
Original Article

Multiple Europes, multiple modernities: Conceptualising the plurality of Europe

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Abstract The question of a plurality of ‘Europes’ raises new questions about the nature of unity and diversity. The argument given in the article is that the problem of unity cannot be jettisoned in favour of diversity, but needs to be conceptualised in a way that includes plurality; accordingly a proposal is made for a theory of modernity that integrates both unity and diversity, which it is argued offers a more useful approach than identity or culture based ones; finally, a brief sketch is provided of this framework with respect to the twentieth century and rival projects of modernity that were a feature of the age. While many examples can be found in the long perspective of European history, the twentieth century was particularly important in shaping the present diversity of Europe and therefore merits special attention.

Comparative European Politics (2016) **14**, 398–416. doi:10.1057/cep.2015.33;
published online 16 May 2016

Keywords: Modernity; unity; diversity; fascism; communism; liberal democracy

A challenge for research and study on Europe is that unlike nations the idea of Europe is not self-defining in terms of its basic geopolitical and cultural forms. While all notions of political community are today contested, this is much more the case as far as Europe is concerned. Until recently such considerations of the nature of Europe’s political or cultural identity were not important. Over the past two decades or so the increased concern with Europe as a political reality has led inevitably to questions about the nature of that reality in relation to its constituent elements, nation-states, regions, cities. For a time it appeared that the institutional framework of the European Union (EU) offered an account of the nature Europe as an emergent reality. However, it has in the meanwhile become increasingly apparent that Europe is not reducible to the EU any more than it can be explained as the sum of its national units. In short, Europe is a reality, but what kind of reality is it?

One way to attempt to answer this question as to the reality of Europe is to see it in terms of unity and diversity. The notion of a ‘unity in diversity’ to an extent has itself become part of the official identity of Europe, as in the mottos of the EU and the



Council of Europe. However, such a notion obscures as much as it clarifies and, as argued in this article, it needs to be conceptually unpacked in an analysis that identifies both the diversifying elements and the unifying ones. The conventional approach was to see unity as something that transcends diversity, with the EU as constituting a level of unity above the national and regional diversity of Europe. Very often such notions of unity, as in the 1973 Declaration of European Identity, were seen as pre-existing but given a political form with the arrival of the EU. While there is no doubt that the EU has brought about a degree of homogenisation in certain areas, it has not overcome the diversity of Europe, a diversity that operates on different levels and which is not reducible to national plurality. The emphasis has moved increasingly in the direction of a view of the EU as governing a complex and multi-levelled polity rather than forging unity (see Wiener and Diez, 2009; Favell and Guiraudon, 2011). It is also evident that there are different and contested interpretations of the meaning of Europe, but demonstrating contestation does not exhaust all possible meanings of the object. It is presumably the purpose of the special issue of this journal to explore such pluralities and interpretations. The question this article seeks to answer is how to conceptualise the unity and diversity of Europe. This is in part a question of how structure and agency should be reconciled, since it is unity that is emblematic of structure and diversity arising from the effects of agency.

The general trend in recent times is towards a certain scepticism of unity in favour of diversity, as reflected in the slogan 'unity in diversity', which has become the semi-official motto of the EU, having originally derived from the Council of Europe (Sassatelli, 2009). Europeanisation is often conceptualised as producing differences as much as integration and rather than a singular conception of Europe there are multiple trajectories (Strath, 2000; Blokker, 2010; Biebuyck and Rumford, 2012). The argument of this article is that the specificity of Europe cannot entirely do without the equivalent of the concept of unity in order to make sense of diversity. Rejecting unity in favour of diversity does not solve the problem, since the notion of diversity requires a notion of wider context. To solve this problem the following proposition can be made: unity and diversity are constitutive elements of a singular process. Unity is co-terminus with diversity and, conceived of in terms of a developmental historical process, it makes possible diversity. Diversity may be logically before unity where the latter establishes an integrative framework uniting disparate elements, but diversity also requires a more basic matrix to define its elements. Both terms make sense only in relation to a constitutive structure. In this view, then, the idea of Europe refers to a constitutive process of structuration that produces unifying trends – that is societal structures and cultural models – as well as variations of those trends. These variations make possible diversity. Europe is constructed in a historical process in which commonality is produced through ongoing variation. So the question then is what is this structure, which has both diversifying and unifying elements?

The proposal made in this article is that such questions need to be placed in a broader theoretical framework, which it is argued is that of modernity. Current attempts to conceptualise the nature of Europe suffer from a lack of theoretical sophistication in that they are insufficiently distanced from the discourses that Europe produces about itself. The article accordingly begins with a critical discussion of current theorising, second, presents a proposal for a theory of modernity that integrates both unity and diversity, third, offers a brief sketch of this framework with respect to the twentieth century. While many examples can be found in the long perspective of European history, the twentieth century was particularly important in shaping the present diversity of Europe and therefore merits special attention. For this reason the article will not consider the civilisational diversity of Europe, nor the diversity that comes from its historical regions.¹

