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TOWARDS EUROPEANISATION AS A CULTURAL SPATIAL CHANGE

Some Theory Based Considerations on the Role of Intercultural Learning and Institution Building for the social (Re)Construction of Border Areas

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In this article the underlying rationale for one of the leading research questions of this project, namely how Polish-German cross-border cooperation in the field of higher learning may contribute to Europeanisation, will be conceptualised. Different meanings of Europeanisation in social-science research are described and the understanding of the concept in this project is elaborated. The assumption in this article is that Europeanisation processes will show up empirically in adjustments to social practices, routine actions and changes in rule systems and thus they can be comprehended as cultural spatial changes. Based on theories of social constructivism and the knowledge sociology constitutive building blocks for cultural spatial change are discussed. These theoretical considerations are followed by the presentation of a model that serves as a tool for investigating even small steps of intercultural convergence with the aim of assessing their potential for cultural spatial change towards Europeanisation. The last part of this article will feature selected examples from the empirical findings of cross-border collaboration between universities in the Polish-German border area how this conceptual approach may serve to better understand Europeanisation that evolves within everyday processes.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

This theoretical article has the objective of outlining the underlying rationale for one of the leading research questions of this project, namely how

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[1] Note: Quotations from scientific articles in the German language have been translated by the author.

Polish-German cross-border cooperation in the field of higher learning may contribute to Europeanisation. The assumption is that Europeanisation processes will show up empirically in adjustments to social practices, routine actions and changes in rule systems and thus they can be comprehended as cultural-spatial changes. Social interactions in border regions seem to be particularly suitable for an empirical reconstruction of these processes as such areas are where different cultures and their respective specific knowledge stocks encounter each other and even clash.[2] In accordance with this view, the term Europeanisation in this research is meant to represent something new: a bottom-up approach to the development of coherence and understanding between different European cultures.

In this article the theoretical basis for this project regarding its understanding of Europeanisation as spatial cultural change will be devised. At first the state of the art concerning the different meanings of Europeanisation in social-science research is described and the understanding of the concept in this research will be elaborated. In order to explain this approach it seems to be necessary to work out and to define the most important elements of cultural spatial change for consideration in the light of the underlying theory of social constructivism. Thus, in this article the attempt is made to link the elements of culture and space by considering the role of social practices and their interrelations with knowledge and institutional learning which, taking a perspective from theories of social constructivism, can be regarded as the constitutive building blocks for cultural spatial change. Such theoretical considerations will be followed by the presentation of a model that is based on these theories (Fichter-Wolf 2010). The model that is introduced is a conceptual approach in order to empirically reconstruct the socio-cultural changes of border areas and an attempt to visualize such processes. It will serve as a tool for investigating even those small steps of intercultural convergence that might be encountered in empirical research with the aim of assessing their potential for cultural spatial change towards Europeanisation. The last part of this article will feature selected examples from the empirical findings of cross-border collaboration between universities in the Polish-German border area how this conceptual approach may serve to better understand Europeanisation that evolves within everyday processes.

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[2] Here we follow Hettlage, who assumes "that presumably some spaces may become temporarily more significant than others, due to their actual, symbolic or imaginary references" (Hettlage 2007: 276).

EUROPEANIZATION AS A PROCESS OF CULTURAL-SPATIAL CHANGE – ON UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT

The term 'Europeanisation' is both in practical as well as in scientific terms rather vague and is used to characterize many forms of development in Europe. Both social and scientific discourses often equate the term `Europeanisation´ with the term `European integration´ and use them as synonyms. However, in the last years there have been attempts to differentiate between the two terms and give distinctive definitions (Deger 2007). Whereas in most cases 'European integration' refers to the change of political, economic and legal structures and thus referring to a Europe-wide processes of legal adjustment and the formation of institutions, 'Europeanisation' is often used in a much more unspecific way, which made Olson claim: „'Europeanisation' is a fashionable but contested concept" (Olson 2002: 921; 2007: 68) Thus, behind Europeanisation there is obviously a concept by which a variety of approaches may be subsumed. Accordingly Koschmal (2006: 11) assumes that this term has been widely recognized because it is capable of connecting most different social discourses.[3] Radealli approaches the ambiguity of the term by comprehensively defining Europeanisation as "processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things', and shared beliefs and norms" (Radealli 2004: 3). According to such a wide understanding, Europeanisation covers both the change of rather 'tough' structures (economic and legal systems, political system) and also changes in 'soft' fields which are more difficult to grasp, such as attitudes, identities and value systems etc. which accordingly include cultural and social integration. In this context Deger believes that the "diffuse nature of the use of the term 'Europeanisation' can at least partly remedied by completing the understanding of Europeanisation in a cultural way" (Deger 2007: 146). This vagueness – this is her argument – is most of all due to the contradictions and tensions resulting from the problem of defining the European space as territorial unities with there different spatial interlacings and overlappings that analyses of Europeanisation processes have to refer to. By extending the analysis with the cultural view the principle of territoriality – understood as containers within which social actions happen – might be overcome. As for the cultural perspective research requires analysing processes of social change across existing borders and of defined political-administrative spaces. It is within social interactions that

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[3] E. g. Featherstone (2003: 6ff.) distinguishes four different topical fields which are significant in the context of Europeanisation: 1. the historical process, 2. the process of cultural diffusion, 3. processes of institutional adjustment as well as 4. the adjustment of political processes.

the relevance of spaces is constructed by the actors themselves (e. g. transnational action spaces). According to such a constructivist position, spaces are most of all constituted by everyday interactions and the views actors are taking within these spaces. The idea of the container on the other hand – as is the criticism – "transported outmoded and outdated ideas of society and the action orientations of actors" (ibid. p. 154) and thus is not suitable for the analysis of Europeanisation processes. As it is obvious in practical work interrelations, instead there develop 'spaces of field-specific interdependence' resulting in new spatial unifications (see ibid. p. 156f).

