

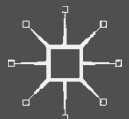
Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology

Toward a Reflexive Political Sociology of the European Union

Fields, Intellectuals and Politicians



Niilo Kauppi



Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology

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In memory of Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002)

Acknowledgments

This selection of writings continues what I have been doing since my PhD: that is, to work with some of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's ideas, enriching them with other ideas from several disciplines, to explore the social and cultural underpinnings of political power in the European context. My perspective has been that of a reflexive contextual analysis of social action. Reflexivity involves a variable analysis of one's own approach. It also involves a critique of established practices and power. I think these critical elements are the forgotten but enduring aspects of Bourdieu's work. Unfortunately, today there is too much superficial conceptual appropriation that misses the underlying ideas. The global diffusion of concepts like 'field' or 'habitus' has meant that concepts and ideas have been dissociated from one another. The mechanical use of concepts without content has replaced Bourdieu's iconoclasm. The purpose here is to focus on ideas such as the critical analysis of contextual political action and the sociogenesis of political power. However, this critical perspective requires pushing the analysis forward to explore political action as well as to objectify Bourdieu's approach, something he attempted himself in different ways (see for instance Bourdieu 1988, 2004).

This is a very personal collection that inevitably arrives yet again at an analysis of my relationship with Bourdieu. While I still consider myself a Bourdieusian scholar, I have drawn inspiration from a variety of sources in political science, IR, sociology, philosophy and linguistics. Bourdieu

and I had our differences. The most important one had to do with the interpretation of the purpose of scholarly work. After my PhD with Bourdieu in 1991 on French intellectual and political radicalism, I spent several years at Indiana University (Bloomington) working on linguistics and semiotics before shifting focus to political science and European integration at the University of Helsinki. During this time, I kept contact with Bourdieu and always received encouraging feedback for my ongoing work. That is, until I published *French Intellectual Nobility* in 1996. Bourdieu thought I had sided with the enemy. Why? I had taken distance from his approach by analyzing it as a position in and product of the French intellectual field. For me, this was a way to develop my own research. Despite this disagreement, I published a book which is a reflexive analysis of the concept of habitus (Kauppi 2000). At this point, I was invited to take part in a seminar organized in Bourdieu's honor at C erisy-la-Salle in July 2001 (see Chap. 14). But I had firmly decided to continue working on my own research perspective.

* * *

Although I as the author carry solely the responsibility for what is published here, this adventure would not have been possible without a little help from a number of friends and colleagues. I am particularly grateful to Kari Palonen, who has played, in different ways, an important role since the 1980s in my intellectual explorations. A legendary Weberologist and academic figure on the European social science scene, Kari, although now retired, continues to publish and take part in academic seminars and conferences. Thank you also to another intellectual companion David Swartz, with whom I have been developing European political sociology in the ECPR since the beginning of the 2000s, for stimulating discussions. My warmest thanks to Rebecca Adler-Nissen, Pertti Ahonen, Stefan Bernhardt, Erkki Berndtson, Ioana C irstocea, Jean-Pascal Daloz, Tero Erkkil a, Adrian Favell, Virginie Guiraudon, Taru Haapala, Ilkka Heiskanen, Sakari H anninen, Herbert Kalthoff, Niels Lachmann, Mikael Rask-Madsen, Brigitte Mahuzier, Juan Diez Medrano, H el ene Michel, Fr ed eric M erand, Tuomo M or a, Jon Nixon, Semi Purhonen, J-P Roos,

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Helsinki

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Introduction

This selection of writings deals with processes of differentiation and social action in European politics. The basic argument is that in European politics today, new forms of transnational power are being created that challenge the traditional parameters of action of the nation-state. In these texts, I try to capture the evolving dynamics of transnational spaces, groups and knowledge. Established and new agents create new spaces of action, such as European public policies in areas like higher education and research and transnational institutions like the European Parliament as well as new types of knowledge and new political practices tied to these spaces. Politics and knowledge are coproduced by a variety of actors, including politicians, civil servants, journalists, intellectuals and academics. In parallel with a political Europe that emerges around public policies and transnational institutions, politicians, civil servants and academics have produced a Europe of knowledge that aims to create European science through similar reforms and institutional blueprints in European nation-states. These processes of field differentiation are highly complicated and the texts that follow will only be able to give a glimpse of these developments. Fields as spaces for social action span a variety of institutional complexes and are subject to a variety of temporalities. These studies provide a perspective that focuses on the positional spaces, strategies and resources of social groups such as academics, intellectuals and politicians like Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). This approach