Problems in Theorising the Plurality of Europe

Recent developments in historical scholarship and social science on Europe have stressed the historical variability of Europe as contextualised in time and place. There is a striking departure from the older assumptions about the cultural foundations of Europe as self-defining Grand Narratives and the taken for granted assumptions about the geographical limits of Europe. The new approaches have been enormously influenced by developments in social and cultural theory, which have introduced a certain relativism into accounts of European identity and have generally invited scepticism of the possibility of any kind of an objective interpretation of a European order of values or a foundation for the construction of political community. An unresolved issue in many of these approaches is whether the aim is a corrective of the older Grand Narratives or a rejection of the possibility of an alternative account of European modernity. The position taken in this article is that such approaches are best seen as correctives rather than providing the ground for fundamentally new paradigms. Four main positions can be identified and for simplicity termed: global, constructivist, pluralist and hybridisation approaches. Terming these approaches may be too strong, for they are often not fully developed approaches, but themes that are often implicit in theorising Europe. All four are essential components of an account of the shape of Europe, but need to be placed within a broader framework. The following is a necessarily brief sketch of the main tenets of these positions.

One of the most decisive moves away from the older Eurcentric approaches that characterised Europe as relatively isolated from the rest of the world has been the global historical turn in international relations and in historical scholarship more generally. In an expanding area of scholarship, influenced in part by post-colonial theory, there are many studies that place Europe in the context of a more globally connected world. The emphasis on global connections in the analysis of major historical periods and episodes, including the formation of the EU, is one of the main



alternatives to the older endogenous accounts of the rise of Europe. The older approaches tended to see the global context as secondary or unimportant. The importance of the external context is now increasingly seen as an essential part of the explanation of the formation of modern Europe (see Bayly, 2004; Frank, 1998; Hobson, 2004; Hunt, 2010; Pomeranz, 2000). Contextualising Europe in a global context rather than, as is the mainstream tendency, to see Europe as emerging out of the internal relations between the nations of Europe represents a major departure from the older Eurocentric accounts. This is due in no small measure to the signal work of global historians, such as Braudel ([1987] 1990), McNeill (1963, 1974), Hodgson (1993) and comparative historical sociologists such as Eisenstadt (2003) who laid the foundations for much of contemporary scholarship on global linkages and effectively brought an end to the older Eurocentric accounts of world history in which Europe, always narrowly defined, could somehow explain itself. So Europe is not simply self-generating, but shaped in a process of interaction with other parts of the world. For instance, Europe's colonial history has been much neglected in accounts of the rise of Europe and has barely figured in accounts of the emergence of the European integration. The result is that Europe must be seen as a product of cross-cultural fertilisation, encounters, dialogue and mediation rather than as self-contained and impermeable. It may also be seen in terms of a relation of alterity. It has often been noted that the idea of Europe has been linked to perceptions of an external enemy or non-European other that offered a reference point for European self-identity.

The globalist perspective suggests the importance of a relational approach, which is the theoretical assumption, though not always evident, underlying the global turn in historical analysis. However, the globalist approach, to characterise it as such, effectively only offers a corrective to the internalist approaches. Drawing attention to the external context in the shaping of Europe does not remove the need to offer endogenous accounts, as not everything can be explained by the interaction with the external context, which varied from being an influence, a formative factor and a consequence that had later ramifications (and thus not a cause of what had previously occurred). Any attempt to situate a given phenomenon in a global context does not exhaust the need to account for internal processes of formation. For instance, colonial relations had a differential impact on Europe and do not explain all dimensions of European consciousness or history. In sum, the globalist approach corrects, but does not replace internalist accounts with a much needed externalist perspective on European formation.

Since the cultural turn in the social sciences, constructivist approaches have become influential in interpretations of the making of contemporary Europe. This was already signalled in Said's work and is much influenced by the pioneering work of Foucault and has led to the view that Europe is a historically variable discourse, such as the above mentioned argument that European self-identity is based on discourse that was shaped by reference to an external Other. It is often claimed that Europe is invented and has no objectivity other than in the discourses that construct it. There are thus in this view as many 'Europes' as there are discourses about it.



The constructivist approach has led to a strong emphasis on multiplicity over the older assumption of a continuous narrative of progressive unity. As with the globalist perspective, it has the merit of de-naturalising the received view of Europe as manifest in objective structures and somehow given. Such a perspective has the merit of drawing attention to the process by which Europe became a reality in terms of politics and culture. Constructivist approaches seek to show how discourses were constituted and underwent change. This is where sociology meets history, for the sociological aim is in part to account for the formation of entities that appear to have a natural form and to demonstrate the connections that link the social actors with history and with the wider global context (see, for example, Sewell, 2005). However, beyond that de-naturalising function constructivist approaches are limited to accounts of the formation and transformation of structures of consciousness.

