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Homological structures and conjunctural alliances

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## **The European Social Survey and European research policy – homological structures and conjunctural alliances**

### **Abstract:**

This article analyses the history of the European Social Survey and its relationship to the changes in European research policy using Bourdieu's field analytical approach. It argues that the success of the European Social Survey relied on three interwoven processes that we theoretically can understand as the establishment of homological structures and the formation of conjunctural alliances between the field of European social science research and the field of European policy. The three interwoven processes that I depict are: first, the production of a European field of social research connected both to European and national scientific institutions; second, the establishment of EU institutions and organisations that could identify and link up with social researchers; and third, the formation of conjunctural alliances between the two fields (social science and EU research policy) and the appearance of actors able to move capital between them.

### **Key words:**

European Union, Bourdieu, sociology of knowledge, history of social survey research, European Social Survey (ESS), homological structures

## Introduction

This article analyses the historical development of the European Social Survey (ESS) and relates it to the development of the European Union's (EU) research policy. It offers one of the first empirical accounts of how social science knowledge production entangles with political processes of European integration. In 1996, a group of European social scientists under the auspices of the European Science Foundation (ESF) and closely entangled with the EU initiated what became one of the largest social science projects in Europe and what is now regarded as one of the most important transnational surveys (see e.g. Heath, Fisher, and Smith 2005). The first survey round of the ESS was launched in 2002 and has since been conducted biannually. From the very start, the ESS was heavily funded by the European Union Framework Programs (FP) and national research agencies. It thus managed to establish itself as a reference point in survey research and is now institutionalised as a European Research Infrastructure. The development and relative success of the ESS, I argue, should not be understood as a result of its intrinsic scientific qualities, changes in the political environment or strong political support. Rather, its perceived success is largely attributable to a homological structuring of two social fields and the ability of the powerful actors involved in the ESS to engage with, and use, various resources available from European institutions. The article thus underscores the importance of connections to powerful political institutions in understanding the successes and failures of social scientific knowledge and highlights the work involved in transforming resources deriving from the political field into resources usable in the field of social science. Lastly, it analyses how specific forms of social scientific knowledge production came to occupy dominant positions in the emerging field of European social science.

The analysis uses Bourdieu's field analytical approach (Bourdieu 1996) using the concept of homological structures and conjunctural alliances. By homological structures I refer to the theoretical assumption that homological structures are constructed across fields and by conjunctural alliances that agents from different fields construct alliances across fields. In the article I argue that the success of the ESS was largely made possible by three interrelated processes, the first to coming the formation of homological structure and the third the construction of conjunctural alliances. First, in the twenty years prior to the launch of the ESS, European social science researchers had built up experience in conducting transnational social surveys and a European network with close connections to powerful European and national scientific institutions and research bureaucracy. Here through, they connected to an emerging field of EU research policy bureaucracy. Secondly, in the early 1990 research policy became a

central policy area in the EU and the social science was included. Thirdly, and crucially for the success of the ESS, the two fields were, structurally synchronised, enabling leading agents associated to the ESS to transfer both financial and symbolic resources between the two fields. Thus, the case of the ESS provides us with an opportunity to explore the nature of the relationship between the EU and the social sciences. More generally, it shed light on how the relationship between social science and political institutions is negotiated and reshaped in the process of European integration.

Research and scientific collaboration have been part of the European integration project since the 1950s. Despite this, and the emerging European collaboration in other scientific fields, few European social science projects emerged in the first 30-40 years of this process (Fleck and Hönig 2014; Heilbron 2014), perhaps because of the historically close connections between the social sciences and the nation state (Desrosières 1998; Wittrock, Wagner, and Wollmann 1991). That notwithstanding, various kinds of social science knowledge have contributed to European integration: economic theory has informed the construction of the single market and EMU, legal scholars have been decisive in the construction of the *acquis communautaire*, and political science has informed EU foreign policy, to mention but a few notable examples (Adler-Nissen and Kropp 2015; Manners 2015; Matthijs and McNamara 2015; Vauchez 2015). However, questions like ‘who produces knowledge about Europe and how?’ are seldom addressed, and the link between knowledge on the one hand, and actors and institutions on the other, is rarely explored in studies of the relationship between the social sciences and European integration processes (Adler-Nissen and Kropp 2015; Rosamond 2000); neither is the question of how specific forms of knowledge production come to dominate the emerging field of European social science. Hence, this article explores how specific modes of social science knowledge production developed and were institutionalised at the European level over than twenty years. The article is structured as follows. First, I present the theoretical framework, thereafter I analyses the case of the ESS. I start out by analysing for the history leading up to the ESS. The following section analyses the development of EU research policies and the position of the social sciences within it. Thirdly I analyses the formation of what I call the conjunctural alliance between the two fields. In the last section, I discuss empirical implications of the analysis.

### **Conjunctural alliances - The entanglement of social science and politics**

The article deals with the production and organisation of social sciences on a European level.

