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# Gramsci in Brussels -

## Alternative Perspectives on the Democratic Deficit of the European Union

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# 1   INTRODUCTION

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*The challenge of modernity is to live without*
*illusions and without becoming disillusioned*
*– Antonio Gramsci*

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As the European Union has extended its range of activities from pure market integration towards manifold areas such as social affairs and economic regulation, discussions about the democratic quality of European governance become ever more prevalent (Hix 2008:32, 67). In recent years a countless number of scholars from distinctive theoretical backgrounds devoted themselves to the so called "democratic deficit" (Dahl 1994; Majone 1998; Beetham & Lord 2001; Hix 2008).

The thesis at hand offers an alternative perspective on a scope of substantive criticism towards the European Union that perceives the integration process as an "elite project" (Haller 2009a) or – to put it more drastically - as a form of "bureaucratic despotism" (Siedentop 2001)[1].

According to its critics, the European Union ought to be conceptualized as a project driven forward by a coalition of European elites whose interest and values significantly differ from those of the public (Haller 2009b:63 ff.). It is argued that the continuing bureaucratization of European institutions enforces the distance between those groups and that it embodies the elitist character of the union. The characteristic lack in political participation and the increasing euroscepticism result in the decline of democratic legitimacy (Zürn 2000; Fuchs 2009).

To counter the criticism, one of the most important political strategies in the debate envisages the involvement of civil society. According to its advocates, the inclusion of civil society entails active political participation which ends in responsibility, political accountability and ultimately in the strengthening of European democratic quality[2] (COM 2001, 428:14 ff.; Freise 2009:121 ff.). After all, the involvement of private actors and the active promotion of European ideas and collective meanings are supposed to lead to a transnational formation of a European identity, allegedly a crucial basis for the future of legitimation (Beetham & Lord 2005:15 ff.; Frantz

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[1]   For critical voices see the review of Siedentop's work in Moravscik (2001).

[2]   Within the Lisbon treaty an "open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society" has been adopted to the democratic principles (EU, 2007, article 8b).

2009:144).

One of the earliest scholars that endorsed the concept of civil society for the analysis of power relations and the state was the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. In contrast to the positively associated concepts of modern democratic theory that conceive civil society as an intermediary sphere between public and private, Gramsci understands civil society as an integral part of the state. Within the sphere of the "*società civile*" (Gramsci 1971) the dominant classes try to consolidate their hegemony through active intellectual leadership and the production of consensus in everyday life (Simon 1991:22).

Hegemony describes the generalization of interests within processes of compromise-formation between social classes. Gramsci emphasizes the role of intellectuals for the reproduction of societal power relations. Intellectuals as the functionaries of the dominant class, present individual interests as generally accepted by means of defining collective ideas and meanings, thus consent. Understood in this way, the notion of civil society is not self-evidently connected with democracy, but it equally points towards class dominance and subjection.

However, Gramsci's ideas were tied to the Italian national context, and on the eve of the Second World War the vision of a united Europe was still far away. Additionally, reinterpretations of Gramsci within international relations theory have been rather focused on universal prospects of world order and global hegemony (Gill 1993; Cox & Sinclair 1996).

How then can a Gramscian framework in a world radically transformed from his conditions give a constructive contribution to the debate on democracy within the EU? What are the theoretical opportunities and shortcomings of Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and civil society applied to the European context and how do the European elites fit into that frame? Does Gramsci still "speak to our condition in the new circumstances of twenty-first century politics" (Schwarzmantel & McNally 2009:1)?

By presenting the main concepts of Gramsci's theoretical reflections and by using them to interpret claims concerning the substantive dimension of the democratic deficit and its cure, this paper aims to find answers to these questions.

Located within the (neo-) Gramscian research tradition, the work can be seen as a critical input to the discussion on the democratic quality. On the edge of state-theory and elite-theory it is

designed to embed the aforementioned discussion into a Gramscian theoretical framework[3].

Throughout the chapters the considerations will be linked to modern concepts of political science, and opportunities of connectivity will be discussed in order to evaluate the dynamic and relevance of Gramsci's political thought. The recourse to Gramsci might give hints to the analysis of legitimacy and the relevance of power structures within the integration project.

The methodology of this work is based on literature research and on a theoretical discussion. After introducing the thematic and presenting the problem and its relevance, the theoretical framework of Gramscian thought will be approached.

Initially, his ideas will be placed within the historical and broader Marxist context and in a short overview some important attempts of Gramscian (re-) interpretation are presented. Thereafter, the central concepts of Gramsci's theory will be explained. It is evident, that this paper is not designed to reconstruct the whole complexity of his ideas, and many aspects that are less important in the context of the analytical question will be left out. Therefore, the work focuses on the concept of hegemony, state and power as well as on the central notion of civil society. In the light of the problem at stake, an emphasis lies on the intellectuals and their role for the production of consensus. The following part starts with a short overview about the debate on the democratic quality of the European Union. Building on that, features of the substantive strand of criticism will be further discussed.

Chapter 4 embeds the debate in the Gramscian framework. By means of a theoretical essay the role of elites and the growing distance towards the population will be linked to the concepts of hegemony and civil society.

Chapter 5 then opens prospects of democratization. On the basis of the analysis, reflections on Gramsci's ideas of democracy will be driven forward. It is one of the crucial challenges of this paper to present a useful contribution to the debate on democracy in Europe without disposing of a cohesive definition of democracy within Gramscian thought. However, regarding the central concepts of power which are rule and legitimacy, the dimensions of state-theory and classical democratic theory overlap.

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[3]  The term *framework* is used to indicate that Gramsci's thought cannot be understood as a complex, cohesive theory, but rather as a methodological instrument for the analysis of political situations. For further information see Heise & von Fromberg (2008).

Even though visions of counter-hegemony are only partially touched in this paper, it is crucial to acknowledge that Gramsci's analysis of power relations was always designed to transform those and to support the emancipatory struggle of the subalterns. Following Marx's thesis eleven – "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world […]; the point is to change it" (McLellan 2000 [Marx 1845]:158) a normative vision of counter-hegemonial organization was the driving force of his theoretical reflections.

The conclusion presents the major findings of the paper and connects them with the initially raised question whether Gramsci's thought might be useful to understand current developments of the European Union. Major advantages and shortcomings will be recapitulated.

As already indicated, it is evident that this work is neither designed to explain the entirety of Gramsci's political consideration, nor to present a full scale analysis of European politics. Moreover, the paper does not aim to refute or to judge the claim of the democratic deficit. It seeks to highlight the debate from a different point of view ("*How would Gramsci understand it?*") and it points towards diverging implications with regard to democracy.

Due to the limited frame, the substantive and economic content, of the "configuration of Europe" (Bieling 2000) find little consideration. According to the differentiation suggested by Ziltener[4], the question of the *integration project* will only to a certain extent - as continuous reference point - be part of the analysis. Emphasis lies on the *state project* as a principle of broad societal organization (Ziltener 2000:76).

According to Schechter, Neo-Gramscian scholarship has come to constitute "perhaps the most important alternative to realist and liberal perspectives in the field today" (Schechter 2002:2). After all, the conclusion of this paper attempts to give a hint whether neo-Marxian thought – in contradiction with Fukuyama's "End of History" (Fukuyama 1992) - still has something to offer for the analysis of modern society structures and power relations.

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[4]    Within his Neo-Gramscian analysis of European integration, Ziltener distinguishes between *state projects* that define the broad political, intellectual and moral principles of the organization of the state and *integration projects* that describe the normative conceptions concerning the future of European integration (Ziltener 2000:76). In the context of neoliberal integration patterns the *integration projects* build the centre of most neo-gramscian studies on European integration (Bieling & Deppe 2003).

# 2  APPROACHING GRAMSCI – HEGEMONY AND THE STATE

## 2.1  Historical context and theoretical background

In order to comprehend Gramsci's thought it is indispensible to draw a short overview about the historical context of his work. Most of the concepts that will be touched in this afferent part will be discussed in detail within the chapters 2.3 to 2.5.

The Italian Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) was a versatile personality. He was a philosopher and political theorist, a journalist and the co-founder of the Italian Communist party. The here discussed part of his lifework, his political writings arose during an eleven-year imprisonment under the fascist rule of Benito Mussolini (1883 – 1945).

The central guidelines of his reflections concern the state and the production of hegemony. One of the essential problems, Gramsci discusses, was the question why the communist revolution - in contradiction with the revolutionary theory of Karl Marx – firstly succeeded in comparatively underdeveloped Russia. In his historical-materialist theory of capitalist production, Marx predicts that the revolution would break out in the highest developed countries where the contradictions of capitalism would be most intense and destructive (Demirovic 1998:97). Despite those apparent societal contradictions, how could the capitalist countries retain a relatively high level of stability while at the same time reducing the role of the state as a means of coercion?

Looking for an answer to that question, Gramsci extends the notions of state and power to the sphere of civil society, culture and their interdependencies. The proletarian revolution in Italy was doomed to fail because the bourgeois state was protected by its linkages with the private actors, by the culture and customs of civil society, what he calls the "powerful system of fortresses and earthworks" (Gramsci 1971:238). In Russia in contrast, this protection did not exist. The "state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous" (ibid.) and the Marxist-Leninist mission to "smash the state machine" (Lenin 2004 [1917]:91) was successfully realized.

As already indicated above, these ideas will be further discussed within the later sections on Gramsci's theory of the state and the concept of hegemony. First, Gramsci's ideas will be placed within the context of Marxism.

### 2.1.1 Broader Marxist context

Gramsci was an avowed Marxist and all his theoretical considerations were clearly driven forward by the vision of a progressive socialist revolution. An important part of Gramsci's work was influenced by Lenin and his theory of revolution and the state. Despite this intellectual heritage the following chapters will make clear that Gramsci's analysis significantly differed from the orthodox theory. This opposition lead to a long lasting neglect of Gramscian thought which, until the end of the Cold War never gained significant influence anywhere outside of Italy (Schwarzmantel & McNally 2009:7 f.).

