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Lynggaard, Kennet

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Original Article

Domestic change in the face of European integration and globalization: Methodological pitfalls and pathways

Kennet Lynggaard

Department of Society and Globalisation, Roskilde University, Universitetsvej 1, 4000 Roskilde, Denmark.

E-mail: kennetl@ruc.dk

Abstract Before the early 2000s, research on Europeanization and globalization developed largely independently of each other. Since then a limited, yet increasing, number of studies have shown an interest in investigating and differentiating between the domestic implications of European integration – known as Europeanization – and trends which are usually seen as having a broader global application including market liberalization, the construction of global institutions and policies. While research concerned with domestic change in the face of European integration and globalization in itself is a reaction to pressing epistemological concerns within the Europeanization literature, this in-the-making research agenda is also faced with a number of methodological challenges. This article deals with some of the most pressing methodological challenges we face when conducting empirical research and moving towards more comprehensive accounts of domestic change. Drawing on methodologies known from comparative politics and discourse analysis, the article argues in favour of three methodological moves: (1) from top-down towards bottom-up methodological set-ups; (2) from counterfactual analysis towards compound temporal comparative and cross-country research designs; and (3) from hypothesis tests towards multiple theoretical analysis.

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Introduction

It is becoming increasingly urgent to deal with the methodological challenges we face in the study of how both European integration and globalization arrive and possibly cause change in the European Union (EU) member states. Arguably, our knowledge of the implications of European integration (known



as Europeanization), globalization and domestic dynamics of change will remain limited until we begin to study these phenomena in concert (Rosamond, 2000; Wallace, 2000). The development of more sophisticated and empirically sensitive research strategies for this endeavour is further emphasised by empirical findings and recent methodological concerns within the literature on Europeanization.

Empirically, the Europeanization literature has shown that the, otherwise, almost intuitively true notion that European integration is instigating convergence among EU member states is at least not as clear-cut as early theorizations suggested. Findings point towards significant variations in the timing, scope and direction of domestic policy change, even where EU policies are particularly well developed, most notably within economic policies (Dyson, 2007) but also, for instance, within the agricultural (Roederer-Rynning, 2007) and environmental areas (Jordan, 2001; Haverland, 2003a; Bugdahn, 2005; Knill and Lenschow, 2005; Börzel, 2007). Likewise significant variations are found in the timing, scope and direction of Europeanization of domestic institutions including public administrations (Kassim, 2003; Laegreid *et al.*, 2004; Kassim, 2005; Laffan, 2007) and domestic structural compositions including state-society interrelations and interest intermediation (Ladrech, 2005; Eising, 2007). Often such variations are attributed to variations in domestic institutions, but also to variations in domestic discourses on European integration and globalization.

Methodologically, the Europeanization literature has also become increasingly concerned with the development of research strategies, which neither assume convergence among EU member states nor assume European integration as the sole and even primary source of domestic change. In order to move towards a more comprehensive understanding of domestic change research strategies should focus not only on domestic and EU-level institutions, interests and ideas, but also on the impact of global institutions, international treaties, norms and even global policies (or for the purpose of the methodological discussions pursued below – simply ‘the global’) (Radaelli, 2004; Haverland, 2007).

Against this backdrop, this article deals with the most pressing methodological challenges related to the development of research strategies aimed at the study of the respective implications in EU member states of European integration, globalization and domestic sources of change. Given the immature nature of the research agenda and our limited knowledge on the subject, it is argued that we need to employ more analytical inductive research strategies. This involves three ‘moves’: (1) from top-down to bottom-up methodological set-ups; (2) from counterfactual to compound temporal comparative and cross-country research designs; and (3) from tests of hypothesis to multiple theoretical analyses. The article goes further by specifying directions to the development of appropriate and more sophisticated research strategies by making use of methodological tools known partly from comparative politics



and partly from discourse analysis (to be sure, here I draw upon discourse analysis in terms of methodology rather than in terms of substantive discourse theory). The article thus argues that methodological tools known from discourse analysis supply a very suitable basis for the development of more analytical inductive research strategies and, at the same time, prepare the ground for moving into comparative and multiple theoretical analyses.

