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Conceptualising the EU model of governance in world politics

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Abstract
While the field of EU studies has generated a rich theoretical literature, the usefulness of analyses of the EU for broader processes of regional governance has been questioned. At the same time much recent scholarship on the EU has examined the Union's external relations as opposed to its internal governance. At stake in both of these debates are questions about the nature of the EU, what it represents and how it should be conceptualised. By examining the conceptual literatures on EU 'actorness', the governance of EU external relations and policy and academic discourses of comparative regional integration, this paper argues that approaches informed by broadly constructivist insights carry significant promise and can help to answer questions about the EU's role in world politics that perplex both the policy and the academic imaginations.

Introduction

In its first half century, academic work on the European Union (hereafter EU studies) has generated a rich conceptual literature.[1] This is hardly surprising. The EU and its antecedents represent – depending on one's theoretical starting point – either a remarkable experiment in post-national governance or a stunning instance of inter-state co-operation and concomitant institutionalisation. The field of EU studies has been shaped by significant theoretical conversations, which have both fed into and drawn upon broader debates within political science and International Relations (IR). In recent years, the field has engaged in a phase of auto-critique where the supposed inadequacies of earlier theoretical efforts – notably the debate between neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists – have been identified. One of the key themes here has been the claim that IR lacks the capacity to ask appropriate questions about the evolving EU, which in this account is better talked about in the vocabularies of either classical political science or a newer toolkit associated with the idea of 'governance' (Eberlein and Kerwer, 2004; Hix, 1994; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch, 2004). Meanwhile, the recent dramatic growth of studies of comparative regional integration has actively downgraded the status of the EU as an exemplar case. In this strand of thought, the EU is depicted as a *sui generis* phenomenon – a peculiarly institutionalised path dependent creature of decisions made in the aftermath of World War II. The point here is that the more recent growth of regional organisations in world politics is a consequence of newer imperatives that

follow the end of the cold war and the rise of globalisation. It follows that we should not expect the likes of NAFTA or Mercusor to come to resemble the EU and thus that the EU's long experience offers lessons to neither region-building policy actors to academic analysts of regionalism (see *inter alia* Beeson, 2005; Hettne, 1999; Söderbaum and Shaw, 2003).

However, the assertion that the EU's grip on both the policy and academic imaginations should be loosened has become commonplace at the same time as the EU itself has emerged as a significant presence in world politics. The biggest growth area in EU studies in the last few years has involved research on EU external relations and EU foreign policy. Thus, at the precise time when the EU seems to be exercising a significant influence over the shape of world politics, we seem to be confronted an uneasy separation, if not a full scale divorce between EU studies and the wider study of governance and change in the global political economy. This article undertakes a critical review of the conceptual literature – largely developed within EU studies – about the EU's external governance profile to argue for a degree of rethinking. The paper deconstructs the phrase 'EU external governance' into four distinctive thematic clusters. These might be listed in terms of four sets of questions. First, how does the EU manifest itself as a presence/as an actor in world politics/global governance? Second, how does the EU regulate its relations with the non-EU? Does it deploy a distinctive mode of governance to this end? Is it possible to develop a coherent theoretical account of EU external relations? Do rival theoretical schools mimic/extend the classic fault lines of integration theory? Third, to what extent does the EU itself provide architects of post-national/global governance with a template/with a model? Finally, to what extent does the EU help us understand/explain the emergent architecture of regional governance in an era of globalisation?

The paper supplies a critical review of the extant theoretical literatures around these four questions to show that the analytical leverage of using the EU as a starting point for comparison/projection is far from exhausted. The paper details the evolution of thinking around these questions and shows that the most creative conceptual efforts

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have emerged from scholars working outside of the rationalist and disciplinary mainstreams. The paper argues, therefore, that the theoretical analysis of the EU's governance in the context of the broader global/world/international governance system is a useful and vital step in the project of 'thinking otherwise' in contemporary international studies.

