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## Concluding Remarks

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## SECTION IV

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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*Anna Meeuwisse and Roberto Scaramuzzino*

This book is a product of the joint efforts of a research team linked to the research program Beyond the Welfare State—Europeanization of Swedish Civil Society Organizations (EUROCIV) financed by the Swedish Research Council. It is based on the first systematic study of the Europeanization of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Sweden, and it draws on both survey data and case studies spanning a range of different types of organizations operating at various levels. In this final chapter we want to briefly sum up the findings in relation to the overall themes outlined in the introductory chapter.

Our point of departure is an understanding of Europeanization as a two-way process in which the European Union (EU) influences domestic actors, but where domestic actors also make use of the EU. This process might be enabling as well as constraining for CSOs, producing opportunities on the one hand but leading to increased regulation on the other (introduction and chapter 1). We also suggest a multidimensional approach to Europeanization as summarized in the typology presented in chapter 1. This typology draws attention to both direct forms of Europeanization such as regulatory, financial, and organizational Europeanization and indirect forms such as participatory, discursive, and identity Europeanization. Each empirical chapter addresses one or more of these forms of Europeanization, and different theoretical perspectives are used in the book in order to grasp both institutional pressure and organizational strategies and the interplay

among them. For example, theories of resource mobilization have proven fruitful for investigating financial Europeanization (chapter 6), while theories of neo-institutionalism and isomorphic pressures have been helpful when analyzing discursive Europeanization (chapter 7).

One of the main results from our studies is that Europeanization only seems to concern a minority of Swedish CSOs, and this holds true irrespective of whether we consider activities such as influencing policy (regulatory Europeanization), applying for funding (financial Europeanization), or being a member of a European umbrella organization (organizational Europeanization). In other words, relatively few organizations actively pursue activities at the European level. According to many Swedish CSOs, the impact of the EU on the domestic level and on civil society also seems to be relatively weak, which suggests a low level of Europeanization. Considering that the majority of the organizations in our survey were local organizations, these results are hardly surprising. For a local association in a small municipality in Sweden, Brussels is likely to be perceived as both geographically far away and difficult to access, but also as politically irrelevant. Our results in fact reflect the centrality of the grassroots level for most Swedish CSOs and the difficulties these organizations might encounter in connecting to other levels of government (chapters 3, 4, and 5).

Studying organizations within the welfare policy area has yielded several valuable insights into the Europeanization of Swedish civil society. This is a policy area in which the EU has a weak mandate, hence such a study provides insight into not only why CSOs might Europeanize, but also why they sometimes might not. A lack of resources and expertise is often highlighted as explanations in research on Europeanization, but we can conclude that the perceived relevance of the EU for the organization's work is indeed at least as important (chapter 4).

Skepticism of the EU might, however, also stem from a perceived ideological clash between values and norms that are ascribed to EU institutions and those that the organizations stand for. For example, this is the case in the gender policy area where Swedish organizations might perceive the supra-national level (both public institutions and other CSOs on this level) as being less responsive to issues of gender equality and gender-based violence (chapters 8 and 9). Our study clearly illustrates how Swedish CSOs within the social welfare area in various ways try to defend the Swedish social policy model from outside pressure. But we also find organizations that are critical of different aspects of the Swedish model and that use the opportunities to organize and participate at the European and international levels to gain support for their criticism (chapters 9 and 10).

Many of the results presented in this volume point to similarities across countries and are comparable with results from studies from other national

contexts. Some of the findings, however, seem to be quite specific for Sweden and in particular in regard to the strong role of the state in enabling and constraining civil society actors' strategies at the European level. For example, our analyses demonstrate that public authorities and political parties play an intermediary role in CSOs' attempts to influence public policy (chapter 3). The domestic public funding system also plays an important role in creating the financial stability that is required to handle EU funding. Furthermore, it is often Swedish public authorities that guarantee the stability and continuation of EU-financed projects (chapter 4). Swedish organizations are thus often dependent on domestic public support in order to access the EU level, but they might be less dependent on EU support for their survival than organizations in other countries.