Fligstein supports a similar idea of Europeanisation processes which, as he says, take place within 'social fields' that are permeating national borders. As a 'field' he defines "… an arena of social interaction where organized individuals or groups such as interest groups, states, firms, and nongovernmental organizations routinely interact under a set of shared understandings about the nature of the field, the rules governing social interaction, who has the power and why, and how actors make sense of one another's actions" (Fligstein 2009: 8). Also Hettlage and Müller (2006: 15) argue in this direction. In their opinion, a European society may develop by processes of social networking that emerge in the various subfields of society. These social networks serve as elements of a new European society, according to which then Europe may be imagined as "a unique reconciliation of different social fields" (ibid. p. 152).

This analytical approach, which analyzes Europeanisation processes by way of networking processes in social fields, provides a suitable starting point for our research. Here, German-Polish cross-border cooperation's in the field of university education can be considered as such a 'social field' where actors from different institutional and cultural backgrounds interact and thus permeating national borders. It is the question of concern how this processes may contribute to Europeanisation in the meaning of the development of coherence and understanding between different European cultures – in higher education and beyond.

CONSTITUTIVE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CULTURAL SPATIAL CHANGE: CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Culture, Knowledge and Social Practices – an approach towards a Synthesis

From the perspective of theories of Social Constructivism (Berger und Luckmann 2004) the concept of 'culture' is oriented towards a meaning-,

knowledge- and symbol-oriented understanding. Accordingly, culture is considered as specific orderings within respective arrangements of knowledge and thus "develop against the background of symbolic orders, of specific ways of interpreting the world ... [and] are reproduced by systems of meaning and cultural codes" (Reckwitz 2005: 96). But culture will not here be reduced to the cognitive phenomena of meaning and mental structures; rather cultures are also interpreted and understood "as know-how dependent everyday routines, as collectively intelligible social practices" (ibid. p. 97). In this view a culture's knowledge arrangement also includes practical knowledge, such as "the practice of bureaucratic administration, of physical hygiene or of risky enterprise, [the] complex of the practices of scientific research, of middle class marriage or of the reception of pop music etc." (ibid. p. 98).

Culture in this understanding is expressed in habitual practices, competencies and routines that are to a great extent related to the existing shared knowledge base of a society. It is collective knowledge that shapes social practices and patterns of action. This knowledge can be explicit but is often implicit, stored in the shared values, norms and traditions of a society. Thus, the social world is created through a meaningful knowledge of procedures and such social practices make obvious how everyday life is structured through 'cultural codes' as collective forms of understanding and meaning; in the broadest sense by symbolic orders (Reckwitz 2003: 287ff.; Reckwitz 2004). By this means practices and action patterns unfold people's perception of reality and together with other practices transform or stabilize their world view. "Regular practices of action follow implicitly cultural patterns and unfold in habitual interpretations, meanings and social actions" (Hörning 2001: 165). Regular common action patterns evolve into collective patterns of action and thus the main features of human interaction are socially expectable. It is assumed that most human actions are not an intentional act but follow internalized collective social practices (ibid.). Thus, social practices maintain the shared social knowledge that is often implicit and has been settled through experience and continuous action. "Social practices are thus in a sense, the medium of social relevance and appropriateness" (ibid. p. 162f.). Bourdieu and Giddens therefore believe that social practices are ontologically more fundamental than the particular acts of individuals (ibid.).

To characterize the specific forms of social practices that have developed in certain surroundings the term 'habitus' – following Bourdieu – seems appropriate (Hörning 2001: 167f.; Reckwitz 2003: 282). In the understanding of Bourdieu the term distinguishes a system of internalized patterns of behaviour that is produced by a range of class-specific thoughts, perceptions

and actions. Even though they are shared with other members of the class, for the individuals themselves they appear as their own. Thus, the habitus concept includes tacit knowledge which has lodged in an actors mind through experience from within the ongoing habitual action routines. The commonly accepted habits and social practices that are covered by the term 'habitus' are not understood as a result of reflective learning, but by internalized routines and practices in a world of common meanings. The habitus is understood as a system of schemes for the production of practices and also as a system of schemes for the perception and evaluation of practices. In both operations the social position in which a specific habitus has developed becomes clear. Consequently the habitus produces practices and ideas that can be classified and can be identified by those who possess the code necessary for the understanding of its social meaning. Therefore the habitus is complemented by the 'habitat' as the social environment created within a social field and by the practical world. Thus: habitus and habitat are understood in a closed relationship of reciprocal enabling and opportunities (Bourdieu).