In retrospective, the striking demarcation vis-à-vis orthodox Marxism was Gramsci's refusal of economism. With his stress on culture and ideas, Gramsci insists that Marxism had to relate to the reality of society and had to be open to its historical transformations, rather than imposing one dogmatic materialist model onto that of reality[5]. In an attempt to "rejuvenate" (Schwarzmantel & McNally 2009:3) Marxism, the inevitable vision of teleological historical materialism and the conception of individuals as "passive bearers of economic forces" (ibid.) were replaced by an emphasis on human agency and the dynamics of human society. Revolution is not the predetermined outcome of economic relations: on the basis of a status-quo analysis, political agents being capable of transforming the existing order could be identified (Schwarzmantel 2009:80).

Power does not solely arise from the distribution of means of production: chapter 2.5 reveals that within a complex set of societal interrelations the antagonism of the bourgeoisie and the subalterns is reproduced by cultural habits and common sense.

## 2.2 Neo-Gramscianism, *world order* and the rediscovery of Gramscian thought

Gramsci's main piece of work, being the *Prison Notebooks,* arose under the circumstances of political imprisonment, censorship and a very limited access to books and other sources. Enforced by the aforementioned disregard of his ideas in the socialist states, it was not until the

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[5] To bring out the importance of Gramsci's rejection of economic reductionism, Schwarzmantel uses the term "Marxism of the superstructure" (Schwarzmantel & McNally 2009:3). Cox then distinguishes between (orthodox) "historical economism" and (Gramscian) "historical materialism" that broadens the central notion of production to the "production and reproduction of knowledge and of the social relations, morals and institutions that are prerequisites to the production of physical goods." (Cox 1996a:96).

1970s that his ideas became more widely known. Among others within the disciplines of pedagogy, gender studies, communicative studies and international relations theory, several scholars tried to reinterpret his ideas for their research purposes (Schwarzmantel & McNally 2009:2 ff.) [6]. After the 1990s and the end of "Real Socialism" Gramscianism experienced a second period of reconception and *Neo-Gramscianism* gained significant influence within critical studies, European integration theory and political economy. However, the fragmented complexity of the "Prison Notebooks" and the theoretical diversity of Neo-Gramscian scholars result in the difficult task to grasp a coherent insight into his theoretical framework. The following remarks are closely tied to the original concepts of state theory. Nevertheless, perspectives from neo-Gramscian integration theory and international relations theory will be taken into account when appropriate.

## 2.3    The integral state and civil society

Originating from the analysis of the October Revolution in Russia, one of Gramsci's core assumptions to grasp existing power structures is the concept of the *integral state*.

Arguably the most familiar quotation from the "Prison Notebooks" in a compressed way elucidates the fundamentals of his state theory: According to Gramsci, the state is

> *"political society + civil society, in other words, hegemony protected by the armour of coercion". (Gramsci 1971:263)*

The quotation gives insight into a perspective change compared to orthodox-Marxist and liberal state theory. In contrast to Lenin's "The State and Revolution" (Lenin 2004 [1917]), Gramsci's state is more than a violent machine of the ruling class for the sake of exploitation and suppression. It is the institutional concentration of societal power relations and a material result of contradictions among classes (Demirovic 2000:66). Consequently it does not stand above society; the state itself is a part of it (Demirovic 2007:24). Opposing the liberal interpretation of the state as a neutral body, Gramsci saw it as a particular dynamic manifestation of the dominance of the ruling classes at a certain moment in history. By underlining the societal character of the state, Gramsci emphasizes the role of common political actors, such as social classes, for the genesis of the state itself. As the organization

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[6]    Arguably the most important Neo-Gramscian contribution in political science is Robert Cox' concept of "World Order" and the reformulation of Gramscian thought within international relations theory (Cox & Sinclair 1996).

among and within classes is prone to change, the state, being the manifest form of these ties, is subject to dynamic change as well.

Following the argumentation, Gramsci deconstructs the liberal separation of public and private. The separation itself might be interpreted as a method of power consolidation as it allows to reject certain interests as particularistic and to define the public interest for the benefit of those who actively shape the discourse (Neubert 2001:59; Demirovic 2007:27; Candeias 2008:18)[7]. The deconstruction that likewise applies to the classical division of economy and politics leads to Gramsci's concept of civil society.

A major novelty that derives from the integral state is its extension to the sphere of civil society as the terrain of the production of consent. Gramsci underlines the importance of consent when he explains earlier in the *Prison Notebook* that the state can be interpreted as

> *"the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only maintains its dominance but manages to win the consent of those over whom it rules". (Gramsci 1971:244)*

Social relationships of civil society in the form of culture and habits are relations of power to the same extent as the coercive elements of political society. Hence, the nature of the state goes beyond Weber's definition of the state as the bearer of the monopoly of violence (Weber 2002 [1922]:821f.). Joseph Nye's (2004) later approach of *soft power* shows parallels to the consensual dimension of Gramsci's understanding of power.

To understand the interplay of force and consensus further definitions are needed; while *political society* describes the coercive elements of power relations that are materialized in the sphere of direct rule and government, civil society means the "ensemble of organisms commonly called private" (Gramsci 1971:12)[8].

As we have seen in part 2.3, Gramsci (ibid:238) identifies the intellectual and cultural life within civil society as the "fortress" of the bourgeois state and the key to stability. Going even further, Gramsci (ibid: 263) apparently recognizes civil society as the core attribute of the state when he perceived political society, hence coercion as the protection of civil society.

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[7]   The formulation of public interests and the production of hegemony will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

[8]   P*olitical society* includes the armed forces, the police, law courts and all institutions necessary for the realization of the state monopoly of coercion. *Civil society* involves all private actors such as the family, the church, but also the economy even though its belonging is questioned by Simon (1991:68 f).

The characteristic of civil society is a ramose network of so called private organisms and initiatives that organize the cultural prevalence of the dominant class. Therefore civil society is the area where the state appears in the shape of active cultural patterns that guide individuals to rule themselves and to organically become one with the state (Demirovic 2000:67). Civil society in the Gramscian sense is the sphere of rule exertion in the form of active compliance and self-submission.

On the one hand, the provision for the impact on societal and political stability is reminiscent of Putnam's *social capital* approach that describes the importance of social networks for the cohesive functioning and maintenance of political systems (Putnam 2001). On the other hand the Gramscian definition fundamentally differs from the classical democratic understanding of civil society as an intermediary sphere in the way that civil society is functionally embedded into state theory, class rule and class conflict. It will be seen later on that the Gramscian definition does not per se have a positive or negative connotation.

To understand the following steps of the Gramscian framework it is useful to recapitulate the main ideas of this chapter: 1. The state is conceptualized as the manifestation of social relationships and class conflicts within society. 2. Power and rule are dialectic processes of coercion and consent. 3. Civil society, as the sphere of hegemony, is an integral part of the state.

*figure a)*



1. the "liberal state"

| THE STATE (*public*) |
| :---: |
| CIVIL SOCIETY (*intermediary*) |
| THE INDIVIDUAL (*private*) |

2. the "integral state"

THE STATE

POLITICAL SOCIETY ↔ CIVIL SOCIETY

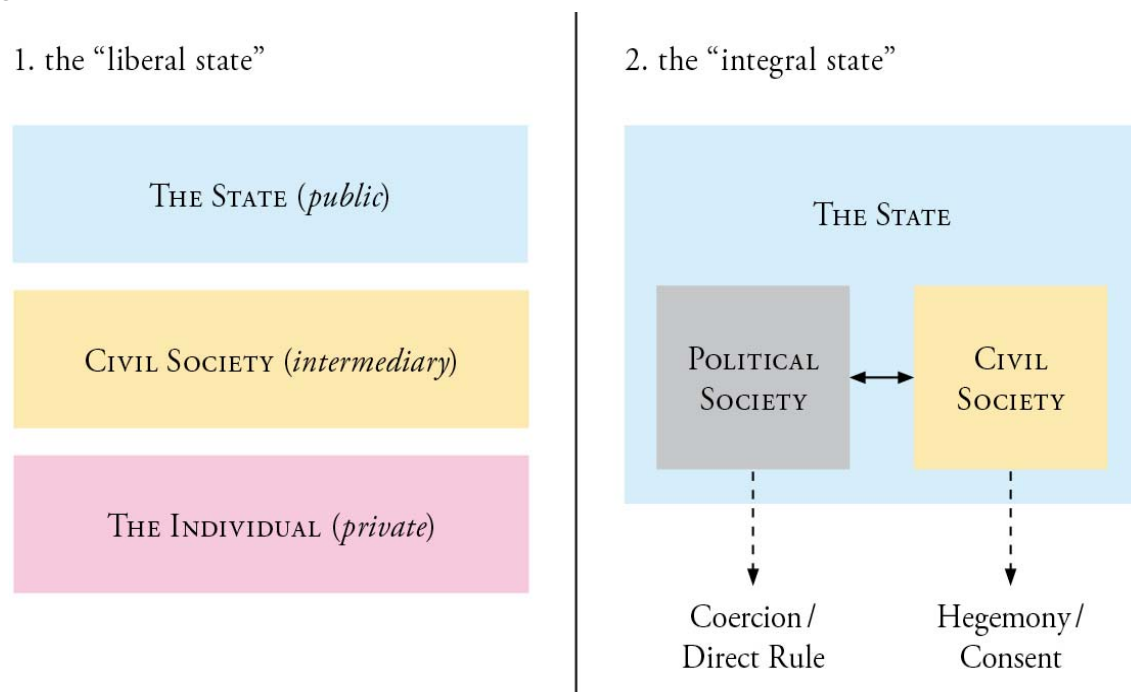Coercion / Direct Rule          Hegemony / Consent

Figure a) illustrates the findings of this chapter, comparing the "liberal" conception of the state with the approach presented by Gramsci. While the liberal understanding includes a division between the state and the individual including civil society as an intermediary sphere, the integral state regards civil society as the sphere of hegemony in interaction with the sphere of political society as an integral part of the state itself.

To propose a deeper understanding of the stability of modern capitalist systems and to elucidate the organizing structure within civil society, Gramsci endorses the concept of hegemony.

## 2.4    Hegemony and the generalization of bourgeois interests

The specific form of rule exertion within civil society is hegemony. Together with the integral state and its extension towards the sphere of civil society, the following are crucial considerations for the understanding of a Gramscian theoretical framework. As the concept of hegemony is intertwined with a number of other Gramscian concepts, an abbreviated definition seems inadequate.

