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The mythical construction of the future Europe in the debate on the 'State of the Union Address' 2012.

Since 2008 the deep crisis of the EU has provoked ongoing debates in Europe on three universal, mythical questions: Where do we come from? Who are we? and Where are we going? Their outcome is of course open. It is, however, instructive to analyse them as they disclose something about the nature of the crisis and about the existing potential for European solutions. I think this applies in particular to debates within the European parliament. This very special political institution has represented Europe's diversity in a much more differentiated manner than other political institutions have. It is composed of delegates from across the political spectrum and from all member states and regions with an amazing 24 official languages. It even includes an increasing political camp of determined EU opponents. As a regularly elected institutional representative of citizens, it forms a mediating bridge between citizens' interests as well as identities on the one hand, and the ambitions and mythology of European elites on the other hand. Both have repeatedly been the subject of research, but not the mediation efforts of the parliament in this context. The influence of the European parliament on public debates in Europe is of course limited, as is its power in European politics. However, its debates are interesting because they reflect the diversity of Europe in a condensed and differentiated way and reveal potential for consensual agreements. Therefore, the parliament appears to some extent as a laboratory for common solutions in times of crisis. Its debates are instructive for analytical purposes even if they do not end in a synthesis, do not transcend their hypothetical nature and remain within the parliament's own institutional framework.

Since 2010, following its summer break parliament holds an annual debate on the state of the union address, which the commission president gives to the plenary. This event is a special occasion for addressing the three universal mythical questions that Europe is increasingly confronted with because of the persistent crisis. The debate also focuses on particular, short and middle term challenges. However, in times of crisis it turns into a fundamental discussion about Europe's present and future. My contribution to this workshop is a selective analysis of the event in 2012. The debate took place on Wednesday, 12th September in Strasbourg. Until this year, the very existence of the European Union was at stake. Angela Merkel expressed this dire situation with the words "If the Euro fails, then Europe fails". However, in July 2012, Mario Draghi held his famous "whatever it takes" speech on the peak of the Euro-crisis which had an enormous and sustained effect on financial markets that were stabilized in the aftermath. However, the success of the ECB's intervention was not yet clear in September. Commission president Barroso and the members of parliament therefore began the event with the impression that they were still in the midst of a crisis. This situational framework makes the 2012 event particularly interesting.

What I am presenting to you can be no more than a very rough summary of my analysis that is, in addition, very selective. It concentrates solely on models of a future EU that are favoured in the face of the crisis, either because they appear as necessary long term solutions or as mythical points of reference, i.e. as a desired *finalité* of European integration. That means that my analysis for instance completely ignores the debate on adequate economic policies, i.e. the ongoing controversy over austerity vs. investment policies in times of crisis.

Before proceeding, I have to say a word about the applied method. I analysed the debate according to the rules of objective hermeneutics. This social scientific methodology has been well established in Germany for about 40 years (cf. www.objective-hermeneutics.com). It

regards the meaning of an utterance as the primary object of analysis, not the speaker's meaning. That means it focuses in the first place on what someone has said according to intersubjectively valid linguistic and social rules, not what someone has intentionally meant. As you know, this distinction was also crucial for Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. However, within the “socioanalysis” of objective hermeneutics it has a more general sense. It includes a *social* unconsciousness that is regarded as a reality with a much broader scope than our conscious lives. From such a perspective, debates in the European parliament are also instructive in aspects that transcend the individual consciousness of participating discussants. The dialectical nature of these debates is manifest as an argumentation dynamic, which has to be analysed on its own. Its logic of *pro* and *contra*, of *propositio* and *oppositio*, of *thesis* and *anti-thesis* forms a chain of communication, which as a whole shows a much more differentiated picture of the state of the union and of possible solutions than individual statements intentionally do. An analysis in particular includes explicating *implications*, i.e. to read between the lines and to make explicit what becomes expressed indirectly.