A closer analysis of the resource mobilization of Swedish CSOs uncovers the exclusionary and exclusive dimensions of EU funding and shows that only economically stable and resource-strong organizations with administrative capacity can apply for, be granted, and handle EU funding. This pattern is corroborated by our identification of a group of domestic professionalized CSOs with access to public funding and decision-making that were more Europeanized than the rest. EU opportunities are thus in reality mainly accessible to resource strong, politically embedded organizations buttressing the view of EU integration as an elite project (chapter 5). A similar pattern is found within the gender equality policy area, but where weak forms of participatory Europeanization not only seem to be due to lack of resources or embeddedness, but also as a consequence of ideological concerns (chapter 8).

The political opportunity structure approach that informs many of the chapters highlights how the EU activities of Swedish CSOs are often shaped by their relationship with domestic public authorities within a system of interest representation and funding that enjoys strong support. The habitually close and trustworthy relations between state and civil society seem on the one hand to create the precondition for Swedish organizations to Europeanize. On the other hand, however, the prospects offered by the EU institutions seem to be more of a complement than an alternative to opportunities at the domestic level. However, organizations that are at odds with the Swedish system might use the supra-national level to put pressure on domestic authorities and established norms. Yet it is also clear that the Swedish state is prepared to, and is capable of, countering such strategies when these are perceived as threatening domestic interests, norms, and values. This is illustrated, for example, by the prolonged conflict between representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and the medical profession on the one hand and a health consumer organization on the other (chapter 10). Such struggles testify about the gate-keeping function of the Swedish welfare state.

Our typology of Europeanization has allowed us to disentangle different dimensions implied in the concept of Europeanization, and this has proven fruitful for focusing the analysis presented here. However, while these different forms of Europeanization are more or less distinct at a theoretical level, our studies show that they are intertwined at the empirical level. For instance, results from our survey data show that there is no perceived trade-off between strategies such as influencing policy, applying for funding, or being a member of an umbrella organization at the European level, which suggests that regulatory, financial, and organizational Europeanization tend to reinforce each other (chapter 4).

The case study on the Swedish reception of the social entrepreneurship paradigm institutionalized at the EU level (chapter 7) also shows that discourses entering the domestic field through EU integration facilitate the introduction of new policies by policy entrepreneurs, suggesting a strong link between regulatory and discursive Europeanization. The social entrepreneurship model is closely associated with neoliberal tendencies in EU policy legitimizing nonstate service providers in the social welfare domain, which does not match the general understanding of civil society in Sweden as a complement rather than an alternative to public welfare service provision.

Furthermore, organizational Europeanization might impact on civil society actors' identity through socialization processes. It is clear that activities at the supranational level might not only imply cooperation, but also conflicts between organizations with different norms and values. This is, for instance, evident in the policy area of sex work/prostitution, which is characterized by different and often contrasting framings of prostitution as sex, as work, or as gender-based violence. These conflicts appear most clearly when organizations become members of umbrella organizations and have to negotiate their identity with members from other national contexts (chapter 9). Identity conflicts based on ideologies are handled through different strategies, including trying to change or adapt to the dominant frames. Several of our case studies highlight such inter-organizational and inter-sectoral relations of both cooperation and conflict among civil society actors at the EU level.

The role that domestic embeddedness plays in the Europeanization of civil society is a debated issue, and previous studies point in partly opposite directions (see chapter 5). Access to domestic political authorities is, according to some scholars, crucial for successful engagement at the EU level, while other research indicates the opposite, that it is those that are marginalized at the national level that actively seek support at the EU level in order to compensate for their lack of influence at the domestic level. This volume provides support for both of these propositions. Our data at the aggregated level suggest that the EU is an exclusive arena reserved for resource-strong

and embedded Swedish CSOs, thus reproducing existing hierarchies in civil society. At the same time, we find cases where support from EU institutions can strengthen actors that are challenging domestic power structures and established relations in the field of CSOs.

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