Consequently, from the social-constructivist perspective the theoretical concepts of social practice are therefore strongly interconnected with cultural theories and even regarded as a part of them. But – as Reckwitz points out – it is the importance of materiality / physicality that distinguish practical theories.[4] Practical knowledge is manifested in physical activities and artefacts. It is this form of knowledge that makes a person capable of acting, which turns them into 'actors'. According to this understanding both the system of social order as well as the concept of action is materialized. Thus it includes a modified understanding of action and simultaneously a modified understanding of social issues. Theories of practice offer, therefore, an approach to a theories of materiality by which the social is placed in a spatial-material relationship with bodies and artefacts (Reckwitz 2004; Reckwitz 2003: 282). However, material-technical objects and processes do not themselves possess any functional and cultural significance per se. This will only be gained in the processes of appropriation and use: "… the homes, the landscapes, the cities …, the tools and machines, the technical

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[4] It is also the importance of materiality / physicality that distinguish theories of practice from those directions in cultural theories and social constructivism that mainly refer to images and world views and thus try to understand their mental and cognitive structures through an analysis of texts and discourses. Theories of practice conceive the collective knowledge systems of a culture neither as purely cognitive schemata of observation nor as codes within communication and discourse but as a practical conglomerate of everyday techniques. They are based on a practical understanding of behavioural norms that express themselves in form of routine relationships between subjects and their use of material artefacts. (see Reckwitz 2003).

infrastructure, telecommunications networks, in which we are involved, our modes of experience and the cognitive-symbolic processing effect of our social practices. Particularly they open up new possibilities for action and communication ..." (Hörning 2001: 167). In this way material artefacts (buildings, technologies, etc.) influence our experiences and our practical knowledge and this may explain how new knowledge and new technologies constantly offer new ways of interpreting and understanding the world. Social practices thus always indicate two pathways for social evolution: repetition and new greenfield developments (ibid.).

In an understanding of culture as 'meaningful orders of knowledge that guide social practice' it must be possible – this is the assumption – to empirically track down those elements of social practice that are in a state of flux due to the influences of other alien cultures. It is the aim of this research to identify those developing patterns that may indicate socio-cultural changes and investigate how they may contribute to cultural convergence. This may provide insight into how cultural-spatial change towards Europeanisation might happen.

Institutional Change in Intercultural Contexts

With respect to the above statements about the concept of culture, the role of institutions is accordingly emphasized in this process. Institutions are regarded as shared concepts used by humans in repetitive situations; they are organized by rules, norms and strategies (Ostrom 2005, 1999). North (1990) has stated that institutions are 'the rules of the game in a society' and stated elsewhere that they are "the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic, and social interactions [consisting of] informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)" (North 1991: 97). In social science research, institutions are usually treated as particular rule systems which occur in sets, e.g. constitutional rule systems for society, collective rules governing different kinds of organisations, and operational rules for routine actions.

In any society and its respective cultural setting there is a need for a set of behavioural norms to define acceptable actions for the members of the society, because all human activity requires certain regularising conventions that facilitate social processes. Institutions guide and restrict human behaviour and they form a framework of appropriate and accepted actions. Institutions generate a common orientation for the members of a society and thus reduce uncertainty about the behaviour of individual actors (Göhler

1997). Institutions can therefore be equated with collective knowledge systems and thus are closely linked to culture. In such an understanding of collective practical interpretive knowledge guiding social practice (Reckwitz 2001), each culture is strongly distinguished by its institutions. But on the other hand institutions 'as rules of the game in a society' (North 1990) are also shaped within and by the culture they exist in. Thus institutions on the one hand enable and constrain social interaction, but on the other hand they are created by human actors (Mayntz and Scharpf 1995). This dual face of institutions has to be considered when analysing socio-cultural and spatial changes.

How institutions change and how new institutions evolve is an ongoing debate in social science research. Institutional rules sometimes change at a stroke, sometimes they are subject to incremental change. Göhler distinguishes a revolutionary path (institutional decline; drastic and immediate institutional changes like German unification) from an evolutionary path (adaptation to changing social conditions) regarding institutional change. More common in everyday social processes are incremental evolutionary changes to institutions (Göhler 1997). This can also be assumed for socio-cultural and spatial changes in the context of Europeanisation processes.

Following Djelic and Quack (2002) we regard institution building and institutional changes in the transnational sphere, or rather intercultural context, as an evolutionary and multilayered process consisting of many institutional innovations in every day routines, social behaviour, established practices and rules that regulate the relations and interactions between the actors and groups of actors that are involved. Accordingly, institutional transformations emerge in a process of "succession and combination, over a long period of time, of a series of incremental transformations [which] can lead in the end to consequential and significant change. Each single one of these incremental transformations may appear quite marginal. … However, the succession and combination of multiple and multilevel transformations ultimately and with a longer term view of the process adds to the significance and heightens the impact of each single transformation" (ibid. p. 11). The alteration of institutions that follow an evolutionary path is regarded as a very slow process whereby change is always associated with resistance and persistence (ibid.).

With the aim of identifying patterns of cultural spatial changes and to understand the processes of Europeanisation the question of *how* institutions change is of great interest. Djelic and Quack (2002) assume that transnational and cross-border institutional alterations often emerge as a recombination of existing national institutions. They propose "the focus of analysis has to shift away from the present concern with national configurations

towards attempts at understanding transnational recombination … [and] reinterpret globalisation as multilayered processes of transnational institution building and recombination" (ibid. p.23). As institution building and changes to institutions in an intercultural context involves actors or groups of actors with mental and action maps originating from quite different cultures and institutional contexts, it is of great relevance for empirical research which nation can prevail with their culture and which institutional fragments will merge. There might be asymmetries arising from different power structures in the process of intercultural institution building. Djelic and Quack suggest three different modes in which "the rubbing, contestation and recombination of different institutional fragments can take place at the transnational level" (ibid. p.16f.):

The '*dominant*' mode is obvious where institution building is strongly influenced by the values and structures of the other culture. The '*negotiated*' mode may evolve when actors or groups from different national background are confronted with finding consensus in a process of negotiation. As participants in a negotiation process are never quite equal it is likely that in reality the 'dominant' and the 'negotiated' mode coexist and interact. A process in which the actors can operate with complete openness at the frontier between different rule systems is labelled the '*emergent*' mode. The results from the emergent mode "tend to become detached from their multiple national roots and develop a dynamic of their own as a truly transnational space" (ibid., in reference to Barnett and Finnemore 1999). This process, however, requires that the actors involved consider the others views and rules as well as their social practices and unconditionally accept this perceived system as good or even better. Thus, it seems crucial for institutional change that follows the emergent mode to be strongly connected with the process of institutional learning. In the following section this consideration will be elaborated.