Now let us move forward. If you wish to go through the transcript on your own at a later time, I would be happy to send it to you. It is also available in the parliament's online archives. My analytical summary focuses on three things: fundamental aspects of the crisis in 2012, how they were interpreted in the debate and finally the long-term conclusions that were drawn with regard to a desirable model of Europe in the future. I am going to present you with exemplary quotations from the initial statements of the different party leaders. This presentation should, however, represent essential aspects of the whole debate. The first part, a summary of the crisis in 2012, resulted from reconstructing the debate, but of course includes other sources as well. In a way, it summarises my understanding of the crisis today.

As you know, the crisis in 2012 centred around the euro and the stability of the monetary union. This was a consequence of the public debt explosion, which happened after 2007 because of public bank bailouts. The crisis ridden member states teetered on the edge of bankruptcy, which could be prevented only through European solidarity. This solidarity, however, was uncertain, because the Maastricht treaty entailed a no bailout clause between member states. That is why the financial markets began to speculate on the collapse of the euro or that crisis ridden member states would leave the Eurozone. In retrospect, the ECB stopped this market turbulence through Mario Draghi's famous announcement of the OMT-program (OMT = outright monetary transactions) in July 2012. This program implied huge, indirect transfers to member states in trouble and as such it manifested European solidarity as a fact. It was so successful because Draghi made very clear that it was meant to be *unlimited* (“Whatever it takes”). However, the ECB compensated for weaknesses of the economic and monetary union that are still there. From a sociological perspective, these are not restricted to economic aspects that build the focus of “optimum currency area” theories (Mundell 1961 et al.). Rather, the most fundamental problem of the EMU is that it bounds its member states *holistically* together as a community of fate in economic terms without having established it fully as a community, which means as a *political* community, as a European nation state, which would allow for unlimited solidarity in a sustainable and democratically legitimised way.

To put it more technically, it is helpful to apply the sociological distinction between “Gemeinschaft” and “Gesellschaft” (“community” and “society”) that has been introduced by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (Tönnies 1991). From this perspective, a community is a *collective of whole persons*, whereas a society is a *collective of persons only in specific roles* such as in the work sphere and in the market, where contractual partners follow their self-interests and cooperate in a specific, i.e. limited way, which is defined in the contract. However, for a contract to be socially valid and enforceable there has to be a (political and

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legal) community in the background, which represents the non-contractual elements of the contract that Emile Durkheim has articulated in his book about the “Division of labour”. To put it using the ideas of Frankfurt sociologist Ulrich Oevermann, who refers to Talcott Parsons (Parsons 1939): Relationships within a community are functionally *diffuse*, whereas relationships in a society are functionally *specific* (Oevermann 2000). Communities are diffuse because they are holistic and inclusive. For example, the members of a family or political community not only collaborate in any *specific* sense, but they share their *lives* (the family members usually in a house or flat, the members of a political community within a national territory). That is why communitised relationships are *concrete*, whereas societal relationships remain *abstract* in some sense in their specificity. In a community, you count as non-interchangeable person, whereas in society you fulfil an abstract function. You are therefore principally replaceable. Because of its holistic nature, a community includes solidarity (without necessarily excluding personal interests), whereas a society specialises on following one’s self-interests. The differentiation of a societal sphere is a modern phenomenon. This does not imply, however, that a community is bound to pre-modern traditionality and to face-to-face relationships in a social proximity.

Turning to the process of European integration, it started with *specific* interstate contracts according to the logic of limited, societal relationships for mutual benefit. This remains the fundament of European integration, although the density of contractual regulations has grown enormously and built up a quasi-state apparatus with a somewhat autonomous legislation as in the ordinary legislative procedure. This political entity bases itself on *limited* interstate-treaties that do not communitise their contractual partners like a genuine constitution would. Everything outside of the scope of these treaties has to be decided *intergovernmentally* and *unanimously* by equal partners that remain as separate nation states and do not form a community. The unanimous vote is characteristic of contractual, societal relationships, where the partners remain separated and do not communitise, whereas the majority rule is a necessity for a lasting collective that has to ensure its ability to act under all circumstances (more precisely, a collective, which is built on foundations of equality).

