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Hybrid statehood – a new perspective on the limits of statehood in (Southern) EU-Europe

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ABSTRACT

Political science research usually locates limited statehood outside the territory of the European Union (EU), although forms of limited statehood are hardly foreign phenomena in some parts of the EU, for example, Southern Italy. To understand these configurations of statehood, we introduce the concept of hybrid statehood as a specific form of societal order, characterized by a complex mixture of elements of European statehood and other forms of social order. It challenges the dichotomous understanding of statehood as either consolidated or limited, putting more emphasis on the interdependent coexistence of societal order, the practices of doing statehood and negotiating societal order, and the impact of historical constellations of societal order in the longue durée. We argue that bridging the gap between political science, history and social anthropology allows for a more in-depth understanding of statehood there. We need to take the challenge of understanding such societies very seriously, considering that Italy and the EU have failed to implement their visions of statehood and societal order for decades. This is even more the case if we consider that such configurations of hybridity will increasingly travel to other parts of the EU due to migration from the southern Mediterranean.

Introduction

Limited statehood, failed states or similar are labels for – from a Western point of view – problematic societal orders, which are usually located outside the territory of the European Union (EU). Nevertheless, forms of limited statehood are hardly foreign phenomena in some parts of the EU. People, especially in the southern EU border areas such as Southern Italy, look back on long traditions of dealing with a specific form of – at first glance, seemingly limited – statehood. A closer examination reveals their own societal rules, normative standards, and social or cultural practices that, in interaction with the formal rules of the state, have produced societal and state orders, which partially deviate from the EU style of statehood but function more or less stably. This style of statehood has challenged Italian and European policymakers, who have complained about corruption, crime and economic backwardness, for decades (Schneider & Schneider, 2006). Attempts have been made to eradicate reasons for the limited enforcement and functionality of the EU and state legislation and jurisdiction with ever newer policies. Transparency directives, regional development funds or infrastructure projects are just a few examples of 'modernization' policies pursued by the EU and the Italian government which consider societal and economic development as two sides of the same coin (Schwarz, 2020).

Areas such as Sicily are characterized by a complex mixture of elements of European statehood and other forms of societal order, which can be neither captured by the criteria of consolidated European statehood nor classified as failed or limited statehood, since the state has not completely relinquished its regulatory sovereignty. This style of statehood has been difficult to grasp using social science state

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theories because it defies common categorizations. It is argued here that scientific research requires a fresh perspective on these societal orders. We must break out of traditional patterns of thinking, categorizations and (methodological) approaches if we really want to understand the state and society in this part of the EU. Accordingly, we would like to introduce the concept of 'hybrid statehood', which challenges the dichotomous understanding of statehood as either consolidated or limited. It puts more emphasis on the interdependent coexistence of societal order (Boege & Tanis, 2020; Niang, 2018), the practices of doing statehood and negotiating societal order (Thelen et al., 2018), and the impact of historical constellations of social order in the longue durée (Braudel, 1977).

The aim of this paper is to outline a research agenda by taking a new perspective on the limits of statehood in Southern EU-Europe and discussing the concept of hybrid statehood as a particular form of (limited) statehood. We would like to demonstrate that analysing hybrid statehood can tell us a lot about the function (or non-functioning) of the state in these parts of the EU, where other (non-state) systems of order or modes of social co-ordination play a crucial role regarding the implementation of EU and nation-state policies. We argue that understanding statehood in the southern areas of the EU requires an interdisciplinary approach which shifts the focus away from the limits of statehood and the state's institutional order (law). To this end, we propose bridging the gap between political science theory, on the one hand, and the hermeneutic methods from history and social anthropology (Hauschild, 2020), on the other hand. This allows for a more in-depth understanding of statehood and the processes of the implementation of public policies in these areas.

We have developed the concept of hybrid statehood during anthropological fieldwork in Catania, Sicily, in a region that has been part of the Italian nation-state since 1861 and the EU since 1957, but has largely retained its typical characteristics of a hybrid order.

