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**The Cultural Construction of Political Action:  
The Case of the European Community's  
1992 Single Market Program**

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**Abstract**

Explaining the emergence of the European Community's Single Market Program requires making sense of how that institutional project came onto the political agenda. I suggest that there are two features of the political process that have been not well understood. First, large-scale institutional projects usually require political opportunities to come to fruition. Second, they require strategic actors who can frame such projects in broad ways in order to attract a wide variety of groups. My basic argument is that the European Commission is an organization whose function is primarily to solve the bargaining game that characterizes interaction within the Community and act as a strategic actor. This does not suggest that they are always successful or are the only source of ideas, but instead that they are the collective actor responsible for trying to frame collective interests in new cultural ways. To illustrate this point, I document how the Single Market program evolved within the Commission and how other important Community actors came to sign on to its goals over time.



## Introduction

The problem of cultural framing is at the core of much work in social movements (Snow, et. al., 1980; McAdam, 1992). Yet, this work has failed to effect a broader literature on political action. Indeed, most of modern political science and sociology have presumed that actors' interests can be read off of their social positions. Hence, the only issue is who has the resources to organize to get their way in the political system (Riker, 1988; Downs, 1957; Weingast and Marshall, 1988). Recently, however, a number of political scientists and sociologists have realized that political processes are sensitive to initial conditions such as institutions, loyalties, norms, and preexisting organizations (Laumann and Knoke, 1989; March and Olsen, 1988; Garrett and Weingast, 1993).

In this paper, my purpose is to propose a different view of the compromises that occur in political systems of all kinds. This view starts with the problem of cultural framing of issues in order to negotiate coalitions to support outcomes. This view assumes that under certain social conditions, one does not know what one's interests are and that only in the process of negotiation are those identities and interests formed. The view I propose here does not replace more conventional views of interest driven processes, but rather, seeks to show an alternative way in which coalitions emerge. I argue that when situations are sufficiently fluid, that

is, when rules are no longer providing desired outcomes for actors, groups will be more likely to search out new ways to create solutions to problems (see White, 1992; Fligstein and McAdam, 1990). Under more stable conditions, politics may be driven by more interest driven processes.

The point of this analysis is to offer this alternative to rational choice views for two purposes. One of the most interesting cases in which social scientists have typically focussed are the construction of institutions. These situations are by nature difficult to theorize and most frequently, rational choice attempts fail, in spite of their claim that they should be able to predict these situations (see Riker, 1988 for an interesting case). Secondly, it may be the case that rational choice and what can be called cultural frame theories are alternatives in fluid situations. If both fail, then social disorder is likely to follow (Scharpf, 1988).

The possibility for new forms of interaction require the cultural production of new interests, means, and ends and as White (1992) has put it, identities oriented towards new forms of control. Under more fluid social conditions, there exists the possibility for a different kind of strategic action, one that cannot be read off the interests or social position of actors, precisely because these are in flux. In these circumstances, very different social skills are rewarded. I argue that we can learn a lot about how new institutional forms emerge by studying how stable situations become destabilized, how actors respond to that

destabilization by creating new cultural tools, and how those tools then become generally available to all actors.

One basic insight of this approach, is that new institutions are likely to reflect political compromises. These compromises form collective identities that offer something to everyone. They are often "sloganistic" (terms such as "feminist", "pro-choice", and in this case, "the single market") and open to myriad interpretations by actors. They become embedded in new rules that emerge and facilitate further interaction. Once these truces are created, they are powerful constraining forces upon subsequent interaction.

To make more sense of this approach, and to begin to understand what the skill of actors who help produce such outcomes are, I would like to provide an account of the European Commission's role in the Single Market Program from 1980 to 1992. The European Community and the physical headquarters of that institution in Brussels are a fascinating case for social science study. The European Commission is an agency whose central function is to propose legislation for 12 nations. The institutional arenas, or what the Commission calls "competencies", are somewhat open ended. At the core of the European Community is the attempt to create a single market across Europe. But the political project of one European state lurks at every turn.

This means the actors in the European Commission are in the business of engaging in strategic action. They are constantly trying to find new institution building projects to which they can get the states to agree. Their interest in finding these projects

means that they have a great deal at stake in analyzing the disagreements of the various states and trying to find ways to balance them off. Their successes and failures are relatively close to a pure case of engaging in strategic action. If they start out with goals that are too obviously in the interest of one group or another, they can be easily blocked. Thus, the critical problem is to find collective solutions that can open new policy terrains. Because of the way in which the European Commission and Community have changed, this makes an important research site to uncover common parts of the strategic action problem.

These actors live in a textbook example of the rational choice game theoretic world. Their job is to find a way to solve the difficult dilemmas inherent in those worlds. I argue that the only way they can do that, is when there exist fluid political conditions. Then, they can provide a collective identity for the relevant actors, mainly the representatives of the states, but also representatives of important interest groups. The problem of control, in this instance, is part of their everyday world. Their ability to find identities is complex and fluid and relies on discovering cultural tools that work. One purpose of this paper is to describe how they did this in the context of the Single Market Program (the so-called Europe-1992 Program). Another is to draw larger lessons for the general problem of the emergence of new institutions.

The Institutions of the European Community

The European Community has four major institutions: the Commission, the Council, the Court, and the Parliament (Bulmer and Wessels, 1987; Noel, 1985; European Community, 1981; Thorn, 1981; Groben, 1985). The Commission is the executive arm that proposes and negotiates the directives. The Council is made up of ministers from each country who decide whether or not to accept the Commission's proposals. The states have permanent representatives in Brussels who continuously interact with the Commission. Twice a year, the heads of the governments meet to have Council Summits. Each country takes a six month turn as chair of the Council. The Council can suggest, modify, or reject directives. Once they pass directives, the directives have the force of law. If individual nation states have laws that are in disagreement with directives, they are supposed to transpose the directive into their national law. In 1987, the Council passed the Single European Act. This made majority voting the rule for the Single Market Program (European Community, 1987; Garrett, 1992). The Maastricht Treaty has extended this principle to all other matters (European Community, 1992).