The historic decision by political elites in Europe to introduce an economic and monetary union changed the situation fundamentally. As the crisis has shown, this step put the member states structurally in the same boat in such a comprehensive way that this exceeded the logic of limited, societal cooperation. However, *politically* they stayed attached to this logic and did not communitise in order to consciously shape their now shared future jointly in a regular and democratic way. It is this structural discrepancy, which holds the European Union in an ongoing existential crisis. Every new big challenge or crisis, which is not already regulated in the old treaties, will reactivate this logic of interstate bargaining, in which individual member states can block solutions, thereby putting the entire EU at risk once again.

It seems clear to me that there are only two options for avoiding an epoch of continuous crises over the EU’s very existence. One is to turn the clocks back and restore the sovereignty of the old nation states, restricting the EU to a platform for limited interstate cooperation, for example like in the old EFTA-model. Second, move on to a complete, full blown European nation state, which would not be a centralised superstate, but rather a federal state with a strong dedication to the principle of subsidiarity. Remaining between these two options and keeping the Eurozone without completing or abandoning it will not end the series of existential crises within the European Union.

How was this situation reflected in the debate of 2012 at the peak of the euro crisis? How was it interpreted? And what are the long-term conclusions that were drawn with regard to

the envisaged model of Europe in the future? In his opening state of the union address, commission president Barroso drew a picture of the EU as being at a crossroads and in a defining moment, where it was time to stop piecemeal responses and muddling through. He analysed the crisis as multi-faceted, as a deep financial, economic and social crisis, but foremost as a political crisis of *confidence*, which was also reflected in the turbulence of the markets. At its core he saw a lack of *community spirit*, which clearly reflects the structural discrepancy that I have mentioned. The vision he derived from this for the future of the EU was “the completion of a deep and genuine economic union, based on a political union”. At the same time, he published a communication with his commission carrying the title “A blueprint for a deep and genuine economic and monetary union. Launching a European Debate” (European Commission 2012), where he outlined a detailed roadmap towards this goal: from banking union over fiscal union to a social union and ultimately a political union. With regard to the euro crisis he clearly stated in his address that

“Ultimately, the credibility and sustainability of economic and monetary union – the credibility of our currency, the euro – depends on the institutions and the political construct behind it. This is why the economic and monetary union raises the question of a political union and the European democracy that must underpin it.” (Barroso spoke in English)

But what does it mean to achieve a political union and a European democracy? With regard to his central diagnosis of a “community deficit”¹, one should think that Barroso must be in favour of Europe as a political community, a European federal nation state. However, he then called for a “federation of nation states” instead. This formula linguistically implies that the nation states remained as nation states within the federation. If they remain as nation states, the envisaged federation cannot be a political community and will continue with a community deficit. If the federation is democratic with a majority rule in all matters that concern Europe, then it is in fact a political community, a European nation state made up of traditional nation states, which thereby have ceased to be nation states. Viewed in this light, Barroso’s formula for a “democratic federation of nation states” remained contradictory and hybrid just like the current structure of EU-institutions.

How did the parliament react to Barroso’s address? The first statement of response was given by Joseph Daul on behalf of the European People’s Party (EPP), which also includes Barroso.² Daul did not depart from his party colleague concerning the community question. However, he remained even vaguer in this respect. He restricted himself to the abstract parole “more Europe is the solution” but left open what that precisely meant. However, at the end of his statement he made clear to Barroso that

*“Here in Parliament, we champion democratic control at European level.”
(...) “we need a real political Europe. A Europe where parliament is the only direct representative of the citizens of Europe. If we do not do this, we will fail. Political union is legitimacy, it is more democratic control, more citizen participation.” (The original language was French)*

If the European parliament became “the only direct representative of the citizens of Europe”, then Europe was in fact politically communitised. This is of course a central aspect of a political community, which does not fall behind the universalistic standards of the nation state. However, such a European parliament would overrule the German, French, Belgian

¹ To use a term coined by Amitai Etzioni, who analysed the European crisis in a similar way (Etzioni 2007; Etzioni 2008; Etzioni 2013).