State-of-the-art

We could draw on countless literature on the state and society or on the often discussed Italian South (Putnam, 1993). Political science studies have analysed varieties of limitations in statehood, however, quite a number of them are normatively determined, taking the classical (Western) model of consolidated statehood as reference, which is based on the rule of state law and jurisdiction (Leibfried & Zürn, 2005). Following Weber (1921), the consolidated state has an institutionalized rule structure with the ability to govern authoritatively (*Herrschaftsverband*) and legitimately control the means of violence. Krasner emphasizes 'the "domestic sovereignty", that is the formal organization of political power within the state and the ability of public authorities to exercise effective control within the border own polity' (1999). Normative determined works assess nearly all states (and societies) that are neither democratic nor economically developed as 'failed', 'fragile' or 'failing' (Chomsky, 2006; Rotberg, 2004). The superiority of the (Western) consolidated state model was propagated, especially in the course of the 'Global War on Terror' after the terrorist attacks on the US, because the failed or failing states were accused of (potentially) being a sanctuary for terrorists (Grimm et al., 2014). The great weakness of such normatively determined approaches is that many stable states and societies are classified as weak, failed or otherwise negative simply because they do not conform to the ideal model of (Western) statehood that is consolidated in all its facets (Risse, 2011). Many works tend to view the (nation-) state as the only legitimate form of societal order and often disqualify other forms as inferior (Call, 2011; Santini, 2018). Uniformity and homogeneity of societal orders within a given (territorial) framework are implicitly regarded as a superior form of order and a guarantee of stability (North, 1990). Therefore, it was asked how Western notions of statehood could be exported or functional equivalents established in areas of limited statehood by the local population under local conditions (Bieling & Große Hüttmann, 2016).

Since the aim here is to consider hybrid statehood as a specific form of (limited) statehood in a normatively undetermined way, we would like to start our discussion with reference to a definition of limited statehood by Thomas Risse (2007), which we consider as being normatively most neutral. Risse defines (consolidated) statehood as 'the monopoly over the means of violence and the ability to enforce and implement political decisions' on all levels of a state's governance structure (Risse, 2007, p. 4). The consolidated state provides governance in rule-making, its enforcement and the provision of collective goods, such as security, welfare and a clean environment. Limited statehood results from limitations of

these capabilities of the state, either as a missing (legitimate) monopoly over the means of violence or a lack of ability to implement and enforce rules (law). Such limitations can refer to different dimensions of boundedness (temporal, sectoral, social and territorial). According to this definition, limited statehood must be regarded as a very complex phenomenon that can occur in very different configurations (Risse, 2011). It is, thus, a phenomenon that occurs more or less distinctly in most states of the world. The concept of limited statehood, therefore, turns out to be a kind of 'catch-all concept', which can manifest itself within a wide range of degrees of intensity and modalities (Polese & Santini, 2018). In most cases, however, states are not completely but, instead, partially limited. These are mostly geographical and cover only individual areas of the national territory, or are functionally limited. The state, especially central governments, have only a limited monopoly on the use of force or are unable to consistently enforce state law and individual political decisions in everyday life. Limitations in statehood do not automatically result in anarchy, but rather to the existence of other (non-state) systems of societal order (Krasner, 2001a, 2001b; Ostrom, 1990), including those with coexisting orders (Niang, 2018).