Such approaches are also not able to offer significant insight into the formation of societal structures or major transformations in the relation between state, economy and society. To say something is invented is only to recognise its constructed nature and that it was constituted in a formative process by social practices, as opposed to being natural. The problem with this is that it can lead to the view that identities should be perceived by social actors as constructed. This is to conflate an explanatory category – constructionism – with an empirical category. Social actors may still view their identities as essentialist, that is as natural, and thus produce effects that create reality. The objectivity of such realities can easily escape constructionist approaches unless complemented by a deeper macro analysis of long-term societal trends and the formation of cultural structures. In other words, discourses and other such notions of social constructions produce structure – that is reality – forming effects. Constructionism alone does not adequately demonstrate how a structure is formed. Without such a perspective on structure formation, it is impossible to make sense of the formation of a historical pattern or a heritage that takes shape over the course of centuries. This is where a perspective on ‘unity’ as opposed to ‘diversity’ becomes important.

The third approach concerns multiplicity and brings in an important added dimension on the geopolitical and cultural diversity of Europe as not having one historical or political form but many. This can be viewed in terms of major historical divisions, between, for instance, Eastern and Western Europe or Northern and Southern Europe, or differences between major historical regions, or Old versus New Europe, debtor versus creditor nations and so on. Rather than see Europe as a single actor, such as the West, or coeval with the EU, it is a more plural entity characterised by difference, contingent outcomes of social practices and overlapping forms. Most histories of Europe do not see Europe as a homogenous entity and not much more than the total of its constituent national components, which of course have rarely remained constant in history. The emphasis on multiplicity is frequently an outcome of a more broadly discourse approach to Europe and based on the insight that there is no centre that organises the reality in question. Biebyck and Rumford (2012, p. 5) argue: ‘As a multiplicity we are drawn to the fact that Europe lacks an essence or



centre, but is defined by the lines of flight it takes, and ways these lines of flight are relationally defined'. They are correct in arguing (Biebyck and Rumford, 2012, p. 16) that the recognition of the multiplicity of Europe is the starting point for an understanding of the diversity of Europe and that it is not the proliferation of such forms that requires investigation than the dynamics. This is already to go beyond much of the current discussion, but a good deal more needs to be said on what kind of 'historical ontology' is at stake. Any account that considers only the fact of numerical difference ultimately fails to account for the phenomenon that exists in multiple and entangled forms, since it is a truism that different regions, countries and so on are different from each other. The argument for multiplicity, 'multiple Europes', is essentially an argument for variation and thus needs to be deepened with a perspective on what variation produces, how it is produced and how such variation is produced. Such an account will have to pay attention to the ways in which social actors generate structures, which have recursive effects in shaping the choices social actors make and opening up developmental possibilities and societal innovation.

A fourth theme, which is less developed in the current literature, but of some importance concerns hybridity. In this view, often found in post-colonial interpretations, Europe is composed neither of a singular nor of multiple forms, but of interacting and overlapping ones. This entails a different perspective of Europe's diversity as dynamic and the source of ever-changing forms. A hybrid Europe is thus composed less of separate entities than mixed and open forms. In this view borders and identities are not fixed or discrete units that could then be basis of an internally differentiated Europe. A perspective on hybridity has the advantage of avoiding the unity versus diversity problematic in that it transcends such distinctions. However, as with all such constructions it is not without difficulties. The main problem with the notion of hybridity is that it makes sense only where there is consciousness of hybridity, for all societies and cultures are hybrid in that they were formed out of the interaction of different groups over time. Thus to say that a given society is hybrid is only to recognise the diversity of factors that shaped it. Once a society has ceased to recognise its own hybridity, its hybridity has effectively been eroded in the construction of a new consciousness that typically affirms difference. So the question whether there is more or less hybridity is ultimately a question as to consciousness of hybridity. In general, consciousness of hybridity has not been a feature of how Europeans have identified with Europe or been a basis for ideas of Europe. However, any account of European history will have to take into account the hyphenated nature of much of the European heritage, such as the interacting influences of the different Christian traditions, Islam and Judaism.

The upshot of this is not enough to identify different Europes without showing how they are linked and how the linkages produce structure forming effects in terms enduring social and cultural forms. For similar reasons, as argued above, an exclusive preoccupation with the global context is inadequate if it is not accompanied with an account of the internal formation of the object under investigation. Structure



formation is the other half of the process of the making of history. Structure is a form that is produced by social practices and while being constantly re-worked by social actors, it gives shape to social life. For reasons of space a detailed exploration of structure is not possible here.² It will suffice to state that structure is not simply a form that constrains action, but is in part produced by social practices and by developmental logics that have recursive effects in opening up spaces of action. The new directions – with their emphasis on global connections, discourses, multiplicity – lack a clear grasp of how a social and cultural structure is formed. The result is a relativisation of Europe to a point that the objective reality disappears into a world of contingencies or is explained away by process and discourse. The theoretical proposal in this article is to place structure at the forefront in the analysis of Europe's unity and diversity, as it is structures that produce outcomes that have both diversifying and unifying consequences. How can such structures be understood? This is where a theory of modernity is relevant. The conception of modernity offered here is one that stresses both the productive capacities of social actors to produce effects that embody structures and the structuring resources that cognitive ideas play in shaping social imaginaries.