² The first round in the plenary debate followed the rule that the leaders of the party groups would give their statements in the order of the party’s share of the vote.

and all other parliaments of today’s member states in all European matters. Therefore, such a big step towards European democracy would be democratic only if the different member states first decided for a final time on their own to form a political community through a constitutional act. There is no European democracy that can be built simply through the European parliament *taking over power* like the former Bundeskanzler Helmut Schmidt suggested in a book in 2013 (Schmidt 2013, pp.336, 354–55).

Hannes Swoboda then spoke on behalf of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats. He did not push towards a takeover of power by the parliament like his party colleague Schmidt. However, his criticism of the European Council for its “undemocratic” crisis management was one-sided:

“The Council should not take upon itself responsibilities and powers which it is not entitled to. That is a violation of democracy.” (The original language was German)

One can indeed argue, like Swoboda and many others, that there is a democratic deficit and that the intergovernmentalism of the European Council’s crisis management was undemocratic. However, the opposite is also true. One has to recognise this structural ambivalence to get a whole picture. The ambivalence is routed in the hybrid character of the European Union as described above. Swoboda argues here from the standpoint of a future European democracy. The euro-sceptics often argue from the standpoint of still existing member states democracies. Swoboda, however, seems to be aware that there has to be a European convention with referenda on a European constitution to democratically turn the current Europe into a European democracy.

In his statement on behalf of the ALDE Group, Guy Verhofstadt picked up Barroso’s diagnosis of a political crisis as the core of the complex constellation of crises by saying:

“Everybody is talking about public finances, about interest rates, about economics. In my opinion it is not about Greece, it is not about the public finances, it is not even about economics as being the fallout of the crisis. The real nature of this crisis is a political one and that is the political incapacity today to make the jump forward to a federal union and, more precisely, the incapacity of the national elites of Europe to make this jump to a more federal union in Europe. That is the real crisis we are going through today” (The original language was English)

Verhofstadt pointed, however, more consistently than Barroso did to the necessity of the step towards political communitisation by using the formula “federal union”. That this step appeared in his words as a “jump”, i.e. a very big step or a historic caesura, seems appropriate, for it would imply much courage and determination, complex preparations and negotiations, with at the end referenda in all EU member states as well as differentiated regulations with the countries that rejected this step at that time. Of course, the European *peoples* finally had to decide each on its own for such a constitutional jump, and not the national elites. Why did Verhofstadt then accentuate the latter? Probably because the national elites of a majority of EU member states had to initiate such a jump politically and carry it by the majority.

Verhofstadt seemed to be quite aware that the critical state of the European Union would continue until this jump became real and that the national elites currently appeared to be far from making this a reality. One piece of evidence for this is the continued preponderance of the use of the conventional pragmatic mode of becoming “an ever closer union” without starting to argue in public for this jump.

Verhofstadt then attacked directly Barroso’s inconsistent solution for the community deficit, thereby performing a considerable and charismatic move towards the solution of a federal union:

(direct continuation:) “I am saying that, Mr Barroso, because you have made a whole speech, but at the end of the speech you come up with a concept and that concept we cannot accept: a federation of nation states. No, no federation of nation states, that is more of the same, we have that already – that is the European Council, which is a federation of nation states where the Heads of Government and the Heads of State were trying to solve and are incapable of solving this crisis. We do not want more of the same – we do not need a nationalistic or a national future for Europe. We need a post-national future for Europe. That is what we need. What we need for Europe is not a federation of nation states: it is a federal union of European citizens. It is about citizens and it is not about nation states in the future.”