Research on limited statehood has focused almost exclusively on non-European regions (Risse et al., 2018), areas and states – mostly developing countries or (semi-)colonial areas (Carboni & Moody, 2018) – that were classified either as collapsed or weak (Brandel & Randeria, 2018). These works provided explanations why the model of (consolidated) European statehood cannot be exported everywhere, how governance is shaped in areas of limited statehood and which factors promote successful governance in these areas (Risse, 2007). However, these works remain rather dichotomous in their approach to varieties of statehood. Remarkably, it is mostly argued with pairs of opposites, i.e. statehood is either consolidated or limited and is located in clearly delineated areas, such as the global North, which is essentially made up of the 'West' of the Cold War and today''s EU, or the global South, the core of which is the 'Group of 77', whose 130 members' statehood is shaped by the different impacts of a colonial past (Williams, 1991). That there are overlap areas or border zones of varying types of statehood is sometimes mentioned but only analysed in a few cases (Boege & Tanis, 2020). Therefore, Risse et al. emphasized: 'What is still missing, though, are systematic comparisons of areas of limited statehood across the North-South divide that investigate similarities as well as differences, and explore varieties of limited statehood' (2018). Some of these areas belong – as we argue here – to EU territories and assumed consolidated states, such as Italy.

Regarding Southern Italy, research mostly argues in terms of modernization theory. It tries to explain why these territories have not yet reached the 'maturity level' of European statehood (Jansen, 2012; Putnam, 1993). Policymakers and researchers alike reach into the toolbox of modernization theory and try to explain and eliminate corruption, violence and economic backwardness with the tools to be found there. Only a few even make the effort to actually understand the characteristics and functional mechanisms of the state and societal order (Capello, 2013), however, they are mostly outdated (Giordano, 1992). They date back to an analysis of state and society in the 1960s and 1970s when the EU was still in its infancy and important societal changes triggered by globalization and digitization had hardly taken shape, for example, European regional policies, World Trade Organization agreements, such as General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or the EU border regime (Henrich-Franke, 2019).

We are convinced that research on limited statehood within the EU and Southern Italy, whose goal is to actually understand and explain the functioning of state and society, instead of wanting to implement specific ideas and modes of functioning of (consolidated) statehood from the outset, is mostly missing. Our research agenda provides food for thought in this direction. We argue that we have to take the challenge of understanding such societies very seriously, considering that here both the Italian nation-state and the EU have failed – also in their own imagination – to implement their visions of statehood and societal order for decades. This is even more the case if we consider that such conceptions of hybridity will increasingly travel to other parts of the EU due to migration from countries of the southern Mediterranean and neighbouring areas, such as the states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where state and society are characterized by hybrid orders of a different style (Polese & Santini, 2018). We believe that research and policy-making have not recognized that policy implementation has repeatedly failed because of the hybridity of the social order. Narrowly focused explanatory models of clientelism (Briquet, 2015; Piattoni, 1998), corruption (Torsello, 2015) and organized crime (mafia) (Rakopoulos, 2020), which start from the normative foundation of the Western-style (consolidated) nation-state, fall

short and obstruct the view of hybrid functional logics of societal order that are deeply rooted in people and their everyday practices (Sabetti, 2006).

Hybrid statehood – a conceptual framework

Our concept of hybrid statehood starts precisely here. It helps to overcome the theoretical anchoring in the model of Western statehood and provides a way out of the dichotomous understanding of statehood as either consolidated or limited. Hybrid orders have already been discussed within the postcolonial peace and conflict literature, especially as part of the growing critique of the failed state discourse in the context of state building processes (Albrecht & Moe, 2015; Boege et al., 2009). The notion of hybridity has, however, solely been used to analyse non-European territory, such as the MENA states (Polese et al., 2020; Polese & Santini, 2018), where the hierarchies between different social orders and modes of steering are much more contested than in EU territory. There, hybridity describes what is the case in so many so-called fragile states (Boege et al., 2009).

What is missing in these areas of hybrid order and legitimacy, from our understanding of hybrid statehood, is the (relative) stability of political and social order over a long time and an institutional state structure of European quality. Here, the state remains (invisibly) present despite limitations. The state does not always enforce its laws consistently, but it rarely relinquishes its monopoly on the use of force. We see this differentiation as an important step on our way to understand why state and societal order in Southern Italy deviates from both the EU style of statehood and statehood in non-European hybrid orders. Characteristics of similar forms of hybridity can also be found in other areas within Europe, especially the Balkans and other former socialist states in Eastern Europe (Tepšić & Vukelić, 2022). However, these are characterized by sharp political and social conflicts and ruptures. They hardly exhibit the same stability as Southern Italy (and Sicily), which has not experienced any disruptive changes from external forces, such as colonialism or socialism within the Italian nation state (Conrad & Randeria, 2002).