Hegemony in Gramscian terms goes beyond the realist definition of predomination and supremacy that is widespread in international relations theory (Joseph 2002). Once again the stress on culture is essential. Hegemony is a process of political, moral and intellectual leadership that arises from civil society and that describes the organization of consent and common sense (Simon 1991:22; Bobbio 1993:92; Neubert 2001:66–67).

In order to become dominant, a social class as the coalition of similar interests needs to combine leadership and dominance ("hegemony protected by the armour of coercion" [Gramsci 1971:263]). Dominance in the form of coercion is rather located within the political sphere and it is directed against antagonistic groups that sincerely challenge the hegemonic aspirations. Hegemony in the form of leadership is formed within the sphere of civil society and points at potentially allied groups to constitute a collective form of interests (Gramsci 1971:57–58).

Rather than conceiving economic relations as determining culture and politics, Gramsci claims that culture, economy and politics are allocated in a context of "mutual exchange and shifting networks of influence" (Jones 2006:5). As the substance of this network, hegemony is the "ethical content of the state" (Gramsci 1971:208).

Still, hegemony is a systematic and multifaceted approach of a class to present its particularistic

interest as universally accepted. In the context of the bourgeois state, hegemony is the generalization of bourgeois interests. The perspective and peculiar organization of things that corresponds to the living of the dominant class spread to other classes. They are generalized in the way that even subaltern classes share and recognize *those* ideas that reproduce their subjection, as their own. Gramsci describes the subjection under the hegemonial habits and customs as "self government": The individual must come to

*"govern himself without his self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society – but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement." (Jones 2006:32)*

However, Gramsci does not stop at the level of mere subjection: In continuation of his dialectical interpretation of power relations, Gramsci identifies the interaction of passive toleration and active consent to define hegemony. A social class has the potential to become hegemonic only when it achieves to go beyond its particular interest and to include other, subaltern classes by means of compromise formation and concessions. Hegemony therefore includes the active compliance of the subalterns with their subjection. Only when those groups see a concrete advantage and a real interest in the hegemonic project, the rule can become stable (Candeias 2008:21). On the other hand, the more the hegemony relies on passive toleration only and the more the active consensus among the social forces deteriorates, the more the coercive element of the state comes into appearance (Gramsci 1971:246).

The moment in which the bourgeois interest is generalized and universally accepted by means of leadership and compromise formation is called the "political moment" (Demirovic 2001b:154). This process constitutes the realization of the hegemonial project as the structural framework of the state itself (Demirovic 2000:54–55).

The alliance of social forces and interests that make up this moment is described as a "historic bloc" ["*blocco storico*" (Gramsci 1971:136)]. Using the Marxist division between structure and superstructure, the notion of historic bloc then expresses the unity of those spheres: Economy, ideology and the state as combination of political and civil society all hold the hegemonic project in a relationship of complex negotiation. A historic bloc is the contradictory unity of rulers and ruled. In a quotation that emphasizes the importance of culture and living in Gramsci's work, Demirovic sees the historic bloc as a *"kompakte Einheit einer kollektiven,*

*klassenübergreifenden und staatlich sanktionierten Lebensweise"[9]* (Demirovic 2001a:65) that includes feelings and thoughts.

In any case the historic bloc and even its leading class are never homogenous. Hegemony then is never complete, as the process of compromise formation needs permanent adjusting and redefinition. Society in Gramsci's sense finds itself in a process of continuous reproduction (Jones 2006:48).

Once the alliance of social forces achieves to establish a spontaneous consensus among the other groups or – to put it in another way –, once a dominant coalition exercises power, "it must continue to lead as well" (Gramsci 1971:58).

Before concluding this part it is important to emphasize that Gramsci conceives hegemony as an analytical tool to understand society and its power relations in order to change it.

To relate the chapter with other strands of political science the analogy concerning concepts of legitimacy and political stability is evident: Tocqueville (2004 [1835/1840]) and his successors underline the importance of common habits and moral beliefs for the stability of democratic rule. Within modern governance concepts the societal backing of the political system as a fundamental precondition of legitimate rule gained significant importance (Benz 2004).

The main feature of a Gramscian approach to hegemony is its connection with his theory of the state and the acknowledgment of subordinate classes in the operation of power. To outline the essence of this part, hegemony is a procedural generalization of interests within an instable equilibrium of compromise and consensus (Demirovic 1992:154).

The following chapter will provide a more detailed view into the establishment of common sense as the organizational medium of hegemony.

## 2.5    Common sense and the role of intellectuals

As we have seen, hegemony describes the active reproduction of society as the manifestation of class relations in everyday life. This chapter gives an insight into the complex organization of everyday life or common sense within civil society.

Before the emergence of the Gramscian theory of the state, the "Prison Notebooks" were

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[9]    *A compact unity of collective living that overlaps class divisions and that is sanctioned by the state* (Translation of the author).

supposed to present a comprehensive theory of intellectuals within the Italian society (Simon 1991:91). Even though Gramsci rejected this purpose, the role of intellectuals remains central. According to Gramsci, intellectuals are the main agents of common sense as the basis of what was earlier called (cultural) hegemony. Intellectuals organize the spontaneous consensus and uphold it by means of intellectual and moral leadership (Demirovic 2007:30).

It is important to underline that his definition of intellectuals differs from the modern connotation. In the "Prison Notebooks" Gramsci notes that "All men are intellectuals […] but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (Gramsci 1971:9). Intellectuals are not defined by their sophisticated way of thinking, but by the function they perform. They are the assistants of the ruling class and the representatives of the historic bloc within civil and political society. As such they reproduce the power relations and class dominance they represent[10] (Gramsci 1971:60 ff.; Simon 1991:91ff.).

At the "symbolic moment of the state" in which the generalization of interests is accomplished, the role of the intellectual is to bundle the information and to speak on behalf of the public will (Demirovic 2000:54–55). In the context of the analysis of demagogy in democratic societies, Cunningham follows a similar argumentation when he focuses on "the empty space of democracy" (Cunningham 2006:19) that is filled by those self-appointed to do so.

Intellectuals are therefore not only philosophers and writers, but also political leaders, civil servants and managers within the productive apparatus. Summarizing the above, intellectuals are all those who use their societal influence and publicity to organize the state and the existing order.

Basing on this, the question arises how this is achieved and how common sense is established:

Intellectuals, disposing of the societal standing and public influence, execute moral leadership in that they form terms, discourses and habits that correspond to the attitudes of the ruling classes. By introducing and receiving those patterns within the sphere of civil society they become generally accepted. Within the frame of public discussions, the media, universities,

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[10] Within a complex illustration of intellectuals, Gramsci draws a not always cohesive distinction between "organic intellectuals" and "traditional intellectuals" (Gramsci 1971:14 ff.). Organic intellectuals are the main organizers of a new culture and they intrinsically arise from the ruling class itself. Organic intellectuals of the rising class find traditional intellectuals already in existence and absorb them by means of their interpretative dominance. For further information see Martin (2002).

churches and other institutions of civil society, intellectuals shape a public opinion that is recognized as the public will (Votsos 2001:130 ff.).

Individuals come across the implementation of common sense in everyday life. Active consensus in that sense is constituted in the formation of patterns of thought and daily habits that merge into the regularity and predictability of living. It is expressed in the forms of ideas and ideology, art and the selection of news right up to seemingly trivial aspects such as street signs (Demirovic 1992:134).

The argumentation leads to Gramsci's perception of epistemology. Science and intellectual work are never neutral. In contrast to the determinism of orthodox Marxism, Gramsci stresses that objectivity is never complete. Truth is nothing but the consensus of groups (Morera 1990:26). Within his application of Gramscian thought in international relations theory, Robert Cox emphasizes the role of theories for the rationalization of existing power balances. He states that there is "no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space" and that "Theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (Cox 1996b:87)[11].

A crucial strategy for the reproduction of power relations is the separation of politics and economy and the division of manual work and brain work within the modern bourgeois state. The proclaimed incongruity delegates politics (the organization of political society) into the hands of the political elites. Additionally, the separation permits an intellectual interpretative monopoly. Consequently, intellectuals - in contrast to the normal citizen - possess the time and material resources to realize functions of opinion formation and professionally realized public demonstration (Demirovic 2000:54 ff.).

The elaboration of a complex common sense (*Alltagsverstand)* is the decisive achievement of hegemony. On the one hand, it invites the individuals to get actively involved in the activities of civil society in order to identify with the content of the state and its rule. On the other hand, the constructed dichotomy of politics and economy implies a passivation in the sense that the complex political organization within the state apparatus is directed to intellectuals and elites (Demirovic 1998:102). This argumentation will be revived in chapter 4.2.

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[11] Cox distinguishes between "problem solving theories" and "critical theories". The predominantly positivistic "problem solving theories" move within a static-structural frame of "objective" circumstances. Contrarily, "critical theories" evaluate the potential of structural change by interpreting current dynamics from a super-structural perspective (Cox 1996b:88 ff.).

Regarding the ethical content of common sense, Demirovic highlights another dimension: For him common sense, as the principle of hegemonic rule, is a switch in perspectives. What was perceived as antagonistic and heterogeneous transforms into an essentially homogenous reality (Demirovic 2001b:165). By means of constantly forming compromises and hence by integrating the subaltern classes into the hegemonic project, the class differences seemingly become obsolete. An "ideology of reconciliation" (Hofer 1991:24) between antagonistic classes and the postulated meaninglessness of class-affiliation becomes common sense. Reversed, on negating its existence, class differences and existing power relations are reproduced.

The formulation of hegemonic patterns within civil society is attended by the delegitimation of critical or potentially counter-hegemonial discourses. Ideas and cultural habits that challenge the existing order through leaving the patterns of common sense are disarticulated and disclaimed as "radical" (Candeias 2008:23).

This chapter elaborately discussed the role of intellectuals and the production of common sense within a Gramscian framework. Coming back to state theory, intellectuals are the organizers of "the fortresses" of civil society and the principle actors of the state itself (Gramsci 1971:238).

