution of resources and the structuration of social spaces beyond the nation-state. It is not possible to document the full impact of Bourdieu's work on research in transnationalization processes. Instead, this presentation will first discuss general features of transnational social fields and then move to an examination of the European Parliament as an empirical case that illustrates this approach.

The work of Bourdieu has provided a source of inspiration for numerous English- and French-language studies on transnationalization processes (see for instance Beauvallet and Michon 2010, Bigo 2013, Büttner and Mau 2014, Cohen 2013, Dezalay and Garth 2013, Favell and Guiraudon 2010, Georgakakis 2012, Häkli and Kallio 2014, Kauppi 2005, Kauppi and Madsen 2013, Kull 2014, Kunz 2013, Landorff 2016, Madsen 2011a, Mudge and Vauchez 2012, Sallaz 2006, Sending 2009). The approach developed here is not a theory in the strict sense of the term but rather an instrument in a process of scientific rationalization that attempts to make sense out of reality. In this perspective the object of this approach, transnational social fields form the social infrastructure of globalization processes. They are historical constructions, subjected to a double historicity: the development of the position of the scholar or observer and the development of the objects that she tries to elucidate in relation to other objects. Transnational social fields enable to highlight through controlled contextualization certain structural aspects that are crucial to sociologically understand the structuration of resources and spaces that cross nation-state borders. These structural aspects are both material and symbolic, that is they combine social interactional elements with symbolic aspects, empirical dimensions with an intellectualist or idealist dimension. The scholar constructs the structures on the basis of empirical materials, but the structures themselves are not directly visible. Metaphorically speaking these form the lines that the scholar draws to connect the perceived points. This is the main difference between (linguistic) structuralism and more traditional empirical definitions of structures and sociological realism. The concept of field provides a tool for controlled contextual analysis (for a presentation see for instance Bourdieu and Passeron 1989).

A social phenomenon never develops disconnected from other social phenomena. For this reason analysis has to be relational and involve the contexts of the existence of social phenomena. Research cannot isolate itself to either a macro- or micro-level, but has to combine these levels to a meso-level study (see Sartori 1970, 1053 for a similar point). Globalization's structural aspects do not exist 'out there' as such but are products of the construction of reality by the researcher, of the interaction between the researcher, her tools of analysis, and the objects under study. But this interaction does not take place disconnected from the rest of the world. The autonomy of the research cannot be absolute and calls for a reflexive approach. In a broad sense of the term the activity of the scholar is political both in terms of the links it has with other social activities (the political, the economic) and in relation to the more specific sectors of activity as an academic (for instance disciplinary relationships). The value of these

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sociological constructions is dependent on the scholarly quality of the results they produce and on their use in academia and beyond (performative force).

Transnationalism

The state nobility (Bourdieu 1989a) is today more transnational than before. Technological developments in communications and transformations in the world economy have made transnational interactions a banal feature of modern life in many areas of social activity. Recent work on the transnational has grown out of the need to make sense of key aspects of politics. These include the growing social interactions between citizens and politicians in different national settings and mobility across borders, the structuration of various transnational spaces, the constitution of institutions and their impact on the denationalization of national political decision-making and the reinforcement of global governance (see for instance Levitt and Schiller 2004). However, despite these dramatic changes in the real world scholarly ontologies relative to politics have not kept up with these developments. In mainstream political science, concepts such as sovereignty and state autonomy are still central to any research on modern politics. In mainstream IR, national entities are still framed as relatively independent from one another and constituting the building blocks of the international. Political science and IR are still very much separate disciplines that are in competition with one another. Scholars are either political scientists focusing on the nation-state or IR scholars exploring interstate relationships. Given this disciplinary inertia alternative ontologies, often from disciplines such as economics and sociology, are seen as illegitimate curiosities that merely supplement established scholarly classifications. Drawing a new political map that would replace old maps is a scholarly uphill battle.