Theoretically, it focuses on the relationship between social science knowledge production and political institutions and power. It draws on theoretical insights from two sociological fields that are seldom brought together: the political sociology of the EU and the sociology of knowledge and science (though see Kauppi 2014; Mudge and Vauchez 2012). Statistics constitute an obvious starting point when analysing the relationship between the social sciences and political institutions. Social statistics and social science knowledge have played a crucial role in state building in the modern period (Porter 1995; Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1996; Wagner 2001). Since the early modern period, social statistics have been used to transform complex social issues into manageable policy problems, as well as to enable comparisons of social groups, territories and so on - all processes that have equipped state bureaucracies with a means to consolidate state power. In this context, social statistics have played a central role in the unification of the European states, both as governing technologies and by enabling symbolic integration (Bourdieu 1994). As studies in the sociology of science have shown, social statistics do not merely represent a reality in themselves, despite the apparent scientific objectivity bestowed on them by quantification and rigorous methods. On the contrary, as knowledge instruments they perform and contain social realities upon which scientists, politicians or bureaucrats can act (Desrosières 1998). Thus, social statistics produce intelligible and manageable social realities that potentially have as much power to shape the social world as they are shaped by it.

In conceptual terms, I use Bourdieu's field analysis to address the relationship between political institutions and scientific knowledge production (Bourdieu 1991, 1996). The analysis approaches European political institutions and social science knowledge production as two distinct fields. Bourdieu defines fields as relatively autonomous social spaces governed by their own laws (*doxa*) and integrated by the agents' interests in the activities and products of the field (*illusio*) (Bourdieu 1996; 184 ff & 331 ff). Vauchez (Vauchez 2008; see also: Mudge and Vauchez 2012) has appropriated Bourdieu's concept of 'field' to study the political sociology of the EU. They write: "*By 'political field' we mean a system of relations in which actors struggle over political authority, partly in the form of authority over policy agendas and governing bureaucracies.*" (Mudge and Vauchez 2012:455). Thus, I view fields as relatively autonomous. This means that ideas, resources and people can move between fields, and that fields are in a hierarchical relationship to one other. The main contribution of this article is to shed light on how the two fields relate to one another, how agents mobilise resources in different fields, and how activities in one field are influenced by the changing configurations of other fields. To understand this I use

often overlooked aspect in Bourdieu's field analysis and argue that homological structure between fields and the conjunctural alliance between agents from different fields are key to understanding the success of the ESS (Bourdieu 1988). By 'homological structure' I refer to Bourdieu's theoretical assumption that homological structures are constructed across fields, owing to underlying principles of vision and division (Bourdieu 1996; 182). Thus, in order for capital and agents to move between fields there needs to be a common set of perceptions that allow the formation of 'conjunctural alliances' (Bourdieu 1988:173–80). Here conjunctural alliances are understood as points in time when agents from different field conjoin through a common perception of the situation and their interest and act together in their pursuit of maintaining or overturn the current social configuration for their respective fields. To understand these processes I draw on Bourdieu's concepts of capital understood as power resources that are both the means and ends in struggles in the field. Furthermore, capitals are field-specific power resources in the sense that what is recognised in one field is not necessarily recognised in others. Thus, the analysis focuses on how various forms of resources are mobilised and how power resources from different fields are converted into field-specific forms of capital. Conveying capital from one field to another requires timing and that the actors and institutions constituting the various fields operate, to some degree, with a similar temporal and political rhythm. Different from the standard critic of Bourdieu (see e.g.: Sewell Jr. 1992) I thus focus on the actions of the agents and how they engage in building alliances and institutions. All in all, I argue that the case of the ESS can be understood as one of the many processes of 'building Europe' through the construction of homologically structured fields. In the case of social science fields, this process notably involves the construction of common symbolic and technical tools as well as the establishment of scientific institutions and scholarly networks (Heilbron, Guilhot, and Jeanpierre 2008)Setting the scene

In 1995, the EESFs Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS) put together a small group of survey experts to design a blueprint for a ESS. The idea was to create a survey similar to the surveys conducted in many European states, such as the German ALLBUS or the British Social Attitudes Survey, in order to produce data for comparative social science. The SCSS asked a group of expert advisers led by German political scientist, Max Kaase, a SCSS member at that time, to formulate a preliminary plan for the development of the ESS in 1995 (SCSS ESF 1996). The SCSS accepted the proposal at its 1996 meeting in Paris, and 17 out of 21 national ESF member organisations decided to support the project (ESF 1998).

Under the auspices of the ESF, the SCSS set up and funded two committees to carry out the survey: a larger Steering Group which represented the involved countries, and a smaller Methodological Committee responsible for the more technical part of the survey. Supported by the ESF secretariat, the two committees, , prepared the final document, which not only called for a European social survey. The proposal was presented to the SCSS in 1999 and three years later, in 2002, the first round of surveys was conducted in 22 countries throughout Europe, heavily funded by national research councils and not least the EU's framework program. Since then, the survey has been repeated biannually and the data used in more than 2000 scientific publications (Bethlehem et al. 2008; ESS 2016). Two questions arise from this short narrative. First, how and why did it become 'necessary' to set up a European social survey? And second, how did the agents involved manage to mobilise European institutions and connections? In order to understand the success of the ESS, we need to look at the history of transnational surveys in Europe as well as the academic trajectory of the main actors involved in the different committees and groups established by the ESF.