The importance of intellectuals or elites demonstrates promising links with modern elite theories. In their function to formulate collective meanings and to perform as role models, the notion of *Wertelite* shows parallels (Kaina 2006: 45).

Moreover, the stress on culture illustrates the connection with modern strands of social constructivism that share the Gramscian view that human behavior is shaped within a complex set of ideas and institutions. Foucault elaboration on discourses points in a similar direction: He denotes discourses as selective in the way that they constitute the border of what is to be accepted as the correct way of thinking and acting. By institutionalizing behavioral patterns within society, they effect power relations (Foucault 1977).

The emphasis of the power dimension of knowledge parallels Weber's description of modern bourgeois rule as "*Herrschaft kraft Wissen*"[12] (Weber 2002 [1922]:129).

As we will see in a later part of this thesis, the centrality of knowledge influenced Gramsci's visions of a democratic and socialist society. The task of Gramsci's understanding of Marxism is

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[12] *Control on the basis of knowledge* (Translation of the author).

the criticism of common sense and the intellectualizing of society (Simon 1991:65).

Before coming to that point, the Gramscian framework will now be applied to the debate on the legitimacy problem of the European Union.

# 3   THE DEMOCRATIC QUALITY OF EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE

## 3.1   Between Hix and Moravscik– an overview about the debate

Ever since the European Union has come into existence, its institutional and substantial shape has been intensively debated. Subsequent to the growing transfer of powers towards supranational institutions, the "European Constitutional Settlement" (Moravscik 2002:603) and a shift in the policy agenda from market building to economic reform and regulation, claims about the democratic deficit of European governance have filled hundreds of books and journals (Hix 2008:e.g. 40 ff.).

The iterative argument is that the European Union in its political function is not sufficiently legitimatized. The lack of legitimation is broadly equated with a lack in democratic quality in general. The scope of criticism covers the whole range of political theories and intellectual backgrounds while at the same time it is always based on the specific definition of democracy itself and on the normative vision of the European integration project.

Similar to Scharpf's dichotomy of Input- and Output-legitimacy[13], Dahl describes the democratic challenge of European integration as a dilemma of system effectiveness versus citizen participation (Dahl 1994; Scharpf 1999). Concepts that accentuate the one or the other source of legitimacy consequently arrive at diverging consequences concerning the implementation of European democracy.

To conceptualize the many different charges towards democracy in Europe, it seems useful to distinguish between a substantial and an institutional dimension even though these concepts overlap (Huget 2007:42 ff.).

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[13]   In the tradition of Lincoln's famous definition of democracy, Scharpf understands the input-dimension of democracy as "Government *by* the people". "Government *for* the people" instead covers the effective outcomes of the political process, hence the output-legitimacy (Scharpf 1999). Input –Legitimacy will be further discussed within chapter 3.2.

The institutional dimension of criticism is a rather pragmatic approach focusing on the actual functioning of European institutions and proceedings. Scholars highlight the transfer of powers away from nation states and national parliaments and the execution of powers by non-legitimized supranational bodies. The focus often lies on the allegedly weak power of the European parliament as the only directly legitimized body and on the implementation of voting rules on European level (Rohrschneider 2002). The emphasis of the institutional bodies and mechanisms leads to the more fundamental problem of political values and substantive fundaments:

Scholars that emphasize the substantive dimension argue from a rather normative perspective. The focus lies on the meaning of political legitimacy and democracy itself and the values that underlie the integration process. Furthermore, the content of the political process itself is examined. Scholars raise questions concerning a European demos and they criticize the distance between the European bureaucracy and the population. Input-legitimacy in the form of political participation as well as the cultural and substantial foundations of European democracy build the core of the analysis.

A central claim that in its range covers both dimensions is brought forward by Hix: After disproving other criticism, Hix describes the missing electoral contest for EU wide political office as the real problem of European governance. Assuming in the Schumpeterian tradition that political competition is the essence of modern democracies, the European Union according to Hix is "closer to a form of enlightened despotism than a genuine democracy" (Hix 2008:3).

Next to the many arguments that can broadly be placed within the two categories, some scholars dispute the existence of a legitimacy problem at all. Arguing from the intergovernmental school of thought, Moravscik challenges the critical voices claiming that the European Union even *redresses* biases concerning Input- and Output-legitimacy (Moravscik 2002). In a similar way Majone argues that criticism concerning the democratic quality is based on false standards (Majone 1998).

In more detail, the following chapter presents some of the major claims that point towards the substantive dimension of argumentation. For the sake of clarity, only a few of the many scholars that belong to this strand of criticism will be considered.

## 3.2 European integration as an elite-project – selected claims on the substantive dimension of the democratic deficit

As already indicated, the substantive dimension of democratic quality falls within the scope of what Scharpf describes as input-legitimacy. This perspective corresponds to government *by* the people and stresses the importance of political participation and inclusion. A political system is regarded as legitimate when its political decisions are derived from the authentic preferences of its citizens (Scharpf 1999:6). Scharpf and other European Union scholars argue that this does not apply in the case of the European Union and that consequently the Union cannot be regarded as democratically legitimate in this dimension.

Arriving at the concrete content of criticism, the subsumption of the European Union as an elite project leads to the most important claims:

Conforming to this point of view, the process of European integration has to be understood as a political and economic project that is predominantly driven forward by a group of transnational and national elites. Those include important decision makers in national and European politics, in the economy[14] and media, bureaucracy and science (Haller 2009a). During the integration process these elites establish particular interests that starkly differ from those of the public.

Despite the existence of particular benefits, elites attempt to accentuate the general desirability of a common Europe and they overemphasize the benefits for European citizens within the public discourse[15]. Normative patterns of argumentation that underline the desirability of democracy, freedom and peace overlay economic and power political interests (Haller 2009b:354 ff.).

One particular benefit, the opening up of administrative careers, hints at an important claim in the debate that Siedentop calls "bureaucratic despotism" and the problem of "unaccountable technocracy" (Siedentop 2001:3ff.). "The rapid accumulation of power in Brussels" he urges, leads to the transformation of the European Union to a "centralized tyranny" (ibid: 104).
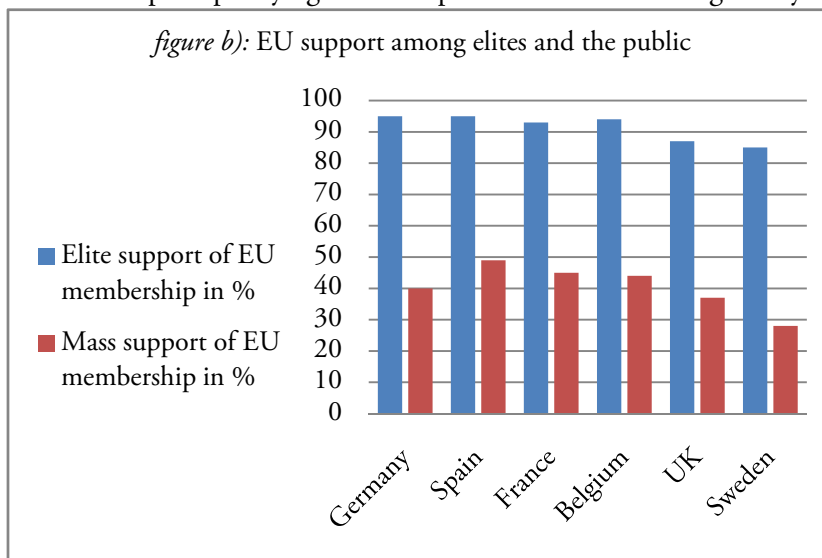
Expanding those thoughts some scholars conceive the democratic deficit in the growing

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[14]  The dominance of economic elites is exemplified by the immense presence of professionalized lobbyists on behalf of international enterprises and companies in Brussels (Freise 2009: 129).

[15]  The articulation of common interest will be further studied in the analytical chapters.

distance between the "eurocracy" and its voters. The decision making process on European level is perceived as a rather obscure procedure within intransparent elitist networks. Due to the excessive bureaucratization and the difference of the European Union compared to national systems, citizens do not understand the EU and consequently they are not able to participate or identify with the system (Hix 2008:70). The complexity of the system impedes political participation and to citizens it seems as if it is better to leave these complicated decisions to their specialized representatives (Haller 2009a:18). However, without the preconditions of political participation democracy persists incomplete.

The isolation of the European elitist core also points to the aforementioned problem detected by Hix: The European Union lacks political contest and there is no electoral competition within the European institutions. European Parliament elections are not about the direction of the European policy agenda and political offices are assigned by an obscure negotiation process between national governments (Hix 2008:76 ff.).



*figure b):* EU support among elites and the public

■ Elite support of EU membership in %

■ Mass support of EU membership in %

The claims that were mentioned in this chapter are all interconnected with the problem of euroscepticism (Fuchs 2009). While the elites enthusiastically endorse European integration because of particular advantages connected with it, the comparison with the general public in *figure b)*[16] illustrates a significant gap in support in selective countries. In total only 48 per cent of the general public support EU membership, compared to 94 % of the European elites (Hix 2008:59 ff.)[17].

The rejection of the European constitution project in France and the Netherlands in 2005 and

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[16] The figure is designed on the basis of Hix (2008: 60) who uses data from Eurobarometer Elite survey (autumn 1996) and the standard Eurobarometer 46 survey (autumn 1996). Only selected country data are presented here.

[17] As elites, Hix defines politicians, trade union leaders, influential academics, leading cultural figures etc.

the negative referendum on the Lisbon treaty in Ireland in 2008 ultimately exemplified the lack of popular support.

Concluding, one could argue that the euroscepticism is the expression of and - understood as a lack in popular legitimacy - at the same time a central foundation of the democratic deficit of the European Union. When democratic legitimacy implicates among others the active support and shared consent of the citizens, the growing gap is a clear indication of a lack in legitimation (Beetham & Lord 2005:16 ff.). Legitimacy confined to elite consensus proved to be inadequate (ibid: 18). Democracy is intrinsically connected with the expressed consent of citizens. To the extent that this consent lacks within the EU, scholars argue that the system cannot be regarded as democratic.

Evaluating on the necessary foundations of legitimacy, Beetham and Lord argue that the existence of legitimacy on the input-dimension relies on a strong common identity and a common public space (Beetham & Lord 2005:19 ff.). This leads to a last claim on the substantive side of the discussion about the democratic deficit.