stems from a critique of more established approaches in the literature like constructivism and institutionalism that reify or anthropomorphize institutions and fail to analyze political action in terms of resources or capital. From this perspective, culture and education are interesting not as codes, narratives or tool boxes but as sources of power.

In this introduction, I will first discuss some of the principles involved in a structural constructivist approach to EU politics and then present the structure of the book.

Key Features of the Structural Constructivist Approach

Some scholars (Ansart 1990) have labeled Pierre Bourdieu's approach as structural constructivism or constructivist structuralism. These two terms, often used interchangeably, operate in two different registers. The first one, structural constructivism, emphasizes the links with other constructivist trends in sociology, political science and the study of international relations (see Kauppi 2005). The main difference between these and Bourdieu's work is the definition of social structures. Sociology defines the structure of society as composed of institutionalized patterns of interaction (see for instance Berger and Luckmann 1966). Many scholars in international relations understand structure to mean culture or values (Wendt 1999). In contrast to these, Bourdieu's definition of structure is linguistic. The structure has two parts, for example A and B (good / bad, day / night, dominated by / managed, cultural / economic ...). This division manifests itself in different forms and at all levels of society. Structural equivalence indicates that in the two pairs AB and CD, for example, the terms A and C, and B and D, are in similar positions. For instance, A and C may be the dominant players in two separate fields and B and D the dominated players in these same fields.

The second concept, constructivist structuralism, emphasizes the similarities between Bourdieu and French structuralism (for analysis see Kauppi 1996a). The concept emphasizes the similarities between very

different kinds of works that apply the structuralist conception of structure. Works range from linguistics (Saussure, Trubetskoy, Jakobson), philosophy (Derrida, Foucault), to literary studies (Barthes, Goldman) and psychoanalysis (Lacan, Pontalis). The main difference between Bourdieu and for instance the main developer of structuralism, Claude Lévi-Strauss, is that Bourdieu added to the analysis of structures that of action and power. Structural constructivism/constructivist structuralism examines reality as a product of human activity, as a symbolic and material construction. I use the term structural constructivism in this context because it emphasizes those features that are essential for political sociology. I will combine these features to broader social scientific discussions outside France.

Bourdieu can be considered as the main developer of structural constructivism. In the 1960s and 1970s, his close colleagues Luc Boltanski (1973, 1982), Jean-Claude Chamboredon, Jean-Claude Passeron and Monique de Saint Martin also took part in the development of this perspective through empirical work relating to the French system of higher education, among other themes. In France, Bourdieu's influence spread beyond sociology from the 1970s onward via the works of scholars who had attended his seminars. Naming a few will give the reader a sense of the breadth of this influence. Jacques Dubois (2000), Joseph Jurt (1995) and Gisèle Sapiro (1999) applied the concepts of structural constructivism to the study of French literature. Some French historians used some of his key concepts in the study of the role of the writer and intellectual history (Viala 1985; Charle 1990). In political science, some scholars (Gaxie 1978; Offerlé 1999) studied the professionalization of politics in France and in the European Union (see for instance Kauppi 1996b). In communication studies, work has been done on French journalism (for instance Champagne 1991; Neveu 2009) and on the French intellectual field and its relationships with civil society and its power structures (Pinto 1984; Kauppi 1994, 1996a). Since the 1980s, Bourdieu's influence has gone global (cf. Kauppi and Swartz 2015; Medvetz and Sallaz 2018).

For the purposes of this study, the strengths and weaknesses of Bourdieu's structural constructivist approach to political sociology need to be discussed (see Chap. 13 for a deeper analysis).