Modernity and the Multiple Forms of Europe

Modernity is a condition that involves the pursuit and realisation of ideas, which can be regulative ideas, such as freedom, equality and autonomy. But modernity is not simply an order of ideas, since such ideas are embodied in societal forms. The specific forms of modernity are shaped in particular by the relationship between capitalism/market society, state formation and civil society (that is, organised social interests, the public, social and political movements). There is also not simply one transformative idea, as Wagner (2012) claims, such as autonomy, or freedom as Honneth (2011) argues but many, and it is often the combination of these ideas that make possible the specific form of a particular variant of modernity (for example, the liberal, socialist, republican variants of political modernity were products of different appropriations of the ideas of freedom, equality, autonomy, self-government, individualism, social justice). These are part of what I call the cultural model of society and take the form of what Taylor has termed a 'social imaginary', namely a future-oriented projection of the possibilities within the present (see Taylor, 2004). Modernity is thus marked by the belief that human agency can transform the world in the image of a possible future. A feature of modernity is that these ideas are in tension with the social order since, the existing societal model resists modernity or because they are incompletely realised in practice, leading to the view that modern society is fragmented, a theme central to social thought from Rousseau to Hegel and the classical sociologists. In this vein, as many contemporary theorists – most notably, Arnason, Castoriadis, Habermas, Touraine, Honneth and Wagner – have argued there



is a central conflict at the heart of modernity, between communicative rationality and instrumental rationality, between democracy and capitalism, between autonomy and power, different orders of recognition and so on. This dual face of modernity gives to modern societies a dynamism and a creative force, as modern societies try to resolve or overcome the contradiction between the ideas of modernity and the concrete form modern society takes.

It should not be concluded from this that the notion of modernity means that everything is entirely open, for modern societies have created structural forms. The various forms modernity have taken are determined by the relationship between capitalism, the state and civil society. Such structural configurations reflect the interpretation of the transformative ideas associated with modernity. The idea of Europe is itself one of these transformative ideas, and the way its realisation is pursued depends on the selection and combination of such ideas (for example, freedom, equality, solidarity, social justice) with it. It is this process of selection and combination that separates liberals, republican, conservatives and socialists. For this reason, modernity cannot simply be reduced to one basic orientation, but has a tendency towards plurality.

This approach to modernity recognises the plurality of historical forms, often referred to, following Eisenstadt (2000, 2003) as ‘multiple modernities’ but better considered, following Wagner (2012), as ‘varieties of modernity’, and that modernity is not necessarily European, but exists in numerous world settings.³ Moreover, modernity is not an historically path dependent order, but is historically contingent and variable, since, first, the ideas of modernity, that is the cultural model, can be differently interpreted and, second, will be realised in different institutional ways. However, the varieties of modernity approach is insufficient, as what needs to be accounted for in specific instances is the formation of enduring structures. These structures are produced by societal models and by the cultural models of societies in particular times and places. They are given form from specific selections and combinations of ideas.

Modernity is the constitutive matrix that gave to Europe a direction and meaning. A feature of modernity is the accelerated momentum of global connections and flows of ideas, a movement that is multi-directional. So, for instance, as Bayly (2004, p. 471) has pointed out, the language of rights was variously appropriated throughout the world in the revolutionary period from the end of the eighteenth century (see also Hunt, 2010). This illustrates the tendency that once something has been invented it does not simply go away, but remains as a resource and is taken up in different ways. The history of modern societies is thus characterised, for instance, by the tendency towards the amplification of democracy and its metamorphosis. Once the seeds of democracy were set they had often startling results that were never fully domesticated. The argument then is that European modernity unfolded around a specific societal model, the chief characteristic of which was that neither the state nor capitalism entirely dominated society since both had to be balanced and accommodate claim-making from civil society. So a particular model of modernity developed in Europe in which the ideas of modernity influenced the shape of society in a very

specific way. A key aspect of the shape of European modernity was the prevalence of a strong politics of solidarity emanating from class struggle and a relation between state and capitalism that set limits to the capacity of either to dominate entirely the social order. Europe as a result became neither entirely ruled by capital nor by a hegemonic state. Europe modernity unfolded over the centuries through contestation over its societal model and was marked by various crises; it was also realised at different speeds and with national and regional variations.

The social theory of modernity offers the most promising way to make sense of Europe. It provides an approach capable of contextualising the idea of Europe along with other discourses of Europe in institutional processes as well as generative and transformative ones and thus avoids the limits of purely constructionist approaches, which tend to see everything only in terms of discourses. It is also a way to make sense of long-term historical processes, which from the perspective of a theory of modernity can be seen as a variable configuration of state, capitalism and civil society relations. In these configurations, which define the societal model, the influence of civilisational legacies are also to be found shaping the specific form of society at a particular juncture. An additional advantage of this approach is that it builds into the very understanding of modernity an interpretative and reflexive dimension: modern society understands itself to be modern and, as part of this self-understanding, the normative consciousness of modernity – that is its cultural model – is built into the structure of society and its publics. This is why modernity is accompanied by a self-transformative condition for it involves the constant questioning of the world and the pursuit of different visions of how the social world should be organised. However, in departure from purely interpretative accounts of modernity, I am arguing for greater attention to the developmental dynamics arising from specific societal forms and also from the reflexive appropriation of cognitive ideas, such as those of freedom, autonomy, equality, justice and so on. This can be seen as the basis of a European model of reflexivity, as reflected in theorising about Europe as an object of consciousness and political possibility. Finally, the approach offers a way to understand the specificity of Europe from a global perspective as one version of the wider condition of modernity as a world historical region. A comparison of world historical regions and their forms of modernity can tell us more about the nature of European modernity than what can be discovered from an analysis confined to Europe (Therborn, 2002; Wagner, 2011).