The EU in world politics

One of the longest standing problems in the study of EU external relations concerns the conceptualisation of the EU as an actor. As is well known the EU interacts with the non-EU is a variety of ways. There is no uniform or predictable pattern to EU actions in, say, its putative foreign policy, its bilateral exchanges with other actions or what might be called its foreign economic policy. The impression of variation in terms of the manifestations of EU 'actorness' is reinforced by two further observations. First, who acts on behalf of the EU might be the Commission, the sitting Council Presidency or the High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to name but three possibilities. Second, the processes through which external actions are produced also vary, suggesting that the projection of the EU to the outside is as complex as the variegation that characterises its internal governance. Yet the EU undoubtedly creates 'footprints' in world politics, whether it be in the form of influence over the conduct of global trade politics, the provision of humanitarian or development assistance, the creation of common positions or joint actions in the sphere of foreign policy or the articulation of ideas about the proper conduct of some aspect of global affairs. In other words, these products or footprints are of sufficient significance to require academic scrutiny and a pre-requisite for this is the development of appropriate conceptual schema.

The problem – long recognised in EU studies – is that conventional IR is built on a basic ontological imagery where the basic actors (units) in world politics are states and that meaningful interaction is undertaken between states. Mainstream debates in IR (such as those between the realist and liberal traditions) tend to revolve around disagreements about which forms of interstate conflict and interaction should be accorded analytical primacy. The EU is obviously not a state, at least in the sense normally understood within the political sciences. Of course, the literature is littered with arguments about whether the EU is becoming a conventional state, whether it is

evolving into a new or hybrid form of state or whether is should acquire state-like characteristics. But perhaps the more fundamental problem is that conventional IR expects its core units to exhibit rationality and instrumentality. The EU's lack of coherence in this regard and the absence of clearly discernible EU 'interests' explains the cautious way in which early discussion of the EU's international role shied away from the noun 'actorness' in favour of the looser idea of 'presence'. In Hill's oft-cited distinction 'actorness' is only achieved when an entity is clearly and unequivocally distinguished from other entities in the international system (Hill 1994). Moreover, Hill argued that 'actorness' (particularly in the realm of foreign policy) was only achievable when the entity in question made its own laws and when it possessed 'legal personality', a diplomatic corps and the capacity to conduct autonomous negotiations with third parties. Hill's preference for the idea of the EU's 'presence' in the international system reflected the observation that the EU lacked these core attributes, but that at the same time its impact in world politics was discernible. This 'distinctive non-state' presence, to use White's phrase (White, 2004: 45), is not only about the empirics of actions and outcomes that demonstrate an external projection of the EU into the domain of foreign policy broadly defined. As Allen and Smith (1990) recognised, it also has much to do with the fact that this presence is regarded as legitimate and perceived to be important by other actors in the system. In so far as the EU has actor-like attributes, then it follows that the successful appearance of the EU as a factor in world politics has as much to do with the norms of that system as it does with the agency of the EU itself.

Herein lies a central paradox for the analyst of EU foreign policy/external relations. The recognition rules that accord an entity significance/legitimacy within the international system tend to be governed by highly state-centric norms (Jørgensen and Rosamond, 2002). The expectation within the system is that actors be state-like. One way of thinking about this question follows the argument that to take on the appearance of an actor, the EU needs to conform to the system norms. This in turn – particularly in overly structuralist accounts – is likely to preclude the possibility of a logical external projection of the internal multifaceted EU polity because to *be* or to *become* within the international system requires a suppression of the transformationalist character of the EU. There is also an analytical component to this paradox in that conventional theories of international politics (and politics more

generally) have an in-built assumption that the nation-state provides s with a norm or a benchmark. Thus there is always a danger that the external projection(s) of the EU will always be measured against this benchmark in terms of success or failure to comply with the pre-existing norm (Manners and Whitman, 2003: 395). At this point it is interesting to note the very close correspondence between the *analytical* expectations of conventional theorising and the *prevalent policy norms* of the 'everyday' international system.