On Political Action

Although the importance of symbolic action is undeniable to Bourdieu's analysis of social life, it does not get a central role in his political theory. In fact, symbolic action and the role of civil society as an intermediary between the individual and the state play only minor roles. In his early works, Bourdieu interprets rather straightforwardly the role of mediation and transmission. In Bourdieu's Platonic interpretation, politics is just about the symbolic, in the pejorative sense of the term, and it only reflects *à la Marx* more fundamental economic and social processes. On the one hand, reality is renewed through symbolic action; on the other hand, fundamental economic and social processes are independent of the symbolic. Social reality should then be analyzed through a kind of dual ontology, in which a part of reality only reflects more fundamental phenomena, a kind of 'Ur-reality'. This approach minimizes the transformative power of politics and political action. Perhaps for this reason, Bourdieu's theory has been accused on several occasions of determinism.

Bourdieu's theory of politics is divided into two parts: the analysis of social domination and of the political field. Following Weber, symbolic violence—or the imposition of a cultural code—is the basic principle of operation through which society's dominated groups unconsciously reproduce social domination. They have to participate in this domination for it to be legitimate. The reproduction of social domination takes place with the consent of the dominated. Although, theoretically speaking, symbolic violence could be distinguished from acts carried out on a voluntary basis, in practice it is difficult to distinguish the two. Symbolic violence can be compared to physical violence, which was famously defined by Weber as a state monopoly. But in contrast to Weber and also Michel Foucault (1980), Bourdieu does not analyze physical violence, which has traditionally been considered in the form of the public control of private violence as a key element in the emergence of the modern state (see Chap. 15). Bourdieu seems to be saying that the state is in possession of the monopoly of physical as well as symbolic violence. However, these differences are so significant that it is questionable to say that one institution controls symbolic violence like it does physical violence. Civil society,

in the broad sense, and religion, among other institutions, participate in the creation and maintenance of symbolic violence.

The ultimate target of political activity is knowledge of the social world and the struggle for the legitimate definition of reality (politics of knowledge). But the political value of an idea or information is dependent more on its capacity to be universalized than on its truth value. It depends on its ability to mobilize. Echoing French social philosopher Alfred Fouillée, Bourdieu defines political ideas as power ideas (*idées-forces*). Power ideas like ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ cannot be shown to be true or false. The only way political opponents can resist them is by setting against them alternative power ideas. The ability to mobilize correlates with the power idea’s cognitive and social status, whether it is widely accepted or not. If the political community accepts it as a fact, it is no longer fought over. It will form part of the legitimate definition of reality on the basis of which social struggles will continue. A lot is ‘decided’ at this ‘metapolitical’ level (see Chap. 2 for analysis). Education is a key guiding social mechanism shaping reality. More broadly, although Bourdieu does not develop this aspect, political culture in the form of civic culture forms the rarely questioned deep level of political life.

Bourdieu’s analysis of social domination stresses the role of the social field (*champ social*) in defining political struggles. The social field structures the superstructure of the political field. From this perspective, politics is about fetishism and semblance (for a similar position see for instance Derrida 1993). The real game is played behind the scenes in the social field between competing social classes that are connected to the political field via numerous structural equivalences. In the social field, in turn, the criterion of individual success is social class. The Marxist division into economic versus cultural finds an equivalent in Bourdieu’s division into the social and the symbolic/political.

The core of Bourdieu’s critique of democracy is in his analysis of political representation. Following Thomas Aquinas and Karl Marx, Bourdieu examines representation and delegation as measures by which the people transfer its political power to a representative. Both re-presentation and re-production imply a process of duplication, which is the precondition for any kind of social life. Duplication can be synchronic when it takes

place between an individual and a group or diachronic when structures and authority relationships are transferred to a new generation. In the Western metaphysical tradition, the second is ontologically, epistemically and morally inferior to the first, that which is re-presented or re-produced. But in the social world, presentation is often, paradoxically, secondary in relation to re-presentation (as repetition). Bourdieu's work can be seen as developing an empirical analysis of the dialectics production/re-production and presentation/re-presentation.

