‘Basically unaffected’?
Revising the Domestic Party Politics of European Integration through Political Sociology.

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The paper tries to demonstrate how political sociology could be usefully applied to a research question that has been marked so far by strong positivist assumptions: how European integration affects national political parties. The first part will show the deficiencies of current research, in terms of research object, data and methodological choices. Then, in the light of those limitations, we will assert that political sociology should be mobilised to theorise the Europeanization of parties as a process of mediation, and not as impact. The remainder will develop the heuristic value of three particular approaches focusing on actors, organization and institution. Firstly, the sociology of political career should show the importance of EU related resources, and not only EU related positions. Then, recourse to the sociology of organizations, and its conceptualisation of power, uncertainty and concrete system of action, should make more relevant the analysis of the European environment and party organizations. And finally, we will illustrate how the sociology of political roles could help understand the normative evolutions of parties as institutions vis-à-vis the practices of the actors, as well as bridging the idea/preference divide.

Introduction

If you want to evaluate how domestic party politics has evolved vis-à-vis the European integration, fetch your thesaurus and develop an expertise in synonymy: “basically unaffected” (Ladrech, 2007a, 91), “no fundamental change” (Linek and Mansfeldova, 2006, 38), “patchy impact” (Ayltt et al., 2007, 207-208), “impervious to change” (Mair, 2000, 28), “limited organisational changes” (Ramiro and Morales, 2007, 155) “remarkably unaffected” (Poguntke, 2007, 128). For long, domestic political parties have been ignored by the Europeanization literature, more inclined to focus on public policy, courts, interest groups, parliamentary or state structures. But now that some scholars have ambitioned to gauge how much party systems and parties’ internal organization, identity, image or strategies have been affected by European integration, the result is that there seems very little to be studied indeed.

Or is there? The paper will first assess the outcome of this burgeoning literature. Although strong conclusions have been reached, the choices of research objects, methods and theorisations have considerably limited the findings on how deeply Europe influences, destabilises and becomes part of national parties. A focus on institutional adaptation and formal organizational changes has hindered a fuller grasp of those dynamics. Research projects have to be more problem-driven, and recourse to political sociology could be highly beneficial to this apparent rendez-vous manqué. More particularly, uses of the sociologies of political careers, of
organizations, and of roles should be developed so that parties were not to remain “the poor cousin of European integration theory” (Cole, 2001, 20).

The limited direct impact of Europe.

Scholarship on political parties and the European integration has always tended to focus on the European level. The direct election of the European parliament in 1979 generated a research field focusing on the formations and functioning of parties in the European institutions (Henig, 1979; Pridham and Pridham, 1981). Sustained academic production has almost continually ensued on the nature of the European Parliament party system (Kreppel, 2002; Hix et al., 2003), the formation of transnational party federations, (Bomberg, 1998; Dietz, 2000), parties’ policy positions (McElroy and Benoit, 2007) or more generally the roles played by parties at the European level (Hix, 1995; Hix and Lord, 1997). National parties rarely appeared in the equation, except for the EU policies they establish (Marks and Wilson, 2000, Howarth, 2002) or the links between MEPs and central offices (Raunio, 2000; Messmer, 2003). By the beginning of the ‘noughties’, as close to nothing had been shown of the implications of the European integration for national parties themselves, Peter Mair (2000) and Robert Ladrech (2002) gave the research area its original impetus. Mair produced evidence that the European issue had “virtually no direct or even demonstrable effect” (2000, 31) on national party systems and proposed a number of explanatory hypotheses, while Ladrech established an analytical framework calling for research on the Europeanization of party policy content, organization, competition, party-government relations and relations beyond the party system. Though still in its infancy, the literature developed considerably in the past few years (Belot and Cautrès, 2005; Lewis and Mansfeldova, 2006) and has been marked by the outcome of a major research project (Poguntke et al., 2007). It seems timely to assess the findings reached so far.

Following Mair’s article, how the European issue enters domestic competition has often been analysed in terms of party system\(^1\) and his early conclusions have been confirmed almost systematically. The European Union has never become so salient in

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\(^1\) For that matter, many studies tend to reduce or assimilate party Europeanization to the Europeanization of party systems. It is especially true in *The European Union and Party Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (Lewis and Mansfeldova, 2006) and *Vers une Européanisation des Partis Politiques?* (Belot and Cautrès, 2005).
party competition to generate a proper cleavage and engender party realignment. This has proved true for western European countries like France (Olivier, 2005) or Spain (Ramiro and Morales, 2007), but also for the party systems of the new entrants – in the Czech Republic (Linek and Mansfeldova, 2006), Bulgaria (Stoyanov, 2006) or Hungary (Enyedi, 2006).

As for parties per se, the EU dimension did become more salient. Parties increasingly deal with European themes in national elections and party manifestos (Kritzinger and Michalowitz, 2005, 48, Krasovec et al., 2006, 184). In organizational terms, formal positions linked to the EU have been created such as International or European Liaison Secretaries (Krasovec et al., 2006, 184; Ladrech, 2007a, 93) as well as EU policy specialists (Luther, 2007, 50). MEPs have also gained political weight (Raunio, 2000, 221; Messmer, 2003, 216). Then, the most striking EU-induced effect may well be an empowerment of the party elite through an amplification of the governmental incumbency effect: “The exclusive nature of European Council meetings and meetings of the Council of Ministers, by definition, gives national party elites a high level of autonomy” (Carter and Ladrech, 2007a, 78). As a result, Europeanization has increased the gap between the elite and lower echelon (Johansson, 2002, 436).

On the whole though, those effects are said to be remarkably weak. EU specialists “command little influence over their parties” (Aylott, 2007, 175), positions as party spokesman for EU affairs carry little prestige (Aylott et al., 2007, 207) and MEPs still derive little power from their mandate (Carter and Ladrech, 2007, 78/82). Party identities have not been noticeably affected by European integration (Enyedi, 2006, 81), and belonging to certain EP party groups has no strong effects on the party’s policy stances (Markowski, 2006, 145). Eventually, though increased, the salience of Europe in party competition remains very low (Ikstens, 2006, 104), even during the European elections (Poguntke, 2007, 113).

