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Research Article

The European External Action Service: Torn Apart Between Several Principals or Acting as a Smart 'Double-agent'?

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Abstract

The European External Action Service (EEAS) is a hybrid and compound institutional actor in the EU's multi-level administration with delegated authority from the member states (MS) to conduct the EU's external action. Substantial competences, notably in the field of Neighbourhood and Trade policies, as well as Development and Cooperation remain under the control of the European Commission (Commission). At the same time, also Members of the European Parliament (EP) are more clearly voicing their interests and ownership in the EU's representation in the world. This article tests the notion of 'double-agent' – or in fact "triple-agent" – as a way of characterizing the position of the EEAS, and in particular of the EU Delegations (as the 'EU field-level bureaucracies') vis-à-vis the MS, the Commission and the EP, as an expression of complex and interrelated chains of delegation, where the EU 'embassies' have to interact with and to answer to (but not in a clear line of delegation) different (sets of) principals, namely the MS, the Commission and the EP. Based on the findings from a series of elite interviews with 47 EEAS and Commission officials and on a survey among 184 EU diplomats, the paper seeks to examine this fuzzy principal-agent relationship and uses the review process of the EEAS as an opportunity to assess the level of autonomy of the new EU foreign policy apparatus.

Keywords

EEAS; EU foreign policy; international bureaucracies; principal-Agent theory; organizational autonomy

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The European External Action Service (EEAS) is frequently characterized as an "organizational hybrid" (Duke 2011: 46; Carta 2012: 167; Liszczyk and Formuszewicz 2013: 144) or as an "interstitial" organization (Bátora 2013), since it operates in multiple organizational fields. It 'works rather like a chameleon' (Blockmans and Hillion 2013: 9), fulfilling different institutional functions, in both the intergovernmental and community spheres. Legally, the EEAS is the recipient of delegated tasks from the member states (MS). Policy prerogatives in the field of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Trade, Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) as well as Climate Action (CLIMA) and the budgetary competences for the EU's external action remain under the control of the European Commission (and the respective DGs). In addition, also the European Parliament (EP) is more audibly voicing its interests and ownership in the EU's representation in the world. In order to shed some light on this complex web of inter-relations, I develop and test a notion of 'double-agency' as a way of characterizing the situation of the EEAS and the EU Delegations (DELs[1]), in between the intergovernmental and the supranational spheres, as an expression of complex and interrelated chains of delegation, where the EEAS and in particular the EU embassies are compelled to interact with and to answer to, at least, two distinct - if not three - (sets of) principals (or "pseudo-principals"), namely "the" MS and COM, and increasingly also to the EP.

The burgeoning literature on the EEAS has emphasized the specificities of EU foreign policy in the traditionally state-centred arena of international relations (Allen 2012; Dijkstra 2013; Raube 2012; M.E. Smith 2013; Thomas and Tonra 2012; Vanhoonacker et al. 2012), where the EEAS has been described as a long missing bridge over the divisions of the old EU pillar structure (see Balfour, Bailes and Kenna 2011; Hug et al. 2013; M.H. Smith 2012). Legal scholars (Blockmans and Hillion 2013; Cardwell 2012; Van Vooren 2010) have discussed the place and role of the EEAS in the EU's institutional architecture and its formal legal status and competences. In addition, some work has been done on organizational questions (Bátora 2013; Henökl 2014; Ongaro 2012; Wisniewski 2012) as

well as on recruitment and integration of national diplomats (Duke and Lange 2013; Juncos and Pomorska 2013a, 2013b; Murdoch et al. 2014; Novotná 2014; Spence 2012). What is missing so far is research on EEAS-officials' actual decision-making behaviour based on solid quantitative data. Drawing on a recent survey carried out among EEAS officials, which investigates the degree of *de facto* autonomy of the organization, this paper adds a public administration perspective and sets out to disentangle the command and control structures governing the EU foreign policy apparatus.

The problem of agency autonomy in international organizations has already been researched (see Hawkins et al. 2006; Vaubel 2006); and principal-agent (P-A) relations in EU foreign economic policy have been dealt with by several scholars (see Delreux and Kerremans 2010; Dür and Elsing 2011; Wessel and den Hertog 2012). The relevance of the principal-agent approach for the EEAS, and, more specifically, an analysis the rationale behind the delegation of power has recently been confirmed by Hrant Kostanyan (2014). The control mechanisms deployed by the EEAS' many principals have been explored by Jost-Henrik Morgenstern (2013a), but also other fields have contributed to this debate; from a development policy angle, for instance, Mark Furness (2013) made a very insightful attempt to provide an answer to the question of 'who controls the EEAS?'. The puzzle is whether and how the EEAS will carve out an autonomous role, defined as relative independence in its actions (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Egeberg and Trondal 2009; Ellinas and Suleiman 2012), from its principals, the MS, on the one hand, but also with regard to the inter-institutional relations with the Commission and the EP, on the other. This question has at least two dimensions: the first dimension concerns the EEAS' bureaucratic integration with the central level EU institutions, notably the European Commission (EC). The issue here is whether the EEAS will be successful in extending its powers *vis-à-vis* other EU institutions, and increase its capacities in terms of resources (budget, staff, competences etc.) accordingly. The second aspect concerns the administrative decision-making in different policy areas in which the EEAS will be more or less successful to establish some degree of independence *vis-à-vis* the EU MS.

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), by definition, has competences which fall under the community method as well as intergovernmental decision-making. The EEAS has thus several political masters and works in areas with different decision-making rules and procedures. Furness (2013: 109) claims that 'mixed competence policy areas raise further possibilities", because of the "grey area between them', and that it 'is therefore likely that the EEAS will have opportunities to push for greater autonomy in some policy areas and its options will be limited in others.' The place or the organizational *locus,* where both the intergovernmental and the community competence areas are present and intersect, with the idea of joining forces, in order to increase the "coherence" of the EU's external action, are the EU DELs in third countries, where personnel form different EU institutions is working closely together, sharing intense contacts and exchanging information on a daily basis (Pfeffer 1982: 266; see also Hatch and Cunliffe 2006; Therborn 2006). Organizational geography, the physical location of officials, has been demonstrated to matter for socialization and institutionalization of behaviour, as the 'forming mould for actors' (Therborn 2006: 512; Jacobsen 1989, Egeberg 1994, 2012; Egeberg and Trondal 2011; Henökl and Trondal 2013). Physical presence and proximity relationships have been highly valued in the conduct of diplomacy since the establishment of the first resident embassies in fifteenth century Italy (Bull 1977: 160; Bátora 2008). Especially in contexts of high volatility and uncertainty, as in foreign and security policy, agents have a preference for negotiation and information exchange in face-to-face settings. In diplomacy, even more than in other organizational and governance contexts, information, especially accurate and professionally processed, and often confidential information, is a crucial resource (Berridge 2002: 122; Blom and Vanhoonacker 2015, Dijkstra and Vanhoonacker 2011, Maurer 2014). This predilection for personal contact was also corroborated by the survey data, where more than 80 per cent of respondents expressed their preference for direct, face-to-face meetings, whether formal or informal, as compared to other means of exchange, such as telephone or video-conferencing. Informal face-to-face meetings are particularly strongly favoured by diplomats

in EU Delegations, where 91 per cent consider them as 'important' or 'very important', as compared to 82 per cent of HQ officials.

Adopting a principal-agent perspective, this article sheds some light at the intertwined chains of delegation that run from the political masters in Brussels and the MS capitals through diverse channels of instruction and reporting all the way "down" to the "field-level bureaucrats", i.e. diplomats and officials working at the 139 EU Delegations around the world. The research is based on empirical data from 47 semi-structured interviews as well as from a recent survey among 184 decision-makers in the EEAS and Commission officials posted at EU Delegations. Questions, addressed by the survey, are: Who are the people running the EU foreign policy machinery? Who are these agents in contact with? Whom do they listen to? What are the concerns and considerations officials take into account in the decision-making process? And where do the political signals, agents receive and emphasize actually come from? How does the role of the EU Delegations influence the autonomy of the EEAS vis-à-vis the MS? The survey features an almost equal distribution between officials at HQ and posted at EU Delegations in third countries, which makes it possible to compare the two groups as regards their contact patterns, concerns and considerations, as well as emphasis put on political signals from different institutional sources. Key findings from the survey reveal a number of interesting differences between officials at HQ and those "at arm's length", at Delegations. Staff at Delegations has considerably more contacts outside the organization and emphasizes more strongly signals from central-level EU institutions as compared to signals from member states.

A PRINCIPAL-AGENT PERSPECTIVE

P-A theory builds on rational cost-benefit calculation as the main logic of action, whereby actors engage in wilful institutional design and delegate certain competences, in order to avoid conflict, reduce uncertainty or reap economies of scale (Majone 2001; Tallberg 2002; Shepsle 2006). A vast body of literature on P-A relations has been accumulating since the 1990s when scholars started to apply principal-agent modelling to the European Union to understand the relationship between the member states and the EU institutions (Pollack 1997, 2003; Thatcher and Stone Sweet 2002), and to describe the EU and its functioning (Dehousse 2008; Franchino 2007; Kassim and Menon 2003; Scharpf 1997 and 2000; Pierson 1996). A number of authors have framed EU external relations and trade policies in a P-A perspective and as a problem of incomplete contracting (see Delreux and Kerremans 2010; Dür and Elsig 2011; Wessel and den Hertog 2012). According to the P-A logic, the EU member states as "collective principal" choose to establish agents to reduce transaction costs by relieving themselves of certain tasks, by acquiring expertise, or by limiting the complexity of decision-making. Agents can exploit conflicting preferences among their principals or informational asymmetries to their advantage to increase their autonomy. To prevent bureaucratic drift or agency slippage and to make agents accountable, principals aim at creating oversight and control arrangements (Hawkins et al. 2006: 12-20; Koremenos et al. 2001). Autonomy may be enhanced by dysfunctional control mechanisms or if communication among the principals is hampered by bureaucratic politics. But the autonomy of bureaucratic agents not only depends on the structure of political oversight and control, it also has to do with the agent's own characteristics (Hawkins and Jacoby 2006). Organizational characteristics such as the EEAS' boundary position, its geographic spread, fluid organizational membership and behavioural predispositions of officials may be of crucial importance in this context and conducive to the development of increased agency autonomy (Cohen et al. 1972; Aldrich and Herker 1977; Stinchcombe 1965).

Applying the P-A model to the EEAS, however, produces the dilemma of simultaneous presence of *multiple* principals (the member states individually) and a *collective* principal (Council), as well as a number of oversight and control functions assumed by the European Parliament and the Commission, resulting in complex and intertwined lines of delegation. In search for a more sophisticated model,

accounting for this situation of multiple principals, the chapter proposes the image of a "double-agent" to depict the relationship between the EEAS and the member states, on the one hand, and the supra-national EU institutions on the other. Given the more complex and multi-dimensional nature of composite political systems unfolding at the EU level, Renaud Dehousse (2008) has suggested (originally for regulatory agencies) a "multi-principals model," arguing that 'despite its unquestionable relevance, the principal-agent model, in its standard form, is analytically inadequate as it does not take into consideration some of the peculiarities of the EU setting. The most important of these is the absence of a clearly defined "principal" since European institutional architecture has been carefully designed to avoid any concentration of power' (Dehousse 2008: 790).

In the case of the EEAS, and more particularly the EU DELs, the most important delegated tasks are representation of EU interests, maintaining a channel for negotiations and dialogue, as well as for information gathering (Art. 221(1) TFEU, EEAS Decision, Art. 5; see also: Blockmanns et al. 2013: 12, 32-34). In addition, depending on the EUs relations with particular countries, the EU DELs are the liaison offices for DG DEVCO responsible for the management of cooperation and development programmes, as well as footholds in third countries for DGs Trade, Enlargement, and ENP. With the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (LT) and the creation of the EEAS, the nature of tasks changed from a trade and cooperation focus to more strongly emphasizing foreign policy, characterized by political and security concerns (Maurer and Raik 2014). New responsibilities of the EU DELs include assuming the role of the permanent EU presidency, chairing the meetings of Heads of Missions and other working groups of member state diplomats, political reporting, as well as delivering EU *démarches*.

MULTIPLE PRINCIPALS AND "DOUBLE AGENCY"

Given the multi-level and polycentric structure of the composite political system unfolding at the EU level, the P-A approach has been modified and fine-tuned (see Curtin 2007: 528). Dehousse (2008) has suggested (originally for regulatory agencies) a "multi-principals model," arguing that 'the principal-agent model, in its standard form, is analytically inadequate as it does not take into consideration some of the peculiarities,' in particular 'the absence of a clearly defined "principal," since the European institutional architecture has been carefully designed to avoid any concentration of power.' Moreover, the different principals in the EU system fear to relinquish power, and their main concern is less "agency-drift" than "political drift", 'in which agencies are somehow captured by one of their institutional rivals in the leadership contest' (Dehousse 2008: 796). This leadership contest has been manifest in the area of external policy, since the early days of the European Political Cooperation in the 1970s (Bretherton and Vogler 2006: 165-167). Later, during the European Convention preceding, the Intergovernmental Conference, which ultimately led to the Lisbon Treaty, the MS have been divided and were finally opposed to grant additional foreign policy competences to the European Commission (Morgenstern 2013b). In contrast to external relations, the CFSP continues to be driven and controlled by the MS and an intergovernmental mode of decision-making, notably by retaining unanimity also post-Lisbon. Delegation of authority and control of the EEAS involves the Council of Ministers, the national foreign services, the EP (with regard to staff and administrative budget, and newly acquired competences) as well as the European Commission (for traditional external EU policies). Information asymmetries may arise from different contact patterns between HQ and EU DELs, as well as from a lack of clarity with regard to roles and instructions. Potential for drift or slippage may be expected from diverging interests and receptivity to other political signals and inputs. Cultural dynamics can be expected to differ alongside with underlying patterns of conflicts and cleavages.

In parallel, the conceptualization of the multi-level actor/forum relationships in the EU system (see Bovens et al. 2013; Wille 2013; Brandsma 2013), led to elaborate on the increasingly sophisticated European "accountability architecture" and on an "accountability framework for multi-level

governance," where one actor may be in a variety of accountability relationships, and simultaneously answerable to different forums. However, having essentially an "ex-post" character of checking the compliance with rules, the control mechanisms of this architecture and framework are applicable mainly to formal decision-making and the legislative process, and cannot fully account for all stages of the process, in particular with regard to the informal aspects of administrative behaviour, allowing for some discretion of bureaucrats in the policy shaping and implementation, based on values, beliefs, identities, role expectations and perceptions, opinions, organisational culture or "bounded rationality" (Simon 1972). Certain parts of the policy formulation, steering and implementation process may simply "stay under the radar" of the mentioned mechanisms, and it cannot be excluded that these are of significance. Chances are that how and with what kind of mind-set minutes of meetings are written, for instance, or the cognitive capacities, predetermined opinions or a potential hidden agenda of an agent sitting on – or chairing – an evaluation or steering committee or drafting a report, analysis, non-paper or, say, a policy proposal may escape the scrutiny of even the most thorough monitoring instruments. By taking a bottom-up perspective the notion of "double-agent" corresponds to and reflects the existence of multiple principals or multiple forums, creating overlaps, situations of ambiguity and potential problems of "multiple accountability disorder" (Schillemans and Bovens 2011: 6).

In a P-A perspective, agency of the EEAS is "nested," that is there are intricate and variable P-A relationships, where recipients of supra-nationally delegated powers might, in a different constellation, be the principal for another agent (which could at times act as the operational principal for the first), resulting in blurred lines of delegation between Council, EP, the Commission and the EEAS. Thus, there may be room for larger bureaucratic drift and agency loss, especially in a context of asymmetric and incomplete information as well as dual and parallel channels of communication between principals and agents. I adopt the definition of agency loss, suggested by Arthur Lupia (2003: 35); 'Agency *loss* is the difference between the actual consequence of delegation and what the consequence would have been had the agent been "perfect"'; '"perfect" being a hypothetical agent who does what the principal would have done if the principal had unlimited information and resources to do the job herself.' In the case of EU DELs this is particularly intricate, especially in instances where the preferences of the different principals diverge. Such situations may provide the DELs with increased leeway and opportunities for autonomous action, which in turn would feed back into the inter-institutional relationship, and ultimately lead to a higher degree of independence of the EEAS vis-à-vis the political masters in Brussels as well as in the MS capitals. Furness (2013: 117) estimates that 'the EEAS may be able to build its agency through its [D]elegations to third countries and international organizations […and] can be expected to use this "upgrade" [of EC Delegations to Union Delegations] to increase its political influence within the EU system.' Chains of delegation are blurred and intertwined, not least because the Commission is itself a body vested with powers resulting from supra-national delegation by the EU MS. Competences are partly overlapping, instructions are issued by several sources and reporting lines have in many instances been characterized as redundant. The EEAS Review document tabled by HR/VP in July 2013, for instance, speaks of two separate and parallel structures for the coordination of human resources in EU Delegations ("EUDEL" and "COMDEL" working groups), and concludes that 'this dual system leads to multiple debate on the same issues, delays in decision-making and can be an obstacle to direct contacts between the EEAS and Commission service with a stake in Delegations' (EEAS 2013: 11).

METHODOLOGY

In April 2013 an online questionnaire was distributed to 617 EU officials. The recipients were randomly selected, on the basis of available EEAS staff lists and e-mail addresses on EU DELs' websites. Within the possibilities of selection, some attention was paid to a balanced distribution of invitations to

complete the survey according to organizational affiliation, place of assignment, function and hierarchical level. After three reminder e-mail messages and administering 70 paper questionnaires at the EEAS headquarters in Brussels, the survey could harvest a total of 184 responses, comprising 148 completed questionnaires and 36 partially completed ones.[2] For the sample of ca. 680 eligible respondents this results in a response rate of approximately 30 per cent. As can be demonstrated, the data is valid and representative both with regard to officials' previous affiliation, geographical balance (country of origin), place of assignment, educational background as well as age and gender. Most of the officials in this survey (74 persons, 41 per cent) were recruited (transferred) from DG RELEX, 19 respondents (11 per cent) from the Council Secretariat General (SGC), and 24 respondents (13 per cent) from MS Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The 24 seconded national diplomats in the survey come from 18 different member states. About 21 per cent of the respondents were working for other Commission DGs before 2011, i.e. Aid and Cooperation (AIDCO), Development (DEV), TRADE, and Enlargement (ELARG).

Table1: Institutional affiliation and provenance

	Previous affiliation (%)	Present affiliation (%)
EEAS	-	75
Council SG	10.6	-
COM DG RELEX	41.1	-
COM DEVCO	-	12.5
COM DG AIDCO	8.3	-
COM DG ELARG	0.6	2.2
COM DG TRADE	1.1	1.6
COM DG DEV	12.2	-
MS MFA	13.3	2.2
EP	1.1	1.1
Other	11.7	5.4
N	180	184

Institutional affiliation and provenance (mean N=182)
Abbreviations: EEAS: European External Action Service, SG: Secretariat General, COM: European Commission, DG: Directorate General, RELEX: External Relations, DEVCO: Development and Cooperation, AIDCO: Aid and Cooperation (until 2010), ELARG: Enlargement, DEV: Development (until 2010), MS: Member State, MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EP: European Parliament.

The 21 officials having indicated "other" as their previous affiliation mention either various Commission DGs, not listed in the questionnaire, other national authorities or agencies (e.g. defence/civil protection, development or police), as well as international organizations (IOs) or research institutions as their affiliation of origin. Four respondents do not disclose their institution of origin. It may be interesting to trace movements and career trajectories of officials and to see whether where they come from has a bearing on their attitudes, role perceptions and preferences, whether there are differences pertaining to their individual experiences of the changes, or which concerns and signals they choose to emphasize.

Overall the survey features an almost equal distribution between HQ-staff (52 per cent) and officials posted in DELs (47 per cent). Three respondents did not specify their place of assignment. Within the two populations (HQ and DELs) the distribution is also fairly balanced with regard to staff category, level of tasks and gender. The data is less balanced regarding previous affiliation, where there is a slight selection bias in favour of previous Commission staff, which to some extent however reflects also the overall picture of EEAS staff (approximately 1/3 of staff coming from MS MFAs), as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 2: Distribution by HQ and Delegations

		HEADQUARTER % (frequency)	DELEGATIONS % (frequency)	N Total
Affiliation	Previously Commission	65.8 (52)	79.5 (73)	**167**
	Previously Council and / or MFA	34.2 (27)	20.5 (15)	
Staff category	AD	61.8 (55)	66.7 (50)	**164**
	AST	18.0 (16)	13.3 (10)	
	SND	10.1 (9)	14.7 (11)	
	SNE	3.4 (3)	4.0 (3)	
	CA	6.7 (6)	1.3 (1)	
Task level	Political / diplomatic	55.5 (50)	55.7 (44)	**169**
	Administrative / managerial	42.2 (38)	40.5 (32)	
	Operational / technical	2.2 (2)	3.8 (3)	
Sex	Female	30.5 (25)	31.7 (20)	**143**
	Male	68.3 (56)	66.7 (42)	
	Average N	85.0 (52)	76.0 (47)	**161**

Distribution according to affiliation, staff category, task level, and sex in HQ and DELs (average N=161)
Abbreviations: AD: Administrator, AST: Assistant, SND: Seconded National Diplomat, SNE: Seconded National Expert, CA: Contractual Agent.

Representation by Member State

Considering for the moment only the data from the online questionnaire launched in April 2013, the survey gathered officials from 23 EU MS, with countries most strongly represented being: Germany (22 responses), Belgium (14), Italy (13), France (12), the Netherlands (10) and the UK (9 officials). 53 respondents did not disclose their country of origin. Among the respondents, German nationals are somewhat overrepresented in relation to the total number of German EEAS officials (126 officials: 84 AD and 42 AST), as are the Netherlands (10 respondents compared to 55 Dutch EEAS officials in total, 20 AD and 25 AST). Belgium, although a small MS, is strongly represented in the survey sample as well as in the EEAS population (226: 60 AD and 166 AST), whereas Spain and Poland (5 and 4 respondents respectively) score somewhat below their weight in terms of organizational population (Spain: 122 EEAS officials, Poland: 61). France, Italy, and the UK are reasonably well represented within the study compared to the share of their countrymen and women within the EEAS, and the same is true for a

Table 3: Respondents by Member State

MS	Survey respondents	Interview partners	Total	EEAS population (March 2013)	
(By category)	(All)	(AD and SND)		(AD)	(AST)
BE	**14**	1	15	**60**	166
BG	**-**	-	-	**12**	4
CZ	**3**	1	4	**23**	11
DK	**2**	-	2	**23**	16
DE	**22**	9	31	**84**	42
EE	**1**	2	3	**12**	8
IE	**2**	-	2	**22**	14
EL	**1**	-	1	**33**	26
ES	**5**	3	6	**81**	41
FR	**12**	5	17	**12**	56
IT	**13**	3	16	**98**	49
CY	**-**	-	-	**4**	1
LV	**2**	-	2	**10**	3
LT	**-**	1	1	**10**	5
LU	**-**	-	-	**3**	-
HU	**4**	2	6	**21**	10
MT	**1**	-	1	**8**	4
NL	**10**	1	11	**30**	25
AT	**8**	8	16	**28**	11
PL	**4**	-	4	**38**	23
PT	**1**	-	1	**27**	28
RO	**2**	1	3	**13**	16
SI	**2**	-	2	**6**	9
SK	**1**	1	2	**8**	4
FI	**5**	1	6	**22**	18
SE	**7**	3	10	**35**	28
UK	**9**	4	13	**68**	31
Not specified	**53**	1 (NO)	54	**-**	-
TOTAL (N)	**184**	47	231	**899**	649

Number of respondents and interview partners by MS as compared to EEAS population, Survey N= 184

number of medium-sized and smaller member states (see Table 3, also listing the number of interview partners by MS as compared to the total EEAS population).

The questionnaire was designed as a blend of standardized and open questions, gathering some basic biographical information on affiliation and function (Q1-3); moving to questions on previous and present work situations (Q4-6); the interviewee's opinions on the organization of new service, its ways of working and its organizational culture (Q7-11); collecting data on contact patterns, allegiance, concerns and considerations, as well as political signals and sources of political input (Q11-17); and ending on some demographic questions.

ANALYSIS OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

Contact patterns of EEAS officials

While at HQ in Brussels information flow and coordination are hampered by rigid structures, inflexibility and bureaucratic rivalry (ECA 2014: 12; EEAS 2014: 32; Juncos and Pomorska 2013a), one would expect agents at DELs to be driven by the functional need for close cross-institutional cooperation and information sharing, and over time by a tendency to intra- and inter-organizational integration (Trondal and Peters 2013). The EEAS Review underlines this point, stating 'while respecting individual roles and responsibilities' in the working arrangements between the EEAS and the Commission 'there is a degree of flexibility for Commission staff in Delegations to contribute to the political work of the EEAS' (EEAS 2013: 11). The modalities of working relations between Commission and EEAS staff at DELs have been addressed by the "Joint Decision on Cooperation Mechanisms' between the services" (European Commission/HR/VP 2012). When asked whether since January 2011, after the establishment of the EEAS and taking up their new function, they had more or less contacts within their own organization, roughly 46 per cent of HQ staff said they had significantly more contacts, compared to 31 per cent at DELs (overall HQ and DELs: 39 per cent). Outside contacts have evolved slightly differently: 41 per cent of HQ staff say they have more contacts outside, and 47 per cent of Delegation personnel indicate increased levels of outside contacts (44 per cent overall). About 40 per cent (HQ) vs. 47 per cent (DELs) say, it remained the same, and nearly one fifth (19 per cent) at HQ maintain (significantly) less outside contacts, whereas only 6 per cent at DELs report a decreased number of outside contacts. In more detail, these inside and outside contacts, broken down by populations at HQ and EU Delegations, look as follows in Table 4.

The pattern of the survey data suggests that whereas officials at EU DELs have slightly less contacts within their own organization than their colleagues at HQ, and increasingly so moving up the hierarchy, they have a significantly higher level of outside contacts, especially as regards contacts with IOs, their own domestic ministries and agencies, with ministries and agencies of other EU MS as well as those of third countries, but also with NGOs, business and industry, and other, such as media, associations and the civil society at large. This data seems to confirm our expectations that in DELs, more remote from and out of the immediate range of their policy-making hierarchy in Brussels, contacts across organizations and with "the outside" become more frequent or more intense, and therefore more important. These results also support the argument of informational asymmetries, in that HQ officials, who are mainly concerned with strategic aspects of policy-making (including planning and programming), are more remote from the day-to-day implementation business in third countries. Due to the nature of their tasks and the direct exposure to the "field" (notably also because of the EU DELs' involvement in aid and cooperation), personnel at EU DELs have closer contacts and better access to operational-level information. On the development side, this has recently been observed by

Table 4: Contacts in- and outside the organisation

	HEADQUARTER (N=82)			DELEGATIONS (N=75)		
	(Very) frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Rarely/ almost never (%)	(Very) frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Rarely/ almost never (%)
Colleagues within unit/division	95.3	4.7	0.0	94.2	4.3	1.4
Head of unit/division	84.3	13.3	2.4	75.3	15.4	9.2
Director	50.6	32.1	17.3*	33.3	26.1	40.5*
Other departments	67.1	25.9	7.1	58.0	23.2	18.8
Other institutions	53.0	34.1	13.0	30.5	26.1	33.3
Commissioner/political head of entity	8.6	8.5	82.9	13.0	5.8	81.1
International organisations	18.1	39.8	42.1	58.0	27.5	14.4
Domestic ministries and agencies	12.3	37.0	50.6	40.7	28.4	20.9
Ministries/agencies of other EU Member States	26.5	30.1	43.4	49.3	24.6	26.1
Ministries/agencies of third countries	20.7	26.8	52.5	66.6	14.5	18.8
Non-governmental organisations	23.2	24.4	52.4	57.9	26.1	15.9
Business industry	6.1	22.0	71.9	20.3	31.9	47.8
Universities/ research institutes	12.2	36.6	51.2	17.4	42.0	40.5
Other (media, civil society etc.)	15.5	31.0	53.6	43.8	33.3	22.9

*6% almost never, **25% almost never
Contact patterns (Total N=157). Original codes as used in the survey: 1 = "Very frequently", 2 = "Frequently", 3 = "Occasionally", 4 = "Rarely", 5 = "(Almost) never", 0 = "Can't say"

Maurizio Carbone (2013: 349), claiming that, 'aid practitioners at headquarter level [assume] in a rather paternalistic way that greater EU actorness would be welcomed by aid recipients.' Frequently, it is argued, HQ seems to be lacking crucial information about what is going on in the field. Given the decreasing intra-organizational contacts when moving up the hierarchy, such tendencies are particularly important for decision-makers at the political level (of both the EU and MS sides), and may produce situations of the "tail wagging the dog", since 'information asymmetries turn bureaucrats into knowledgeable experts and their political overseers into the dilettantes Weber describes' (Ellinas and Suleiman 2012: 63). In addition, there is also a need and a tendency for a more flexible and versatile role understanding in EU Delegations, which is also reflected in the behaviour of EU diplomats in third countries (cf. Henökl and Webersik 2014), as confirmed by an official posted at an EU DEL:

> I don't see how else you can go about these things: we, willingly, are European civil servants; at least that is what I am. So our goal is to also serve the wider purposes of the Union, and if it means a bit more about foreign policy, intervening into files that have a broader reach, then

> this is what we are hired for. We are supposed to be versatile in our backgrounds, and to sort things out (Interview #40[3]).

In the same vein, another official emphasizes the team character of staff at EU DELs:

> [M]any of the issues [at HQ], for instance corporate identity and so forth are issues that I am not busy with, because we have an EU *Delegation*. We deal with the colleagues in the Delegation in the country. We have a corporate identity as a team. For example, we have a human rights working group, and I am chairing this group. […] But I also invite the guy who is doing human rights projects, spending money on it. You know, it is not the EEAS – it is the EU *Delegation* really [emphasis on the word "Delegation"] (Interview #18[4]).