In Bourdieu's political theory, the transfer of power is a form of alienation. The transfer of power means that (the) people give up their original sovereignty to a representative. Why does this need to be? The reason for this is that an individual can get her voice heard in politics only by converting it into a group voice. In order to avoid complete political alienation, abandoning one's own voice is necessary. This is how groups become political players. Following Durkheim (and Rousseau), group formation is an example of social magic, by which a group of atomized individuals turns into a social actor. The symbolic logic of recognition/misrecognition is inscribed in this social metamorphosis. The group becomes a social actor when the representative is seen as legitimately representing the group, and the objects of this alienation do not see that this transfer of power is alienation and nothing more. Bourdieu says that democracy is logically impossible as long as the representative (person, organization) monopolizes speech. Indeed, once the representative speaks on behalf of the group, she can manipulate the group in its own name.

Bourdieu's analysis of politics and journalism follows his broader field theory. The basic idea can be found in Weber's sociology of religion (1922), where he speaks, following a neo-Calvinist blueprint, of different spheres of social life, the economy, culture and religion. Political capital is the type of symbolic capital individuals operating in the political field will try to accumulate. Politics follows a twofold logic which pervades all its levels—from the historical development of political practices to political ideas. Those at the autonomous pole (the 'rich') have the most political capital, those at the dominated (the 'poor') pole the least. This symbolic structure defines the objective relationships between agents as well as the strategies they adopt. The web of political positions taken,

which mirrors the web of social positions, defines the value of individual positions. In contrast to Weber's analysis of life spheres, Bourdieu's field is linguistic. The basic idea comes from Saussure (for a critique of this idea, see Kauppi 2000). The value of an element depends on the web of relations in which this element is inscribed. In the same way, as the letter 'a's value is determined in relation to the letters of the alphabet, the importance of a political idea at a given moment is determined by its relations with other political ideas available at that same time.

The structuration of the field around two poles emphasizes the tension and conflict between change and stability. The dual logic permeates all levels, from political ideologies and organizations to the level of the individual and her political habitus. In addition to political capital, political action will be defined by other types of capital, for example, economic and cultural capital. Bourdieu's analysis of capital includes two partly contradictory definitions of value. The first argues that value is relative, or syntactic. The fewer that have access to it, the more valuable it is. Rarity is valuable. The second argues that value is proportional to the amount of trust. For example, citizens may trust a politician, who is then able to turn this confidence into political capital via her election.

Following Weber and Marx, Bourdieu equates politics with power struggle. The task of social science is to reveal the mechanisms of these power struggles. In order to reveal a hidden reality, the distinction between real and apparent reality is necessary. In contrast to Weber's perspectivism and nominalism, Bourdieu's real reality can be grasped only via scientific means. Perhaps this is why Bourdieu's analysis of reality has an ontological bias. Unless elevated by science, everyday life and everyday politics can only represent epiphenomena. Politics is symbolic in the pejorative sense. Symbolic interaction, communication and the media are part of this re-presented, secondary reality.

Herein lies the main problem of Bourdieu's approach from the point of view of political sociology. While it does enable a sophisticated theoretical analysis of domination, his approach is unable to provide a sufficiently fine-tuned perspective on issues of power in the EU. In his writings, he presents the mechanisms of domination as being universal and ahistorical. For him, European integration was nothing more than a capitalist project. He did not see anything productive in it. Bourdieu did

not study how democracy, as a form of governance, differs from other forms of governance. He explored how political re-presentation and the idea of transfer of power led to alienation and how domination was present even where one did not think it operated. Bourdieu agreed with Weber on this formal point. But in contrast to Weber, Bourdieu saw social domination as ubiquitous because he considered political processes as always private acts that presented themselves as public acts. Politics was about camouflage and embezzlement. Political interests were somebody's private interests. If the state is understood as an institution that defines and represents the common, public interest, in Bourdieu's political theory is stateless (for more thorough analysis see Chaps. 12 and 13).

One way forward is to move away from a formal and theoretical analysis of politics and power to an empirical one that partly draws on qualitative differences between democracy as a system of domination and power and other political systems. Democratic systems have their own rules that rely on open elections and freedom of expression, among other things. There are empirically legitimate, socially and historically constructed common interests that appear justified to a majority of the population. These interests are not necessarily as arbitrary or illegitimate as Bourdieu's theory would lead us to believe. However, they do involve power relations and various forms of inequality. From this research perspective, publicity is more than a mechanism that enables the one group to dominate the others. Elections are more than a ritual that confirms the social domination of certain political groups.