The exercice de style in paraphrasing presented in the introduction conveys the feeling that European integration has developed in a parallel dimension to domestic party politics and that indeed the latter has been “basically unaffected” (Ladrech, 2007a, 91). But there seems to be a whole world of potential effects missing from this new literature – ideas, practices, the “cognitive and normative dimensions of Europeanization” (Radaelli, 2003, 36), but also power relations, the party
consequences of an Europeanization of public policy, the effects of Europe on political territories… As was recently argued by Mair, the flaw of the literature so far has been its focus on direct effects that do not account for those more subtle impacts:

Attention has been focused primarily on the analysis of the direct effects of Europeanization rather than the indirect ones. Once we consider the impact of Europe on parties and party systems in particular, however, it is the indirect effects that may well be the more decisive (Mair, 2007a, 159).

Is there a database for parties’ youth organizations?

Mair proceeds by hypothesising on the potential impact of the non-majoritarian, non-partisan, civil society-oriented ethos carried by the European Union (2007a, 159-161), its socialising effect on citizens and the general trends towards less or non-accountable institutions. Depoliticised political actions that are given weigh by European institutions alter resource distribution and concrete power configurations at the domestic level, and consequently imply changes for political parties. The Commission may make mandatory the participation of organised interests in the implementation of its directives; it may impose public access to domestic administration; carrying a set of norms that destabilise, downplay or even bypass traditional representative institutions at national and local levels. Secondly, the European Union may induce shift in the policy positions of parties. If certain competences shift to the European level, parties may want to differentiate themselves on other issues. The link between policy position and European integration cannot be reduced to the salience of Europe in manifestos. Thirdly, Europe affects territorial representations: it often promotes a functional definition of political boundaries and has engendered the reorganisation of national territories (Regions in England were largely set up as economic agency to manage European funds). It has given momentum to the idea of subsidiarity and redistributed certain resources vertically by shifting implementation responsibilities to lower levels. More generally, as shown by an extensive literature, policy-making, in terms of paradigms, instruments or rules,

2 On parties being bypassed: “À défaut d’être en contact avec des partis politiques, médiateurs classiques de la démocratie représentative, la Commission européenne tente d’atteindre le politique et la chose publique locale en louant des liens étroits avec des organisations publiques et privées susceptibles d’intervenir directement, ou indirectement, dans la mise en oeuvre des politiques” (Guerin Lavignotte, 2002, 225)

3 “Whilst implementing is often seen as the responsibility of national governments, in may cases detailed implementation is decentralised to lower levels of government or other agencies” (Goldsmith, 2003, 121).
has changed tremendously under the influence of the European Union. Hardly can those developments not have affected domestic party politics. Additionally, an exclusive focus on EU-related positions has left aside a whole range of party actors whose relation to Europe has been overlooked. Party members for example have been especially disregarded. One of parties’ traditional functions is the socialisation and education of its members, is such process at work with Europe? What about the circulation of information on European issues inside parties? Are members more knowledgeable about those than average citizens? Is there a differential involvement of members in European campaigns? Party youth organizations would also prove a valuable research object – more likely to be well-traveled, yet sometimes more eurosceptic than their mother organizations (Olivier, 2005, 167).

More often than not the literature reviewed here proposes relevant and puzzling research questions, especially those on power redistribution inside parties, but fails to answer for it is too systematically data and method driven. Most of those fall in the remit of either quantitative manifestos analysis, expert surveys, with retrospective judgement about parties’ position, and public opinion pools. The results of researches on the pervasion the European dimension inside parties through manifesto analysis has to be qualified here. Although certainly valuable to measure its salience inside programmes – that is, how the party acknowledges Europeanization and how it wants it to be perceived – it says little on how much Europe has concretely affected it, and the keenness to generalise findings to parties per se is perplexing. Programmes are the compromised results of intra-party factions and debates, therefore what is absent is much more likely to be interesting; and dissent or issue sensitivity is to be found there. Then it is notorious that programmes for a campaign say very little about how it was actually done and what was debated. Eventually, organizational analysis has relied on parties’ formal structure:

4 Many researches of course include party and party politicians’ input into European policy-making, but very rarely do they constitute the research object – leaving aside an understanding of the aftermath. Alistair Cole’s article on the repercussions of Jospin’s European policies on the P.S. is a rare exception (Cole, 2002).
5 Especially when “more than 60% of decision-making and rule-making is (in)directly affected by the EU, and less than 10% of the explicit co-mentions per policy domain concern Europe” (Pennings, 2006, 268).
6 Major differences can be found between programmes that focus on European issues when the campaign focuses on domestic ones, or when parties run critical campaigns towards Europe when nothing as such is to be found in the programmes. (Linek and Mansfeldova, 2006, 31).
creation of position, number of MEPs in executive bodies, number of MEPs or EU specialists in teams drawing-up programmes, etc. While certainly important findings can be reached through those means, they will never encompass the full story, as the more subtle dimensions of change just won’t fit.

The current literature is not only limited by research objects and data, but also by the theoretical standpoint it adopts, as most researchers follow (neo-)institutionalist approaches that reduce party change, or the absence of, as the effect of institutional characteristics. Thereby a weak territorial chamber, disciplined party behaviour and the nature of parliamentary control over EU affairs explains the absence of Europeanization in Austria (Luther, 2007, 31, 51). Likewise the reasons for the absence of euro-sceptic tendencies in German parties are to be found in the institutional characteristics of the state (Lees, 2002). A first consequence is that it reduces Europeanization to an adaptative process and precludes the apprehension of its “creative usages” (Radaelli and Pasquier, 2007, 38). Then it narrows the focus on the national level as most institutional characteristics put forth are linked to state funding, structure of parliament, of the executive, and electoral and party laws. The stress will be put on party elite, as studying the interactions between parties, national institutional dimensions and Europe is likely to be theorised as taking place there. Eventually, in the cases where party themselves are considered as the institution, its national characteristic will become the explaining variable (Carter et al., 2007, 15) and there again ensues adaptative, state-centred analyses that exclude many party actors, as well as a diversity of Europeanization mechanisms.