The purpose of this chapter is to break from this mould. Understanding the dramatic developments at the nation-state level and between nation-states requires a double operation of recontextualization from the national level to the transnational level and from an institutional or sectorial ('functional') level to a social level, as many non-sociological scholars do not consider institutions as necessarily being social. This recontextualisation requires localized and historically sensitive but theoretically informed empirical work. The national and the supranational will be fused in a transnational research perspective.

Transnationalism has emerged as a major alternative to traditional approaches stuck in the dialectics between the national and the international. Transnational history has already developed both in Europe and North America (an overview is provided in Iriye and Saunier 2009). Scholars working in the area of migration studies have adopted this perspective (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), as have some sociologists of law (for recent work see Dezalay and Garth 2013, Madsen 2011b) and scholars of European integration (Mau 2010, Büttner and Mau 2014). At the moment there is exciting work on the transnational formation of IR theory (Guilhot 2011), on transnational professionals (Bigo 2013, Sending 2009), and in sociology some French language work on the international circulation of ideas (see Bourdieu's ground-breaking study 1990, also Sapiro 2008 and Heilbron et al. 2008).

A transnational approach seeks to overcome the divide between the 'inside', the nation-state, and the 'outside', the global, by focusing on the interplay between several national contexts. It focuses on aspects neglected by the canonized form of IR. The neglected objects of IR include interest representatives, social groups, nongovernmental organizations, and 'regular' individuals. But the national is not the opposite of the international any more than it is the opposite of the transnational. In other words, studying the transnational level does not mean dispensing with the national level. Rather, national levels are to varying degrees, which are to be determined empirically, transnationalized and thus take part in transnational transactions. In a way from the scholar's point of view transnational approach requires doing a double amount of work, at both national and supranational levels, compared to approaches that stay at one level. But there are clear differences in terms of how the concept of transnational is understood and how it is empirically constructed.

Social field analysis

In order to sociologically get a grip of transnational developments, the transnational dimension has to be supplemented with another scholarly approach, that of social fields. Already operationalized by social psychologist Kurt Lewin, today it is mostly known as having been developed by Pierre Bourdieu and his students (for an English-language presentation see Swartz 2013). In its most generic, essentially Weberian formulation, fields are relatively autonomous structured spaces where a variety of agents struggle for power. Established agents will try to maintain and even increase their power, whereas novices will often put into question the legitimacy of dominant values. Fields can be political fields, involving those who do politics as a profession, institutions like political parties and parliaments, practices such as elections, and so on. An institution such as parliament can also be analyzed as a field, involving conventions, the structuration of positions and resources, strategies to maintain the status quo or subvert dominant values, the stratification of social resources, etc. They are historically formed. But in contrast to other field approaches (for instance Fligstein and McAdams 2012), the one developed explicitly in this tradition of structural constructivism (see Bourdieu 1989b, Ansart 1990, Kauppi 2013, Kull 2014, Landorff 2016, for a discussion of political sociology approaches see Zimmermann and Favell 2011) focuses on the social infrastructure of modern life. Social fields cannot be reduced to organisational structures (DiMaggio and Powell 1991) as they often encompass several institutional and organizational entities.

Like Weber or Marx, Bourdieu provides critical intellectual tools for a holistic analysis of power in the modern world. While Bourdieu's own studies have concentrated on France (or earlier on Algeria), since the second part of the 1990s scholars inspired by Bourdieu's work have applied and extended some of his ideas in the sociology of IR and especially of European regional integration (see for instance Favell and Guiraudon 2009). Pioneering Bourdieu-inspired sociological studies have concentrated on supranational institutionalization in a variety of transnational fields that cannot be reduced to international spaces, paving the way for a theoretical reflexion of the structuration of positions and resources beyond the nation state. This structuration refers to the organization of a social space around struggles for specific forms of power that involve actors occupying a hierarchy of positions with different kinds of resources and dispositions. The concept of field has been particularly useful in mapping

transformations in power resources as it provides a non-normative basis for analysis of the social conditions of political action in radically transformed circumstances. But at the same time the uses of the term have been varied, thanks in part to the flexibility of the concept itself. Empirically, this extension of Bourdieu's approach has led to a re-examination of some tenets of Bourdieusian sociology: its reliance on static structures and its empirical focus on the nation-state framework (for a discussion of some of these points, see Daloz 2013). Scholars (see for instance Dezalay and Garth 2013) have introduced more dynamic elements: the changing power relationships between political institutions in transnational social fields, the increasing role of a variety of informal, transnational professional groups in policy-making, the embeddedness of regional integration in global economic and technological interconnections, and the deeper historical underpinnings of intra-European power relations between countries (colonial/non-colonial) and social classes.