### 3.2.1 Is there a European demos?

As a precondition of democracy, the existence of a common identity is often regarded as crucial. It is essential since it facilitates tolerance towards the system in 'losing' sub-groups within a population (Dahl 1998:117 ff.).

However, scholars that analyze the political attitudes of the European public detect that most citizens continue to identify with the national state rather than with the European Union (Beetham & Lord 2005:20 ff.) [18]. A common identity of the European citizens forming a European demos of a democratic Union seems far away. The diversity of languages and the absence of broad transnational media networks impede the emergence of a European public that is regarded as a central precondition of political deliberation and identity formation.

In the previous chapters some of the claims that are put forward by advocates of the substantive side of the debate on the democratic deficit in the EU have been presented. Being an elite project the European Union is too distant from voters and an ever growing bureaucratization

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[18] Using data from the Eurobarometer 42 (1995), the authors describe that on average 33 % of the EU-Population refers to their nationality only while another 46 % in first place identify with their nation next to the European Union. Only 7 % conceive themselves as Europeans only.

results in a lack of political participation, hence popular legitimation. On the intransparent European level there is no real electoral competition. Furthermore, the prospect of democratization has to cope with the inexistence of a common European identity.

The following hypotheses pass into the analytic part that connects the two segments of this paper. A Gramscian analytical framework will be applied to analyze the aforementioned patterns of argumentation. It will be discussed in how far the Gramscian concepts are applicative to the current development and the criticism that is brought forward against the European Union.

## 3.3 Working hypotheses

The formulation of working hypothesis introduces the following two chapters and it structures the patterns of argumentation:

- In Gramscian terms the European integration can be understood as the hegemonic project of dominant social forces.

- Within the framework of a Gramscian analysis, the democratic deficit is an inherent dimension of class rule. The emerging debate about the deficit and the growing euroscepticism indicate towards a crisis of hegemonial aspirations.

- In order to (re-) establish its hegemony, the dominant social class applies an interconnected, sometimes contradictory approach that includes depoliticization, the integration of civil society and the formation of a pro-European common sense.

- According to Gramsci, democratization is only possible through the intellectualization of society in order to overcome the institutionalized division between rulers and ruled.

## 4 GRAMSCI IN BRUSSELS – INTERPRETING THE SUBSTANTIVE DEFICIT OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

This chapter can be seen as an essay that translates argumentative patterns that were presented within the elaboration on the democratic deficit discussion into a Gramscian framework. The elite project European Union will be interpreted against the background of Gramscian state theory, including the central concepts of hegemony, civil society and the intellectuals. The

aforementioned hypotheses serve as guide lines of the argumentation.

The application seeks to generate answers to the initially raised question whether Gramscian thought could be fruitful in the light of the analysis of European integration dynamics. It will be evident that the Gramscian access reveals alternative criteria and implications concerning the analysis of the status quo as well as concerning prospects for future democratization.

In analogy to chapter 2, it seems useful to endorse the Gramscian interpretation of the state as a logical access to further interpretation.

Once again, it is important to emphasize that the substantial content of a potentially hegemonic project is mostly omitted. Apart from a side note and partial reference, the focus lies on the structure of a hegemonic project that relates to the general emergence of European integration.

## 4.1 European integration as the hegemonic project of dominant social forces

As it was described before, a Gramscian analysis is concerned about the emergence of statehood and power relations. Gill argues that an integration theory ought to be a theory of European state formation at the same time (Gill 2000:27). Accordingly, in the field of materialist state theory, European integration is often seen as the formation process of a new kind of state that penetrates the traditional organization principles of the nation state (Demirovic 2000). Following Gramsci, the adherents of this assumption argue that any new form of European statehood is the manifestation of specific power relations and class differences on a transnational level.

Regarding Haller's criticism that the European Union is mainly supported and driven forward by a transnational coalition of elites, a Gramscian view suggests that the integration process is the attempt of dominant social forces to construct hegemonic patterns and to manifest their dominance within a new form of transnational state. The evaluation of support towards integration revealed that among these forces consensus about the European idea and the general desirability of integration is widespread. Several Neo-Gramscian scholars furthermore highlight the consensus concerning the neoliberal reconstruction as the substantive economic logic behind the integration process (Gill 2000; Demirovic 2008). Chapter 4.1.1 provides background information.

According to Neo-Gramscians, the constitution of the European Union is characterized by a new form of governance and the rearticulating of political decision making processes through interconnected networks and formal and informal alliances (Ziltener 2000:78). Bieling and Steinhilber (2000b:109) interpret the transformation towards a European multi-level system as a top-down principle of governance and as a particular political strategy of supremacy. As we will see later on, the Gramscian perspective adds its own conception of civil society to the common definition of multi-level governance. Consensus generation and hegemony are central categories.

To detect the social forces behind the integration process, further considerations are necessary: It is argued that within the often intransparent and unclear arrangements only those forces that dispose of the necessary (material, social or time) resources are able to grasp them and only those are able to shape integration processes in their favor (Ziltener 2000:77 ff.). In that sense the complex governance mechanisms are a moment of class rule. In Gramscian terms, the emergence of state patterns on European level corresponds to the distribution of power among European societies. Transnational elites as the visible elements of the European coalition of capital interests, define the broad directions and the consensus of integration. Referring to materialist state theory, Demirovic affirms the possible emergence of a European statehood. Decisive - he states - is the transformation of power relations that are materialized within the process of European integration (Demirovic 2000:66). The later passages on bureaucratization and civil society deepen these considerations.

Even though the Gramscian perspective provides insight into the unequal distribution of resources and the resulting differences in shaping power, still the concrete composition of the dominant class remains unclear. Is it supportable to link Haller's concept of an elite project to the Gramscian "dominance or hegemony of a social class" and how could it be defined?

Analyzing elites on European level, Hartmann (2007:243) ascertains that a large part of European elites have an upper-class background. Within a Neo-Gramscian framework Apeldoorn refers to the elitist networks in the European Union, when he speaks of "class-elites" (van Apeldoorn 2000:191 ff.) and the emergence of a transnational European class that is composed of the capital owners and that constitutes the driving force of integration[19]. The

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[19] What Apeldoorn analyzes in the context of European power relations was earlier applied by van der Pijl (1998) on international level. Close to the Coxian concept of world order, van der Pijl notices the

immense concentration of capital lobbyists in Brussels further demonstrates the dominant (economic) logic behind the integration process. Detecting an example of emerging class formation on transnational level, Apeldoorn investigates the strategies of the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT). Being a transnational agglomeration of economic, political and administrative elites, the ERT – according to the author – embodies the new emerging capitalist class[20]. Deppe (1993:53) identifies a relatively stable power bloc or political class that was established by a broad negotiation process among national political elites, economic leaders and representatives of science and media.

Understood in that sense, the elitist network of politicians, bureaucrats and economic leaders detected by Haller, could be interpreted as a coalition of pro-European forces and the representation of class formation. Nevertheless, it must be clear that a Neo-Gramscian framework rejects the vision of a homogenous and internally cohesive class. The idea of class formation accounts for the heterogeneity of such a coalition. Consensus finding among forces is always accompanied by negotiation, conflictive processes and contradictory developments (van Apeldoorn 2000:192). In more detail, the role of elites for the generation of consensus will be elucidated within coming passages on Gramsci's ideas on the intellectuals and hegemony.

As already indicated, the interpretation of the elite project as the hegemonic project[21] of an emerging social class provides alternative perspectives on the democratic quality of European integration:

The Gramscian point of view suggests that the lack of political participation is supposed to enable the pursuit of particular interests of the dominant social forces without being held accountable. From a Gramscian perspective the democratic deficit is the generic term of a multifaceted constellation to establish an apparent separation of the political sphere and the sphere of society (see chapter 2.3). The dominant class is disconnected from democratic processes to shape the integration process according to its interests (van Apeldoorn 2000:193 ff.). Demirovic (2000:64–65) states that with regard to its domination by elitist networks, the constitution of the EU interrupts the democratization process of European societies and

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formation of a transnational managerial class that shapes the neoliberal direction of globalization.

[20]  Apeldoorn calls the ERT the "elite forum of Europe's emergent transnational capitalist class" (van Apeldoorn 2002:83).

[21]  The notion "hegemonic project" refers to the *ambition* of a coalition to become hegemonic. It is not synonym to the actual accomplishment of hegemony. The passage on Euroscepticism provides insight.

undermines the negotiation processes of the traditional welfare states for the benefit of the capitalist class as the dominant social force within the European Union.

An essential aspect of power and Gramscian hegemony is the ability to present particular interest as generally desirable in the name of the public good. Without referring to concrete normative content, Scherrer (2008:76) argues that hegemony means the universalisation of particular interests. Here again, the Gramscian perspective seems useful to conceptualize aspects of the substantive dimension of the democratic deficit. Haller (2009a:19) argues that elites developed particular interests connected with the integration process that disperse from the interests of the citizens.

He identifies main interests that commit elites to the active support of European integration. The European Union serves as a *"Reformhebel"* (ibid:77 ff.) in the way that political elites use the European Union to solve national problems. The argumentation corresponds with Ziltener's observation that the European integration project performs well in those areas where the EU - in the context of modernization projects – took over functions to solve the political gridlocks of national elites (Ziltener 2000:87).

Economic elites promote European integration in view of new market opportunities and deregulation. Other incentives are the financial opportunities coming along with the structural funds and the funds for agrarian policy. After all, the integration opens new opportunities for administrative offices and European careers for all kinds of elites (Haller 2009a:77 ff.).

He continues that elites accentuate the commonly ascribed characteristics of European integration such as peace and liberty.[22] The emphasis on these generally accepted values and the expulsion of concrete interests in terms of market integration or (undemocratic) problem solving, could be seen as the dialectical attempt to build a pro-European hegemony through the generation of consensus. The next passage examines the preliminary accomplishment of the hegemonic project:

## 4.2 Euroscepticism as a crisis of hegemonial aspirations

Earlier on, the concept of hegemony was extended to the active involvement of the subalterns. Following Gramsci, hegemonic consensus is only attainable when the ruled acknowledge

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[22] Once again it shall be referred to chapter 4.2.2 that analyzes the role of intellectuals for the generation of hegemony.

concrete advantages and interest within the project (Candeias 2008:19). As soon as the active interest declines, hegemony crumbles.

