

Introduction
**Contextualizing, Researching and Debating
Patterns of Standardization and Diversity**

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Background

The network of academics who have contributed to this book come from universities across Europe who have been involved in an undergraduate Sociology Intensive Programme that was established in 1992. The network that delivers the Erasmus-funded Intensive Programme began with eight universities and has since grown to thirteen European universities. The theme of the Intensive Programme for the last five years has been standardization and diversification in Europe. This book is the product of our discussions and debates. The network is, in itself, a diverse one. Scholars involved work in sociology, social policy and social work departments, and have a wide range of substantive areas of interest. It is precisely this diversity that has led to such a rich book. We would like to thank all the students who attended the Intensive Programmes over the last five years for their enthusiasm, contribution to debates, and for challenging our own thinking and understanding around the concepts of standardization and diversification.

Towards an 'Iron Cage' of Standardization, or let a Thousand Flowers Bloom?

Most of our daily life is standardized to some extent: how and how long we work; what and how we eat, where and how we shop, go on holiday or spend our free evenings (cf. Ritzer, 2000). Despite this, most of us will emphasize that our work, eating habits, holiday and/or shopping behaviour are not the same as most other people's – they are 'our' way of doing it. We emphasize the difference, uniqueness and authenticity of people, or more specifically, ourselves. Being different from other people – our individuality – is more valued than being the same, at least as long as those other people are 'enough' like us, and not 'other' in terms of being foreigners, migrants or asylum seekers.

The twentieth century can be characterized by a process of rationalization, and at the same time a process of individualization. The first process can be understood as a discourse on discipline, and the other can be understood as a discourse on liberty (Wagner 1994). Each discourse puts the emphasis on only one aspect of modernity. The liberation discourse refers to the ideas on (individual) freedom as formulated by

Enlightenment thinkers (Wagner, 1994: 5). The establishing of civil, political, and social rights are well-known examples of this discourse. Also the above-mentioned emergence of science and the decreasing importance of traditional norms and values in modern society (or, at least, the weakening of traditional constraints), the growing importance of individualism and pluralism, are expressions of the liberation discourse. At the same time, however, the disciplinization discourse refers to the quest for order¹ and stability² in modern society. The genesis of nation states and the accompanying expanding bureaucracies, with its emphasis on formal regulations, is one form of disciplinization. Foucault has pointed to all kinds of tacit disciplinization, or normalization, in areas varying from prisons to madness (Foucault 1979; Foucault 1965).

Standardization is not necessarily an outcome of explicit or conscious behaviour. It can also be a by-product of other societal processes; there can also be an element of comfort in familiarity and predictability. Standardization can also have a more hegemonic character, for instance when you look at the forms of new institutions like transnational organizations, global media or global markets. By way of example, in all these domains Connell (2009) sketches the way gender patterns are repeated or reshaped. As such, new forms of standardization, also recreate older forms of existing gender inequalities.

The first chapter by Elchardus highlights the fact that standardization or diversity have been more or less 'preferred' at different historical points. For example, the 'epitome' or 'ideal type' of standardization was reached in terms of labour relations in the Ford factories a century ago. This was not only the standardization of the production process through conveyor belt production systems, and 'scientific' management concepts based on Taylor, but also the standardization of consumption and, to some extent, cultural standardization defined and enforced by Ford's 'Sociological Department' (this is discussed further in the concluding chapter). This process of standardization was evidenced in both the West and the East. Lenin, for example, invited American engineers to organize the new Soviet factories. In contrast, the post-modern discourse wants to break from standardization and to privilege and celebrate diversity. Within this position, even grand social theories are seen as an attack on human diversity. We consider issues of standardization and diversity as ones that cannot be defined as fixed concepts; rather they are open to empirical exploration as the relationship between diversity and standardization is likely to vary across time, space and institutions. These concepts also interrelate. It is also posited that standardization and diversification do not stand alone, and therefore cannot be thought of in isolation from one another. Regulation, for example, that intends to

1 'A main theme of modern reasoning is the creation of order, by the imposition of order on wildness or, if that is impossible, by the separation of the disorderly from the orderly. This theme is obviously related to the idea of rational mastery; disorder defies prediction and control' (Wagner 1994: 40-41).

2 In this regard, the longing for stability and security can be formulated as a central explanation for human behaviour (cf. Giddens 1990; Giddens 1993; Toulmin 1993).

increase standardization in a particular social field, often results in movements of resistance in defence of diversity. In consequence, increasing diversity can lead to the perceived need for standardizing human action, behaviour and policy.