Socio-Cultural Change and the Role of Institutional Learning

Particularly in policy research, the question of institutional learning is taken up from time to time and has been emphasized in the recent years (Héritier 1993; Leonhard-Maier et al. 2003; Bandelow 2003). The discussion quite often refers to earlier studies on organizational learning where the interrelation between individual and collective learning is the matter of concern (Argyris 1964; Argyris und Schön 1974, 1978). The considerations in these earlier studies already offer important approaches that can be made fruitful for explaining the relationship between knowledge, social practices

and institutional learning – also in the intercultural contexts of cross-border cooperation. Argyris and Schön (1978, 1996) argue that people have mental maps with regard to how to act in situations which includes the methods of planning, implementing and reviewing their actions. They assert that such actions rely more on these mental maps than on the theory of action they espouse. Therefore they propose a distinction between a 'theory in use' and an 'espoused' theory. However, a theory in use is implicit and the related tacit knowledge has been acquired in the processes of socialization. Thus, this approach can be related to cultural understanding as the shared knowledge stock in a culture.

This theory of organizational learning (Argyris and Schön 1978, 1996) also provides some explanation so as to better understand institutional learning in the context of intercultural cooperation processes. Learning for Argyris and Schön (1978: 2) involves the detection and correction of errors in order to avoid future failure. They make a distinction between different modes of learning. *Single-loop learning* describes a simple adaptation of behaviour without changing their underlying values. This learning process can also be called instrumental learning as any changes to an action strategy do not jeopardize the existing institutional framework. More advanced is *double-loop learning.* This combines changes in values along with their connected knowledge bases and is therefore related to changes in collective behaviour and changes in organisational and institutional structures. The process of double-loop learning includes feedback loops regarding both action strategies as well as the underlying theories of action. Through reflection and modifications of the methodology in line with alterations to action strategies it offers a greater range of possible responses to changing conditions.

I regard this advanced mode of learning as crucial for institutional learning because it tackles the deeper structures of internalized knowledge. Additionally, I consider the approach of Sabatier (1993) as the most appropriate approach for explaining changes in institutions through learning. The core of his thought is built on the idea of different levels of belief, which are characterized at each of the various levels by different knowledge bases. The lowest level consists of *deep core beliefs* and contains fundamental core beliefs. This is characterized by normative and ontological axioms. The middle level of *second core beliefs* refers to fundamental beliefs about action orientations and strategies. The outermost layer concerns convictions regarding instrumental action as well as, for example, specific rules about the process of decision making. In the hierarchy of these elements there is a decreasing resistance to change. The tertiary aspects (choice of instru-

ments, measures) will be most accessible, while the cores of the normative beliefs and fundamental positions are very resistant to change.

Referring to these different layers of institutional learning it has to be recognised that fundamental social cultural change requires changes to deep core beliefs and can therefore only be achieved by double-loop learning. This raises the question of how double-loop learning in organizations can be fostered. While single-loop learning is mostly driven by unilateral defensive strategies in order to protect oneself and others, double-loop learning is based on a process of dialogue that encourages open communication. The underlying governing values are participating in the design and implementation of actions, emphasising common goals and mutual influence, and publicly testing assumptions and beliefs (Argyris and Schön 1996). Transferred to intercultural communication contexts, e.g. in cross-border cooperation, this means appreciating the views and experiences of others rather than just seeking to impose your view on a situation. In this way each side's naturalized practices with their underlying mind maps are being tested and this encourages mutual learning. Therefore, it can be assumed that any new knowledge gained in intercultural interactions and negotiations within cross-border cooperation will change the existing knowledge base on both sides of the border and thus may enhance the capabilities of individuals and organizations to act under changing conditions.

Accordingly, institutional learning will here be understood as a crucial process where new solutions enhance the collective knowledge stock due to answers that are found during long, complex search processes. This knowledge exists as new institutional arrangements detached from the members who were involved in the 'first' complex search process.[5] However, the crucial question of institutional learning still remains how the transfer of individual knowledge to the collective knowledge base of an organization or society takes place. According to Berger and Luckmann it is the process of internalisation of knowledge that explains the interconnection between the individual and society. They introduce a sequential model consisting of three stages of institution building: 1. The *pre-institutionalisation stage*, where the actors involved in recurrent and regular interactions develop patterns of common behaviour according to shared meanings and conduct. Repeated actions reduce the strain and uncertainty of human behaviour and open new spaces for creative ideas and innovation. 2. In the process of *objectification*, behavioural patterns and their associated meanings will reach a pre-

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[5] Such a process could be demonstrated based on the example of Berlin's economic policy (see: Fichter 1996).

stabilized stage. Thus, the consensus achieved may go hand in hand with the emergence of preliminary structures and (informal) rules. However, they still remain fragile at this semi-institutionalised stage. 3. In the process of *legitimation*, institutionalization takes place and the new patterns of behaviour become generalised beyond the specific context in which they are emerged. They are perpetuated in the continuing structures and develop a reality of their own. (Berger and Luckmann 2004: 56ff.).

This sequential process will be explained further in this article in the context of introducing a conceptual model for the empirical analysis of cultural spatial change (see fig. 3).

Understanding Space and Cultural Spatial Change in Border Areas

> *"The border is not a spatial fact with sociological effects, but a sociological fact with geographical impact"* (Simmel 1908, 1992).