The same applies for direct contact and mutual exposure between different staff categories. Interview partners working at EU Delegations in third countries have testified in favour of this hypothesis:

> In our delegation the HoD [Head of Delegation] comes from the Commission he knows all these people, he worked in ECHO and knows everyone. So he feels like he is double-hatted, he is treated like he is double-hatted. He says he is double-hatted. Those who come from the MS see that [it is] more difficult for them to get into that and to accept that (Interview #16[5]).

Even though altogether the integration of national diplomats reportedly works rather well, some problems having to do with a lack of socialization persist, as put by a former EU HoD:

> We have been integrating these national diplomats too quickly, and I think it has been regretted from different sides, because they have not been properly trained. There is a bit of difference between an Ambassador and a Head of Delegation. And they are going out without a network in Brussels [...]. If you drop somebody from a national MFA, first of all, he has problem with understanding his role. In many countries he has to manage a cooperation programme, which he has never done in his life-time. And he has to cope with this complex administration here in Brussels, where people are fighting with each other, and if you don't know how to zigzag through it, you are stuck" (Interview #4, former EC/EU HoD[6]).

Connected to this close relationship and with regard to the type of contact and communication considered important by officials, differences between HQ and DELs are not significant, maybe with the exception of "spontaneous encounters", as a particular form of face-to-face contact. These are valued more strongly at DELs, 40 per cent, as compared to 33 per cent at HQ, a tendency that can be explained by physical closeness within smaller office premises, regular direct exchange with colleagues (who are often part of the same "expat bubble") and the day-to-day exposure to common issues and problems.

Multiple principals, double-agency, and "nested delegation"

Diverging or even contradictive signals and instructions from different sources may also produce a lack of clarity or cause confusion on the side of the agent, necessitating requests for clarification and delaying or limiting his/her capacity to act on behalf of the principals. This seems to be the case in EU DELs, where multiple and parallel channels of instructions and reporting lines are not sufficiently coordinated, and individual agents may receive different signals (Duke 2014: 33; ECA 2014: 21-22, para. 58-60). Wouters *et al.* (2013: 39) commented that "[t]he evident confusion in lines of responsibility and communication at the senior echelons of the Service had been noted beforehand, with one report noting the presence of 'several duplicating layers of management, unclear hierarchy in terms of chain of command and opaque relationships between different departments'". And, according to Duke (2014: 33), "[c]onfusion about the precise responsibilities of the most senior levels

was evident in the original Council decision [2010/427/EU] on issues such as budgetary management". This organisational conundrum also finds expression in the survey results: Officials were asked whether, compared to their experiences before the launch of the EEAS, their role had changed with regard to a number of aspects related to their job-profiles and functions. This organizational conundrum also finds expression in the survey results: officials were asked whether, compared to their experiences before the launch of the EEAS, their role had changed with regard to a number of aspects related to their job-profiles and functions. Respondents overall indicate that changes occurring after the launch of the EEAS were important, especially concerning "political exposure" and "political interferences" (more than half of the respondents said "more or significantly more"), but also as regards "clarity of one's own role and function", as well as "clarity of reporting lines" and "clarity of organizational goals and strategy" (nearly half said "(significantly) less"). In one word, the establishment of the EEAS has introduced – at least during the early stages of the new organization – an element of opacity and ambiguity for officials regarding the clarity of their roles and instructions, lines of reporting and especially as regards organisational goals and strategy, where overall more than half of the surveyed staff perceive a rather sharp decline.

Table 5: Perceived changes in the work situation

	HEADQUARTER (Mean N=83)			DELEGATIONS (Mean N=77)		
	(Significantly) more (%)	Same (%)	(Significantly) less (%)	(Significantly) more (%)	Same (%)	(Significantly) less (%)
Political exposure	46.8	32.9	18.3	64.1	29.7	6.3
Political interference	57.2	35.1	7.8	51.6	43.5	4.8
Clarity of role/function	15.4	36.9	47.6	18.8	39.1	42.0
Clarity of instructions	14.2	36.9	48.8	17.4	33.3	49.3
Clarity of lines of reporting	9.6	42.2	48.2	18.8	33.3	47.8
Clarity of org. goals and strategy	14.8	24.7	60.5	14.4	36.2	49.3
Administrative burden	63.1	26.2	10.7	72.4	20.3	7.2

Perceived changes in work situation (Total N=160)
Original codes as used in the survey: 1 = "Significantly more", 2 = "More", 3 = "Same", 4 = "Less", 5 = "Significantly less", 0 = "Can't say"

Key differences between HQ and DELs concern political exposure, where 64 per cent of the staff at DELs perceive "significantly more" political exposure as compared to 47 per cent at HQ, but also the administrative burden has increased more significantly at DELs. This partly has to do with the higher profile of the EU DELs, and their new role as exercising the permanent EU Presidency (see also interviews, e.g. #18, 24, 31, 44[7]), but probably also with the aforementioned redundant and parallel reporting lines as well as multiple sources of instructions. Interviewees further report a multiplication in the generation of reports, notes and briefings (in different versions depending on the addressee, whether, for instance, EEAS HQ or MS MFAs), as well as a proliferation of requests for assistance from various institutional actors besides the HR/VP, namely Council and Commission Presidents, line

Commissioners, MS governments and the EP. Despite decreasing clarity regarding role and instructions, it seems that the "clarity of organizational goals and strategy" has suffered less in DELs than at HQ: 49 per cent at DELs vs. 61 per cent at HQ asserting "(significantly) less". One possible explanation is that the core task of representing the EU is more tangible and more directly experienced in Delegations than at HQ.

In the short term, the EEAS Review proposes to remedy the problem of functional overlaps and organizational ambiguity by recommendation nr. 14: 'Requir[ing] all instructions to [D]elegations to pass by Heads of Delegations, copied to the relevant EEAS geographical desk' (EEAS 2013: 16). The issue, however, originates in the distribution of lead-responsibilities between the HR/VP and the Commission. As pointed out in the Review, 'the division of responsibilities is potentially unclear and should be clarified. The allocation of portfolio responsibilities in the next Commission presents an opportunity for the President of the Commission to review the situation' (EEAS 2013: 8). One official at a key Delegation summarizes the dilemma as follows:

> I have a number of bosses now, they have multiplied with the [institutional] change, and with going from Brussels to a Delegation: there you have an Ambassador and a number two of the Delegation, whom I work for as well. When there is good communication between my ambassador, for instance, and my DG in Brussels, it's not that I can play one against the other, there is no room for that (Interview #40[8]).

This evaluation of having different political interlocutors, different reporting lines and hierarchies in Brussels and also 'significant others' in the MS capitals), emitting messages, signals and instructions is also corroborated by the survey results. Replying to the question, "In average, how much do you emphasize the (political) signals coming from the following?", officials indicated they pay most attention to their "direct hierarchy" (84 per cent - "(very) important") and the "political leadership/senior management of their entity" (92 per cent). Yet, presented with a choice of different political actors outside their own organization, EEAS officials pay most attention to central level EU institutions: the European Commission, 81 per cent; Foreign Affairs Council, 79 per cent; and European Council, 78 per cent, with the first scoring 10 per cent higher at "very important" (40 per cent vs. 30 per cent); and finally the EP, at 65 per cent. They also indicated, "the big EU member states", 58 per cent, "the medium-sized EU member states", 34 per cent, IOs, 26 per cent, "the small MS", 25 per cent, and, finally, "signals from the domestic government of my own member state", 19 per cent (see Table 6).

The emphasis on concerns and considerations as well as the importance given to political signals seems to be fairly balanced at headquarters and DELs, with some notable exceptions. First, as regards the importance of European Institutions: both the European Commission and the EP are ranked (15 per cent and 10 per cent respectively) higher at Delegations than at HQ. In contrast, the influence of MS (in order of their relative weight from "big" to "medium-sized" to smaller MS) is more strongly felt in Brussels than at Delegations. The complexity of the institutional arrangements is also reflected in a quote from an experienced former DG RELEX official, posted at one of the important EU Delegations:

> We have, of course, the formal guidelines from the FAC and there is the functional hierarchy as defined by Lady Ashton and her people. So there is no independence, the guidelines are there, but we have our "marge de manoeuvre" within which we can act here at the Delegation, depending on what we think is right. HQ is formulating guidelines, like in the case of any Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but there is also European Parliament with the Foreign Affairs Committee and the European Council – all of these are our political masters ('Herren und Meister', interview #32, own translation[9]).

Table 6: Which are the political signals emphasized in officials' decision-making?

	HEADQUARTER (mean N=78)			DELEGATIONS (mean N=73)		
	(Very) important (%)	Somewhat important (%)	Less/not important (%)	(Very) important (%)	Somewhat important (%)	Less/not important (%)
European Council	75.6	21.6	2.8	80.0	10.9	9.1
Foreign Affairs Council	82.2	13.7	4.1	74.1	14.8	11.1
European Commission	74.7	20.0	5.3	89.8	1.7	8.5
European Parliament	60.3	27.4	12.4	71.9	15.8	12.3
'Big' MS	64.9	20.3	14.9	48.3	21.4	30.3
'Medium-sized' MS	41.1	38.4	20.5	25.0	42.9	32.1
'Small' MS	30.2	42.5	27.4	17.6	38.6	33.9
Domestic Government	22.7	12.0	65.3	14.3	21.4	64.3
Political level/ senior management	92.3	6.5	1.3	91.4	3.4	5.1
Direct hierarchy	93.7	6.3	0.0	93.3	5.0	1.7
International Organizations	24.6	38.4	37.0	27.3	45.5	27.3
Other	21.1	31.6	47.4	22.2	22.2	55.6

Political signals emphasized by officials (Total N=151)
Original codes as used in the survey: 1 = "Very important", 2 = "Important", 3 = "Somewhat important", 4 = "Less important", 5 = "Not important at all", 0 = "Can't say".

Other than a clear emphasis put on signals from EU-level institutions, an interesting observation concerns the relative overall importance that is given to the EP, which echoes that the MEPs by smartly playing their hand throughout the negotiations, which ultimately led to the EEAS Decision of 26 July 2010, have gained influence and political weight vis-à-vis other EU institutions – at least in the eyes of EEAS officials. Commission officials, for instance, also share this observation in a quote, summarizing a trend, '[F]or many years the EP was unimportant and it was ignored. It had the least standing among the institutions of the EU. It is undergoing a process of transition – gaining power and knowing how to use it' (Ellinas and Suleiman 2012: 80).

Although not a principal in the sense of delegated authority, the EP, too, has some degree of political ownership and it exercises control and oversight functions as regards the EU's external policies, last but not least for the EEAS' administrative budget. After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EP enjoys larger influence on foreign policy than most of its national counterparts in the MS. And it could further strengthen its role and status during the EEAS negotiations, also written down in the preamble of the EEAS Decision, guaranteeing the EP 'to fully play a role in the external action of the Union, including its functions of political control' (Council 2010). Parliamentary hearings of senior EEAS officials (including EU Heads of Delegations prior to their appointment) have become a common practice and 'the HR/VP ensures the views of the EP are taken into consideration'. This is particularly the case for the views, motions or reports issued by the EP's Foreign Affairs committee (AFET). Ulrike Lunacek, (MEP for the Greens) expresses very clearly a growing desire for parliamentary control and oversight,

> We wish that the Parliament would exercise even more control and be more active, for instance that we put reservations on [EEAS] funds. We could for instance release the budget lines for salaries only under the condition, that there will be structural changes in the EEAS. The EP can do that. The question is if the large fractions are ready to let their words be followed by actions. We should think about this in the context of the review (Interview #36, own translation[10]).

But also in the EP's recommendations to the HR/VP (EP, AFET 2013) the desire for co-ownership of the EEAS and particularly the EU DELs is very well documented, in eight specific recommendations (Recommendations 17-25) on EU Delegations and five recommendations regarding the implementation of the 'Declaration on Political Accountability' which was annexed to the EEAS Decision (Recommendations 31-36),

> 32. To ensure full political reporting from Union delegations to key office holders of Parliament under regulated access; 33. To ensure, in line with Article 218 (1) TEU that Parliament is immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedures for negotiations on international agreements, including agreements concluded in the area of CFSP; 34. In line with the positive experiences of newly appointed Heads of Delegations and EUSRs appearing before AFET before taking up their posts, to extend this practice to newly appointed CSDP Heads of Missions and Operations; 35. To ensure that, once appointed by the HR/VP, the new Heads of Delegations are officially confirmed by the relevant committee of Parliament, before taking up their posts.

The EU MS, the Commission and the EP all have stakes in the European External Action Service and the EU DELs to third countries. Therefore, I suggest the notion of "double-agent" as a way of characterizing the situation of the EEAS and in particular the Union Delegations, vis-à-vis their dual sets of principals, namely on the one side the intergovernmental masters (the MS via the Council and individually), and supranational stakeholders (the Commission when *acting* as a principal, and the EP as the directly elected body, exercising democratic oversight). Double – or, in fact, multiple - agency, characterizes the complex chains of authority and accountability, through which the EU external agents have to interact with and to answer to different forums of principals, functioning within their own competence spheres and according to distinct decision-making rules.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to unveil and extract the interwoven, sometimes woolly lines of delegation leading from the principals, MS, Commission, and also the EP all the way down to the field-level bureaucrats, the EU diplomats posted at EU Delegations. As demonstrated, the results of the empirical research indicate interesting differences between headquarters officials and DEL staff. Contact patterns are varying significantly between HQ and DELs, with the former showing higher frequencies of intra-organizational and the latter significantly more outside-contacts. Internally, upstream communication and information flows are thinning out, leading to considerable informational asymmetries to the agent's advantage. Political signals are emitted from different sources and received and taken into consideration by EU diplomats to different extents depending on their posting and affiliation as well as their relation with the political masters. EU-Diplomats in third countries tend to more strongly emphasize signals from the supra-national EU institutions, the Commission as well as the EP, whereas signals from MS as well as the intergovernmental bodies are considerably less strongly taken into account. These, in turn, are clearly more present at HQ. Altogether, for the EU's external agents, the institutional change has produced certain ambiguities, necessitating flexibility, adaptability and improvisation in order to make sense of their situation and the sometimes-contradictive demands they are confronted with.

Control is exercised in different ways and at several places, directly or indirectly. MS retain important decision-making powers in the FAC as well as the PSC, and have their own agents seconded to the service, exercising oversight in a way of quasi-monitoring the service from within via their diplomats in key positions inside the organization. The MS are trying to stay on top of the game, which they are the "grand masters" of, since they have been at the origin of delegation to the supranational bodies of the EU in the first place. However, they are not consolidated as a unified, collective principal, and visibly display heterogeneity of preferences, more or less directly and openly conflicting with one another. The Commission, on the other side, remains in charge over important policy competences, budgets and large portions of staff at the EU DELs. It has the advantage of the incumbent supranational bureaucracy, already in place and in possession of many of those competences, expertise and resources, which the EEAS critically needs. Finally, the Parliament, having co-ownership in ex-ante control, through its co-decision powers with regard to the administrative budget and the staff regulations, as well as the formal approval of the nomination of EU Heads of Delegations, the work of the AFET committee, parliamentary reports, motions on particular policy issues or geographical areas and through field visits of parliamentary delegations. We have seen that, in the case of the EEAS, chains of delegation are interwoven and partly overlapping (redundant), involving actors and forums at different levels of governance, within separate jurisdictions, based on their respective constitutional arrangements and modes of decision-making. Control of the EEAS is transversal and crosses national borders, institutional and organizational boundaries as well as sectorial competences. Roles of actors and forums are blurred, allowing for some actors to be forums of other actors at the same time. They behave as principals in certain competence areas or at certain stages of the processes - which is why this analysis tentatively speaks of "nested delegation." In practice, system fragmentation, incomplete contracts, asymmetrical information and diverging (or even opposing) preferences among the principals, together with lack of clarity or conflicting signals and instructions may complicate the work of EEAS officials, but at the same time create the opportunity for agency as well as political drift. Information advantages to the benefit of the EEAS, dividing lines between EU institutions and member states as well as the evolution of a distinct EU diplomatic *esprit de corps* or EEAS organizational culture may further add to the potential for developing agency autonomy.

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[1] To avoid confusion I will consistently, throughout this paper, use the capital letter 'D' for EU-*D*elegations (DELs, the EU-embassies in third countries), and the minor case 'd' for the concept or the act of *d*elegation, as in principal-agent theory.
[2] As completed questionnaires were counted responses that answered all content questions throughout the survey and at least partially the demographic questions at the end of the survey (member state of origin, education, sex and age). Since, in principle, all content-questions were mandatory to reply to in order to get to the end of the survey, missing data in the completed questionnaires is rather limited ('in principle' because, in the case of one question the "mandatory-to-reply" feature was not activated, neither is it applicable to the paper questionnaires returned by mail.)
[3] Interview #40, 09.05.2013, N.N., COM official (AD, other), EU DEL.
[4] Interview #18, 23.11.2012, N.N., EEAS official (AD, ex-SGC), EU DEL.
[5] Interview #16, 23.11.2012, N.N., EEAS official (SND), EU DEL.
[6] Interview #4, 23.10.2012, N.N., EEAS official (AD, ex-RELEX), EU-DEL/HQ.
[7] Interview #18, op. cit. ; Interview #24, 08.02.2013, N.N., EEAS official (SND), EU DEL ; Interview #31, 21.03.2013, N.N., EEAS official (SND), EU DEL ; Interview #44, 30.07.2013, N.N., EEAS official, (AD, ex-RELEX), HQ.
[8] Interview #40, op. cit.
[9] Interview #32, 23.04.2013, N.N., EEAS official (AD, ex-RELEX), EU DEL.
[10] Interview #36, 24.04.2013, N.N., MEP (other), EP.

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Research Article

Bottom-up Perspectives on Multilingual Ideologies in the EU: The Case of a Transnational NGO

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Abstract

This paper investigates the discursive construction of multilingualism in citizens' discourses, aiming to fill a gap in the literature of European studies that has scarcely been concerned with language ideologies from bottom-up perspectives. In particular, we focus on the discourses of a transnational NGO to analyse how its members position themselves in relation to linguistic issues and to what extent (if so) they reproduce the EU's multilingual ideology. Deriving data from focus groups and semi-structured interviews, we contextualise our analysis against the backdrop of an increasingly 'glocalised' European site of struggle between global communication and linguistic justice. Using critical discourse analysis we aim to show how discourses of multilingualism are being negotiated at the grass-roots level. Our findings suggest that whilst citizens' discourses validate an ideal promotion and preservation of linguistic diversity in the EU, they also endorse a diglossic scenario with language performing separate identity and communicative functions. We thus argue for an understanding of European multilingualism that takes into account the transnational dynamics of the European sphere.

Keywords

Multilingualism; language ideologies; language policies; active citizenship; critical discourse analysis

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In the last decade, multilingualism has featured prominently in the European Union's policies against the backdrop of an increasingly 'super-diverse' European community, legitimisation processes and the struggle to find a common identity. Whilst institutional discourses on multilingualism have been the focus of much literature from sociolinguistic, political, legislative and critical perspectives (Kjaer and Adamo 2013; Rindler Schjerve and Vetter 2012; Weber and Horner 2012; Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2011, 2010; Gal 2010; Extra and Gorter 2008), bottom-up approaches to multilingual ideologies and attitudes have mostly been limited to educational issues (Creese and Blackledge 2010) or conducted from quantitative perspectives (Special Eurobarometer 386 2012). By contrast, there have been relatively few qualitative insights on language ideology that have focused on citizens' views in the European context (see for example, Millar and Wilson 2007; Gubbins and Holt 2002). This is rather surprising given that the 'dilemma' between communication and identity (Mamadouh 2002; Wright 2000) in the construction of Europe is not only a concern for institutional practices but encompasses a wider ideological struggle involving issues of civic participation, social inclusion/exclusion and the transformation of cultural identities in an increasingly diverse, mobile and interconnected European society. As pointed out by Wright (2000), the language issue goes to the core of the European political project and its legitimisation if the EU aspires to be more than a trading body.

The main rationale for this article therefore lies in the need to provide bottom-up views on multilingualism in addition to the institutional ones that can contribute to better understanding of the 'language issue' in the European socio-political field. For this reason, our investigation into the discursive construction and negotiation of multilingualism focuses on an association of citizens engaged with European politics and the promotion of civic participation called Democratic Change for Europe (DC4E).[1] The organisation has been run on a voluntary basis and consists of a number of semi-structured local groups across Europe open to all EU and third-country citizens,[2] who operate at the transnational level by running debates, cultural events and (on and offline) campaigns

simultaneously across local groups. Furthermore, members who characterise themselves as transnational share an ideological commitment to the development of a European public sphere (EPS) beyond national remits.

The 'public sphere' – which, put succinctly, is 'a network for communicating information and points of view' (Habermas and Rehg 1998: 360)- has increasingly been regarded as a crucial feature of modern and deliberative democracies, as it stands for a site of civic participation and the formation of public opinion (Wodak and Koller 2010). For Habermas (1984) the public sphere is characterised by three elements: openness to participation; challenges to public authority to legitimise decisions; and an ideal of rational-critical discourse. From this stance, Habermas (ibid) suggests that a European public sphere must consolidate in which actors are able to discuss 'European' issues and to deliberate democratically through consensus. Furthermore, by challenging the logic of democratic deliberations organised around national clusters (Fraser 2007), the public sphere may provide solidarity bonds between 'strangers' and the development of what Habermas calls 'constitutional patriotism', that is a sense of belonging to a society organised around a civic (rather than ethnic) definition of community. In spite of Habermas's optimistic views, the extent to which a transnationalised EPS exists (if at all) remains a debated issue (see, for example, Triandafyllidou, Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2009; Fligstein 2008; Splichal 2006; Eriksen and Fossum 2002; Closa 2001). However, Risse (2010) contends that, notwithstanding a number of limitations, an embryonic transnational 'community of communication' has been emerging where new 'European' perspectives are negotiated at the transnational level by different actors including the media, interest groups, and non-governmental organisations. It is thus in the general context of the developing EPS that we investigate DC4E as a salient community of European citizens in which, we hypothesise, institutional meaning(s) of multilingualism are likely to be reproduced, but also transformed and reconstructed at grass-roots and transnational levels. Of course the very specificity of our object of study does not allow us to extend our findings to the general public or to advance claims that our data is representative of a general European public opinion.

The article is structured as follows: in the next section we offer a general contextualisation of language ideologies in relation to globalisation phenomena looking in particular at different philosophical and political approaches to the nature of 'language' and its use within a 'community'. This is followed by a third section which focuses on EU multilingual policies including some critical perspectives on the socio-political multilingual arrangement. We subsequently outline our theoretical framework and describe our methodology. Building on the analysis which is then set out, the conclusion engages with the main findings, suggesting that the construction of multilingualism in members' discourses somewhat departs from the institutional vision and is more orientated towards a distinct separation of the communicative and identitarian functions of language.

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN GLOBALISED POLITICS

Multilingualism is a polysemic construct that can refer to different dimensions: individual (the personal ability to speak more than one language), societal (the coexistence of many languages within a society) and institutional (organisational practices involving more languages). However, as the normalisation of linguistic practices (instantiated in the creation of language policies) is typically negotiated in the political arena, language policies are never exclusively about language and are often understood as embedded in wider social, political and economic contexts (Ricento 2006; Shohamy 2006; Kroskrity 2000). Within political philosophy, a traditional approach to the regulation of language use within communities (for example, in nation states) has often relied on ideologies predicated on either the function of languages as 'in-group' identity markers or on functional/communicative arguments. De Schutter (2007) for example suggests that two opposed political views have existed on the nature of language - *constitutivism* and *instrumentalism.* In broad

terms, constitutivism sees language as intrinsic to identity and of moral value, whilst for instrumentalism language is only a means to achieve other objectives through communication. De Schutter (2007) thus suggests that a constitutivist approach will typically tend to regard language and the speaker's identity as deeply interrelated, relying on a rather essentialist notion that language is intrinsic to one's culture and the ability to express ideas and concepts. From this perspective, constitutivists will argue for institutional recognition of linguistic/group identities through linguistic rights since 'language rights remedy the injustice that arises when minorities are forced to live their life in the language of majorities, who happen to possess the prerogatives of linguistic power' (De Schutter 2007: 10).

Conversely, the instrumentalist perspective illustrated by De Schutter (2007) contends that, rather than an intrinsic expression of the 'self', language is an arbitrary convention which provides the necessary tools for communication of thoughts and ideas. Therefore, in matters of language policies and linguistic justice, by and large, instrumentalists tend to downplay issues of identity whilst focusing on the instrumental functions of language and the attainment of objectives such as efficient communication, equality of opportunity, mobility, cohesion and solidarity. The different ideological orientations illustrated here are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Instrumental and constitutive language ideology and policy (adapted from De Schutter, 2007)

	Instrumentalism	Constitutivism
Underlying view of linguistic membership	Language is external to the self, it is a tool, a convention	Language is intrinsic to the self and to one's identity
Normative conclusion (language policy)	Language should be regulated such that non-identity related goals are realised	Language should be regulated such that the identity interest of language is taken into account

De Schutter (2007) recognises that the ideologies presented in the taxonomy above have so far resulted in the implementation of different language policies and interpretations of linguistic justice. Whilst constitutivists generally will call for protection of linguistic rights as a matter of principle, instrumentalists will support language maintenance/diversity as long as this does not represent an obstacle to communication and priority practices. Obviously these ideologies do not interplay in mutually exclusive ways, neither do they exist in a vacuum, but rather they are part of a complex social system influenced by many other factors, such as economic and cultural contexts.

We consider therefore how some literature has made sense of those processes of globalisation that we consider key to our analysis as they are impacting on and are being reflected in linguistic practices and the formation of language policies in modern European societies. First, for example, it has been recognised that intensified patterns of migration and mobility resulting in increased (linguistic) diversity in Europe, can amplify tensions between constitutivist and instrumentalist ideologies, and intertwine with discourses of human rights (Kymlicka and Patten 2003), identity and education (Blackledge 2005). A second aspect of globalisation is the intensification of economic exchange and increased communication. In relation to the response of language policies to this issue, Kibbe (2003) suggests that two models have met with strong political popularity, i.e. the 'free-market' theory of unfettered capitalism and the 'green' theory of ecological protection. Kibbe sees these two ideologies resulting in distinct 'linguistic geostrategies': the race for 'market share' among the governments representing the major international languages and the protection of endangered

languages undertaken by linguists and by those interested in linguistic human rights. Finally, much literature on transnationalism has recognised the impact of globalisation on the transnationalisation of society and public spheres, and a weakening of national systems in favour of cross-border (organised) connections (Vertovec 2009; Albert, Jacobson and Lapid 2001; Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Once again the implications for language policies have been on the one hand the reaffirmation (albeit incongruous) of de jure notions of national languages (see for example Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2009) whilst, on the other, this has resulted in the de facto validation of hegemonic regimes with the convergence towards English as a lingua franca in cross-border communication.

Consequently, the use of English in relation to questions of social justice has been a long debated issue (Van Parijs 2011; Mar-Molinero and Stevenson 2009; Phillipson 2003; Ammon 2001). While some scholars have taken a critical approach to hegemonic practices, others have seen the diffusion of global languages as opportunities for more cross-border interaction. For example, House (2003), suggesting a pragmatic distinction between 'language for communication and language for identification', defends English as a global lingua franca from accusations of being a killer language or the embodiment of (neo)imperialist aspirations. Instead, she argues that English as a lingua franca can work in conjunction with local languages on the basis of the functional distinction raised above. In this respect, House sees a diglossic[3] scenario developing in Europe in which English is used as high language 'for various 'pockets of expertise' and non-private communication on the one hand, and national and local varieties for affective, identificatory purposes on the other hand' (2003: 261).

MULTILINGUALISM IN EUROPE

The complexity of multilingualism has been extensively covered by a wealth of academic literature (Unger, Krzyzanowski, and Wodak 2014; Weber and Horner 2012; Van Els 2005; Wright 2000). In this study, we approach European multilingualism as a set of ideological discourses produced and promoted at institutional level by EU organs such as the Commission. In the Commission's discourses, the multilingual ideology has typically been constructed around its benefits in three main areas: social cohesion, democratic participation and the economic dimension (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2010). Whilst the first two areas can be related to 'identity marker' and functional arguments respectively, the economic dimension portrays multilingualism as 'a necessary skill' thus tying with the Lisbon strategy main agenda (Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2010) and neo-functionalist ideologies that clearly promote the EU as a 'global enterprise' (Zappettini 2014).

By and large, multilingual ideologies have applied to: a) internal practices where official and working languages are used within the EU institutions; and b) the societal level where the EU has promoted a model of multilingual polity which intends to 'protect' and 'promote' linguistic diversity.[4] At the societal level, policies have been introduced, inter alia, aimed at enabling communication between citizens and institutions in any of the EU's official languages and some of the regional languages. Furthermore, all national official languages of the European Union member states have official status within the EU. Such a 'panarchic' policy regime (Grin 2008) is complemented by the practices of EU officials who often resort to practices of multilingualism to accommodate an interlocutor and allow for smooth communication (Wodak, Krzyżanowski and Forchtner 2012). The EU also makes special provision for European citizens whose mother tongue is a regional language (for example, Welsh) providing a certain level of translation and interpretation services.

On the other hand, the limitations of devising multilingual (and for that matter cultural) policies at a supranational level has been widely acknowledged (see for example King et al. 2011; Kraus 2011; and, with specific regards to cultural policies, Sassatelli 2009). The promotion and protection of a plurilingual Europe can only be implemented in practice insofar as individual member states are

willing to do so as the EU cannot impose on national policies regarding multilingualism and language learning.

