

LECTURE 6

A EUROPEAN UNION FOR CITIZENS TO IDENTIFY WITH: FEDERALISM AND SUBSIDIARITY

- In this (shorter) lecture going to examine just what kind of European Union that citizens would ‘identity’ with
 - going to use this lecture to hopefully demonstrate just how some of the theories we’ve looked at so far, and the aim of producing an E.U. citizen identity, ‘fit’ together – could work?
 - and suggest that a European Union moving towards a Federal system based on subsidiarity is the model mostly likely to assist and promote the development of a European Union ‘citizen identity’
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- The way in which the European Union itself develops will have a positive or negative effect on the development of EU ‘citizen identity’.
 - for many EU citizens a centralised, bureaucratic ‘Superstate’ European Union, remote from their everyday lives, based overwhelmingly in Brussels, and gradually eroding their nation-state and all it stands for, provokes a negative response
 - a negative image, and one hardly likely to engender and produce EU ‘citizen identity’

- BUT, a more decentralised EU alongside a Europe of political and socio-cultural regional identity need not eradicate the nation-state and would promote EU citizen identity
- That form of European Union would not be remote from its citizens, but instead would be rooted in the regions of Europe.
- It is argued that a more *federal* European Union would promote EU ‘citizen identity’ at regional level.
- This would mean a clearer division of competences, and arguably a federal structure could be more transparent and democratic
- Power sharing in federal systems is governed by the *subsidiarity* principle, whereby powers are formally divided in a way that brings government as close to the citizens as possible.
 - subsidiarity = decisions taken at the lowest level relevant to the issues
- This should/would make the European Union less remote from its citizens in their everyday lives.
- A Federal European Union does, of course, provoke concerns among many EU citizens
 - largely because it does evoke just those images of a large, bureaucratic centralised organisation that I mentioned earlier (money waste and taxation)

- BUT a Federal European Union, more democratically constituted, and really based upon the principle of subsidiarity, could assist in the promotion of a European Union ‘citizen identity’
 - through better image alone, but also through ‘practice’ of E.U. impacting upon citizens’ lives in a positive way – the ‘feeling’ and experiencing of benefits will ‘bring identity’?.
- The present European Union constitution proposal (being voted on across EU), with a set of fundamental rights and institutional structures could be a stage towards that.
- What, in fact, we are seeing now is a process of *functional integration* in the European Union
 - and this may be an interim stage that will promote EU ‘citizen identity’ through the very ‘functions (and processes) of integration’ – so, alongside the federalist arguments there are functionalist ones also
- this takes us back to the theory/theories talked about in lecture 2

a) *FUNCTIONALISM*

- **the functions of different elements of societies would encourage and produce co-operation and integration.**

b) NEO-FUNCTIONALISM

- **based on principle of ‘spillover’ (as integration occurs in one area/sector of the E.U. the benefits would ‘spillover’ into other sectors, and produce integration in them).**
- so, the ‘functions of integration’ in the EU will produce greater co-operation between member States, organisations and citizens
 - and ultimately ‘spillover’ into the production of a Federal EU and EU citizen identity.
- A Federal European Union therefore would comprise a ‘Europe of the Regions’ based on *subsidiarity*
- Again from lecture 2 let’s just remind ourselves of the Federal model:
 - **FEDERALISM**
 - 3 MAIN ASSUMPTIONS:**
 - a) societies are complex and diverse;**
 - b) societies are pluralistic**
 - c) since societies are diverse and pluralistic, institutions which protect diversity and autonomy, but which produce unity, are required.**
- so, a Federal framework for the European Union would:
 - protect minorities and minority interests;
 - prevent the growth of a strong centralised power;
 - lead to the peaceful integration of conflicting interests;

- help solve societal problems at the level of government (local, regional, national, E.U.) that was most suited to deal with the particular problem or issue
- it is argued then that institutionally a Federal European Union would provide the necessary freedom, autonomy and identity for the diverse societies in the EU,
 - and at the same time it would provide for and encourage co-operation and conflict resolution – and promote a common EU citizen identity
- But this promotion and development of a common EU citizen identity within a Federal European Union need not eradicate or seek to take over from national, regional or local identities.
- There is no reason why people in the EU should not hold multiple identities (as social psychology theory suggests).
- Indeed, in a certain sense, multiple European Union, nation-state, regional and local identities might actually be very appropriate for a multi-level system of governance such as the EU.
- Although the concept of regionalisation means that the establishment of E.U. structures can only be reconciled with the citizens' interests if there are, simultaneously, oppositional tendencies as well in the sense of a strengthening of the sub-national level.

- This means a balance between regional, local and E.U. institutions and processes
 - a balance of structures and processes.

- The establishment of a Federal European Union, with supra-national structures at the centre, must be counterbalanced by a ‘Europe of the Regions’
 - in which there is a shift of decision-making to smaller, intermediary groups that are involved in dealing with complex social demands concerning policy and public action (related to EU citizens’ everyday lives) = *subsidiarity*.

- This process of decision and policy-making at the lowest relevant level (*subsidiarity*) would, in turn, promote citizen awareness of the EU and its role and benefits
 - and ultimately, promote ‘EU citizen identity’

- Despite current fears and wariness of a certain type of Federal Europe amongst the EU populations, and its seeming unpopularity, if it were properly and fully constituted and operated this then does seem to be the EU model that is most likely to produce EU citizen identity
 - a federal European Union, based on the principles of ‘subsidiarity’ and a ‘Europe of the Regions’

- But, this is just one model that could possibly produce an E.U. ‘citizen identity’ – and it is, of course, based on the assumption that an E.U. ‘citizen identity’ is desirable.