The Court enforces community law (ie. directives) by listening to cases from private parties, the nation states, and the Commission. The links between national courts and the Court of Justice are extensive (Weiler, 1990). The Parliament is now directly elected by all European citizens. They set the budget and advise the community. In the context of the 1992 program, a complex procedure existed that required the directives to move back and

forth from the Commission to the Parliament, before eventual consideration by the Council.

The ultimate goal of the EC is somewhat unclear. Certain proponents would like to see a United States of Europe with a federal structure that would resemble the United States. Others believe that national autonomy will be preserved and fiscal policy, social welfare, education, taxation, and defense will be left to the states. The Maastricht Treaty, of course, calls many of these presumptions into question. The basic problem revolves around how much sovereignty nation states will be willing to grant to the EC (for some different views on this debate, see Gatsios and Seabright, 1989; Hurwitz, 1983; Winters, 1988; Pelkmans and Robson, 1987; Taylor, 1983; Shepard, 1975).

This brief description fails to account for the basic dynamics of the European Community. These dynamics are a matter of sharp contention amongst the political scientists who study the Community (Moravcsik, 1990; Garrett, 1992; Schmitter and Streeck, 1991; Schmitter, 1992; Keohane and Hoffmann, 1991). There are two main dynamics of the Community that have interested scholars: the bargaining problem and the growth of the community and its functions.

The voting rules of the Community suggest that any attempts to engage in cooperative regulatory activities will require one of two conditions: a high degree of consensus over the matter, or a linkage of issues such that votes are traded (what can be termed "logrolling"; see Weingast and Marshall, 1988). Both of these types



of processes have been analyzed from rational choice based bargaining models in the literature on international regimes (Tsebelis, 1990). Indeed, any observer of the Community is quickly struck by how the problem of pleasing twelve countries is at the core of the strategic action problem faced by the Commission.

The second feature of the Community, is that in spite of these problems, the arenas in which the Community participates in European life has expanded in the past 40 years. This expansion has not been constant and it has occurred in spurts (Schmitter, 1992). But, it has happened. This expansion in "competencies" has helped create and solidify support for the Community in the nation state bureaucracies and legal systems and amongst the members of the business community who have the greatest stake in Community trade; ie. those firms who are exporters of goods (Fligstein and Mara-Drita, 1993).

The existence of both of these dynamics ignores the basic problem this paper wants to pose: ie. the role of the European Commission as an institutional entrepreneur in pushing both of these dynamics along (Ross, 1993). Scholars who have emphasized the bargaining aspects of the Community generally believe that the Commission plays little role in the possibility for real changes to occur. Instead, they view the Commission as reactive and dependent on the lining up of interests of the nation states. From this perspective, the only types of action likely to be taken are "lowest common denominator" (Morascvik, 1990).

Scholars who have been more open to the possibilities for

expansion of the Community (ie. those identified as functionalists or neofunctionalists) view the major effect of the extension of the competencies of the Community as a result of "spillover". The Community is given new regulatory functions by the member states and then it exercises them. The exercise of these new functions creates new interest groups which organize to put pressure back on the states to increase the scope of the Community. This creates "spillover" into new issues. Here, the possibility for Commission autonomy exists, but these theories then have the difficulty of explaining why the process has been so slow, and at times nonexistent.

The case I would like to make here, is that the ability of the Commission to increase its competencies is related to two sets of issues: the existence of social conditions that produce openings to make it sensible to pursue new competencies and, equally important, the ability to solve the bargaining problem by finding a language, culture, or what could be called a conception of control (Fligstein, 1990) to make new action seem sensible.

The first problem has been called the problem of political opportunities (McAdam, 1984). If there is no possibility for action, then the most skilled strategic actors will be thwarted. A political opportunity implies a crisis where interests are in flux and thus the possibility for cooperation increases. In the language of bargaining, if there are no least common denominator solutions to the problem at hand, then the Commission will languish. Thus, the construction of political opportunities is crucial to an

institution building episode.

The second problem is at the core of strategic action. In order to engage in action, one needs a cognitive frame or world view to interpret what is happening and provide one with a set of solutions to the problem that is being presented. I have called this cognitive frame a conception of control (Fligstein, 1990). This term alerts us to the fact that actors have to have a set of ways to control the world around them. Embedded in this conception is their view of their interests and the appropriate tactics to undertake those interests.

The search for conceptions of control is complex. In unstable worlds, actors must draw on cognitive elements, forge them together into a coherent whole, and act on them. This process usually goes forward with two kinds of momentum. First, actors must create conceptions of control that bring other important actors along. If conceptions are too narrowly constructed, then actors will not be able to persuade others that what is being proposed is in their interest as well. In this sense, conceptions of control are collective identities that actors use to make sense of actions of one another and allow them to cooperate (and compete). Second, these conceptions of control are constructed out of elements in actors' environments. They can be borrowed from other successful actors or actions or they can be taken piece by piece from many sources.

The key problem of strategic action is to have a conception of control. In stable worlds, conceptions of control are well known.

Actors know who the players are and what motivates their actions. Rules are collectively known. This makes action somewhat predictable. When political opportunities exist, when social worlds are unstable, there is the possibility for new conceptions of control to emerge. At these moments, actors have to construct new identities and it is here that collective actors like the European Commission can make a pivotal difference.<sup>1</sup>

To make this discussion a bit more concrete, let me give an example of what I have in mind from one of the interviews I did in Brussels. One person I spoke to was in charge of a subunit in DG-III, the unit of the EC in charge of the Single Market Program. I asked him about how they decided to negotiate standards for different directives in order to open markets. He handed me a file with about ten directives and told me that the "philosophy of harmonization" was contained in those directives. He then went on to describe the documents as "a bible" that helped them to negotiate complex issues across industries. I take his description of the tools his subunit uses to negotiate directives to be a description of a part of a conception of control. It is a worldview that is quite explicit and when invoked, it can be used to create agreements amongst the 12 nations.<sup>2</sup>

My account of what happened in the EC to produce the Single

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<sup>1</sup> It is the case that this does not have to happen. In a fluid political situation, actors can muddle through, have old conceptions of control reassert influence, or in radical situations, observe an entire breakdown of social order.