The article is organized as follows: the first section briefly introduces the most common conceptions of the relationship between European integration, globalization and domestic change. To be sure, this is by no means a review of the literature on Europeanization. Rather it is confined to that particular part of the literature that has some concern with all three types of variables of interest here (yet, I do propose that this subsection of the Europeanization literature is of special relevance for furthering research within the overall research field). Hereafter follows three sections dealing in turn with the three methodological 'moves'. The concluding remarks outline a three-step approach to the development of more sophisticated and empirical sensitive research strategies.

European Integration, Globalization and Domestic Change: Types of Explanations

Our knowledge on respective effects of European integration, globalization and domestic sources of change in EU member states is limited and disperse.¹ However, if we look across a number of studies and approaches that more or less prominently and explicitly deal with the research question at hand, we may establish a more solid ground for developing empirically sensitive research strategies. That is, the scientific ideal is that sensible research strategies should be developed to match the research question at hand, though not determined by any one particular theoretical and analytical framework (more about this latter on). In fact, several – perhaps even most – authors draw on a variety of different types of explanations in their study of how the global and European institutions and policies may arrive and instigate change at the domestic level. This includes explanations emphasizing European integration as mediating global forces, domestic institutions as mediating European integration and globalization and domestic discourses as translators of European integration and globalization.

European integration as mediating global forces

Globalization may be seen as mediated through EU policies and institutions which, in turn, may give rise to domestic change. On the one hand, European



integration may amplify global pressures on the competitive position of member states in a global economy by creating pressures for domestic reform, for instance, through the requirements of the European Monetary Union (EMU) on public spending (Haverland, 2003b) or by weakening domestic corporatist structures and protective support systems within agriculture (Hennis, 2001). On the other hand, EU-level institutions, and policies may also ease off global pressures on European industries by promoting positive integration (Verdier and Breen, 2001; Levi-Faur, 2004a), for instance, through the establishment of common EU productions and product standards as well as by promoting more inclusive multi-level governance structures (Graziano, 2003). It has also been suggested that the forces of European integration and globalization tend to collapse into each other (Anderson, 2003) or, along these lines, that European integration is the most advantaged form of globalization, in the sense that the chief part of the increase in international trade has occurred in Western Europe as has the development of the most advantaged integrated market (Fligstein and Merand, 2002).

Domestic institutions as mediators of European integration and globalization

Global forces and European integration may also be seen as mediated by domestic institutions which, in turn, may give rise to some level of policy and institutional convergence (Thatcher, 2004) or divergence among EU member states (Schmidt, 2002a; Dyson, 2003). From this perspective – for which the literature on ‘varieties of capitalism’ is a central source of inspiration – domestic change may, for instance, depend on variations in member states’ institutional capacities, policy preferences and policy legacies. Variations should also be expected across policy sectors according to the extent and specification of EU-level institutional and policy decisions and according to the vulnerability of national policy sectors to increased global competition (Schmidt, 2002a). Variations in domestic responses to global forces and European integration may also be explained by variations in national political systems differentiating among statist, strong neo-corporatist political systems or intermediate neo-corporatist systems (Menz, 2005).

Domestic discourses as translators of European integration and globalization

European integration and globalization may finally be seen as a set of concepts and conceptions, which makes up a discursive context for domestic decision-makers, policies and institutions (Hay and Rosamond, 2002; Hay and Smith, 2005; Schmidt, 2007; Smith and Hay, 2008). European integration and global forces are often seen as constituting common and exogenous pressures on EU

member state economies. Yet, significant variations exist as to how European integration and globalization are translated and used strategically to legitimate and carry through reforms (or not) in national contexts. Discourse is thus a conceptual framework through which social, political and economic developments are ordered and understood at the domestic level. Focus is put on how decision-makers respond, communicate to the public and strategically use the conceived implications of European integration and globalization in order to bringing about domestic institutional and policy change or, just as likely, to maintain *status quo*.