### **Interested powerful agents**

The actors involved in setting up the ESS during the late 1990s were not closely connected from the outset. However, they did share views on the goals, methods and forms of reasoning of social science (Steinmetz 2007); they all had previous experience with European and international surveys and research projects; and they were, centrally positioned in their national social science fields and well connected to European bureaucratic scientific organisations. In other words, they occupied similar positions in different national fields and shared epistemological convictions. As such, they worked as agents mediating between the European political field and the field of European social science. A brief look at three of the leading actors will serve to exemplify the trajectories and capitals that conjoined in the project. They are: Max Kaase, chair of the expert group and later of the steering committee; Swedish sociologist, Robert Erikson, chairman of the SCSS and a participant in developing the questionnaire; and UK social scientist, Roger Jowell. Many others researchers were involved in the initial development phase and contributed to different aspects of the survey. However, these three agents embodied not only scientific recognition based on their publications, but also institutional power due to the positions they occupied, their experience with organising collaborative projects, and their connections to political institutions both at the national and European level.



Kaase (1935 - ) was educated in economics and sociology. During his early career he spent time in the US at centres for survey research, and from 1974 – 1979 he was the director of the ZUMA (Zentrum für Umfrage, Methoden und Analysen), Mannheim, Germany. More importantly, from the late 1980s he was one of the leaders of the ESF-initiated research programme, *Beliefs in Government* (Kaase and Newton 1995). As a member of various research committees and boards in Germany and Europe, Kaase was well connected in the German scientific field, and over the course of his career he came to occupy a central position in the major European social science institutions. All in all, he was a central figure who brought strong institutional resources to the ESS project.

Erikson (1938 - ) is a Swedish sociologist renowned for his collaboration with the British sociologist, John Goldthorpe, on the now classic book, *The Constant Flux* (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992). Ever since his early career, Erikson have been involved in European sociological stratification research and placed in the inner circle of European stratification research. However, like Kaase, he was in the early 1990s deeply involved in national and European scientific institutions and governmental committees and expert groups in Sweden and, importantly for the ESS, in the European Commission. Not only was he a well-known and recognised sociologist, he also possessed significant institutional capital and was, furthermore, chairman of the SCSS in this crucial period. Thus, Erikson mediated between the political field and the scientific field, and was able to transfer capitals between these fields.

The last central agent involved in setting up the ESS, Jowell (1942 - 2011), lacked his colleagues' academic connections on a European level, but amply made up for this in terms of his experience in running large-scale international surveys and setting up and managing large-scale transnational survey organisations. Jowell had headed the British National Centre of Social Research since the early 1980s, and as such he had been instrumental in establishing the British Attitudes Survey in 1983 and, not least, in developing and chairing the ISSP (International Social Survey Program). Whereas Kaase and Erikson were both well-established within the academic field, Jowell mediated between classical publicly funded social science research and private opinion polling institutions. His career was thus characterised by an entrepreneurial approach and this proved to be a crucial asset for the ESS (Member of Core Scientific Team, 2013).

Hence, the three central agents involved in setting up the ESS were not just academics who happened to hit upon a good idea. They were all extremely well connected at the national and

European levels, both to academic and political institutions, and were therefore able to mobilise various forms of capital. Furthermore, they all represented the dominant social science position using social survey and had worked on questions of social mobility, political systems, inequality and social cohesion - issues that were deeply entangled with the social problems of the nation state around which the social sciences were institutionalised as the dominant form of social science research in the post war period (Kropp 2013; Steinmetz 2005). It was partly the conjuncture of these different properties that made the project possible.

### **Roads to a European Social Survey**

The ambition to create an international social survey for comparative social science was not new, and the team around the ESS drew on their experience from a number of earlier projects and incorporated this in into the organisation and design of the ESS. As one of the main researchers explained, the Beliefs in Government project encountered huge problems in establishing comparable data in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He recalled: “... *we could not fill the matrix* [of analysis], *because there was not enough data for enough countries across the time dimension. And that gave me the idea that we should develop a survey in Europe, which would be conducted at various times in the world with an identical questionnaire.*” (2013). In more theoretical terms, the history of the ESS is also the history of how a field is historically constructed and especially how relations between agents and institutions are formed. In the following analysis I show how the agents positioned themselves and established their power over institutions. Furthermore, I show how a common vision of the challenges to social science knowledge production was constructed, and not least how these challenges were met – two aspects which are crucial to understanding the formation of the field. Thus, the following section shows how the group of researchers and the field as such were integrated through a common *illusio* and *doxa* constructed through historical processes (Bourdieu 1996).