It was argued that the growing euroscepticism is the expression and – at the same time – a central feature of the democratic deficit of the European Union. Findings from the "Eurobarometer" revealed the distrust among the European societies. Examining the empirical conceivability of hegemony, Scherrer (2008:80) underlines the importance of scientific surveys for the determination of the quality of hegemonic structures. One could argue that the European "elite-class" recognized the importance of public opinion polls given the fact that there is an extensive survey program on European Union related topics.

By taking recourse to that argumentation, the growing euroscepticism and the gap between elite support and citizen support means a lack of consensus and a rather poor accomplishment of hegemony. Gramscian thought indicates that a growing distance between political society and civil society is due to growing tensions between the dominant and the subalterns classes (Demirovic 2007:22). The criticism that "the EU is simply 'too distant' from voters" (Hix 2008:70) hints at a structural crisis and a fundamental conflict of interest between classes, or between rulers and ruled (Felder 1993:64).

Within the integration theories the declining support is often described as the end of the permissive consensus in the Post-Maastricht era (Deppe & Felder 1993). It is argued that for a long time all groups seemed to profit from European market integration and that the permissive consensus was guaranteed without the active inclusion of civil society[23]. However, in the early 1990s the economic crisis and the growing unemployment within the European societies formed the end of the economic boom and eroded the consensus as people perceived more and more as losers of the integration process (Deppe 1993:46). Parallel to the crisis, the European institutions withdrew decision power from the national governments and the policy agenda shifted towards regulation and economic reform (Hix 2008:40). In the form of distrust and scepticism the growing discontent was directed against the "obscure" bureaucrats in Brussels. The "Anti-European bottle has been uncorked" (Frankling, Marsh & McLaren 1994). Integration is no longer perceived as unquestionably desirable. Gramsci argues that in case of

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[23] Because of the apparent isolation of the transnational "class-elites" before Maastricht and the inexistence of a European civil society, it is doubtful whether we can speak of hegemony in the classical Gramscian sense.

lacking consensus, the coercive element of class rule comes into appearance. From the point of view of Neo-Gramscian integration scholars, coercion gained prominence in the form of the neoliberal reconstruction of European societies after the end of the permissive consensus (Bieling & Steinhilber 2000a:16; Altvater & Mahnkopf 2007:109 ff.):

### 4.2.1 Side note: A Neo-Gramscian theory of (neoliberal) European integration

The argumentative patterns of the last chapters have been accompanied by references to Neo-Gramscian integration theory and likewise it was emphasized that the politico-economic implications of the integration project are rather neglected within this paper. This side note provides some background information about the arguments of this school of integration theory:

Neo-Gramscian integration scholars share the view that European integration has to be understood in the context of a transformation of the state towards new forms of governance and regulation on European level. The reconstruction of political structures and the economy is summarized by the term "new constitutionalism" (Gill 2000). It describes a moment of the emerging governance structure that secures neoliberal principles in society while at the same time withdrawing them from political responsibility for the benefit of the capitalist class. It safeguards the structural power of capital. The neoliberal discourse is often seen as hegemonic in that it penetrates the entire structure of society and in that it implements market principles and economic calculations in everyday life (Demirovic 2001a:59). The capitalist class shapes a dominant discourse paying reference to the "unavoidable constraints of globalization" and "enhanced competitiveness" in order to implement the neoliberal reconstruction. The "new constitutionalism" then "seeks to separate economic policies from broad political accountability in order to make governments more responsive to the discipline of market forces and correspondingly less responsive to popular-democratic forces and processes" (Gill 1998:5). As described initially, the imposition of neoliberal regulation and disciplinary force compensates for the lack of consensus. Because of this shift towards coercion some scholars prefer the term neoliberal dominance rather than hegemony that is predominantly associated with consensus generation (Bieling & Steinhilber 2000a:16).

## 4.3   Dimensions of (re-) constructing hegemonic power relations

The apparently low accomplishment of hegemony as illustrated by the end of the permissive

consensus exposes questions about possible dimensions of (re-) constructing power relations within the European integration project. Gramsci calls the strategy of the bourgeoisie to (re-) establish hegemony in a time of "organic crisis" the "passive revolution" (Gramsci 1971:46). It appears whenever the leading position of a social class is threatened, when the consensus erodes and when an extensive process of reorganization is needed in order to reconstruct hegemony within society. This happens through a transformation of popular consciousness. The argumentation suggests itself to connect it with the broader debates about the inclusion of civil society and the existence of a European identity.

Before coming to that point, the forthcoming considerations refer to the nature of bureaucratization as part of European integration.

### 4.3.1   Bureaucratization and the separation of politics and society

Within the evaluation of Gramscian thought it became clear that the picture of separated spheres of politics and society is an essential aspect of the realization of class rule in the context of state formation. When recalling the debate on the democratic deficit, it seems promising to analyze the claim on an unaccountable eurocracy in the context of a Gramscian theoretical framework.

As indicated above, the discursive separation of politics and society is an intrinsic dimension of hegemonic class rule. The accomplishment of hegemony implies the active production of common sense and - at the same time - the generation of popular passivity: common sense postulates the image of an objective reality that is too complex to be understood by normal citizens and that therefore should be left to politicians and other elites (Demirovic 1998:102). The differentiation of ruler and ruled denies the intellectuality of the citizens to govern themselves (Demirovic 1991:53).

Criticizing the elitist character of the EU, Haller refers to Offe in the sense that the omni-presence of the European Union and the specialized knowledge in that field lead to a growing *"Inkompetenzvermutung der Bürger gegen sich selbst"*[24] (Buchstein 2006: 267; Haller 2009:23). The high level of bureaucratization on European level and the complexity of the political process can be understood as the reproduction of passivity that disconnects the directions of European integration from public debate. The claim that European elections are not about

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[24]   *The impression of incompetence directed towards oneself* (translation of the author).

European topics and that there is no electoral competition concerning European offices fits into the argumentation (Hix 2008:76 ff.). The low turnout of European parliament elections, that is about 20 % lower compared to national elections, illustrates the degree of popular passivity (ibid:79–80). The disconnection from political controversy guarantees the defining power of the dominant actors that is necessary to shape the politico-economic foundations of the integration process and to configure the consensus formation within society (van Apeldoorn 2000:193). The broad non-consideration of the European electorate during the Lisbon treaty adoption process and the non-discussion of its substantive content exposed that democratization and the actual form of governance are not part of the consensus production arguably because the "elite-class" fears to lose its structural power.

The connection of Gramscian thought and criticism concerning the extensive eurocracy suggests considering the power related dimensions of bureaucratic rule. From a Gramscian perspective, bureaucracy and the lack of political debate within the European Union are an essential dimension of class rule and generalization of elite-interests as described in chapter 4.1. Next to passivity, hegemony is intrinsically connected with the formation of common sense. The here presented ideas are interconnected with the following part.

### 4.3.2   The common sense of European integration

Van Apeldoorn (2000:191) argues that the reconstruction of capitalist power and the emergence of hegemony rely on concrete strategies of the dominant class that imply collective action and the use of resources. After reconstructing a broad Gramscian perspective on the integration project, the following provides more concrete comprehension about the role of the intellectuals in the sphere of civil society and the generation of common sense on the way to hegemony.

The passages about the elitist character that was perceived as a major obstacle for democracy in Europe discussed the fact that elites overemphasize the universally acceptable features of European integration while at the same time withholding particular interests (Haller 2009b:69). Again the Gramscian theoretical framework seems fruitful to interpret these observations within a broader perspective of class rule.

Chapter 2 demonstrated the importance of the inclusion of civil society for the reproduction or power relations in the context of Gramscian thought. Intellectuals in the sense of functional

elites that shape the public discourse are the recognizable representatives of the ruling class.

Within the European Union it is observed that the integration strategy after the end of the permissive consensus is more and more extended to the incorporation of private actors within civil society and to increased public relations campaigns (Bieling & Deppe 2003:529)[25]. Generally speaking, the increase of civil society networks is supposed to lead to an increase in democracy (Freise 2009:121 f.)[26].

Corresponding to Gramscian state theory, European intellectuals or elites represent the formation of a European transnational class that acts within the sphere of civil society. At this point it is important to recapitulate that civil society according to Gramsci (1971:12) is the ensemble of "private" structures in society[27].

The earlier described separation of public and private and the structural power of capital enable European intellectuals to exercise cultural leadership, to fill the "empty space" and to speak on behalf of the public will. The cultural leadership promotes a common sense of the integration project and it seeks to generate active consensus among the subaltern classes. Demirovic (2000:68) mentions a European historic bloc that emerges in form of a broad coalition of private and public actors.

In recent years more and more publications on European level endorse tighter connections with actors from civil society (EU 2007, title 2 *Provision on democratic principles*). Apparently, the inclusion of actors from civil society concentrates on those that are selected ex-ante in regard of the general compatibility of their basic ideas in the context of hegemonic consensus formation. Analyzing the *White Paper on European Governance,* Greenwood recognizes that the inclusion of civil society is confined to "representative actors" (Greenwood 2007:349–351). Referring to the elite character of the European Union, Frantz states that the top-down inclusion of civil society is part of a strategic instrumentalization in order to challenge the claims of a lack in political participation and responsiveness. The professionalized complex of civil society and the high

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[25] In particular Bieling and Deppe mention the "Open method of coordination" (OMC) as an instrument of increased inclusion of civil society actors. However, Greenwood argues that the OMC bears "little evidence of anything resembling deliberative outcomes or practice" (Greenwood 2007:355).

[26] Despite the amplified reference to civil society, Freise (2009:123 ff.) interestingly argues that there is no coherent definition of civil society among the European institutions and that the term is applied to a broad range of problem areas.