**A salience is a salience is a salience is a salience.**

This reduction of parties to the elite and the institutional characteristics has far-reaching consequences on the hypotheses being made, and the results reached.

Here we rejoin Andy Smith in his critique of the research object and theoretical choices often made to analyse the EU and its domestic impact as leading

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7 Here Europeanization clearly challenges parties as much as its academic research: “these changes have put paid to the hitherto dominant state-centric paradigm within which European political parties have operated. The paradigm of the New Europe poses significant political challenges for those parties. It also presents the empirical party research with the challenge of adapting how it analyses the operations of those parties both within the nation state and the surpranational level” (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002, 346).
often to humdrum results. The Europeanization of National Political Parties (Poguntke et al., 2007) is based on two hypotheses, that Europeanization will increase the power of party elites and of the EU specialists within national parties – both of them turned out to be verified, albeit the former when the party is in government and the latter in a very limited way. Although useful to organize such a substantial research project, those hypotheses, and results, are not particularly groundbreaking. There is some good sense in the fact that the party elite is empowered through EU when in government, but just as it is when it reaches government in the first place. Then little is said on how that extra power is used, towards which aim, or is it? And who is the ‘elite’ by the way? Does Europe alter the composition of party elite? Is that abstract category as immovable as some nomenklatura? Who is more precisely empowered by debates on the European Union, and by the resources it offers? Much of the literature is permeated by hypotheses through which eventually we learn very little. “The salience of the European issue to a party increases as other parties in the political system emphasize this issue” (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004, 170). Certainly true but then again what do we learn? Focusing solely on the salience of the European issue says little of the wider picture, and though Gertrude Stein may have found the subject not quite poetic, there is more to salience than the word. That is, how it actually increases, with what consequences, how does Europe materialise, changes power-relations, career patterns and political norms?

The choices presented above also result in a strong historical and chronological tendency found in those researches: the CDU created such position in

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8 “Jusqu’ici un refus implicite d’interpréter l’Europe telle qu’elle est a eu des conséquences lourdes tant sur le plan de l’enseignement que celui de la recherche. Fautes d’objets de recherche et de problématisation pertinents, les méthodes d’enquête employées ont souvent donné lieu à des résultats banals et à des analyses superficielles et peu percutantes.” (Smith, 2004, 41)

9 As seen in the extract I already quoted, the use of “by definition” does not leave much room to theoretical refinement: “The exclusive nature of European Council meetings and meetings of the Council of Ministers, by definition, gives national party elites a high level of autonomy” (Carter and Ladrech, 2007a, 78).

10 For instance, a research has tried to show how parties affect the distribution of European structural funds in a country. A highly relevant research question as we now almost nothing on the interactions between parties and European funds. Yet it hypothesised and concluded of a link between the strength of left-wing parties in a region and the size of transfer that region receives, for “according to their ideologies, party from the left always prefer higher levels of spending than do parties on the political right.” The fact that those regions were financially disadvantaged in the first place apparently was not granted enough explanatory power to be included in the hypothesis. “Any regional government will try to maximise its own revenue. Given their ideological stance, however, left-wing parties should be more capable of doing so since this corresponds to the ideological preferences of their voters” (Kemmerling and Bodenstein, 2006, 380). Good point.
1993, the Sosiaalidemokraattinen-Puolue entered such European partnership in 1998, Labour’s ambition was to… etc. An organizational reification that only shows the official story and neutralises meaningful theorisation. Richard Katz’s words on the danger of presenting parties as unitary actors strikes the right cord here:

Treating parties as unitary actors certainly makes narration of political events and theorizing about democratic politics simpler [however] to treat parties as unitary actors would be to dismiss an important – in some cases perhaps the most important – aspect of politics. Even when the party behaves cohesively vis-à-vis other parties or groups, questions related to how strategy is decided, leadership selected, resources gathered, and the whole organisational structure maintained, remain open” (Katz, 2002, 87).

Not enough is analysed on how Europe interacts with the issues Katz lists here. We learn nothing of processes and mechanisms, of the ‘how’ questions, and on the effects of contextual changes on the organization in its entirety. The reification of parties has here again preventing an analysis of the role of members in the organization. We saw earlier that nothing was known of socialisation processes, but nothing is known either of their role in the dynamics of Europeanization. In numerous Nordic parties, elite and members have been deeply divided on the European issue, but the accounts of those intra-party splits remain historical, un-theorised, and narrated from the elite point of view – the party did that, grassroot reacted… (Raunio, 1999; Aylott, 2002). We learn nothing of who pushes whom, of the persuasion processes, the compromises, and also the aftermath. Do euro-sceptic members change, adapt, leave the party? Members could be a very good case to understand processes of party organizational change.11

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11 It could be very fruitful to use Albert Hirschman’s voice/exit framework to understand elite and members relation on EU-induced divisions (Hirschman, 1970). Especially since we have so many cases of those, and have been for a while. Already in 1969, Anthony King in his sceptical reflections on parties used the European example to show the lack of impact members can have: “The labour administration elected in 1964 has applied to join the common market despite the Labour Party’s hostility to joining, expressed both before and after the 1964 and 1966 elections; and the government persisted in supporting united States policy in Vietnam despite the passage at successive Labour Party conferences of resolutions calling on the Labour government to dissociate itself from America” (King, 1969, 137). Parallels could be drawn with a time when the euro and Irak were high on Labour’s elite agenda. Pour la bonne bouche, as the French say: though sceptical, he recognised in his article that “if the study of political parties did not exist, it would clearly have to be invented” (King, 1969, 141), which is probably quite fortunate.
“Catching up with the hazardous uncertainties of politics”