As pointed out above, throughout his career Kaase had been involved with other colleagues both from Europe and North America. One of the earliest of these projects was the *Political Action* project which ran from the early 1970s following the political and social protests and actions of the late 1960s that had questioned the post war Western social model. In theoretical terms, the project arose from the observation that political science had arisen in times of political tranquillity and had therefore, theoretically and morally, perceived conflict and political protest as abnormal and harmful (Wagner 2012) and had difficulties explaining the social and political changes of the late 1960s and 1970s. The Political Action project

approached to this problem was, however, still aligned with the model of social science - and US political science in particular – that had been institutionalised in the first decades of the post-war period. Thus, the Political Action project brought together theoretical and methodological components from the post-war political science settlement, the theory of political systems, techniques from attitude surveys, a comparative approach and nomothetic assumptions and aspirations (Barnes and Kaase 1979). The project was not only seen as a “...major comparative study of the modes of political action ... in five Western democracies... [that] ... No one who will in the future do research either in comparative politics or in political participation will be able to ignore.” (Sigel 1980:539–41) as was pointed out in one of the reviews. The project was also an early step in conducting collaborative European political science, and as such it gave Kaase a name in political science and connections throughout the Western European political science. At around the time when Barnes and Kaase published their results from the Political Action project, the ISSP (the International Social Survey Program), was launched (Bréchon 2012). The ISSP differed from the Political Action project in important ways. Whereas the Political Action project was guided by an interest in specific social changes and questions in political science, the ISSP was primarily interested in producing high quality comparative data and was closely connected to public statistical bureaus. It thus constituted what is nowadays termed a ‘research infrastructure’. The project developed in the early 1980s as a result of collaboration between the German ALLBUS and the US GSS, which incorporated a few common items in their surveys in 1982 in order to facilitate comparative studies. Two years later, in 1984, the ISSP was launched, adding two other major partners: the British Attitudes Survey initiated and headed by Roger Jowell, and the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes. The idea was to form a consortium of countries and to conduct repetitive, high quality surveys focusing on social policy issues for comparative social science purposes. The ISSP was, from the very beginning, connected to major publicly funded social surveys, which determined the issues to be addressed. Hence, the ISSP focused on major social policy issues ranging from equality to concerns about the environment and attitudes towards governments (Smith 2012). From 1985-1991 the ISSP was headed by Roger Jowell, who thus acquired first-hand experience in handling of both technical and political aspects of large-scale international surveys. In the late 1980s, Kaase initiated a research project together with Kenneth Newton from the UK that linked issue-driven political science and data production. The Beliefs in Government project was proposed in 1987 at a Political Science Research conference held at the European University Institute in Florence with the purpose of discussing the state of European Political

Science and, not least, of identifying collaborative projects on a European level. Both the ESF as sponsor of the conference, and the chairman, Professor Jean Blondel - a specialist in comparative politics and central actors in European political science through the ECPR (European Consortium for Political Research) - were eager to promote European collaboration and US-style behavioural political science, and the proposal that resulted from the conference was a comparative project aimed at exploring European public attitudes towards government (Kaase and Newton 1995:173ff). Kaase and Newton's concluding book about this project describes the process as follows:

*"This suggestion was enthusiastically accepted by the SCSS... Max Kaase... and Ken Newton... were asked to prepare a working paper for the workshop, which was held in September 1988 in Strasbourg. ... They considered the rationale of the research and the difficult problem of suitable and available data. There was a great deal of enthusiasm for the project and a belief that the data situation, while very far from ideal, was at least satisfactory. As a result, the workshop was able to agree an outline research programme... divided into four sub-topics, namely: attitudes towards democratic politics; the internationalization of government; the scope of government; and the impact of values ... Kaase presented it to the November 1988 meeting of the ESF General Assembly. It was unanimously accepted."* (Kaase and Newton 1995:2)

As this quote shows, the project was closely connected not only to the ESF, but also to national research funding bodies and, like the Political Action project, it again embodied the dominant forms of post-war political science knowledge production. The project did not aim to collect its own data, it had to rely on existing data. The data used in the project was collected from transnational surveys like the Eurobarometer, the European Values Study (EVS), the ISSP and national surveys. Despite the positive expectations about data, this became a major challenge. As one of the leading researchers from ZUMA explains, the existing data was politically sensitive and plagued by technical problems:

*"We offered them [the researchers in the Political Action project] to prepare the data... At that time it was impossible to compare data and you would need four assistants for each researcher to dig out some data for analysis. This catastrophe led to Kaase joining ESF to push for a change. You cannot do a comparative survey if you do not have a strong input from all countries."* (German surveys researcher, 2013)

Thus, political scientists specialised in comparative politics, and the experts in general social survey research, were frustrated over the lack of high quality data, since it rendered comparative analysis close to impossible

Summing up, two important things came out of the roughly twenty years just described. First of all, European social scientists built up experience in conducting transnational research projects using survey data, and became aware of how inadequate nationally collected data was in producing a coherent scientific object of study. To overcome these problems, international surveys like the ISSP were launched, giving researchers experience with organising such scientific endeavours and established a network of survey researchers in Europe. Secondly, researchers involved in these large scale survey projects establish linkages to central European institutions like the ESF and the European Commission. These two processes were, to a very large degree, dependent on each other, since building up relations to the science policy field required scientific recognition, and these relationships, in turn, provided the researchers with access to bureaucratic resources and networks that could then be transformed into new research projects. Hence, the result of the two processes was both an emerging field of European social science research dominated by a form of social science focusing on quantitative methods and surveys data to analyse the social problems of the state and with close ties to European bureaucratic and political fields.