<sup>2</sup> These directives constitute rules by which rules are written. This, is in essence, the building of institutions.

Market Program agrees broadly with Cameron (1992). He argues that a complex set of economic, institutional, and political conditions gave rise to the Single Market Program. He emphasizes the increasing interdependence of the European economies and their lack of ability to solve the economic crises of the 1970s on their own. His discussion of how the EC is driven by both the problem of bargaining and the problem of functional interdependence accurately describes what occurred. I also draw from the theoretical view of Peters (1992), who argues that the EC is best conceived of as a set of "games". He emphasizes the bureaucratic games within the Commission and the politics of policy setting.

The purpose of this paper is to fill in a missing gap in most of the stories told about the Single Market Program. I want to describe how the conception of control that produced the Single Market Program (Europe 1992) was constructed. I characterize this conception of control as containing five main elements: 1) the idea that the main purpose of the Community was to create a single market in the first place, 2) the definition of that market as mainly concerned with issues of freedom of exchange, 3) the construction of a program that offered something for everyone (ie. logrolling), 4) the passage of legislation that did not create any new regulatory apparatus, and 5) new strategies for creating a single market that dealt with the bargaining problem and created new ways to harmonize standards across countries. I argue that the construction of this type of "philosophy" or "worldview" was only possible through one agency, a collective strategic actor, in this

case the European Commission. States, left to their own devices, would not have hit on this particular set of compromises.

The result of this strategic action was the Single Market Program. Its passage over the past seven years is a remarkable feat. It has done several important things. First, it has provided the EC with a renewed purpose. Second, it has laid the ground work for new initiatives in monetary, political, and social spheres. Third, it has created a set of practices that can now routinely make "new markets". The problems of harmonization have been solved and the conception of control now exists to engage in new forms of market action. As one person who worked in the Standards area of Directorate General III remarked to me "Our job is now just like that in other government bureaucracies".

#### The Origins of the Single Market

To make this more concrete, it is useful to lay out some of the events that led up to the Single Market Program. My version of the story relies on several different kinds of sources. First, the discussions that have appeared in the scholarly literature. Second, the consideration of official documents and the unofficial publication of the EC- Europe-Agency. Third, I did a number of interviews with officials of the EC over a two year period. All of the officials had been involved in some aspect of the Single Market Program, either its roots, its genesis in the White Paper, or else its negotiation. The purpose of my story is to illuminate the

particular crisis of the EC in the late 1970s and early 1980s, how the Commission struggled with trying to get the nation states to respond to the crisis, and finally, what events led to the construction of the Single Market Program.

Every observer of the European Community in the late 1970s and early 1980s agrees that the EC was having difficult times (Sandholtz and Zysman, 1988; Moravcsik, 1990; Cameron, 1992). These troubles reflected two economic problems: the lack of growth in western European economies in the period and the simultaneous growing interdependencies of these economies (Cameron, 1992). The leaders of the European states were unsure how to deal with this crisis. The traditional answer had been to raise government spending, close off exports, and protect jobs. But these tactics had failed throughout the 1970s. The French socialist government in the early 1980s tried to push these types of policies forward and quickly found themselves in a recession. I argue that this economic crisis created a political opportunity for the European Commission. If a common EC policy could be found, one that resonated with the interests of a large number of the states, the EC could have been rejuvenated. The problem in the early 1980s was finding such a policy.

Three sorts of political projects evolved in the early 1980s. The first could be broadly labelled "institutional reform". Members of the Commission and Parliament recognized that the basic impediment to increased cooperation in the Community was the unanimous voting procedures in the Council. This meant that any of

the states could prevent any legislation from moving forward. The federalists in the Parliament, led by Alberto Spinelli, wanted to solve this problem by creating a true European Parliament and embedding that group with real political power (Ludlow, 1988).

The second project was monetary union. The 1970s had produced the European Monetary System (EMS) which was an attempt to fix exchange rates between currencies. This system was never intended to be permanent, but instead was supposed to be a transition system to a full monetary union, ie. a single currency and a European Bank. This project, which was later embedded in the Maastricht Treaty, was on the agenda as well.

Gaston Thorn, president of the Commission during this period listed both the institutional reforms and the monetary union as central to his concerns in June 1980 (Europe Agence, June 13, 1980, p. 7). The third project, the completion of the internal market was the least formed. Indeed, at this historical moment, it would be difficult to show the idea having any proponents. Yet, by 1984, institutional reform was in the background, monetary union had become a faint hope, and the Single Market was the only viable choice.

It is important to consider the political machinations that brought the Single Market to the fore. To do so, it is necessary to understand a bit more about how the Commission actually operates. The Commission is the institution that proposes legislation. From the perspective of bureaucratic politics, it is in the interest of all parts of the Commission to be trying to



expand their purview to new arenas. Hence, there is a great deal of incentive to try and find ways to expand the competencies of the Commission. But, the Commission does not speak with one voice. There are 23 Directorate Generals (DGs), each in charge of different issues. One can expect that the head of each DG has an interest in generating legislation. This interest is tempered by two factors: the agenda of the president of the Commission and the interests of the states.

Each directorate is subdivided into departments. From my conversations with various individuals in these Departments, it became clear that they were directly in touch with others within and across the EC. When I asked people how they checked out directives with the states, they informed me that they directly called the person who was in charge of the relevant matter in each of the states. They also were in touch with local experts in the Community. When a directive was proposed, it went out to comment to other relevant actors within the Commission, the Council, and the affected parties. Industry lobbyists saw each piece of legislation well before it reached the stage of passage by the Council and influenced the way in which directives were written as well.