The contradiction is that many authors acknowledge the ‘dirtiness’ of Europeanization: the complexity of causation, equifinality (Aylott et al., 2007, 191), how interwoven is the effect of Europeanization with domestic processes (Ladrech, 2007b, 211); in a word how much more there is to the official story of formal evolutions. The problem is the lack of approach to explore that complexity and it will now be contended that political sociology can do just that. Let us summarise what has been said, and link it to what is coming, with a most appropriate quote:

The virtually exclusive concern with formal organizational characteristics explains why this type of research can scarcely hope to get beyond a static description of reality. At best, it is limited to developing statistical correlations between organizational structures (treated as dependent variables) and contextual factors, correlations which tell us almost nothing about the only question that matters: namely, under what conditions and through what mediating mechanisms do these contextual factors affect and modify (and in what sense) the rules of the game governing interactions in the system of action underlying the organization. (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980, 74)

Political sociology encompasses different definitions, paradigms, theoretical structures or methods, but it seems that those share two aims from which the study of domestic parties in their relation to the EU can benefit greatly. Firstly, it seeks to pull apart society from its apparent order and rhetorics and to show the hidden mechanisms: a system of tensions and conflict through which a social group organises itself and its evolutions. Secondly, it understands social action as relational – between actors, organizations and institutions, both horizontally and vertically. Organizations therefore cannot “be analysed as the transparent entity which its leaders often wish it were. It operates in the realm of power relationship, of influence, of bargaining, and of calculation” (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980, 74). If the proper impact of European integration is to be understood, one has to cease seeing parties as organograms, but rather as related networks of individuals (members, activists, sub-national politicians, MPs, executive…) endowed with different power resources when conduction those relations. Firstly, we should not only look at EU-related party positions, but above all at EU-related resources, how they have been distributed in the party, and how they have been used in internal bargaining. Then, what inner conflict (factions, courants, member groups, territories…) has the EU created, through which mechanisms the party overcomes tensions to express unitary positions? Finally, we must follow the position that change is a mediating process in which actors have some freedom in
their relation with the environment, and through which organizations and institutions change. Political sociology, as will be developed further down, offers an understanding of institution/actor relations that also allows research on the strategic preservation or strategic change of institutional orders as well as a theoretically-grounded apprehension of complexity, especially in its microsociological trends, which departs from mere formal adaptations to top-down imposed constraints.

Ironically enough, the importance of mediation has already largely been developed for parties in the late 1960’s by Giovanni Sartori, who built on the concept of cleavage formulated by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, as not automatically reflected into the political system. Sartori claimed that if one did not consider cleavages as produced by the system, then there would be little we would “really know concerning the extent to which conflicts and cleavages may either be channelled, deflected, and repressed, or vice-versa, activated and reinforced precisely by the operations and operators of the political system” (Sartori, 1968, 176). He thereafter called for the “full recognition of the programming of the managers” (1968, 179). Parallels with the European cleavage are obvious. Too often researchers expect the Europe integration to make its impact, to affect parties and party systems as if automatically, and when nothing as such happens, reasons are to be found in the “lack of knowledge about European matters amongst the electorate” the “lack of interest in European politics”, “the democratic deficit.” (Andersen and Evans, 2005, 59), the “returning to Europe” consensus (Duvold and Jurkynas, 2006, 124), and of course “path dependency” (Steenbergen and Marks, 2004, 3) and “inauspicious institutional context” (Andersen and Evans, 2005, 77), and never in terms of political action to neutralise the cleavage. It seems slightly useless to accumulate studies showing how party systems have not changed – the marginal academic value of each having seriously decreased over the past 10 years. Since Mair already developed some hypotheses in his 2000 article and again more recently (2007b), instead of entering the waltz of synonyms and again proving that party system change is limited, it must

12 “Cleavages do not translate themselves into party oppositions as a matter of course, there are considerations of organisational and electoral strategies; there is the weighing of payoffs of alliances against losses through split-offs; and there is the successive narrowing of the ‘mobilization market’ through the time sequences of organizational efforts.” (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, 26)

13 It seems that part of the Rokkan/Lipset/Sartori conception of the political sociology of parties (Sartori, 1968) has been lost somewhere along the line: “in using a political sociology approach, we have assumed that political parties arise in response to the demands of voters. In other words, party structures and platforms reflect concerns of social cleavages” (Andersen and Evans, 2005, 76).
somehow be time to look more concretely for reasons, in lieu of throwing a line of hypothetical explanation in the last paragraph. Mair put forth that political leaders have nothing to gain in politicising the European agenda when the European arena increasingly deals with domestic politics. They prefer not to engage voters in those issues and keep focusing on domestic debates, so that “voters are being offered a voice that is likely to have little or no effect on the practice of decision-making” (Mair, 2000, 47). This strongly depoliticising strategy leaves them henceforth free to implement their European policies amidst electoral indifference.

The literature has to reverse the way it sees Europe and domestic parties to account for such a use of European resources and to test hypotheses trying to explain the work of mediation. A mediation that is also at work inside parties where cleavages can be “used as resources and thereby over- or under-played according to alignment and political strategies” (Sartori, 1969, 211). The link between party politics and political sociology becomes obvious when Sartori’s “programming of the managers” finds answer in Crozier and Friedberg’s conditions and “mediating mechanisms”.

Focusing successively on actors, organization, and institution, what follows will introduce three ways political sociology could help the domestic party politics of European integration “catch up with the hazardous uncertainties of politics” (Sartori, 1969, 214)\textsuperscript{14}.

**Did Raffarin get his premiership in the European Parliament?**

Either by the sheer disregard of party members, or the use of abstract categories like ‘the elite’, we have seen earlier that research on the Europeanization of national parties has neglected the study of actors. Yet one of the domains where Europe is most likely to materialise is in its effect on party politicians and career patterns. Following the weberian conception of politics as a professionalized field and politicians as political entrepreneurs (Weber, 1959, 112), the goal would not only be to understand the relative value of the European mandate on the electoral market, but

\textsuperscript{14} “It is an extraordinary paradox that the social sciences should be even more prompted to explain politics by developing fetishism for the ‘invisible hand’. This essay is predicted upon the opposite assumption, namely, that the sociologist should catch up with the hazardous uncertainties of politics” (Sartori, 1969, 214).
also the national use of EU resources in the conquest of power positions by entrepreneurs inside the party, as well as in their consolidation of territorial leadership. That means not only looking at MEPs but also at the effect of European integration on politicians who are not directly and formally linked to the UE.