Of course, not all accounts of the internal polity of the EU would subscribe to the claim that it is either especially transformative or particularly transcendent of established governance mechanisms. For example, one powerful rationalist account conceptualises the growth of supranational institutions in principal-agent terms (see Pollack, 2003). In this framework, the growth of EU governance is thought to be the consequence of deliberate self-regarding action by member-states (principals) which – motivated by convergent preferences – delegate common tasks to supranational institutions (agents). One corollary would be the suggestion that foreign policy/external relations tasks might follow a similar principal-agent logic. Indeed, those keen to emphasise the continuing importance of national executives in EU policy-making (for example, Moravcsik, 1998) would argue that the extent of European institutionalisation (as a manifestation of integration) is always explained by the level of preference convergence among the (key) member-states. If, to borrow Hill and Smith's phrase, the EU might be understood as a 'trading state' (Hill and Smith, 2005b: 12), then the optimisation of the member-states' collective commercial interests might explain external action that seeks to create a stable and predictable environment. External action becomes a rational spillover of the EU's inherent purpose. Rationalists might also make hay with the range of actions directed by the EU vis-à-vis its 'near abroad'. Thus the Barcelona Process seeks to create a zone of peace and stability in the Mediterranean region via the classically commercial liberal mechanism of moving towards a free trade area. Similar, customised actions have been developed in relation to other neighbouring regions such as the Balkans and South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the so-called Northern Dimension (organised principally around the EU's Russian border). The whole array of activities under the heading of 'transatlantic relations' could also be read as

indicative of deliberate attempts to create a rule bound order for the optimal pursuit of collective transnational economic gain (Pollack and Schaffer, 2001).

Thus, conventional rationalist theories can go some way to develop plausible hypotheses about the appearance of and evidence for an EU profile in the international arena. However, they run into some difficulties, which might be summarised as follows. First, rationalism can advance an explanation of why formal institutional expressions of an EU external presence appear, but they do not necessarily help us understand the particular character of the processes through which these mechanisms operate. Or put another way, they have been accused of ignoring significant and peculiar attributes of EU foreign policy broadly defined, thereby tending to force the analysis of the EU's international role(s) into conventional – and possibly misleading – frameworks (this is discussed in the next section). Second, rationalist explanations might be able to account for many aspects of external economic governance or even the growth of the EU as provider of particular foreign policy/external relations specialisms in areas such as development assistance, but how do we account for the remarkable appearance of a military dimension to EU external action in the form of the ESDP, and what is going on when the EU manifests itself within the US legal system as an advocate of the abolition of the death penalty (Manners, 2002)? What is at stake here is the *constitution* of actorness. This leads to a third point: the fact that there are multiple ways in which the EU makes an appearance in world politics. As White (2004: 45) notes, it is imprudent to think about the EU as *an* actor or *a* presence or even *a* singular identity. It is not just that the EU projects itself in different substantive ways. As will be noted below, it is also about the *concepts* of the EU that are being projected and the normative receptiveness of the international system to such projections.

The EU's governance of the non-EU
The field of EU studies has become increasingly preoccupied with understanding the mechanisms through which the Union manages its external relations and foreign policy activities (Carlsnaes, Sjursen and White, 2004; Hill and Smith, 2005a; Smith, 2003). Inevitably this literature has developed a number of generalisations and has sought to generate theoretical as well as empirical insights. The key question for this section involves the relationship between the character of the EU's external projection