In contrast to other field approaches such as organizational fields approach developed by American sociologists (DiMaggio and Powell 1991) or strategic action fields elaborated by European and American sociologists and political scientists (Schimmelfennig 2003, Fligstein and McAdam 2012), transnational fields in the structural constructivist sense are social fields, that is they are fundamentally based on interdependencies and power relationships that are not sectorial or institutional but social, that is involving actions, positions, resources, hierarchies and dispositions. Furthermore they are transnational, that is they are not confined to a relatively homogeneous national entity like France, and they can encompass several more established national and institutional contexts. Generally, they are less structured than fields at national or lower scalar levels. But they are not necessary weak fields (Mudge and Vauchez 2012) as opposed to strong fields. This formulation would bring us back to a static 'once and for all' structural framework. A more dynamic and nuanced approach is required that takes as its object the historically and locally variable strength of fields or of field effects and their process of structuration. This is because of historical and scholarly reasons: they are often historically more recent, less established and therefore have been less studied and less objectified by scholarly and lay discourses. Certain sectors of a field can be more structured than others at a specific point in time. From a processual perspective more structured means that some of the field's entities are more clearly differentiated from one another. For instance the dominant pole might be the object of more social control than the dominated pole. Social fields do not necessarily develop in a linear fashion from less structured to more structured either. They can also contract or expand. A case in point is the Eurozone as a social field. While it was in the beginning a zone of economic formal exchange its effects have spilled over to other social sectors such as external security especially for new member-states that share a border with Russia.

These ontological reorientations in terms of the transnational and the social need to be supplemented with an additional methodological principle, reflexivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1990). In contrast to other field approaches developed by North American scholars, the analysis of transnational social fields from a structural constructivist perspective requires mobilizing a sociology that does not confound the scholar's model of reality with reality itself. This means that transnational social fields are constructions, that is scholarly rationalizations that aim at making intelligible a question or problem that the scholar seeks to elucidate. These constructions should not be confused with

'reality'. Constructions can never capture the whole of reality, which is always over-determined. The rapport between the scholar (or the observer) and observed reality is not static but interactive. The choices the scholar makes can in part be understood in relation not only to broader social and cultural contexts such as the current processes of globalization but also to his/her professional habits, formation, position in academia, etc. These are obviously evolving, just like the objects of study are. Interactivity between these levels means also varying mutual influence. The knowledge produced by the scholar is not just a more or less accurate reflection of a pre-existing reality but also a statement that to varying degrees takes part in processes of social construction of reality. The performative effects of scholarly activity on 'reality' link it with developments outside the academic world, and especially the political world. In other words academic and non-academic action feed into one another, creating various forms of material and symbolic dependency and even symbiosis. EU –studies is a perfect contemporary example of this symbiosis between academia and politics (see for instance White 2003). In other words the transnational social fields that scholars are interested in are embedded in multiple institutional contexts. Actors involved in transnational transactions in various social worlds, including the academic world, contribute to the production of the object of their study, transnational fields. These transnational social fields are academic and non-academic co-productions. The aim of these considerations is not to lapse into relativism, but to provide ammunition for the development of better forms of objectivity.

The European Parliament as a Transnational Social Field

The European context has provided a 'natural' terrain for studies of transnational social fields. After two disastrous wars that started in Europe but became global, European elites engaged in a process of incremental integration that started in strategic areas like coal and steel production. Deepening European integration was seen as the solution to European devastation. European unification has been one of the success stories of the second part of the 20th century. Integration meant setting up new supranational spaces of interaction in key areas and the eventual creation of centres of political and economic power such as the European Commission and the European Central Bank, central institutions of what was to become the European Union (EU). Fundamentally, macro-level regional integration depended on the historical formation of transnational social spaces or fields of varying force to foster interactions between agents from the formerly belligerent nations. This interaction ranged from the highest to the lowest level, from political and economic decision-makers and their neoliberal economic policies to miners, cleaners, housewives and families.