[27] "Private" is set in quotation marks here, because apparently Gramsci claims that "everything is politics" (Morera 1990:29).

entry barriers for small, emerging actors in Brussels signify rather a continuation and reproduction of the elite project than a step towards a democratic inclusion of citizens (Frantz 2009:140). Moreover, the ascribed developments structurally promote the inclusion of financially sound actors and a disequilibrium in favor of industry lobbyist becomes apparent (Freise 2009:129). In the words of materialist thought, the current developments manifest the dominant power relations and reproduce the elitist and capitalist character of EU-integration.

The enforced use of public relations campaigns and other "strategies of persuasion" (Haller 2009b:354) is the most visible attempt to form acceptance and consensus. The implementation of European license tags and the emblems of a common European currency could be seen as the analogue of the street names that Gramsci detects as an example of common sense formation in everyday life. In general, the introduction of the Euro fosters the impression of an area in close proximity. European sport events and European song contests, the introduction of a European flag and European anthems are more examples. Furthermore, the practices of European research projects, European elite networks and student exchanges between European universities account for the establishment of a European common sense. This partial emergence of a European civil society is essential for the state formation and the power consolidation of the ruling class (Demirovic 2000:68 ff.).

Additionally, the European common sense is positively substantiated by the connotation of values and myths of integration. The excessive articulation of universal European values such as liberty, democracy and peace in official documents[28] and public discourses overlay the political and economic process and form the cultural, universal substance of integration (Hellström 2006:16 ff.). The term *"Wertegemeinschaft"* ideally stands for the emphasis of normative values as major principles of integration. The conflictive integration process is embedded in a constant replication of myths that help reducing complexity while at the same time legitimizing existing power structures. Common myths are: 1) The European integration is the main guarantee of peace and stability in Europe. 2) Integration is irreversible and necessary in order to counter the structural constraints of globalization. 3) The development of the EU is irreplaceable for prosperity and economic welfare for the benefit of entire Europe (Haller 2009b:361 ff.). European integration is presented as an overall useful process that is driven forward by nothing except the logic of progress and modernity (ibid: 85 ff.).

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[28]  See: Haller (2009b: 334 ff.)

The emphasis on universal values and integration myths can be seen as a strategy to underplay class antagonism and to continue the depoliticization of European politics that facilitate the substantive shaping of integration by the dominant class. Furthermore, it relates to the possible creation of identity:

Within the debate on the democratic deficit, it was argued that the missing precondition of a functioning European democracy is the existence of a common identity. The establishment of such an association would therefore enhance the chances of democratization.

In Gramscian terms one could argue that the intellectual strategies described above seek implementing the cultural basis of a common identity within the sphere of civil society. Rather than unclosing opportunities of democratization, a common identity is understood as the accomplished implementation of consensus or cultural hegemony and the successful stabilization of the hegemonic project through legitimation (Demirovic 2000:68–69).

The European exchange networks, the abolition of internal frontiers and the emphasis on common values establish the idea of a coherent European territory and a certain kind of togetherness. Referring to Jessop, Ziltener uses the term *"Staatsprojekt"* to describe the creation of a coherent community whose interests and developments are conducted by the current historic bloc (Ziltener 2000:76).

In the case of the European identity construction, the togetherness is enforced through the differentiation of "the other". The restrictive control of the European borders and the articulation of the immigration threat, serves to underpin the identity formation (Hellström 2006:20 ff.).

As it was argued, the European community of values and the emphasis of a European uniqueness disarticulate the diverging interests within society. To refer once again to Demirovic, one might state that in the process of identity formation antagonism and heterogeneity transform into an essentially homogenous reality (Demirovic 2001b:165). The particular elite-interests are overshadowed by promotion of generally accepted values.

The formulation of a common identity as a foundation of hegemonic patterns within civil society is attended by the delegitimation of critical or potentially counter-hegemonial discourses. Ideas and cultural habits that challenge the existing order through leaving the patterns of common sense are disarticulated and disclaimed as "radical" or, applied to the European Union,

as anti-European (Candeias 2008:23). Analyzing European documents and discourses, Hellström (2006:214 ff.) detects a constitutive split between "Good and Bad Europeans" that are broadly connoted with modernity vs. backwardness, cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism.

The argumentation seizes Cox's statement that theory is always for a purpose (Cox 1996b:87). Equally, definitions of Europe are never neutral (Hellström 2006:21). Using a Gramscian framework, the articulation of a common identity aims at restricting the European project and at fostering structural power relations within the transformation towards a European state.

## 4.4    Impacts on legitimacy and democratic quality

After linking the debate on the democratic deficit to a Gramscian perspective of European integration, this chapter provides a recapitulation of the impacts on legitimacy and democratic quality. Chapter 5 will then refer to the Gramscian concept of democracy and prospects of counter-hegemony.

The basic principles of political legitimacy in the modern world are democratic in character. Political power in liberal democratic systems should be authorized and responsive, representative and accountable (Weale & Nentwich 2005:3). The debate on the democratic deficit of the EU thus calls into question its political legitimacy.

The Gramscian extension of the state towards civil society reveals a holistic perspective on the nature of political rule and legitimacy: within the sphere of civil society, rule is justified and legitimated by common sense and the production of consensus. Within the European Union it was argued that the partial inclusion of civil society and the reliance on private actors follow the logic of popular legitimation without however fundamentally changing the substantial directions of integration. Recalling Weber, the logic of hegemony hints at the definition of legitimacy as the acceptance of the existing order as legitimate (Weber 2002 [1922]:122). Going even further, the production of common sense indicates parallels to the *Alltagsglauben* of the classification of traditional rule (ibid: 124). Weber links legitimacy to the willingness to comply with a system of rule or to obey commands. He urges that compliance also requires a belief in the legitimacy of the system of rule or command. Every system of authority attempts to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy (Weber 2002 [1922]:325). Beetham and Lord further argue that governments are authorized by means of institutions of consent (Beetham & Lord 2005:16 ff.). Within the EU the belief in the need of European integration is supposed to fill

this place. The implementation of pro-European discourses and the establishment of cultural elements underpin the process of popular legitimation.

Using the dimensions of Scharpf's *komplexe Demokratietheorie,* it was explained that the legitimation through output is overemphasized by the assignment of often abstract, universal values in order to distract from the missing input legitimation.

The central findings of this chapter seem to be broadly in accordance with the initially presented hypotheses: When the democratic deficit is understood as a lack of political participation, bureaucratization and a lack of political debate, the Gramscian perspective suggests that the mentioned developments are rather inherent structures of class rule and the uneven distribution of power within the European Union. They separate the (political and economic) principles of European integration from the public discourse and from responsibility in order to ban influences of popular democratic processes (van Apeldoorn 2000:193). While the general desirability of integration is widely articulated, its specific content is left out of the debate. The lack of democracy then permits dominant social forces to implement their strategies and to achieve their (capitalist) interests. The unaccountable influence of the intensive capital lobbyism and the uneven distribution of material resources among the interest groups in Brussels exemplify the dominant developments of the integration process.

However, European integration in itself has become the dominant value among elites without so far accomplishing hegemonic power and active consensus among the population. The growing disappointment and the euroscepticism were interpreted as an organic crisis of the hegemonial aspirations. The permissive consensus among the population is no longer guaranteed. Rather than being a prospect of democratization, contemporary strategies such as the inclusion of civil society and the development of a common identity point towards the implementation of a pro-European common sense. Growing acceptance and increased consensus would secure and reproduce existing power configurations. What is seen as a fostering of democracy is interpreted as a reproduction of power relations. Table a) gives an overview about the Gramscian interpretation as part of the last chapter:

*table a)*

| Dimensions | Claims on the democratic deficit | Gramscian reinterpretation |
|---|---|---|
| European | *The EU is an elite project.* | *The EU is the hegemonial project of* |

| integration | | dominant social forces. The democratic deficit is an inherent dimension of class rule. |
|---|---|---|
| European bureaucracy | *"Bureaucratic despotism"* | *Passivation, depoliticization and the generation of interpretative power.* |
| Relation elites – citizens | *Euroscepticism* | *The gap is an indication of unaccomplished hegemony.* |
| Future prospects and strategies | *The inclusion of civil society is a means of democratization.* | *The inclusion of civil society is a means of power consolidation and hegemony formation* |
| | *Common identity is a precondition of democracy.* | *Common identity is the accomplishment of common sense. The emphasis on European values is a means of depoliticization.* |

Notwithstanding, a European civil society is still in the formation process. Precisely because hegemony is not yet complete critical scholars underline the opportunity of counter-hegemonial discourses. Bieling and Deppe (2003:524) describe the ambivalent character of an emerging European civil society: on the one hand European civil society is the hegemonic arena of power consolidation and legitimation. On the other hand it is a terrain where fundamental criticism and alternative discourses can be brought in.

The last chapter points towards counter-hegemonial developments and prospects of democratization in the Gramscian sense.

# 5 PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRATIZATION

The earlier chapters revealed that civil society in the Gramscian definition is not intrinsically tied to democratization, but likewise to class rule. For Gramsci, civil society is an analytical category for the interpretation of power relations and hegemony. It is not per se negative or positive. However, hegemony as the organizational principle of civil society gives insight into a Gramscian approach to democracy.

It was described earlier that the "Prison Notebooks" do not bear a coherent concept of democracy and in fact there are fewer than 15 references to it (Morera 1990:15). Then, what

kind of democracy does Gramsci's conception of hegemony imply?

The chapter on the function of intellectuals for the organization of the state revealed the importance of knowledge. While intellectuals are solely defined by the specific role they perform, the intellectual act of thinking is intrinsically rooted within every individual. The statement that "All men are intellectuals […] but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (Gramsci 1971:9) is crucial for a Gramscian approach to democracy.

According to Gramsci, democracy is the engagement in a process of learning and the intellectualization of the masses. Without this intellectual reformation, the subaltern classes cannot become hegemonic. Democracy then means narrowing the gap between rulers and ruled and "eliminating class relations and their resulting form of political society" (Morera 1990:33).