### **The emergence of EU social science funding**

Before proceeding with the history of the ESS, we need to understand the changes in EU research policy that took place in the 1990s, notably the introduction of substantial funding for the social sciences. As I have argued, social scientists in the fields of comparative politics, sociology and social survey research had called for a high quality international or European social survey. But it was not before the field of European social science research and the field of EU research policy were homologically structured and conjunctural alliances between the two consolidated, that it was possible for important resources and symbolic recognition to be transferred between them.

As table 1 show, the ESS has been heavily funded by EU FP funds, but this kind of substantial social science funding only became possible due to the 1990s changes in EU research policy.

Table 1: Here

The role of science in EU policy had been ambiguous ever since the foundation of the EEC. This ambiguity is captured by Antonio Ruberti, the Italian commissioner for research from 1993 -1995, who stated: *“Europe today has no research policy [however] ...research was present from the very early stages of European construction”* (Ruberti and André 1997:325 & 331). Ruberti was here

pointing to the fact that despite not being central, the EU had supported research since the 1950s. However, until the 2000s, that support was mostly organised in ways which supported major policy areas like energy (atomic research) agriculture, industry and to some degree environmental protection (Krige 2003). Furthermore, research was dominated by the applied branches of the natural sciences, subordinating social science to the problems formulated by the other sciences. Despite the exclusion of most social science research from EU funding, social science research was nonetheless conducted and supported by two European scientific institutions initiated by the EU but which were formally organised as intergovernmental institutions. These were the European University Institute in Florence and the ESF in Strasbourg. Both these institutions aimed at strengthening scientific collaboration and coordination in Europe, and the EUI was, furthermore, exclusively devoted to the social sciences and to studies of European issues and it functioned as the official archive and chronicler of the EU.

The position of the social sciences in EU research policies changed significantly on a rhetorical and legal level following the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and at an institutional level after the FP 4 was introduced in 1994. The new possibilities opened up by the Maastricht Treaty had less to do with the increasing opportunities for independent research funding and the role assigned to research policy, than with the expanded political scope of the EU which enabled relevant areas of EU-funded research to be established in the applied branches of social science (Kastrinos 2010; Schögler 2013). In this way, central questions and issues for dominant forms of social science knowledge production - like social cohesion and solidarity, social welfare and living standards - were included in the EU portfolio and became issues that could be funded through the established research funding instruments like the FP. From the FP 4 (1994-1998) onwards, social science issues were included on their own terms and were no longer subordinated to technological or natural science issues. The three broad social science themes taken up in the FP 4 were: evaluation of science and technology, education research and research on social integration and social exclusion. Looking at the work programmes for the Social Sciences and Humanities, we find an increase in the funding allocated and more topics included from the FP 4 (starting in 1994) to the Horizon 2020 (starting in 2014). For the researchers working on the ESS, the increasing focus on themes such as social cohesion and governance was in line with their research interests, as was research focusing on methods and initiatives aimed at strengthening European SSH communities and institutions. From the late 1970s, ongoing discussions had taken place about the status and organisation of the social sciences in Europe

and the minor role played by the social sciences in European policy. By increasing funds and directing initiatives to build up SSH communities, EU research policies from the late 1990s not only addressed specific policy problems, but also focused on establishing European scholarly communities for the social sciences (Schögler 2013).

For researchers these changes in EU research policies created opportunities. However, the changes in EU policies did not ensure support and funding for projects like the ESS. Relations had to be built, points of view exchanged and alliances formed in order to transform the structural openings in EU research into specific research projects. In building relations between the EU and the field of social science research, the ESF played an important role in mediating between the two fields. The ESF's support was far from purely symbolic: it gathered European academic funding agencies and was established to coordinate European research funding. Thus, the ESF was not only connected to the EU research bureaucracy, but also to national research funding agencies and policy institutions. This position as mediator between the two fields enabled the ESF to encourage and, to some degree, ensure that national research funding agencies supported the ESS. As a member of the expert group explained:

*“The ESF works by asking member organisations whether they would be interested in financially supporting a particular project. That was the basic logic of the ESF operation... then [ESF] checked with Member States and asked which country would be willing to support the project.” (2013)*

Thus, the ESF carried out much of the work of building up and establishing support for the project. The ESF served as the secretariat in the first phase, organising meetings, funding travel, handling the budgets and writing proposals and drafts for the initial funding (Scientific Officer ESF, 2013). The ESF served as a crucial institution in transforming funding from the EU into scientific activities, but it also served to ‘inform the dialogue’ between relevant parts of the EU bureaucracy and the ESS. In this way, the ESF worked on shaping calls and proposals by conveying the concerns and ideas of leading scholars in the ESS to the EU research bureaucracy. The ESF was, in other words, a crucial institution in building up the conjunctural alliance between European survey researchers and the EU research bureaucracy.