These complex social relations imply that any negotiations were only undertaken with the knowledge of all parties. After all, if a directive made its way to the Council and each state had not had an opportunity to respond to it or have their relevant interest groups respond, it stood little chance of passage. Most of the political action, therefore, takes place well before a directive gets to the

Council.<sup>3</sup>

The head of one part of DG-III (the Directorate in charge of the Single Market) told me that no one would ever go forward with a proposal without having taken into account all of the relevant interests. If they could see high powered opponents to the legislation, they would certainly back off trying to pass it. He then proceeded to describe a directive that his group had been working on that he thought had no chance of passage.

It is useful to ask where the impetus for the substantive fields of new directives comes from. From discussions I had with people involved with the Single Market Program (hereafter SMP) and other directives, I found that directives generally originated with complaints from either states or private business. Representatives from various parts of each nation's bureaucratic apparatus take issues of interest to their constituencies directly to the relevant person in the Commission. Businesses involved in exporting are the ones who are likely to have experienced difficulties entering markets in other countries. They take their complaints to the Commission as well. One of the reasons that big business has such an impact on the activities of the Community, is that they are the ones who voice their objections.

Once a set or series of complaints are made, the Commission tries to adjudicate them. First, aggrieved parties are put in touch

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<sup>3</sup> It is ironic that many of the leaders of the nations rail against the "faceless bureaucrats in Brussels". This obviously reflects playing to local politics. These leaders are acutely aware of how connected their regimes are to Brussels.

and the Commission tries to negotiate the situation. If this fails, the parties ends up in the European Court. The relevant part of the Commission might consider writing a directive or regulation if the situation arises repeatedly.

This complex political process means there are always a number of political projects being floated throughout the Commission. Some are relatively minor and others are more ambitious. The president of the Commission usually takes up some small number of projects and tries to push them through the Council. Part of the problem, from the point of view of the individual DGs is getting the attention of the president in order to get their project on the agenda.

To understand the SUMP, one must appreciate several features of the program. First, groups of actors must have originated the set of complex ideas embodied in the SUMP that reflect its substantive content. Second, these groups must have also been able to formulate its political appeal to a broad group of interests by using coalition building and logrolling. Third, these must have been combined to produce a set of philosophical practices whereby the real sovereignty concerns of states were considered.

One does not want to see the outcome as predetermined as the result of a rational set of games or structurally determined by the logic of the interaction of the institutions. Instead, it is important to see that the process that generated the SUMP encountered a series of constraints and opportunities whereby actors were able, over time, to construct a broader and broader

coalition for its enactment. The SUMP is like any complex pathbreaking piece of legislation: its origins are murky, the groups who take it up are often contradictory, and the eventual adoption has to take into account the obstacles in the way. It was never a certainty, even after the states signed on in 1985.

In my reconstruction of what happened, I would like to focus on how a set of elements snowballed to bring the Single Market together. It should be noted that the EC was founded to facilitate trade amongst the member states. The idea of a single market was enshrined in the Treaty of Rome. So, there was always a certain abstract commitment to create a single market in the EC. The problem, was negotiating what such a market should look like.

To produce a single market, one had to get all of the countries to agree to rules that would govern trade. The problem was that every directive needed to have unanimous agreement. In practice, this was difficult for several reasons. First, very different interests were at stake on any given issue and oftentimes, the substance of these agreements was hard to put into place. Moreover, even if countries could agree to some common set of rules, the problem was selecting what those rules were. Each country, of course, preferred their own practices and wanted the other countries to conform to their practices. In the 1970s, the only way one could attain agreement was by very time consuming negotiations that resulted in extremely detailed legislation. To get a real internal market, the problem of how to harmonize the differing standards across societies needed to be resolved.

## The Elements of the Single Market Program

The beginning of the story came in 1979 when the European Court of Justice decided the famous Cassis de Dijon case. The Commission issued a communication to the Parliament and the states following the decision that outlined its perspective on the meaning of the ruling. It is useful to quote from that document (OJ C 256) at some length:

"Any product lawfully produced and marketed in one member state must, in principle be admitted to the market of any other member state. This principle implies that member states, when drawing up commercial or technical rules liable to affect the free movement of goods, may not take an exclusively national viewpoint and take account only of requirements confined to domestic products."

"Only under very strict circumstances does the court accept exceptions to this principle; in order to satisfy mandatory requirements (public health, protection of consumers or the environment, or the fairness of commercial transactions)".

"The Court has induced the Commission to set out a number of guidelines. A member state may not in principle prohibit the sale in its territory of a product lawfully produced and marketed in another member state even if the product is produced according to technical or quality standards which differ from those imposed on its domestic products. Where a product "suitably and satisfactorily" fulfills the legitimate objective of a member states own rules, the importing country cannot justify prohibiting its sale in its territory by claiming that the way it fulfills its objective is different than that imposed on domestic goods."

This last provision is what is now termed "mutual recognition". This provision implied that it was no longer necessary to write elaborate agreements to allow the free movement of goods across countries. Instead, the working assumption was that if a product was safely produced in one country, it could be

exported with little trouble. It could also be used for the export of services and the recognition of various forms of certification such as professions. Mutual recognition became an important tool that made negotiation between states less complex. States no longer had to agree to harmonize standards to a single country's perspective: they only had to agree to accept another state's standards.

The Commission recognized that the "loophole" in the Cassis de Dijon case, the problem of differing standards, particularly as they revolved around health and safety issues was now going to be the focus of their harmonization efforts:

"The Commission's work of harmonization will henceforth have to be directed mainly at national laws having an impact on the functioning of the Common Market where barriers to trade to be removed arise from national provisions which are admissible under the criteria set by the court."

"The Commission will therefore have to tackle a whole body of rules which lay down that products manufactured or marketed in one member state must fulfill technical or qualitative conditions in order to be admitted to the market of another. The Commission is referring in particular to rules covering the composition, designation, presentation, and packaging of products as well as rules requiring compliance with certain technical and or health standards."

This approach became known as the "new" harmonization (von Sydow, 1988). In essence, instead of trying to write detailed directives to harmonize markets, the Commission would focus on general directives that concerned themselves with health, safety, and technical issues.