and the quality of available theoretical accounts. The previous section has already suggested that the portfolio of classic rationalist theories might not be able to deal with the peculiarly complex and multiple ways in which the EU manifests itself in world politics (see also Manners and Whitman, 2003). Realist theories of international relations expect nothing less than rational coherent state-like entities to be the only significant actors in politics beyond the nation-state. Liberals and regime theorists anticipate the rise of international co-operation and are more comfortable with a variegated pattern of actors. But states' activities and the rational pursuit of state interests (which *contra* realism may have a commercial as well as a security rationale) remain the key motors of world politics (Andreatta, 2005; Tonra and Christiansen, 2004). It takes quite a radical leap to loosen the core assumptions of state-centred traditions of foreign policy analysis to develop a transformed conceptual framework that can cope with the curiosities of the EU (though see White, 2004a; 2004b for the most explicit attempts to do just that). These caveats might also apply to the mainstream and long-standing theories of integration. We have already seen that (liberal) intergovernmentalism (a liberal institutionalist as opposed to realist theory) would conceptualise the external projection of the EU as a consequence of co-operative, rational, interest-driven activity by the member-states. Neofunctionalism, on the other hand, is principally a theory of region building (see below), and so does not have a obviously available account of EU external governance. Newer conceptualisations of the EU are largely products of the broader intellectual move to analyse the EU from within, as a polity (either recognisable or novel). That said, some attempts have been made to generate conceptualisations of EU foreign policy that draw upon the insights of concepts such as multi-level governance (Smith, 2004)..

There would seem to be three issues that make life difficult for the theoretically minded analyst of EU external activity. First, as Jørgensen (2004b: 42) notes, analytical leverage is difficult to obtain using conventional theories of foreign policy because of the peculiar, potentially *sui generis* character of EU external relations (see also Knodt and Princen, 2003: Jørgensen, 2004a; Tonra and Christiansen, 2004). Social scientific protocol demands that research be analytical rather than purely descriptive. The problem with discussions of *sui generis* phenomena is that they are likely to be inherently descriptive. This does not mean that the phenomenon or event is beyond analytical capture. Rather the task of the social scientist is to recast the

investigation so that the phenomenon becomes an instance of something (Rosenau and Durfee, 1995)..The difficulty then becomes a matter of 'an instance of what?' The resolution of that question is partly empirical and will be grounded in observation of the phenomenon under investigation, but it is also a matter of theoretical choice and ultimately of the openness of the analyst to a diverse range of theoretical possibilities. Here this first issue of the *sui generis* character of EU external relations runs into the second and third issues.

The second issue then is about what we observe when we examine EU external relations/foreign policy. A few key findings – in addition to the general observation about variegation and complexity – are worth noting. First, in foreign and security policy, it is no longer appropriate to narrate the EU's operation purely in terms of the formal treaty description. This is not an instance of standard intergovernmental exchange, but apparently a concerted effort to upgrade common tasks, which in turn has yielded an alternative (perhaps a post-) diplomatic culture among the participating member-states. Second, consensus building rather than fiercely differentiated national interests is the foreign policy norm in contemporary Europe – and this culture is less recent than might be supposed (Jørgensen, 1997; Nuttall, 1992; Tonra, 2001). Third, EU external activity – in all domains – is highly discursive. It is aspirational, declaratory and full of positioning statements:

> Across EU documents a discourse can be identified according to which the
> Union is constructed as a unit which defends its own interests and has an
> obligation to take on responsibilities in the light of international challenges
> (Larsen, 2004: 67).

In other words, much of the effort of the EU's external projection involves the announcement of the *significance* of that external projection and the claim that the EU *is* a coherent and purposive actor (Jørgensen, 2004b: 12). Also, the assertion of coherence and purpose is all fields of external action/governance does not preclude the projection of multiple and sometimes contradictory roles, suggesting (a) a discursive struggle to define the substantive way in which the EU should impact upon the world (Rosamond, 1999) and/or (b) alternative components of the EU's international identity that relate what it is to how it acts (Manners and Whitman,

2003). Fourth, the language of 'Europe' has become pervasive and feeds back in significant and transformative ways into the domestic discourses and practices of foreign policy within the member-states (Tonra, 2001: Wæver, 2000; 2005; see also Herrmann, Risse and Brewer, 2004). Fifth, there is evidence that foreign policy actors themselves understand their actions as being about the construction of a European identity and their field of action as being 'European' foreign policy-making (White, 2001). Finally, there is a highly normative dimension to EU external action. By that is meant that many of the EU's external relations activities can be read as attempts to shape conceptions of 'the normal' in international politics. (Manners, 2002; Manners and Whitman, 2003: Smith, 2003).