Since the 1950s, social scientific research on European integration has been dominated by legal, political science and economic approaches. A symbiosis between politics and research by social scientists developed. Seminal works such as those by Ernst B. Haas provided a rationalized history of integration and so-called evidence-based research results as well as theoretical concepts such as spill-over that were appropriated by scholars and politicians alike to plan their activities (Haas 1958). European integration has fundamentally been a political and scholarly co-production.

Bourdieu's field approach not only provides an alternative to basic textbooks on European regional integration and politics (see for instance Hix and Hoyland 2011) but

also the tools to explore policy structures and processes of integration, in other words, the stratification and differentiation of power in certain social configurations (Cohen 2013, Kauppi 2005, see also Kauppi and Madsen 2013). Restricting the analysis of power structures that go beyond the nation-state to the institutional level prevents understanding the complexity of the transformations under way. These include the fact that boundaries are not always clear and often challenged and that political action takes place in spaces that combine several scalar levels. Institutions such as the European Parliament evolve in more or less stable contexts or environments that include other institutions such as the Council or the Commission in the traditional institutional triangle of the EU, but also national institutions such as Parliaments and governments, as well as more regional institutions as well events that structure political life, notably elections. From a social field approach all these form a multileveled political field, structured around two dimensions: the supranational/national and the political/technocratic. The dynamic topography that the multileveled political field forms has its own temporal rhythm, punctuated and structured by national and supranational elections and unforeseeable political and economic events such as the fall of the Soviet Union. The advantages of such a social field approach include a more nuanced analysis of political institutions such as the European Parliament (EP). It is simply not possible to understand the internal structuration of the European Parliament (EP) without taking into account national elections and government formation and more broadly interdependencies that go beyond institutional limits. And the reverse is true also, that is that national politics cannot be dissociated from European politics. As part of individual and collective political strategies, these determine the investment individual actors and political groups make to the European Parliament. These social configurations are not reducible to transnational institutional configurations. In other words the social networks in which individual actors such as MEPs (Member of the European Parliament) are embedded are not limited to the institutional setting of the European Parliament. Social configurations vary a great deal depending on the previous political and social experience of MEPs and can include NGOs (non-governmental organizations), media, business, academic institutions and so on (for a fine analysis see Landorff 2016). These social configurations will give indications on the social resources available to these actors. These social resources can be dependent on previous positions held in other fields, or to the existence of certain types of 'multipositionalities' (Boltanski 1973), that is of holding several political positions at the same time at regional, national and supranational levels. These available resources will give us clues on the political strategies that MEPs develop. They can be investments at the national level when the newly elected MEP uses his/her EP mandate to prepare for national elections for instance to the national parliament.

The example of the French Front National illustrates this use of the EP and the social configurations involved. According to Votewatch, an NGO (non-governmental organization) following parliamentary work in the EP funded partly by the Soros Foundation, the 3 Front National MEPs have not participated at all in the regular commission work in the EP since 2009. They have instead been present in the plenary sessions that take place once a month in Strasbourg, France, in contrast to the regular commission work in Brussels, Belgium where decisions are prepared. According to the statistics of Votewatch, Marine Le Pen, the president of the FN and MEP, has been quite inactive in her European parliamentary work. Marine Le Pen displays a participation in plenary votes of 65.6 per cent while the average is 83.3 per cent for all French MEPs.

