

Book Review

Chris Rumford, ed. (2009)

The SAGE Handbook of European Studies

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Chris Rumford's edited *SAGE Handbook of European Studies* offers an impressive account of the state of the art of the study of contemporary Europe. This new text of European Studies is a follow-up to the *Handbook of European Union Politics* published in 2007 by the same publisher, under the editorial direction of Knud E. Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond. It is no accident that the first of the two handbooks was that on "European Union Politics". As justified from the outset, European Studies have been overshadowed for too long by the study of European Union (EU) and European integration, thus suffering from a sort of "invisibility" (p. 1). Hence, the major task of the project is to (re-)place European studies into the academic spotlight as a preliminary and necessary step to the achievement of proper academic recognition. Specifically, the handbook has three core aims: to examine the transformation characterising contemporary Europe, to examine the best ways of studying Europe and how key-resources in European studies can be best mobilised in view of future research. Accordingly, the book is about contemporary Europe and the study of European integration is situated in the context of Europe's transformation, being therefore seen as a constituent part, albeit a substantial one, of the story, but not the entire story.

In terms of structure, the handbook has four major sections and 35 chapters produced by some of the most important scholars in the field. The first section examines the context of Europe's transformation by looking at the role of the past and memory, culture and identity, as well as geography and politics as shapers of contemporary Europe. It is worth highlighting the critical discussion on European heritage by George Delanty, as well as the inclusion of the chapter on "Postcolonial Europe..." by Gurinder K. Bhambra, usually absent from mainstream textbooks, including for instance, the previous *Handbook of European Union Politics* (Manners 2007: 76). This first part also includes two other excellent chapters on "Europe Transformed, 1945-2000" by the late Charles Tilly and "Europe beyond East and West" by William Outhwaite. The second section moves on to polity-building, institutionalisation, governance and europeanisation. Unsurprisingly, the role of supranational institutions and integration is more salient than in the first section and this is especially visible with regard to the chapters on "Supranational Governance" (Ben Rosamond), "Institutionalizing Democracy..." (Dimitris N. Chrysoschoou), "Competing Visions..." (Craig Parsons), and "Enlargement" (John McCormick), but less in the chapters on "National Interest" (Jeffrey Lewis), "Markets" (Michelle Egan) and "Law and Justice" (Lisa Conant).

The third section, bringing together a wide variety of themes and issues, is the largest one, making up about half of the book. The section is introduced by a discussion on the "Uses and Abuses of the Concept of Integration". Philomena Murray argues that the term "integration" is becoming increasingly redundant (counter-intuitively so, perhaps, given the ever growing academic production in this field), while EU studies are becoming broader and more interdisciplinary (p. 241). It is not clear whether the subsequent chapters confirm this assessment, although the topical issues are definitely analysed in a broader manner than an exclusive focus on the EU and European integration would have allowed. However, as the reader is made aware from the outset (p. 2), even if the handbook is not about the EU, the topic is certainly well represented throughout. The topics and issues approached in the third section are certainly relevant to contemporary Europe. Several chapters analyse regulatory and redistributive policy areas at the national, trans-national and/or supranational levels, such as economic growth (Amy Verdun), agriculture (Wyn Grant), welfare state (Susanne Fuchs and Claus Offe), mobility and space in European education (Martin Lawn) and the information society (Barrie Axford). Other chapters look at the dynamic of freedom and security in Europe (John Agnew), borders (William Walters), migration, minorities and marginal groups (Franck Düvell), social movements (Donatella della Porta), as well as the role of Europe in global governance (Jose M. Magone). Given the historically important role of cities and regions in Europe, the chapters on urban governance (Neil Brenner) and regional dynamics (Anssi Paasi) are two welcome additions. Even more important perhaps, given the hot debates on the role of religion and secularism, is the chapter on religion in a post-secular Europe of Effie Fokas, which is preceded by Nick Stevenson's critical essay on multiculturalism. The tension between nationalism and Transnationalism in contemporary Europe is also examined by Victor Roudometof, as well as the shapes of democracy, citizenship and public sphere in Europe by John E. Fossum.

The last section turns to discuss future directions of research in European studies. As such, it takes in general a normative stance. Francis McGowan returns to the disciplinary tension between European studies and the study of EU politics. While the latter is usually rooted into mainstream political science and International Relations, being considered part of "normal science", the field of European studies is pluralist and multidisciplinary, drawing from a range of approaches from history, law, economy, sociology, cultural studies, or humanities (see also Rosamond 2007). The diversity of disciplinary angles gives the field breadth, but at the same time it weakens its internal consistency and coherence as an academic discipline. The solution to this apparent tension is not for one approach to displace the other, but an effective synthesis of the two in addressing the nature of contemporary Europe (p. 537). Furthermore, Ian Manners, drawing on a "normative power Europe" view, suggests a trans-disciplinary approach to understanding why and how different ideas of common good constitute, motivate and shape Europe (p. 580). On a similar normative stance, Ulrich Beck contends that the solutions to nowadays Europe are even greater integration and a more cosmopolitan Europe (p. 602). The two essays of Stjepan Mestrovic on "Europe as a Postemotional Idea..." and Faisal Devji on Global Islam sit uneasily amongst their normative companions in this section of the text. Instead of laying down future avenues of research, they rather plead for open dialogue between Europe and itself and Europe and the (Muslim) Other. In the last essay, Craig Calhoun surveys the field of European studies in a true *tour de force*, concluding in a rather upbeat tone that Europe is one of the best natural laboratories in studying cosmopolitanism, as well as the challenge of nationalism, which makes European studies likely to thrive in the long run.

The major aim of the handbook of giving more visibility to European studies has been certainly achieved. Even if there is an inherent tension between European Studies, as the archetypal model of area studies (Calhoun 2003: 5), and EU studies which is visible

throughout the handbook, the overall endeavour leads towards synthesis and mutual complementarity, rather than exclusion. Overall, this is an outstanding work and a definite companion to all those interested in contemporary Europe.

References

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