The Commission had begun to realize that they now had two new tools (mutual recognition and the "new" harmonization) to deal with the problem of bargaining with the twelve countries. In a series of

directives issued in the 1980s, they expanded their use of these tools in several directions. First, the member states had to inform the Commission before they created any new technical standards or health regulations (OJ N L 109). Second, the new approach to harmonization was formally agreed to by the member states on May 7, 1985 (O J C 136). Together these directives provided the Commission with the ability to monitor changes in standards by member states and proceed to write directives harmonizing those standards either by mutual recognition or the "new" harmonization.

How did these work in practice? From my discussions with various officials in DG-III, both mutual recognition and the "new" harmonization were part of every negotiation. One could tell the difficulty of any negotiation after 1985 by the form of negotiation utilized. If one reads a directive and there was an incredible amount of detail whereby products were defined, and processes and procedures that were legal were defined as well (ie. the "old" harmonization"), this is an indication of a difficult negotiation where many parties objected to details of the harmonization. If mutual recognition was used, this implied a fair amount of conflict. States or the affected interest groups would not allow the imposition of a single standard, but were prepared to recognize that other standards were legitimate as well. Finally, the new harmonization implied the least conflict. The issues negotiated would be usually industry rather than product specific, and the goal of the directive would be toward common certification of health and safety standards. Often, the writing of these standards

were left to European wide organizations, either technical experts or else representatives of industry. It is interesting to note that about 70% of the directives in the SUMP used the "new" harmonization (Fligstein and Mara-Drita, 1993).

But these are philosophical approaches that define how the Commission can have the means to bargain to ends. They do not define what those ends might be. While the Commission appeared prepared in 1980 to use these forms of harmonization to all forms of market integration, there was as yet, still no common program. So, while certain actors in the Commission had begun to realize how to deal with the bargaining problem, it still did not have a political program that created a collective identity or conception of control that the states would find reasonable.

Earlier, I suggested that there were two other programmatic candidates for reinvigoration of the Community: institutional reform and transformation of the European Monetary system to a European Monetary Union (ie. a single currency). The basic problem for each program was centered on the issue of national sovereignty. Joining the EMU or allowing the EC to have more power would clearly undermine the ability of states to control their political destinies. I will consider in some detail the various debates over "institutional reform " in the 1980s, but the basic point is that no one ever made a good argument as to what was to be gained by such an action. EMU was never seriously on the EC's agenda because erosion of control over monetary policy would mean that states would give up one of their two main levers of control over their



economies (the other being fiscal policy). From the perspective of 1981, it was not clear what the states were to receive in return by granting these EC level institution building projects. Given the high inflation of the period, none of the states had much interest in pursuing a collective monetary policy and the issue was never really seriously pursued from 1980 to 1984.

The problem of institutional reform was on the agenda of the EC during the term of office of Roy Jenkins from 1977-1980. Mr. Jenkins had presided over the Commission and guided the European Monetary System into place. He also oversaw the direct election of the European Parliament and the beginnings of a collective foreign policy in the Community. He saw the problem of institutional reform as the one major arena where change was needed during the 1980s. He felt that the rules of the EC should change, but also the collective competencies of the EC should expand as well (Europe Agence, Dec. 14, 1980).

Institutional reform dominated discussion at all of the Council Summits in the early 1980s. The most important issue was that at the core of the EC's inability to push any programs forward was the use of unanimous voting in the Council. This meant that the game theory view that only "lowest common denominator" solutions could produce action was written into community affairs. All of the various proposals for reform were concerned with changing this rule in one way or another (Ludlow, 1988). It was thought that this reform had to proceed an expansion of the competencies of the EC or more power for the Parliament.

The discussions on European political union were the subject of the European Council Meeting in Luxembourg (Europe Agence, December 3, 1980). But, at the same time, there was serious discussion in Great Britain about pulling out of the EC. In the European Parliament, there began several years of discussions around the issue of institutional reform and in particular, increasing the role of the Parliament in Europe's affairs. The "Crocodile Club", led by Alberto Spinelli, formed in June 1980 with the express purpose of discussing such issues. The European Parliament declared in June, 1981, that they were going to write a draft of a new European Union Treaty by 1982 and take the issues to the voters of Europe in the Parliamentary elections of 1984 (Europe Agence, June 1, 1981, p. 3). Mr. Leo Tindemans, chair of the European Parliament proposed that the Council consider reenergizing the EC by undertaking a set of reforms to expand its competencies and reduce its democratic deficit. He suggested that there were a lot of proposals floating around, but that what was lacking was the resolve to carry them out (Europe Agence, June 11, 1981). The Crocodile group proposed that the Parliament move forward with these discussions and the Parliament agreed.

The Commission, led by Gaston Thorn, took up the cause of institutional reform as well. They proposed the subject to the Council throughout 1981. But, the states wanted to narrow the focus of the discussion to problems with the EC's budget (Europe Agence, June 21, 1981). After the December meeting of the Council in London, Thorn proposed that the Council and Commission focus its

attention on the problem of institutional reform in the next six months (Europe Agence, Dec. 10, 1981). A report was being written on institutional reform by the Council that was called the Genscher-Columbo Report (after its authors) that proposed what the new union treaty looked like. Thorn said "Europe needs to be governed and I do not believe that it can be governed unanimously with ten or twelve governments." (p. 4)

But this effort failed. In May 1982, the Council decided to table the report and continue the discussions. Various states, particularly Great Britain, opposed changing the voting rules. The basic stumbling block was around what the purpose of the reforms were; ie. what issues would be open to majority voting and how the EC would coordinate political and economic programs. This discussion continued throughout the rest of 1982. By December, the Parliament had gone on record in favor of institutional reforms and an increased role for themselves. The Commission had made a set of proposals about how to change procedures of voting and consultation with the Parliament. The Genscher-Columbo initiative on what a new European Union Treaty would look like was complete. But, the states still continued to block any reforms.