His term “federal union” obviously represents a label for an EU which has been established holistically as a political community. An indicator for that is also Verhofstadt’s reference to the citizens as opposed to the nation states. Although a “federation of nation-states” would go probably further than the status quo, it would still not achieve a political communitisation. That is why it seems in general to be correct that such a federation would be “more of the same” hybrid structure of the current European Union that has led to the present era of existential crises. Verhofstadt pushed more strongly than any other member of parliament for a consistent solution of the European crisis.

Who is “we” in the sentence “we cannot accept a federation of nation states”? Verhofstadt’s party group? The majority of the parliament before the Commission president? Later it became apparent that he assumed a consensus within the parliament in that regard and therefore felt justified to speak for the parliament as a whole, or at least for the majority of it. The majority of the parliament indeed seemed to follow in the envisaged direction. However, nobody articulated the necessity of making the jump towards federal union so clear and nobody pushed that strongly in this direction.

Verhofstadt as well as his federalist comrade Daniel Cohn-Bendit (who spoke afterwards on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group) did not realise, however, that from an analytical perspective a politically communitised, federal European Union would be a *nation state* with “Europe” as new *nation*. Their usage of the concept of a nation implied a pre-political understanding: The nation as a community that is rooted in ethnicity, a cultural tradition, a common language etc. with a somewhat ontological status. This contrasts with the nation as a *freely formed* political community (a “Willensnation”), which can therefore also freely decide to form a bigger community and nation with others. The whole discourse of *post-nationalism* in politics and in the social sciences is negatively bound to the pre-modern concept of a nation. From its perspective, all good-minded, cosmopolitan people have to distance themselves from the nation state that becomes closely associated with nationalism and its historical crimes. From an analytical point of view, the nation state only represents a *structure model* of organising a political community. In its full-blown form, this model is the epitome of a polity that is democratically organised along universalistic standards of citizens’ self-determination. If the will is there, this model could be raised to the European level, thereby establishing a new political community and nation. A criticism such as the one that Ulrich Beck has put forward against “methodological nationalism” in the social sciences and European studies (Beck & Grande 2010; Beck 2013) is ambivalent, because it fosters a “post-national” perspective on the EU, which also in turn weakens the already achieved

universalistic standards for which the nation state stands for. In this way, the critical discourse of post-nationalism has opened up scope for Europe as a “neoliberal” economic regime, which submits the old nation-states to economic interests, of course against the good intentions of its proponents. Their vague models of a “supranational democracy” (Habermas 2012b; Habermas 2012a) with the nation states and the citizens as dual cornerstones of the EU, as a “democracy” (Cheneval & Schimmelfennig 2013) etc. do not resolve the structural deficiency mentioned above. They remain inconsistent and therefore practically powerless. That is why in the end they prolong the hybrid state of the union, which is useful only for dubious economic interests. In view of this, it is understandable that there are intellectuals like the neo-Marxist Wolfgang Streeck, who criticised Habermas (Streeck 2013b; Streeck 2013a) and drew the conclusion that a return to the old nation states would be a better choice (Streeck 2014). However, this option also seems illusory in an age of globalisation.

As an experienced politician, Verhofstadt had in fact a much clearer view of the deficient hybrid structure of the European Union than these intellectuals did, although he was linguistically influenced by a misleading post-nationalist rhetoric. His federalist position marked one end of a continuum of attitudes toward this structural deficiency. Martin Callanan, who then spoke on behalf of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), took an intermediate position, arguing not for the abandonment of the Eurozone, but for its restructuring.