These are obviously selected highlights and the foregoing is a rather partial account of the key findings in EU external relations research. However, they have been chosen deliberately because these features of EUI external governance are either difficult to explain using a conventional rationalist political science repertoire or – perhaps more importantly – they are observations that might not be regarded as significant within the frameworks of such theories. To take one example, Larsen (2004: 69) remarks that the discursive character of EU foreign policy might be regarded as epiphenomenal and simply rhetorical within mainstream rationalist work. The point for many constructivists and discourse analysts is that the discursive quality of EU external action is *the* most distinctive and significant aspect of EU foreign policy.

This brings us to the third issue under this heading: theoretical choice. The set of findings was deliberately chosen because they all come from work that departs from the rationalist mainstream. In other words, analysts have conceptualised EU external relations in particular ways and arrived at potentially significant results because they have asked certain sorts of questions. Much of this is accounted for by the recent constructivist turn in international and European studies (Christiansen, Jørgensen and Wiener, 2001) and by the application of insights from contemporary social theory to the analysis of the EU (Kelstrup and Williams, 2000; Linklater, 2005; Manners and Whitman, 2003). Within IR, constructivism has been concerned with understanding the social bases of international politics. The way that actors conceive of themselves, of other and of their environment is crucial to the conduct of that politics. This upgrades the significance of ideas, knowledge, intersubjectivities and discourses.

Institutions become venues for socialisation rather than simply the rational exchange of preferences. Indeed the creation of interests and identities is endogenous to institutionalised interaction (whereas rationalist theories tend to treat interests as exogenous). Such theoretical moves appear to allow for the solution of the *sui generis* problem as well as relaxing significantly the idea of the EU as a unitary instrumental actor in international affairs. So, for example, we can re-conceive of the CFSP as a zone of communicative action (Jørgensen, 2004b). Meanwhile it is possible to recognise that the EU is not an actor in the conventional sense, but to find interesting to process through which it seeks to wrestle for a form of agency, bound by prevailing ideational structures that dictate what an actor should be. It is this shift from the analysis of the EU's *being* to its *becoming* that is perhaps the most helpful side effect of the social theoretical move.

The EU as a model

The foregoing has focussed on those actions or activities by which the EU appears as an entity in world politics or through which it creates an impact. This, of course, presupposes action (be it purposive or unintentional) that produces either of these effects. However, the EU also arguably shapes the international system by simple virtue of its very existence. Analytically, this tends to beg the question of what the EU is an instance of, if anything – a question to which several answers are possible (Rosamond, 2000: 14-18). A standard social scientific approach would then involve the analysis of whether analogous phenomena are present or have been present in the international system as a basis for further comparative work. Yet, it is important not to lose sight of the ways in which the EU, as a ready-made exemplar, affects the perceptions of actors within international politics. Most obviously, this boils down to the extent that the EU offers a *model* – to be either emulated or avoided. What is interesting – from a constructivist viewpoint – is that, in this context, the question of the nature of the EU (that which might be emulated or avoided) is not necessarily settled. Thus part of the international politics of the EU, which is often overlooked, is a struggle over the presentation of *what the EU model is*. The various competing images of the EU tend to diverge over two things: (a) the description of its structures and processes and (b) the assertion of its normative substance.