First we need to better understand what is the value of European positions inside national parties. Most studies of MEPs look at their link with, and involvement in, central offices when they are in the European Parliament. We also know a lot about mechanisms of party coordination and discipline (or rather absence of) that link MEPs to the party (Raunio, 2000), but we should also focus on the long-term use that is made of the resources acquired at the European level (network, expertise, prestige resources). Likewise, researches done on MEPs describe their socio-political background when arriving in office but we also need to take the time dimension into consideration and not only look at the first or second order quality of politicians being ‘sent there’, that is the value the European mandate carries in the political cursus honorum (Sadran, 2000), but see its place in the political trajectory as a whole.

Marc Abelès, in his anthropological study of the European Parliament, devoted some pages to Raffarin, then unknown, when he was entering the electoral market as newly elected president of Poitou-Charentes and MEP (Abelès, 1992, 316-321). Retrospectively, one can wonder how much the stature he built there for himself, in international terms with the creation of the Atlantic Group, or in regional terms as tireless spokesman and fund-raiser for his region, has been instrumental in his rise inside in the RPR-UMP party. A more biographical oriented approach to MEPs would show more clearly how they concretely use their European experience, and accordingly how Europe has entered career patterns. As seen in the Raffarin example, the territorial dimension of the European mandate should be explored as, through it, some politicians manage to make a local impact and increase their ‘electibility’. Necessarily, shifts in the European Parliament electoral modes do make an impact on MEPs relations to domestic constituencies. Still even in the regional proportional system some are more able to use the multi-positionality offered by the European Union than others, and that differential use in the political control of a territory is to be explored further.

The biographical approach to the European mandate makes it also easier to disentangle the determinants of carrier evolutions and point down the significance of
the European specialisation in a political trajectory - especially for small countries where it is usually considered difficult to do so more formally (Luther, 2007, 38). Parties have often used the European Union as a means to temporarily, and comfortably, put aside certain controversial figures, and thereby soften internal tensions – Kovács in Hungary or Mandelson in England are examples among many others. Besides, it is common for central and eastern European politicians to favour European careers to national ones. If such phenomena of party-towards-Europe move are largely documented, little is known about their effect in the long run once their European experience is over.

Secondly, Europe does not exclusively offer resources to ‘European politicians’, but may also be crucial to careers at the local, regional and national levels. European public policies have a far-reaching capacity to modify the distribution of political resources at every of those levels. The implementation of directives, the distribution of European funds, the European emphasis on certain issues, can all be mobilised by party politicians to attain their goals. Here we clearly rejoin Cornelia Woll and Sophie Jacquot in the way they conceptualise Europeanization as the use of European opportunities by actors, and their transformation into practices (Jacquot and Woll, 2004, 10). Seen in this fashion, Europe offers a diversity of elements that can be mobilised – ideas, discursive references, policy instruments, funds… (Jacquot and Woll, 2004, 17-23) – and the “usage” of those by politicians in power relations, within the party, and society at large, is a decisive part of the Europeanization of parties.

Europe is primarily present at the domestic level through its public policies, politicians will be involved in their implementation, parties will give their position, they will communicate and use them in diverse ways (reward members, send messages…). The whole material and symbolic use of European public action by politicians has so far been neglected and we should now develop ethnological analyses of European directive implementations to understand how much Europe alter political configurations, and how career resources are affected accordingly. There is a whole tradition of local party research that has not yet been mobilised in the Europeanization debate, still analysing how European opportunities are seized at the local level may well be the best method against the homogenising accounts we have described earlier. It would certainly be unconvincing to assume that political careers
have been Europeanised (in the sense of an end-result) inside the national arenas, nonetheless politicians have been mobilising European resources – as well as having been constrained by those – in the takeover of constituencies and territories, and that aspect of European integration has to be expounded.

Consequently, ethnological analysis gives a more complete account of the political spheres affected by Europe, the diversity of actors’ mobilisations, and the evolutions of parties in their imbrications in other social practices and networks. We should value the local *per se*, but also as a way to reach the concrete mechanisms of wider partisan evolutions. The lack of micro-foundations for theories of party change has been rightly criticised\(^\text{15}\) and for the same reason the impact of the European Union on national parties cannot avoid localised analyses, since parties as organizations and as institutions evolve dialectically with the actors they comprise – as the following will develop.

... and did Margaret Thatcher fall under the pressures of nasty concrete systems of action?

The view that will be presented in this section is that analysing the relation between domestic parties and European integration would greatly benefit a use of the sociology of organizations developed by Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg (Crozier, 1963; Crozier and Friedberg, 1977/1980). Firstly, it will enable researchers to analyse the ‘black box’ of political parties, that is this world beyond formal characteristics. Then, it offers a set of concepts and tools that will not only theorise the impact of the European Union, but also allow for a comparison of informal organizational elements. The sociology of organizations is based on two postulates: organizations are social construction, and there is room for ‘games’ between its formal rules. Therefore it should not be analysed as an organogram, but as a “concrete system of action”, that is the strategies, the alliances and the formal and informal rules through which actors regulate their relations to make the organization work: “a structured human ensemble which employs relatively stable game mechanisms to coordinate the actions of its participants. It furthermore maintains its structure, i.e. the stability if its games and relationships among them, by means of mechanisms of regulation” (Crozier

\(^{15}\) See Herbert Kitschelt’s critical evaluation of the cartel party model (Kitschelt, 2000).
Therefore parties, when subjected to a changing environment, will adjust primarily by changing those informal rules and games – making relevant the study of a European impact in those terms.