To this distinction between democracy and other power regimes has to be added another distinction between national and supranational politics. There is more to EU politics than just processes of extension or reproduction of existing national or international power structures. Rather, supranational politics creates new interests and power resources that need to be studied. Both the meaning of political action in a democratic society and the role of political participation as a potential constructive force have to be empirically analyzed. In order to provide a more complex picture of political action that also considers politics as productive activity, this volume seeks to develop a political sociology of the EU that builds on structural constructivism's analysis of power by deepening the analysis of democratic politics.

In European political science, some scholars, largely forgotten today, have attempted to theorize European integration as a political project. French political scientist Pierre Duclos devised at the beginning of the 1960s the concept of ‘politification’ to describe the political dynamics of European integration (Duclos 1962; Sidjanski 2003, p. 538; Meynaud and Sidjanski 1965; see Kauppi et al. 2016 for analysis). By politification, he meant the transfer of power from the national to the supranational level, a level that would be equipped with considerable executive power. He considered that a society is ‘politified’ to the extent that it has ‘a special organization capable of maintaining, failing the approval, consent or agreement of the group, the group’s cohesion, survival, and adaptation’ (Duclos 1962).

This transfer to ‘a special organization’ could be sudden. Duclos had in mind the Constitution of the USA, or gradual like in the case of European integration. Politification would mean that political procedures would replace the normal diplomatic procedures reigning in international politics. In Duclos’s mind, politification is a broad development that has to do with procedure or the rules of the political game, the substitution of a diplomatic procedure with a political procedure that could include parliamentary and democratic procedures, although he did not specify this. It involves a collective conversion, a transformation in the guiding values of groups and individuals. It requires in the words of Swiss political scientist Dusan Sidjanski ‘the attractive diffusion of a certain number of concepts and ethical principles that will reinforce the innermost convictions (of Europeans) relative to a unified Europe’ (Sidjanski 2003).

From today’s perspective, this optimistic global triumph of the political procedure has failed. Furthermore, while professional politicians in the EU perceive European integration as a political process, in the sense that political positions in supranational institutions the European Commission and the European Parliament are integrated into their career paths, European citizens have weak knowledge of European politics, and are on the whole not interested in European Parliament elections for instance. In fact, one could even say that the opposite of what Duclos imagined has happened. To European citizens, the politification of European integration has in reality meant a process of depolitization, in the dual sense that it has been presented as being nonpolitical and that

they have been kept at an arm's length from it. This depolitization and lack of public debate about political alternatives combined to supranational 'policies without politics' have contributed to increasing political opacity and a generalization of doubt, distrust and political disenchantment.

A key aspect that Bourdieu repeatedly emphasized in his teaching, and visible in all of his work from Algeria to France, is the issue of practices, the point of view of the actors involved in politics and to power processes that surpass them. Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage* in *La pensée sauvage* (see Lévi-Strauss 2008; Mérand 2012) encapsulates this idea. The actions of the objects under study can be described in terms of *bricolage*. The political *bricolage* approach to European integration and politics is a point of view that does not rule out 'theories', but emphasizes that fundamentally individuals and groups shape the political order and that this logic is not reducible to a 'theory' such as neofunctionalism, neorealism, institutionalism, multilevel governance, world culture theory or intergovernmentalism. They find themselves in fundamentally uncertain circumstances, face novel situations and try to manage with the means at hand. This activity does not rule out scholarly theories, it even requires them, but its logic can be only very imperfectly captured by them. Sociological studies are always partial retrospective rationalizations.

The issues discussed throughout the volume revolve around the crucial question of the role of the nation-state, its changing parameters of action and of knowledge production that is tied to it. The aim is to further a political sociological account of these transformations, building on insights from Bourdieu and Weber, by developing an action-oriented structural constructivist field approach. Action as the practices of the agents (the *bricolage* logic) more than structure will be the focus. Fields will be understood more as evolving spaces of political and social action that are being structured than as static constructions. They will be viewed as interactive spaces and more or less open fields rather than as hermetic, closed spaces. Emerging practices cannot be reduced to preexisting structures or power constellations. Fields are evolving, more structured in the center where the finalities and rules of social action take shape than in the periphery, where more or less successful alternatives are formulated. Fields are expanding or shrinking, depending on how they succeed in attracting interest and in influencing individual and group strategies.