As far as the first of these is concerned, the default assumption amongst policy actors is that the EU is a heavily institutionalised form of governance, reliant on a delicate compromise between supranational and intergovernmental forces. This, in essence, is a description of the 'Monnet model' or the community method – the classic textbook presentation of how the EU works. In so far as region-builders elsewhere refer to the EU in their deliberations, it has been commonplace to dismiss the European variant as institutionally top-heavy, as a relic of particular deliberations in a particular region at particular time. Most scholars of European governance would offer a corrective at this point to note that there is rather more to EU policy-making that the cumbersome 1950s engineering of the Monnet model, and in any case the Monnet model itself has developed in quite subtle and often surprising ways since its formalisation in the founding treaties. Yet, what is also striking is the way that this caricature of what the EU model is has become embedded in some of the EU's own discourse. The Prodi Commission (1999-2004) made particular play of the virtues of the EU model of governance:

> Our European model of integration is the most developed in the world. Imperfect though it still is, it nevertheless works on a continental scale. Given the necessary institutional reforms, it should continue to work well after enlargement, and I believe we can make a convincing case that it would also work globally (Prodi, 2000: 4).

Similarly, the Commission White Paper on Governance (2000) also quite clearly positioned itself as contributing to the debate about how the *Community Method* might be strengthened. The point is that, notwithstanding the sheer complexity of EU governance mechanisms, policy actors both within and beyond the EU construct the EU in quite particular and arguably partial terms. The research task would then be to ask why these particular constructions? Do they represent knowing discursive strategies of policy elites or, on the contrary, to they simply follow from an intersubjective consensus on what the EU is?

In contrast to the one dimensional representations of the EU's governance structure favoured in conventional policy discourse, recent scholarship on the EU has suggested that it possesses multiple, co-existent modes of governance (Wallace, 2005). The

evolving community method is one of these, but in Wallace's analysis there are at least four other modes at work in the EU polity: a regulatory model of negative market integration, a redistributive mode associated with regional and agricultural policy sectors, a form of policy co-ordination associated with the Open Method of Co-ordination and 'intensive transgovernmentalism', found most obviously in areas of high politics that are largely immune from excessive supranational intrusion.

The intimate interplay between EU and non-EU in terms of the footprints each leaves upon the other is transformed if we begin to think about the EU's multiple modes of governance in 'balance of trade' terms. These policy modes can be thought of as either policy methodological imports into the EU from elsewhere or European-devised policy methods that may have a broader application. If we focus simply on variant 1 (the Monnet/Community model), then we become rather hopelessly trapped in the fatal $n = 1$ hole where the formal replication of supranational and intergovernmental institutions simply does not happen elsewhere. However, if we think about regulation or 'benchmarking', the story is somewhat different. Here we have instances of the EU adopting policy methods from the US or some of its member states (in the case of regulation) or from international organisations such as the OECD (in the case of 'benchmarking'). transgovernmentalism is especially interesting because it occurs in areas that are formally intergovernmental in terms of treaty stipulations (the so-called pillars II and III of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union) or require a high level of co-ordination between national executives (EMU). However, portraying interactions in these areas as 'intergovernmental' in the traditional sense is misleading in so far as it cannot capture the substantial interpenetration of national executives and bureaux that takes place. Nor can the traditional diplomatic discourse of intergovernmentalism understand the ongoing multi- and bi-lateral interactions that take place between member-state governments. From this brief survey, we can conclude (a) that there is no single EU mode of governance and, therefore, (b) that the external projection of the EU's governance identity is far from straightforward. Moreover, (c) in terms of governance models, the EU does not simply practice a weird, internally-generated, path dependent mode, but rather (d) its governance practice is part of a broader global exchange of governance methodologies. This yields at least two significant observations. First, the study of comparative regional integration need not carry its usual ($n = 1$) caveats about the EU

(this is discussed further in the next section). Second, the external projection of the EU is about rather more than actions that simply follow from internally generated policies.

Similar questions are directly applicable to constructions of the normative substance of the EU. Rival understandings are routinely played out in the internal politics of the EU (such as in the recent debates over the Constitutional Treaty), but they are also key to the external projection of the EU. For example the idea – propagated within some member states and certain parts of the Commission – that the EU should exist to protect a solidaristic, institutionalised 'European social model' is a form of self-identification and role attribution that relies in turn upon a depiction of the external environment which is usually construed in such discourse as a brutally neoliberal globalised economy (Rosamond, forthcoming). This discourse also has an outward orientation, reflected in the EU becoming a dialogue partner with bodies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to deliberate issues such as core labour standards and corporate social responsibility. But this view is also involved in a perpetual struggle with a neoliberal representation of the EU as bastion of liberal market discipline and a champion of open regionalism and global economic institutions (Rosamond, 1999; 2005a).