The key to understand a party and its changes is the power struggles it is made of; its functioning being the outcome of the conflicts between the diverse rationalities. Power is thought as relational and reciprocal. One may think rather mundane now to emphasise on the fact that power is not a property, or the attribute linked to a position, but as a matter of fact research on the Europeanization of parties still holds conceptions as “power-holders” who possess “the authority to pursue their preferred goals” (Carter et al., 2007, 10). Accordingly, the power of MEPs is conceptualised as the autonomy of decision they have, in terms of absence of party discipline and lack of accountability processes on their action. When the autonomy increases, they have greater power as they can shape the EU position of their party (Carter and Ladrech, 1997, 76). If you apply a relational vision of power to the situation, MEPs in relation to the central office, the absence of party discipline and accountability is more likely to convey indifference and actual lack of power; a more to the point description. Then reciprocity (power as a reciprocal, but unbalanced relations) is also often absent from considerations, and with unfortunate research consequences too.

Researcher are influenced by weberian views of power seeing it as the capacity to have someone do something he would not have done by himself. If one looks at dissent on the European issue within a party, for instance when some backbenchers oppose the official position, the power of the party elite is never unilateral but is a process of constant compromises closer to the view proposed by Crozier. In the end, the party elite gets more than the dissenters in their relation they establish but the elite nonetheless gives something in return16. In the study of the Europeanization of national parties, the analysis of those power relations is more likely to bear fruits than looking at the official story and issue salience. Eventually, the unbalanced nature of relations is based on the resources the different actors or groups have access to. This can be linked to our previous section on how actors may get, use, or lose, resources through Europeanization. A possible framework would be

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16 The Norwegian Labour Party is a good example of implicit deals made between the leadership and dissenters. The latter agreed not to openly challenge the former on the issue during a campaign if the party kept open its official position until further debate (Aylott, 2002, 451-452).
to qualify those as network, expertise, veto capacity, legitimacy or prestige, and to
analyse how the concrete system of action may evolve with the evolutions of those.
Crozier and Friedberg offer a valuable qualification that all resources are not relevant
and mobilizable (1980, 38), therefore what can be used in terms of career pattern, may
not be used in party internal struggle. One should try to discover when do they
become relevant and enter the balance of those internal power relations.

Before elaborating more concretely how the sociology of organizations can
help our analysis of the impact of European integration, we should specify two points.
First, the major source of organizational power is the control of zones of uncertainty,
as the actors who can do so will use that capacity in their relation to the those who are
dependent from it – this is essential to understand the impact of Europe as will be
developed below. Then, drawing on the work of Crozier, Angelo Panebianco (1988)
elaborated a useful conceptualisation of party elite as a “dominant coalition”, an
alliance of alliances whose composition reflects power relations within the party in
terms of factions or territorial divisions (Panebianco, 1988, 39). The goal of the
dominant coalition is to assure organizational stability as changes offer resources to
the minority elites.

The assumption is that Europe is a major source of uncertainty to political
parties today. The complexity and unpredictability of that environment will push
dominant coalitions to multiply links to that environment in the hope of dominating it.
Relays or “gatekeepers” (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980, 82) are created, here in the
form of Secretary for International Relations, for European Affairs… Yet, meanwhile,
organizational stabilisation is also dealt with by trying to limit the autonomy and
control of actors having connections with different sectors of that environment, the
“marginal-sécants” who have the power of boundary-spanning. For instance, national
parties are supplying MEPs with very limited resources: “They provide no financial
help at all to their MEPs, in the form of either money or staff support” (Carter and
Ladrech, 2007, 68). This forms one ‘mediating mechanism’ for the impact of the
European integration. Another way is the control of candidate choice. Labour’s
dominant coalition from 1994, built around Tony Blair, decided to shift from a
selection at the local level controlled by members to a list decided by the central
office, as some ‘old Labour’ politicians with strong local loyalties managed to
challenge the leadership this way (Messmer, 2003).
Still, the interesting aspect of the “concrete system of action” is that it does not necessarily stop at the boundaries of the organization and allows for a more dynamic understanding of the interpenetrations of the environment. When environmental instability increases, the number of people believing they can cope with zones of uncertainty and propose solutions increases too, it also make dominant coalitions more fragmented and instable. The divisions of the Parti Socialiste in France over the referendum exemplify this. In the same way, the difficulty of some Finnish parties to agree on a position over the EU led to fragmentation and to the integration of eurosceptic candidates when the dominant coalition had traditionally supported the European integration (Raunio, 1999, 155). That fragmentation can eventually lead to organizational change arising as changes of the dominant coalition. The two conditions for that to happen are internal factors that are balancing the power relation increasingly in disfavour of the dominant and an external stimulus. “The external stimulus acts as a catalyser accelerating power structure transformation when the internal preconditions of this transformation already existed” (Panebianco, 1988, 242). Europe has been particularly instrumental in those party coalition struggles. In England for instance, position towards European issues have been instrumental in every single leadership change in the Labour party from Wilson to Blair (Daniels, 1998). Similarly, divisions on Europe have played a very substantial part of Thatcher downfall, and affected Major’s leadership (Garry, 1995). In France, as mentioned above the referendum has shaped, and been instrumentalised for, faction oppositions and leadership strategies (Ivaldi, 2006, 50-51). In Sweden the leadership of the Social Democratic government was severely affected by several cabinet minister supporting the no in the 2003 EMU referendum (Aylott, 2007, 165). The literature offers an already substantial list of those examples, but they need to be put into perspective with a theoretical standpoint and go beyond mere historical accounts. This conception of organizational change in terms of dominant coalition, power struggle and use external stimuli would allow for comparisons, carry theoretical properties and consequently help understand under what conditions actors turn contextual changes into internal strategy.