This is a score that allows Marine Le Pen to stay above the 50 per cent threshold below which MEPs lose half their daily attendance allowance. Among parliamentary activities, Marine Le Pen has written 3 parliamentary questions and has intervened 44 times in plenary sessions during her five years in office. She has not produced a single resolution, report or written statement since 2009 (Barbière 2014). Marine Le Pen has used the position of MEP as a transnational power base for continuing activity at the national and regional levels. This political strategy has been rewarded at the municipal elections in 2014, making out of the FN the most popular party in France. Marine Le Pen is now aiming at the parliamentary elections in 2015. Another example of this type of use of the MEP mandate is Jean-Luc Mélenchon, charismatic leader of the extreme leftist Front de gauche, a record absentee as are both Jean-Marie Le Pen (father) and Marine Le Pen (daughter). During the parliamentary year 2013-14, Mélenchon had not taken part in any meetings of the EU's foreign affairs committee that meets in Brussels, of which he is a vice-president (Laurent and Létenche 2014). His most visible mode of participation in parliamentary work was sending emails as written intervention after plenary discussions in Strasbourg. These national politicians clearly use the EP as an external resource that is converted into domestic visibility and influence. Parliamentary work in the EP is non-existent. But these are clearly a very small minority as most, even Eurosceptic MEPs, take part in parliamentary work and develop their European political agendas. Le Pen and Mélenchon seem to have none.

The significance of ascendant resources in the institutionalization of the EP cannot be overemphasized. For instance, in the recent election of vice-presidents for the EP Brice Hortefeux, a former French conservative minister and protégé of former President Nicolas Sarkozy, was not elected to the post. According to one MEP 'Everyone knows that he is not the most assiduous and the most hard working. In (the European, NK) Parliament, it is not his former position as a (national, NK) minister that will protect him. He is not particularly popular in (the European, NK) Parliament. He is not particularly invested. His fellow members know that.' (Le Monde 2014, my translation) Numerous other MEPs, such as Joseph Daul from the conservative UMP, have invested heavily in work in the EP. Daul has used his considerable political experience in agriculture to climb the political ladder in the EP, converting these political resources into parliamentary work in the EP.

Analysing the EP as a transnational social field requires then analysing social resources that are both endogenous and exogenous to the institution, and mapping the transformations in the political value hierarchies in the Parliament, that is what kinds of resources are more valued than others. This will enable the scholar to see how actors succeed or fail to convert different types of resources (endogenous/exogenous, economic, political etc.). This requires that inside the institution itself the roles of different political groups and the European Parliament committees, for example, or the European Parliament's rapporteurs, be analysed in a multidimensional context. A social field analysis also requires exploring the development of political positions and discourses, as well as political debate in relation to the positions of MEPs and their evolution. Differentiation and stratification lead to the historical formation of dominant discourses and policy positions inside the institution. These social processes take place in complex evolving transnational social fields that encompass several institutions and spheres of social action at both transnational and national levels. Scholars who approach the EP as a closed institution will not perceive the complex interlocking relationships

between European institutions and national institutions. These are, however, determining in understanding the actions of politicians and the distribution of power.

According to the official rhetoric of the EU the European Parliament is a unique political experiment in the history of the world and one of the brightest achievements of European integration. Its members are elected by direct suffrage from the European Union member states. It is, of course, a paradox that while the European Parliament has gained political power, especially through the Treaty of Lisbon, it is still relatively weak compared to the European Commission and the Council (see Goetze and Rittberger 2010). Not well known among the voters, it is often undervalued by leading politicians.

Over the years, the European Parliament has come to represent to some politicians a credible alternative political career to the traditional national or regional political careers. For example, in France, female politicians have used the European Parliament elections to integrate into the national political system (Kauppi 2005, Beauvallet and Michon 2010). Less publicly recognized and socially regulated than domestic institutions, the European Parliament has offered leading socialist politicians like French President François Mitterrand a way to reward ambitious, young female politicians while avoiding a rebellion against party leadership by male politicians. To provide places for female politicians in the European Parliament and not in the lower chamber of parliament or the National Assembly was for Mitterrand a way to satisfy both groups. But as the saying goes, what is thrown out of the window comes back in through the main door. It is no coincidence that Jacques Delors' daughter Martine Aubry led the Socialist Party in 2008, and that several prominent socialist politicians with experience in the European Parliament today such as Elisabeth Guigou are women. Regional and local politicians have also benefited from the development of the European Parliament. The European Parliament provides them a way to bypass the national political center and its power structures and to use the EU's economic and political tools such as the Structural Funds to further their careers. This is the case in France, but even more so in federal states such as Germany. Some of the local and regional politicians' career strategies have been convergent with the European Union's attempts to create, in the name of the principle of subsidiarity (decision-making should always be as close as possible to the citizens), efficient 'Euroregions' (uniting regions from different member-states) that support Brussels' tug of war with Member States. The third group, which has benefited from European integration is composed of politicians from extremist parties. French Front National founder Jean Marie Le Pen has been sitting in the European Parliament since 1984, using this as a supranational base for his national political game. Without the EP the extreme right in France would have been unlikely to become the most popular party in October 2013.