Manners and Whitman (2003) have gone some way to thinking about the ways in which this kind of discussion of the external representation of the EU might be tied to the earlier long-standing debates about 'actorness' and 'presence'. They place considerable emphasis upon the so-called 'reflexive ' (as opposed to 'active') dimension of the EU's international identity. The key for Manners and Whitman is to understand 'how the EU is constituted, constructed and represented internationally' (2003: 383). In other words, a full appreciation of the EU's external projection involves an understanding that how the EU appears internationally is a function of three interrelated and constantly fluctuating phenomena: (a) its core constitutive principles, (c) how it is conceptualised and (c) how it and others represent the EU. The point is that these broadly social/intersubjective and ideational factors are crucial in mediating the relations between the EU and the non-EU. What the EU is and what kind of model it might be is far from static. Rather these issues are the result of ongoing multi-level discursive exchange.

Analysing the EU and the architecture of new regional governance

It is not entirely inappropriate to say that the first serious academic studies of European integration in the 1950s and earl 1960s were exercises in an emergent comparative project. The explicit aim of neofunctionalists such as Haas was to develop explanations of the dynamics of regional integration. Initially, at least, the European experience would be a rich source of hypotheses to be tested elsewhere. The story of how this project unravelled is much told and is presumably very well known. The normal argument is that while the neofunctionalists uncovered some localised spillover dynamics in the first phase of the Communities, these did not prove to be enduring and their application beyond the European case was patchy to the point of threadbare. Within EU studies there has been a long-standing tradition of auto-critique that tends to bracket first phase integration theory as, at best, a heroic yet misguided intellectual project. It, therefore, cautions against the re-ignition of approaches such as neofunctionalism that seek analytical leverage by seeking to compare the EU with other cases of regional integration. Meanwhile, as the study of comparative regional integration has revived in the face of so-called second wave regionalism, its practitioners have been quick to dismiss EU studies and its theoretical efforts as inappropriate starting points. Thus the *status quo* is characterised by a situation where EU studies is utterly sceptical about treating the EU as an instance of regional integration while meanwhile contributors to the 'new regionalism' literature are unhappy with identifying the EU as a case (paradigmatic or otherwise) of 'second wave' regionalism (although see Beeson, 2005).

There are undoubted merits in much of the work that seeks uncover the dynamics of the new regionalism. Its lack of Euro-centricity is obviously sensible. Moreover, as two of the primary discussants of the new regionalism note, part of the agenda of recent studies has been to think about how a region constitutes itself into a purposive entity or 'how a geographical area is transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region' (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000: 461). However, this process could easily describe the EU's story as an emergent economy in possession of its own economic subjects that competes with other economies or as a participant in multi-lateral institutions or as an embryonic military actor, albeit one imbued with a particular moral purpose. Perhaps

the problem is not that the study of the EU is not helpful for the scholar of new regionalism in a blanket sense, but rather that the approaches that have prevailed in the study of the EU have not been especially pertinent. In short, the analyst and the scholar are potentially significant players in the ways in which the EU is represented, constructed and construed.

There are two more important observations that should be made in this section. The first is that the supposed analytical utility of the EU for studies of comparative regional governance has been downgraded by reciprocal discursive constructions in two distinct fields. EU studies' refusal to countenance EU governance as having anything to do with regional integration has legitimised the impression, in those parts of IPE and IR that deal with the new regionalism, that EU studies has nothing to offer. This point has been made recently with great eloquence by Alex Warleigh (forthcoming) who develops a strong argument to suggest that IR – even that which self consciously and strenuously seeks to 'think otherwise' about world politics and which is open to the notion that we are living in a post-Westphalian era – has been largely blind to the *acquis academique* in EU studies. His point is that EU studies predominantly involves work – debated, published, debated some more – that offers a rich set of ideas and concepts about governance beyond the state, the re-calibration of authority, the interplay between international institutions, governmental actors and domestic polities, the possibilities for post-national democracy and post national *demoi* and the role of law and legal institutions in international governance. In other words, the study of regional or international governance elsewhere can draw on EU scholarship without necessarily buying into the assumption that the EU is the benchmark case. There are some interesting analogies in this sociology of knowledge discussion with the points made earlier about the relaxation of the idea that the EU is represented by a singular governance mode.

