Book Review

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Cultural Diversity, European Identity and the Legitimacy of the EU by Dieter Fuchs and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (eds)

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Legitimacy, identity and culture are concepts which frequently instigate disputes on the relationship between the "common man" and the European Union (EU). Fuchs and Klingemann's latest publication provides some surprising data on citizens' opinions regarding the EU and thus is one most researchers will find a useful aid to developing swift and incisive argumentation.

The book is an empirically original piece aiming to contribute to political theory through normatively inspired concepts and the analysis of European citizens' attitudes and views towards the European project. Legitimacy, identity and cultural diversity are central elements in this book, guiding an interesting and comprehensive discussion on the character and potential of the EU integration process.

Fuchs introduces the topic by arguing that the link between legitimacy, culture and identity is the sharing of common values and thus one which is intrinsically linked to culture. Hence, in regards to European integration the author believes it useful to treat cultural diversity and the formation of identity as crucial variables and clues to the formation of a European collective. He notes, nevertheless, that group opinions and the sense of identity are mostly influenced by elite discourse and media reports which may promote or discourage EU support. The core of the book, as a result, is an overview of how these elements work together and a summary of their impact.

Fuchs and Schneider begin by analysing citizens' impressions of the usefulness and profit brought to them by the European Union. It proceeds to establish a link between European and national concepts of identity, concluding that EU identity is profoundly based on shared democratic values and not in any sort of post-Maastricht decline. But then, why is there still a notion of individual nationality above Europe?

In the chapter that follows, Schlenker-Fischer dwells on the citizen's capacity to assimilate co-existing concepts of group belonging. Ultimately, if citizens are proven able to belong to two distinctive communities, the sense of threat stemming from externally or distant constructed imageries is eliminated and "europeanness" protected. Indeed, whilst an "us-them" antagonism proved strong in some EU countries, the average of all EU member states considered is still "EU optimistic" and confirms compatibility is possible between more than one community and individual imagery.

Similarly, both Schlenker-Fischer and Guinaudeau's reflections agree that much of citizens' perception of the EU is due to their own national formulations of identity and the way in which that is exported. The latter study, for example, concluded that people who view Europe as a political construct are much more prone to identifying with it than those who view it as a cultural competitor. Empirical data has, in fact, confirmed early assumptions on mass opinion formation as being key to the development of the EU

identity and the acceptance of legitimacy. The authors have not, however, elaborated further on the motivations behind either kind of mobilisation.

Additional corroboration of attitude formation is provided through a meaningful analysis of the role of the civil society and its impact on the construction of the European project. Here, Bornschier identifies various elements that may be used for mass mobilisation, only to settle on cultural and economic elements as the main promoters of and opponents to the European project. Accordingly, Vries and Arnold argue national political parties utilise those very elements to mobilise or hinder support. But, interestingly, that compatibility between citizens' views and party positions is not often a reality.

In the end, economic factors and political stability emerge from the case studies as unifying elements relying on the maintenance of utility and efficiency of EU-led operations. Whilst culture does appear to have a part in integrating nations into the EU collective, its determinism can be overcome by other common elements of association such as shared economic and political values.

Overall, the set of empirical studies presented grant the reader a detailed and scientific evaluation of citizens' perceptions of the European Union. Moreover, it focuses on citizens' own identity, the manner in which different nations react towards cultural diversity, how they perceive threats to their identity and the legitimacy of the integration process. Whilst all contributors depart from the assumption that legitimacy is dependent on the existence of a cultural demos and therefore will be scarce in Europe wide terms, Fuchs affirms, convincingly so, that perceptions are often the product of media reports and biased elite discourse. As a result, it is suggested that EU legitimacy will depend on both instrumental reasoning and more abstract concepts of collective and national identity.

"Identity matters" is perhaps the expression which best defines this publication and summarises its goals. Both the authors and editors either focus on or come to that conclusion, leaving the reader to question further and develop their own research projects based on the numerous quantitative data brought to their attention. The book is, in reality, more successful in presenting and analysing results than in further advancing EU literature *per se*. At times, it feels that too much effort is spent on explaining the process behind variable selection than on offering a critique of the produced results. There is, certainly, an underlying suggestion of a broader discussion concerning the importance of the elites who created Europe and those who opposed it; however, perhaps one which is not presented with sufficient conviction.

To be sure, elites' role in controlling information output into the public sphere and the consequent effect it had/has on citizens can ultimately only confirm what citizens' views already hint at. As Fuchs himself points out, future work should focus on the framing of the EU through political and media discourse in order to assess the most relevant actors and the degree of correlation between them, collective identity and perceptions.

Objectively, the aim of this publication is not to debate politically the origin of mass opinion but to assess whether or not cultural diversity itself, regardless of origin, has an impact on identity and consequently EU legitimacy. On that point the book is successful, albeit limited in its problematisation of what cultural diversity is and signifies to different people.

In sum, the book is an overall good quality addition to the library of any EU researcher. Its well defined focus does not in any way reduce the relevance of its conclusions. Ultimately, its original empirical findings, its impressive display of quantitative methodology and its contribution to integration and diversity literature will be advantageous in respect of almost any EU-related argument, not to mention a good starting point for future research.