Following the social constructive perspective strictly it is not only culture and institutions but also 'space' that is understood as being socially constructed. Simmel has already stated that spaces – and thus also border areas – are manifestation of social processes: "not the states, not the land, not the municipality and the rural-district limit each other; but the residents or owners who exert the reciprocal effect of limiting" (Simmel 1908, 1992: 35). According to such an understanding of space, geographical boundaries and border areas are social constructs; whether a border serves as a dividing line, or as a contact zone and builds a connective space, depends on human interactions (social and political practices). Thus it is the human capacity for synthesis that also constitutes cultural space.

This understanding of 'space', as a social construct, is consistent with recent perceptions in the social sciences on space. According to this perspective space exists therefore primarily as human attribution of meaning. (See e.g. Eigmüller 2010; Eigmüller and Vodruba 2006; Miggelbrink 2009; Werlen 2009, 2000, 1997; Christmann 2010). Thus, cultural space is understood to be the result of human actions. For space is always already a social space, and "space as an object is ... tied to discourse and communication, to acting and practical work or practices" (Miggelbrink 2009: 71). That is why "all human ideas of space ... are experience- and perception-based constructions of structural relations between elements" (Pries 2007: 132).

However, this is not at all meant to deny the material conditions for the processes of social construction, for "at the same time we must assume that social-cultural and physical-material aspects may always work both as means and as constraints of social acting" (Werlen 2009: 100). This percep-

tion is thus consistent with the approach of theories of practice – as described above – that place the social in a spatial-material relationship with bodies and artefacts. The significance of materiality in the processes of constituting spaces is also supported empirically by surveys of previous Europeanisation processes that indicate the significance of material preconditions; e. g. by procedures that guide the processes of constituting spaces (Deger 2007: 161). Accordingly, it is often the European Union especially which creates such preconditions, by changing the material conditions of cross-border interactions. But in the focus of this action-oriented consideration are the acting subjects, and from this perspective it depends on human behaviour (social and political interactions) if a spatial boundary works as a dividing line or as a contact zone or builds a connecting space.

Accordingly, the focus of research is on human behaviour and relationships. In this understanding the creation of a European space is strongly connected with communication, knowledge exchange and the social practices of human interactions. Following Knoblauch, "even on a fundamental theoretical level … [it is] communication which brings together action and knowledge" (Knoblauch 2005: 175)[6]. It is within communication processes where exchanges of meaning and knowledge transfers take place and common interpretations of action situations may be generated. Relating to changed attitudes and views new ways of acting and regulating may develop that constitute a new shared knowledge base that includes specific notions and ideas about spatiality. "Only by way of communicative exchange it is possible to develop and communicate commonly shared knowledge" (Christmann 2010: 27). It is assumed here that this new shared knowledge - referred to as spatial knowledge - serves as an important component for the creation of a joint European space.

However, it is not about a solitary process due to individuals but it is a social construction: "Spatial interpretations, here also called 'spatial knowledge', must be agreed on by the subjects, must be communalised and last but not least made a matter of society" (ibid.). For a cultural space includes "what we may call societal knowledge, but at the same time it includes processes which make this knowledge circulate – which is the only way a common culture is constituted" (Knoblauch 2005: 175), and through which – and this is the thesis supported – the processes of cultural-spatial change in Europe are socially constructed.

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[6] In his recent work Knoblauch elaborates the interrelation between communication and action as social practices in terms of social constructivism. In this understanding communication is always already human practice. Thus, he identifies 'behaviour' with communicative action. Communication in this understanding is the basis of social reality and therefore constitutes identity, human relationships, society and their perceived reality (Knoblauch 2013).

But, in accordance with Koschmal it has to be considered that Europeanisation in such an understanding of cultural-spatial change is a process that can never be finalised, neither topically nor by its spatial dimensions, and thus will "always [remain] a task ... always [be] an incomplete concept" (Koschmal 2006: 17).

Concluding Theoretical Remarks and further Considerations

The above statements are an attempt to link different theoretical approaches and examine their explanatory power regarding the adoption of Europeanisation as cultural spatial change. It has been shown that Europeanisation in conformity with this understanding as cultural-spatial change represents a process of interaction and communication between different cultures with their own specific knowledge systems and their related social practices in their various social fields.

Border regions in this sense are regarded as 'spaces with opportunities' that – in the context of neighbourhood cooperation and intercultural communication processes – provide particular opportunity structures for different cultures moving towards each other. Such a view means that border spaces thus have the potential for integrating different social interpretations of reality and in this way cultural-spatial change towards Europeanisation can take place.

But these assumptions need to be verified. Representative survey data from recent empirical research about the development of transnational social capital in border regions indicate that European border spaces are not per se 'laboratories of social integration' (Rippl et al. 2009). In a quantitative study Delheys (2005) thesis was tested as to whether it could be verified that European social integration will show up in the quality and quantity measures at the micro level. The results of this survey indicate that identification with the border region and with Europe are not as congruent as the notion of border areas as laboratories for European integration suggests. According to the authors an explanation for these results can be found by considering the question of the social connectedness in certain spaces. Social bonds are found rather at the local and regional level but hardly experienced personally at the level of Europe. Thus, the notion of European integration is rather abstract.