The second observation that has implications for the reinstatement of the EU is the study of regional governance revolves around the simple suggestion that, rather than being dismissed, the classics of European integration theory should be re-read. Put simply, the prevailing image of 1960s/1970s neofunctionalism is overly static, overstates the centrality of the spillover dynamic and marginalises the substantial interest that early integration theorists displayed in mapping comparative background

conditions that could explain either the prevalence or dissolution of regional integration projects (see Rosamond, 2005b for a fuller argument). The key here is to understand that the construction of 'the EU model' is not simply an act where the object of study is given the best available description by academic practitioners. Rather, those same practitioners are also involved in adjudicating the representation of the field of study – its history and its conception of progress. This means that potentially interesting lines of enquiry – in this case of continuing use to the scholar of comparative regional governance – are collectively 'forgotten' in the quest to represent the story of the field (EU studies) in a particular way.

Conclusions

The projection of the EU into world politics and its governance of the non-EU remain particularly complex puzzles for students of international politics. The argument here has been to suggest that an open-minded, broadly constructivist framework is an essential part of any attempt to engage intellectually with these processes. Standard rationalist discussions grounded in IR orthodoxy have two broad problems. The first is that they struggle to escape from a notion of 'actorness' that is not only welded to the norms of Westphalian statehood, but also understands actors as purposive, rational, unitary and motivated by exogenous material interests. The second is that they are inherently shy about analysing the role of subjectivity in social relations. One of the key lessons about the practice of EU external relations and the policy discourses that surround outward projections of the EU and others' interpretations of it is the significance of ontological claims about the nature of the EU. So the question should be shifted from thinking about what kind of actor the EU is or what kind of model it represents to the construction and representation of the EU and how it is thought relate to the world system.

There are also some telling lessons about structure and agency in this type of discussion. One of the claims here is that there is a reciprocal and dialectical relationship between the EU and global politics. The EU, through its ongoing practice, projects images of how a transformed future polity might be and what its modes of politics could/should become. As we find routinely within EU discourse, there is a consciousness that the experience of the EU represents an exemplar of what might 'be otherwise' in world politics. More concretely, the EU stands – self-

consciously sometimes – as a beacon of what it might mean to engage in the post-Westphalian governance of globalisation (Manners and Whitman, 2003). It is in this sense a normative transmitter to the rest of the word. And yet it has to exist and function within a world not of its making whose commonsensical norms continue to be couched in (oftentimes fundamentalist) Westphalian terms. Not only its effectiveness but also the acknowledgement of its existence, of its legitimacy as an actor-participant in world politics is conditional upon its placement within an established politics of recognition.

Both academic and policy imaginations can conceive of the EU's substantive actions and normative purposes in a variety of ways. But they also conceptualise the EU as a case of regional integration, whether as a policy or an analytical exemplar. Here again the role of representations and constructions becomes important, although perhaps in slightly different ways. Within policy discussions it is clear that the EU status as a regional governance regime worthy of emulation is seriously contestable. Within academic discussions, involving both EU studies and comparative integration studies, the EU's usefulness as an analytical starting point has been seriously questioned. Yet, interestingly, the downgrading of the EU in this sense is reliant on particular (and arguably erroneous) constructions and representations of the past of EU studies/integration theory. In other words, the insights of a broad open-minded constructivism might usefully be applied to not only the objects of study, but also those studies themselves.

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