The way in which the state remains limited in the enforcement of its decisions (and its laws) in hybrid statehood can be explained by three key characteristics on which we would like to elaborate: the interdependent coexistence of societal orders, the practices of doing hybrid statehood (everyday practices, agency and power relations) and, finally, the heritage of the longue durée. These three characteristics are, however, not exclusive features of hybrid statehood. On the contrary, they also appear in other forms of statehood, which we might label as consolidated or limited, but they are neither systemic there nor do they form the main foundation of such states and their societal order. What makes the difference is that they are immanent characteristics of state and societal order under the conditions of hybrid statehood. These three characteristics are, in reality, not clearly separable but rather intertwined and complementary. However, we will deal with these characteristics separately in the following for analytical and heuristic reasons.

Interdependent coexistence of societal orders

The first key characteristic of hybrid statehood, the interdependent coexistence of social orders, consists of several elements. The first element is the typical style of coexistence and the respective specific equilibrium of the different forms of societal order which is also different to other hybrid orders outside EU-Europe (Boege & Tanis, 2020). In addition to the state and the church, networks and families are important forms of societal order (Zinn, 2019), which are based on informal (unwritten) customary law, whose mode of ordering (order-making) is built upon negotiations and habits (e.g. 'rispetto'/respect) among the citizens. According to Weber (1984), such customary law is legitimized by tradition. Networks and families are structural elements of society and not singular or isolated phenomena (Borneman, 1992; Herzfeld, 1993). Widespread family networks, which are structurally not comparable with the Western European nuclear family, serve as an equivalent to civil society organisations. They have the power to uphold traditional norms that conflict with state law. Local civil servants are well aware that they are confronted with ramified family networks, the actual ramifications of which cannot be surveyed; just as little as the associated access to positions of power and influence in society (of whatever kind) can be assessed, including those in state institutions. They are so significant for hybrid statehood because they

embody informal (unwritten) customary law that has been handed down in cultural patterns of human interaction and which is also passed on through socialization within the family. This law is based on long-established patterns of negotiations, customs and rituals between people and does not rely on state institutions and written rules (Hund, 1998). It is not arbitrary, but follows rules, behaviours and norms, which can be objectively verified within a particular social setting. Its enforcement, however, is not incumbent on an abstract authority, such as the state (and its representatives), but on the people themselves, who, in following these rules, give them a high value, which challenges or disregards state order (Druzin, 2014). However, the aim here is not to describe the very complex mechanisms of punishment and judgement in customary law in detail, but to show how the different social orders function in their coexistence with and interdependence on one another.

In order to understand interdependent coexistence better, it makes sense at this point to distinguish between institutional and functional statehood, because hybrid statehood is dependent on an equilibrium between both. On the one hand, the state and its representatives claim institutional statehood, especially ultimate authority, but they accept their own limitations in functional terms, i.e. in the fulfilment of their own tasks and the enforcement of statehood and civic 'duties'. On the other hand, other forms of societal order and their representatives do not fully comply with state law as they also doubt the state's general legitimacy. They take (economic) advantage whenever possible, for example, by not paying taxes or regulating societal interaction according to unwritten customary law. It is even considered 'smart' in large parts of the population to deceive the state, which, in these cases, is considered illegitimate. Examples of this are structurally established practices, such as the sale of goods without VAT with the argument that the state is getting 'rich off the little people', the sale of stolen goods, such as fruit at local markets, the use of stolen license plates for cars or the tapping of power lines for private use. Of course, even in consolidated states, individual 'criminal' acts, such as minor tax fraud, are considered a trivial offence. However, there are very clear gradual differences, as deceiving the state is a structural feature of hybrid statehood in (large) parts of the society.