Wright (2000) offers an interesting account of the tensions and contradictions that exist in the EU's multilingual proposition, suggesting that 'the present EU strategy of promoting plurilingualism is admirable in its idealism […] but Utopian' (p. 8). Wright advocates the development of a community of communication among Europeans in order to legitimise the Union, which otherwise would 'just be a trading association run in an autocratic way' (ibid.). She argues that a system of 'personal bilingualism and social *diglossia*' could provide the best solution for European communication needs and language preservation. In other words, she envisages an ideal scenario for the EU with English performing a communicative function, whilst the identity function would be embodied by mother tongues. Wright (2009) recognises the political implications of such a choice as any formal legitimisation of English would infringe the principle of equality and linguistic justice. However, she invites us to reconsider the rigidity of such a principle, which she sees as anchored in the 'ideological legacies from nation building and colonial empire' (p. 93), arguing that 'history demonstrates that communities and individuals usually achieve the communication networks they need, whether this happens in a planned or an unplanned way' (Wright 2009: 8). Kraus (2008) proposes another model for dealing with the issues of multilingualism in Europe and avoiding the creation of a diglossic society. He suggests that an attainable solution is the support for 'converging multilingualism' a model which, in Kraus's view, 'attempts to find a necessarily precarious balance between pragmatism and respect for diversity' (p. 176).

In a similar vein, Archibugi (2005) supports the notion of striking the right balance in the quest for the language of democracy within the EU by envisaging the adoption of a vehicular language for improving communication (that he sees best represented by Esperanto), whilst retaining the multicultural approach to the recognition of individual languages. This approach would do away with the notion of official languages. Archibugi (2005) rests his argument on the cosmopolitan perspective that:

> in the face of common problems, cosmopolitanism seeks to apply democratic procedures, implementing public policies designed to remove linguistic barriers, even if this implies that some members of the population who are not fluent in the language used for public purposes might be somehow disadvantaged (p. 544).

From this premise, Archibugi opposes Kymlicka's idea that democratic politics must be in the vernacular, arguing that 'it is the responsibility of individuals and governments to remove the language barriers that obstruct communication' (p. 545).

These various theoretical models point to the complexity of the issue of multilingualism in Europe, both at an institutional and societal level. In our view, therefore, the promotion and protection of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe is not only a policy issue, but needs to be addressed from a wider perspective, including citizens' perspectives. Whilst these have sometimes been voiced explicitly (for example in the consultations conducted with the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism, 2009) we contend that views at the grass-roots level have largely been underestimated and thus turn to the exploration of those views.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Theoretical Assumptions

Our theoretical framework draws on the general tenet of critical discourse analysis (CDA) that sees society and language as mutually constitutive (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). We refer here to the

term discourse in its amplest meaning of text carrying different social properties in different contexts. We thus interpret discourses not only as representations but also as constitutive of 'social reality' and the 'objects' of discourse (Foucault 1984). From this perspective, the analysis of discourses informs our theoretical understanding of 'language in use' and, at the same time, represents our heuristic approach to the analysis. We treat ideology as instantiated in discourse, that is, we believe that linguistic structures and elements dialogically relate to systematic representations/organisations of the world. We therefore regard discourses of multilingualism as meta-representations of society at large and furthermore as embedded in wider socio-historical contexts, such as globalisation and EU integration. Crucially, in line with CDA, we also assume that ideologies can be (re)produced, challenged and dynamically transformed in discourses through a variety of discursive strategies such as, for example, (de)legitimisation, justification, recontextualisation and so on (see for example Wodak et al. 2009).

In approaching the analysis of our data we rely in particular on Van Dijk's (1997) socio-cognitive framework which sees ideologies as acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced in and through discourse as cognitive structures socially 'stored' and shared in 'schemas' and realised through linguistic features. For Van Dijk, discourse may be ideologically `marked' and thus pointing to specific 'schemas' as the speaker draws for instance on a 'collective memory', or invokes specific discursive strategies and other phonological, syntactic, lexical and/or contextual elements. Moreover, for Van Dijk, such elements are not always explicit but can underline discourses as 'implicatures' or metaphors and therefore become inferable through interpretation.

Research Aims and Procedure

This article contributes to existing perspectives on the EU's multilingual setup (see, for example, Kjaer and Adamo 2013; Rindler Schjerve and Vetter 2012; Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2011 and 2010) by providing qualitative insights from a bottom-up perspective. Our main aim is to ascertain if, to what extent and how multilingual ideologies (as fostered by the EU institutions) are reproduced, (re)constructed and negotiated at grass-roots level in and through discourses of citizens engaged in the debate on Europe. We emphasise however that our analysis does not intend to focus on multilingualism as a communicative practice of our informant organisation as such, but rather on the socio-cognitive dimension enacted in discourse by its members. Moreover, we take an interpretative approach to the data analysis in line with social constructivist views of discourse[5] (defined in the following section). Our research is therefore guided by the following questions: 1) How is European multilingualism ideologically (re)produced at grass-roots level?; 2) How are the ideological tensions of EU's multilingualism reflected and negotiated in the discourses of members?

Our data consists of four focus groups and nine individual interviews conducted in two waves between 2010 and 2013. In total we spoke directly to 26 members from seven different local branches of DC4E (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and the UK). All the NGO branches were initially approached through contact with gatekeepers and participants were sought. The 26 respondents who agreed to participate in our study thus represent a self-selecting sample of DC4E members and, therefore, are not necessarily representative of the organisation's view at large. Furthermore, due to the mixed national make-up of each local group (see note 2), we were not able to control the sample for 'national' or 'regional' variables (i.e. the nationality, residency and other affiliations of participants). Instead, in the light of the NGO identity and the contextualisation of their activities in the wider EPS we decided to treat the data at a transnational level. We were, however, able to profile our informants through socio-demographic data (age group, language proficiency, nationality, etc.) collected via a questionnaire distributed to each participant before commencing the interview. A summary of these details and further

information on the circumstances of group and individual interviews are provided in Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix.

The rationale for combining focus groups and individual interviews was to maximise the main advantages of two methods of collection for discursive purposes. Focus groups have been increasingly used in social sciences to explore shared opinions and beliefs because of the dynamic interaction that can emerge out of the discussion whilst staying focused on the topic (Litosseliti 2003). Individual interviews, on the other hand, provide informants with a more personal setting, which can allow the emergence and elaboration of personal narratives.

The focus groups were moderated by the authors in the local language (i.e. English, Italian and Romanian). Individual interviews were also conducted by the authors in English by request of the interviewees, except in two cases when they were conducted in Italian as the language was mutually shared by the interviewees and the interviewer. Discussions focused on a number of European issues and different topics related to multilingualism, which had been derived from the literature and previous ethnographic investigation of the NGO. These were: a) orientation towards constitutive/instrumental views of language; b) the social and political significance of multilingualism; c) views on the institutional use of languages; d) language and democratic practices; e) the use of English in Europe.

However, rather than strictly structuring the discussion protocol or following a specific order, the topics were loosely introduced by the moderators/interviewers as prompts to elicit the discussion, so that different themes were also allowed to emerge. In general, moderators acted as facilitators whilst being aware of their potential role of co-constructors of the 'social reality' of participants. All data was audio recorded, transcribed and, if needed, translated into English. Data was subsequently coded and systematically treated for linguistic insights in relation to the following categories: i) macro-propositions and recurrent discursive themes; ii) speakers' enunciative positioning and their ideological orientation; iii) linguistic strategies realised in talk; iv) specific linguistic features such as metaphors and figurative language and their argumentative purpose. The following section provides insight into these discussions and the emergent categories examined.

DATA ANALYSIS

Discursive (Re)Constructions of Languages and Multilingualism: Constitutive vs. Instrumental Views

Several members spoke about languages referring to cultural aspects, often associating languages with the identities of their speakers, stressing thereby their constitutive function. Some, for example, metaphorically represented languages as 'living' entities and subject to 'life/death' cycles (but also to transformation). Overall, we noticed a positive evaluation of multilingualism as a desirable individual and social practice linked to the expression of one's culture. Most members highlighted the intercultural function of multilingualism providing new opportunities for 'seeing the world from different angles/perspectives' whilst retaining a significant social meaning of group affiliation. In these discourses, we thus recognise the recontextualisation of the overarching institutional frame on the social cohesion function of multilingualism 'bringing the peoples of Europe together'. The following extract is an example of how the speaker draws on the 'common house' metaphor which has often been deployed in institutional representations of a united Europe (Drulak 2004; Chilton and Ilyin 1993):

CL4: [language] gives you the freedom to go anywhere, and you feel at home

In a number of cases, however these positive views were expressed by members with generic and somewhat idealised statements referring, for example, to oversimplified notions of national or official languages associated with (member) states. In our view this would therefore indicate the ideological reproduction of the EU hierarchical system. In some cases, rather essentialist interpretations of 'national' cultures emerged as well as certain misconceptions on languages as in the following extract where the speaker mistakenly assumes the mutual intelligibility of Romanian and Bulgarian:

> LO2: ... Let's say people in Romania were speaking to people in Bulgaria in English you know and they're not speaking to each other in Romanian or Bulgarian and that's a real shame.

By contrast, we also found more critical views that challenged established EU discourses. One member, for example, challenged a representation of Europe as the 'sum of its parts' and of Europeanness as the 'simple' interconnection of cultures which has often been promoted in institutional discourses:

> CL5: Well I do not know, ... the European term, I should be very very European since I am connected with so many cultures, but I find it to be just a rhetorical tool that actually means nothing.

Another critical view emerged in relation to the 'nature' of languages and their instrumental use in politics. For example one suggested that:

> BO3: language is a means and thus it should not be an obstacle, however it can be dragged by its hair into politics so that it represents an obstacle.

In this case the speaker highlights the instrumental function of language in two ways: firstly through the explicit enunciation that 'language is a means [for communication]' and secondly through the personification of language, for which he uses the metaphor of 'language dragged by its hair'. Although the speaker here uses a passive form that backgrounds the 'dragger' (the agent) we can still infer his reference to and negative valuation of the instrumental use of languages for nationalistic political agendas in the construction of nation states.

'Promotion' and 'Protection' of Languages

In general we recognised that a number of arguments were constructed on either the '*topos* of zero-sum' (that is the logical premise that one language does not take away from others) or on the assumption of an 'ecology of languages', whereby languages can be lost at the expense of the system. For example, in dismissing Esperanto as a viable option as a common language, LO3 said:

> LO3: I feel it's more like we have lots of languages and, and there's no need to sort of lose everyone's language to create this new one.

By contrast PR2 argued*:*

> PR2: I think that that's really is great, you know this idea of, of finding the balance and not, you know in this, in this kind of quest to kind of see how the integration, how people can work together, exactly not losing the individual cultures.

Thus whilst most members seemed to agree on the benefits of individual multilingualism (that is, learning more languages through personal initiative), opinions were split and conflicting on the institutional commitment to protect and promote languages. On the one hand, we recognised constitutivist ideological stances subscribing to the protection of linguistic rights as an indispensable

universal/human right and therefore a European value to safeguard. On the other hand, however, some members questioned the desirability of defending languages out of principle, raising the issue of artificiality of normative approaches, thus clearly orientating towards instrumental ideologies. We thus found significant differences among our informants over whether - and to what extent - protection should apply to which language. Significantly, most members debated the definition of what counts as language or dialect[6] (which was perceived as a convenient discriminant in guiding policy approaches):

> BO4: the question is if we really need to protect every single language, I mean Venetian, Neapolitan, Sardinian which after all are dialects.

In this respect, ultimately, most members fell back on institutional definitions of minority and regional, as formulated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe). We thus found an implicit instrumentalist approach supporting a general ideological orientation towards a selective maintenance of linguistic diversity and a reproduction of national ideologies that perceive certain institutionalised languages as more prestigious and with a higher status than others.

Similarly, in reference to the promotion and protection of languages through education, we recognised contrasting views. Some members argued in favour of keeping alive as many languages as possible through schooling policies. A large number of members, however, tended to support policies that would develop competences in much needed and viable common denominators of communication in Europe (i.e. English) as a priority. To support their ideological stances, most members engaged in strategies of justification aimed at legitimising hegemonic practices, whereby dominant languages were naturalised through historic frames. These views were conspicuous in the Italian and Romanian focus groups. The Italian members discussed at length the reproduction of global languages throughout history, offering examples of how Latin, French in the past and lately English emerged as dominant languages in relation to specific socio-economic conditions. Italian member BO4 for instance represented the cycles of history through tropes of movements such as 'waves' of cultural diffusion/dominance and this premise allowed the respondent to justify the social promotion of important languages because 'language follows the movement of history'.

Furthermore, we found that often the 'agentivisation' of history was recontextualised into economic discourses. This strategy allowed some members to construct a relationship between economic power and language diffusion and crucially to justify the supremacy of certain languages vis-à-vis others in relation to a linguistic market. In the following extract, for example, BO5 refers to patterns of economic highs and lows to represent and justify the reproduction of hegemonic languages in education as dictated by the market (a linguistic realisation achieved via the term 'boom' that implies a sudden surge for demand and supply):

> BO5: until thirty years ago there was French, then English boomed (...), in the future I don't know, but perhaps we'll stop studying English and we'll take up Chinese.

We found similar perspectives held by our Romanian informants who, during the discussion, brought to the fore several economic arguments in relation to the benefits of multilingualism as exemplified by the following extract:

> CL2: The economic benefits come through English, look, since I can speak English, now I work in a place where I need to speak English otherwise I couldn't ... Languages continue to exist anyway till the end of the world, but I think talking about a language of communication that will be English from now on, and local languages will resist, and local and every country that speaks other language those will resist anyway, I will still write in Romanian and nobody will have anything against it.

> CL1: You say [...] English from now on, but 200 years they would have said it was French from then on …
>
> CL2: Yes, but there was no globalisation then, and maybe only if the planet will deglobalise it will change, but until then ...

In this example, CL2 encapsulates many discursive patterns emerging from our data. The first one highlights the constraints of the linguistic market that citizens are engaged with, and the tensions between ideal and de facto situations. The second is the use of interdiscursive links with themes of globalisation, which were also often put forward by members to construct a general understanding of the value of languages as determined by social and economic contexts. In this respect, we recognised a conceptualisation of the economic benefits of multilingualism conspicuously divergent from the institutional ideology that regards all languages as equal.

Reconciling 'Unity' and 'Diversity': What Is the Language of Democracy?

'Ideational vs. practical' tensions clearly emerged when discussing multilingualism in relation to the issue of how best to ensure democracy, whilst encouraging the development of a transnational EPS and an ever closer Union. By and large, however, we found that our informants showed an ideological orientation towards supporting a common language that could facilitate communication, as for example in the following extract:

> RO1: I think [English] should be encouraged ...and yes it would give an advantage to English and Irish speakers but ... I think sometimes it goes like that, … some groups in society have advantages over others and the role of the state or of an institution like the EU is to make sure that these natural advantages do not make those people step over others ...

Here, RO1 recognises the tension between ideational and pragmatic aspects acknowledging that the official promotion of English could be seen as an infringement of the principle of equality, however the respondent seems to reconcile the instrumental and constitutivist ideologies of language with the 'watchdog' function of the EU.

Another similar perspective is exemplified in this extract from the Romanian focus group:

> CL4: Now, I think it depends partly on what democracy means for each person, what the person understands by the term democracy, and we could then make an analysis between what the EU says in there that multilingualism underlies democracy and what I think democracy is.

Similarly, in reference to internal multilingual practices of the EU institutions most members tended to endorse the selective multilingualism of the Commission primarily on functional and pragmatic reasons. For example:

> LO2: I think [these contradictions] are just historical, they are a little bit uncomfortable but if it was decided that … the lingua franca of the EU institutions could be Maltese then everybody would have to ... you know, take a break for the next three or four years and learn Maltese and then get together again, it's, it is just not practical … the biggest, the widest spoken languages in Europe in that order aren't they, they are English, French and German and that's the reason they're spoken purely for a practical reason … ehm it's a bit unfortunate maybe everybody should learn Maltese (laughs) ... but it is a fact we are going to have to learn to live with.

Here the speaker legitimises the status quo of institutional practices through different discursive strategies. They firstly refer to historical reasons, presumably in reference to the historical practices of the Commission's working languages (political continuity). Secondly, LO2 appeals to practical reasons by offering the counterargument that if the Maltese language were adopted instead it would have practical negative consequences. Such an argument seems to recontextualise the debate that took place during Malta negotiating accession to the EU.[7] Finally, the speaker appeals to the logic of big numbers (the widest spoken languages), reproducing notions of pecking order and prestige which they then downplay with some linguistic hedging ('a bit uncomfortable', 'a bit unfortunate').

In most cases it would appear that finding a balance of interests in evaluating language practices against the benefits of democratic participation was a major ideological orientation for members. This notion also seemed to apply to the internal practices of the organisation itself. For example, in discussing the editing of the NGO magazine, AM1 valued the pros and cons of having different articles in different languages:

> AM1: The more general things are written in English and then there are pages that are in our own language and we in the Netherlands we always also write it in English because […] a lot of Dutch people know English anyway. But in other countries they, they write in their own language and I think that's also ... it excludes other people from reading it, I don't know, it's, for their own people it ..., it makes the (…) the, the threshold or something a bit lower but it's …, I think it's always, it's always standing in between a little.

For AM1, lowering a metaphorical threshold to allow more citizens to enter the debate was a compromise worth accepting even if it impinged on her own contribution to the community. In this sense, we recognised a strategy of accommodation of the lower threshold in which language represented a proxy for civic equality. The issue of commitment to the NGO activity was also raised by VA1 who argued:

> VA1: I will say it's a practical issue, it depends also on each person, it depends on how much you want to give … I mean … if I believe in this network and I believe in the transnational level then it's a must that I speak English to work.

Notably, the ideological positioning of English native speaker members in this respect was orientated towards recognising their head start and conceding that English only is not enough. Native speakers of English thus adopted a positioning of solidarity as exemplified by the following extract in which LO3, the member interviewed in London, adopted the metaphorical representation of house to express their stance:

> LO3: It's just […] like having friends that you don't make an effort with, making them always come to your house rather than you go and visit them, that kind of thing.

A diglossic scenario

Our data robustly suggest that most members portrayed an existing, or envisaged a future, diglossic scenario where a language of large diffusion (for the time being identified with English but open to being superseded by Chinese for instance) would enable communication across different native speakers whilst the same speakers would additionally retain their personal language. This argument was often discursively constructed along a functional distinction between languages for communication and languages for identity that largely tallies with Wright's and House's arguments (see above). For example, the interplay between the communicative and identity functions of language is illustrated by the following extract:

> RO1: Well I think that my dream, my vision is that Europe be united politically and for this to happen […] we need to have a language in common […] I'm really a fan of English not because I see this as a sort of cultural imperialism because by now English has nothing to do with England any more or with the UK …
>
> MO: Can I just ask you to explain what you mean by English is no longer related to England, do you mean the English identity?
>
> RO1: Yes, that's exactly it, I don't see it as an imposition of cultural imperatives from the Brits, you know, by now English is the language of Eur … by now, you know, if aliens came to the Earth, by now, they'd probably try and talk to us in English … it's the language of old England it is the language of the US but it is the language of the EU too …

There is a series of ideological assumptions inferable from this passage. The first one relates to Europe as a united polity with a common language and which is offered as a statement of necessity (supported by the modal verb 'we need'). In this sense, the speaker's discursive strategy appears to legitimise the de facto dominance of English on instrumental grounds. However, we can also infer a sort of evaluative process in weighing and juxtaposing the effects associated with linguistic hegemony (cultural imperialism) and support for it. In their argument of justification, RO1 refers to a cognitive schema of universality through which they place Europe in a global, indeed universal context. In this context, the respondent naturalises expectations of being able to communicate with others through the hyperbolic and futuristic imagery of 'aliens' communicating with humans. Crucially, in support of this construction, RO1 clearly decouples utilitarian from identitarian aspects of the English language, appealing to the modernity of this argument (signalled by the temporal expression 'by now').

Further examples of the deconstruction/decoupling of English into separate 'communication' and 'identity' languages emerged in this exchange in which *globish* (that is a simplified version of English) is seen capable of performing the communicative function, whilst the identitarian function remains anchored to *classical* English:

> BO1: In my opinion we really need to distinguish, there are two languages, one is for work and every-day communication, globish, right? And then there's English.
>
> BO6: Indeed there's also the Euro-English of bureaucracy that has got nothing to do with Shakespeare's language, which is the language of the English.

Homogenisation and Cultural Diffusion

A final theme that emerged from our data relates to the members' ideological orientation towards globalising flows and the risk of cultural homogenisation impacting on (and deriving from) languages. Whilst different views emerged in discourse, overall we noticed a conspicuous tendency to accommodate and justify global transformations, whilst downplaying the potential negatives. We will present one example of how these representations were achieved by quoting PR2, who told us:

> PR2: We speak of homogeneity in the whole world [but] we have been also homogenifying a lot in … many countries and some people have seen it as a threat but in the end people are happy about that. I don't know if I take the example of France … in the sixteenth century probably people were not happy that they were forced to speak French and they preferred to keep their own language, their own culture and etc. - - but the result is that now the French culture, let's say, is part of a more global diversity, as long as people are aware of ehm … ehm not necessarily of the fact that there is this process of ehm of homogenifying

> but also ehm if they are aware of what can be done in a different way ehm then there is no problem. It's … it's a question of creativity yeah, I think.

In this case the member used a distinct discursive strategy aimed at relativising the globalisation of culture by an argument of historical analogy. Comparing the current process of global homogenisation with that of French language standardisation, the member portrayed the former positively and was able to represent it as 'part of the more global diversity'. The argument rests on a temporal dimension, which assumes linguistic change through standardisation as a positive development (realised through the propositions people were not happy/people are happy).

CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have highlighted the many tensions of the EU's multilingual ideology and aimed to establish if and how these are reproduced and negotiated at grass-roots level. Our data show that the ideological tensions are somewhat present in the discourses of our respondents through a range of cognitive orientations towards constitutivist views of languages at one end and instrumentalist views at the other. The emergent construction of multilingualism in our data, however, reflects the institutional one(s) to different extents. Overall, our informants endorsed an idealistic vision of Europe as a multicultural/multilingual community and in this sense they largely reproduce the ideological 'ecology of languages' fostered by the EU. It must be noted, however, that often the notion of language is restricted to official and national categories, thus effectively reproducing a 'pecking order' of languages. Such vision is consistently emerging in discourses of promotion of languages, where we found an ideological split on the actual implementation of policies that would either favour one or more languages.

Whilst we used the constitutivist/instrumentalist taxonomy to guide inductively our analytical approach to member's ideological orientations to language, we must emphasise that no member portrayed their perspective in such dichotomic terms. One major insight emerging from our analysis is that most members seemed to be willing to accommodate instrumental and constitutivist ideologies in a diglossic situation whereby a high common language would coexist with individual low languages. Different arguments were put forward in support of such an either existing or envisaged arrangement. For example, discourses of globalisation were conspicuously linked to the need for competitiveness in the linguistic market and such discourses offered the premises for supporting the use of dominant languages as valuable linguistic capital. Thus, although most members referred to languages as 'resources', a clear preference for English was generally argued in contrast to mainstream institutional discourses (and the rhetorical notion of the equality of languages).

Furthermore, where our data appears to be most divergent from most institutional conceptualisations of languages is in the fact that members appeal to an ideological separation of the identity and communication aspects of language. Such conceptual separation of different functions of language enabled our respondents to construct a set of arguments aimed at legitimising hegemonic practices whether within their own organisation or at an institutional level. Crucially, we thus found that the notion of multilingualism as an expression of democracy (as portrayed in institutional discourses) appears reproduced only to a small extent in our sample. Instead, discourses of democracy are often reconstructed as the necessity of promoting civic debate and improving participation in the EPS. In this light, our data suggest that most members tended to conceptualise democracy as a universal language of its own that should find concrete expression in the most pragmatic forms. Similarly, the notion of linguistic justice was mainly interpreted as the democratic benefits deriving from the construction of Europe which could be sped up by increased interaction in a shared language.

On these last few considerations we recognise some of Wright's (2000) perspectives on the state of a 'community of communication' in the EU discussed earlier. One is that communication networks develop informed by ideological stances that are not necessarily determined by institutional planning. Another important insight is that the decoupling of identity and communication enacted by our informants in their discourses is an ideological departure from nationalistic and colonial views and arguably a move towards a post-national direction, although we cannot dismiss the idea that such views exist in embryonic forms and are partly contradicted by the discursive validation of national/official languages, if only used as convenient labels. Nevertheless our data would tally with existing arguments on social agency and the power of discourse in structuring change. Of course, we must recognise the specificity of our sample, a transnational organisation engaged with reforming Europe, which does not permit the generalisability of such claims to the wider definition of European citizens. Nonetheless, this study may provide potential grounds for future studies to investigate language issues in the EPS. In particular we have deliberately resisted cross-country comparisons or the analysis of 'national' variables, in the belief that a definition of multilingualism must necessarily take into account the transnational dimension of communication in the EPS. We believe that more research should be carried out in this field for there are significant social and political implications for language ideology in the construction of Europe.

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Appendix 1. Summarising socio-demographic data collected through questionnaires at focus groups

Focus Group	Cardiff - UK			Cluj - Romania						Bologna - Italy						London (pilot)- UK	
Date	22/04/2012			14/09/2011						21/04/2011						06/04/2011	
Duration (mins)	65			84						70						36	
Participant Code	CA1	CA2	CA3	CL1	CL2	CL3	CL4	CL5	CL6	BO1	BO2	BO3	BO4	BO5	BO6	LO1	LO2
Age Group																	
18-24	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							X	
25-34										X	X	X	X	X	X		X
35+																	
Male/Female	F	F	F	F	M	M	F	M	F	F	F	M	F	F	M	M	M
Occupation	Student	Student	Student	Student	Unemployed	Employee	Student	NGO Coordin.	Youth Worker/ Student	Journalist	Researcher	Student	Student	Employee	Employee	Researcher	Employee
Nationality	Turkish	Romanian	British	Romanian	Hungarian	Romanian	Romanian	Romanian	Romanian	Italian	Italian	Italian	German /Russian	Italian	Italian/French	Italian	British
Current Country Of Residence	UK	Wales	Wales	Romania	Romania	Romania	Romania	Romania	Romania	Italy	Italy	Italy	Germany	Italy	Italy	UK	UK
Lived Abroad	Cyprus 4yrs; UK 2yrs	Sweden 6mths	France 9mths	Belgium 7mths; Greece 3mths	Germany 3mths; Netherlands 1mth	Italy 8mths	France 4mths; Austria 3wks			France 9mths; Tanzania 3mths	Spain 1yr; Belgium 9mths; UK 6mths	Germany 1mth	Russia 13yrs; Spain 2yrs; Italy 1yr; Slovakia 1mth	France 6mths	UK 4mths; Ireland 4mths; France 9mths	Ireland 1mth; France 4mths; USA 5mths	France 1yr; Spain 6mths; Lebanon 1yr
First Language	Turkish	Romanian	English	Romanian	Hungarian	Romanian	Romanian	Romanian	Romanian	Italian	Italian	Italian	Russian	Italian	Italian	Italian	English
Other Languages; Self Reported Proficiency	ENG 5	ENG 5	FR 5	FR 5	GER 5	ENG 3	ENG 5	FR 5	ENG 4	ENG 4	ENG 5	ENG 5	GER 5	ENG 4	FR 5	ENG 3	GER 5
	FR 3	SW 4		ENG 4	ROM 5	IT 3	FR 5	ENG 5	FR 2	FR 3	FR 3	GER 1	SP 4	FR 4.5	ENG 3	FR 3	FR 4
		FR 1		GER 2.5	ENG 4		IT 4	IT 4	SP 1		SP 4	FR 1	IT 4	SP 3			
				GR 2			GER 2	SP 3					ENG 3				
				IT 1			SP 2	RU 2					FR 2				
							HUN 1	GR 2					POR 1				

LEGEND: ENG- English; FR - French; GER - German; GR - Greek; HUN - Hungarian; IT - Italian, POR - Portuguese; ROM - Romanian; RU - Russian; SP - Spanish; SW - Swedish.

Appendix 2: Summary of socio-demographic data collected through questionnaires at individual interviews

Interview	Rome - Italy	Berlin - Germany	Berlin - Germany	London - UK	Prague- Czech Republic	Prague - Czech Republic	Sofia - Bulgaria	Valencia - Spain	Amsterdam - Netherlands
Date	20/04/2010	16/02/2013	08/02/2013	18/01/2013	24/01/2013	27/01/2013	21/01/2013	24/01/2013	09/02/2013
Duration	36	52	41	45	65	42	61	56	80
Participant Code	RO1	BE1	BE2	LO3	PR1	PR2	SO1	VA1	AM1
Age Group									
18-24									
25-34	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
35+			X						
Male/Female	F	F	M	F	F	F	M	F	F
Occupation	NGO Worker	Unemployed	Cultural Manager	Student	Human Rights officer	Admin/education sector	PhD Student	Journalist	Temp clerk
Nationality	Italian	German	Italian	British	French	American	Bulgarian	Spanish	Dutch
Country Of Residence	Italy/UK	Germany	Germany	UK	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Slovenia	Spain	Netherlands
Lived Abroad	Canada 2yrs; UK 8yrs; Spain 1yr	Italy 9mths	Spain 6mths; Austria 3yrs; Germany 7yrs		Germany 3yrs; UK 1yr; Romania 8mths; Czech Republic 2yrs	Czech Republic 5yrs	Croatia 3mths; Malta 6mths; Macedonia 3yrs	Netherlands 2yrs; Hungary 1mth; Russia 1mth; Finland 1mth	Sweden 1yr; Australia 2mths
First Language	Italian	German	Italian	English	French	English	Bulgarian	Spanish	Dutch
Other Languages; Self Reported Proficiency	ENG 5	ENG 4	ENG 4	GER 2	ENG 5	SP 3	ENG 5	ENG 3	ENG 5
	SP 5	IT 3	GER 3	FR 1	GER 5	CZ 3	MAC 5	IT 1	GER 4
	POR 2	FR 2	SP 2	SP 1	ROM 3		SB-CR 4	CAT 5	FR 2
		SP 1			IT 3		RU 3		SP 1
		TUR 1			CZ 2				

LEGEND: CAT - Catalan; CZ - Czech; ENG - English; FR - French; GER - German; GR - Greek; HUN - Hungarian; IT - Italian; MAC - Macedonian POR - Portuguese; ROM - Romanian; RU - Russian; SB-CR - Serbo-Croatian; SP - Spanish; SW - Swedish; TUR - Turkish.