At the Stuttgart Council in June 1983, the issue was once again tabled. The leaders of the states committed themselves to some renewed form of European Union, but left its details to a later time (Europe Agence, June 24, 1983). The Athens Council became more rancorous. Not only was the whole issue of institutional reform tabled, but the entire fabric of the EC

threatened to come untied over the issue of the EC's budget. The Commission was seeking to raise the budget, while the British wanted reform. Basically, they felt that they and Germany were the only net contributors to the budget and they refused to increase the budget until contributions were equalized.

The meeting ended without the usual communique of "goodwill". Gaston Thorn declared the crisis to be the most serious since the 1960s when the French walked out of discussions (Europe Agence, December, 8, 1993). The crisis was so serious that there were threats that the entire Commission leadership would resign (Europe Agence, December 17, 1983). By early 1984, one could argue that the political crisis of the EC was at an all time high. The Fountainebleau Summit focussed on two issues: resolving the budget crisis and considering a new (albeit, somewhat vaguely defined) future for the EC. The British appeared to be prepared to entertain the second set of issues if the former was resolved in their favor. Francois Mitterand, the President of France, spent the weeks leading up to the Summit negotiating across the four big governments. He appeared ready to consider new institutional arrangements as well (Europe Agence, June 18, 20, 22, 1984). The budget crisis was resolved and institutional reform was once more being considered.

Andrew Morascvik has emphasized the role of the French in the creation of the Single Market. It is clear from the debates that Mitterand played a key role, not just in the formulation of the Single Market, but in the delicate negotiations around the budget

crisis of the early 1980s. By resolving the budgetary concerns of the British, Mitterand was able to get Margaret Thatcher to agree to consider new institutional reforms. There was a political compromise whereby the British got their contributions to the EC budget reduced in exchange for considering new measures to promote the Community.

At this juncture, these measures were still somewhat unspecified. Eventually, of course, the Single Market would become the issue that united the EC. At that moment, the European Union Treaty and institutional reform were being studied once more, but they remained poorly defined documents. The question, from the game theoretic point of view, is what did the states have to gain by changing their unanimous rulemaking? The answer, was for most of them, nothing. And on this issue, the impasse continued.

The question, I would now like to consider, is where did the idea for the Single Market come from? In December of 1980, Roy Jenkins, then president of the Commission, suggested that Europe was faced with the real prospect of economic decline. He argued that it was squeezed between the U.S. and Japan and the newly industrializing nations. He argued that "what we want is a coordinated community approach which can lead to the establishment of a single community market as the indispensable base." (Europe Agence, Dec. 3, 1980). This argument parallels Sandholtz and Zysman's view (echoed by Ludlow, 1988 and Colchester and Buchan, 1990) that the Single Market Program was by and large the product of a fear of competition from the U.S. and Japan. But, the issue of

the Single Market was never really taken up by Jenkins or Thorn. Thorn spent most of his political capital trying to solve the budget impasse and simultaneously push institutional reform. The Single Market initiative, instead, was generated from within the European Commission.

The European Community had originally been founded to create a single market. There were several problems with this idea, foremost was, what exactly is a single market? In my discussion with two individuals who wrote various drafts of the Single Market initiative (both of whom were lawyers by training), when I posed this question, both were rather taken aback. They thought that a single market was a self-evident proposition. When I pressed them to respond, they came forward with two main ideas. First, they assumed that the model was the U.S., where in spite of multiple governments, a single market appeared to exist. Second, and more importantly, was the notion of freedom of exchange. The basic idea of a single market was that there would be no barriers to the exchange of goods, services, and people. This relatively simple idea was at the basis of all of the versions of the SUMP that appeared between 1982 and 1985.

The key actor in the evolution of the SUMP was Karl Heinz Narjes, who was the director of DG-III (the Internal Market and Customs Union). Mr. Narjes and his colleagues in DG-III began with a modest proposal to further the internal market by removing customs and transit formalities in the Community (OJ 83 C 90/16). This directive reflects the idea that a single market is a market

without boundaries. This original proposal was quickly expanded to include thirty directives after it was presented to the European Parliament. Indeed, the members of the Parliament took the idea of the completion of the Single Market as an excellent approach to the problems of European competitiveness. These directives were passed from the Commission to the Council at the Copenhagen Summit in December 1982.

The issues taken up in these directives were relatively heterogeneous. First, proposals were oriented to establish a European wide passport allowing for the free movement of persons. Second, there were a number of directives aimed at levelling value added taxes across states in order to remove taxes as a source of competitive advantage. Third, a regulation was proposed to simplify border formalities. In language very similar to the Cecchini report (1988), the Commission argued that these rules added from 5-7% to the price of goods that were traded (OJ 83 C 90/16). One of the persons whom I interviewed told me that the heterogeneity of the issues reflected the fact that the package was itself the outcome of a political logrolling process. Different states wanted different issues on the agenda and they were willing to make tradeoffs for the entire package.

Mr. Thorn supported the single market effort. He argued that the internal market was threatened by nationalist and protectionist sentiments. He thought that the main factor which prevented the organization of industrial production at the European level was the inability to offer firms a unified market (Europe Agence Dec. 4,

1982). The Japanese threat was once more taken up at the Copenhagen Summit. It was argued that the best way to deal with the Japanese was to increase European competitiveness. And the argument that was developing to do that, was the neoliberal view of opening markets to more competition (Europe Agence, Dec. 13, 1982).

Mr. Narjes wanted the Council to "fastrack" the 30 directives and consider them on a timetable. This extension of the single market immediately met with opposition from the French. They argued that the single market would benefit products from producers outside the EC as much as those from within. The Copenhagen meeting ended with a general agreement to push forwards the single market initiative.

The Parliament continued to lobby in support of the idea. The Kangaroo group began to agitate for the single market. The Permanent Conference of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the EEC argued against protectionist trade measures and for the extension of the single market (Europe Agence, May 31, 1983).