Finally, and all too briefly, a few remarks need to be made about the processes and mechanisms that make modernity such a dynamic and transformative force and give rise to its pluralising tendencies. The diverse societal forms and cultural models of modern societies can be seen as the product of three processes: generative processes, transformative processes and institutional processes.⁴ All three are produced by the actions of social actors. Generative processes involve the creation of new ideas, or new claim-making, which cannot be accommodated within the given order. Such processes are associated with social movements who are generally the initiators of social change. Transformative processes follow from the selection of the variety



generated and occur typically when a dominant social movement brings about major societal change through the mobilisation of large segments of the population and the transformation of the political system.⁵ Transformative processes occur when a dominant social movement brings about a major societal change through the mobilisation of large segments of the population and the transformation of the political system. Institutionalising processes occur when a social movement succeeds in institutionalising its project in a new societal framework, for example, in the establishment of a new state or in new legislation and brings about the re-organisation of state and society.

The specific forms that modernity takes follow from the logic of such processes. To speak of a European modernity is to refer to the dominant form that modernity took in Europe, taking into account variations of that form. In this sense, then, modernity provides the basic structure of unity for Europe, both at the level of general ideas that have been the basis of its cultural model and the basic societal shape of European societies. Viewed as a world region, Europe can be seen as an embodiment of a particular model of modernity, which however internally differentiated differs from the path that modernity took in other parts of the world. However, this does not mean that the formation of modernity was uniform or uncontested: the twentieth century, as will be argued in more detail below, witnessed major struggles between rival forms of modernity and in the preceding two centuries there were significant variations in European responses to modernity, as the history of modern ideology illustrates. What has remained relatively constant are the reference points – the ideas of modernity – but which are differently interpreted. While these are variously emphasised in social and political theory as autonomy (Wagner, 2012) or freedom, (Honneth, 2011) or justice (Forst, 2002), modernity entails not just one cognitive idea but several. These ideas themselves undergo change and re-configuration as well as different combinations emerging. Thus the idea of Europe was once associated with the idea of freedom, while in later times a shift occurred whereby it became associated with the idea of rights and justice. As argued, the underlying societal model of modern Europe was formed around the ideas of solidarity and social justice, as reflected in the history of social struggles over rights, conflicts between democracy and capitalism, and in modern times with the institutionalisation of social citizenship.

The notion of multiple modernity can now be seen as a framework in which to consider the problem of unity and diversity: modernity is a singular condition while taking multiple forms. In other words, modernity entails the pursuit of regulative ideas, such as freedom, but always results in different societal outcomes. The thesis proposed here is that in Europe a dominant societal form did emerge and came to be predominant over competing ones. If this is correct, then, it can be argued that there is a basic structure of unity to the diversity of modern Europe. While this is possibly more discernible from a global comparative perspective, it can also be demonstrated by looking at the history of modern Europe, in particular in the previous century.



The Clash of Rival Projects of Modernity

The idea of modernity is generally identified with an emancipatory project or an imaginary designed to radically reform the present in light of a new vision of future possibilities. This view, as argued, has more recently become the basis of a new interest in multiple modernity and a departure from a dominant western understanding of modernity. The result is a neglect of the existence within Europe of radically divergent projects of modernity, the conflict between which was important in the shaping of the formation of European modernity. The fact that some of these have disappeared does not detract from their importance in shaping the history of modern Europe and they have all left an indelible mark on European societies. There were essentially four such programmatic models of modernity experimented between 1918 and 1989: state socialism or communism, fascism, liberal democracy and European transnational governance.⁶ Of these the first two failed, at least in Europe, and the second two succeeded with varying degrees of success. All four were products of Europe and to varying degrees appealed to the idea of Europe for legitimation; they were also quintessentially products of political modernity in so far as they articulated a social imaginary for the creation of political community on new foundations and the reconfiguration of the relationship between the individual, the state and society. For these reasons, they are best seen as projects of modernity rather than simply political programmes or ideologies or products of specific national traditions.

Throughout the nineteenth century the ideas of the French Revolution greatly influenced European political modernity in all its expressions, from liberalism to nationalism and socialism. This was an age when the political ideologies of the nineteenth century crystallised into potent political programmes with different and incompatible emancipatory agendas. But by the end of the nineteenth century new ideas of modernity gained currency, challenging the legacy of 1789. By the end of the First World War the project of the realisation of human autonomy and freedom was open to entirely new definitions. Fascism and communism were the two most potent and far-reaching experiments in re-shaping the contours of modernity in ways that challenged the presuppositions of the dominant trends.