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[1] We use a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the NGO. DC4E was set up in the post-constitutional crisis of the Treaty of Lisbon when the EU sought to improve the communication gap between citizens and the institutions, and citizens themselves launched 'Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate' (see http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/decisionmaking_process/a30000_en.htm).

[2] This means that the geographical location of each group is not necessarily reflected in the national composition of that group (i.e. the Cardiff branch is made up of Romanian, Turkish as well as British nationals).

[3] In sociolinguistics the term *diglossia* refers to language practices in a community whereby a 'high' version of language is used for formal or literary purposes whereas a 'low' version is used for everyday conversation.

[4] For more details of the EU's multilingual policies and a critique of meanings of 'protection' and 'promotion' see Strubell (2007).

[5] In this article, language is understood as both the object (multilingual ideologies) and the tool (discourses of multilingualism) of investigation.

[6] The question of the difference between languages and dialects has been long debated in linguistic disciplines. From a linguistic perspective, the difference hinges on their mutual intelligibility whereby two mutually intelligible systems of communication (such as Castellan and Catalan) are considered dialects of the wider family of Romance languages. In sociolinguistics, the distinction tends to refer to the socio-economic and historical prestige or status acquired by a language through institutionalisation and standardisation (so that Norwegian and Danish, for example, are mutually intelligible but are regarded as separate languages).

[7] On that occasion it was discussed whether Maltese should be recognised as another EU official language given that it is spoken by a comparatively small number of people and, as the national language of Malta, it coexists along with English (which has official status) and Italian (which is widely spoken) the latter two already being official languages of the EU. In 2007, Maltese was eventually granted 'EU official language status' after a transitional period of three years during which the institutions were not obliged to draft all acts in Maltese.

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Research Article

The Populist Conception of Democracy beyond Popular Sovereignty

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Abstract

With populist parties making electoral progress across the European continent, the question of what their electoral success means for contemporary democratic systems has gained increasing significance. This article investigates how two populist radical right parties, the Austrian FPÖ and the Dutch PVV, conceptualise democracy, based on a wide range of party documents released over recent decades. It builds upon recent academic consensus that the relationship between populism and democracy is best understood from a 'minimalist' perspective, seeing populism not as antagonistic to democracy, but as an ideology that conceptualises democracy primarily in terms of popular sovereignty. The article adds to the existing literature by demonstrating that we can extend this understanding of the populist conception of democracy in three aspects: the populist emphasis on state neutrality; a two-fold notion of equality; and the extension of the political sphere in society. Based upon these three issues, the article concludes by exploring how the populist conception of democracy relates to the most dominant form of democracy practised nowadays, liberal democracy, and to what extent it reflects changes in our democratic political culture.

Keywords

Democracy; Western Europe; Populism

Right wing populist parties have continued to score electoral success across the European continent of late. The most recent instances of their success include electoral gains at the latest elections for the European parliament, the first ever-elected senators for the French *Front National*, and the electoral breakthrough of the Sweden Democrats at the general election there in 2014. Many of the populist parties making headway across Europe have been around for more than a decade and are referred to as being part of the "new populism", which emerged in Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Taggart 2000: 74). With their persistent presence and continuing electoral appeal, the question of how the relationship between right wing populist parties and the liberal democratic systems in which they come to fruition can be understood has gained increasing significance in both public and scholarly debates. This article aims to contribute to an enhanced understanding of this relationship by taking an internal perspective to this topic. It investigates how the populist radical right conceptualises "democracy" by looking at the criticisms it formulates on the functioning of contemporary democracy and the solutions it presents to solve the ostensible democratic crisis.

The article therefore assumes that this conceptual approach, studying how political actors conceptualise key political concepts and map these in an ideological field (Freeden 1998), can provide new insights into the relationship between radical right-wing populism and democracy. The article is consequently grounded in an advanced discourse analysis of party documents and publications from two parties in particular: the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Freedom Party, hereafter PVV) and the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreich* (Freedom Party Austria, hereafter FPÖ). Both parties classify under what Cas Mudde has labelled the 'populist radical right' (Mudde 2007).[1] Following Mudde, this populist radical right can be perceived as the current dominant form of the radical right that is captured by the populist *Zeitgeist* in which the notion that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* of the people has gained prevalence in the political system at large (Mudde 2004). This in turn points to the two major attributes of this populist radical right, both of which are highly relevant for the topic of this article: these parties are nationalist and, as opposed to the extreme right,

these parties are '(nominally) democratic, even if they oppose some fundamental values of *liberal* democracy' (Mudde 2007: 31).

This raises the question of how populist radical right parties conceptualise democracy. Although this study is based on only two case studies, the striking similarities between the PVV and the FPÖ suggest that a more encompassing understanding of the populist radical right conception of democracy is possible. In order to demonstrate this, this article proceeds as follows. First, it discusses the populist conception of democracy based on the academic literature on this topic, which posits that right wing populism conceptualises democracy primarily in terms of popular sovereignty. In concurrence with this literature, it argues that a minimalist definition of populism serves best to ensure a perspective on populism that is both objective and fruitful for further empirical study. In the second part, the article builds upon the insights in academic literature on the topic, and seeks to expand our understanding of a populist democracy beyond an emphasis on "the people". Based upon the party documents circulated by the PVV and FPÖ, it studies both criticisms of the functioning of contemporary democracy and the solutions these parties propose. In this way, it highlights three features of the way these radical right populist parties conceptualise democracy: state neutrality; a two-fold notion of equality; and the extension of the political sphere in society. The article concludes by stating how this radical right populist conception of democracy can be characterised, both by defining it more precisely in relation to liberal democracy, and contextualising it historically within the framework of recent transformations visible in Western democracies.

THE POPULIST CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY AS POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

Populism, such is the broad agreement, is what Ernesto Laclau called an "elusive" concept in which the notion of the people features prominently. Laclau argues that modern society is characterised by an enormous heterogeneity and populism makes an effort to search for and express shared identities. A special role in the quest for homogeneity is assigned to "the people", which Laclau therefore principally perceives as a political category (Laclau, 2005). This identification with "the people" is indeed most often cited as the prime characteristic of populism in general and of the populist radical right in particular. While for Laclau, populism is an intrinsic part of politics, most scholars concerned with the populist conception of democracy focus on right wing populism, since this is in many Western European countries the dominant form of populism. For Taggart, populism 'mobilises itself in the name of the people', in order to defend the imagined "heartland" which is allegedly threatened by elitist politicians detached from the ordinary citizen (Taggart 2000: 97). The "heartland" is an imagined historical and demographic space that lies at the core of the people's community, which populists claim to defend. Along the same line of reasoning, Cas Mudde argues that populism is a 'thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous groups [the 'pure' people versus the 'corrupt' elite]' and which, as has been noted, argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* of the people (Mudde 2007: 23). For populists, the will of the people is by nature benign and it should consequently be leading in determining the outcome of political decisions. It is for this reason that this concept has been studied by those who focus on populist discourse and highlighted as the core of populist ideology (Canovan 2002). Margaret Canovan follows the take of Michael Freeden, studying which concepts in populist discourse constitute populist ideology. These are, apart from the "people", "democracy", "sovereignty" and "majority rule", which makes her state that for populists 'democracy is understood as government by the sovereign people, *not* as government by politicians, bureaucrats or judges' (Canovan 2002: 33).

Since also liberal representative democracies are underpinned by the notion that the ultimate source of political power lies with the people (Dunn, 2005: 79), it is not surprising that this populist understanding of democracy is 'deeply entrenched in the political culture of most established democracies' (Canovan 2002: 38). Canovan therefore states that democracy is in a sense already

populist. Democracy is made up of two core elements, which she labels "redemptive" and "pragmatic". The "redemptive" element in our democracy is the *vox populi*: the voice of the sovereign people, whereas the "pragmatic" element is a form of government with representative institutions. She posits that belief in redemption through action of the sovereign people is vital for the functioning of the "pragmatic" democracy and 'if it is not present within the mainstream political system it may well reassert itself in the form of a populist challenge' (Canovan 1999).

This understanding of populist ideology as the primacy of popular sovereignty suggests that populism is simultaneously an intrinsic component of and a challenge to contemporary democracies. This can be explained by the fact that the populist distinction between the "benign" people and the "corrupt" elite, if studied from a political perspective, relates to the distinction between rulers and ruled institutionalised in and crucial to modern liberal democracies. These liberal democracies were after World War II often deliberately elitist, excluding the people from the decision-making process and distrusting means of direct democracy or popular involvement (Conway 2002). In his major study of political thought, Jan-Werner Müller even baptised Western European liberal democracies, 'democracies with a distrust of popular sovereignty' (Müller 2011a: 128). In order to avoid a radicalisation of the popular will, they were built upon a notion of democracy most eloquently put forward by Joseph Schumpeter, for whom democracy equalled a competition among political elites for the popular vote (Schumpter 1981 [1944]). This understanding of democracy has been challenged, but remains highly influential and is what we usually refer to as "liberal democracy": a form of democracy concerned with the securing of individual and minority rights, a clear demarcation between state and civil society, personal freedoms, the rule of law and limited possibilities of popular participation (see for instance: Held 2006, in particular chapter 3).

By emphasising that democracy denotes the rule of the people, it is clear that populism potentially stands in contrast to liberal democracy – even though, as has been noted, populist ideology is not necessarily antidemocratic as such. Many scholars imply that right wing populism can in this way be seen as a European feature of what Fareed Zakaria has called "illiberal democracy" (1997; see also Habermas 1994), in which democracy is perceived solely in terms of popular sovereignty rather than as an equilibrium between the will of the people and constitutional freedoms and rights. As has been shown in the cases of Greece and Hungary, where populist parties are so prominent in the political scene that these countries constitute "populist democracies", their presence 'contaminated formerly liberal political and party systems' with polarising and unstable politics (Pappas 2014: 18).

Yves Mény and Yves Surel follow this distinction between the two ideological pillars of democracy, in which populist parties aim to alter the balance in favour of the idea that the demos is sovereign (Mény and Surel 2001). Mark Plattner argues that the rise of right wing populism can lead to "democratic disorder", because populism is only 'democratic in a majoritarian sense' (2010: 88). Similarly, Koen Abts and Stefan Rummens state that 'populism can only survive if it becomes authoritarian and despotic', since populist politicians diminish the importance of individual rights in a democracy; they conclude that populism has a thin-centred ideology in which the people as a homogeneous unity occupy a pivotal position (2007: 421). Similar views can be found with Nadia Urbinati, who connects populism to despotism and argues that its differences with liberal democracy lie with the lack of respect for deliberation and the ritualistic meaning of elections (Urbinati 2003).

Mudde conceives the question of the distinctive features a populist conception of democracy comprises somewhat broader (Mudde 2007). According to him, the populist radical right, to which his study is limited, conceives of democracy in three ways. The first is that democracy often equals plebiscitary politics in which people are involved into political decision-making by means of referendums with democracy as such. Additionally, populists advocate a personalisation of power in which the power of the main political figure in the political system is reinforced. Finally, for populists, the will of the people should not be limited by anything: other institutions of representative democracy ought consequently to be made subordinate to the *volonté general*. It is important to

notice that these three features are underpinned by what Mudde calls a "nativist" understanding of democracy, in which "natives" and "non-natives" of the land are juxtaposed. The populist radical right therefore aims for a monocultural state in which the "native" ethnical culture is leading. Put differently, the populist radical right aims to establish an "ethnocracy" (Mudde 2007: 142).

This so-called minimalist perspective on populism, which is sensitive to various connotations of democracy, is valuable, since it situates populism in a long debate on what constitutes democratic government (Kaltwasser 2011: 195). Populism has from this perspective been perceived as 'a mirror in which democracy can contemplate itself, warts and all, and find out what it is about and what it is lacking' (Panizza 2005: 30). The distinction between liberal and populist democracy and the concurrent populist emphasis on plebiscitary elements to "recapture" democratic government out of the hands of a detached elite and return it to a culturally defined people are key elements of radical right populist democratic ideology. This article does not question the importance of "popular sovereignty" and anti-elitism for the way in which populist radical right parties conceptualise democracy. Right wing populism is in this way often seen as a corrective to the liberal interpretation of democracy dominant today (see for instance: Mouffe 2005) but explores how its understanding of democracy can be expanded beyond the notion of "the people".

THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY BEYOND SOVEREIGNTY

Before the discussion of the FPÖ and the PVV's conceptualisation of democracy, it is valuable to reflect briefly on these two parties and the political contexts in which they operate. The FPÖ was founded in 1956 and was for decades the third force in the Austrian party system dominated by Christian democrats and social democrats. The party's character underwent significant change under the leadership of Jörg Haider, who ruled the party from 1986 until 2000 and brought the FPÖ large electoral successes and a stint in government after its election victory in 1999. This election victory was a sign of the crumbling of the decade-old Austrian *Proporzdemokratie* in which the main political parties coincided with "hermetically sealed" national subcultures (Ritter 1999: 275). This system ensured that the main political parties cooperated at the top in order to bridge societal differences, fostering a culture of consensus making and the sharing of influence over state institutions (Rathkolb 2005).

This dominant role of political parties in a divided society is a feature which Austria and the Netherlands have in common. Both qualify as "consociational democracies" characterised by proportionality of interests and coalition making among the major parties in plural societies (Lijphart 1977). In the Dutch case, the cultural and socioeconomic cleavages ran through the country's socialist, protestant and Catholic subcultures, and as a result, the social democrats and the confessional parties divided key positions in the state media, labour unions and government agencies. This consensual system created social stability, but also bred latent discontents with a closed political system unable to keep up with the pace of a quickly changing society. In the case of the Netherlands these tensions erupted in the early 2000s with the electoral surge of Pim Fortuyn. After his assassination, various politicians have tried to fill the populist void, with the PVV being by far the most successful one so far (Vossen 2010). The party gave back bench support to the centre-right minority government in office until 2012 and has now returned to opposition. The same counts for the FPÖ, which came third in the general election of 2013 with 20 per cent of the vote and is now the largest opposition force. The fact that both parties operate in comparable party systems, have carried governmental responsibility in the past and can be situated on the same side of the political continuum, at the populist radical right, makes rightly these two parties suitable for a comparison between their party ideology in order to generate a more encompassing understanding of the populist conception of democracy.

According to populist politicians, Western European democracies face a deep crisis. Geert Wilders, the PVV's leader, announced that Dutch democracy is in 'its biggest crisis since the days of Thorbecke' [the liberal who designed the current-day Dutch constitution in 1848] (Partij voor de Vrijheid 2010: 17). Austria, in its turn, is not truly democratic, but 'late-Absolutist', according to the FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich 2002: 25). A major cause of this crisis is the alleged bias of state institutions within liberal democracies. As has been noted above, the impartiality of the state is an important aspect of liberal democracy. According to liberal democratic theory, state, or state funded, institutions such as the education system, state media and the judiciary are not supposed to reflect politically biased messages. However, the current reality of this ideal has come under scrutiny by the populist radical right. While state neutrality is an ideal that is in theory cherished both by liberal democracy and populist ideology, the latter claims that current liberal democracies no longer live up to their promises and have created politically coloured state institutions. The first of the three conceptions of a populist democracy therefore concerns state neutrality, ensuring that one of the objectives of populism is to reclaim the state and "neutralise" it.

This perceived lack of neutrality of the state is blamed on the position of the "traditional" political parties in modern democracies. As is well known, these parties are the prime target of populist parties, because the elite exert their influence largely through them. Peter Mair even claimed that 'populist democracy may be understood as *popular democracy without parties*' (Mair 2002: 91). Whereas the traditional parties are convinced that they embody democratic values and even claim to protect democracy against the threat of populism, the PVV and FPÖ, on the other hand, argue that the decade-long dominance of these "traditional" parties has led to an undemocratic political constellation. The distinction between elite and the people is thus mirrored in the antithesis between those old parties which dominate state institutions and political newcomers: 'the real battle is between the political parties that make up the existing system and the ones that want to reform this system'. As a result, populists argue that the contemporary system is not so much a democracy, but a *partitocrazia*, a "partycratic oligarchy" or a system of *Parteienallmacht (*Wilders 2006b; Freiheitliche Partei Österreich 2005: 7). From the perspective of populist democratic ideology, there are several problems with the decade-long dominance of the same political parties. Most obviously, this system allegedly does not allow room for dissent views. Populist parties are ostensibly held for antidemocratic radicals, whilst they claim merely to represent views that are not considered favourable by the traditional parties. The political parties are allegedly so institutionalised that the political debate is determined by power politics of political parties instead of original ideas.

More fundamentally, however, in the populist view the deeper-rooted problem regarding the *partitocrazia* is the allegation that the neutrality of the state is jeopardised by the dominance of political parties. The PVV and FPÖ maintain that all institutions that are state-funded should carry a neutral message and be liable to democratic, meaning public, control. Even when state institutions reflect the dominant political discourse, i.e. that of the "traditional" parties, this can in populist ideology not be equated to neutrality, because these state institutions in that case still carry a political agenda. This causes populists to doubt the neutrality of state institutions and to argue that popular control over these institutions should be reinstated. These allegations of the lack of state neutrality embrace spheres usually not considered strictly political – a theme to which shall be returned below. For instance, the *Centraal Plan Bureau*, the main economic think tank of the Dutch government, is allegedly politically biased, because it was led by a member of the social democrats, and because it collaborates with an environmental think tank that adopts theories of climate change in its calculations, by Wilders referred to as 'some environmental club that adopts the ideas of the charlatan Al Gore'. Likewise, the FPÖ asserts that traditional parties exert a disproportionate and undemocratic influence over society, since many important positions, from headmasters of schools to leading positions at the Central Bank, are divided between the parties on the condition of party membership: the *Proporzdemokratie* (Haider 1993: 126-131). The FPÖ fears in particular for the independence of

the *Finanzsenat*, which controls government spending, since it is staffed with party members of the traditional parties (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich n/d: 17).

Similarly, the objectivity and neutrality of the judiciary is questioned. Even before Wilders faced trial on accusation of hate speech and discrimination, his movement accused the judiciary of a jaundiced and left-wing agenda. He believes that his process was politically motivated, which is not surprising since one of his party's arguments is that the independence and objectivity of the judiciary is questionable. Wilders argues that the feelings of natural justice of the average citizen and the judgements or the judiciary are two worlds apart – an argument that can also be found with his Austrian counterparts. The gap between elite and people in the political arena is thus mirrored in judicial rulings. This state institution is no longer neutral, but allegedly reflects the outlook of the elite. Magistrates are therefore referred to as 'progressive liberals in togas' who deliver overly lenient punishments. Based on the assumption of a politically biased judiciary, the FPÖ pleads for more "objective" procedures for the appointment of members of the Supreme Court. The PVV goes even further and stresses the importance of elected judges and police officers and proposed parliament should control whether judges enforce sufficiently harsh sentences.

Another ostensibly partisan state institution is the Dutch monarchy. It is not merely because Wilders favours direct election of state representatives that the PVV is sceptical towards the monarchy. Again, the ostensible lack of state neutrality is a main reason for criticism on the House of Orange, since the PVV accuses the royalty of being part of the left-wing intelligentsia. Wilders came into conflict with the former Head of State, Queen Beatrix, on numerous occasions, most famously in 2009, when the Queen in her annual Christmas speech made an appeal on people to be tolerant towards cultural differences. Wilders perceived this as a personal attack and stated that the Queen had chosen the side of the "multicultural idealists". In other words: while the monarchy should be part of a neutral state, it allegedly advocates politically coloured messages for which it cannot be held up to democratic control.

A final case of a state institution that is not neutral but purportedly reflects the values of the establishment is the state media. Traditionally in Western Europe, the state has exerted influence over state broadcasting services and interfered with the media. According to the PVV and the FPÖ this involvement has, again, not had a neutral character. Both the PVV and the FPÖ argue that the state broadcasting service is staffed according to the *Proporz*-ideal and that citizens get biased information from an institution which is paid for by the tax payer and thus supposed to be neutral. The establishment allegedly utilises state media to propagate its world views to ordinary citizens. Haider was particularly worried about the "repressive tolerance" purportedly propagated on state television, because according to him 'Democracy is about debate, the one who does not want a debate, is no democrat' (Haider 1993: 75). The PVV also argues that state broadcasting is far from neutral. The state media are accordingly accused that they 'excel in warning against the PVV. Every night left wing people are invited by left wing associations to share their politically correct views – all on the cost of the tax payer' (Partij voor de Vrijheid 2010: 33).

In short, while populists and traditional parties nominally share the ideal of a neutral state and neutral state institutions, current liberal democratic practices deviate sharply from that norm according to populist ideology. The prominence of political parties has allegedly led to biased state institutions which propagate and advocate a certain liberal progressive world view through the state media, government think tanks and the judiciary. PVV and the FPÖ thereby dispute a central claim of liberal democracy: that party democracy and state neutrality are compatible. Political parties have allegedly occupied the formerly liberal state, which has subsequently come to reflect the discourse dominant in these parties. The breaking of the power of elites and the aversion against traditional means of political representation, the political party, are thus indeed important aspects of a populist vision on democracy, but these stand in relationship to another objective: the neutrality of the state and the reconquering of that neutrality in the name of the people. In this sense, populist democratic ideology

does not thus stand so much in opposition to liberal democracy, but it can rather be juxtaposed with party democracy characterised by discussion and electoral competition among political parties (Manin 1997: 205-218).

The aspiration to "neutralise" state institutions and establish popular control of – or rather *over* – all state-funded institutions reveals another element of populist the populist conception of democracy. It demonstrates that accountability is an essential concept for understanding the populist vision on this form of government. This emphasis on accountability implies that equality rather than liberty is first and foremost the way in which democracy is conceived. In liberal democracy, as has been noted, protection of individual rights is one of the prime objectives and European democracies are characterised by their emphasis on a negative liberty protecting personal freedoms (Conway 2002). It is this liberty, or "freedom", which populist parties often claim to protect. Yet, a closer look at their programmes suggests that a populist democracy is instead built upon two distinct, yet connected, notions of equality: a radical political conception of equality and an exclusive cultural notion of equality.

First, the political and radical notion of equality entails that citizens should have the ability and the right to hold every representative of the state up to "democratic", meaning popular, control. Hereby it intends to narrow the gap between rulers and ruled. It reveals that a populist democracy is not merely one, which emphasises the importance of direct democracy to extend the influence of the "common man" (Mudde 2007). It instead ventures to overcome unequal political power relations intrinsic to liberal democracy based upon representative institutions. These unequal power relations are in the view of the populist radical right exploited by political elites. The necessary distance between elected and electors, in a liberal democracy, leads to public apathy towards politics, which is considered an obstacle to true democratic government. This apathy is partly attributed to the extensive institutionalisation of democracy and the complexity of the *Rechtsstaat*. Haider claimed that democratic states tend to develop so many rules that the accessibility of citizens to their rights is compromised. Wilders acknowledged that liberal democracy is necessarily characterised by a gap between the political class and citizens, but claimed that public indifference is attributed to a deliberate strategy of the elite.

Populist ideology, on the other hand, displays faith in the capabilities of people to make political decisions. The gap between elite and people should be narrowed, and this can only be achieved by improving the possibilities that citizens have to control state functionaries and subject them to popular control – either direct of via parliament. Mudde in this regard pointed to plebiscitary elements of populist ideology and the personalisation of political power in the hands of the prime figure in the political system, and also Paul Taggart noted the preference for means of direct democracy that populist parties embody (Mudde 2007; Taggart 2002). However, the objective to enforce equality and narrow the ostensible gap between elite and people, does not inevitably take an anti-institutional direction. The national parliament, as embodiment of the popular will, is considered an important instrument to increase accountability and the perfect platform to express the *volonté general*. The concentration of powers in the hands of the parliament works in different ways, but most notably, populist parties fulminate against other political institutions of representative democracy that prevent the popular will from being heard, such as the Senate. In Austria, the Senate should become a true representation of the different *Länder* and thus strengthen the federal character of the state. The parliament's role should be enhanced in order to increase democratic control over government functionaries. For instance, the members of parliament should receive the right to elect ministers and impeach government members. In the Netherlands, the Senate, which traditionally has the role of a *chambre de réflexion*, should be abolished. This would automatically strengthen the position of the Second Chamber and ensure a more direct articulation of the popular will.

However, the discourse of the PVV and the FPÖ suggests that this aspect of their conception of democracy stretches further than the emboldening of parliament and seeks to achieve a more radical

notion of political equality. Representatives currently enjoy certain privileges that are considered normal in liberal democracies, but are considered inherently undemocratic in a populist democracy. By carrying such a deep-rooted faith in the people and resentment towards many institutions of representative democracy, it seems sensible to let the people have more to say and promote self-government: 'Commitment to political processes will lead to more responsibility for the outcome of those processes' (Wilders 2006b: 5).

This conception of political equality in which the gap between citizens and their representatives is narrowed, logically leads to the conclusion that all positions in the democratic system should be subjected to increased popular control and scrutiny. This view is epitomised by the statement 'in the new free republic, the election principle takes prevalence over the appointment principle' (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich 2008: 14. If ultimate sovereignty lies with the people, the people should be allowed to increase democratic, meaning popular, control over government, MPs and civil servants. The FPÖ, for instance, advocates the introduction of a system according to which all elected representatives can be impeached after a referendum. These ideas on democracy stand into contrast to liberal democratic notions of the benefits of a system in which representatives enjoy a certain protection against unremitting electoral scrutiny. However, populist ideology is in this respect also reflective of a trend in modern democracies towards something John Keane has baptised "monitor democracy" in which politicians come under intense and continuous control of the electorate by mechanisms beyond traditional representative institutions (Keane 2009).

Secondly, the radical right populist notion of equality is exclusive. It has been noted that populist parties conceive of the "people" as the common people in relation to the elite, but while this also counts for left wing populism (Decker 2008), the populist radical right also conceives of the people as "the whole people", the *Volk* (Mudde 2007: 138-145). Populist radical right parties conceptualise democracy in terms of political equality not merely because it sees unequal political power relations as elitist and therefore undemocratic, but also because equality fosters national cohesion. The PVV and FPÖ share a mono-cultural conception of the people and it is fundamental to the democratic outlook of populist parties that this cultural nation is the only possible source of democratic government. Democracy according to the radical right parties studied here is grounded upon the supposed ultimate expression of this equality: the cultural ties that supposedly connect citizens and thereby constitute a "people". It is thus a cultural equality, which is by nature exclusive in character. This stance also explains the populist aversion towards European Integration and multiculturalism. When the FPÖ states that 'the freedom and independence of Austria are under threat', it first of all means that a loss of national sovereignty leads to less democratic control, since democratic control can only be enforced by culturally homogeneous people. When the FPÖ states that the Grand Coalition 'has sold the *Heimat* to a corrupt bureaucracy in Brussels', (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich n/d: 20; see also Partij voor de Vrijheid 2010), this "sale" in their eyes seriously restricts the democratic opportunities of citizens to decide over their own destiny and run their own affairs – since Europeans do not constitute a homogeneous cultural nation.

This understanding of equality stands in close relationship to what is arguably the most notable element of the way in which the populist radical right conceptualises democracy: the extension of the political sphere in society. Francisco Panizza has argued that populists cancel the public-private divide, but has focussed there on the way in which populists 'brings into the political realm both individual and collective desires that previously had no place in public life' (2005: 24). However, this cancellation of the line between political and private also works the other way around, by politicising ever-greater parts of society. This feature of populism relates to the two elements discussed before. The extension of the political sphere is concomitant to the politicisation of state institutions that are ostensibly no longer neutral, whereas the believed necessity of a shared worldview relates to the populist conception of equality. It stands in obvious contrast to the liberal democratic objective of limiting the political sphere in society and protecting individual freedoms.

The populist objective to neutralise state institutions already demonstrated that the FPÖ and PVV have an all-embracing conception of the political sphere that is uncommon to liberal democracies. Institutions of the state such as the judiciary and state media are suspected of being influenced by the outlook of political parties. In a populist democracy the political domain consequently extends into spheres not considered 'political' in a liberal democracy: media, judiciary, culture, the economy and education are allegedly no longer largely impartial and non-political institutions, but all spheres which are political and over which "the people" consequently should be able to exert influence. To illustrate this point, the FPÖ argued that corporate structures in which government, employers and labour unions meet should be held up to popular control: if it acts like a support of the government it should also be susceptible to the same electoral process as the regular government. The FPÖ therefore calls for the general election by universal suffrage of the trade union bosses and leaders of employers' organisations who make up the social partnership (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich 2002: 26). This is illustrative of the way populist radical right parties want to politicise every public institution. Based on the assumption that these all carry a political agenda, the parties believe that every institution should be "democratised".

The extension of the political sphere does not stop with trade unions, judiciary and media. It connects to the wish to increase both political and cultural equality in society. According to the FPÖ and the PVV, schooling is critical in this respect and both parties advocate an increased political influence over school programmes and curricula. Through education, society should advocate the common values on which this society is based upon. The "defence of democracy" allegedly commences at primary schools where 'the heroic history of our fatherland should get more attention' (Wilders 2006a: 2). Like the PVV, the FPÖ values the role of education highly in the process of building a common cultural values as well as a "democratic" worldview. Much more energy should therefore be devoted to political *Bildung*. Austrian schools should place emphasis on Austrian culture and history. The ultimate goal of youth politics is to have 'enlightened and independent citizens', not affected by the "propaganda" of the current political constellation Freiheitliche Partei Österreich 2008: 12).

Apart from education, the arts are loaded with political significance to establish a collective moral framework in society. The populists hold that art should be popular, national art and that this is currently endangered. National culture should be strengthened and utilised to bolster political and cultural equality. Art should in the populist view thus not be considered an independent way of expressing emotions or societal critique, but as a political institution. It should consequently display political messages as articulated by the "people". Artists, who often depend on state subsidies, are alleged to be influenced by the political views of the traditional parties and thus only create 'subversionist art with a socialist outlook'. Haider quotes Jürgen Habermas to lend credence to his claim that modern art is merely critique of society and that culture and society are increasingly disjointed, with a high brow, government funded, art telling conservative people they are backward (Haider 1993: 54). Along the same line of politicising the arts, Wilders proposed the scrapping of art subsidies, since art was merely a "left wing hobby".