The purpose of this article is by no means to dismiss any particularly type of explanation or disregard certain variables. On the contrary, at this point we are better off approaching the research area with an open mind and consider it an empirical question as to how European integration, the global and domestic institutions and discourses effect domestic change. For this reason it is also important to avoid building our research strategies on too rigid assumptions as to whether, for instance, European integration enforces or eases the effects of globalization. Almost certainly this will vary across policy sectors and according to the specific empirical research area. The methodological considerations below thus depart from the assumption that any one type of explanation gives us a comprehensive understanding of domestic change. Rather, it will be argued that we need to be open to a variety of literatures, particularly as our empirical knowledge is still limited. The discussion further departs from the assumption that Europeanization and globalization are easily distinguished as conflicting phenomena (Geyer, 2003). Europeanization and globalization as conflicting conceptualizations of domestic change give rise to perhaps the most straightforward – though not trivial – research strategically considerations in the sense that it entails research strategies that clearly distinguish between the mutually exclusive impact of European integration and the global on the domestic level. Such research strategies may give rise to the formulation of rival hypotheses, a selection of indicators and tests against a collection of empirical data. Yet, by far the majority of the otherwise limited research conceives of reality in more complex terms which, in turn, leaves us with a number of challenges in the endeavour of developing more empirically sensitive research strategies.

From Top-down to Bottom-up Methodological Set-ups

The notions of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ may both be used to characterize the direction of causalities (for example, Blom-Hansen, 2006) and basic methodological set-ups (for example, Radaelli, 2004). Even if it often remains implicit this distinction is significant. When top-down is used to denote the



direction of a causality, it may suggest that certain EU-level institutions or policies have a causal effect on government policies or organizational structures within national administrations. Likewise, bottom-up as a description of the direction of a causal relation imply that the domestic level is not merely adapting to EU-level pressures for change. Rather bottom-up theorizations suggest, for instance, that domestic agents may act as 'rent seekers' and 'capture' EU institutions or policies (Blom-Hansen, 2006), or use EU discourse strategically (Schmidt and Radaelli, 2004), all in the pursuit of bringing about preferred domestic changes.

When top-down is used to denote methodological set-ups in the study of domestic change, European integration tends to be treated as an explanation in search of a consequence at the domestic level (Radaelli, 2004). Top-down research strategies proceed by identifying and specifying an EU-level independent variable such as a field of regulation or a particular directive, and then goes on to investigate possible domestic impacts. Such studies include traditional policy implementation research emphasizing transposition and transposition deficits and policy impacts of EU regulations within EU member states (Sverdrup, 2007). It has been argued that it may, in certain cases, be trivial to ascribe domestic changes to an EU-level phenomenon and thus make causal claims of domestic change and processes of Europeanization (Harverland, 2003a). If so, claims of the impact of European integration on the domestic level are probably most straightforward and convincing in more legalistic studies of the transposition of EU law.

It is perhaps not so surprising that the Europeanization literature stemming from scholars whose research interests are firmly placed within EU-studies has shown a preference for top-down research strategies giving favourable attention to EU-level variables (Exadaktylos and Radaelli, 2009). However, a similar choice of research strategy prevails among scholars who, in addition to European integration and domestic variables, are concerned with global sources of domestic change. Such studies identify and define European integration and global independent variables so as to enable the formulation of alternative hypotheses, which may be tested against quantitative and qualitative data. Yet, bottom-up research strategies or domestic-domestic methodological set-ups (Kallestrup, 2006; Radaelli and Pasquier, 2006), have been offered as containing a so far largely neglected potential if the concern is to generate more comprehensive knowledge of domestic change. Bottom-up research strategies significantly turn our attention to domestic change – and continuity for that matter – whatever the sources may be. Such research strategies will take their point of departure in a descriptive analysis of particular domestic changes over a certain period of time and then proceed to ask the question of what may be the sources of the identified changes.

Top-down causal propositions also tend to draw on top-down research strategies and, likewise, bottom-up causal claims tend to draw on bottom-up research strategies. However, it need not be so. Although top-down research strategies are biased towards causal propositions suggesting that EU-level institutions and policies give momentum to domestic change such studies may, of course, also reach conclusions that European integration may have no, or perhaps only limited impact, on the domestic level. In fact, recent calls for the development and application of more bottom-up research strategies seem, at least in part, to be based on an acknowledgement of the so far dominant top-down research strategies often leading to conclusions suggesting that EU-level independent variables may at best make a partial account of observable domestic change. Bottom-up research strategies are, on the other hand, in principle open to a wide range of explanatory factors and may thus give rise not only to top-down causal claims, but also – and perhaps more likely – point to the respective and complementary value of European integration, global and domestic explanations of domestic change. However, the openness of bottom-up research strategies to a range of independent and mediating variables also opens up for the possibility for critique namely: that bottom-up research strategies tend to lack a coherent and well-developed theoretical basis and, thus, fail to generate knowledge that may form the background for further development of coherent causal theories (Blom-Hansen, 2006, p. 47).