An empirical example of interdependence is the ritual of the '*fuitina*' ('sudden escape'), which is still widespread and seen as an equivalent of marriage. A (young) couple, at least one of them often underage, flees from home and establishes (in accordance with traditional customary law) a relationship through the sexual act (in the past also often as rape) and (a possible subsequent) pregnancy, which, however, also constitutes a violation (or breach) of honour. Honour can then be restored through formal marriage in accordance with state and church law. The state and the church, by performing the marriage, legalize the alternative 'marriage' relationship gained through the *fuitina* and, thereby, acknowledge customary law.

Coexistence has distinctive spatial and temporal components (Risse, 2011). There is a pronounced territorial component to the coexistence of state and customary law. The state, for example, accepts non-compliance with rules, to an extremely large extent, in some urban areas (e.g. riding a motorbike without a helmet or selling without paying taxes), while it tolerates this to a lesser degree in others. State rules are usually enforced in areas where the majority of the population accepts them anyway. Urban space is, therefore, characterized by the coexistence of different forms of order (and statehood), sometimes in very confined spaces. The concept of hybrid statehood emphasizes the sharp contrast between consolidated and limited statehood in the narrowest of spaces. Different orders alternately dominate the same space, sometimes even in the course of a day, and people know very well how to deal with these alternations. Therefore, in addition to geographical coexistence in a confined space, the temporal alternation of different forms of order plays a decisive role in the production of hybrid statehood. An excellent example was the monitoring of compliance with state regulations in the central park of the city of Catania, Villa Bellini, during the Covid-19 pandemic. During peak working hours between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., the police, with a large contingent of officers, ensured that the distance rules, wearing a face mask and curfews in the park were strictly adhered to and, if necessary, sanctioned. However, after 6 p.m., when the police left the Villa Bellini, the population streamed into the park and used it according to customary law: without masks, without social distancing, without state surveillance and with all practices that were considered legitimate. What is significant is that the people in Catania (including the state representatives) are aware of these changes and see them as a normal part of the social order and everyday practices.

The second key element is interdependence. The different forms of societal order compete with each other, but they are also dependent on (interdependent) and stabilize each other and, thus, society as a whole. The representatives of the individual orders try to gain the regulative upper hand in (everyday) practices and (rhythmic) rituals without fundamentally eliminating the others. Larger religious rituals can play a central role in the negotiation of interdependence, which is often the case in Southern Italy concerning local saints' festivals.

The festival of the patron Saint of Catania, Saint Agatha, for example, is an important element in negotiating equilibria between state, Church and society in the Catanese social order. The staging of the saint, the organization and course of services for the saint, and the shaping and further development of ritual processes and practices in the festival are a rhythmically recurring occasion for the negotiation and production not only of religious order, but also of state and societal order (Magliocco, 2001; Palumbo, 2020). The patron Saint's festival combines characterized forms of devotion during the celebrations which are regarded as either legal or illegal by the Church and the state authorities and as legitimate or illegitimate by society. The way of negotiating lines of conflict and the competition, interdependence and mutual acceptance of different forms of order show constituent elements of what has been defined here as hybrid statehood. On the one hand, the Church and state repress alternative forms of devotion only temporally, while on other occasions, illegal actions, partly perceived in society as legitimized ritual actions, are tolerated. They claim their ultimate authority by defining the festival's rules and procedure, however, they accept their functional limitations and inability to consequently enforce these rules (Faust, 2021).

Normatively, there are gaps between the legality under state law and societal (customary) legitimacy. What, from the perspective of EU and Italian state law, is called and sanctioned as an illegal violation of law, can, from the perspective of local customary law, be understood as an illegitimate encroachment of the state into an area of regulation for which it is not responsible. In the case of coexisting orders/rule systems, violations of rules are often not clearly definable and their punishment can be problematic. Punishment must, therefore, always take into account the hybridity of order. Areas of hybrid statehood also have various forms of jurisdiction, which range from state justice to the law of the fist and forms of restoration of (family) honour. They have – as different social orders – conflicts regarding the claim to validity and priority. Different legitimacies for different tasks are a characteristic of hybrid statehood. Nevertheless, although the state partially withdraws and does not consistently enforce its laws, it retains judicial supremacy (Faust & Franke, 2024).