The extension of the political sphere in society to the media, education and art, is ostensibly aimed at "democratising" these autonomous spheres. It serves to demonstrate that, while populist parties generally list freedom of speech as the single most important democratic right, and criticise the traditional consensus model embodied by political parties on one hand, they simultaneously conceptualise democracy in terms of the necessity of a shared worldview. This points back to their understanding that the existence of a culturally homogenous people is crucial for the functioning of democracy, since it is only from a culturally homogenous people that a democracy draws its legitimacy. They blame the ostensible current lack of a shared belief system that should underpin cultural homogeneity on the elite and traditional parties and their cultural relativism and "dictatorship of tolerance".

Both Wilders and Haider stated that May 1968 was the advent of a new age in which cultural relativism and a lack of respect for authorities destroyed community bonds. Particularly Haider had an elaborate vision on this topic. He stated that modern man faces a paradoxical situation. Although he is able to reap the fruits of all the freedoms and liberties that society has to offer, he does not know what to do with all those freedoms. Society lacks an ultimate goal as a binding element and is thus likely to fall apart. The *Toleranzdiktatur* that is currently propagated by the traditional parties leads to anarchy and should be abandoned, since it does not lead to a commonly accepted and shared worldview (Haider 1993). Similarly, Wilders quotes philosophers such as Peter Sloterdijk and Pierre Manent to assert that the abundance of liberties in modern societies assures we take these liberties for granted (Wilders 2006b). Wilders argues that the balance in modern societies is tipped too much towards negative freedoms and that we should attempt to define a positive conception of freedom as well – which again signifies a contrast with liberal democracy, albeit this counts more in liberal democratic theory than in practice. Wilders consequently posits that constitutional rights should only be admitted to those who pledge to adhere to the values that are embodied in the democratic constitution, because 'history shows that plurality of opinions can only exist if it is confined within mutual trust in shared norms and values' (Wilders 2006a: 5).

Based on the assertion that constitutional grants should only be granted to those who pledge allegiance to this constitution, the parties are in favour of a forced adoption of "Western" values by migrants. Populist radical right parties consequently advocate letting immigrants sign a contract, in which they pledge to respect the culture of the respective countries. The FPÖ additionally proposed to let immigrants take a "democracy test" in which they could prove their adherence to democratic Austrian procedures. It is finally relevant to note that these parties, which are usually situated on the conservative side of the political continuum, increasingly claim the progressive agenda when it comes to defining democracy. The parties claim to be staunch defenders of women's rights and the PVV also stands up for the rights of homosexuals: 'It is therefore time to choose for the defence of core components of our culture: the freedom of homosexuals and the equal rights of men and women' (Partij voor de Vrijheid 2010: 33). In this way, individual and minority rights return at the core of the populist conceptualisation of democracy, but with the aim of fostering the existence of a shared world view and cultural values among the people – and challenging the tolerance for different customs and opinions customary in liberal democratic practices in Western Europe.

CONCLUSION

This article concludes by answering three questions. The first one addresses how populist radical right parties conceptualise democracy and seeks to develop an enhanced definition of populist right wing ideology. The second question subsequently aims to understand to what extent populism can be contrasted with liberal democracy and to what extent their understandings of democracy are compatible. The final question briefly addresses the question to what extent the populist conception of democracy epitomises recent changes in the way contemporary democracy functions.

To start, it may be noteworthy to recall that populist movements not merely consider themselves deeply democratic, but even state that whilst they are democratic, the existing political order fails to uphold democratic values and norms. In this sense, populist ideology stands in a long debate in which various conceptions of democracy strive for supremacy, especially in a time when democracy has become the sole legitimation of government in the West (Müller 2011b). Based upon the study of the discourse of epitomes of populist radical right parties in Western Europe, such as the PVV and the FPÖ, this article has demonstrated that the populist conception of democracy stretches beyond an emphasis on popular sovereignty of a culturally homogenous people, as is the consensus in the current academic literature. The manifestos, programmes and publications of the main Austrian and Dutch populist parties imply that a more extensive notion of the populist conception of democracy is possible.

The main traits of a populist democracy also embrace commitment to the neutrality of state institutions, a radical notion of political equality within the framework of a culturally defined nation and the extension of the political sphere in society to foster a common worldview ostensibly indispensable for the functioning of democracy.

This right wing populist commitment to equality therefore shows a more politically radical side to it, since a radical right populist democracy asserts that in order to close the gap between the elites and people, the division between rulers and ruled should be cancelled – or at least made as small as possible. Accordingly, control over political representatives and institutions should be significantly enhanced, including means of direct democracy, better instruments to enforce accountability, and a strengthening of parliament. A populist democracy is thus not merely an anti-elitist democracy, but a democracy in which everyone belonging to the culturally defined people can hold everyone else up to popular control. Simultaneously, populism, as has been argued here, has a culturally exclusive notion of equality. This is of importance, since it stands in close relation to its conception of democracy in which popular sovereignty is the sine qua non of democracy. The fact that the people are conceived of in this way entails that in the populist conception of democracy much emphasis is placed on the importance of a shared value system among the population. Populist parties see themselves as crucial actors in addressing the alleged lack of a common order in an individualised society. Concurrently, it extends the political sphere to parts of society that liberal democracy has left unpoliticised, examples of which include education, the arts and the judiciary.

The politicisation of these institutions signifies therefore a major aspect of the populist radical right conception of democracy. It criticises the promise of state neutrality that liberal democracies allegedly fail to fulfil. The FPÖ and the PVV are convinced that the dominance of traditional political parties has led to a political constellation in which the dividing line between nature biased political parties and the supposedly neutral state has become blurred. The pervasion of these institutions by the "traditional" political parties and their – allegedly elitist and, often, left wing – values, has ostensibly led to diminished opportunities for citizens to make well-informed decisions independently. By addressing the alleged politicisation of state (sponsored) institutions such as state broadcasting associations, the judiciary, social partnerships and the education system, populism questions their democratic legitimacy and accuses them of spreading biased and elitist messages. The only way to realise the democratic ideal of state neutrality is therefore to break the power of the traditional parties by increasing the means of popular control over state representatives and institutions. This points back to increased political equality – which demonstrates that the three aspects of a populist democracy are closely intertwined. The populist radical right therefore conceptualises democracy as the popular sovereignty of a culturally homogeneous people with a shared collective worldview and almost horizontal political power relations that are articulated in a heavily politicised civil society not clearly separated from the state.

Hence, how does this particular conception of democracy relate to the liberal conception of democracy dominant in Austria and the Netherlands and wider Western Europe at large? Notwithstanding the gap between liberal democratic theory and practice, this article has shown that these two conceptions of democracy cannot always easily be juxtaposed, although they do show some remarkable differences. An obvious difference is of course the populist emphasis on popular sovereignty, while liberal democracy is committed to a set of representative institutions and the protection of constitutionally enshrined individual rights. This implies also that the distance between representatives and represented which is positively valued in liberal democracies is questioned by populist parties. Finally, also the extension of the political sphere in society and the definition of the people in terms of culture, rather than citizenship, stand at odds with liberal democratic theory and practice. However, the emphasis lays closer on liberal democratic ideals, if not practice. State neutrality is an element both populist and liberal democracy claim to endorse, but populist parties accuse other, "traditional" parties of jeopardising this ideal in practice. Also, equally relevant, populist

parties claim to protect individual and minority rights, when they feel that these are threatened by those who do not belong to "the people". In this way, they claim the agenda of liberal democracy, as can be seen with the PVV's defence of the rights of homosexuals or in the latest election campaign of the FPÖ, when the party claimed to defend the freedom of women while the social democrats allegedly defended the compulsory veil.

Finally, one could question to what extent the conception of democracy put forward by the PVV and FPÖ reflects changes in our democratic political culture at large. Mudde already suggested that not only the radical right, but also the populist *Zeitgeist* captured the political system at large, in which the glorification of the people becomes more common (Mudde 2004). The lack of ideology and the leadership cult often attributed to populism seems also to reflect a trend in democracy in general, rather than being an exclusive trait of populism itself. Bernard Manin (1997) argued that we are currently witnessing the rise of an "audience democracy". Its main feature is the passive reaction of voters to issues raised by politicians. It is thus not party ideology that counts in election time, but the way politicians are able to let public opinion split to their advantage (Manin 1997: 218-238). Populist radical right parties clearly conform to this trend. From the same perspective, the importance of a continuous scrutiny and accountability of political representatives underscored by populist ideology resembles recent developments in which classic representative institutions play a smaller role in the accountability of politicians, but where the constant accountability of politicians as such gains more significance (Keane 2009). From this perspective, populism can even be understood as a specific feature of what Pierre Rosanvallon named "counter democracy": a form of organised distrust in politicians with the objective of controlling them and keeping politicians to their promises (Rosanvallon 2008).

Since this article is based on only two prominent Western European examples of the populist radical right, its findings suggest that more research into the populist conception of democracy is required to deepen our understanding of the additional traits of the populist conception of democracy beyond the notion of popular sovereignty and to extend it to more cases. This research could then further explore the possible tensions with liberal democracy, but also assess to what extent populist and liberal democracy are on similar historical trajectories, both influencing and being influenced by the changing modes of conducting politics and conceiving of democracy that we witness nowadays.

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[1] At the time of the publication of Mudde's book in 2007, the PVV was only a nascent party and thus not included in Mudde's data set. However, Mudde did label the PVV as populist radical right later, see for instance: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2012/09/13/dutch-elections, visited on 14 October 2014.

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Introduction

Teaching, Learning and the Profession

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Welcome to the first edition of the JCER Special Section entitled *Teaching, Learning and the Profession*. This is an exciting new venture for JCER. Indeed, it is now just some 12 months since the JCER editors approached us, in the autumn of 2013, about establishing a special journal section devoted to issues associated with teaching and learning. As proud members of JCER's Advisory Board we were delighted to accept and are today glad to be presiding as Guest Editors over, what we hope will be, the first of many such sections.

We accepted the challenge of putting together a journal section on *Teaching, Learning and the Profession* because of the importance we both attach to teaching European Studies, defined as a subject area in its broadest sense. Moreover, we are well aware of some of the specific challenges associated with teaching in this particular field whilst also recognising that many of the more generic challenges of teaching in the UK HEI sector have a significant impact on our subject area.

In our view, a special section, which addresses issues of teaching and learning in European Studies and an examination of the specificities of this dimension of the profession is warranted because of at least three aspects of the subject area's uniqueness. Perhaps foremost amongst these is that the study of European Studies requires the synthesis of multiple and diverse insights from a wide variety of academic disciplines in the social sciences, humanities, arts and economics. This means that European Studies curricula tend to respond in a highly engaged way by adopting a rather more multi and interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning than perhaps other subject areas do. This section is thus intended as a forum for the profession to debate issues associated with this teaching and learning approach.

Second, European Union Studies as a distinct aspect of European Studies, is inherently characterised by a dynamic, fast-evolving body of knowledge, and also necessitates the development of certain core competencies such as understandings of EU administration, EU governance and the management of EU institutions. This in turn necessitates a particular emphasis within the profession on continuous learning and development, which presents specific challenges, which can also be given a voice in this section.

Third, the fast-evolving knowledge base referred to above places significant importance on the need for innovation in teaching. The EU, as we know, is an important driver for lifelong learning and the development of a knowledge based economy and society. This impetus manifests itself particularly in the European Studies field through increasing pressures on the academic community to disconnect from traditional teaching methods characterized by passive delivery and limited class participation. In their place, there is significant and increasing momentum for the adoption of new and innovative teaching methods based on the development of negotiation, strategic thinking, and problem solving techniques and ones that are embedded in new technologies and social media.

With this context in mind, let us turn to the nature of the contributions to this first edition of the *Teaching, Learning and the Profession* section. Following on from this introduction, there are five research papers and one book review.

The first paper by Helene Dyrhauge is entitled *Teaching Qualitative Methods in Social Science: a Problem-Based Learning Approach*. This paper addresses the issue of research methods modules, which the author posits "are often seen as a tedious necessity by the students and teachers" and compares a general first year module with a specialised graduate module. This comparison seeks to explore the way in which alignment between learning objectives and other aspects of the degree programme can promote and foster active and deep learning; particularly through the integration of students' own research skills and experiences into the research method module and assessment.

The second paper by Patrick Bijsmans and Pia Harbers is entitled *The Use of Matching as a Study Choice Aid by Maastricht University's Bachelor in European Studies: Facilitating Transition to Higher Education?* This piece addresses the recurring challenges of maintaining sustainable student cohort numbers on European Studies programmes and subsequent student retention. It does this by discussing student study choice through an exploration of the technique of "Matching" - an advisory procedure consisting of a questionnaire and, in specific cases, an intake interview. This innovative admissions technique has been used since 2011 by Maastricht University's Bachelor in European Studies as a means to ensure that prospective students' expectations match with the programme's content and teaching philosophy.

The third paper is by Mary Murphy entitled *The Future of European Studies: a Perspective from Ireland*. As the title suggests this contribution uses the Irish HE context as a lens to explore a number of serious, diverse challenges confronting universities, students, graduates, and individual disciplines and Mary charts the specific impact of these challenges on the European Studies field. The paper discusses the 'demise' of European Studies in Ireland in terms of a decrease in the number of European Studies programmes, falling student numbers and an evident downgrading of the subject area and argues that this trend away from European Studies in Ireland is concerning, but that it can be reversed. Moreover, Mary identifies "opportunities for the European Studies field to become a pedagogically innovative programme of study capable of nurturing a vibrant and dynamic student community and of producing highly skilled and coveted university graduates" and offers some comfort to ES scholars in so doing.

The fourth paper is by Charles Dannreuther entitled *Engagement as an educational objective* and focuses on research based learning and its capacity to generate research and evidence for policy debate. The empirical lens focuses here on a final year undergraduate module that explores Britain's relationship with the EU and uses this case as a means to asess the pedagogic role of policy engagement on student learning, motivation and reflection. Charlie argues that although practitioner engagement incurs supplementary costs such as the preparation of additional teaching resources creates, it offers at least two distinct benefits. The first is what he terms a "cognitive disequilibrium" within students enabling them to learn. He also posits that engagement offers students motivational factors such as achievement, recognition and employability.

The final research paper is contributed by Andreas Müllerleile and is entitled *European Studies and public engagement: a conceptual toolbox*. It examines public engagement strategies for academics working in the field of European Studies and asks whether academics should engage with the public, what the most effective outreach strategies are for ES scholars and explores the subsequent implications for such outreach activity for universities and departments. Müllerleile makes the case for engaging with the public as an integral part of ES scholars' work, through in particular an online presence, and relates this practical and empirical aspect to the theoretical nature of public engagement.

We hope that the first set of papers that we have brought together here under the banner of the inaugural JCER Special Section *Teaching, Learning and the Profession* will spark much interest and discussion.

If they do, and as a result you are interested in contributing to this new section in the future, please get in touch with us for an informal discussion. We welcome all sorts of articles that reflect the diverse range of issues we face in the profession and future submissions may take the form of inter alia longitudinal studies, surveys of the literature, single or comparative case studies.

We are optimistic that the papers brought together here will provide a basis on which we can reflect, as an academic community, on the challenges confronting us as a profession generally but also give particular voice to specific challenges for ES scholars. We trust it will serve as a forum for

debate, not just as a talking shop but rather as a provider of practical, viable and realistic ways in which the challenges we face as a profession can be met and shared. In so doing, we hope to contribute in our own small way to taking the European Studies field forward as an academic subject area and securing its place as an important university degree programme.

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Research Article

Teaching Qualitative Methods in Social Science: A Problem-based Learning Approach

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Abstract

Research methods are often seen as a tedious necessity by the students and teachers are often not helping in making these modules relevant for the students' learning process. This article compares two research method modules – a general first year module and a specialised graduate module – to demonstrate how alignment between learning objectives with other aspects of the degree programme can promote active learning and thereby create synergies which foster deep learning. This requires an active learning where the students own research skills and experiences need to be integrated into the research method module and assessment.

Keywords

Qualitative research methods; problem-based learning; active learning; alignment; teaching European studies

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> *It's methods so useful, but it's a hard topic to teach and not a lot of people are interested (feedback from one student)*

The quote is from a feedback form first year students filled in during their last lecture in qualitative method and it sums up most students' perception of research methods. Overall, everyone agree that research methods form the foundation of any good research project, most people would also claim that teaching research methods or being taught methods is not very exciting. The central question for anyone teaching research methods is how to make the module relevant to the students and enable them to apply the methods in their studies, in other words there should be alignment between modules on methods and the students' own research. Teaching qualitative methods to first year students is very different from teaching a research method module to MA students, here progression must be reflected in the teaching for example by developing more specialised MA research modules. This article provides a comparative study of two research modules - a first year and a MA module – to show how problem-based learning can enhance students learning.

The first year qualitative method is a compulsory module for all social science students on the International Social Science Bachelor programme, thus the content needs to provide a basis for research in political science, international development, sociology and geography. By comparison the MA research method module on EU Policy Analysis is an optional module for EU Studies and Public Administration students. The level of critical thinking one can expect from the students differs between the two modules. Students taking the MA module are expected to be able to discuss the ontological perspectives of different institutional theories and which implications these have for research questions and policy analysis. The first year students discuss more practical matters with regard to research methods, such as how to carry out different qualitative methods. Whilst the two modules are at each end of the students' education, both modules employ a problem-based learning pedagogy.

Problem-based learning and responsibility for own learning are core teaching principles at Roskilde University. In modules problem-based learning is guided by the teacher, who sits the parameter for the students' learning process by posing relevant questions which supports the module's learning objectives. The article discusses how problem-based learning can be useful for teaching social science

methods both at first year undergraduate level and graduate level. By comparing the two method courses this article demonstrates how linking methods to the students own research create a better potential for active learning Moreover, research methods give the students transferable skills they can use not only in other modules and their own research project but modules on research methods can also give the students skills they can use after graduation, such as writing policy briefs. Indeed transferable skills and the issue of employability have become increasingly important in higher education not only in Denmark where I am based but also in the UK and other European countries (Clark 2011: Maurer and Mawdsley 2014). The discussion of problem-based learning in the two research methods modules contributes towards this debate.

Overall, this article contributes to the literature on teaching methods, which according to Wagner et al (2011: 75) needs to develop a pedagogical culture, with an "exchange of ideas within a climate of systematic debate, investigation and evaluation surrounding all aspects of teaching methods". The article shows how a problem-based teaching approach to research methods can enhance student learning as methods become integral into the students' own research projects, simultaneously the modules are aligned with progression criteria to reflect the educational level of the students and the skills needed at those levels. Thus the article links into central debates in higher education such as transferable skills, progression and alignment between the different elements of a degree programme.

The article starts by discussing problem-based learning and places it in the context of Roskilde University. Secondly the article describes the two modules, the assessment and the students' feedback to the teaching approach. Thirdly the article makes a comparative analysis of the two different modules to identify similarities and relevance for other aspects of the students learning process more broadly. Finally the article concludes how alignment between research methods modules and the rest of the degree programme encourages deep learning.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AND ALIGNMENT BETWEEN PROJECTS AND MODULES

Problem-based learning has become a popular teaching approach not only in European studies but also more broadly in social science. Overall, the "philosophy of a problem-based learning [module] must be to offer students a rich learning experience by embedding the learning in group work researching a problem and constructing new knowledge and gaining intellectual and transferable (or enterprise) skills accordingly" (Spronken-Smith 2005: 205). In other words, problem-based learning moves away from traditional lecturing towards more active learning with focus on the students. Modules applying problem-based learning vary from EU simulation games (Kraunert 2009; Usherwood 2014) and zombie simulations (Horn et al forthcoming), which focus on explaining complex institutional processes, through to more traditional group research projects, where the students are required to work independently on a topic which they either chose themselves or is linked to a module. Students' engagement with their own learning process is fundamental to problem-based learning and embedded in problem-based learning is active learning.

Both Williams (2006) and Winn (1995) apply an active learning approach to their modules, where the students are expected to carry out their own research as part of the modules. Williams' (2006) module on the cold war requires the students to adopt a pre-defined character and relate different events to the person's life history. Williams' approach allows the students to adopt their own approach, either using personal history, interviews or archives. In general Williams' cold war module requires more imagination from the students than a traditional research project, which primarily is based on descriptive statistics, document analysis and interviews. By comparison Winn (1995) uses a "learning by doing" approach where the students, who are taking a specific research method module, become part of a commissioned research project and become responsible for different aspects of the project,

which relates to the method module. However, the project is led by academic researchers who are also the teachers as such the students have less scope for developing their own projects compared to Williams' module or indeed the students at Roskilde University, where students are able to define their research questions more independently. These different types of projects also require different research skills, whilst Winn's commissioned research is much more defined in terms of methods. Crucially, the direct link between a module and a project, as can be seen in both Williams and Winn's articles, provides the students with more foundation and information than if they were to start from scratch, as many of the students at Roskilde University do especially at undergraduate level.

Problem-based learning is integral to Roskilde University and each semester the students have to write a group project (50-90 pages depending on the size of the group). Here the students need to identify a problem, a puzzle, carry out the research preferable using some empirical data, indeed the project account for half the ECTS points every semester. This constructivist approach emphasises what students have to do instead of focusing on the teacher, here knowledge is created by students own learning activities and their approaches to learning (Biggs 2003a: 12-3). Central to problem-based learning is that students have to take responsibility for all aspects of their learning including the formulation of the problem which the project will investigate (Qvist 2004: 78; Christensen 2004: 103). The project group will be assigned a supervisor, who ideally should be familiar with the research topic and who will support the group in terms of literature, methods and research questions, and research process. A central part of the project is for the students to identify their research question and write the method chapter, especially as students prefer to generate their own data. The students are responsible for their own learning, and the supervisor's role is more as a facilitator who supports the students' learning process. For example it is important that the supervisor supports the students in finding and using key academic literature, which they apply to their research project and thereby develop understanding of key theories (Krogh and Wiberg 2013: 224). Moreover, the project often stands alone and is not connected to a particular module and even in cases where the project is linked to a module the link can be weak, which in turn can be problematic for student learning outcomes especially if the supervisor does not teach on the module that is connected to the project. The strong emphasis on students' responsibility for their own learning, especially in relation to project work is one of the distinctive features of several universities, such as Roskilde University, Aalborg University and Maastricht University. Longmore et al (1996: 85) shows that "when students are allowed to choose their own topics, their desire to understand their chosen topics motivates hard work and improves the quality of the project". This freedom to choose a topic encourages the students' motivations to investigate a topic.

At the first supervision meeting students will often ask "how much method is required?" The question refers to how extensive the method chapter should be and as the undergraduate degree programme in social science is inter-disciplinary and covers economics, politics, sociology, and geography the students are exposed to different disciplinary research styles. For example, one semester a student might write a sociology project and will be supervised by a sociologist and the next semester the same student will do a politics project and be supervised by a political scientist. Whilst the research methods are the same, the disciplinary traditions vary, which can confuse the students. Thus it is important that the students understand a broad range of social science research methods. Here the compulsory modules in research methods are an essential part of the students learning, especially their ability to write a good research project. The four compulsory modules are 'methods in social science' (first semester), 'qualitative methods' (second semester), 'philosophy of social science' (third semester) and 'quantitative method' (fourth semester). The four modules, which are in year one and two, are part of a new degree programme structure. The programme has a strong emphasis on methods as building blocks for projects and compulsory disciplinary modules. The first module 'methods in social science' is mainly about 'learning how to do' research whereas the other three modules focus on 'learning about' research. At graduate level the modules in research methods are more specialised focusing on for example interviewing, fieldwork, writing a policy brief and gender analysis, as such the modules

tend to focus on either particular research methods or methodologies. Moreover, some of the graduate research method modules also incorporate employability skills, especially as these are the last modules the students take before their MA dissertation and thus graduation.

"The value of nurturing the link between research and teaching becomes particularly meaningful when students are able actively to experience this link; when students become the vehicle to develop research while learning" (Leston-Bandeira 2013: 209). The method chapter is the foundation of any research project, I tend to explain to the students that their project is like a house, where the research questions, theory and research methods are the foundation from which the analysis forms the bricks and the conclusion the roof, without a solid foundation the bricks and roof will not hold in stormy weather, i.e. the oral exam. Compared to students at more traditional universities, who predominately write essays, it is important for the students to be able to select and use appropriate research methods, which will help them answer the research questions they have formulated. This requires alignment not only within the qualitative methods module but especially in relation to the students' research projects.

Specifically, "constructive alignment starts with the notion that the learner constructs his or her own learning through relevant learning activities. The teachers' job is to create a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes" (Biggs 2003b). Here constructivism focuses on what the students have to do, and how knowledge is created by the students' learning activities, which should generate deep learning (Biggs 2003a: 12-3). In other words the focus is on the students and how they learn. The components which need to be aligned to facilitate this learning process are the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment process and criteria plus the institutional setting at the department (Biggs 2003a: 26). Moreover, to facilitate the potential for deep learning the teacher need to make the alignments clear to the students, and by building on the students existing knowledge the teacher should elicit an active response from the students, whilst also confronting misconceptions (Biggs 2003a: 16-7). Whilst Biggs (2003a) discusses alignment within a module in relation to learning objectives, assessments and teaching methods, at Roskilde University it is also important to ensure alignment between the learning objectives in both research project and research methods module, thereby adding another element to constructive alignment, which then needs to be linked to problem-based learning. Especially as students tend to weigh their research projects more than classes and sometime struggle to see the link between their modules and their research projects, which is problematic especially as the modules are weighed equally to the project and are supposed to support the students learning in their project work. In short there is a clear synergy and alignment between projects and modules. Parker's (2010) survey of undergraduate research-method training highlights the importance of linking research training with the rest of the curriculum, and where there is this link "the purpose of methods is seen as enabling students to carry out such academic work, which is seen as incorporating very active and independent learning" (Parker 2010: 124). It is, therefore, important for teachers to make the connections between modules and projects clear to the students, especially in research method modules, which serve as the foundation for the students' own academic research, and without a proper understanding of research methods the students will not be able to successfully complete an independent research project.

FIRST YEAR COMPULSORY MODULE IN QUALITATIVE METHODS

The aim of the first year module in qualitative methods is to introduce different qualitative methods used in social sciences. The module covers everything from interviews, participant observation to focus groups and various document analysis techniques. This gives the students a 'taster' of possible methods they can apply in their own projects, and at graduate level they have to choose more specialised modules, as the one discussed later in this paper. Moreover the students only have to choose their degree discipline in year two; the module therefore has to include all standard social

science qualitative methods instead of pure political science methods. As such the examples used in the module come from different disciplines from politics, sociology, geography and international development. To ensure coherence in the teaching there is only one teacher assigned to the module.

The three hours lecture was interactive and required the students to participate in both class discussions and group work. This moved the students from passive learners who received information to active learners, who had to apply and discuss their readings and lecture material. The aim was to change the mode of interaction to ensure effective learning and change activity after 15-20 minutes to engage the students (Biggs 2003a: 103), thereby avoid declining attention levels, which tends to develop as the lecture proceeds (Revell and Wainwright 2009: 214). Overall, the three hours were structured as follow; the first hour, I gave an introduction to the topic which was interspersed with video clips and discussion questions. The lecture was more theoretical driven explaining the specific research method, how and when it is used thus providing the students with examples of how the specific method could be applied. During the second hour the students were required to discuss the specific research method in relation to their research projects. They would sit in their project group and I would walk around the class room to talk to as many groups as possible and discuss how the specific method might be applied to their project. The issues raised in the exercises were aspects the students had to discuss as part of their project work and discussing the issues in class provided the opportunity for the students to receive feedback from their peers and a teacher in addition to their project supervisor.

The aim of these discussions was not to construct an interview guide or how to carry out a focus group. Indeed these skills are covered by other research modules at higher level. Crucially, the first year second semester project does not require the students to carry out new empirical research or data collection. As such the aim of the exercises was for the students to consider how different the different types of qualitative methods could be used in their projects and the impact these different methods would have for the research design. The discussions aimed to identify benefits, pitfalls and limitations in these different methods ranging from interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, focus-groups and content analysis. In the previous semester the students were taught how to do research, i.e. finding a puzzle, finding data and solving the puzzle, and the subsequent semester would introduce the students to philosophy of social science. Overall, the module on qualitative methods is placed in a sequence which develops the students' research skills. Here the directional relationship between the building blocks of research are opposite of the interrelationship suggested by Hay (2002) and Grix (2002: 179-180), thus starting with sources, methods, methodology, epistemology and ontology. This reverse directional order is due to the degree learning progression, where the students from first semester has to carry out a research project and are taught how to do this, but only in the third semester has to incorporate theory and methodology.

The final hour was used for the students to present their group discussions and more actively talk about how the specific research method could be applied. The project groups were encouraged to share their discussions with the whole class. However, it tended to be the same groups and same people who would speak up. To facilitate a broader discussion I would bring in examples from the quiet groups I had spoken to during the previous hours and often ask them to elaborate on my interpretation of their discussions. This generally enabled the quiet groups to participate in the class discussion.

The end of module student feedback regarding the structure was varied; some students wanted more lecturing whilst others wanted more student discussions. Overall, the students were positive about the one exercise where they had to do extra work! For the classes on document analysis and discourse analysis I used an EU policy document, which we discussed in class and subsequently the students had to write a one page summary of the policy document. I commented on these summaries and in the next class I asked each group to write a one to two page policy brief based on the summaries and

comments. This policy brief had to be handed in to me and again they received feedback. The aim of the exercise was not for the students to demonstrate their knowledge of EU climate change policy instead the learning objective was for the students to be able to summarise documents. Interesting no student made negative comments about the extra course work instead one students wrote:

> *'Some of them [exercises] were really good – the ones with policy documents – and also a little bit fun – I might just be nerdy'*

Similar several students requested more assignments and course work,

> *'More assignments – make sure people read – maybe a group presentation of debates as well'*
>
> *'More course work like in economics'*
>
> *'More homework related to reading and the project'*

These comments were rather surprisingly, it is not often students ask for more homework! The compulsory core economic module required the students to hand in work on a regular basis and the groups would get feedback on their progress. Overall, the students value all the feedback they receive. Similar the students taking the EU Policy Analysis method module also said they valued the individual feedback, which they do not receive very often because most assessment is based on group projects or individual oral exams. It is not surprisingly that the students value and request individual feedback on their abilities. Indeed, I will incorporate more individual short assignments in the qualitative method course next year.