### **Setting up the survey**

However, these changes in EU policies were only structural reconfigurations of the field of EU research policy. The alliances between the two fields still had to be built, and resources - both in the form of funding and the symbolic underpinning that the changes brought with them -

still needed to be transformed into recognisable forms of capital in the field of social science. Even a cursory glance at the timeframe from the first initiative in 1995 to the first interviews for the surveys conducted in 2002 reveals that setting up the project was not an easy job, despite the support of major European institutions and agents.

One of the first challenges was to set up a group to write the formal proposal for the ESF that could ensure support from national research funding agencies and the EU. In this phase of the project, some very important decisions were taken. As I showed above, the idea of a European social survey was, to a large degree, born out of the experience with the Beliefs in Government project, and it was also Kaase, supported by the ESF, who took the first steps (SCSS ESF 1996). The report was presented to the SCSS, who approved it and set up two committees: a Steering Group and a Methodological Committee. The Steering Group was composed of representatives appointed from national social science funding agencies, with the European Commission participating as observer, and Kaase as chairman. The aim and tasks of the Steering Group were to take major decisions and to supervise the work of the Methodology Committee, but more importantly it served as a forum to consolidate the support of the European Commission as well as the national funding agencies over time. It thus served as a crucial instrument for forming and upholding the conjunctural alliance. Most decisions about the actual running of the ESS were taken in the smaller Methodology Committee composed of eleven social survey researchers. Their main task was to produce a 'Blueprint' with detailed specifications of the content and organisation of a ESS (SCSS ESF 1999). In 1999, the two committees presented their joint report to the ESF. In the report, a number of important decisions on content, methods and organisation were taken.

First of all, the blueprint set up an organisation with a central coordination team (CCT) that exercised tight control over the working groups and the participating countries. This organisation differentiated the ESS from the ISSP (which had a flat, democratic organisational form), in that it concentrated decision-making power in the Methodological team around Jowell (Bréchon, 2012). Even more importantly, the blueprint laid down the methodological and content framework for the surveys. First of all, the overall purpose was to study “...*social, political and cultural attitudes, beliefs and orientations...*” from a long-term perspective (SCSS ESF 1999:11) and to “... *provide systematic and regular data on topics of major interest to the European social science community and, as a facility, would encourage the comparative analysis of political, social and economic trends. Such analyses would also hold great potential value in terms of European and national policy-making.*”



(ESF 1998:2). At first glance, this seems a rather banal argument for setting up the ESS, but the emphasis on 'long-term changes' served a specific purpose in relation to the EU and specifically to the Eurobarometer. The Eurobarometer had run as a biannual since 1973, and it posed a large variety of questions to the EU and petitioner country populations, primarily regarding their views on European or EU policy problems (Aldrin 2010). It was, however, seen by the founder of the ESS as a flawed instrument, too close to politics, with too little rigour in its methods. The ESS thus needed to balance between, on the one on hand, emphasising its policy relevance in order to comply with the requirements of the FP; and on the other, its claim to the rigour and detachment increasingly demanded in science. Since its organisation and funding were clearly oriented towards various kinds of policy issues, for the ESS the boundary between science and politics came to be defined by the methodological research conducted by the ESS and the emphasis on rigour methods.

The blueprint suggested biannual surveys comprising a core module with a large number of questions asked in each round, supplemented by a rotating module to provide more detailed data on specific and shifting issues. The "*method of accumulating random samples of independent cross-sections of the same population over time*" (ibid., p. 13) was chosen. A core ambition of the ESS was to provide data for, and encourage, comparative studies in the tradition of comparative politics and social policy studies. Quantitative comparative studies had been plagued by low data quality (Jowell 1998) and differences in categories and social structures - problems that did not disappear with the European Social Survey. To handle this problem, the blueprint followed two strategies. First of all, the blueprint called for 'equivalence' in all procedures. The goal was "*... to achieve equivalent methods and measures, not identical ones*" (Jowel et al. 2007:9). This meant that the team had to handle the huge variation both in survey practices in Europe and in social structures, and to strive to find ways to appropriate techniques and concepts to local conditions. The second strategy to ensure scientific legitimacy was documentation. The ESS aimed to document every step and formalise every procedure, thus making the translation, sampling, coding responses etc. available for users, in theory making it possible to take it into account when analysing data.

Thus, setting up the ESS as an organisation and a set of practices also involved building both social and technical alliances through adopting specific techniques and methodological procedures, and recruiting social researchers and their institutions. Setting up the ESS was a huge exercise in enrolment (Desrosières 1991) . It was crucial to coordinate not only the

technical part of the survey that ensured a high quality dataset, but also the organisation itself as well as its relations to political institutions. Hence, the project should not be understood merely as the result of massive institutional support from the EU, research councils from all over Europe, and the ESF. Without the sophisticated technical setup that ensured the project's scientific legitimacy and enabled it to connect to European political entities, the ESS could not have transferred resources between the fields of European social science research and European policy.