At the Stuttgart Summit in June 1983, the issue was discussed and some progress was made on a number of the directives. But by mid 1984, only 15 of the 30 proposals had been passed by the Council. Mr. Narjes made his appeal to the Council that the Single Market would have positive economic effects and be basically, costless. He also argued that it did not impose any regulatory costs on the states (Europe Agence, June 23, 1984).

According to my interviews, Mr. Narjes began work at this moment on an even more ambitious plan: an attempt to put together



150 directives that would extend the single market. His proposal included several key ideas. First, the proposals would have to be passed by 1987. Second, they would be part of a single program. Thus, as 1984 drew to a close and Jacques Delors came on the scene, the Single Market had already been specified as an institutional project about which many of the nations could agree. Further, it had garnered the support of the Parliament and most importantly, European business groups.

Morascvik has argued that all of this support was irrelevant to the eventual production of the SUMP. He suggests that if the states had not backed the project (and in particular, France), it would have gone nowhere. While I think the French support was essential to the success of SUMP, I think it occurred in a larger context. There was a general failure of programs in the EC as my discussion of institutional reform and monetary union suggest. This political failure was made to seem all the worse by the inability of each of the national governments to revive their economies using traditional methods.

It is also the case that the Single Market idea originated within the Commission and evolved into a more and more ambitious scheme as more and more groups began to see the renewal of the Single Market as the institutional venue to the revival of the EC and moreover, the revival of the European economies. The key elements of that program were linking issues together, not creating an expensive regulatory apparatus, and employing a neoliberal view of how to deal with the problems of competitiveness in the European

context. The snowballing support of various groups within and outside of the EC helped greatly. Business interests were well represented in the SMP and the governments were coming under pressure to accept it as a solution.

By the time of the Fontainebleau Summit, the French had decided to back some new sort of initiative. Mitterand couched his arguments in the language of a "Europe of citizens". What he had in mind was "the free movement of persons, goods and services, and the equivalence of diplomas" (Europe Agence, June 22, 1984). The discussions at that time were focussed on what a consolidation of the internal market would look like and how it might be achieved within a reasonable timetable.

When Mr. Delors took office in 1985, the completion of the single market was now the highest priority of the Commission (Europe Agence, December 10, 1984). The Union of Industries of the European Community Council of Presidents (UNICE), which had representatives from the largest firms in western Europe, formally endorsed the Single Market Program as had the European Roundtable (a group mainly composed of the leading electronics firms around Europe). At this time, the standing committee within the Council, the Internal Market Council, was given responsibility over the single market project. On December 18, 1984, the Council voted to complete the single market by 1988.

Mr. Delors and Lord Cockfield (who took over for Mr. Narjes at DG-III) had a political opportunity to change the shape of the Community. The bitter struggle over institutional reform and the

budget left the Community dead in the water. The recognition that the European economies were interdependent and the renewed interest in neoliberal trade measures, all worked to promote some form of reform. Morascvik argues that Delors came to power with three possible programs: institutional reform, monetary union, and the single market. He suggests that all he could get the states to agree with was the single market. While there is certainly some truth in this perspective, it is also the case that the Single Market was already on the agenda. And institutional reform was not far behind. A new initiative (the Dooge Commission) was in the process of producing another version of the European Union Treaty in 1985.

There were three important strategic maneuvers that went into the Single Market. First, the states had more or less agreed to a completion of the single market before seeing the entire program. The entire White Paper was written after the nations agreed to the program in seven weeks and underwent 17 drafts (interview with informant). Second, the White Paper embodied all of the features discussed in the conception of control I proposed earlier. This meant that it cleverly circumvented a lot of potential opposition. Many of these ideas were already "floating around", but they were embedded and sold in the SUMP. It has been estimated that half of the directives in the White Paper were already written (Colchester and Buchan, 1990). Third, Delors managed to attach the issue of institutional reform to the Single Market. The changes in the European Treaty were made precisely to make it easier to pass the

SUMP. This meant that the project of institutional reform had a real purpose, a purpose that gave all of the states a stake in it (Garrett, 1992).

Mr. Delors wanted to make some project the centerpiece of his presidency. When he toured the capitals of Europe in 1985, he offered several possible projects. The one that received the most support was the SUMP. He got the states to agree to the SUMP as a general principle. At this point, completion of the market was more an abstract idea than a concrete set of proposals. It was animated by several simple ideas. The problems in Europe were partially that it was uncompetitive with Japan and the U.S. This lack of competitiveness could be best cured by the free movement of goods, people, and services which would promote trade, competition, and economies of scale and scope. The goal of the Commission should thus be to propose legislation to produce this end.

Lord Cockfield was given the task of producing the SUMP in a very short period of time. I asked several person who were involved in the framing of the White Paper how that task was done. Lord Cockfield put out the word to people in a large number of the directorates asking them for proposals. Many of the directives had been languishing for years waiting for passage.

The directives chosen reflected the types of complaints that the Commission had been hearing for years from business. A large number of the directives were direct responses to those complaints. The states were more indirectly involved in the framing of directives. The first twelve drafts of the White Paper were

circulated entirely within the Commission. The next five drafts went to the representatives of the states and business groups. What is remarkable is that this was done in such a short period of time.

Lord Cockfield also had several other innovations. First, he explicitly invoked "mutual recognition" and the "new harmonization" as the standards to be attained in the White Paper. A large number of the directives pertain to harmonizing health and safety standards and this was the explicit focus of the program. Second, he intentionally avoided creating internal regulatory apparatus for the SUMP and instead left enforcement to the states (Fligstein and Mara-Drita, 1993). Third, he chose the year 1992 for the completion of the SUMP, at the time a date which was seven years away. Fourth, these disparate measures were connected by the theme "Completion of the Single Market". Thus, opposition to any of the directives would seem like opposition to the whole project. This had the effect of making it difficult for states to block any single directive.