Differing from the research design of the above study, where European social integration was assessed by measuring the emergence of transnational social capital in border regions with quantitative data, the aim of our research was to identify those patterns in everyday interaction that might be

of importance for any process towards Europeanisation. Thus, it is not about evaluating the socio-cultural changes in border areas and measuring the degree of change. Rather, it is about investigating even barely perceptible approaches to the everyday development of intercultural understanding and estimating their importance regarding cultural spatial transformation. What will be investigated is not any feeling of personal connectedness with Europe – and thus it is different from the study mentioned above – on the contrary, what is of great interest is how members from different cultural backgrounds and with different social practices who are negotiating and interacting within an intercultural context across borders develop mutual understanding concerning their action patterns and how in the continuing process of cooperation a common meaning system may be constituted. Referring to the above described theoretical considerations the question of concern is how actors from different cultures and with different knowledge backgrounds – thus actors coming from different institutional spaces – coordinate with each other and how they develop mutual understanding and coherence across different cultures. The aim of this research is to find out if and under what circumstances actors develop common interpretations of action situations and thus acquire new collective (European) knowledge with specific notions and ideas about spatiality that contribute to the transformation of cultural spaces. Accordingly, the research goals are aimed at processes in the context of which different (space-related) knowledge is brought together and negotiated, thus creating new, shared knowledge as a basis for joint action based on collectively recognized rules. This is meant to lead to gaining insight into intercultural institutional learning that could be generalized in respect of Europeanisation processes occurring as cultural spatial change.

From the example of cross-border arrangements in the field of university education in the German-Polish border region used in this research it is assumed that most of the processes of everyday communication as well as action routines in the context of bi-national or intercultural collaboration between the participating universities are of interest. It is considered that most of all it is within everyday interactions that the socio-spatial transformation of society take place. However, this assumption involves the restriction that the processes of socio-spatial redesign mostly play out not with a big bang, but often appear in niches and within individual groups of actors. Thus the convergence in cultures of knowledge occurs in many small steps and which is why they are therefore often barely noticeable from the outside. It is assumed here that these processes in the form of "everyday regionalization" (Werlen 2009) may be highly significant for Europeanisation.

The analysis approach presented in the following section is meant as an attempt to assess these locally developed ways of acting in the socio-cultural development of border areas and to appreciate the significance of such minor rapprochements of cultures of knowledge in order to be able to decide on their significance for 'bottom up' Europeanisation processes.

A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH FOR THE EMPIRICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL SPATIAL CHANGE

Visualizing the Processes of Cultural-Spatial Change

Starting from the theoretical approaches of social constructivism (see Berger and Luckmann 2004) and extending this to include communicative actions (see Knoblauch 1995, 2005, 2013; Knoblauch und Schnettler 2004; Luckmann 2002), the process of cultural-spatial change – as an ideal type – can be reconstructed and graphically depicted with help of the following model.

This depiction symbolizes two European cultural spaces characterized by different institutions and traditions. The central area relates to the border region, where the processes of intercultural communication and interaction take place and which the evolution of a new (European) cultural space can use as its starting point. For, due to the immediate, neighbourhood-inspired spatial contact – this is the assumption – cross-border cooperation provides special conditions for the communicative construction of cultural spatial change. Through such direct encounters between different cultures there may well occur processes of understanding each other, of argumentation, of negotiation and of learning from each other.

The depiction – from bottom to top – describes this process as follows: at the beginning there is a concrete action situation which in the context of bi- or intercultural cooperation may be interpreted and judged in completely different ways by the actors involved, i. e. according to their respective so-cial and cultural knowledge background. In the course of the communica-tion process, the interpretations of individual actors are externalized and must be made subject to negotiation. As these individual interpretations gain common consent, they may be combined to become a collective inter-pretation. In the case of bi- or intercultural interaction processes in the con-text of cross-border cooperation, different ways of interpreting an action situation often confront each other. Typically, this may result in intercul-tural misunderstandings because the parties involved do not understand the respective interpretations of the other side and judge the situation ac-
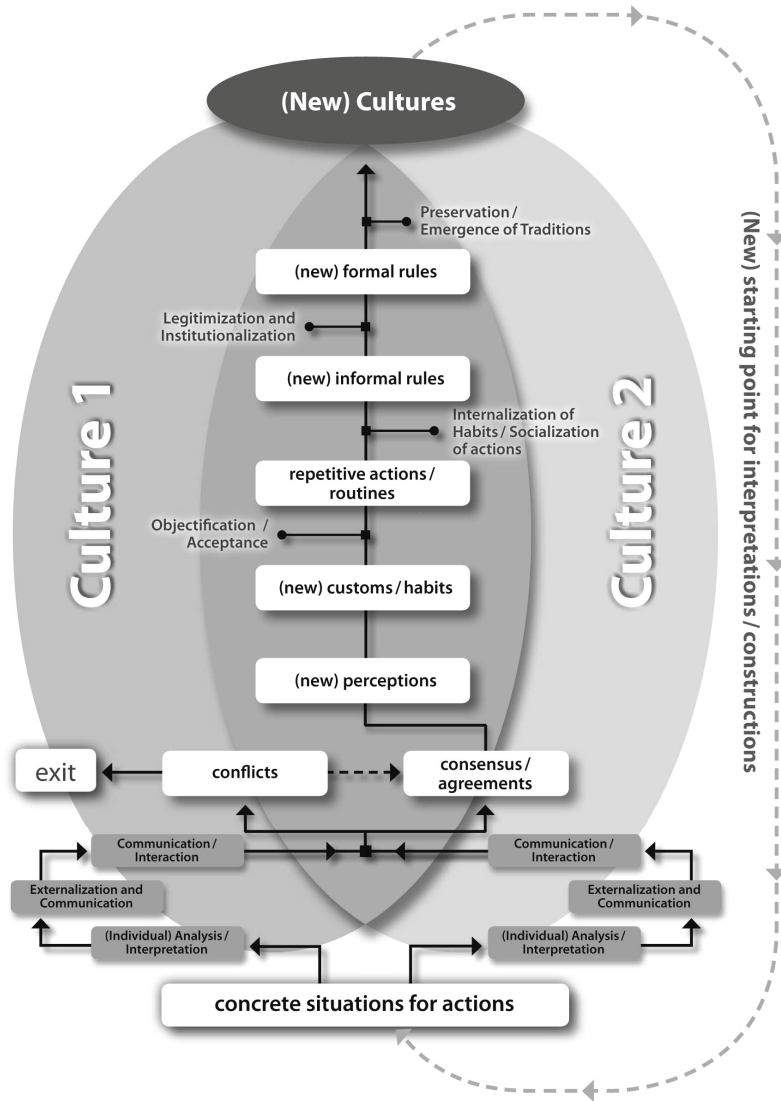
Fig. 1. Analytic model for the empirical reconstruction of cultural-spatial change