Compared to other modules with integrated research projects (Williams 2006; Winn 1995), the students taking the compulsory module in qualitative research methods were not required to apply the methods. This was raised as a criticism by some students, who did not see how the module could be useful for their specific project or who wanted more hands on experience. This criticism exemplifies how some students can be incremental and short-sighted in terms of their own learning. However this criticism was only voiced by a small number of students, most students liked the hands-on exercises. Whilst Bos and Schneider (2009) discusses students' anxiety about doing independent research, this is not the case at Roskilde University on the contrary students often collect their own data, for example one group went on a fieldtrip to Ghana. The students at Roskilde University are from their first semester confident in carrying out independent research but are less skilled in integrating the academic scholarship in their projects. Projects are therefore increasingly linked to core disciplinary modules, where the students still have freedom to define their research puzzle but are required to integrate 300 pages of the module curriculum (the overall reading list for a project must be 900-1200 pages depending on the level).

ASSESSMENT

The qualitative research module was assessed in three ways. The main criterion was 75 per cent attendance; this created an incentive for the students to turn up, especially as there were problems with attendance in other compulsory modules. The students who did not attend 75 per cent of the classes were required to sit an individual exam before they would be allowed to submit their project and sit the oral exam. However, only a handful of students had to sit the individual exam.

Secondly, the students were required to submit a group assignment (assessed as pass/fail), which they had to pass in order to be able to sit the exam for their project. The group assignment was set by me as the module convener, but was marked by the individual project supervisors, a decision which was made at a higher level and created some confusion amongst the teaching staff, and it has been changed for next year so that the module convener sets and marks the group assignment. The group assignment was given at the beginning of the module and was tied into the research method chapter the students had to write for their projects. Moreover, the class exercises and group assignment aimed to help the students write their method chapter. The assignment was explained in the first lecture so the students were able to see the link between the module and their project, and the group exercises were linked to the assignment. The alignment between the qualitative methods module and the project was made explicit in the class and several students commented on it in their feedback. The group assignment was a workbook (see box), which asked the students to consider which methods they would use in their project and how these methods would help them answer their research questions and apply the chosen theories. Essentially, the group assignment formed a part of the draft method chapter the students had to hand in shortly after the module ended.

Box One: Group assignment for qualitative methods

Group assignment: the method chapter for your project

It must be five standard pages incl. bibliography

You should:

> Outline the qualitative methods you are using in the project

> and explain why you have chosen these methods (the advantages and disadvantages)

> How the methods enable you to answer the research questions

> How the methods will be applied in the analysis

> How the methods are linked to the theoretical/analytical framework

Thirdly, part of the oral exam for the group project included an examination in research methods. The group assignments and oral exams were marked by the project supervisors and an internal examiner as part of the project exam. The oral examination on the project included questions about methods in line with those asked in the qualitative research methods group assignment. This mixed assessment with close ties to the group project required a constructive alignment between module objectives, content and the objectives of the project. The degree programme made these linkages clear but did not provide details of how to operationalise the objectives instead the details were filled out by the module convener and supervisors.

GRADUATE RESEARCH METHODS EU POLICY ANALYSIS

The MA method module on EU policy analysis uses institutional theories to analyse different stages of EU decision making processes and applies selected policy case studies. The module is short and intensive. It runs over one week with daily teaching from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm, except for Wednesday which is a study day. The underline teaching pedagogy is the same as the first year qualitative methods

course – problem-based learning – but more preparation is required with regard to activities and discussions, especially as the class is much smaller with an average of 10 students. The small number of students in the class also places more onuses on the students to actively participate in discussions. Specifically small group teaching "provides considerable opportunities for interaction, the demonstration of enthusiasm for a topic and an emphasis and relevance of material within the broader subject area" (Bogaard et al 2005: 114-7). Similar to the undergraduate qualitative research module, this module is also assessed by 75 per cent attendance and active participation, which is easier to monitor in a small class than in a large class room.

The module is based on central aspects of my research interests – EU policy analysis – as such the module is research-led teaching (for a discussion on research-led teaching see Lightfoot and Piotukh 2014). Moreover, some of the students who take the modules are students who I previously have supervised on projects which are closely related to my own research. Generally the level of knowledge of EU policy making is high, and although the public administration students are not necessarily familiar with EU decision-making, all the students are all familiar with institutional theories. Most of the students choose the module because they are interested in using the methods in their MA dissertations, as such the level of critical analysis is high and the module requires the student to engage with the scholarship. At undergraduate level the students tend to apply methodologies in relation to their own understanding of the world, especially in terms of their personal biases towards the chosen research area, but at graduate level the students are expected to discuss ontology in relation to theories and apply these to their empirical analysis. In other words the students must reflect on the interrelationship between the building blocks of their research project.

The day starts with theoretical discussions based the reading and then later move to policy oriented discussing using a case study to bring together one institutional theoretical approach to analyse EU decision-making in details. This enables a discussion about what kind of research questions the specific institutional approach generate; how these questions help us understand the policy case and which aspects of the EU policy cycle the subsequent analysis would emphasis. This brings in a methodological discussion about what the different institutional approaches can tell us about EU policy-making and a specific policy case. In short, "the point is to see how *different* starting points of research lead to *different* research strategies" (Grix 2002: 184). Overall, the EU policy analysis module aims to give the students deeper insights into institutional theories and EU decision-making, where they are able to apply the theoretical framework to specific EU policies, thereby provide them with analytical tools and thorough understanding of EU policy-making, which enable the students to write a MA dissertation. However, there is no direct alignment with the students' research projects instead the students are able to draw on their previous projects, modules and often the students have had internships in Brussels or have student jobs in a Danish ministry, they are encouraged to use these experiences in the class. Compared to the first year module the graduate students all have experience in carrying out research projects and often they have (had) student jobs, which enable them to draw on their own experiences when discussing theoretical issues in relation to EU policy analysis. Similar to Ryan et al (2014: 90) the 'EU Policy Analysis Module' emphasises "research skills with utility beyond academia, of use, for example, in future careers".

The module has run twice. The first time the students tended just to turn up and had not done the reading, although the students were able to discuss the empirical cases the lack of reading was a problem as the discussions were intended to be based on theories. Consequently, the format was changed the following year, and requested the students to write a one page summary of the theoretical article, which they had to email me before the class. Although the one page summary is voluntary, the students are told it is part of the active attendance and they all submitted a daily literature review. I gave individual feedback and incorporated the summaries into the class discussions. The aim was threefold; firstly to make sure the students turned up prepared, secondly help them identify key arguments in the literature and any potential questions they would like to

discuss in class, and thirdly teach them to write short and concise papers. The students are generally good at writing long research projects but are not very good at writing short essays, literature reviews and policy briefs. In the module feedback, the students all made positive comments about receiving individual feedback on their literature review. Most of the feedback the students receive during their university education is based on group projects. As a result the students are not always aware of their own personal academic abilities. Thus individual feedback is valued highly by the students, especially so close to their final project – the MA dissertation which is often the first project they write independently, although a number of students choose to write their penultimate project alone to find out how good they are.

The last day of the module is formed as a role-play simulating EU legislative process and negotiations between the Parliament and the Council. The role-play is based a policy case from my own research on EU policy-making. Here the students are divided into two groups and are subsequently asked to choose which member states or political groups they represent. They are given a brief outlining the actors' policy preferences in the policy case and are asked to negotiate an agreement with a view of adopting the proposal. The simulation brings together the different elements covered over the previous three days. Overall, simulations and role-plays are popular teaching tools in EU studies they are often used to explain the complex negotiations which takes place within and between the central EU organisations (Kraunert 2009; Usherwood 2014; Zeff 2003). Explaining these complex and nested decision-making processes is challenging for any teacher of EU studies and asking the students to act parts of the policy process enables them to develop a deeper understanding of these processes. However, simulations should not stand alone, it needs to be part of the overall learning objectives and the game played "must pull the participants' reflection back into the rest of the teaching" (Usherwood 2014: 59). Indeed, the EU policy analysis simulation itself is only one element of the module and to be able to carry out a successful role-play the students need sufficient theoretical and conceptual understanding of EU politics, just as a post-simulation debriefing focuses on the students' experiences of the role-playing, the debriefing also links the role-playing to the rest of the module content as part of an evaluation of what the students have learnt.

ASSESSMENT

Most students take the EU Policy Analysis module as 2.5 ECTS point, which as mentioned above, is assessed through active participation and 75 per cent attendance. However, there are always one or two students who take the module as five ECTS points, which in addition to attendance requires the student to write a written assignment (assessed as pass/fail). The written assignment is often a policy brief (roughly 4 pages) based on one of the case studies used in the class, here the student can use his/her literature reviews to build a broader picture of a specific policy case. The policy brief helps the student to "address the complex relationship between researchers and policymakers, and build a clearer image of the constraints that policymakers face" (Boys and Keating 2009: 205). Although the assignment is pass/fail most students take the assignment serious and write a good policy brief, instead of just passing. One student said that he "wants to do my best, as it is the last assignment before the MA dissertation". To pass the written assignment the student only need to fulfil the minimum requirements, thus some students do not see the value in putting a lot of effort into a pass/fail assignment. Again the incentive to receive individual feedback often encourages the students to write a proper policy brief and subsequently use the feedback to improve their research projects, in particular their forthcoming MA dissertation.

COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS IN TEACHING RESEARCH METHODS

The similarities between the two modules are not obvious. The Qualitative Research module is a compulsory first year module, which is taught to a large class of around 100 students, and there are three different assessments elements which are directly linked to the students' group project. By comparison the MA EU Policy Analysis module is an elective and, it is taught to a small class with around 10 students, and the student is assessed on active attendance. The delivery of the modules differ as well, the first year module is taught as three hours lectures over 10 weeks whereas the MA module is taught over one week with four full days of teaching. Indeed the only similarities are the 75 per cent attendance and pass/fail assessments.

Despite these differences both modules focus on developing the student's research skills through problem-based learning and by constructive alignment with the students' research project and educational progression towards their final degree. Research-led teaching often refers to the teacher creating a module around his/her current research (Lightfoot and Piotukh 2014). In the context of this article research-led teaching mainly refers to students own research interests and how they can use the method module as part of learning how to improve their own research skills and apply these in problem-orientated research projects. Moreover, the MA module also integrates employability skills. Overall this creates alignment between the teaching approaches used in the modules, the module learning objectives and broader degree programme to support the core teaching principles at the university.

Both modules applied problem-oriented and active learning teaching approaches, which require the students to actively engage in their own learning through different class activities. Naturally, the level of critical analysis and discussions varied between the two modules as the student cohort were at each end of the degree programme. Unsurprisingly the differences in analytical skills in the student discussions illustrate the students' learning progression. Both modules aimed to support and develop the students' research skills, but the learning objectives and the explicit alignment to project work differed. The constructive alignment between project and module was explicit in the first year module. Whereas the MA module did not have any explicit alignment to the students' research projects, instead it was up to me, as module convener, to create the link by asking the students to draw on their past projects or student work experiences, and through exercises encourage the students to explore how EU policy analysis could be used in their MA dissertations. The group exercises in the first year module were designed to support the student's project, for example by asking the students to consider how a specific method influence on their research design and empirical analysis whereas the graduate module would ask the students to discuss specific aspects of the EU policy process in relation to a policy case and applying one of the institutional theories to their analysis. The first year module activities asked the students to apply different methods to their project design. Moreover, the first year module did not require prior knowledge instead it aimed to build a foundation for the students' further learning, where they would be required to take responsibility for their own learning, for example by formulating research questions and explaining how they will answer those. By comparison the MA module explicitly built on the students' prior knowledge from projects, modules and student jobs, where the class activities asked the students to use their existing knowledge and understanding of the EU policy-making to specific institutional approaches, thus trying to collate their existing knowledge and challenge their analytical skills. Overall, both modules require the students to actively engage in the scholarship and their own project work, thereby encouraging deep learning. Indeed both active learning and problem-based learning approaches argues that by asking the students to focus on self-selected topics, the students are more likely to engage in deep-learning (Krogh and Wiberg 2013).

Whilst the modules are designed to encourage deep learning, the small number of students taking the MA module makes it easier for the teacher to engage in a dialogue with all the students. Indeed the

small group provided the students with incentives to be active learners and engage in discussions with each other and the teacher. This type of dialogue between all the students and the teacher were more difficult in the first year module, where there were around 100 students, instead there were more emphasis on group work to facilitate active learning leading to deep learning. Here the constructive alignment to the project played an important role, especially in the subsequent assessment.

Maurer and Mawdsley (2014: 32) cite a 2010 Eurobarometer survey where employers listed team-work as the most important skill required by graduates. Graduates, from universities where problem-orientated and group work are prioritised, are valued by employers for their ability to work as part of a team, acquire new knowledge and work across disciplines but are seen as less able to work autonomously (Krogh and Rasmussen 2004: 40-1). Thus, it is important for modules to strengthen the students' ability to work autonomously and here the individual assignments attempted to accommodate these concerns. Whilst the first year qualitative research methods taught the students how to become active learners, who can work as part of a team to gain new knowledge, thus becoming student researchers, the MA EU Policy Analysis module incorporated more independent work to support students' employability. Overall, both modules were aligned with the wider learning requirements at the specific level of the degree programme. As such constructive alignment combined with active learning provides a fruitful combination in an environment where the core teaching principle is problem-based learning, where students are responsible for their own learning.

CONCLUSION

Similar to existing literature (Ryan et al 2014; Williams 2006; Winn 1995) this article has demonstrated how research method modules should not be standalone modules which are separated from the rest of the degree programme. Instead research method modules work best when they are integrated into the students own research, which in turn facilitate deep-learning. The teaching pedagogy discussed in this article together with Roskilde University's overall strong emphasis on independent research enables the students to collect data and carry out research projects almost from day one of their degree.

Finally, active learning and alignment with wider degree programme learning objectives across modules makes it possible to create better alignment within the degree programme, and fosters better opportunities for students' learning, especially at an university where the students are responsible for large parts their own learning – through group projects. Here constructive alignment between the students' research project and the research methods modules aim to facilitate the students' learning process in relation to their degree programme and subsequent graduation. As such the research modules are designed as pieces in a puzzle, which makes up the students final degree and should provide them with some of the transferable skills requested by employers and highlighted in the wider discussion about the future of higher education.

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Research Article

The Use of Matching as a Study Choice Aid by Maastricht University's Bachelor in European Studies: Facilitating Transition to Higher Education?

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Abstract

Programmes in higher education are confronted with decreasing funds and increasing demands from national governments concerning, for instance, access to higher education and retention and completion rates. In this light it is important that prospective students make the right study choice. Since 2011 Maastricht University's Bachelor in European Studies is using a procedure called 'Matching', which is meant to facilitate prospective students' self-reflection about their study choice. This article explains how Matching complements existing arrangements related to transition to higher education, such as open days and induction weeks, and presents our experience to this point. We have so far only partly been able to meet the initial aims of Matching. Nevertheless, we believe that arrangements such as this can benefit both undergraduate programmes and their students, as it provides a better insight into study choice and into intervention that can improve transition to higher education.

Keywords

Matching; retention; study choice; study success; transition; teaching European Studies

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A mismatch between incoming students' expectations and the reality of their experience at university, frequently linked to limited attempts to familiarise oneself with the study programme, often leads to early withdrawal from the chosen undergraduate programme (e.g. Briggs et al. 2012; Brinkworth et al. 2009). Programmes in higher education are continuously trying to tackle the challenge of how to assist prospective students in making the right study choice. This is not just a service to applicants, but should also help increase retention and completion rates, issues that are on the agenda of many national governments. Yet, this is not an easy challenge to overcome as higher education study choice is determined by several factors, including perceptions of a programme's content, job perspectives, city and institution, as well as influence by friends and family, perceptions of own strengths and weaknesses, and numerous social variables (e.g. Leveson et al. 2013; Yorke and Longden 2004).

Many of the challenges resulting from an insufficiently informed study choice tend to become visible in the first year of studies. In fact, as Trotter and Roberts (2006: 372) explain, the first year is 'the most critical in shaping persistence decisions and plays a formative role in influencing student attitudes and approaches to learning'. The first year is of particular importance within Dutch higher education, where, at the end of the first year, students will often have to pass a minimum number of credits to be able to continue their studies, the so-called Binding Study Advice (BSA). Yet, most programmes are not allowed to employ selection or lottery procedures upon application and prospective students only need to meet basic requirements to be admissible to higher education. Selection is, amongst other reasons, only possible when programmes are based on specific excellence trajectories or when additional requirements are needed, such as is the case for art academies.

While discussion on whether or not selection should be implemented continues (e.g. Sluijter et al. 2011), most Dutch undergraduate programmes are currently in the process of introducing questionnaires, test exams, and other instruments aimed at helping students to make a more informed study choice. Developed under the heading of 'Matching', these arrangements are offered to students who are admissible to Dutch higher education and who are already at an early stage of the formal application process. Matching may not be a selection tool, yet it is also not without

obligation, like arrangements developed elsewhere (e.g. Brinkworth et al. 2009: 170; Ribchester et al. 2014). Prospective students *have* to complete the procedure to get a place in the programme of their choice.

Maastricht University's Bachelor in European Studies (BA ES) already introduced a Matching procedure in 2011. The BA ES is a programme for students with an interest in the cultural, historical, political and social aspects of Europe and as such adopts a broader perspective on European developments than programmes that solely focus on European integration (cf. Rumford 2009). It is also a programme that attracts many international students. Like other programmes in higher education we have been struggling with the challenges outlined above. In this article we will discuss our experience with Matching and our initial attempts to gain a better insight into determinants of study success. Therefore we will compare the outcome of the Matching procedure with first-year study results of the three cohorts of students that so far took part in the procedure and actually started their studies (2011/2012, 2012/2013 and 2013/2014). We will discuss to what extent individual questions on the questionnaire help us to prevent incoming students with advice and, hence, ease transition.

We will argue that Matching has helped us to gain a better understanding of prospective students' study choice, although the procedure is not fail-proof. The interview, in particular, seems to have an added value. Students report that Matching offers them an additional opportunity to reflect on their study choice. Matching also enables us to address potential challenges at an early stage, while at the same time forming a very useful source for institutional learning. Hence, we believe that Matching can fill a gap between two other important activities that play a role in study choice and transition to higher education: information activities, such as open days, and induction activities, such as introduction weeks. Matching could, therefore, also benefit higher education programmes outside of the Netherlands, in particular by better facilitating study choice and transition to university.

MATCHING AS A TRANSITION AID

As Briggs et al (2012: 6) explain, transition from secondary school to higher education starts with young people informing themselves about the programmes on offer and continues well into the first year of their studies. As such, information and induction activities play an important part in preparing students for their new life at university. Information activities and sources (including university websites) are targeted at secondary school pupils and others who are comparing options for future studying. Open days, in particular, tend to have a positive influence on retention, as long as the information provided is in line with the actual nature of the programme (e.g. Briggs 2006; Trotter and Roberts 2006). Induction activities are aimed at familiarising new students with academic life and at meeting staff and fellow students. Such activities can help prevent dropout, especially when the focus is on a mixture of social activities, programme content, and academic challenges (e.g. Bowles et al. 2014; Richardson and Tate 2013).

Prospective students often decide to register for several programmes to be sure of a place, but also because of the overwhelming amount of choice, therewith postponing the final choice (e.g. Briggs 2006: 708). In addition, incomplete or incorrect expectations often influence a student's chances of study success, because, in the words of Christie et al. (2008: 571), this can be 'deeply unsettling'. Therefore, one of the main challenges for programmes in higher education is to align students' expectations with their actual experience, in order to prevent problems during the first year of their studies. Interestingly, Brinkworth et al. (2009) note that prospective students are aware that studying at university will be different from high school, yet their expectations still do not match with actual practice. Hence, 'mechanisms need to be put into place that enable them to bridge the transition from high school to university and facilitate a successful integration into the changed demands of tertiary education' (170). As such, Matching may be able to fill the gap between information and induction

activities, because, as Billing (1997: 129) also writes, '[m]ore pre-enrolment guidance is needed. Many students seek reassurance of more contact with the university department between their commitment to spend the next part of their lives with the university and turning up for enrolment.'

In contrast to most information and induction activities, Matching is a more personal approach aimed at individual students' self-reflection and at helping them compare their expectations with a programme's content, its teaching philosophy and the required skills. Matching can help prospective students in three ways: by reassuring those students who have already made their choice, by helping students who are still in doubt between different programmes to make an informed study choice, and, finally, by giving initial advice to students who are likely to encounter challenges.

Matching in the BA ES

The BA ES started preparations for Matching in early 2010. Beyond wanting to help prospective students to make an informed study choice, our initial aims were threefold: to stabilise the amount of incoming students, to raise retention rates and to achieve higher completion rates. The first aim follows from the fact that cohorts in the BA ES have been growing fast since the inception of the programme in 2002, with 410 new students starting in September 2010. This resulted in several practical challenges, ranging from limited availability of teaching rooms to increasing staff workload. The second and third aim are linked to agreements between the Dutch government and universities aimed at achieving higher retention and completion rates – both of which have actually been quite good for the BA ES, respectively between 70-75% and 80-85% on average. As a result, it became even more important to attract the 'right' students.

As mentioned earlier, other programmes in the Netherlands are now also in the process of setting up Matching arrangements and have opted for several forms. Some (also in Maastricht) ask that students complete a questionnaire, after which they get an automated response with feedback. The procedure stops there. Others have opted for full day events (including test exams) for bigger groups of students. We have opted for a more personal approach, with a questionnaire, and when deemed necessary, complemented by an individual interview. All students receive personalised feedback on their questionnaire. This decision was based on the fact that research on recruitment, admission and induction, and on first-year experience in more general terms, has shown that a more personal approach helps in transition to university by making students feel welcome and at home (e.g. Briggs et al. 2012; Christie et al. 2008; Trotter and Roberts 2006).

Our Matching procedure has been designed as an aid for making an appropriate study choice by having applicants investigate the basis of their decision to sign up (cf. Brinkworth et al. 2009; Kmett et al. 1999). Through stimulating self-reflection we hope that students become more aware of the new life ahead of them and the accompanying responsibilities, as well as of what they should bring to university. By identifying potential problems at an earlier stage we are able to offer students advice and support. As such, we believe that Matching can have an added value compared to entrance exams and other activities in the field of student selection and induction.

Matching was developed in close cooperation with colleagues from our sister programme Arts and Culture, housed in the same faculty. Programme directors and student advisers were closely involved in this process. This way two perspectives were brought in: on the one hand, programme content and expectations; on the other hand, study skills and motivation. Students and staff of the BA ES were asked for feedback. In addition, we consulted with colleagues from the University of Amsterdam's Bachelor in Media and Culture, which was already applying an early form of Matching. A native speaker was involved in order to prevent potential language issues.

Procedure and questionnaire

Applicants are invited to complete the Matching questionnaire shortly after they have applied for the programme. The questionnaire contains different sets of questions that were drafted taking into account insights from existing research on the role of information and induction activities (e.g. Trotter and Roberts 2006), learning environment (e.g. Christie et al. 2008), skills (e.g. Jansen and Suhre 2010) and social background (e.g. Leveson et al. 2013) in transition to higher education. For instance, intending to work for a substantial amount of hours or having to travel to get to classes may lead to challenges (e.g. Brinkworth et al. 2009: 169), so we have included related questions in the questionnaire.

Such insights were then linked to the programme's five main characteristics. For one, Maastricht's BA ES has an interdisciplinary nature. This is reflected not only in the offered courses, but also by the fact that they are jointly developed and taught by staff from various departments, ranging from Arts & Literature to Political Science. The second characteristic is the programme's focus on Europe in its widest sense, including European integration, cultural and religious fault lines and European history. Third, the programme combines these diverse disciplines and perspectives in a coherent curriculum, with all but a few elective courses being offered in the third year. A fourth characteristic concerns the fact that the BA ES builds on Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Supported by a tutor, students are responsible for shaping the learning process in groups of maximum 15 individuals. They are expected to actively present and discuss their own ideas with their peers. Contact hours are limited to approximately 10 hours per week, meaning that there is a lot of emphasis on self-study (e.g. Maurer and Neuhold 2014). The final characteristic of the BA ES is that it is fully taught in English. We expect our prospective students to have a level of English comparable to level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, even though we are not allowed to use this as a selection criterion.

The questionnaire intends to make applicants reflect on their study choice and to help them decide whether or not the BA ES is the right choice for them. The questionnaire contains both closed and open questions, with the latter not only being linked to motivation and expectations, but also aimed at getting a better insight in applicants' writing skills and English language proficiency level. There are general questions about, for instance, a student's background and previous education, as well as more specific questions that address the aforementioned programme-specific issues. For instance, when it comes to expectations, we ask prospective students to first name two contemporary issues they are interested in and, second, to explain how they think that the BA ES can help them to better understand these issues. Another example concerns skills, where we raise specific questions related to PBL, such as whether or not students like to engage in active discussion. After all, research suggests that an affiliation with the learning environment is imperative for a student's chances of success (e.g. Christie et al. 2008).

Based on prior experience and training, completed questionnaires are read by a member of the Matching team, consisting of academic staff and the student adviser. We look at whether or not applicants can *develop* into successful students and, if required, what could be done to facilitate this development. The software currently in use does not allow us to purposefully automate this step in the Matching process, which is partly due to the included open questions. Yet, we have also come to the conclusion that self-reflection requires does not just depend on the way the questionnaire has been set-up, but also requires us to adopt a personal approach when communicating with prospective students.

After our assessment of a completed questionnaire, the prospective student receives a status, either 'OK', 'Pending' or 'NOK'. The OK status is given when it is believed that a prospective student's expectations match with what the programme has on offer and her competences potentially enable her to fulfil the programme's requirements. She receives an email outlining as much, welcoming her

to the programme and inviting her to the introduction days. Applicants who receive the status 'Pending' receive the same email, plus also a specific advice. The latter tends to refer to a potential challenge, which could concern, for instance, English proficiency, but may also refer to expectations regarding the content of the programme.

The status NOK usually implies that the questionnaire brought up more than one potentially problematic issue. Applicants who are put on NOK receive an invitation to a compulsory interview in Maastricht. In special cases, we do offer the opportunity for a skype-interview, yet most applicants actually come to Maastricht. Interviews last approximately 20-30 minutes and follow the protocol in table 1. They are meant as a follow-up to the questionnaire, meaning that we only focus on items that we would like to discuss further and not on the complete questionnaire. The interview offers a particularly good occasion to further explore dispositional factors, such as interest and motivation. It also specifically aims at self-reflection on part of the applicants. After the interview is over, the applicant's status is changed to either 'OK after interview' or 'NOK after interview' (hereafter abbreviated as respectively OK/interview and NOK/interview). The first results in an email that invites the applicant to the introduction days and may still contain some piece of advice. The second results in an email advising to reconsider the study choice.

Table 1: Set-up interviews

a.	Programme director (or student adviser) welcomes applicant and thanks her for coming to Maastricht, provides Matching background and stresses the importance of the advice.
b.	First question: 'Do you have any idea why, based on your questionnaire, we have invited you for an interview?' This question already provides an insight into the ability to self-reflect. The invitation to the interview, in fact, only generally refers to a potential mismatch.
c.	Next the relevant issues identified in the questionnaire are discussed. No particular order is being followed, as questions may sometimes lead to other questions or applicants present new information. The questions are meant to facilitate dialogue and to get a better insight into someone's background, skills, motivation and expectations.
d.	The applicant also gets a chance to ask questions she may still have. This may actually be relevant in terms of formulating advice; questions often confirm our impression that a student does – or does not – have a good insight into the BA ES.
e.	Last question, again aimed at self-reflection: 'what will you take away with you from this interview?' .It is hoped that the applicant can formulate the conclusion herself.
f.	To conclude, the applicant receives advice, although in some cases this is not done immediately due to the need to further reflect on the interview.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

Basic data about the outcomes of Matching is gathered annually and students are asked to evaluate the process. This input is then used to further improve the process. As a result, the questionnaire has been changed almost every year. In other words, the discussion below is not the result of a statistical

exercise in which all variables were kept constant and that was inspired by theoretical questions. Yet, it does illustrate that some themes turn out to be important each time. As such, our experience will be interesting for other researchers and programmes considering activities regarding the pre-induction phase.

On the one hand, the data we have been gathering looks at how students have performed, based on their Matching status; at their Grade Point Average (GPA) and at how many credits (commonly named ECTS – European Credit Transfer System) they received at the end of the year. On the other hand, we have looked at the predictive value of individual questions on the questionnaire, again by linking answers to achieved credits and average grade. It is important to note that we will not focus on the correlation between answers to questions. This is partly due to the fact that our research first and foremost was intended to help improve Matching, although, the fact that our cohorts are very heterogeneous in terms of nationality also played a role. The last part of this section will focus on changes we made to facilitate transition to higher education based on this initial data and our experience with Matching.

Matching process and study results

Table 2 presents an overview of the number of applicants, the number of completed questionnaires and the status given to the student after having read the questionnaire (but before the actual interview), as well as the number of applicants that actually started their studies in the respective academic years. Two conclusions can be drawn from these figures. First, it shows that applicants decide not to pursue their studies in Maastricht at all stages of the process. For instance, when looking at the first cohort, we see that 201 applicants did not even complete the questionnaire; of the people that did complete the questionnaire another 100 also withdrew their application. To us this suggests that Matching does indeed stimulate self-reflection and self-selection. Second, the figures show that our aim to stabilise the size of our cohorts has been met, despite the increasing number of applicants.

Table 2: Matching status before interview

	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Applied	680	694	861
Completed	479 (70.44%)	493 (71.04%)	539 (62.60%)
Intake OK	*250*	*143*	*126*
Intake Pending	*79*	*96*	*77*
Intake NOK	*150*	*254*	*336*
Started	**379 (55.74%)**	**366 (52.74%)**	**361 (41.93%)**

Only few applicants withdrew after the interview, in spite of having been advised to reconsider their study choice. While we have not yet done specific research into this matter, we suspect that many decided to start due to our personal approach. They had already developed an affiliation with the BA ES, through Matching in general, and the interview in particular, which many reported as being pleasant. For instance, responding to the (anonymous) evaluation questionnaire for 2013/2014, a

student wrote that (s)he liked that 'the faculty was trying to approach us in a 'human way' (…) showing us that it cared about the students who applied'.