Though EP elections are still regarded by the political establishment and the scholarly community as second-class elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), they have a significant impact on the long-term development of national and European politics (see here Kunz 2013). It would be more accurate to say that the EP elections may be second-class for first-class parties (large parties that participate in government) but they are certainly first-class elections for second-class parties. Without this largely neglected use of the EP, that is, how the EP has saved and even favored European extremist political parties, it is impossible to understand the policies of the EU and its Member States today when far-right parties are becoming more popular in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Hungary

and other European countries. One could even argue that the normative classification of EP elections as second-class elections and as such not worthy of the same political and scholarly attention as first-class elections (elections to the lower chamber and presidential elections essentially) has prevented scholars, politicians and the public from detecting crucial longer term political dynamics in European societies and the role of the EP in these. The scholarly and lay ontology according to which Europe is 'out there' and politics 'in here' has also contributed to this blindness. In reality, the two spheres are intertwined in complex ways that require a transnational social field approach to disentangle.

The effects of European integration occur as transfers or better translations of institutions and practices into domestic political and administrative fields. It is a complex process that has been documented in numerous studies (see for instance Radaelli, 2003). But it also involves less studied and publicized movements in the other direction and the constitution of hybrid transnational social fields. Symbolic and discursive effects, how formal changes are interpreted and used, vary depending on power relations and opportunity structures. The political value of the European Parliament varies from country to country and from party to party. In general, politicians from smaller member states such as Finland appreciate more the EP than do politicians from large member states such as Britain or France. This means that in some member states the European Parliament's political value is quite high and working there is considered as being a good investment for an ambitious politician. Traditionally, French politicians have been sceptical of the European Parliament (see Kunz 2013). This attitude resonates with the official French intergovernmentalist position in European politics, that is the position according to which European integration should be an issue decided by European governments instead of civil society, citizens or parliamentarians.

The proportional representation of European elections in all EU member-states favors smaller parties. Thus, political movements such as the far-right Front National (FN) have been well represented in the European Parliament. It is no exaggeration to say that without the European Parliament, it probably would not even exist today as a political force. The European Parliament has provided the Front National, and for left-wing movements such as the Trotskyist Lutte Communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) and the Front de gauche led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a transnational base from which they have been able to continue their political activity. This example shows that European integration is not free of contradictions, as all of these extremist parties are fiercely anti-European, but are still represented in the European Parliament.

The key question is how individual politicians and political groups take advantage of European integration, of its institutions and policies and the opportunities that are presented to them. "Use" is defined very broadly, mostly instrumentally. It is understood as practices related to the development of careers and groups of politicians specialized in European politics. The connection between political institutions and individuals is crucial as it brings together individuals with the constitution of policies. The aim of social field analysis is to analyze the positive or negative correlations between these different levels, the resources that are legitimized/delegitimized, new power structures and, ideally, to find causal connections between individuals, groups, and policies. The latter part of the study is, of course, the most challenging.

If we start from individuals, the key is what kind of features are statistically typical of certain political groups that operate in European institutions or their vicinity. Age groups in the European Parliament can be separated from each other in terms of how long they have been members of the House (see for instance Scarrow 1999). French MEPs typically invest weakly in the Parliament. With regard to the second level, the research can explore which groups are using power in certain institutions or, in certain parts of the institution. For the European Parliament this would require studying, for example, the changing role of political groups such as the conservative EPP (European Peoples' Party) that is with the S&D (European Socialists and Social-Democrats) the largest party in the EP. Scholars have studied the formation of the cabinets in the European Commission (Egelberg 2013) and the characteristics and resources of European Parliament's committee chairmen (Beauvallet and Michon 2010). The third level of analysis aims to integrate social background and policy outputs. Research in this area is still nearly non-existent.