Source: author´s own work (Fichter-Wolf 2010)

cording to their own stock of cultural knowledge. Not infrequently this results in conflict, and this always runs the risk that one partner may choose the exit option and leave the negotiation process. However, if the partners are interested in further cooperation – or obliged to continue negotiations

by a higher treaty of cooperation[7] – then mutual understanding of the other side´s point of view may develop in the course of subsequent processes. This may even make the positions of the parties move closer to each other, such as common interpretations, or a consensus may be found on how the problem could be solved. This may result in common or shared views, from which in subsequent contacts new action patterns may arise. According to the theoretical approaches on the social and communicative construction of culture, new views develop as 'intersubjective patterns of interpretation', i. e. individual interpretations are no longer connected to the individual actors involved in the process, as they are also recognized by others, thus becoming a common and 'objectified' knowledge stock. As a result, new practices may develop as common action patterns and become "a typical process which obliges several actors in the same way ..., the use of which relieves [the actors] from the burden of experimenting and deciding themselves ... [thus becoming] objective elements of reality" (Knoblauch 1995: 27).

As illustrated by the model presented above, new action patterns may develop as a result of new shared views. As a result of repeated actions there new routines develop that are internalized by the respective participants and work as collective action patterns. Then, by way of habituations and routines, it may well be that new – informal/formal – systems of rules (institutions) develop as defined action structures.

As mentioned earlier regarding the social construction of cultural spatial change the development of (new) institutions – as socially recognized rules of the game (North 1990, 1991) – is highly significant. This takes place in a dialectic process "which so to speak happens between the I and society" (Knoblauch 1995: 23). The essential steps for this are externalization as a process, in the course of which subjective meaning is constituted and communicated towards the outside; objectification as a process, in the course of which several subjects recognize subjective interpretations as reality; followed by a process of institutionalization and legitimation. The social process of legitimation is considered as the most important step within the process of institutionalization: "Legitimations are the meaningful, objectified ways in which action structures are communicated, or better: they are the communicatively demonstrated dimension of meaning of the respective actions" (Knoblauch 1995: 28). Furthermore, cultural spatial change requires a continuation of these new or changed action-guiding regulations (institutions) that will be internalized and develop into traditions.

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[7] Referring to Scharpf (1993), this situation in a negotiation process may be called the 'shadow of hierarchy'. Through the binding commitment of a higher instance, the exit option is not really possible and the parties are committed to positive cooperation. This means the negotiators are rather tied to finding an acceptable solution for all those involved.

Assessing the Significance of the Empirical Findings

With the help of the above model of analysis it is possible to identify the levels of social and cultural changes which have been reached through collective cultural practices resulting from everyday cross-border activities. At the same time it is possible to illustrate the possible significance of even preliminary results regarding communicative processes towards the social construction of European cultural spaces.

In the empirical analysis of German-Polish cross-border cooperation in the field of higher education it became obvious that coping with institutional and intercultural misfits is crucial for getting collaboration started. As illustrated in another article of this volume[8], due to non-existent regulations at the European level, unconventional solutions between the participating universities in many areas had to be found. There was right from the beginning of the cooperation a need to solve the problems regarding the differential that existed between German and Polish wages and also the necessity of finding a solution due to the lack of clear regulations in labour and social security legislation as well as tax regulations. The aim of creating a joint university with an international teaching staff was almost a failure due to the non-existent regulations at the European level. Other challenges in the early years for bi- and tri-national cooperation in higher education were finding solutions for the visa-problems as well as providing students loans for students studying in the participating countries. One of the major obstacles to overcome for the Polish-Czech-German cooperation – the Neisse University – was the mutual recognition of qualifications acquired in the joint study course with the award of a tri-national joint degree. Even though the joint certificate is not an official document as other diploma certificates in the three countries are, and there is no legal basis at the European level yet, it has been handed to the alumni since the beginning. It is based on an official agreement between the three participating universities. Due to the support of the official authorities who do not intervene, and also a general recognition by potential employers, this informal practice is generally accepted.