“It is a reality – and Members have referred to this, Mr Barroso referred to this – that some euro zone countries are less competitive than others. For them, the euro is acting like a straitjacket, preventing the currency devaluation that would give them time to put in place longer-term reforms. (...) The only way that the euro can be made to work with 17 members is if the people of Germany, the people of the Netherlands, the people of Finland, are prepared to transfer cash – not loans, cash – from their taxpayers’ pockets in order to bridge the competitiveness gap. (...) So surely the only other alternative is for some countries to leave the euro, to devalue their currencies and for us to support them as they find the right policies that will return them to sustainable public spending and growth in the long-term. The euro area needs to be restructured.” (The original language was English)

Callanan articulated the negative consequences of the Eurozone for the less competitive countries quite realistically. With the economic and monetary union, these countries lost protection against much more competitive countries in Europe. They gave away a large part of their sovereignty in economic terms through the Europeanisation of monetary policy. As a consequence of this, the Eurozone proved to be a “straitjacket” for their crisis management. The only way to compensate these disadvantages would be European solidarity, i.e. “if the people of Germany, the people of the Netherlands, the people of Finland, are prepared to transfer cash”. Callanan was sure, however, that these peoples were not ready for that. Therefore, he argued for a restructured Eurozone with part-time exits for countries in crisis. However, he said himself that the only way for the Eurozone to be sustainable was through European solidarity. This had to be an enduring solidarity of course. One-time solidarity was insufficient and would only postpone a real solution to the challenge of economic heterogeneity in Europe. His approach to a recovery through part-time exits raises two problems. It does not seem realistic that countries like Greece could in the near future reach a level of substantial competitiveness that would be unproblematic *within* the Eurozone, so that they could re-enter. Part-time exits, therefore, could lead to enduring exits and erode the Eurozone. A second problem was this. Should the Eurozone be restructured *repeatedly*,

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when problematic imbalances have built up? Callanan’s approach seems to postpone a clear answer to the challenge and engages in an inconsistent muddling through. Perhaps his approach could serve as an interim solution. However, Callanan does not show any impulse to move in the direction of enduring European solidarity and so convince the people of Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and other countries. Sustainable European solidarity implies a political communitisation, a European nation state. Callanan, on the contrary, made clear

“We need new leadership that respects our nation states as building blocks of democracy which should be supported and not undermined.”

He did not notice that it is contradictory to remain as separate nation states within a Eurozone that has already put everyone in the same boat economically. By the way, the first happy years of the Eurozone indirectly show the conditions for stability.³ There were, in fact, huge transfers from richer countries to poorer ones, which compensated for the disadvantages the less competitive countries suffered within the Eurozone. However, these transfers took the form of loans by private banks from the rich countries, not cash. That is why this system of transfers crashed in times of crisis.

The other end of the continuum was represented by Nigel Farage, who spoke on behalf of the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFD). He also stuck to the existing idea of nation states as building blocks of democracy like Callanan. However, his position was much more consistent in that regard. In his opening remarks, he made immediately clear what kind of model he had in mind for Europe.

“Mr President, I begin today on a happy note remembering that it is 20 years ago this very week since the United Kingdom, having been signed up by the Conservative Government to the Exchange Rate Mechanism, broke out of the ERM. It was a great liberation for us and, of course, once having been bitten we did not join the euro project, thank goodness. Sadly, the same is not true for much of the rest of Europe.” (The original language was English)

The ideal Europe according to Farage would resemble the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) that has been founded in 1960 as an alternative to the European Communities. Such a model would indeed avoid the contradictions of the hybrid structure the European Union suffers from today. It would of course waive many advantages of European integration as well.

A key consideration of Farage’s criticism of the EU was democratic legitimacy. Probably for the first time in European history, a right wing movement in Europe relied (and relies) on democratic values. This criticism is far from being solely rhetorical. It faces up to a real “democratic deficit” that left wing intellectuals criticise as well. This built up because the step of establishing economic and monetary union was still made in the elite mode of European integration, although it was in fact a preliminary decision about a far-reaching communitisation that under normal circumstances needed a constitutional process with a democratic vote within the member states. The European crisis since 2008 has made this visible and thereby drives a political polarisation that expresses a subsequent opinion formation within the citizenry. This polarisation goes along the poles of a jump towards Europe as fully-fledged political community and of turning back European integration. The wave of Eurosceptic parties all over Europe plays an important, dialectical role in this dynamic because it articulates the concerns of a considerable part of the population and

³ Cf. the analysis of Georg Vobruba (Vobruba 2014).
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forces pro-Europeanists to give up their traditional elite mode. The latter will have to argue within the public realm to win the emerging battle about the future of the European Union.