### **Transforming into an ERIC – the institutionalisation of the ESS**

In 2002, the first round of interviews was conducted in 22 countries – many more than the initiators had hoped for in the early 1990s. Through their close connections to the ESF and the EU, central ESS actors were successful with their FP-applications, but also managed to influence the themes of the calls through dialogue with EU bureaucrats. However, by the mid-2000s it became clear to the researchers involved that the ESS's reliance on funding from the FPs, the changing political interests of the EU and hence the ESS's ability to continue to be perceived as an interesting and fundable project could endanger its long term perspectives. The question was how to ensure funding for the ESS once its news interest declined? There was a further important downside to the FP projects and funding scheme, namely that the FPs only funded research projects and not 'infrastructures' and it was hard to find money to run the surveys and data management between the rounds (member of CST). In other words, the funding schemes that had made it possible to set up the ESS became a hindrance to the project's institutionalisation and to the goal to monitor long term changes.

Yet again, changes in EU research politics became an opening for the ESS, and once more powerful agents linked the ESS to the very centre of the political process, putting it in a favourable position. Recognising that it had become very expensive for single countries to establish and fund large-scale research facilities the EU created the European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) in 2002. The discussion mainly revolved around issues such as large-scale facilities for the natural and technical sciences, such as cyclotrons and observatories that cost billions of Euros (ESFRI 2006). The few projects included from the social sciences were small compared to those from the natural sciences. For the ESS the ESFRI did provide a strategic opportunity to switch from short-term funding to a more stable institutional setup. What kind of institutional setup would emerge was, however, unclear in the first years of the process, but many hoped for an 'EU solution' where the European

Commission would take over the funding of large-scale research infrastructures, thus protecting European research infrastructures from shifting national research funding priorities (Member of the CST, 2013). A first goal for the ESFRI was to describe the need for the development of research infrastructures in Europe, and in 2006 the first ‘European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures’ was published (ESFRI 2006) including a section for the social sciences and humanities. Chairing that section was Bjørn Henrichsen, then director of the NSD in Bergen. The NSD archived the ESS data and was one of the central institutions in the ESS alongside City University in London and GESIS in Cologne. For the NSD, the ESS was, to a large extent, a prestige project that showed off the archive’s achievements (NSD researchers 2013). Like Kaase, Jowell and Erikson, Henrichsen was linked to institutional powers both at a national and European level. In Europe, he had been in charge of collaboration among social science data archives and he was well connected in EC and European science policy circles. In Norway, he was centrally placed as long-term director of an important research institution and as Norway’s representative in international social science relations. For the ESS, having Henrichsen as chairman in the ESFRI provided the ESS with an opportunity to be updated on discussions about the institutionalisation and funding of European research infrastructures, as well as ensuring that the logic that had guided the ESS was represented in ESFRI. But ESFRI’s should not only to support strategic discussions about the funding of research infrastructure. Just as important were recommendations by ESFRI in the roadmaps about future and existing projects considered suitable for becoming European research infrastructures. Being included in the roadmaps was a way of simultaneously contributing to the scientific legitimacy of the research projects and to their significance for the European Research Area (ERA). In the years that followed the first Roadmap in 2006, the process moved from ‘mapping’ potential European research infrastructures to establishing the legal frameworks for setting up and funding (in 2009) research infrastructures, now called European Research Infrastructure Consortiums (ERICs). Reading through the different versions of the roadmap shows how crucial it became for projects to be included. Thus, both the ISSP and the European Election Survey were included as emerging projects in the first roadmap in 2006, but left out in subsequent roadmaps (ESFRI 2006, 2008, 2010).

Thus, during this process, the ESS was not just running the biannual surveys; it was also working on positioning itself as an potential ERIC. Two events were particularly significant in these attempts to establish scientific credibility. In 2005, the ESS was awarded the European Commission’s Descartes Prize, making it the first social science project to receive the price.

Within European research policy, this was considered a major recognition of the project, promoting the ESS outside the social sciences. Equally important was the evaluation formally initiated by the ESF in 2007. The evaluation panel was composed of five well-established survey scholars headed by Robert M. Groves, the Director of the University of Michigan Survey Research Centre. The purpose of the evaluation was to demonstrate the achievements of the ESS and thus that the money had been well spent. However, the ESS also hoped and expected that the evaluation would point out the insecure institutional and financial conditions that beset the surveys, and exhort funders to ensure stable long-term funding. Thus, the panel was explicitly asked to consider the future funding, organisation and management of the ESS in relation to ESFRI. And from the point of view of the ESS, the panel did indeed deliver a very useful product. The evaluation praised the overall achievements of the ESS with respect to data production and quality, and downplayed the fact that the data was not as widely used as expected. Here, the panel recommended that the ESS should continue working to improve and develop all parts of the survey. However, more important were the recommendations regarding the organisation and its funding. The panel's first recommendation was: *"The panel unanimously finds that the importance of ESS, its demonstrated success in initial launch, and its clear signals of impact justify fully continuous funding at levels necessary to achieve its vision and maintain its quality."* (Bethlehem et al. 2008:3). The evaluation, in other words, strongly supported the ESS's aim to become an ERIC.