In this context, it is also important to address the phenomenon of the mafia, which is a significant element regarding the genesis of hybrid statehood in Southern Italy. The Mafia, which was rooted in customary law in the mid-19th century, enjoyed a certain degree of legitimacy among the people and could be considered as a serious competitor of the Italian state (Sabetti, 2006). But the mafia has transformed itself into a criminal and hierarchical organization with its own rules and clear initiation rites (Arlacchi, 1995). Its power has been based increasingly on intimidation and violence against representatives of state power and more generally against state representatives. This article refrains from including the mafia in the conceptual considerations on hybrid statehood as it misses a general legitimacy within society. It will be a second step to categorize the mafia in a fully developed model of hybrid statehood in order to take account of the fact that hybrid statehood, for example, in Southern Italy, appears to be a prerequisite for the existence of the mafia.

Doing hybrid statehood

The equilibrium between the different forms of societal order which coexist in areas of hybrid statehood is neither fixed nor uncontested. People 'regulate' the functioning and stability of (societal) order, solve complex problems of coexistence and togetherness, and position themselves in the framework of state and societal order in complex, daily and rhythmically recurring practices and rituals (Gupta & Sharma, 2006; Thelen et al., 2018). Hybrid statehood is characterized by continuous negotiations between different actors, competing patterns of order and diverse forms of pragmatic coexistence of regulatory systems. Under the conditions of hybrid statehood, the institutions do not exclusively regulate access to power, resources and competences, but, to a large extent, certain actors, who are related to their

respective networks and/or families. In this respect, the social coupling of actors often plays a greater role in actions and options for action than their institutional coupling. Certain forms of patronage and clientelism, such as favouring family members in official government positions, are, thus, not considered reprehensible in large parts of society (Zinn, 2019). However, it is important to emphasize that there is a striking difference between 'doing' and 'judging' on this point.

Quite fundamentally, people use the various systems of social order very pragmatically. They might be able to choose different institutional structures, actor networks and roles, depending on their opportunities and interests. However, the choice is rarely a voluntary one but is more subject to structural constraints that are both territorially and socially determined. It is possible to circumvent legal norms (exploit grey and border areas) and, at the same time, the state does not consistently enforce its law. It does so at least as long as the offences do not exceed a certain framework, which, in turn, is also not clearly defined. The negotiation and implementation of order takes place against the background of many grey areas, which, seriatim, open up many options for action. That these grey areas can be effectively exploited (and have a strong stabilizing effect) is also related to behavioural norms and cultural codes in Southern Italy that imply, for example, 'actively ignoring' the actions of others, thus, creating spaces for individual agency.

One example is an unauthorized night-time party (with drug consumption and illegal participants) in the middle of a densely populated urban area in the old town of Catania in 2021. The party took place on the ground floor and the street, which plays an important role as an extended living space for everyday life. Although the neighbours themselves, living opposite on the ground floor in the little narrow street, where the night-time party was performed, perceived the party as extremely disruptive, they did not call the local police to help enforce the legally prescribed night-time quiet hours. They demonstratively sat down on their chairs facing backwards on the public street in the direction of the event. In doing so, they neither supported nor accused the night-time disturbance, the use of drugs or illegal participants in the middle of a densely populated urban area. Instead, they sent a signal of active ignorance. Just as they expected others to do if they themselves had to rely on active ignoring. As in many of the previous examples, the difference lies in the structural degree to which the practices of active ignoring are culturally embedded. Actors in these societal systems often take advantage of the different orders, which implies knowing the rules of the different systems. This is one of the reasons why hybrid statehood dissolves the dichotomy between limited and consolidated statehood.