These elements of the SUMP greatly simplified the negotiations and made the representatives of the states more likely to sign on. Since most of the directives dealt with issues that had come from complaints from exporters, there was a natural community of support in the business community. In short, by the time the White Paper was released, its shape was complete. This does not mean that the negotiations were not difficult. One of my informants told me that at the time, they were unsure as to how many of the directives would actually pass. He said that people who were optimists would have been happy for half of the directives to pass.

Delors next step was to attach the issue of institutional reform to the SUMP. Indeed, even before the publication of the White Paper, Delors was backing institutional reform. At the Milan Summit in June 1985 where the White Paper was formally introduced, the issue was raised by explicitly linking the problem of passing the single market program with the current institutional structure of the EC. UNICE reiterated its support for the SUMP and linked the issues of institutional reform to passage of the SUMP (Europe Agence June 26, 1985). After many machinations, the negotiations resulted in the Single European Act. This revision of the treaty establishing the EC changed the voting in the Council from unanimous to qualified majority (Garret, 1992; European Community, 1987).

The negotiations over the SMP continued over the period. The Internal Market Council monitored the process of negotiation with help from DG-III. Mr. Michel Aryal was in charge of the subunit within DG-III that guided the process. He told me that if negotiations on issues became difficult, his unit would inform the Council and they would try and resolve particularly tricky issues. The passage of directives was brisk at first, slowed in the 1989 and 1990 and picked up at the end of 1992. By January 1, 1993, the European Community had passed 264 of 279 directives (about 95%). The SMP was a success.

#### Conclusions

The EC has moved forward from the SMP with the Maastricht Treaty. This is an institutional project, much more in doubt. But, the ideas embedded in the Maastricht Treaty have been part of the community for almost 20 years. The Treaty, with its political and monetary reforms pushes forward the ideas embedded in earlier rounds of institutional reform and the creation of a single market with a single currency.

Institutional projects like the SMP are rare, but perhaps not as rare as they seem. The current reunification of Germany, the reconfiguration of the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, the NAFTA Treaty, and changes in the economic policies of China, India, and Latin America will have profound implications for the economic and political developments in the world in the next twenty years. Yet, we have few compelling theories about these massive institutional projects. What lessons can be drawn from this case study of the production of the SMP?

In fluid social situations where there is clear political crisis, the possibility exists for institutional entrepreneurs to engage in action oriented towards creating new social institutions. On an a priori basis, it may sometimes be hard to spot these situations, but as they unfold, they become more obvious. For instance, while no one predicted the collapse of Soviet society, once it began the possibilities for institutional innovation are obvious.

New social institutions are likely to be built from pieces already in place. Existing institutions do not just collapse

(Stark, 1992), but instead provide building blocks from which institutional entrepreneurs can create new rules. The crisis of old institutions means that groups in contention will be open to new ways of operating. But any institutional entrepreneur must solve the puzzle of discovering a new approach to reach a political consensus that does not undermine powerful groups. Even in a crisis, these groups will tend to look after their narrow interests.

Institutional entrepreneurs cannot act in a narrowly self interested fashion. They have broad goals, but they have to be willing to take what systems give them. They read their institutional crisis, size up the players, and try and forge new collective identities that actors can use. These identities can then be used in new institutional projects. The existing institutions are not just a constraint for action, but actually offer entrepreneurs the ability to produce new tools for action. Mr. Delors took the job of EC President knowing he had an opportunity to make some new institutions. What it would be and where it would go were probably less clear when he started. And the SUMP was not his favored option for renewal of the Community.

Under conditions of great uncertainty, it is very difficult to predict what will happen because the problem of constructing new collective identities and thus, new interests, is inherently an act of cultural creation. This requires inspired institutional entrepreneurs who at critical junctures are able to bring coalitions of disparate actors together. But even at these



junctures, likely candidates for institutional projects can be spotted. In the context of the Community, there were three available projects and two of them had serious liabilities.

This process reinforces the social movement metaphor for large scale social change. To create new collective identities, even in entities as established as the EC, different groups must come together with parts of a collective political agenda that helps forge their new interests. The institutional crisis of the EC in the early 1980s was difficult to resolve because the states could not see what advantages they could obtain by giving sovereignty to the EC. It took the emergence of a metaphor, "The Completion of the Single Market" and a slogan "Europe 1992" to make institutional reform make sense.

Once in place, new conceptions of control operate as powerful institutions. Actors recognize them as being meaningful, structure their actions and interests around them, and use them in both self conscious and unself-conscious ways. In the case of the EC, they now know how to harmonize markets. They have the techniques, the rhetoric, and the rationale. Business groups around Europe now have a stake in effecting how those negotiations will proceed. Indeed, one important effect of the SMP is now to intensify business lobbying of the Commission. This translates into more pressure for market completion.

The Single Market is just now being institutionalized. Once in place, it will be a powerful force, both in reality and as a metaphor to inform subsequent action. The bargaining problem

remains at the core of the Community and this problem will become more interesting as the enlargement of the Community proceeds. For now, the states have committed to solving this problem by using mutual recognition, the "new harmonization" and more recently, the principle of subsidiarity (albeit to less positive effect so far).

The problem of forming a single currency is that none of these cultural tools can be used to create a federal reserve system. A monetary system cannot be resolved by letting the states enforce rules or by leaving governance somewhat vague. From the perspective outlined here, the success of the Maastricht Treaty will depend on a few, as yet unknown factors. First, is the situation sufficiently crisis ridden that the possibility for monetary union can go forward? Second, are there enough of the critical actors within and across the states who will support the effort (ie. has a political coalition emerged that wants it)? Third, what conception of control can be used to create collective support for the monetary union?

At this juncture, one can tell a story either way. What is clear, is that the possibility for strategic action remains in the Community. Over the decade of the 1980s and into the early 1990s, the European economies have become even more intertwined. Now, 39% of GDP in the Community is involved in interstate trade. So, in spite of the current recession, and the clear signals that some of the principle parties have lost their taste for the Maastricht Treaty, the possibility for "an ever closer union" remain high. I would argue that the institutions and interdependencies are now in place such that each of them constrain and enable such actions.

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