During the process of establishing the institutional framework of the ERICs, one important condition changed. When the discussions in ESFRI began, the expectation was that the EU would, in one way or another, take over responsibility and funding of the selected projects. In this way, projects like the ESS would become independent of national research funding agencies and policy requirements. However, during the negotiations this changed and now, ERICs would take the form of consortia which member states and associated states could join. In this way, turning the ESS into an ERIC would not decouple the project from national funding but tie it closer to national state bureaucracies that would have to be convinced about the usefulness of the ESS against a backdrop of cutbacks and financial crisis in the late 2000s. In other words, national teams faced a huge challenge in convincing state bureaucracies to become members of the ESS ERIC. In 2013, the ESS was finally established as an ERIC with 13 member countries committed to contribute to the ESS.

Summing up the process of institutionalising the ESS shows us two ambiguous aspects of the relationship between the EU and social science knowledge production. On the one hand, it once again highlights the importance of homological structures and the synchronising of fields that allow powerful agents to form alliances and move social resources and social logics between fields. Thus, the ESS managed to position the survey into a seemingly favourable position as one of the few social science projects recognised as a ‘high quality’ research infrastructure. On the other hand, it highlights the fragility of this kind of projects. Projects like the ESS rely heavily on their relationship to, and the temporal interest of, political fields – an interest that tends to change rapidly. And despite the work and position of the ESS, the support for the survey from nation states and the EU diminished at around the time it was institutionalised as an ERIC.

## **Conclusion**

This article analyses the social history of the ESS in order to understand the relations between social scientific knowledge production and the EU. Theoretically I argue that we need to account for the formation of conjunctural alliances in analysing the trajectory of social science research and the relationship between social science knowledge production and politics. The social sciences and the knowledge they produce have, since their early institutionalisation, been closely related to powerful political institutions, especially the nation state. However, it was not until recently that large-scale social science research was closely linked to the EU and to the Europeanisation process.

The article offers both theoretical and empirical insights. Theoretically, it argues that in order to understand the trajectory of the ESS in particular, and social science knowledge production in general, we need to understand not only the configuration of the fields of social scientific knowledge production and their relations with other fields but also, just as importantly, we must grasp the structural synchronisation of the fields that allow for the formation of conjunctural alliances. Here, the article argues that Bourdieu’s field analytical perspective offers conceptual tools for understanding how conjunctural alliances were formed between homologically structured fields, and how fields were synchronised in a way that allowed crucial forms of capital and recognition to be moved between fields. Different from neoinstitutional approaches (Battilana 2006; DiMaggio 1988), the article emphasises the concept of capital and power relations in order to understand such processes.

Empirically, the article analyses the history of the ESS as a process of the formation of conjunctural alliances and the synchronisation of fields. It argues that this was the result of three interrelated processes that took place over a period of 30 years. The first process concerns the pre-history of the ESS or, in more theoretical terms, the emergence of a European field of social science research. Through different projects the involved agents were integrated into, and familiarised themselves with, European institutions, especially the ESF and the EU, which later helped them to ensure institutional support for the ESS. Simultaneously, the projects gave them first-hand experience with running large-scale social scientific projects and forming common principles of vision and division for social survey researchers in Europe (Bourdieu 1996).

The second process concerned the establishment of EU research funding for the social sciences. From the early 1980s, and with an especially notable step forward in the early 1990s, research policies became a prominent policy area for the EU and research funding through the FP increased. These changes in EU research policies and the inclusion of social science into the program enabled the EU to fund social science research. Thus, due to large-scale changes both in the EU and the EU's research policies; a number of structural openings were created during the 1990s and 2000s.

The third process concerns the formation of conjunctural alliances. It is easy to imagine both fields following different trajectories than the one sketched out here, and the structural synchronisation of the two fields was pivotal for the success of the ESS in this particular period and given its specific epistemological setup. Through their connection to the ESF, the social scientists involved in the ESS were able to interact with the EU research bureaucracy and accommodate issues raised therein, as well as to convey knowledge and points of view to it. The article thus shows how changes in one field can affect the trajectory of other fields, as well as the importance of the agents mediating between fields. But as the transformation of the ESS into an ERIC shows, such conjunctural alliances can be rather unstable and hard to maintain since they require synchronisation between fields. Thus, if the fields become desynchronised, the conjunctural alliance will be hard to uphold.

More generally, this article shows the slow emergence of a field of European social science, while simultaneously recounting how the dominant post-war status quo within the fields of political science and sociology was transformed into contemporary European institutions receiving massive EU support. With the institutionalisation of projects such as the ESS, the

close alliances between powerful political entities and specific social scientific research technology, specific questions and theoretical convictions are thus once again confirmed. Hence, this is also a contribution to the story of how the ERA was established and how European agents in different fields interacted and benefited from the changing institutional setups. The question that arises from this is, of course, how the formation of a ERA and other European scientific institutions will impact not only the institutions of social science knowledge production, but more importantly the evaluation criteria and forms of social sciences knowledge production that will be seen as legitimate.

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