This perspective resonates with Weber's comment, *contra* Bismarck, that politics is not the art of the possible but that of the impossible.

Part I focuses on evolving transnational fields, Part II on the changing role of academics and universities in this evolution and Part III on Bourdieu's works on politics and the media. Part I includes a series of writings on transnational processes in the European context. Chapter 1 was originally titled 'Structures of Domination in the EU' but then developed into a broader piece on what sociology can bring to the study of EU politics. The aim was to develop a political sociology approach that would contrast with more institutional, mainstream approaches. Chapter 2 reflects on the political ontology of research on the EU, trying to go deeper into the unformulated and taken-for-granted principles of research. Chapter 3 is a contribution to the analysis of 'integration' in supranational contexts. Chapter 4 places research on the EU in a broader theoretical framework, bringing in recent studies in IR. Chapter 5 was originally published in French in a volume edited by Aurélie Campana, Emmanuel Henri and Jay Rowell (*La construction des problèmes publics en Europe*, Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 2007) and deals with the European Commission's failed attempt to democratize European governance. The last piece in this part deals with a political sociology approach to the EU and the difficulties of studying the EU. It came out originally in Finnish in a volume on EU studies (*Johdatus Euroopan Unionin politiikkaan*, University of Helsinki, Department of Political Science, 2014).

Part II shifts the focus to academics, universities and the bureaucratization and the marketization of the production of knowledge in the European context. Chapter 7 deals with intellectual traditions in Europe, as incarnated in the figures of the critical and the functional intellectual. Chapter 8 is a study on current transformations in European academic life. Chapter 9 explores the effects of the current quantification of quality on political science and its publications, criticizing the current number mania or dataism in science policy. The following Chap. 10 deals with social science and its political effects. What is the role of social science in today's world?

Part III, Bourdieusian meditations, is a take on Husserl's Cartesian meditations and Bourdieu's Pascalian meditations. As meditations, they are personal bits and pieces on various aspects of Bourdieu's oeuvre that

I found stimulating. They are all for and against Bourdieu. Chapter 11 is a reflection of the limits of Bourdieu's often-quoted analysis of the transnational. Chapter 12 was composed as an analysis of Bourdieu's studies of the media and more broadly the role of public discussion and debate in contemporary democracies. Chapter 13 is a study of Bourdieu's theory of politics. Two pieces compose Chap. 14. The first part was originally the introduction I wrote to two of Bourdieu's books translated into Finnish, *Contre-feux* and *Sur la télévision* (*Vastatulet, Televisiosta*, Otava, 1999). These were occasions not only to present these works to a Finnish audience already familiar with Bourdieu but also to share some of my experiences as a PhD student in Bourdieu's seminar. The last part is a piece published in the largest Finnish daily, *Helsingin sanomat*, after the death of Bourdieu. Chapter 15 deals with something altogether different, a sociological interpretation of Kant's and Schiller's theory of the sublime, applied to the fall of the Soviet Union. The key issue in this chapter is the lack of concepts to the study of major, macro-level political transformations as well as the interface between the symbolic and physical violence, a theme undertheorized in Bourdieu's work. An epilogue draws together some of the main ideas of the volume.

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Part I

The Politics of Transnational Integration

1

Toward a Sociology of EU Politics

Aside from a few exceptions (for instance Deutsch 1962 and Haas 1958), sociological works are relative newcomers to the field of European integration and more recently of European Union (EU) politics. Since the beginning of European integration in the 1950s, economists, jurists, political scientists and scholars in international relations (IR) have developed a vast body of literature on European integration. Since the end of the 1990s, a revival of sociological approaches has taken place with the introduction of sociological works into research in IR and European integration studies (Christiansen et al. 1999; Wendt 1999). Partly inspired by American sociologists like Erving Goffman and George Herbert Mead, this broad movement called social constructivism has succeeded in widening the scope of political science research and deepening several key issues such as those having to do with identity and discourse.