Researchers have studied these issues using primarily three complementary research methods. The first is quantitative and concerns the social groups such as the European Parliament's or the European Commission's members (Ross 1995, Page 1997, Georgakakis 2012). This approach can lead to so-called prosopographic studies of collective life in the European Parliament. Another study technique is interviews. The purpose of the interviews is to fine-tune the quantitative data by adding a subjective dimension to the research. The third approach is discursive and aims to analyze the official documents and policy statements. Ideally, the research process is characterized by the constant movement between quantitative and qualitative, statistical and numerical methods more widely and individuals to positions, discourses and institutional structures. The fourth dimension is historic. This is difficult to take into account because the systematic gathering of information can be virtually impossible, or because the information is not available or its collection would take too much time. Most of the research is therefore not diachronic but synchronic. This is of course a major drawback because the EU's institutional development and the understanding of its dynamic topography is crucial to the analysis of political institutions, power structures and practical dimensions.

French political sociologists Beauvallet and Michon's research focuses on the professionalisation of the European Parliament (Beauvallet and Michon 2010). More institutional studies are those of Costa, Navarro and Scarrow (Costa 2001, Navarro 2009, Scarrow 1999). Beauvallet and Michon argue that the European Parliament has become more independent in relation to other political institutions in the sense that the careers in the European Parliament have become more dependent on resources accumulated in the European Parliament (a similar examination can be found in Kauppi, 2005, 2010). By this they mean resources such as seniority (experience), social capital, and knowledge. Seniority refers to the fact that the candidates are close to the top of the European Parliament Bureau, committee or political group or the presidency are not beginners, but they have significant experience in working in the institution. They have internalized the institution's culture and developed a political role as the institution's representatives ('institutional charisma'). Social capital refers to connections and networks. One must know the right people and be known by others, an in-group member. Expertise is recognized competence in a specific area that is relevant to the functioning of the European Parliament. Political work in the European Parliament is

very technical, and may be related to the environment or human rights, for example. One must be able to operate in English, French and some other European languages. In practice, English and, to a lesser extent, French are the working languages of the European Union institutions. Of course, less commonly used languages such as Finnish language knowledge can be of considerable advantage in certain circumstances. For Beauvallet and Michon these resources are necessary for leadership positions in the European Parliament. In this sense, since the first direct elections in 1979 the history of the European Parliament can be seen as being a history of the stratification of social resources: the value of the above-mentioned social resources has risen relatively more than social resources that are linked to social configurations external to the institution (ministerial and national parliamentary experience for instance).

Beauvallet and Michon explore the value of exogenous resources such as national political experience. To simplify if in the 1980s exogenous resources such as experience in national government were the condition for political success in the European Parliament, twenty years later they had lost their value. In the 1980's many highly positioned MEPs had earlier national parliamentary experience and had been ministers in government. They were elite members of the national political systems of the member-states. In the French case, this meant integration in political institutions in the capital Paris, the only place that had real meaning for politicians. For French politicians election to the European Parliament was not valued, as was considered as being somewhere between that of a regional councillor and national deputy. It was not a viable career move and was therefore less valuable than election to the National Assembly. In other words, since 1979, when members of the European Parliament were first elected by direct popular vote, the relative value of exogenous resources for political careers in the European Parliament has dropped while the value of some endogenous resources has increased. For example, 45 per cent of the first term (1979-1984) MEPs had experience in the national parliament or in government. Twenty years later, for fifth term (1999-2004) MEPs the figure had dropped to 28 per cent. This differentiation process has been concomitant with the uneven growth of the European Parliament's political power in relation to other EU institutions, mainly the European Commission but also the Council of Ministers. In particular, thanks to the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) the European Parliament is poised to play a central role in the democratic development of the European Union.