We may or may not accept the development of causal theories as the ultimate scientific ambition. Regardless, considering the lack of maturity of the research agenda, the development of more open bottom-up, or analytical inductive, research strategies is timely. For the time being our empirical insight on the respective significance of European integration, global and domestic sources of domestic change is limited, which suggests that we should be careful not to rely on certain ‘cut-in-stone’ assumptions and theoretical frameworks. In order to move forward, further substantial empirical research is needed. This of course begs the question of how we may proceed to develop analytical strategies which, on the one hand generate systematic empirical knowledge and, on the other hand allow for subsequent theoretical analysis and theoretical development. In the following, I suggest that we may address this question through a combination of different comparative research designs and multi-theoretical analysis.

From Counterfactual to Compound Comparative Research Designs

Research strategies aiming to deal with the respective impact of the European integration and the global on the domestic level may rely on counterfactual



reasoning. The result of an analysis emphasizing the causal effects of European integration on domestic change is here compared with the imagined absence of European integration. A counterfactual analysis may, for example, address the question of whether it is reasonable to imagine that certain identified domestic changes would have occurred in the absence of EU-level institutions and policies. In order for such an analysis to appear reliable, the 'alternative reality' with which the actual analysis is compared should be theoretically substantiated and only vary on explicit and well-defined dimensions (Haverland, 2007). Alternative hypotheses about the domestic effects of globalization and domestic reform imperatives may thus form the background for a counterfactual analysis enabling more nuanced claims of whether European integration is source of domestic change or if such may have occurred regardless. Counterfactual analysis may be a helpful analytical strategy in cases where a clear a priori distinction can be made between the independent effects of European integration, the global and domestic dynamics of change. First, however, the mere fact that we are dealing three types of variables will make the establishment of a convincing 'alternative reality' against which the substantive empirical analysis is compared a difficult task. Second, if – as most studies suggests – Europeanization and globalization tend to constitute corresponding and highly context sensitive rather than conflicting and clearly distinctive phenomena, then speculating about the causal relations becomes problematic.

Another, and more promising methodological pathway, goes through comparative research strategies. There are at least three basic routes in developing comparative research strategies: (A) cross-sectoral; (B) cross-national; and (C) comparative temporal studies. These comparative research strategies are by no means mutually exclusive and various compound comparative research designs have shown great promise on the area (see Levi-Faur, 2004a; special issue edited by Levi-Faur, 2006b). Below it will be argued that a combination of cross-national comparative and comparative temporal research designs is particularly well suited for the research endeavour pursued in this article. It is also argued that methodological tools know from discourse analysis may help us to release the full potential of systematic comparative temporal analysis.

A: Cross-sectoral comparison

Most of the otherwise limited empirical investigations of the implications of European integration, globalization and domestic sources of domestic change have been conducted with a focus on one particular policy sector, for example social policy, agricultural policy, telecommunication or economic policy. However, route (A) has been followed to compare changes within the capital

and labour markets (Verdier and Breen, 2001) and to compare change in the telecom sector with that in electricity (Levi-Faur, 2004a, 2006 b). Cross-sectoral comparisons are based on the assumption that different policy sectors also tend to be affected to varying degrees by European integration and global forces. One of the central advantages of cross-sectoral comparison lies in the selection of variation in sector studies.

For instance, labour market and social policies may be seen as traditionally domestically rooted in national institutions and discourses. On the other hand, whereas the agricultural sector for the past 40–50 years has been subject to extensive EU regulation, the financial and, more recently, climate policy sectors are perhaps more global in terms of discourses and regulatory frameworks. Comparing policy sectors that differ in the degree to which they are subject to EU governance, global regulatory regimes or rooted in domestic institutions may thus help us to generate knowledge of whether and possibly how domestic policies, networks and institutions are affected. Yet, these examples, also suggest that it is not an easy task to a priori categorize policy sectors within EU member states which are often subject to impacts from a complex variety of European integration, global and domestic sources of change. An illustration of this from the financial sector is banking: banking is often seen as a prime example of the impact of globalization in terms of liberalization and cross-boarder competition as well as in terms of the establishment of international regulatory standards. At least since the latter part of the 1980s, the EU has also addressed banking through EU-wide regulations and supervisory standards. At the same time a number of studies have shown how member state banking systems exhibits distinct national characteristics, for instance, in terms of the role of central banks, the scope of government intervention, the role of supervisory agencies and peak interest organization (for example, Pagoulatos, 1999; Lütz, 2004). To this can be added that the complexity of causes of domestic change is not only an issue at any given point in time, but almost certainly the ‘mixture’ of the respective impacts of the three types of independent variables change over time. As a consequence we are probably better advised to assume that we are dealing with a mixture of causes of policy sector change. At the same time, we are probably often also faced with challenges related to ‘degree-ism’ when selecting policy sectors according to variations in outcomes (or dependent variables).