Table 3: Matching outcome versus study results

	Status	N	Average GPA (SD)	Average ECTS (SD)
2011/2012*	Intake OK	203	6,69 (1,50)	48,65 (18,48)
	Intake Pending	65	5,81 (1,74)	41,53 (22,00)
	Intake NOK	105	5,36 (2,10)	35,03 (23,97)
2012/2013*	Intake OK	118	6,62 (1,67)	48,11 (18,22)
	OK/interview	105	6,23 (1,74)	46,05 (19,72)
	Intake Pending	81	6,23 (1,63)	44,27 (19,70)
	NOK/interview	62	5,51 (1,81)	37,74 (21,82)
2013/2014**	Intake OK	99	6,53 (1,74)	19,29 (6,87)
	OK/interview	142	5,97 (1,66)	16,80 (7,75)
	Intake Pending	52	6,36 (1,99)	18,70 (7,56)
	NOK/interview	65	4,77 (2,23)	11,90 (9,23)

* Results at the end of year 1
** Results after 2 out of 5 course periods

As shown in table 3, the comparison of Matching data with study results suggests that the impression a student makes through the questionnaire (and, when applicable, the interview) provides an indication of their chances of successfully studying the BA ES. The data for 2011/2012 shows that, with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 6.69[1] and a total number of 48.65 ECTS[2], the students that received the OK status on average performed much better than the two other groups. Also, the Pending students performed better better than the NOK students.

In 2012/2013 we introduced the OK/interview and NOK/interview categories so as to be able to better differentiate between the students that have to come for an interview. We assumed that this would provide a more accurate picture of the performance of the group that was invited for an interview. Again, the OK students have outperformed the other groups, but we also see that the OK/interview group outperforms the NOK/interview group. In other words, the introduction of the new statuses seems to lead to a more accurate picture.

Currently we do not yet have complete study progress data for the 2013/2014 cohort, but based on data collected after 2 out of 5 periods we already could see that the OK group seemed to be outperforming the other groups. There was, however, a marked difference between the Pending and OK/interview groups, with, compared to last years' results, the latter doing less well than the Pending group. Yet, as will be shown below, general data about this cohort after their first year shows that many students eventually made it to the second year.

While table 3 just shows how the students performed, table 4 goes a step further by comparing the different status groups, in particular how the OK and OK/interview students performed vis-à-vis the NOK and NOK/interview students. The data show that there is a significant correlation, with the different OK groups consistently outperforming the NOK groups. This confirms that our expectations in terms of student performance were largely met. Still, it remains difficult to exactly predict how a cohort and its subgroups will perform. After all, there are many other factors that influence students' study progress, including external factors beyond the control of university (e.g. Leveson et al. 2013). For instance, 39 out of the 203 OK students of the 2011/2012 cohort received an n-BSA at the end of the year.

Table 4: Least significant difference post-hoc analysis

Dependent variable	I (Matching status)	J (Matching status)	Mean difference (I-J)	P-value
2011/2012**				
GPA	Intake OK	Intake NOK	1,33*	0,000
ECTS	Intake OK	Intake NOK	13,61*	0,000
2012/2013**				
GPA	Intake OK	NOK/interview	1,11*	0,000
	OK/interview	NOK/interview	0,72*	0,009
ECTS	Intake OK	NOK/interview	10,37*	0,001
	OK/interview	NOK/interview	8,31*	0,009
2013/2014***				
GPA	Intake OK	NOK/interview	1,76*	0,000
	OK/interview	NOK/interview	1,20*	0,000
ECTS	Intake OK	NOK/interview	7,39*	0,000
	OK/interview	NOK/interview	4,90*	0,000

*p < 0,05
** Results at the end of year 1
*** Results after 2 out of 5 course periods

One of the main aims behind Matching was to increase retention rates. After just three years of Matching it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions, also because other factors may be involved. In fact, the academic literature is not conclusive on this matter. Some studies that suggest that activities aimed at better transition can lead to higher retention rates (e.g. Richardson and Tate 2013), but there are also studies that report hardly any changes (e.g. Verbeek et al. 2011). As table 5 shows, retention rates do seem to be on the increase for the BA ES. In addition, fewer students have received an n-BSA. A final, interesting, observation concerns the finding that relatively few students drop out despite having received a p-BSA: 0 per cent of 2011/2012 and 2 per cent of the 2012/2013 cohorts, as

compared to more than 10 per cent of the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 pre-Matching cohorts. This seems to imply that those students who eventually started the programme were those that were really convinced of their study choice. We are as yet unable to draw a similar conclusion for the 2013/2014 cohort due to the fact that we do not yet have complete data.

Table 5: N-BSA and retention rates Matching cohorts

	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Started	379	366	361
N-BSA	74 (19.5%)	69 (18.8%)	57 (15.7%)
In year 2	276 (72.8%)	275 (75.1%)	57 (15.7%)

Individual variables, study progress and the additional value of interviews

We also want to highlight important issues that were often raised during interviews, even though they do not always seem to have predictive value.[3] These issues are often related to dispositional factors that have thus far only been explored to a limited extend by other studies, even though research suggests that they can influence a student's chances of study success (e.g. Bowles et al. 2014; Christie et al. 2008; Gale and Parker 2014). Quite a few of these issues also tend to be only addressed to a limited extent in other procedures. It is here that we believe that Matching in general and the interviews in particular have an added value.

When looking at prior education, the predictability of secondary school grades is something where other studies suggest that the higher the average grade at the end of secondary school, the better the chances of study success (e.g. Bruinsma and Jansen 2009). However, our research presents a less straightforward picture, which can partly be explained by the heterogeneity of our cohorts. For some nationalities no reliable data was available, either because the groups were too small or because no detailed data on grading scales was available. The latter is related to the fact that, currently, the Matching questionnaire only asks for detailed grades from sizable nationalities.[4] More importantly, comparing grades always turns out to be difficult, for instance due to different grading scales, different high school subjects and sometimes even different routes to university.[5]

Yet, even when looking at a single nationality, problems remain. The final English grade of Belgian students represents a telling example. This indicator has so far proven not to be predictive at all, yet completed questionnaires often raise doubts about the English proficiency level of the students in question. We believe that this ambiguity can partly be explained by the fact that, as especially our French speaking Belgian students tend to explain during the interview, English was taught in their native language at high school. As such, a high grade does not necessarily reflect the actual English language proficiency level and their active knowledge of the English language (cf. Maiworm and Wächter 2002).

A counter example concerns students that were previously enrolled for another programme in higher education, but without completing it, who on average, score much lower than other students, both in terms of GPA and credits achieved. One of the reasons for this is that they have wrong expectations, which, for instance, concerns the belief that programmes in higher education are similarly structured, require the same skills and apply the same rules. A second reason concerns the lack of certain invaluable study skills, as well as more general academic problems, including procrastination and fear

of failure. In these kinds of cases the interview has an added value in helping applicants to reflect upon where it went wrong before and to explore what can be done to prevent the same thing from happening again (cf. Assiter and Gibbs 2007 on motivational factors).

This brings us to the important issue of skills. Yorke and Longden (2004: 114) remark that students who drop out often refer to lacking certain study skills. Our prospective students have to look at statements concerned with studying in a PBL environment (e.g. time management, group work, discussing) as well as with general academic skills (especially reading and writing). They choose one out of four possible answers: disagree fully, disagree partly, agree partly and agree fully. The lower applicants' self-reported score on these items, the lower their average number of acquired ECTS and GPA. It is on these types of issues that we can provide advice. For instance, if applicants indicate that they are not good at time management, they are advised to take a study efficacy course at the university's Student Service Centre.

To allow us to get a better insight into prospective students' acquired skills we introduced questions on work experience in the questionnaire for the 2013/2014 cohort. The first of these concerns the question whether or not they have had such experience (summer job, voluntary work, and other work experience). If yes, they are asked to explain a) which work experience, b) which skills they acquired and c) how they think they can use these skills during their studies. These questions again aim at having applicants reflect on their study choice. They also help to put the self-reported skills scores in perspective, for instance, when a student's response to the statement 'I am good at time management' is 'agree partly', while also writing about how a demanding job helped her to become better at planning.

Whether or not students have already acquired work experience appears not to be predictive. What did turn out to be predictive is the length of the answers to the related open questions. In fact, our data indicate that the longer the answers to *all* open questions in the questionnaire taken together, the better the students perform. Of course, this suggests that students took the questionnaire seriously. However, we also assume that, since writing is a key component of many programmes in social sciences and the humanities such as the BA ES, eloquent writing skills and even a degree of pleasure in writing are important. The length of the answers to the open questions seems to be an indication of this. In fact, we have observed that shorter answers are regularly combined with applicants indicating that the first-year course 'Research and Writing' is the one that appeals least to them. In addition, their answer to the skills-related statement 'I enjoy writing' tends to be either agree partly or even disagree partly. Finally, shorter answers are often combined with a poorer English proficiency level.

Issues such as these also raise questions about how students have informed themselves before signing up for the programme. Were they unaware of the fact that they have to write a lot? Our data shows that students who have only informed themselves through the website underperform compared to students who have informed themselves through a wider variety of channels. At the same time, whether or not a student visited an open day is not predictive for study success. This finding surprises us. We often notice, both in questionnaires and during interviews, that applicants who did not attend an open day, tend to lack certain knowledge about key characteristics of our programme, both in terms of content and required skills. The case of students who dropped out from a previous programme in higher education is once again telling. In quite a few cases these students indicate that the previous programme did not meet their expectations, yet despite this they did little to prepare for their new study choice. This is especially the case for those coming from another faculty of Maastricht University.

Whether or not the BA ES is a student's first choice and whether or not a student has simultaneously signed up for another programme in higher education also have no predictive value it seems. During interviews applicants who have answered that the BA ES is not their *first* choice often remark that this

is due to the fact that they were originally interested in, for instance, an International Relations programme. Yet after informing themselves about a variety of possible programmes the BA ES turned out to be their *preferred* choice. They also regularly indicate that they have signed up for another programme as a back-up in case of a negative outcome of the Matching procedure.

Finally, we also ask applicants if they have a dream job or a more precise career orientation. Our data is not conclusive on whether or not this influences study success, nor is this confirmed by other research (e.g. McKenzie and Schweitzer 2001: 23, 27). Yet, what we do notice during interviews, is that students who have no idea about future careers have a much tougher time explaining why the BA ES is a good choice for them than students who do have clearer future perspectives.

Adjustments inspired by Matching

Based on the data presented above and the experience gathered until now, we have made changes to not only the Matching procedure itself, but also to the wider transition. To start with, we have made changes to the questionnaire. Some of these changes concerned the order of the questions and the information that precedes them. Yet, we have also introduced new questions, such as the ones on work experience and reasons to quite a previous higher education programme, both mentioned above. We have also removed questions that turned out to have no added value in terms of both the questionnaire and the interview, such as questions where students had to list their three main reasons for deciding to opt for the BA ES. Such changes have helped us gain a better insight into students' study choice and have helped to further streamline the assessment of the questionnaires, as well as the interviews.

Other procedure related changes concern our communication with students, the best example of which is the email that we send to students who are advised to reconsider their study choice. Before 2013/2014, this 'NOK/interview' email contained an ambiguous message: an advice to reconsider, but, should the applicant still decide to come, an invitation to the introduction days. Since then, this email has been rephrased to make it more the point, just mentioning the advice to reconsider and the reasons why. Whereas in 2012/2013 only a handful of applicants withdrew after a 'NOK/interview', just over a quarter did after this change was implemented.

Matching has also inspired broader programme-related changes and changes related to other phases of the transition process. We have revised our open days following feedback from the students who attended our interviews. For one, more emphasis is put on what the programme expects from its students and on the most common challenges our students tend to encounter, not just on what the programme is about. In addition, we now also host separate sessions for parents, who have an important influence on study choice (e.g. Briggs 2006: 709; Yorke and Longden 2004: 136-137). Students that were interviewed increasingly mentioned their parents' role in making a study choice – for better or worse. The BA ES website has also been upgraded, with, for instance, more information about PBL and a clearer student profile.[6]

We have also looked at ways in which to enhance first-year experience, in particular at how we introduce students to and help them to become part of the academic community. We now have a two-day introduction programme that is organised at the start of the academic year. The first day is meant to welcome students in a friendly atmosphere, with only limited attention to academic issues. Students meet their peers from the first tutor group, as well as their and their tutor. The second day consists of a mentor group meeting, during which the mentor (aided by a senior student) provides specific information about the programme, about study skills and about other important issues (for example, faculty rules and regulations). In fact, the mentor programme itself is a novelty that was introduced at the start of Matching and that has been further developed since. The first year focuses

on individual mentoring aimed at helping students to 'survive' their first year of studies. Subsequent years devote attention to issues such as internships, studying abroad, and how to write a final Bachelor Paper.

We have also introduced a diagnostic English language test. Interviews often made it clear that some students were in danger of making a bad start because they struggled with the English language – something that has also been experienced by other programmes in higher education that are fully taught in English (e.g. Maiworm and Wächter 2002; Murray 2013). This multiple-choice test, developed together with the university's Language Centre, tests the English proficiency level of new students at the start of the programme. The lowest scoring 20 per cent have to summarise a text and will also have to attend an interview with one of the language trainers. Based on the interview, the summary and the answers to the test, students receive advice on how to improve their English language proficiency.[7]

CONCLUSION

Most students tend to positively comment on Matching. They often remark that the questionnaire makes them reflect on their study choice and makes feel them more confident about their study choice. As one student who received an OK-status told the university paper *Observant*: 'I think the questionnaire is a good idea, especially for ES with its broad programme. And also for students who haven't put enough thought into it. It forces you to think it over again.' (Jansen 2012). Further development and improvements are, however, necessary, which was an important reason for us to gather the data presented above. As illustrated, based on the annual findings and evaluations of Matching by the students we regularly make adjustments to the Matching procedure and the questionnaire. One issue that is currently high on our agenda concerns time investment. Other studies advise that active involvement of programme managers and 'designated school or college staff who have year-on-year responsibility' is important for a successful transition to higher education (Briggs et al. 2012: 12). This is currently the case, but also leads to higher costs. How can we adapt Matching in such a way as to make it more (time) efficient, while maintaining its key strengths?

Analysing a large pilot project in the Netherlands – the results of which appeared after we started the Matching procedure – Verbeek et al. (2011) conclude that study choice procedures such as Matching have a positive effect on the connection between students and programme, allow for better advice to applicants, and tend to lead to better results, even though there does not appear to be an immediate positive effect on retention rates. Based on our findings, we would agree with this qualified conclusion. We developed Matching with three aims in mind: to stabilise the number of incoming students, to increase retention and completion rates and to offer an additional service to applicants. As regards the first aim, self-reflection on part of the applicants seems to lead to withdrawal, especially at early stages of the process, thus leading to a stabilisation of the size of incoming cohorts. So far, it appears that retention rates are on the increase, if only slightly, although at this stage it is premature to draw definitive conclusion on this matter. Even so, there is earlier engagement between programme and student, which seems to ease transition, and students appear to be more aware of the transitions that they will be going through (new study, new responsibilities, new life). This does seem to have had an impact on the composition of the group of students who dropout. Finally, while this article focussed on first-year experience, we are, in fact, as yet also unable to draw conclusions as regards the aim to increase completion rates. At the time of writing, the first cohort is still in the process of completing their studies.

We will continue gathering more detailed data and feedback to be able to gain a better understanding of the role of Matching as part of the transition from secondary school to higher education and, in a few years, to be able to draw conclusions regarding the influence of Matching on completion rates. In

terms of further research we are also considering two lines of enquiry. First, while we know that students drop out at various stages of the Matching procedure, we know little about their reasons for doing so. Yet, this information could lead to a better insight into the actual impact of Matching on study choice. Second, we would like to find out why students that were expected to fail, actually turn out to perform well, and vice versa. We would like to know more about the specific factors that influence our students, especially the aim of further improving the predictive potential of Matching.

In sum, further research is certainly needed for us to be able to draw definitive conclusions regarding the exact impact of Matching. Even so, it has proven to be a positive experience in terms of getting to grips with students' transition to university and filling the gap between information and induction activities. Therefore, we are convinced that other programmes could also benefit from Matching.

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[1] On a 1-10 grading scale, where a 10 is the highest possible grade and a 6 a passing grade.
[2] Our students need to obtain a minimum of 42 ECTS to be able to continue their studies.
[3] Detailed data is available on request.
[4] Note that the central registration office requests grade transcripts from all applicants to be able to check whether they are admissible to our programme.
[5] In fact, even within one country different grading scales may apply, as is the case in Germany.
[6] See: http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/Faculties/FASoS/TargetGroups/ProspectiveStudents/BachelorsProgrammes/EuropeanStudies2.htm (last accessed 10 November 2014).
[7] Interestingly, many students who have to attend the language interview have previously been warned about the level of their English during Matching.

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Research Article

The Future of European Studies: A Perspective from Ireland

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Abstract

Ireland was one of the first EU member states to develop discrete European Studies programmes at higher education level. However, recent years have witnessed a decrease in the number of European Studies programmes, falling student numbers and an evident downgrading of the subject area. Broad economic constraints and political challenges to the ethos and orientation of Irish higher education have impacted on the vitality of the European Studies tradition. This article contends that this trend away from European Studies in Ireland is concerning, but that it can reversed. Drawing on experience and best practice elsewhere; better utilising a diversity of pedagogical tools and techniques; tapping into international networks and financial supports; building a cohesive Irish European Studies community; and communicating the merits of the European Studies model of education are important means of strengthening this branch of Irish higher education. In addressing the challenges facing the field, there are opportunities for European Studies to become a pedagogically innovative programme of study capable of nurturing a vibrant and dynamic student community and of producing highly skilled and coveted university graduates.

Keywords

European Studies; Ireland; teaching and learning; pedagogy; teaching European studies

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Since the 1980s successive Irish governments have placed a considerable emphasis on developing higher education, seeing it as a key means of producing high quality graduates with clear skills that make Ireland an attractive base for foreign direct investment (FDI). It has worked. Ireland has acquired a strong reputation for educational excellence at university level. On international league tables, Ireland scores well for a country of its size and capacity and moreover, Irish graduates are highly employable internationally (a trend which is particularly evident since the return to outward migration in 2008). Although this may bathe the Irish university sector in a favourable light, it masks a number of serious challenges confronting Irish universities, students and graduates, and individual disciplines. These challenges originate from both within and outside the state. In the domestic setting, the Irish university sector confronts serious economic shortfalls and faces political and social challenges to its traditional ethos and orientation. External challenges and opportunities include Europe 2020, Europe of Knowledge, European Higher Education Area (EHEA), Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and the Bologna process. These initiatives have framed the broader context within which degree programmes are designed and rolled out, and Ireland has not been immune to their influence. To some extent, they pose challenges for Irish higher education institutions in terms of directing and enabling investment in non-vocational programmes such as those which European Studies offers.

This diversity of challenges impacts to varying degrees on specific disciplines and has involved serious consequences for the European Studies field. Indeed, it is possible to discern the decline of European Studies in Ireland in terms of a decrease in the number of European Studies programmes, falling student numbers and an evident downgrading of the subject area. Ireland is not unique. Other states, including the UK, have witnessed similar developments. This article queries why the appeal of European Studies has declined in Ireland? Moreover, the contention here is that although this trend away from European Studies is concerning, it can be reversed. In addressing the challenge facing the field, there are opportunities for European Studies to become a pedagogically innovative

programme of study capable of nurturing a vibrant and dynamic student community and of producing highly skilled and coveted university graduates.

Reviving and reinvigorating European Studies in Ireland involves grappling with two key considerations. Firstly, there is a need for the teaching process to instil intellectual capacity. To do this, academics must consider what they teach i.e. the range of knowledge, perspectives and standpoints they impart. The acquisition of such knowledge enables students to pose questions, propose solutions and challenge paradigms – all of which may be better suited to addressing contemporary societal challenges. Secondly, the teaching and learning process aids in the cultivation of key skills. If European Studies is to remain relevant and appealing as a choice of study and as a socially useful educational route to employment, there is a need to consider if, and how, the Irish European Studies community produces graduates with the requisite intellectual capacity *and* skills base. This article explores the pedagogical innovations which have invigorated European Studies elsewhere and assesses how they might be harnessed and applied in Ireland. Other resources and supports are also identified including the role of professional disciplinary associations (and the wider Irish European Studies community) and funding opportunities available to support European Studies through the EU's Jean Monnet programmes and the Fulbright-Schuman award scheme. Paradoxically, this does not necessarily entail radical change rather it demands collective and coherent actions on the part of a distinct academic community.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND: PRINCIPLES AND PROGRESS

The Irish higher education sector is structured around seven Universities,[1] 14 Institutes of Technology and seven Colleges of Education. In addition, a number of other third level institutions provide specialist education in fields including art and design, medicine, business studies, rural development, theology, music and law. In common with many other European states, Irish higher education has experienced massive expansion over the course of the last two decades. Participation rates have increased markedly during this period – by 105 per cent between 1990/1991 and 2003/2004 (Central Statistics Office n.d.). In 2006, 41 per cent of those aged 25-34 had received a third level education (Coakley 2010: 44). This upward trend in terms of participation and completion rates is set to persist. The National Skills Strategy (2007: 7) has set a 72 per cent target for progression to third level education by 2020. Heavy state investment in higher education fuelled the expansion of the sector from the 1990s. This entailed capital and structural investment and involved the abolition of higher education fees. Since 1996, Irish higher education is *technically* free at the point of entry. Although students are not liable to pay fees, they are required to pay an annual Student Contribution Charge. The size of this contribution has increased substantially in recent years and is EUR 2,750 for the 2014-2015 academic year.[2]

The growth and expansion of Irish higher education was predominantly concentrated in the period after 1990. In the years and decades previous to that, Ireland's third level sector was dominated by a conservative Catholic Church resistant to educational developments and intellectualism.[3] This influence began to wane from the 1970s as a process of national economic and social modernisation advanced. Early state investment in Irish higher education was minimal and what initiatives did emerge "gave little evidence of systematic thought about the relationships between educational, economic and social change" (Lee 1989: 363). Consideration of such linkages began to materialise from the late 1960s when utilitarian considerations became paramount in determining policy (see Clancy 1989). However, it would take many more years before they garnered political salience or prompted policy change. A series of fundamental educational reforms eventually emerged during the 1990s and produced a significant transformation in the Irish higher education system. Pioneered by successive right of centre governments, reforms emphasised the *economic* function of Irish higher educational institutions. A steadfast national focus on creating an educational system which

prioritised jobs, employment and employability guided much of the substance of Irish educational reform and discourse. This recalibration of university education as a tool of national economic policy implicitly rejects the Newman conception of the academy as a public good and has effectively allowed the forces of marketisation to infiltrate the higher education sector in Ireland.

The philosophical norms which have traditionally underpinned Irish university education have been fundamentally challenged by an embrace of the neoliberal agenda and the spirit and ethos of New Public Management (NPM) tools. Practically, this is manifest in higher education's increasingly forced reliance on non-exchequer funding models; the contracting out of a number of key educational functions (e.g. training senior civil servants); and the growth in private colleges in Ireland. It is also evident in terms of a plethora of new measurement exercises and financing and regulation principles. Irish academics are now subject to quality review exercises and research evaluations. Their performance and outputs are measured by metrics and league tables. This altered educational and learning environment sits uneasily with many in academia. Being in thrall to commercial and economic interests ('the market') is seen to stifle academic freedom, to misunderstand the mission of the academy and to value knowledge solely for what it contributes to material wealth (see for example Walsh 2012).

Economic factors have also impacted on the Irish higher education model. Previous investment during the 1990s and early 2000s has not been maintained – this is despite the continued expansion of student numbers. Even before the onset of the economic crisis, public funding models were being questioned and alternative private models mooted. Underfunding has manifested itself in terms of cuts in the number of staff employed in higher education and reduced investment in both capital development and institutional running costs. Between 2008 and 2012, the number of academic staff in Irish higher education has fallen by 12 per cent (Higher Education Authority 2014: 40). Overall state spend per student has fallen from EUR8, 897 in 2007/2008 to EUR5, 212 in 2013/2014 (Donnelly 2014).

Domestic developments in the Irish higher education sector have been influenced by international factors. Organisations including the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) have both prompted and supported educational reform in Ireland. Holborow (2012: 104) notes that a 2004 OECD report on higher education was adopted by the Irish cabinet shortly after publication. The objectives of the Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020 complemented and reinforced the 'knowledge economy' agenda which has come to dominate Irish higher education policy (Walsh and Loxley 2014: 2). The implementation of the Bologna process similarly emphasised the role of higher education in serving the interests of the labour market and in promoting links between academia and industry (McMahon 2014: 183-4). All of these developments and influences – domestic and international – impact on national higher education policy at a macro level, but they also impact on how individual disciplines are perceived and positioned.

EUROPEAN STUDIES IN IRELAND: SURVIVING OR THRIVING?

Dedicated European Studies programme have a history in Ireland which pre-dates Irish accession to the EU. The earliest example of a European Studies programme is the postgraduate programme in European Integration and International Trade which was first offered in University College Dublin (UCD) during the 1966-67 academic year. It was later followed by the establishment in the early 1970s of an undergraduate programme in the National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick (now the University of Limerick (UL)). The UL BA European Studies is one of the oldest and most established programmes of its kind in Europe. The programme has a multi-disciplinary character and offers students instruction in a number of arts and social science disciplines including history, political science, sociology, law and economics. In addition, students undertake the study of a

European language and also complete a period of work experience and/or participate in an Erasmus exchange. According to Byrne et al. (2000: 224):

> The objective of the University of Limerick's European Studies programme is to develop a 'European' – an internationalist who can transcend national boundaries and socio-cultural differences to help realise the aspirations of a developing Ireland in an increasingly interdependent world. By producing graduates who speak continental European languages and have been educated to understand how to relate to modern European society, the European Studies programme at the University of Limerick is training the executives and technologists of the tomorrow. These young people will be ready to seize the opportunities created by the transnational cooperation and expanded market already emerging as a result of the EU and other European organisations.

The numbers undertaking the BA European Studies programme at UL have varied between 13 students in 2008/2009 to 20 in 2013/2014.

Table 1: Overview of European Studies Degree Programmes in Ireland

Institution	Programme	Course Duration	Compulsory Language	Erasmus	Work Placement	Areas of Study
ITT	BA European Studies	4 years	Yes	Yes	Yes	Language History Politics Culture Business
NUIM	BA European Studies	4 years	Yes	Yes	No	Language Anthropology Geography Sociology Ancient Classics
TCD	BA European Studies	4 years	Yes	Yes	No	Language (two) History Sociology
UCC	BA International (European Studies)**	4 years	Yes	Yes	No	Language Geography History Politics
UL	BA European Studies	4 years	Yes	Yes	Yes	Language History Sociology Economics Law

* UL also offers a BA International Insurance and European Studies which has a strong business component.
** European Studies is only available as a subject in Year 1. For students who choose the BA International, European Studies can be pursued to degree level (as part of the BA International).

UL pioneered European Studies as an undergraduate area of study, but later other Irish universities and an Institute of Technology followed. Today students can choose from five European Studies programmes (see table 1). There are clear similarities between all five programmes – each is four years in duration; the study of at least one European language is compulsory and all offer opportunities for students to participate in the EU's Erasmus programme. Students also choose modules from a variety of disciplines within arts, humanities and the social sciences. There are, however, some distinctions in terms of the module offerings available to European Studies students across institutions. The Trinity College Dublin (TCD) programme is heavily focused on language acquisition. National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) includes an emphasis on geography and sociology while the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT) has a business component. The University College Cork (UCC) programme is anchored by the history and geography departments within the institution.

The appeal of European Studies programmes has waned and changed over the years. Although the number of European Studies programmes has increased since the first programme was created in the 1970s, the prestige and status of programmes has arguably diminished. An overview of the grades needed to gain access to European Studies programmes demonstrates this trend. The entry route to Irish higher education institutions is determined by a points system which is administered by the Central Applications Office (CAO).[4] In crude terms, the system operates on the basis of supply and demand i.e. the most sought after programmes (e.g. medicine, veterinary science, law) and those with small intakes typically have the highest entry points. Table 2 reproduces the entry points for all five European Studies programmes since 1998.[5] It is interesting to note that three of the five programmes were created after 1999. Up to that period, TCD and UL were the only Irish third level institutions offering European Studies degree options. TCD's European Studies programme has consistently had the highest entry points and it qualifies as a programme which attracts high point students i.e. those who achieve 450+ points in their Leaving Certificate (see Higher Education Authority 2007). This may be at least partially explained with reference to the programme's small intake of approximately 45 students annually (although this is higher than the 35 places it offered during the 1990s). TCD is also Ireland's highest ranked university (according to the QS and Times Higher Education World University Rankings) and this too may impact positively on the appeal of its programmes and elevate the entry point level. Research by the Network for Irish Educational Standards (2014) shows that TCD attracts a high proportion of high point students – in 2004 and 2005, over 75 per cent of courses recorded student intakes where students' median CAO points were above 450 points.

In contrast to TCD, the UCC European Studies programme was created in 1999 and was until 2003 a discrete programme in its own right. However, the entry points fell to a low of 265 that year and this led to the programme being subsumed within the arts programme (although European Studies does maintain a measure of distinctiveness there). The ITT European Studies offering is also relatively new. It has also seen its points fall from 255 in 2004 to 210 in 2013. The acceptance of 'all qualified applicants (AQA)' in 2014 suggests that points fell substantially (perhaps below 100 points). The points for entry to the NUIM and UL programmes have remained stable despite some fluctuation. Falling point levels in some institutions and stable point levels elsewhere do not suggest that European Studies has expanded its appeal. What is perhaps more telling, however, is the fact that in tandem with falling/stable entry point levels, the number of European Studies places has diminished. The expansion of programme offerings since the end of the 1990s has diversified the range of European Studies offerings, but it has not increased the overall intake of students. For example, during the early 1990s, the UL European Studies degree programme accepted an annual intake of approximately 200 new students.[6] By 2002, this figure had fallen to 56 and over ten years later, in 2013, it was 20. An improved choice of programmes does not fully account for this fall in intake. In 2002, UCC accepted 26 students on to its dedicated BA European Studies and ITT offered 30 places on its programme. In both cases, the current intake has reduced further. The NUIM

European Studies programme was not established until 2003 – since then its annual intake has averaged 20 students per year.