In addition to the exploitation of legal grey zones and minor offences, negotiation also includes the demonstrative 'claim for authority' by state authorities (police), i.e. the enforcement of state violence in demonstrative actions. The state's own ultimate responsibility is strikingly shown in the practices of negotiating societal order. The sale of counterfeit products (contrary to EU trademark protection law), for example, is not fundamentally prevented, but individual illegal traders are repeatedly arrested with great media impact (Faust & Franke, 2024). It also becomes clear here that the 'shadow' of state hierarchy is not completely abstinent, as Börzel presupposes, for example, for areas of limited statehood (2008). The state representatives do not consistently enforce state law in everyday practices, among other reasons, because this does not fit with the informal norms, i.e. societal customary law, that even the state actors often accept, such as road traffic regulations or the illegal sale of goods in local markets.

Socialization within 'hybrid statehood' is enormously important for understanding interdependent coexistence and the importance of practices of negotiating order. This has already been mentioned for the passing of customary law, but it applies as much to state representatives, such as the different police forces which play an important role in ensuring successful coexistence at the interface of the different social orders. Actors, especially within the various police forces, often have difficulty coming to terms with this form of negotiation of social order when they are transferred to the south from other (northern) parts of Italy where mainly formalized state law defines order.

Heritage of the longue durée

If statehood and social order derive quite substantially from the everyday practices of their negotiation, then people's socio-cultural backgrounds, i.e. their norms, values and behaviours, which are deeply rooted in cultural strata, are of crucial importance for societal stability and equilibrium. These must also

be reflected in the study of hybrid statehood because patterns and types of behaviour cannot be detached from their historical contexts of emergence and development (Conrad & Randeria, 2002). The anthropologist Mühlmann already pointed out in the 1970s that 'the state of mind of a people and its social strata can never become clear without knowledge of the 'historically invested experiences' of the incorporated attitudes, convictions, habits, and gravamina' (1975, translation by the authors). We argue that the longue durée, i.e. that layer of time that focuses on persistent social, political, economic and cultural structures that change very slowly but have a fundamental impact on human actions, is crucial to understanding hybrid statehood. The latter requires an understanding of the persistence of old habits of thought and action 'which are more resilient – sometimes against all logic – than expected' (Braudel, 1977, p. 55).

We argue that the interdependent coexistence of state and societal orders is so stable because the practices of doing hybrid statehood are deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the region and its people. It did not emerge only with the establishment of the nation-state in the 19th century (Sicily became part of Italy in 1861), but has its roots in a 'system of equilibrium' of secular rule, ecclesiastical rule and civil society regulations that has shown a high degree of continuity since the Middle Ages and became entrenched in everyday practices (Schneider, 1998). The reason for this, historically speaking, is probably that the 'foreign' secular rulers – up to the Italian nation-state after 1861 – never managed to consistently enforce the law and their own authority on the local level (Reinhard & Sommer, 2010). Constitutional law was only anchored in customary law to a limited extent. Therefore, ruling or state and customary law always remained isolated next to each other.

Regularly changing foreign rule (often from distant centres of power) was always opposed by the continuity of local customary law in this strategically important region of the Mediterranean. Foreign and domestic (legal and legitimate) orders, as well as religious orders, always had to be brought into an equilibrium. This is all the more significant because forms of foreign domination that were not regarded as legitimate by the population, thus, gained in importance for the formation of hybrid institutions. Very different practices and rituals emerged over the longue durée of several centuries – from the very mundane to the annual festivals surrounding the city's saints – in order to continually restore the balance of forms of order, power and norms (List, 2006). Unlike in other parts of Europe, where the competition of orders aimed at permanent dominance and elimination (with the enforcement of the consolidated western statehood in long historical processes), competition in Sicily never resulted in elimination but in (temporary) leading roles in the coexistence of orders and claims to power, which were regularly negotiated and brought into temporary equilibria. The lack of acceptance of formal state institutions must then be seen as an after-effect of earlier regime configurations, which linger because specific patterns of perception and action sink into deep cultural layers that are no longer questioned.