Arguments for and against a European nation state, for and against an EFTA like EU gain special attention in this process. Within the debate on the state of the union address of 2012, the pro-European majority referred constantly to the protection of European interests and values in a globalised world, where big players such as the USA, China, India and Russia pursue different paths in certain areas.

Concluding remarks

The analysis presented here concentrated on the hybrid structure of the European Union as the major root of ongoing existential crises in Europe, how this structure was interpreted in the parliamentary debate on the state of the union address of 2012 and what conclusions were drawn with regard to Europe’s future. The analysis showed that although the majority of participants of this debate followed the path of wanting “an ever closer union”, regarded “more Europe” as solution to European crises and wanted the European parliament to gain more power, only a small group of politicians seemed to be aware that without a “jump” towards a politically communitised “federal union” the era of existential European crises would not end. Even among this group, there is a considerable degree of confusion about the character of such a union. They set it against the nation state, which they treat as a thing of a particularistic past. They do not realise that the opposite is true. The fully-fledged nation state has to be regarded analytically in the first place as a structural model for organising a political community. It should not be confused with concrete nation states. It represents the model of organising a common living politically along universalistic standards of citizens’ self-determination, although the early stages of its history were characterised by nationalistic crimes. Because it is a structure model, it could be lifted to the European level together with its universalistic achievements. To denounce that perspective as “methodological nationalism” as Ulrich Beck and many others have, in fact weakens universalistic politics in Europe through intellectual confusion. It opens a space for “neo-liberal” politics that know very well how to use post-national arguments for economic interests to dissolve the political power of nation states and replace it with opaque “governance” that is easy to infiltrate.

Verhofstadt and Cohn-Bendit, after all, did not follow post-national intellectuals in every aspect. As a matter of fact, their aim remained that of a political *communitisation* of Europe as a federal union, whereas Jürgen Habermas, for instance, regards such a perspective as unrealistic as well as *undesirable* (Habermas 2012b).⁴ Post-nationalism intellectuals often also distance themselves from the community notion with regard to a polity and prefer the concept of a “society”. They normally regard a “political community” as a contra-factual nationalist ideology, which only imagines the anonymous state as a community following the example of communitised, harmonic face-to-face-relationships in social proximity (Anderson 1983). As far as I can see, this perspective became dominant in the social sciences. It received some plausibility, because prominent founding fathers of sociology such as Durkheim and Tönnies already tended towards analysing a modern polity as “society” and not as “community”, because they were among other things strongly influenced by contractual theorists in the French and British traditions. However, to regard a political community as only *imagined*, to see the history of modernization as a move from community to society, to conceptualise the notion of a community as bound to social proximity, as tradition-oriented and in contrast to autonomy, as harmonic in contrast to conflictual, are nevertheless clear analytical errors that express an overall theoretical illiteracy within the social sciences today with regard to the structure-logic of communities. This is fatal for

⁴ For him, a future European Union should not be a reminder of a nation state and should have a new, dual structure with the citizens and the member states as equal cornerstones of the polity.
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European studies in particular, because without an analytical understanding of this structure-logic it is difficult to adequately analyse the hybrid EU-institutions and the dynamics of crisis since 2008. Part of the problem is also a prevailing constructionist approach, which focuses on subjective perspectives in the first place instead of the structure of a practice. From this viewpoint, a community is regarded as rooted in subjective feelings and is hardly analysed as a matter of *practice* with specific structural properties. This approach also underlies the concept of “narratives”, which generalises a particular form of practice (“narrating”) as a general feature of human practice.

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