Yet party changes can take a more incremental turn. The diffusion of organizational uncertainty may lead to an erosion of the autonomy of the organization as well as its systemness, understood as the interdependence and similarity of the
different internal sectors (Panebianco, 1988, 55). Because the organization is a universe of conflicts and because actors always try to increase their zone of freedom, there always exist a latent risk of disintegration (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977, 81-82). Still as long as autonomy and systemness are strong, change will result in new game mechanisms, the environment will be kept at the margin of the concrete system of actions and the differences between actors’ strategies and the goal of the organization will be accommodated. Yet, if this tends to be decreasingly the case, organizational strength will be greatly affected by the environment and the hint here is that Europe challenges significantly the autonomy and systemness of parties. First of all, by taking over domestic political issues European integration reduces the political space at the national level and makes the policy differentiation of parties more difficult (Mair, 1997, 133). Parties’ capacity to structure the electoral offer is therefore weakened and candidate’s dependence on partisan label diminishes. Likewise, the increasing competence of the European Union reduces the number of “rewarding policies” decided at the national level, and parties’ capacity to use them to please constituents (Raunio, 2002, 416).

Furthermore the European Union increases the stratarchical\(^\text{17}\) division of parties. Firstly it strengthens the regional level of party organization in giving its actors new political venues, source of funding and new channels of territorial representation. Horizontal links of sub-national party groups ensues, for example between the Parisian PS and Berliner SDP (Olivier, 2005, 164). Then the cross-cutting nature of the European cleavage blurs party boundaries. The European election are the one at which parties are the most likely to present non-party members on their list, such as prestigious, charismatic civil society individuals. Finally, the European Union emphasises a technical type of political legitimacy that present party expertise as “old-fashioned” (Enyedi, 2006, 83) and makes it more likely for party politicians to publicise and have recourse to non-partisan consulting-type of political expertise (Guerin Lavignotte, 2002, 217). All those dimensions make it harder for the central office to manage the organization, as resource difference inside the party and in the dominant coalition tend to level down. As was summarised recently: “As local, regional, and even supranational party bodies have begun to assert their autonomy

\(^{17}\) “in which different and mutually autonomous levels coexist with one another, and in which there is a minimum authoritative control, whether from the bottom-up or from the top-down” (Mair, 1997, 114).
from central head office control, uniformity is likely to have become both less desirable and less enforceable” (Bardi and Mair, 2008, 161).

La Palombara, in an review of what changed in party politics since the publication of his 1966 classic Political Parties and Political Development, recently noted that now “the political party may well be unable to govern in his own name” in the face of party discipline being “difficult or impossible to enforce” and volatile candidates (LaPalombara, 2007, 148). European integration is certainly not the sole cause for such a trend\(^{18}\), but its impact in terms of reinforcement, and the diversification of the concrete means through which the phenomenon unfolds has to be taken into accounts in the Europeanization of domestic parties. Using the framework offered by the sociology of organizations makes it possible to think the organization outside the formal features, and through the concrete system of action to theorise the interaction between actors and organisation in the face of the European challenge.

**Actors and institutions, a sociology of political roles.**

So far we have developed how a sociological approach can help analyse the impact of Europe on party actors and on parties as organizations. Remains to be taken into consideration the normative influence of Europe on the institution that are parties in western societies. Besides, the “usage” of Europe for career purposes or its qualification as a resource of organizational power struggle may convey the idea that actors behave rationally vis-à-vis the opportunities offered by European integration. On the contrary, this last part will try to substantiate how a sociology of political roles can link rationalist and constructivist conceptions of human action in emphasising how strategic choices make no sense outside constructed possibilities. As was mentioned above, maybe the main challenge of European integration towards political parties is that it diffuses political norms that are essentially antithetic to them:

\(^{18}\) For the Parti Socialiste, Europe may not have created the processes of disintegration described here: “L’actuelle recomposition du parti socialiste est caractérisée par la rupture avec une certaine institutionalisation interne du parti, un éclatement de ses cadres d’interprétation et de ses modèles de socialisation et d’intégration nationale traditionels” (Olivier, 2005, 159). But Europe has certainly has amplified the institutional instability: “la différenciation des préférences des électeurs, adherents et dirigeants des parties peut menacer la cohesion parisienne interne, du fait de l’émergence de courants exprimant des visions contradictories de l’Europe.” (Olivier, 2005, 170).
participation, partnership, non-majoritarianism, output-oriented legitimacy, soft types of coordination, subsidiarity and so on. This normative structure is inherently critical of what is seen as the failures of party government – the inability to enforce regulation, the refusal of certain groups to recognise its legitimacy and a call for what are seen as more democratic, or more efficient, or more ‘sustainable’ problem-solving mechanisms. More often than not, the resources offered by the European Union as described in the two the previous parts are infused by norms that go contrary to the traditional functions parties are supposed to perform: representation and aggregation of interests, policy implementation, and political accountability. How do those norms get institutionalised in the domestic spheres, how do they affect party politicians behaviour and ultimately the partisan institution?

In a constructivist vision, institutions are supposed to be stable cognitive models guiding action. They are shared understanding about socially accepted appropriate behaviour and thereby define the interests and practices of actors. They “control human conduct by setting up pre-defined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, 72). As such, the relation between actors and institutions is one of assimilation, learning and socialisation of actors to institutional rules. The set of attitudes and practices that is conceived as the most appropriate in a certain institutional context is a role, and roles constitute the ways that institutions are made present (Lagroye, 1997, 8). As regard European integration therefore, the institutionalisation of new cognitive and normative matrices happens through learning and socialising when actors “through interaction with broader institutional contexts (norms and discursive structures), acquire new interests and preferences” (Checkel, 1999, 548).

Still the relation, or rather the relations, of an actor to the institutions that structure society, and to the roles they prescribe, is more diverse than what neo-institutionalists assume. Although institutions will define an actor’s interests and identity, each actor is determined by several institutions that prescribe potentially different roles for the same situation. This is particularly true for representative institutions. A politician can successively slip into different institutional identities: paternalistic, technical, managerial, brokerage roles; rooted locally or established

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19 The White Paper on European Governance epitomised neatly such normative positions.
nationally; social proximity or *notable*; trustee or delegate... and those roles may happen to be contradictory as institutions are not monolithic themselves, but the accumulation of diverse historical dimensions²⁰. Actors are more or less aware of those different possibilities and can play with their different roles. Donald Searing (1994) showed that it is impossible for English MPs to embody all the role dimensions of the MP position (policy advocates, ministerial aspirants, constituency members, parliament men...) and the differences within those institutional possibilities are linked to strategic goals. Institutional roles cannot be understood independently from those strategies. Political actors follow a logic of appropriateness, but potentially one logic among a (very) few others, and do so to reach certain objectives (Nay, 1997, 18). The sociology of roles distinguishes between roles that are institutionalised and those that are not and calls attentions to the content of roles and the script quality of role behaviour. Some will be as institutionalised as comprehending the whole reality of the institution, while in other institutional settings and especially for representative institutions, different roles with different degree of institutionalisation may be ‘offered’. Analysing institutions through roles gives a valuable entry point to the appreciation of their evolution and their relation to actors²¹. The European Union will add one role dimension to the institution of parties, and indeed socialisation and social learning are necessary steps in the cognitive activation of those new norms, but their full institutionalisation will be linked to its incorporation into political strategies.