It would be tempting but misleading to term the new developments as anti-modern or simply as anti-western when what they opposed was simply one version of modernity in the name of new ones. The early twentieth century saw the birth of new projects of modernity in so far as they involved the articulation of diverse social imaginaries about how the social world should be organised and how human emancipation could be achieved. They had both a generative and transformative effect on the age in that they opened up new perspectives as well as new institutional realities, which were in turn variously taken up by social, cultural and political movements in the early decades of the twentieth century. These new ways of seeing world in time became the basis of new societal systems, as well as the inspiration of many abortive attempts at social reconstruction. For reasons of space they can only



be briefly characterised in order to illustrate the models of modernity contained within them and to indicate how these formed the basis of different conceptions of the future of Europe.

After the end of the First World War there were two competing social imaginaries for the reconstruction of Europe in the aftermath of the collapse of the European empires. One was the Marxist Leninist project; the other was Western Liberal Democracy. The defeat of the Prussian, Austrian Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires, along with the weakening of the British and French overseas empires, was a turning point in European and world history. The Bolsheviks, especially Trotsky saw it as the opportunity to create a new modernity according to the principles outlined by Marx and Engels in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. The outcome was the creation of the USSR and the eventual extension of its area of influence to the countries of the Warsaw Pact in the aftermath of the Second World War. The Soviet Union was the most radical experiment with modernity as a feat of human agency. State socialism was not only a political system, but a project of modernity, which may have been an experiment that failed, but was nonetheless an experiment with the making of a new kind of social and political order that sought its legitimation not in the French Revolution, but in the ideas of the Russian Revolution of 1917 (see Arnason, 1993, 2000).

According to Ferher *et al* (1983), the Soviet system, with its command economy, was the carrier of a modernising trend. The planned economy, rapid industrialisation and the authoritarian state was not only the basis of a new political system, but a model of modernity that eventually led to the bifurcation of Europe for much of the twentieth century. This was a self-proclaimed universalism based on growth driven by the two forces of maximisation and control (see also Feher, 1987, p. 13). Without the social imaginary of communism such a project would not have been possible since it was necessary to create an ideological blueprint and a project of emancipation in order to conceive of the possibility of an alternative society. As Furet (1999, p. 63) has commented, '[W]hat was so spellbinding about the October Revolution was the affirmation of the role of volition in history and of man's invention of himself – the quintessential image of the autonomy of the democratic individual'. This vision crystallised in the Soviet Union's pursuit of education and science as a means of transmitting its vision of modernity to its citizens. Despite its authoritarianism, it was another facet of the Enlightenment project of enlisting knowledge for social advancement. The Marxist Leninist project originated in western Europe in terms of the genesis of its ideas, but it was implemented in Russia under very different circumstances in a society that had emerged out of serfdom in the second half of the nineteenth century; it was also potentially, as propounded by Leon Trotsky, a universal movement of 'permanent revolution', probably with greater appeal in the colonies of Europe and in Asia than in the West. It did not see itself as a specifically European movement, since its aims were universalistic, though for a time the notion of a republican United States of Europe was voiced by the Bolsheviks and had the



support of Trotsky (Anderson, 2009, p. 483). However in the end it settled for the Stalinist model of ‘socialism in one country’.

In the case of communism, the Chinese route since 1949 was the other major one and a reminder of the potential for communism to adapt and endure to become what is still the main alternative to the western liberal democracy. The example of China shows that there was no inherent reason for the Soviet System to fail. Lack of flexibility and adaptability to a non-Western context was a factor, but above all it was its incapacity to see through reforms that proved fatal. In the terms of a conception of modernity, it failed because it did not succeed in securing a workable balance between autonomy and power; in the end it eroded the conditions of the possibility of modernity.

Fascism is often considered as much a project launched against modernity than a movement of modernity. However, as with communism, to regard it as anti-modern would be to neglect its modernising dimensions – however reactionary – and some of its core tenets, which proclaimed the creation of a new kind of human being and the assertion of the autonomy of the nation overall else (see Herf, 1986; Roseman, 2011). It was driven by a peculiar modernist aesthetic that proclaimed new transcendent values that would be realised through violent rebirth and revolution (Griffin, 2009). It was closely linked with Futurism, which glorified modernity as a regenerative force. Gentile (2003, p. 61) has shown that fascist modernism sought to realise a new synthesis between tradition and modernity without renouncing the goals of the nation. Riley (2010) has argued that fascism was a form of ‘authoritarian democracy’ and was a product of civil society associationism, which did not, contrary to de Tocqueville, always block despotism, but facilitated it by providing it with a means of anchoring itself in local sources of power. Fascism drew from revolutionary movements and, according to Hobsbawm (1994, p. 127), owed its support to people who were attracted to its anti-capitalist and anti-oligarchic edge. Its modernity was a different one from that of Enlightenment liberalism. The sources on which it drew, which varied from political romanticism to nationalism, were all products of modernity, however much transfigured they became in the fascist imagination, which did not have the same project of emancipation that communism had. As a project of modernity, it was a force of economic and political modernisation but without the assertion of freedom and human autonomy. Through the creation of a monolithic state apparatus, it destroyed most of the foundations of modernity and failed in the end to create a viable alternative.