Progressive forces must engage in a critique of common sense and in the questioning of existing social orders, power relations and objectivity. As indicated earlier, for Gramscians, truth is nothing but the consensus of a group (Morera 1990:26). Democracy implies a fundamental critique of the nature of rule itself (Hofer 1991:21).The counter-hegemonial project then seeks to overcome the seemingly natural dichotomy of rule and subjection. Nevertheless, the conception of new projects and perspectives cannot be imposed onto the masses from outside. It must emerge out of the existing values, thought and feelings of the people itself (Morera 1990:26). Gramsci states that "every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil is always a teacher" (Gramsci 1971:350)[29]. Within this context, the importance of individual initiative becomes clear: The emancipation of society and the emergence of a collective will base on the multitude of individual wills. Any form of economic determinism is rejected (Demirovic 1991:44).

Gramsci's ideal of a democratic society is one that renders class differences and structural power relations obsolete. In lieu of the bourgeois society emerges a self determinate association that no longer requires the political state (Hofer 1991:27). It implies new forms of collective decision making processes and the inclusion of the masses as equal participants. Democracy contains the transition from being controlled to the grasping of rights of citizenship. It means that "every citizen can govern and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in the general condition

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[29] The emphasis on the mutual process of learning and the role of education explains the impact of Gramscian thought on educational studies and pedagogy.

to achieve this" (Schwarzmantel 2009:89 ff.) Moreover, the participation of all individuals in the political process requires an open structure such that "no bureaucracy can become entrenched in the leadership positions" (Morera 1990:36). The vision of democracy is therefore a fundamental criticism of bureaucracy, too.

Coming back to the European Union, the Gramscian approach to democracy leads to a critical analysis of dominant discourses and of their constituting power relations and interest. Neo-Gramscians endorse a dialectical conception of history, aiming to detect the internal contradictions of prevailing social relations in order to form the basis of progressive social change (Ayers 2008:3). The analysis would include a deconstruction of myths that underline the normative, politico-economic logic of integration. The groups that at the moment reject the forms of integration can only become counter-hegemonic when they achieve to develop alternative visions of integration that include the subaltern groups. So far, demonstrations and oppositions remained mostly defensive in nature (Bieling & Steinhilber 2000b:109). A Neo-Gramscian prospect would embrace new forms of integration that highlight the social dimension instead of neoliberal market principles. To transform the elite project EU to a European society project and hence to resolve the democratic deficit in this regard, counter-hegemonial perspectives and the intellectualization of society are required.

The broad direction of the arguments at hand seems to coincide with other scholars that highlight the importance of knowledge and awareness. Dahl's definition of democracy requires "enlightened understanding" (Dahl 1998:37). Also the tradition of deliberative democracy seems close (Habermas 1992). However, Demirovic (1991:46) rejects the conception of civil society as a neutral sphere and the image of intellectuals as mediators between the state and the public. The structural power of capital and the role of elites as bearers of interpretative power are obstacles to public deliberation and even in the form of consensus the class antagonism remains structural (Demirovic 2007:28).

# 6 CONCLUSION

## 6.1 Benefits and shortcomings of a Gramscian analysis

Initially it was asked whether a Gramscian framework of analysis still has something to offer for the understanding of political constellations in the 21st century. The concluding examination

reveals an ambiguous picture that introduces to further research challenges:

The application of a Gramscian framework including the concepts of the integral state, hegemony and civil society to the European Union lead to the assumption that the democratic deficit is rather an integral component of class rule and a moment of manifestation of power relations in a new form of European governance. The elitist character is a constitutive characteristic of the European Union. The end of the permissive consensus and the growing euroscepticism require new strategies to consolidate a pro-European common sense and to foster the hegemonic aspirations of the dominant social class. Here the Gramscian understandings of civil society and common sense were tied to the pursuit of legitimacy and the prospects of a common identity formation. The critical, power-related analysis of civil society contrasted the predominant positive connotation in mainstream theories.

The Gramscian perspective yields different implications to the meaning of the democratic deficit and to the deriving consequences for political action and analytical discussion:

A counter-hegemonial discourse requires a holistic perspective on power relations and interests that detects the complex interdependencies between political and civil society, between public and private, the economy and the multitude of social groups (Sauer 2008:169). A Gramscian perspective calls for new perceptions of European integration that deconstruct the existing discourses and myths while including the masses in its redefinition. Aside from the alternative perspective, what then are the major benefits and shortcomings that become apparent?

There are particular concepts that might fit better or seem to redundantize a Gramscian analysis. The importance of cultural ties was absorbed by critical and constructivist theories and the role of elites could equally be explained by modern elite theories. The importance of societal networks and civil society is treated in modern governance concepts and several definitions of legitimacy underline the importance of consensus and compliance. However, the particular benefit of a Gramscian perspective is the integration of these ideas in a holistic analysis whose crucial moment is the extension towards the integral state. This extension allows the analysis of power relations and rule mechanisms and the interpretation of political structures as a societal power scheme. The critique of consensual ruling agreements remains important (Emtmann 1998:141). Overcoming the one-dimensional examination of political institutions, it might open dimensions on the complexity of societal relations to understand the contradictory processes of European integration.

Furthermore, the emphasis on common sense elucidates the importance of values, culture and intellectuals. It accounts for the power of ideas for the construction of the European order and for the interests that underlay the constitution of public discourses (van Apeldoorn 2000:190). The aforementioned deconstruction of integration myths might help to "Bringing Europe down to earth" (Hellström 2006). Demirovic (1998:106) further highlights the importance of cultural leadership and the relevance of rule over passivated individuals. Then, Schwarzmantel concludes that the Gramscian reference to education might give hints to the task of being a citizen in the complex conditions of contemporary mass democracy (Schwarzmantel 2009:92).

After all, the Gramscian analysis is characterized by a certain dynamic and flexibility regarding processes of societal transformation. The specific form of dynamic is further clarified by the many opportunities of connectivity with temporary concepts:

Inter alia, the Gramscian perspective revealed parallels to forms of network governance, to elite theories and parts of deliberative democracy. The meaning of societal ties for the stability of social orders was recognized by modern concepts of civil society that underline the importance of social capital and social networks (Putnam 2001). Even though it was argued that Gramsci was not a genuine democratic theorist, his ideas give an important contribution to modern concepts of legitimation, always embedding them in a broader perspective of rule and class antagonism. Furthermore, the here presented framework links to the constructivist strand of social theory, critical theory, concepts of gender, political economy and many modern approaches that were broadly influenced by Gramscian thought (Jones 2006:122 ff.).

Nevertheless, several shortcomings draw an ambiguous picture and call for partial redefinitions:

It seems doubtful whether the concept of class and the irreconcilable antagonism between ruler and ruled is still applicable in the light of modern processes of societal differentiation (Haller 2009b:65). What exactly does the concept of social class imply and does it account for the plurality of interests in the modern, transnational world (Schwarzmantel & McNally 2009:11)?[30] The reference to a "transnational managerial class" (van der Pijl 1998) and similar forces in the context of European integration seems rather vague. The transnational perspective might neglect the close interlinks of (political) elites with national constellations such as

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[30] Especially the "Amsterdam school" is often confronted with the critique of implicit economism (Scherrer 1998: 163 – 170).

national elections[31]. Moreover, the Gramscian point of view might give the impression of a cohesive, stringent strategy of class rule that neglects inconsistent developments and conflictive processes within the dominant social forces.

The critique that the Gramscian perspective might be too vague equally applies to the prospects of counter-hegemony: What are the actors that could play the role of the former party as the "collective intellectual" (Schwarzmantel 2009:91) and the head of the counter-hegemonial movement? Hardt and Negri's (2005) concept of "multitude" and Cox's reference to the "counter-nebuleuse" (Cox 2002:30 ff.) as the bearer of alternative processes only reinforce the obscurity of the concept.

Furthermore, scholars criticize the abstract dimension of analysis and the neglecting of political institutions such as the parliament and the nation state when international constellations are concerned (Demirovic 2007:37).

According to neoliberalism and the economic dimension of class rule, it was argued that the gramscian concept of hegemony is antiquated as the modern capitalist system more and more relies on force and the constraints of market processes instead of the production of consensus (Demirovic 2008:28 ff.). Indeed, the last century experienced some fundamental developments that define the necessity of readjustment.

## 6.2 Necessary redefinitions and challenges for a Gramscian research agenda

As indicated in chapter 6.1, the neoliberal reconstruction of society and the growing reliance on force unfold the necessity to readjust the concept of hegemony[32]. Other developments such as the educational expansion and the emergence of mass media call for a reorientation concerning the role of intellectuals and the construction of common sense in modern societies. The growing transnationalization of political and economic relations additionally requires a more general adaption of the Gramscian framework that arose from the specific constellation of the Italian nation state. Nevertheless, the sketchy application to European integration still proved to

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[31] The mere recourse to the heterogeneity of social forces seems little convincing when e.g. the EU-related suspicion of English intellectuals and political elites is considered.

[32] Scherrer (2008:82) advocates a clearer definition and a specific operationalization for the empirical analysis of hegemony. Demirovic (2008:28–3) anticipates new forms of post-hegemony without common sense as a characteristic of neoliberalism. See also: Crouch (2004).

be fruitful.

A future research on the integration process would then integrate the European dimension within a global transformation process while at the same time feeding it back to national constellations and interests. Gramscian scholars argue that the forces that support European integration are essentially the same that shape the directions of globalization (Demirovic 2000:65). A next step of Gramscian analysis would tie the broad perspective of European integration with the hegemonial project of neoliberal reconstruction and it would distinguish moments of overlapping between both discourses. After all, the critical discussion of structural power relations necessarily leads to the further analysis of counter-hegemonial projects and alternative developments towards a European association that truly emerges out of its citizens.

The paper revealed an alternative perspective on the integration process and on its problematic developments that provokes critical analytical tools to conceptualize the European transformation process. It critically discussed the inclusion of civil society and the promotion of a common identity as dimensions of power consolidation. Moreover, it generates ideas to overcome the elitist character of the EU and to ultimately establish new visions of a "Europe of citizens".

In the end, Gramsci still "speaks to our conditions": as a continuous reminder to critically engage with common sense in the "philosophy of praxis", recalling once again that "'everyone' is a philosopher" (Gramsci 1971:330).

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# 8 APPENDIX

[ viii ]

*Declaration of Authorship*

I certify that the work presented here is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and the result of my own investigations, except as acknowledged, and has not been submitted, either in part or whole, at this or any other University.

Signature

Moritz Sommer

July 19, 2010