Conclusion/avenues for future research

We are convinced that a stronger focus on the interdependent coexistence of societal orders, the practices of doing hybrid statehood, and the deep layers of human practices and institutional orders (heritage of the longue durée) will put us in a position to understand statehood better in Southern Italy. We argue that understanding hybridity and hybrid statehood there will enable us to better understand (emerging) forms of hybridity in other EU regions where the consolidated state is increasingly confronted with people, often immigrants from MENA countries, who have brought their everyday practices acquired in hybrid orders with them to the EU. The interesting thing about this observation is that hybridity should not be classified as an obstacle for social stability but, on the contrary, as a guarantor of stability. Such a shift in focus, analytical interest and methodology might give us new insights and provide us with a better understanding of public policies in those territories of the EU where the characteristics of hybrid statehood become apparent. We are convinced, that this is the case in urban areas, such as in the Paris Banlieues or Berlin Neukölln. There, many people who were socialized in (non-European) hybrid orders have to come to terms with the institutions and regulations of a consolidated state in their everyday practices. Analysing hybrid statehood in Southern Italy might provide us with a better understanding of these new forms of coincidence between the consolidated state and

social practices acquired in hybrid orders. Hybrid statehood is also anchored in its functional mechanisms in the social and cultural practices of certain people who move and settle freely as EU citizens or migrants within the EU territory.

We do not claim to have designed a model or theoretical concept of universal scope with the concept of hybrid statehood and its three key characteristics. Up to now, we have located and analysed it in Southern Italy, particularly in Sicily/Catania, but there are similarities in many other areas within the EU which deserve our attention. Understanding areas of hybrid statehood in the EU is a challenging task, as it benefits from an interdisciplinary research design to grasp daily practices of everyday social interaction and political implementation. Such research must be prepared to move away (at least for pragmatic research reasons) from Western notions of (consolidated) statehood and engage (without value judgment) in understanding such forms of state and society. Once again, we are well advised to 'rethink the state' (Migdal & Schlichte, 2005) if we really want to understand some of its main current challenges. It will be a particular challenge to recognize what practices and norms constitute local customary law and its legitimation.

The methodological challenge in studying hybrid statehood will be to combine different disciplinary approaches and theories. We consider it necessary to bridge the gap between political science theory, on the one hand, and the hermeneutic methods of history and social anthropology, on the other. Anthropology, as a (mainly) actor-centred approach, is based on the analysis of mundane and annual practices, the nature of networks and families which structure society, regarding especially its methodological tools in knowledge production which is based on participant observation. This is particularly suitable for a society such as that in Southern Italy, where nonverbal communication and practices, such as the 'active ignoring', play a crucial role (Faust, 2021). The data to be collected through participant observation are able to capture tacit knowledge and barely verbalized courses of action that only become visible in the observation of repetitive practices. Regarding hybrid statehood, anthropological analysis promises to provide a new understanding of the interplay between formal institutional (state) order and processes of negotiating order. The historical perspective then helps to penetrate the surface of the observable to reach (even more effectively) the unconscious drivers of human action. A historical institutional analysis traces how coexistence could occur and why it can be stable, when, in fact, according to the assumptions of institutional theory, the uniformity and close coupling of formal and informal institutions should be the very cause of stability. This leads to the conclusion that there is a need to rethink the rationality of the consolidated model against the background of previously existing structures and practices and the challenges that have subsequently emerged.

We are convinced that linking political science models and theories of statehood to a comparative anthropological and historical study of societies that exhibit characteristics of hybrid statehood is a promising avenue for future research. A research agenda designed in this way promises new insights into both the limitation of statehood in the southern EU region and areas of contested statehood in northern EU states. This is so important because it is people with their individually acquired notions of statehood who shape the production of social order through migration into and within the Schengen area.

Disclosure statement

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