Although abstention in European elections is still relatively common, many see the European Parliament as representing the ordinary citizens while the Commission is a supranational bureaucracy and the Council a collection of National Ministers. This symbolic dimension is important as the European Parliament may present itself as the representative of ordinary Europeans. Other transformations indicated by Beauvallet and Michon include significant changes in the practices of parliamentary work. As MEPs remain in office for a longer than before, institutions and routines are stabilized. The European Parliament has also become more international as a growing number of MEPs have studied abroad and are fluent in several languages, and includes more women MEPs than ever before (see also Landorff 2016).

Several researchers have made similar structural studies of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. Page's work is a fundamental sociological study of the European Commission officials and their social characteristics in different parts of the

administration (Page 1997). Applying a social field approach, Madsen's work focuses on the Court of Justice lawyers, their backgrounds and the networks that control the supranational legal game (Madsen 2011b). Using as his starting point Bourdieu's work on the French state nobility, Mangenot has studied of the French elite school ENA (Ecole nationale d'administration), its transfer from Paris to Strasbourg and how this move has exacerbated tensions between the national and the international in the French political class (Mangenot 1997). These studies provide us with important information on how political careers integrate and change the political power structures and institutions of the European Union and the European nation-states. These studies show that a separate European political class does not exist for the simple reason that political careers combine many institutional spheres vertically at the national and supranational level (the local/regional council, the National Parliament, the Senate, the government, political party organization, the European Parliament, the European Commission, and so on), as well as horizontally or sectorially (academia, government, finances, and so on). Heterogeneity is still so high that a strong sense of exclusive common interests has not been able to develop, although some groups, such as the European Commission officials defend the EU's achievements out of official duty. In this sense, they form the vanguard. But the defense of those interests does not necessarily mean that these officials would all have the same 'European identity', that they would have swapped their national identities for a European identity.

Conclusion

Exploring transnational structuration processes has provided an opportunity to extend Bourdieu's field approach. Transnational social fields are not reducible to institutional or organisational structures. In contrast to institutional approaches they enable a more holistic analysis of institutions. In the case of the European Parliament this means an analysis of the social configurations in which individuals are embedded and the social resources they have access to. I have tried to show that the process of European regional integration as social field formation and collective action involving stratification (some social resources and values gain more power than others) and differentiation (institutional differentiation is a form of social differentiation) deepens our understanding of its social dynamics. The European Parliament is an example of how social field structuration shapes hierarchies, practices and resources, as well as the interactions between individuals, groups and political institutions. A Bourdieu-inspired political sociology perspective also reveals the hidden deep structure that is tied to social resources, which (re)produce inequality between groups and individuals. Social resources are unevenly distributed. The effects of this deep structure on policy outcomes should be promptly investigated.

A field approach also enables to develop a more nuanced analysis of the agents of these transformations. Is a unified political class with a uniform political and economic outlook developing in Europe? As I hope to have shown the importance of endogenous resources in EU institutions such as the EP may prevent the formation of a homogeneous European political class as each sub-group seeks to protect its resources and obstruct the development of common resources, thereby sharpening institutional differences between the EP, the Council and the Commission. More research is needed to explore how transnational groups manage to increase their power, to create common interests and a subjective sense of membership and how this process is linked to

transformations in global governance, in particular private power users such as lawyers and law offices, security experts and actors in the financial world. From this point of view, the EU is a player in a wider political and economic game whose rules are set in part elsewhere.

An approach in terms of transnational social fields sustained by sociological concepts such as differentiation and stratification helps us understand the development of power resources in supranational institutions such as the European Union and the formation of power structures beyond the nation-state. Concepts such as field and strategy are useful when trying to make sense of political and economic development that go beyond the nation-state and in a longer historical perspective. This approach has its challenges, and should be developed in two ways. The first one is the interaction of different temporal changes. Institutions and social fields are in a dynamic interaction in more or less volatile environments. Simultaneous analysis of a number of contradictory changes is difficult. Historical processes are never clear-cut. The second challenge is going to be the systematic collection of historical information on politicians, institutions and discourses in Europe.

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