The two positions of standardization and diversification are often positioned against one another in rather ideological terms. This book aims to clarify the concepts of standardization and diversification, to place the discussion of standardization and diversification in a more theoretical context, and to apply these concepts in empirical research in a number of different areas, and ask, then, to what extent are processes of standardization and diversification empirically evident in contemporary, and more specifically, European, society? This book explores a number of questions, and applies these to a number of different substantive areas, exploring what we mean by standardization and addressing questions such as: are unification, harmonization, and convergence the same? What synonyms do we use for standardization? Which of these imply 'force', which imply consensus? What are the costs and benefits of standardization? What, if any, are the unintended consequences of standardization?

Outline of the Book

The book is structured in five main parts. The first section provides theoretical and policy approaches to the issues of standardization and diversification. The first chapter by Elchardus provides a theoretical discussion that both discusses and clarifies the concepts of both standardization and diversification, and makes clear their mutual relationship. It also details the varied use of these concepts over time and suggests a framework for investigating and applying these concepts in an analysis of contemporary society. The second chapter by Petersson places these concepts in the policy arena. In doing so it particularly focuses on the neo-liberal response to Fordism and standardization, and the corresponding concepts of New Public Management, the 'steering state', activation and welfare.

The book then moves on in Part II to discuss gender-related issues. Chapter 3 by Jönsson critically assesses the extent to which policy approaches to prostitution and trafficking in EU countries are converging towards some sort of standardization, or if, in fact, there remains significant diversity. She contrasts the opposing policy approaches taken in The Netherlands and Sweden; the former endorses legalized 'pro-rights' approach to prostitution and considers trafficking to be a problem of illegal migration, and the latter viewing prostitution as part of the violence against women continuum and trafficking as a sub-set of prostitution. She goes on to ask the question whether Europe is moving more in one direction than the other, and to what extent can we say that approaches to prostitution and trafficking are standardized, and why. McMillan in Chapter 4 addresses the area of sexual violence policy outcomes. She places this within the supposedly standardizing framework of human rights and asks the questions whether the human rights framework has led to standardization of sexual violence policy in Europe, and whether outcomes for victims of such violence are standardized. Lastly in this section, Chapter 5

by Sung and Guerreiro, provides a comparative analysis of work/family policies. Using the examples of the United Kingdom (UK) and Portugal they critically assess the extent to which differing gender welfare regimes in Europe converge or diverge in the arena of work/family.

The third part of the book deals with issues of ethnicity and cultural diversity. Chapter 6 by Aschauer provides a Europe-wide theoretical and empirical analysis of attitudes towards minority ethnic groups and situates that in the wider theoretical debate about social disintegration. He poses the question whether societal developments lead to greater or lesser ethnic prejudice in Europe. Glorieux and Laurijssen in Chapter 7 build on the theme introduced by Aschauer by focusing on the educational experiences and subsequent labour market integration of children of those who have recently migrated to Belgium. They consider whether the standardized expansion of the education system, characteristic of most Western societies, has led to equity of outcome for different minority ethnic groups. In Chapter 8, Littlewood critically appraises refugee and asylum policy in Europe. In doing so she questions whether the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), designed to offer a standardized response to refugees and asylum seekers, does in practice, do so, or whether concerns and attitudes about increasing ethnic diversity impact upon whose claims are accepted where, and under what conditions. Sabour, in Chapter 9, continues this theme by addressing the cultural aspects of diversification. He does so through an analysis of, until recently, the fairly homogenous population of Finland, and considers the conditions under which 'successful' integration can occur. This case study is subsequently situated in the wider European context.

The fourth part of the book examines issues of inequality and welfare. Chapter 10, by Koch, analyses attempts at centrally dealing with diversity in European Union policy-making, through the example of employment regulation. More specifically, it theorizes processes of destandardization and diversification of work and employment and looks at the content and procedures of the Open Method of Coordination through the European Employment Strategy and considers, through the case study of Germany, whether this is an attempt to regulate diversity in employment relations. The final substantive chapter of the book by Yerkes and Peper (Chapter 11) addresses another important aspect of welfare regulation, that of childcare and the ability to combine work and family responsibilities. They situate the care regimes of the UK and the Netherlands in the European context and consider the influence of social policies analysing whether Europe converges towards a standardized care regime, and highlighting enduring gendered inequalities as a result of the 'care risk'.

In the concluding chapter the editors provide an overview of the different patterns of standardization and diversity observed in the differing fields discussed in the book and place these in theoretical context and in a perspective of social transformation. The chapter also formulates questions for further theoretical and empirical research and investigation.

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