As illustrated by these empirical findings, solutions for overcoming obstacles to cross-border cooperation are often based on informal regulations. Looking at the analysis model introduced above it can be seen that new action patterns develop which are based on new perceptions that evolve due to agreement and mutual understanding between the participating

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[8] See article by Heidi Fichter-Wolf in this volume: Intercultural Learning regarding Europeanisation in Higher Education. Influence of University Cooperation in the Polish-German Border Area.

cultures. By exploiting grey areas of the law the actors involved often find consensus in the form of informal agreements. This process can be well illustrated by another empirical example: the solution found for coping with the unclear regulations regarding teaching staff who commute across the Polish-German border every day. As explained in the above mentioned article (see FN 8) the existing double-tax agreement between Germany and Poland in 2007, which requires that German commuters to pay their taxes in Poland if they work on Polish territory for more than 183 days, proved not to be implementable. Even the additional regulation in the agreement, stipulating that taxes must be paid where the concerned person's main place of residence is, did not fit the real situation as often members of the teaching staff are cross-border commuters on a daily basis – sometimes even several times a day. The negotiated solution was that the taxable person him/herself may define his/her main place of residence. This informal regulation now determines the tax practice in this border region. However, there is no written record as a formal rule on this regulation yet. As is illustrated by the model (fig. 3), the next stage – namely the degree of institutional codification – requires the social process of legitimation and is the most important step within the process of institutionalization.

However, institutionalization processes do not run straight, as suggested by the model. For social reality is much more complex, and processes in the social (re)construction of cultural spaces involve both standstills as well as movements in a backward direction.

In the case of the regulation used in the example given above, if there is an intervention by the German Federal State's audit board who could declare this informal regulation unacceptable a backward move in the process of institutionalization can be expected. Nevertheless, this can still be identified as a step towards cultural-spatial change, for the entire process may be considered an institutional learning process. The knowledge gained within the process may become significant for developing European legal systems and thus may include a potential for cultural-spatial change. For even a backward move itself initiates a search for new solutions which might be even more suitable for reaching the level of a codified, formal institution by way of social legitimation. In this context, previously acquired knowledge should also not be underestimated in the further negotiating processes. Thus the process of generating intercultural knowledge occurs by moving forward and backward, and in this way each respective next-higher level of problem solving may be reached.

If we analyse another example from our empirical findings, namely the identified coexistence of different cultures of teaching and learning in the

context of a joint German-Polish law course at European University Viadrina (see article "Intercultural learning …" in this volume, FN 8), it seems – according to the model presented here – that the level of objectification/recognition has been reached. According to the common view developed within the process it was agreed on the further existence and coexistence of the two teaching cultures. The common view includes a mutual recognition of the justified existence of both knowledge cultures with their respective advantages and disadvantages. The coexistence of knowledge and teaching cultures in the context of the German-Polish law course has meanwhile become a routine procedure which nowadays determines the conduct of teaching and examinations. At the same time these procedures come along with new, informal regulations contributing to the development of a new (European) knowledge culture. For this is connected to the recognition of cultural multiplicity as well as of the balance of power between the knowledge cultures involved. This shared view functions as a 'hidden agenda' within bi-cultural practice and is thus transferred as tacit knowledge to further student and lecturer generations. This practice can therefore be regarded as a component in a new bi-cultural institutional system and thus as a contribution to cultural spatial change.

These examples from university cooperation on the Polish-German-Czech border may serve as an illustration of how institutional learning processes in the field of transnational legal systems may occur: through negotiations based on communicative processes of understanding solutions are developed – at first in the form of informal regulations – which are then accepted and practiced by the participants without any codified rules. By exploiting legal grey areas new social practices develop and informal rule systems evolve. This is the only way cooperation in border areas – which are often hampered by non-existent official institutions – is even workable. At the same time these informal regulations indicate a possible direction for solutions of cross-border obstacles that may be significant for the development of European systems of rules.

CONCLUSION

This contribution presents a draft of a theoretical-conceptual analysis approach regarding the empirical reconstruction of cultural-spatial change, building on theoretical approaches of knowledge sociology and social constructivism. The model is based on the assumption that social change in cultural spaces occurs in a communicative way. The ideal-typical course of

such a communication process has been described above, thus demonstrating that cultural-spatial change happens through a change in the socially legitimated knowledge base, via the development of (new) institutions as action-guiding regulations. Relating the empirical findings to the analysis model was done to illustrate a methodological way of dealing with this set of tools. This research aims at analysing the possible potential of everyday action situations in intercultural cross-border contexts and to relate it to the process of cultural-spatial change. For often the varied processes in a cultural approach are neglected because they happen below the horizon of official policies – "below the surface", as explained by Fligstein (2009) – and mostly in remote corners as well as often not being noticed.

Europeanisation as a cultural-spatial change, according to the understanding presented here, happens through changes in a society´s knowledge stocks which are preserved by institutions. This means a (new) European cultural space comes along with a changed knowledge arrangement, which again serves as a (new) starting point for interpreting the action situations of its members. It seems as if a coexistence of knowledge cultures serves as an important intermediate step on the road towards a cultural approach to change in the sense of Europeanisation. It is here where the actors involved learn how to deal with diversity, they have access to 'foreign' knowledge arrangements, and they learn to understand the other side´s interpretations. In the course of the subsequent communication process it is possible to decide which practices might be taken over as one´s own action patterns. Such a process in a cultural approach to change will minimize power asymmetries and create an atmosphere of trust.

If we now try to judge how much these everyday experiences contribute to any 'bottom up' Europeanisation processes, we can state that what counts is not so much the result of individual problem solving in the context of cross-border cooperation. For any single solution is also a product of the specific conditions and constellation of actors which made it possible. Thus, it is not necessarily easy to apply such results as 'best practice' in other cross-border action situations. Essential for 'Europeanisation processes as a communicative construction of cultural-spatial change' is most of all that kind of knowledge that stands beyond single solutions and refers more to an attitude towards other cultures along with a willingness to work towards mutual understanding and learning. This knowledge can be acquired by intercultural learning in the context of communication during cross-border cooperation. It may be collectivized by way of new action patterns and preserved by new systems of guiding practices in border areas and thus constitute a new cultural space. This knowledge may be transferred to other European spaces and may contribute to cultural spatial changes.

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