Policy sectors may, for example, vary in degree of liberalization. It may be in terms of policy objectives that more or less favour international competition, policy instruments that more or less favour deregulation or more or less reduce national trade barriers. If the criteria for selection is based on variations in governance structures across policy sectors, for instance, differentiating between types of policy networks, it also tend to be a matter of degrees. Empirically policy sector networks thus tend to be characterized in terms of degrees of networks



openness to the entry of new actors or as being more or less inclusive to new policy ideas. Since we may here lean on numerous existing policy sector studies in the selection of our cases, I consider the selection of policy sectors according to variation on outcomes at least less problematic than selections of variation in a complex mixture of independent variables. Furthermore, as suggested by Levi-Faur (2004b), it is certainly an option to carry out pilot studies in order to deal with the challenge of selecting policy sector cases before any in-depth investigations. Essentially, pilot studies should be conducted in order to define the population of cases according to categories relevant for the comparison.

Even so, I will argue below that the research question at hand is for the time being better approached through comparative temporal analysis combined with cross-national comparisons. This is also to suggest that when Levi-Faur (2004a) follows an otherwise sophisticated compound research strategy combining cross-sectoral and temporal comparisons, the real advantage of this appear as a consequence of the temporal analysis. In fact, an in-depth temporal analysis at the domestic level is also the process of uncovering the particularities and developments in our dependent variable. By no means does this suggest that we should avoid comparative policy sector studies. Yet, for the time being, it may be less useful to embed our comparative research designs in the most disperse and fragile knowledge on policy sector variations, but rather look towards the, at least, more solid cross-national comparative foundations and perhaps most importantly make the full use of temporal comparisons.

B: Cross-national comparison

Route (B) has lead to research strategies comparing a large number of countries including both 'most similar' and 'most different' research designs comparing groups of EU member states and non-EU countries with the aim of isolating the impact of EU membership from global sources of domestic change (Verdier and Breen, 2001; Levi-Faur, 2004a; Schneider and Häge, 2008). 'Most similar' research designs may, for example, compare EU member states with countries that are not members of the EU, but members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) both in Europe and across the globe so to indicate a certain commonality in open market policies, democratic values as well as on standards and recommendations across a number of policy areas. 'Most different' research designs aim, for instance, to show whether EU policy and institutional choices are in fact the source of domestic change among EU member states or if similar developments are observable in unlike countries outside of the EU and most often also outside of Europe. As impressive as they are, such research designs

also hint at certain limitations in comparing European with non-European countries as well as in the reliance on the existence of comparable quantitative data across a large number of countries. Together this tends to disfavour domestic institutional and ideational explanations of domestic change.

More specifically, the categorization of countries – whether as ‘most similar’ or ‘most different’ – is clearly not an easy task since countries move between categories over time, which is a particular drawback as a temporal analysis is an essential element in research strategies addressing Europeanization and globalization (see further below). ‘Most similar’ comparative country studies possess an additional challenge since country as well as regional-specific events like economic or political crises may well upset the general picture. The general challenges related to the categorization of countries exist to some degree regardless of whether comparison is done across European countries and non-European, and regardless the number of case countries. However, research strategies combining European and non-European country comparisons with a large-*N* relying on quantitative data are particularly exposed to being biased so to disfavour domestic explanations of domestic change. These studies rely on the existence of comprehensive and comparable empirical knowledge of the dependent variable under investigation. When, however, such knowledge is not available – and for the subject matter and for the time being, this is the rule rather than the exception – it is necessary to develop research strategies, which investigate in greater detail the quality of the dependent variable across the case countries. For instance, formal organizational changes, the introduction of new government regulations, and a restructuring of the delegation of formal powers may well be captured through existing quantitative cross-country data (for example, statistical data from the OECD). However, normative and ideational imperatives for domestic changes are not covered including cross-national variations on how the challenges and opportunities of European integration and globalization are conceived of in different countries and regions (see further Peters 1998, 18ff). Cross-national comparative research strategies focusing on a large number of ‘most similar’ and ‘most different’ countries thus tend to be biased so to disfavour possible domestic sources of domestic change including domestic institutional and discursive characteristics, which are increasingly considered significant in accounting for domestic change by in-depth empirical studies.