While the principal ideology in fascism was nationalism, it had also a European dimension in terms of its appeal to the idea of Europe. Fascists proclaimed the essential unity of Europe as both an ideal and a reality. In the case of Hitler with his vision of a ‘New Europe’ this was taken much further than by Franco, who confined his movement to Spain,⁷ and Mussolini. It was a supra-national ideology that in its extreme version sought the creation of a new European civilisation. Hitler and Mussolini believed in the Roman Empire as the model for a new fascist Europe.



The One Thousand Year Reich was to be a European order. The inspiration for Hitler was Mussolini who articulated many of these ideas for the revival of the Roman legacy in a new fascist Europe. The rise of fascism after 1917, provoked and in part inspired by communism, and the challenge it offered to both liberal democracy and the variety of socialist alternatives, was not entirely surprising and is a reminder of the vulnerability of democracy and the fragility of modernity, which was not entirely wedded to the democratic state. Parliamentary or liberal democracy was not firmly rooted in the political traditions of many European countries, and in those with relatively strong democratic traditions there was nothing preventing mass mobilisation to subvert democracy, which without strong institutional structures can easily take populist forms. For these reasons caution must be exercised in associating Europe with the spirit of democracy. It was a feature of fascism that it gained considerable popular support, though not in all cases democratic legitimation. In many countries Hitler offered a vision for the future that was more appealing than what liberal democracy could offer. The notion of submission to Hitler was not entirely objectionable to elites for whom mass democracy was not particularly attractive and the prospect of Bolshevik victory spreading to Western Europe was equally unappealing. The idea of a total state that controlled economy and society offered elites and masses alike certainty and stability. One of the major attractions for fascism was its social and economic programme of full employment. It was this more than anything that made it more appealing than liberalism (Luebbert, 1991, p. 275).

Liberal democracy was a competing model of modernity in Europe in the twentieth century. There was no inherent reason why it should have prevailed over its competitors. Both fascism and communism provided credible alternatives to it. Democracy was fragile in many European countries during the first half of the century and it was not until 1990 that all countries made the transition to liberal democracy, by which time it had itself been transformed by European transnational governance. The only countries that did not have a break in their democratic tradition during the interwar period were Britain, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland (Hobsbawm, 1994, p. 111). Those liberal democracies that have had the longest history of constitutional and democratic government were the ones that presided over colonial empires for much of the twentieth century and embarked on colonial wars preventing the adoption of democracy in their colonies while promoting peace in Europe. Democracy was weak in much of Southern Europe: in Spain Franco ruled until 1975, Portugal was ruled by a military dictatorship until 1974 and in Greece the colonels ruled from 1967 to 1974. However, in a relatively short space of time, it had become the dominant framework for the organisation of state and society in Western Europe. With the transition to democracy in Spain and Portugal by 1980 and the return to democracy in Greece in 1975, liberal democracy had become stabilised, at least until the late 1970s when its edifice unravelled, though not before the demise of its main alternatives.



Despite the experience of war, both internal warfare and external colonial and neo-colonial, liberal democracy from the end of the nineteenth century onwards provided Europe with a means of solving the major challenges produced by modern society. The disastrous experience of war in the twentieth century should not detract from the fact that liberal democracy was the principal model for the realisation and organisation of modernity in Europe. Wagner (1994, pp. 73–74) has termed this the period of ‘organised modernity,’ roughly from the 1890s to the 1960s when the exit began to a different model of modernity from the nineteenth century’s ‘restrictive modernity’. In this period European societies achieved a degree of stability and certainty following a long period of uncertainty. This was not finally achieved until the post-second world war period, since the two world wars undermined the initial move in the direction of organised modernity, understood, in Wagner’s terms, as state-led projects organised on national lines for the classification of social phenomena. The broad categories of organised modernity were the nation-state and social classes. Liberal democracies thus spear-headed programmes for material allocation and reward through institutions such as education, citizenship, health and welfare reform. These programmes went far beyond the nineteenth century methods of state control for they required more extensive apparatuses of government and had to become more embedded in democracy. Democracy was no longer seen as a product of the free-market, but required state led programmes of integration including economic protectionism, technical shifts and changes in the nature of organisation management, such as scientific management along the principles of Taylorism and Fordism. Capital and labour increasingly became incorporated into this organised model of class conflict.

Liberal democracy in the twentieth century brought about a transformation in citizenship in the direction of social citizenship. The notion of social rights, in addition to political and civic rights, as in the famous theory of citizenship of Marshall (1987) in 1949, was an achievement of the twentieth century, though not specific to liberal democracy, as it was also a feature of the Soviet Union. However in Europe it was more firmly tied to a belief in individual and collective determination and made possible a more expansive degree of democratisation, even social citizenship was, in the terms of Marshall, a compensation for the inequalities of capitalism. Liberal democracy within the model of organised modernity increasingly became wedded to the normative goal of equality and in theory the vision of an egalitarian society articulated the basic imaginary of the era that was animated by the idea of meritocratic achievement. The various national variants tended towards the egalitarian or the meritocratic ends of the normative spectrum of organised modernity. The societal model that underpinned social citizenship can be characterised as democratic capitalism, namely the integration of capitalism within a basic democratic framework; however this is relevant only to the three decades after 1945 when economic growth sustained a more social kind of capitalism, an expanding welfare state, full employment, the general acceptance of Keynesian economics and the assumption that capitalism had to be compatible with democracy (Streck, 2011).