Let us use the example of European directives for which the Commission makes the participatory implementation mandatory. For instance, the Water Framework Directive requires that every collectivity affected by its implementation (to reduce water pollution) is to be included by representatives in the drawing up of the policy itself and its implementation. The process is based on a non-majoritarian consensual political style and its issue-oriented nature implies a focus on functional territory and not on political constituency. Schematically here politicians can take on two roles. Either a constituency oriented role through which they will try to have their

²⁰ "Véritable mécanisme de sédimentation, par lequel coexistent des prescriptions de rôles correspondant à des états successifs des rapports sociaux et des registres de savoir, l’une des caractéristiques du métier politique étant à rechercher dans la gestion au jour le jour de cette coexistence" (Lagroye, 1994, 8).

²¹ "The analysis of role is of particular importance to the sociology of knowledge because it reveals the mediations between the macroscopic universe of meaning objectivities in a society and the ways by which these universes are subjectively real to individuals" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, 96).
party-defined policy options implemented to the satisfaction of their constituent and for which they will draw coalition with special interested and different groups as the participatory nature of the policy community make impossible a majoritarian decision-making process. That would be an extension of the representation logic to a new, slightly inimical arena. On the other hand, politicians can take on a procedural role focusing on technical, seemingly non-partisan intervention, about schedule, feasibility, general interest and so, their legitimacy a democratic mandate to organise the state and not represent particular interest. Both options could simultaneously correspond to appropriate behaviour for one actor, each corresponding to two different historical stages in the evolution of party government, and the second one being less institutionalised. Indeed for the latter, Europe participate through rule diffusion and socialising (of those politicians and members of the policy community) to a redefinition of political roles, that is a redefinition of the norms that govern their interactions, but the institutionalisation of new forms of political regulation, as influenced by the European Union will take a two stage process. First, the cognitive activation of new role possibilities and then, and we are coming back concept of “usage” (Jacquot and Woll, 2004), the mobilisation of those possibilities by actors in strategic pattern. Here, politicians could emphasise their procedural role because the issue imposes high material and electoral cost to policy failure, and taking on an organising position allows them to escape accountability – which would be attributed to the whole group, that is, because of its deliberative nature, no one in particular. On the contrary, they may want to engage in coalition-making, debate and in fine political conflict, because they would send a message to the electorate, mobilise new networks, or simply because they have a policy-oriented conception of their work. Those preferences are endogenous, which does not mean that they are unique and will include an actor’s whole identity; there is space for strategic game in playing with constructed roles.

In this way, the sociology of roles, in focusing on actors’ interpretations, the games revolving around those, and the socialisation to new political regulations can indeed bridge a idea/preference divide in the sense that a logic appropriateness and a logic of bounded consequentialism correspond to two different steps in the institutionalisation of European-originated political structures, but are not irreconcilable. It also puts a stress on an oft-disregarded complexity of dynamics
between actors and institutions. The growing institutionalisation of norms will also happen through its increasing intentional use by actors in a bottom-up process. Therefore the previously presented analyse of how Europe redefines political career patterns and party organizations by altering resources should always be embedded in the parallel analysis of the institutional context. On the one hand, what is prescribed as appropriate and how this evolves through normative diffusion. On the other hand, in what concrete situational engagements the new rules are activated, interiorised and institutionally reproduced (Briquet, 1994, 18). Of course roles cannot tell everything about an institution, but they form a very relevant research object in institutional changes; from the acceptance and increasing institutionalisation of a role a lot can be inferred on the underlying norms governing social relations.

Eventually, institutional changes equally account for organizational changes for, if organizations mobilise bias towards the attainment of their goals (Schattschneider, 1960, 30), evolution of societal bias regarding parties as institutions will result in continuous reappraisal of organised strategies. The way parties are downplaying their linkage function in terms of increasing state funding, loosening links with civil society groups (unions…) and personalised campaigns (katz and Mair, 1995) may well be just one example.

**Conclusion**

Hopefully this paper has managed to prove the initial point that political sociology can be usefully mobilised to help get the study of domestic party Europeanization out of its current dead-end – thus forming a highly promising new research agenda. The point of departure to political party analysis should be shifted from formal organizational structures and programme content towards a focus on actors and thereby changes in career pattern, organization and institution. A bottom-up actor-oriented approach to parties – looking at what they do, not what the are – is much more likely to show the diversity of forms taken by European integration at the domestic levels as well as its concrete mechanisms. Likewise, ethnological or biographical studies are more likely to disentangle the significance of such European resources in a career trajectory, of such European issue in the instability of a dominant coalition, of such policy experience in a role construction. Still, one should not try to
systematically pin-down ‘where Europe is’ and is not. Research designs obsessed by counterfactuals neglect important dimensions of the European influence. Trends towards more inclusion of civil society in policymaking, or the decreasing cohesion of political parties as organizations would certainly be on their way without the EU. Rather, it is in their capacity to grasp complex causal mechanisms, to theorise parallel, or mutually reinforcing trends, and systemic causality (Braud, 2006, 682) that sociological tools can make a difference in the analysis of parties’ Europeanization. As a *quid pro quo*, backed by shared concepts and methodological framework, their comparative dimension should be reinforced without losing its inductive flair.
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