Route (B) has also led to more in-depth qualitative comparisons of European states which not only show similarities but also vary on a few and central characteristics of interest. This route is particularly helpful as it is based on a number of well-established hypotheses of relevance for a range of theoretical stances (see further below). The selection of states may be based on variations on either dependent or independent variables. The former has given rise to cross-national comparisons of large EU member states which vary in



adopting more protective (France) or more neo-liberal (United Kingdom) stances towards increased global economic pressures (Schmidt, 2001). Country selections based on variations on the independent variables have led to comparisons among corporatist yet multi-actor member states (Germany and the Netherlands); comparisons between more cohesive and single actors states (France) and fragmented multi-actor states (Italy) (Schmidt, 2002b); and studies giving the lion's share of attention to large EU member states – Germany, France, the United Kingdom and possibly Italy – but also begin more extensive comparisons of large and small states (Schmidt, 2003; Hay and Smith, 2005; Menz, 2005; Smith and Hay, 2008).

On the one hand, by paying attention to the particularities of domestic institutional, discursive and structural characteristics in European countries, these studies supply qualitative knowledge of domestic developments and point up domestic sources of change – or domestic mediating factors – in the face of European integration and globalization. On the other hand, the criteria for the selection of countries are based on variables and hypotheses which are accepted as relevant across a number of theoretical literatures including the literature on 'varieties of capitalism', Europeanization, the new-institutionalism and studies of corporatist state structures. Empirical findings of such studies thus make room for cross-fertilization and theoretical developments across a number of literatures. Further, some of the theoretical solidity which may otherwise be lacking within this in-the-making research agenda, may be improved through the use of theoretically informed criteria for country selection.

To be sure, the ambition here is by no means a general dismissal of the usefulness of hypothetical-deductive and quantitative research strategies in favour of more analytical inductive and qualitative research strategies. Rather the scientific ideal is that the two types of research strategies are best seen as benefitting from each other (see Tarrow (2004) for an excellent discussion). Along these lines and considering the nature of the research question and existing studies on the area, the point is that it is time to move towards more in-depth comparative country studies. This pathway is suitable for approaching the immature research field and for contributing to the establishment of a certain pool of knowledge that may subsequently form the basis for the development of more substantiated hypotheses. This will further allow for releasing the full potential of the already existing hypothetical-deductive and quantitative research. Finally, most often in-depth cross-national studies compare EU member states, but a number of studies also include comparisons with European countries that are not members of the EU. I will by no means dismiss the relevance of including European countries that are not members of the EU for particular research purposes, however, below I will argue that often, perhaps, a more profitable pathway goes through temporal comparative

analysis of countries before and after EU membership or before and after country-specific opt-outs.

C: Temporal comparison

As to route (C), most studies include a time dimension which expands over ten or more years since Europeanization and globalization are commonly conceptualized as processes, rather than seen as an end-state. Nevertheless, the full potential of cross-time comparisons is still to be released. This may be done through the development of research strategies, which explicitly and systematically compare periods of time characterized by variations in either the dependent or independent variables.

The most common temporal comparisons are those which are based on variations in the independent variables. This may, for instance, lead to comparisons of countries before and after EU membership with the aim of isolating the impact of the EU membership. With the same aim, more sector-specific variation may also form the background for a comparison of countries, for example, before and after membership of the EMU or before and after certain country-specific opt-outs. Similarly, we may cover periods of time enabling a comparison of EU member states before and after the enforcement of an international trade or climate agreement or before and after membership of international organizations – for instance, the recent North Atlantic Treaty Organization membership among a number of Central and Eastern European countries may well be a relevant marker in the study of defence and security policies. The methodological concerns here are, of course, that global treaties and international organizations as well as the EU or the EMU may well be the cause of domestic change well before the actual act of membership – think, for instance, of the implications of EU accession negotiations and various pre-accession agreements. With this methodological concern in mind, it is still highly useful to cover a time period in country studies which allows for comparisons along the lines of variations in independent variables but, importantly, without assuming that domestic change occurs in the immediate context of global or EU-level events. That is, since our limited knowledge tends to suggest that global forces and European integration may well have some level of impact on the domestic well before the actual act of various types of formal institutional and policy choices and memberships (see, for example, Bauer *et al.*, 2007), such comparisons should be preceded by a bottom-up temporal analysis.

