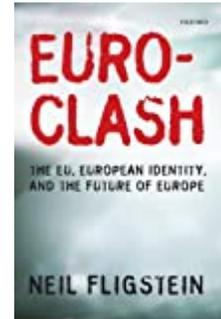




Neil Fligstein. *Euroclash: The EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 279 S. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-954256-7.



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N. Fligstein: Euroclash

Neil Fligstein's *Euroclash* is a thoroughly researched, empirically exhaustive new addition to the ever expanding body of literature on European integration. The book is the culmination of an inquisitive 15 year case study that stemmed from a curiosity about the need for, and creation of, the European single market. The evidence of the European Union's economic success seems obvious. Millions of individuals and thousands of firms have been brought into the fold thanks to increased trade and dissolving barriers, so much so that the European Union is now the world's single largest trading zone. Given its functional single market, scholars have begun to probe why the European Union has not produced an attendant demand for increased political integration. The stock political science answer to this question is that most of the European project turns on what is happening in Brussels. For Neil Fligstein, an American sociologist and professor at Berkeley, Brussels is but the tip of the iceberg. It is the individuals, the voters, who are the most important determinants of the European project. With this in mind, he engages a question few have dared pose: why, given the lateralization and homogenization of the European economy, has a pan European identity not emerged?

The answer, like all things related to the European Union, is multifaceted and complex. Drawing on a wide array of data, he suggests that part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that the European Union is a class based project. Now to students of the European Union, this fact is hardly surprising. After all the European Union has always been one of elites in which none of its enlargements, with its varying degrees of widening and deepening, have been prompted by any popular mobilization. In fact it has been quite the opposite; decisions have come largely from the top. That is to say, they have come from political elites, initially in France and Germany, and then with the cooperation of the Benelux countries. Further to that, there is broad consensus that the institutions of the European Union suffer from a tremendous democratic deficit. So the question of a European identity has been largely irrelevant, it simply was not a part of the development process.

Fligstein's *Euroclash* is an attempt to analyze the extent and degree to which the European economic and political integration project has changed and shaped Europe. Understanding the above is but a prelude to the

much larger task he sets out for himself; that of determining how interactions between individuals throughout Europe have changed over time in order to create the foundations of a European society. If, as Fligstein proposes, the European Union is a class based project, it stands to reason that there are winners and losers, each vying for different outcomes in the political arena. The title of the book says it all: Euroclash is the sum of these differences and how they are playing out in contemporary political debates and shaping the future of the European Union.

In its first few chapters the book presents a chronology of how the European Union promoted economic integration, with examples of how this has happened across the European economy, and more specifically across three industries; those of defense, telecommunications, and football. Concluding that several industries have in fact Europeanized and reorganized themselves on a European wide basis. It is worth noting that for Fligstein Europeanization is defined in strictly economic terms, in which new forms of transnational integration are advanced in order to produce economically beneficial outcomes. His findings, however, suggest that although industries and firms have reconfigured to become more European, many retain their national orientation and character.

As European economic, social and political fields have developed so too have the routine interactions of individuals from different societies. It is these new spaces of social interaction that open the possibility for the emergence of a European identity. It is to this question that the book turns to in the second half. Having clearly stated at the outset his position that the European Union is indeed a social class project, Neil Fligstein seeks to link the absence of a pan European identity to the class structure of European society, marked as it is by income, class, and educational disparities. To do so he engages a notoriously unreliable survey method (largely discredited by scholars of the European Union) known as Eurobarometer; a biannual survey conducted to gauge public opinion on matters relating to the European Union. For this reader, the failure to engage any other census data outside of Eurobarometer is one of the greatest weaknesses of this book. The datasets do, however, support the main argument that it is overwhelmingly the beneficiaries of the European project (upper middle income, educated, professionals and young people), who identify with a European identity. Conversely, those who have not been direct recipients of the advantages of European integra-

tion (lower middle income, less educated, blue collar individuals) are the least likely to identify themselves as European, and therefore the most likely to default to the protection and security of the nation state. Somewhere in the middle lie a majority of individuals who fall under the category of circumstantial Europeans. This group tends towards national identity in the first, favouring a European identity on particular issues or in rare circumstances. It is possible to conclude from this that the future of the European project depends to a large extent on the degree to which the circumstantial Europeans can be persuaded to embrace the notion of a common European community. It is these individuals who are being integrated into the aforesaid new fields of social interaction, those of travel, business, language, schooling, and the like. Yet the implication that these new social fields are distinctly European is problematic.

On the question of language, Fligstein suggests the proliferation of English across Europe is but another example of this process of Europeanization. Given that English is the language of global capitalism, of global academe, and of the United States, it is not clear why English suggests a deepening European identity, rather than a more global one. Notably there is a convergence of education systems within Europe, evidenced by the Bologna process, but he fails to mention that they are in fact converging on the American model. In concluding the chapter, he suggests that business, education, and the media are all converging on a European model, but nothing about these trends suggests anything distinctively European. Instead what is novel about these observations is that they reveal the great irony of Europeanization; that Europe, in its efforts to become more European, has in the process become more global.

A welcome addition to literature on the European Union, Fligstein offers up a fresh perspective to a field so often bogged down by politically saturated state centric analyses that blur the individual from sight. A new methodological approach that links economic integration to the pitfalls of the European Union is timely given capitalism's current plight. Whether or not it will be read as such is of another matter altogether. That being so, it is highly recommended to those studying the European Union, whether as economists, political scientists, historians or interdisciplinary studies, this book is sure to spark controversy, or at the very least a debate. For at the heart of the story is an uncomfortable question as to what and for whom the European project is for.

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