Finally, the project of European integration since the 1950s can be viewed from the perspective of modernity as an alternative model, albeit with uncertain outcomes, to the three main models of modernity that clashed over the preceding four decades. It was of course more closely allied with liberal democracy, but in its pursuit of the transnationalisation of the European nation-state it ultimately brought about a major transformation in the relation of state and society and the creation of a new kind of polity. For these reasons it can be considered a project of modernity, even if it did not seek the overcoming of liberal democracy in the way the earlier competitors did. The post-1945 period was marked by a movement away from nationalism in the recognition of the need for a new international normative order. The foundation of the United Nations in 1945, UNESCO in the same year and the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 were the most prominent signs of the emergence of a new cosmopolitan imaginary that sought to embed the pursuit of national interests in a normative order beyond the nation-state. Initially this did not seek anything more than to avoid war and in the case of Europe to bring about lasting peace between countries whose entire economies and national psyches had been organised for war for several decades. Such an ambition required the diminution of nationalism and a commitment to international cooperation. As a project of modernity, European integration was part of what was earlier referred to, following Wagner, as organised modernity; it was conceived in programmatic terms as a major attempt at inter-state co-ordination and became more and more a transformative project in the economic, social and political realms of all countries. Whether or not it can be seen as a Europe of nations or as a transnational polity, on balance it is evident that European integration has become a rival to a conception of modernity based on national-models of liberal democracy. Notwithstanding the realist interpretation of the EU as a project of states or the modified position that the EU is nothing more than a coordinating mechanism, it is evident that five decades of Europeanisation have produced one of the most significant experiments in statehood and in the articulation of normative ideas of post-national political community.

Conclusion

The thesis of multiple modernity offers some advantages for theorising the plurality of Europe. First, it offers an alternative to the singleness of Europe, the notion of Europe as a single entity; second, it avoids the conclusion that European plurality is a reflection of an underlying unity and taking the form of a unity in diversity; and third, it has the advantage of resisting the untenable implications of a totally pluralised notion of Europe, which is implied by the rejection of the unity and diversity argument.

The idea of modernity is sufficiently broad to include major societal frameworks and historical trajectories that go beyond nations. This is because modernity is a structure forming process that provides both integrative as well as differentiating

functions. Encompassing distinctive cultural models that are realised in societal configurations of state formation, capitalism and civil society, modernity is also plural. While it is possible to speak of a general European modernity, there are also variants of it. The course of European history saw the pursuit of different models or projects of modernity. In the present day these are less stark, but in the twentieth century there were major competing projects of modernity. The argument then is that the plurality of Europe is very much the product of these rival modernities. However the disappearance of the totalitarian variants and the mutual entanglement and tensions of national models of liberal democracy and transnational governance as represented by the EU has not led to a single project of modernity.

It is all the more striking today than ever that the political and societal form of modernity in Europe is open. The onset of significant economic and political crises since the financial crisis of 2008 has opened up new questions not only about the future of European integration, but too of democracy and the very nature of the polity in terms of the relation between state and economy. There are generative, transformative, institutional processes at work in shaping the economic, political, social and cultural dimensions of Europe. It would be beyond the scope of this article to explore the transformation of the field of European modernity in detail, but it can be remarked that the onset of multiple crises, which had their roots in the economic crisis, has brought into focus the emergence of a new oppositional currents. It may be premature to attributive generative powers to these developments, but wide-scale social protest, public disenchantment and oppositional movements, suggests the ground is shifting, albeit in an uncertain direction. While such developments are opaque in terms of alternatives, they have the capacity to open up new scenarios and questions about not simply the future of European integration, but the nature of modernity.

Acknowledgements

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013)/ERC grant agreement no 249438 TRAMOD. The author is grateful to Professor Peter Wagner of Barcelona University and his research team for participating in the project 'Varieties of Modernity' in Spring 2013 when this paper was written. The author is also grateful to the editors of the special issue for their comments and to a detailed reader's report.

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Notes

- 1 I have explored such questions in other publications (see Delanty, 2012).
- 2 See Giddens (1984) for an influential theory of structure and its relation to agency. See also for a discussion of the concept of structure in relation to agency, social change and culture, Chapter 5 of Sewell (2005).
- 3 The notion of multiple modernity has been extensively developed by a range of authors (see Arnason, 2003; Jameson, 2003; Gaonkar, 2001; Wagner, 2012).
- 4 This model has been developed in Delanty (2012) (see also Strydom, 2012).
- 5 This can be broken into two, selection from variety and consequent cultural and societal transformation.
- 6 There was arguably a fifth, namely the world government model as represented by the League of Nations and later by the United Nations. However this has been largely subordinated to liberal democracy and, within Europe, the project of European integration.
- 7 Franco embodied only in part fascist ideology, since the break with the fascist Falange movement. In the case of Francoist Spain, the idea of a modernist project was less present.

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