Taking our point of departure in research strategies known from discourse analysis, it is suggested here that a diachronic analysis of domestic change, or, if you wish, temporal comparisons based on variations on the dependent



variable, is a helpful first analytical step. A historical in-depth descriptive country analysis should be aimed at identifying periods of time which may be characterized in term of specified domestic changes and, thus, enable a subsequent comparison of time periods. The identification and characterization of time periods also involves the identification and characterization of points in time that mark the beginning and the end of time periods. For instance, a specified period of time may be characterized by the institutionalization of certain discursive conceptions of European integration and globalization. This is essentially the study of domestic change as a process. The point in time that marks the end of this process may also be characterized as constituting an institutional change. This is essentially the study domestic change as an instant where 'time is frozen' – so to speak (Andersen and Kjaer, 1996; see also Lynggaard (2006) for an example). Depending on the number of time periods and points in time identified and characterized in the temporal analysis, it will supply us with the opportunity to compare domestic change both a process and instants and, essentially, theorize domestic change under various conditions. Systematic temporal comparisons may thus be seen as a way to 'compare a country with itself' at different time periods and at different points in time. This not only has the advantages of 'most similar' research designs, but also addresses the limitations of comparisons of even the most similar countries we may be able to think of. Further, a temporal comparison at the domestic level will direct our attention towards the identification of points in time characterized by domestic change, rather than assuming that domestic change appears in the immediate context of, for instance, particular EU level policy and institutional initiatives or the adoption of global treaties or recommendation.

A Discursive Analytical Route towards Multiple Theoretical Analyses

As argued throughout this article, when dealing with an immature research agenda we should be careful not to base our research strategies on too rigid causalities. This brings to the fore the final methodological point, namely that research strategies that allow for multiple theoretical analyses are especially useful. Rather than developing research strategies aimed at hypothesis –tests, it is – at least for the time being – more appropriate to adopt a methodology that allows for a variety of theoretical interpretations. Yet, how do we counteract problems of reductionism while still generating systematic knowledge that allows for theoretical development?

Discourse analysis is helpful in a number of ways. First, through discourse analysis we may uncover causal relationships among European integration, globalization and domestic sources of domestic change as conceived by



involved decision-makers. That is, discourse analysis supplies a more open inductive approach in the sense that causal relationships, as conceived by actors involved in the empirical field, are given primacy over theoretical causations. The assumption is that domestic decision-makers have certain collective conceptions of the challenges and opportunities they are facing as a consequence of European integration and globalization which, in turn, form the background for domestic institutional and policy responses. To be sure, domestic discourses on the challenges and opportunities posed by respective European integration, globalization and domestic legacies (for example, policy and institutional legacies) are by no means necessarily all-embracing or coherent. Discursive conflicts are more likely to exist, for instance, within and between the political elite and the broader public and domestic discourses may well change over time. In any case, research strategies aimed at uncovering domestic discourses on European integration, globalization and domestic legacies enable a distinction between the three sets of variables in question as articulated by the involved agents. The most used research techniques to uncover discourses are elite interviews, questionnaire surveys and document analysis. Document analysis has shown to be particularly useful to uncover discursive configurations over time and enabling the development of discursive typologies (Hay and Rosamond, 2002). Interviews may, subsequently, help us to zoom-in on the specificities of discursive typologies – for example, on variations among different domestic groups of actors – and through questionnaires we may quantify the scope of these typologies (Hay and Smith, 2005; Smith and Hay, 2008).

