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Sociology of the European Union – edited by A. Favell and V. Guiraudon

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- This is a book review of: *Sociology of the European Union*, edited by A. Favell and V. Guiraudon (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, ISBN 9780230207127); xiv+266pp., £22.99 pb. This is the peer reviewed version which has been published in final form at http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2012.02259_2.x

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Sociology of the European Union, edited by Adrian Favell and Virginie Guiraudon (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, ISBN 9780230207127); xiv+266pp., £22.99 pb.

A Political Sociology of the European Union: reassessing constructivism, edited by Jay Rowell and Michel Mangelot (Manchester University Press, 2010, ISBN 9780719082436); xv+270pp., £65.00 hb.

At the March 2011 European Union Studies Association (EUSA) annual conference in Boston, M.A. (<http://www.eustudies.org/conference.php?cid=6>), the Favell and Guiraudon book under review here was hailed as thankfully as rain in a drought. Sociology, writes George Ross in his postscript, was 'arriving late at the European Studies ball' (p.215), and the volume tackles the thirst (as the contributors see it) in EU studies for a 'distinctive, new, empirical sociology' (p. 24). It takes the form of an edited, paperback contribution to Palgrave Macmillan's wide range of EU studies, adopts an approach intended to be interdisciplinary (p. 24), and explicitly declares itself as a 'manifesto' for doing a sociology of the European Union. In form, the book is somewhat shoe-horned into paperback norms, with the presence of boxed inserts of key concepts at the start of each chapter sitting rather superfluously with material that by and large is advanced in nature. Chapter styles fluctuate widely, and in places would have benefited from more rigorous editing, particularly since the book is indeed intended to speak to students. In substance, and following a general introduction, the book is divided into two parts (Social Foundations - the impact of Europeanization on 'everyday European citizens' lives and experiences', p.25; and Politics and Policies - 'how sociological tools might be operationalized to study more explicitly *political* integration', p. 125). Each of these halves begins with its own introductory summary, and in this sense, the book can be read as having pedagogical intent, since by marshalling its material under these broad headings, and by bringing so many leading scholars onto the pages, it is a valuable introduction to sociological 'data-driven' (p. 4) methodologies and theory applied to a wide range of specific fields of enquiry. Part One brings to a wider readership work seen before in other guises (Juan Díez Medrano on Social Class and Identity; Adrian Favell and Ettore Recchi on Social Mobility and Spatial Mobility'; Alberta Andreotti and Patrick le Galès on Elites, Middle Classes and Cities, and Neil Fligstein on 'Markets and Firms'); and in the second part of the book, the material inevitably, and usefully, overlaps with and complements the French scholarship that is the hallmark of the Rowell and Mangelot volume.

That volume is published in hardback by MUP, is also co-edited, and is a expansive distillation of the scholarship generated by the Strasbourg school ('the Strasbourg research centre on the EU (currently known as GSPE PRISME)', Favell and Guiraudon, p. 126); namely, the application of political sociology (itself a key dimension of French political science) to the study of the European Union. The book's contributors include authors from institutions beyond the Strasbourg laboratory itself, but all are based in French research teams (or French-speaking, in the case of Laurent Scheek from the Université Libre de Bruxelles). Roughly one third of the chapters draw on studies conducted initially on French research objects: Marine Lasalle on 'European' careers in subnational French administrations; Hélène Michel on the

construction of European interests based on the example of French property owners' associations; Andy Smith on Protected Geographical Indications for food. In contrast, the majority of the chapters start from analyses of specifically EU-level 'fields', 'problems' and 'instruments' (each of these objects organising one of the three parts to the book): Didier Georgakakis and Marine de Lassalle on EU civil servants; Michel Mangenot on the EU's Council Secretariat; Christele Marchand and Antoine Vauchez on the 'sociology of litigants pleading before the European Court of Justice' (p.68); Laurent Scheek on fundamental rights; Willy Beauvallet on the European Parliament and 'the politicisation of the European space' (p. 164); intergovernmental benchmarking by Isabelle Bruno; 'the instrumentalisation of 'European opinion' by Philippe Aldrin; Romuald Normand on 'expert measurement in the government of lifelong learning'; and Jay Rowell, finally, on 'the instrumentation of European disability policy'. Every single contribution is rich in detail and succinct in its conclusions, and, vitally, highly readable, thanks to having been held to a clear template by the editors.

In a certain light, both volumes under review here read as Bourdieu-schripts, which is to be expected, and are none the worse for that. Both have flaws that are virtually inevitable when dealing with material that is edited and, in the Rowell and Mangenot book, translated in many cases from French to English, although only the lack of gender-aware language in some chapters of the latter really jars in any way. Indeed, of the two books under review here, it is Rowell and Mangenot's which offers the more accessible read, and which provides the more coherent account of how we might think of the EU as a collection of socially-constructed objects. It offers the most original empirical material in support of its arguments, and it is the more consistently and effectively edited. Yet it is also the more ferocious of the two volumes in its (self-declared) battle for turf, not only amongst 'EU constructivists' (xv), but within 'existing approaches to the EU' in general, to which 'both the individual chapters (...) and the book as a whole, constitute a sustained and systematic challenge' (*ibid.*). The political sociology of the EU, we can logically conclude, is being pioneered by our colleagues from the Strasbourg stable, and it is a good thing that these two publications have brought the work to the attention of the wider readership that two English-language texts can offer. Its legitimacy thus established, its proponents might consider taking a breather from the battle for disciplinary *lebensraum*, and joining Favell and Guiraudon in promoting the benefits of the equally challenging adventure of forging a truly interdisciplinary sociology of (the) European Union.