Society has been the traditional object of sociology. The field has focused on issues such as stratification into upper and lower classes, mobility in terms of circulation of people and groups and all forms of inequality. However, all human activity includes social aspects and can be successfully studied from a sociological perspective (see for a stimulating read, Berger 1963). In this chapter, I will discuss some of the intellectual

tools that sociology can mobilize in the analysis of EU politics, and then follow with a closer investigation of some sociological research. To illustrate EU politics, I have chosen to concentrate on the European Parliament, the most democratic European institution, composed today of 751 members directly elected from the current 28 EU member-states. I will contrast the sociological approach and its advantages with more traditional research.

European integration has provided new objects of analysis for sociologists working on political issues and for political scientists with a sociological bent. Some of these scholars study transformations in European societies (Bartolini 2005; Medrano 2003) while others focus more on the European Union as a new polity (for useful overviews of English-language research, see Favell 2007 and Zimmermann and Favell 2011). Yet others have developed a more specific form of sociological analysis that has also been labeled structural constructivist (for analysis, see Ansart 1990; Bourdieu 1989; Kauppi 1996b; Manners 2007). This sociological perspective highlights the general and specific structures of power and competition that keep societies together by analyzing individual and group action. Some groups wield more power than others and rely on a variety of resources and institutionalized processes to protect their status and increase their power. In this chapter, I will outline some of the main points of this type of approach to EU politics that has also been labeled the Strasbourg school (for empirical research, see for instance Beauvallet 2007; Beauvallet and Michon 2010; Beauvallet et al. 2016; Campana et al. 2007; Erkkilä and Piironen 2013; Georgakakis 2002, 2012; Georgakakis and de Lassalle 2008; Kauppi 2005; Kauppi and Madsen 2008, 2013; Kull 2008; Madsen 2011; Mangenot 1998 and Michel 2006).

A sociological approach to EU politics involves the social factors that influence and shape EU politics. These can be studied at the level of the individual, the social group and the field of action¹ involved. The link between individuals and politics is never direct. Individuals are always members of various groups and enact various social roles. Furthermore, individual action is conditioned and channeled by various institutions such as elections, political parties, parliaments and so on (March and Olsen 1984). Actors can be individuals, groups or even institutions

(Mayntz and Scharpf 2001). All fields of action that encompass individuals, groups and institutions involve political aspects. The political field proper is formed of all the individuals, institutions and procedures that regulate politics in the traditional sense of the term.

Engaged in action in the world, individuals and groups mobilize available resources in their struggle for power. Following a classical definition, power is the ability to influence other peoples' behavior (Weber 1968). This can be done through a variety of means: physical force, charisma, persuasion, blackmail, bad conscience and so on. Power limits and empowers (see for this conception, Lukes 2005). Agents' scope of action is always constrained by a variety of social, economic, technological and other factors. Power empowers because individuals and groups, and even weaker ones in some circumstances (Havel 1990), can influence and even transform reality.

In this endeavor to study the human dimension of EU politics, sociological research has mobilized a variety of quantitative and qualitative research techniques. A central concern is the statistical analysis of the characteristics of the groups involved in European politics, such as Members of the European Parliament, European civil servants and judges of the European Court of Justice. Scholars have painstakingly collected this statistical material from a variety of sources, such as administrative directories and official EU almanacs. They have examined the influence of education, gender and political experience on political careers and group formation (prosopographic studies). These works have shown that certain social qualifications, such as degrees from elite schools or ministerial political experience, are necessary to make it to the top in European politics. Quantitative studies based on in-depth interviews of individuals, ethnographic fieldwork and discursive analysis of historical documents have complemented quantitative analysis. The perceptions and interpretations that individuals attach to their actions and to the institutions in which they operate have enriched the more numerical analysis provided by statistical analysis.

Instead of a theory, the sociological approach developed here serves as a heuristic device by which the scholar can mentally construct an object of research. As a tool of reflection, this device enables the scholar to analyze in a structured manner the phenomenon under scrutiny, in this case