The second advantage of discourse analysis is that it may form the background for a second and multi-theoretical analysis. While a discourse analysis of causal conceptions involved among domestic decision-makers may be seen as a ‘1st order’ analysis, this analysis may also form the background for a subsequent ‘2nd order’ – or theoretical – analysis (see Andersen and Kjaer, 1996). The study of domestic discourses generates data which supply insight into whether, for instance, decision-makers in small states conceive of themselves as more effected by European integration and globalization than decision-makers in larger states, or whether decision-makers in Liberal Market Economies consider themselves more effected by external forces than decision-makers in Coordinated Market Economies as suggested by the literature on varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001). In order to generate systematic data for a 2nd order multi-theoretical analysis, the 1st order discursive analysis should be guided by themes that are not confined to interpretation within any one particular theoretical or analytical framework, but rather focus on analytical themes that cut-across theoretical divides. In other words, by focusing on analytical themes we drain our analytical strategy of causalities and leave it to the empirical field – as conceived by the involved actors – to



supply these. Looking across the relevant theoretical positions and analytical frameworks there are a number of themes that cut across several literatures including: country size (large/small), national polity characteristics (for example centralized/decentralized states; neo-corporatist/pluralist states) and institutional and discursive variations (for example large/small number of veto points; interventionist/liberal policy stances).

Finally, discourse analysis has the advantage of being particularly empirically sensitive. The empirical sensitivity is acutely needed to further uncover and substantiate the limited findings so far. This point build to some extent on a reiteration of the empirical findings (see Introduction) in favour of further pursuing the research agenda at hand namely that: (a) European integration at best supplies partial explanations of domestic change; (b) European integration and globalization tend to be mediated through domestic discourses and institutions; and (c) the domestic implication of European integration tends to be diverse, rather than, for instance, instigating an overhaul and convergence in national polities (see, for example, Anderson, 2002). To these findings may be added – by suspicion – that still further and more subtle and indirect changes in domestic politics and policies are probably yet to be captured and possibly be attributed to European integration (as convincingly argued by Parsons, 2007) and the global. Together, this calls for research strategies especially sensitive to the empirical.

Concluding Remarks: Three Steps Enabling an Analytical Inductive Research Strategy

This article has dealt with some of the most demanding methodological challenges that we face in the endeavour of investigating and differentiating between European integration, global and domestic sources of domestic change. Given our current limited knowledge about the area, the main points are that (1) we need to develop research strategies that counteract reductionism, while enabling theoretical development, and (2) in order to develop more sophisticated and empirically sensitive research strategies we need to combine a number of methodologies.

Against this backdrop, the article suggests a step-wise approach. The first step involves the development of a research strategy that uncovers domestic discourses on European integration, globalization and domestic reform imperatives over time (probably at least a 10-year perspective). The discursive analytical strategy should evolve around a number of themes that cut across theoretical positions. This research strategy allows for a 1st order analysis of agents' causal conceptions of how globalization and European integration arrive and possibly cause change within EU member states.

The second step is the development of a research strategy that allows for a temporal comparative country analysis. A temporal analysis that compares European countries ‘with themselves’ in different time periods and at different points in time has the advantages of the most ‘most similar’ comparative research design. Further, this research strategy allows us to proceed with a bottom-up temporal analysis of whether and how domestic change coincide with global and European integration explanatory variables – for example, does domestic change occur before or after the enforcement of global treaties or memberships of international organizations, before or after EU membership, before or after membership of the EMU, before or after country-specific opt-outs or associational agreements – all, of course, depending on the empirical field investigated.

The third step is the development of a cross-country comparative research design allowing for a multiple theoretical analysis. Our knowledge of the respective implications of European integration and globalization on policy sectors is, at best, uncertain and essentially an open empirical question. Rather our knowledge is more solid on variations of national political and economic structures making the selection of variation among case countries, a more helpful pathway. Cross-country comparative research designs need by no means to lead to a confirmation of existing knowledge in the area. It may as well produce supplementary or contradictory knowledge, yet still within more well-researched fields.

The first research analytical step will itself enable a distinction and an assessment of the implications of European integration, globalization and domestic discursive imperatives for domestic change. Some fully satisfying analytical ambitions will be completed at this stage. However, proceeding with step two and three will favour theoretical cross-fertilization and the production of more comprehensive knowledge. The combination of a systematic temporal comparative and cross-country comparative analysis enable us to distinguish among European integration, globalization and domestic sources of change in EU member states and essentially prepare the ground for a more open multi-theoretical analysis.

About the Author

Kennet Lynggaard is Associate Professor at the Department of Society and Globalisation, Roskilde University, Denmark.

Note

- 1 See also Rosamond (2005) for a critical review emphasizing European integration in the face of globalization.



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