Table 2: Entry Points for European Studies Undergraduate Degree Programmes 1998-2014

Course	TA021 European Studies*	MH108 European Studies***	TR024 European Studies	CK101 Arts	LM040 European Studies
Institution	**ITT**	**NUIM**	**TCD**	**UCC**	**UL**
2014	AQA**	380	520	345	375
2013	210	395	535	330	355
2012	215	395	545	330	340
2011	180	385	530	345	375
2010	220	370	520	350	370
2009	170	365	510	360	385
2008	180	360	495	335	350
2007	225	355	535	340	350
2006	225	350	540	345	360
2005	230	375	530	360	335
2004	255	400	530	385	330
2003	250	385	505	265****	350
2002	210	-	505	330	355
2001	-	-	505	405	350
2000	-	-	470	375	345
1999	-	-	510	400	370
1998	-	-	490	-	370

Source: Compiled from CAO data, available at www.cao.ie
* The programme was not offered through the CAO system before 2002.
** AQA (All Qualified Applicants) means that all qualified applicants for a course were offered a place. Sometimes the use of the term AQA suggests that the points of the last qualified applicant being offered a place were less than 100.
*** The programme was first established in 2003.
**** UCC offered a discrete BA European Studies from 1999 to 2003. From 2004 to the present, European Studies is incorporated into the broader BA Arts programme where it constitutes a subject. Prior to 1999, there was no European Studies offering at UCC.

To some extent, the availability of fewer places might be expected to elevate the entry point level – less places generally has this effect. This scenario, however, has not materialised and furthermore the slacking off of interest in European Studies programmes which this suggests has happened against the backdrop of an expansion of participation and places across higher education. Table 3 illustrates the growth in CAO applications over a ten year period from 2003-2012. Throughout this period, the proportion of students opting for programmes in the arts/social sciences has remained

consistent at approximately 27 per cent. This would naturally suggest higher numbers of students undertaking European Studies programmes. This, however, is not the case. Against the backdrop of an expanded student population, the number of European Studies students has not experienced a comparable expansion. Higher numbers of students in Irish higher education has not translated into similarly higher numbers of new entrants into European Studies programmes. The broader transformation and expansion of the higher education sector appears to have had little positive impact on the appeal of European Studies programmes in Ireland. So how to explain this? Is it a cause for concern or are there reasonable explanations for this pattern of apparent dis-engagement with European Studies?

Table 3: CAO Application Statistics 2003-2012

	No. of Total Applications	No. of Arts/Social Sciences Applications	Arts/Social Sciences Applications (% of Total Applications)
2012	405,870	109,500	27.0%
2011	406,927	116,614	28.6%
2010	410,377	117,983	28.7%
2009	375,866	106,321	28.3%
2008	347,356	96,829	27.9%
2007	338,382	90,070	26.6%
2006	335,521	89,815	26.8%
2005	338,252	89,902	26.6%
2004	351,796	94,425	26.8%
2003	354,621	99,222	28.0%

Source: Compiled from CAO Board of Directors Reports 2003-2012, available at www.cao.ie

These questions can be examined from two perspectives. Firstly, the broader economic and societal environment within which prospective students make educational and career decisions, and secondly, in the context of how the study of Europe/EU has changed and evolved over time. In the first instance, Ireland's relationship with the EU has traditionally been one which has been supportive of European integration and positive about Ireland's place within the EU. This historic consensus began to disintegrate from the late 1990s coinciding with a period of unprecedented national economic growth (the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' era). During this time, Irish politicians, civil society and the general public became less enthusiastic about the Ireland-EU relationship. Former Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), Mary Harney, suggested that Ireland was closer to Boston than Berlin. Other cabinet colleagues questioned the impact of EU membership on Irish identity; voiced concerns about the influence of the European Commission; and displayed a degree of indifference to the EU. A number of Irish civil society organisations have mobilised and campaigned successfully against EU referendums since 2001. Public attitudes to the EU have also changed. In contrast to the 1980s and 1990s when Ireland consistently recorded high levels of robust support for the EU, enthusiasm for Europe has declined with much of this fall-off concentrated during the economic crisis. This is evidenced by drops in the levels of popular trust in the EU and the extent to which Irish people have a "positive" image of the EU (see Standard Eurobarometer 2013). Falling levels of

support for EU membership have also been matched by a greater public propensity to elect soft Eurosceptic MEPs to the European Parliament during the first decade of the 21st century.

Laffan captures the complexity of it all when she notes: "Ireland's relationship with the EU over the last 10 years was characterised by episodes of active engagement, elite indifference verging on hostility, and an uncertain and questioning popular discourse on European integration" (2010: 1). An anti-EU narrative has been discernible in public debates and commentary and the crisis has also constituted a profound crisis of politics, political institutions and representation. Public faith and trust in key political and economic institutions has been tested. The drop in support for the EU which this has coincided with, however, is not necessarily indicative of an irreversible shift in Irish opinions and attitudes towards the EU: "the dampening of Euro enthusiasm in Ireland that has clearly occurred over the course of the economic crisis … should not be seen as a mushrooming Euroscepticism" (Standard Eurobarometer 2013: 11). It is clear that from the late 1990s, falling levels of interest in the study of the EU and Europe coincided with a negative shift in Irish public and political attitudes towards the EU. In addition, the period from the mid-1990s to 2008 was a period of exceptional national economic prosperity. The bulk of graduate employment opportunities were linked to FDI, and resided in the construction, IT, communication and pharmaceutical sectors. The availability of these attractive and well-paid jobs meant a burgeoning in the number of higher education programmes catering to the needs of these industries and a subsequent increase in student interest in these specific areas of study. Against this changed political and economic backdrop, a drop in entry point requirements and a reduced student intake for the less instrumental European Studies product is perhaps unsurprising.

To some extent, the European Studies community has responded to these challenging external developments and has sought to both diversify and embed the study of Europe and the EU. It is increasingly clear that such studies are not monopolised by the European Studies label. They are also provided outside of the traditional European Studies framework. This relates to broader developments in the evolution of the EU and related issues concerning the study of Europe. Kreppel (2012: 640-1) identifies "the fundamental shift that has occurred in EU studies over the past few decades as the theoretical paradigm has shifted from an understanding of the EU as a unique or *sui generis* form of international organization to an increasingly normalizing (if not yet fully normal) political system that can best be understood from within a comparative perspective". Warleigh-Lack and Van Langenhove (2010) also propose a "rethinking of EU studies" by cautioning against a tendency towards introversion and advocating instead for a more sustained and energised engagement with studies of other global regions.

Therefore, although other Irish higher education institutions do not offer dedicated undergraduate European Studies programmes, studies of the EU are incorporated into a diverse range of courses where knowledge and understanding of an increasingly pervasive and influential European Union is imperative. In its Education Audit 2012-2013, the European Movement Ireland identifies "over 400 different courses in over 30 colleges across Ireland" (2013: 4) which offer either optional or mandatory EU subjects.[7] This includes qualifications ranging from NFQ (National Framework Qualification) Level 6 to NFQ Level 10 i.e. higher certificate level to PhD level programmes.[8] It also identifies a broad suite of programmes which incorporate the study of the EU. Examples include: Diploma EU Studies (Institute of Public Administration (IPA)); BA Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies (Dublin City University (DCU)), BA Legal Studies (International Trade) (Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)); BBus Tourism (Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)); MBS International Public Policy Diplomacy (UCC); and LLM European Law and Public Affairs (UCD). The fact that the study of Europe and the EU has been assimilated into a broad range of other higher education courses and programmes, however, does not automatically mean that dedicated European Studies programmes are redundant. On the contrary, opportunities exist for the development and cultivation of

programmes which feed into national and international priorities and agendas, but which simultaneously allow space for pedagogical creativity and innovation.

In addition to undergraduate European Studies programmes, Irish higher education institutions also offer postgraduate opportunities to study Europe and the EU. Attempts to develop postgraduate European Studies programmes have been evident since the late 1960s. Here again however, their appeal has not flourished. UL and UCD have traditionally been to the forefront in delivering MA European Studies/Integration programmes which were initially rolled out during the 1980s. Although these programmes no longer technically exist, they are not fully defunct. Instead, they have been refined, adapted and subsumed into other programmes including the MEconSc European Public Affairs and Law (UCD) and the MA European Politics and Governance (UL). In 2009, and motivated by the continued enlargement of the EU, TCD rolled out a one-year taught MPhil European Studies. In UCC and UL, postgraduate programmes are less multi- or interdisciplinary and include programmes which are focused around the discipline of law and the needs of the legal profession.

A further challenge in cementing the study of Europe and the EU at postgraduate level relates to the expansion of postgraduate teaching which has been evident since the late 1990s in Ireland. This development has diversified the range of postgraduate programmes around increasingly specialised, narrow and focused areas of study. Additionally, and perhaps more damagingly, the 2000s saw a trend towards promoting other 'area' studies, including in particular Chinese Studies. There are implications here at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. UCD established the Confucius Institute for Ireland in 2006. With support from the Chinese state, part of its mission is to develop and promote teaching and research in Chinese Studies and to offer professional services to both public and private sectors to deepen economic relationships between China and Ireland. In 2007, UCC established its own Confucius Institute and offers students a range of undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities. Irish and Chinese government support for developing Chinese Studies and their (financial) investment in rolling out new programmes and initiatives contrasts with the limited levels of support afforded to the study of Europe and the EU. For a multitude of reasons, therefore, it appears that as the undergraduate and postgraduate environments have become more crowded, it is not apparent that European Studies has been able to withstand the increased competition from other programmes of study where institutional, political and economic support is more pronounced.

THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN STUDIES IN IRELAND: NAVIGATING THE OPPORTUNITIES

The rationale for maintaining and strengthening European Studies as a distinct programme of study is strong. The EU is a pervasive force and its operation, decisions and outputs impact directly on many facets of contemporary life. McCormick (2013) identifies 20 reasons as to why Europe matters, or to put it another way, why the EU needs to be taught and researched. These embrace a multitude of subjects, positions and policies ranging from the EU's role in bringing peace to Europe to reducing regulation and red tape; and from promoting a cleaner and greener Europe to sustaining the world's largest trading bloc. Such is the expansion in the breadth and depth of the EU's evolution since the 1950s that there is a persuasive logic to the need for today's students and graduates to understand the dynamics of how the EU operates and evolves. But additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the EU is part of an extraordinarily complex and often problematic working environment which students and graduates daily confront. The EU forms both the context and the confines within which the needs of a rapidly changing world are identified, addressed and ultimately resolved. These challenges are not merely economic, although many may require financial investment. They also encompass less tangible but equally complex developments including: globalisation; economic volatility; war, conflict and international terrorism; climate change and energy needs; ageing populations; changing patterns of migration; poverty and inequality; international political volatility;

religious tensions; and (information) technology developments. In a discussion of forty years of European political science, de Sousa et al. (2010: S6) astutely note that social scientists (particularly economists) are grappling with how to explain and how to respond to the post-2008 global economic crisis, but few of those same academics anticipated its coming. At an intellectual level, contemporary crises and issues tend to cross disciplinary boundaries. They demand specific skills and specialist knowledge. European Studies is well placed to respond effectively to these needs. In a 2008 study, the Tuning Project produced a report on reference points for the design and delivery of degree programmes in European Studies. The study noted: "European Studies graduates are by definition multi-disciplinary, mobile, flexible and highly competent human resources, "friendly" to the new structures of employment and economy in a constantly changing and challenging international socio-economic context. In addition, their competence in languages strengthens their ability to work in a multicultural context" (21). However, the report also acknowledges that there are discernible differences in the structure, content and approach to teaching/learning in European Studies which relate to different national traditions and the pedagogy of the discipline in which degrees are grounded (2008: 19). In Ireland, the European Studies community embraces a number of disciplines and adopts a variety of pedagogical styles. These reflect the traditions and culture of different disciplines and institutions, and are responsive to the pressures which emanate from broader national strategies and international/EU agendas.

The market-driven approach to higher education which has lately emerged in Ireland may be unsettling for some, but it does nevertheless entail opportunities for those disciplines willing to exploit the possibilities it offers. Resource limitations and a changing (political) conception about how higher education is best delivered present challenges, but also opportunities. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (launched in 2011) is the effective blueprint for the development of Irish higher education. The strategy addresses the many dimensions of higher education including: teaching and learning, research, engagement with wider society, internationalistion, system governance and funding models. In the teaching and learning domain, the document proposes the use of state-of-the-art learning resources, the collection and application of student feedback and a more flexible and innovative approach in the delivery of higher education. The report explicitly states that: "Higher education institutions should offer broad-based courses and more interdisciplinary learning opportunities for students in the first year of their undergraduate studies" (Department of Education and Skills 2011: 18). There is also a strong emphasis on aiding students in the acquisition of generic skills. To some extent, the European Studies 'product' potentially fits neatly with this conceptualisation of how education is best delivered at third level. However, the lessening off of student interest coupled with failing entry requirements for the discrete European Studies degree programmes in Ireland begs the question: to what extent do Irish European Studies programmes produce graduates with an optimal mix of generic and specialist skills and knowledge? There is a secondary issue here too in terms of how effective the Irish European Studies community is at selling the merits and appeal of programmes which (at least on paper) meet the standards of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.

It is increasingly the case that all graduates are required to possess a range of generic skills appropriate to the 21st century workplace. Burrus et al. (2013) identify five key skills and competencies required for most occupations. These include: complex problem-solving; fluid intelligence (abstract thinking and mathematical reasoning); teamwork (cooperation); achievement/innovation (persistence); and communication skills (including oral and written expression). This complements the findings of a 2010 Eurobarometer survey of employers which revealed the same skills preferences. Like all other higher education programmes, European Studies is increasingly obligated to produce graduates capable of demonstrating a wide range of generic abilities. This is a trend strongly promoted by the Bologna process which places a heavy emphasis on employability and the acquisition of skills. The process of nurturing key transferable skills, however, is challenging and it is also contested. Maurer and Mawdsley (2014: 33) argue that "European

Studies is well-suited to the incorporation of employability skills into the existing curriculum". They demonstrate how this can be accomplished using a variety of tools and approaches including: problem-based learning (PBL); work placements; simulation exercises; research skills training; and innovative assessment.

In a narrower context, the Tuning Project (2008) identified a range of competences (both generic and specific) of special relevance to European Studies. Generic competences include those listed above and also identify the ability to communicate in a foreign language; to work in a multicultural team; and to engage with different disciplinary methodologies in an interdisciplinary setting. Specific competences relate to the acquisition of knowledge on general European issues and on EU issues.

Undergraduate European Studies programmes in Ireland deliver a diverse mix of skills and knowledge to students, and not all of these align with the employability agenda of the Bologna process and/or the knowledge competences outlined by the Tuning Project. For example, the UCC and NUIM European Studies programmes do not have work placement components, while the TCD and ITT programmes do not include core dedicated modules on the contemporary EU. In other ways however, European Studies programmes demonstrate a degree of pedagogical innovation and dynamism which foster key transferable and transversal skills. Field-trips to Brussels, simulation exercises, research projects and innovative approaches to assessment form part of the content and structure of European Studies programmes in Ireland, albeit to differing extents. Although it has been used in some teaching contexts in Irish higher education (see McInerney and Adshead 2013), PBL is not a widely utilised teaching method. Additionally, few European Studies programmes in Irish universities offer research skills training. It is evident too that programmes emphasise multi-disciplinarity rather than interdisciplinarity. Information technology has been embraced in terms of the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs), although this engagement has not extended to the roll-out of online/blended modules. This is not to imply that all programmes need to, or necessarily should, comply with uniform content, structures, standards and approaches. However, in a context where pressures to attract and maintain students are immense and yet investment in higher education is falling, there is some logic to adapting, developing and further enriching existing European Studies programmes by drawing on examples and best practice from elsewhere. Doing this in ways which fit more deliberately with national and European agendas does not automatically mean losing or abandoning the innovative character and the distinctiveness of programmes such as European Studies. On the contrary, European initiatives including the Bologna process, Europe of Knowledge, EHEA, Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, and national higher educational strategies potentially provide a space where pedagogical experimentation and creativity can be tried and tested. In turn, this provides a platform for European Studies to enhance its appeal to a wider, more numerous and more diverse student and employer audience.

In Ireland, organisations including the HEA, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and the National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL), amongst other organisations, have been to the forefront in promoting the quality of teaching and learning for all third level students across all academic disciplines. These organisations and initiatives largely originated in the 2000s and so are relatively new additions to the educational landscape in Ireland. It is also the case that Irish academics are now increasingly encouraged to undertake postgraduate training in teaching and learning. Most Irish universities offer programmes of study leading to accredited teaching and learning qualifications. Despite a greater institutional focus on pedagogy, at single disciplinary (or indeed at cross-disciplinary) levels, the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning has not traditionally enjoyed much traction in Irish academic circles. It is clear that individual scholars in Ireland have tested and pioneered novel teaching methods (see for example Buckley 2010; Donnelly and Hogan 2013; Harris 2010 and 2012; McInerney and Adshead 2013), but only recently have there been considered attempts to link academics within and between disciplines with a view to encouraging

collaborative research between scholars who are expressly interested in advancing the study of pedagogy in Ireland. For example, the Political Studies Association of Ireland (PSAI) has created a Teaching and Learning Specialist Group and introduced an annual Teaching and Learning Award (now in its fifth year). Unlike other national professional associations however (including APSA, ECPR, PSA and UACES), this has not (to date) extended to active support for the publication of articles on teaching, learning and pedagogy in the association's journal, *Irish Political Studies*. A reluctance to publish this type of material is in part due to the fact that few submissions are received, although admittedly there is little encouragement for such submissions. More pertinently, the fact that the Irish political science discipline is represented by just one scholarly journal means that the journal has very broad aims and scope. Consequently, there is strong competition for space and access – and the study of teaching and learning appears to be a victim. Other disciplinary communities in Ireland – including law, sociology, geography and history – have similarly shied away from an explicit pedagogical dimension to their professional activities. Even associations which blur the edges between disciplinary boundaries, such as the Irish Association for Contemporary European Studies (IACES), provide only passing support and encouragement for pedagogical discourse and scholarship. The importance of academic associations in promoting research and initiatives which actively support both the practice and scholarship of teaching and learning should not be under-estimated (see Brintnall and Mealy 2014 for a discussion of the role of APSA and Craig 2014 for an overview of the work of the PSA). Their role typically includes playing a broader role in "refashioning directions in teaching and learning related to international objectives and responsive to [the] development of global citizenship" (Brintnall and Mealy 2014: 167). The relatively small size of the Irish academic community is clearly a factor which limits the extent to which national professional associations can actively support all dimensions of the profession. Relative to other organisations, Irish professional associations do not command the same critical number of members or the resources needed to engage wholeheartedly with pedagogical issues. However, even where resources are available to support EU specific teaching and learning, Irish scholars have been slow to engage with opportunities. Ireland demonstrated low levels of engagement with the Jean Monnet actions, part of the EU lifelong learning programmes (LLP) 2007-2013. This observation is significant because Jean Monnet actions offer financial support and networking opportunities aimed at stimulating teaching, research and reflection in the field of European integration studies at the level of higher education institutions. Between 2008 and 2013, there were just five Irish beneficiaries of the Jean Monnet programme (Key Actions 1)[9] and these were confined to two years – 2012 and 2013. The successful applications included one Jean Monnet Chair (at NUIM), one Centre of Excellence (in youth work at NUIM) and three Information and Research Activities (at NUIM, TCD and UCC). There were no awards in support of European modules and just three of Ireland's third level institutions engaged successfully (if minimally) with the Jean Monnet programme during the 2007-2013 EU funding period. Ireland is not unique – other EU member states also have low engagement and success rates with the Jean Monnet programme. However, it is also clear that many member states have been substantially more adept than Ireland at exploiting the opportunities which the Jean Monnet programme offers. Ireland's poor level of engagement and success here is a consequence of a range of factors. The buoyancy of the higher education sector during the Celtic Tiger period diminished the necessity for academics to source external funding to support teaching and learning. In tandem, there existed a dominant emphasis on attracting national and EU *research* funding and Irish academics duly directed their efforts here. Low levels of familiarity with the Jean Monnet programme may be related to university research offices pushing and prioritising other funding sources. The success of the European Commission in promoting Jean Monnet programmes in Ireland is also questionable. A failure to reach the academic community is surprising given the size of the country and the relative ease of access to higher education institutions and staff. A failure on the part of professional associations to alert and to support members in exploiting these opportunities is reflective of a certain incapacity and/or disinterest when it comes to issues around disciplinary pedagogy. The absence of a strong and cohesive

European Studies academic community at the national level can also disallow a sharing of information and experience and this too may minimise engagement levels. Additionally, the practice of mentoring junior academics is under-developed in Ireland and insofar as it limits the quality and quantity of advice and support from senior colleagues, it may also help to account for Ireland's patchy engagement with the Jean Monnet programme.

Better exploitation of funding opportunities is but one means to develop pedagogical capacities. Lightfoot and Maurer (2014) highlight practical ways in which European Studies degrees can deliver high quality teaching. They include the use of non-classroom learning environments (such as Facebook and webinars); simulations; study trips and exchanges; and student-student interaction. Crucially, in exploiting these pedagogical tools, Lightfoot and Maurer (2014: 2) emphasise that: "[their] full potential is best harnessed when the activity is smoothly integrated in the overall course design". In other words, learning objectives, assessment and feedback must be aligned and meaningful. Ishiyama (2013) identifies under-utilised active learning techniques, such as PBL and team-based learning, which are appropriate to the political science classroom and large classroom settings, and which are also less costly than traditional forms of active learning focused on simulation exercises. These represent broad-based findings which have implications for the delivery of programmes. There are also many other pedagogical innovations which have a narrower application at the level of individual modules and include experimentation with music (Hawn 2013); board games (Bridge 2014); blogs (Sjoberg 2013); films (Bostock 2011, Gokcek and Howard 2013); play (Farrelly 2013); Twitter (Blair 2013); audience response systems (ARS) (Gormley-Heenan and McCartan 2009); etc.

Lightfoot and Gormley-Heenan (2012) point to three substantial challenges academics face in teaching politics and IR international relations (IR), a subject area which is central to many European Studies programmes. These include: the ways in which the subject matter can change rapidly sometimes entailing profound implications for sub-disciplines and by extension teaching; the impact of the nature of academic publishing which often involves a time-lag in the production of analysis of events and developments which academics are expected to teach; and the impact of political activism (among staff and students) on the pedagogical endeavour. This is coupled with pressures for programmes to fit the employability agenda and to instil key transferable skills. The challenges are immense but they do not necessarily require radical change. Indeed, they potentially provide an opportunity for European Studies to assert its status as a premier field of third level study in Ireland – one which is not just intellectually rigorous, but skills based and socially useful. This can be accomplished by using research, experience and best practice from elsewhere to inform a reassessment of not just the content of European Studies programmes in Ireland, but also the pedagogical tools and techniques upon which programmes rely. Pioneering a programme based learning environment constructed on this basis provides a unique opportunity for European Studies in Ireland to establish itself as a pedagogical leader.

CONCLUSION

Universities have rarely faced such profound challenges. In Ireland, the challenges may be even more pronounced given the severity of the economic crisis. Importantly, however, it is necessary to be aware that these challenges are not just ones of a resource/financial nature, rather they are much deeper than this. Irish President, Michael D. Higgins (2014) put it thus: "The universities have a great challenge in the questions that are posed now, questions that are beyond ones of a narrow utility". In the same speech, the President alludes to the need for a greater pluralism in the academic disciplines that inform "European expertise". The complex nature of today's world and the acute challenges facing societies, economies and political systems demand that universities play a more

determined and thoughtful role in instilling knowledge and skills. European Studies is potentially well-placed to meet this objective, but arguably there is a need to match promise with reality.

European Studies, as a discrete area of study at higher education level, takes a number of forms in Ireland. The Irish suite of European Studies programmes may vary in terms of content and emphasis, but they all offer quality educational experiences. In recent years however, all programmes (bar that offered by TCD) have experienced difficulties in attracting students. This is despite the capacity for such programmes to produce the type of graduate needed in today's increasingly complex working environment. All offer multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary instruction. They include Erasmus and work placement opportunities and they utilise some novel teaching tools in terms of simulation exercises and study trips. There is, nevertheless, more which European Studies programmes might offer students. Greater pedagogical experimentation is warranted. Opportunities to support new and novel teaching activities exist in networks like those facilitated by Jean Monnet and national/international professional associations. In the case of Jean Monnet, financial support is also available. Ireland's European Studies community, however, is disparate and this impacts negatively on its ability to sell the strengths of European Studies programmes to potential students and to exploit opportunities for enhancing the European Studies learning experience.

Utilising a diversity of pedagogical tools and techniques; tapping into networks and financial supports; building a cohesive Irish European Studies community; and communicating the merits of the European Studies model of education are important means of strengthening the vitality of this branch of Irish higher education. Many of these imperatives fit with national and international educational objectives and strategies. Although the prospects of aligning the European Studies field with troublesome market-driven agendas may be disquieting, the impact of a strong and appealing programme of study combined with a cohesive community of scholars may in fact provide an important bulwark against objectionable external pressures and forces. Operationalising new ideas, initiatives and strategies at the programme level does not necessarily constitute a paradigmatic shift, but it does, at least to some extent, reconceptualise the European Studies educational experience in Ireland. It requires that academics be bold, brave and critical and that they foster new forms of innovation, creativity and dynamism in terms of their engagement with students, colleagues, programmes and society. Success in this regard will cement the future of European Studies as an intrinsically important dimension of Irish higher education.

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[1] The seven Irish universities are: Dublin City University (DCU). National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Cork (UCC), University College Dublin (UCD), and University of Limerick (UL).

[2] Where a student qualifies for a higher education grant, this fee is paid by the state. Students are awarded grant assistance on the basis of a means-tested process which aims to support those in lower socio-economic categories.
[3] Trinity College Dublin (TCD) is an exception here. The university was set up in part to consolidate the rule of the Tudor monarchy in Ireland, and it was seen as the university of the Protestant ascendancy for much of its history. In response to a changing Ireland, the university repositioned itself to become a non-denominational institution during the 1800s. Catholics were in fact permitted to enter and to take degrees from as early as 1793, however, it was 1970 before the Catholic Church in Ireland lifted the episcopal 'ban' which had long prevented Catholics from attending TCD. Unlike other Irish universities, therefore, the Catholic influence has traditionally been less apparent and less influential for TCD,
[4] Points are calculated using Leaving Certificate exam results. The Leaving Certificate is a two year secondary school programme which prepares students for working life or further study. Approximately 55,000 students sit an average of seven Leaving Certificate subject exams annually. Each subject exam grade corresponds directly to a number of points e.g. an A1 grade in any higher level subject corresponds to 100 points, a B1 grade earns students 85 points, etc. The CAO system only considers a student's six best subjects and calculates their total points on this basis.
[5] The CAO points system has been revised a number of times since the CAO service was first offered in 1977. The current CAO points system was introduced in 1998.
[6] In second year, students were required to specialise in one area – options included law, business (insurance), political science, social research or languages. For some students, UL's BA European Studies programme was seen as an alternative means of pursuing a law degree as entry points were lower than for the stand-alone law degree programmes,
[7] These figures include two higher education institutions in Northern Ireland, namely Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster.
[8] The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a system of ten levels. Each level is based on nationally agreed standards of knowledge, skill and competence i.e. what an individual is expected to know, understand and be able to do following successful completion of a process of learning. Further information on the ten levels is available at http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/about_NFQ/framework_levels_award_types.html.
[9] The Jean Monnet Key Actions 1 award financial support for a range of positions, networks and actions including: Jean Monnet Chairs; 'Ad personam' Jean Monnet Chairs; Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence; European modules; associations of professors and researchers; information and research activities; and Jean Monnet multilateral research groups.

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Research Article

Engagement as an Educational Objective

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Abstract

Few politics modules encourage research based learning to generate research and evidence for policy debate.This example draws from a final year undergraduate module that explores Britain's relationship with the EU to asesses the pedagogic role of policy engagement on student learning, motivation and reflection. It argues that engagement with pratitioners creates a cognitive disequilibrium within students that enables them to learn.In practical terms this means that applying concepts to empirical problems in seminars, lectures, offline resources and assessments allows students to demonstrate originality and rigour in their work that is more easily rewarded with higher grades.Furthermore practitioner engagement offers motivational factors such as achievement, recognition and employability.The costs to this approach include the preparation of additional teaching resources and additional teaching to provide high levels of support to the students.

Keywords

Pedagogy; Cognitive Disequilibrium; motivation; practitioner engagement; Britain and the EU; teaching European studies

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While there may be good democratic reasons for political institutions to engage with young people, these engagements can also have considerable educational value for research based learning in political science.Specifically by introducing a standard political science curriculum as a set of policy problems students are forced to reconsider their interpretations of academic literature and concepts. Rather then validating these literature and concepts against more literature and concepts, they have to consider how well the literature and concepts apply in practice to real life problems. This is described as a "cognitive disequilibrium" that triggers learning (Maclellan & Soden 2004). This paper reviews some of the issues of the above strategy and describes how they have been applied in a standard level three module on Britain and the EU at the University of Leeds. The aim of the paper is to describe the approach in relation to the literature on Higher Education (HE) pedagogy, to demonstrate how the module works to create and exploit this cognitive disequilibrim in the students and goes on to discuss the kinds of support that enable students to thrive in response to these challenges.Throughout the paper the empahsis is on identifying lessons that are transferable and applicable to other social science modules.

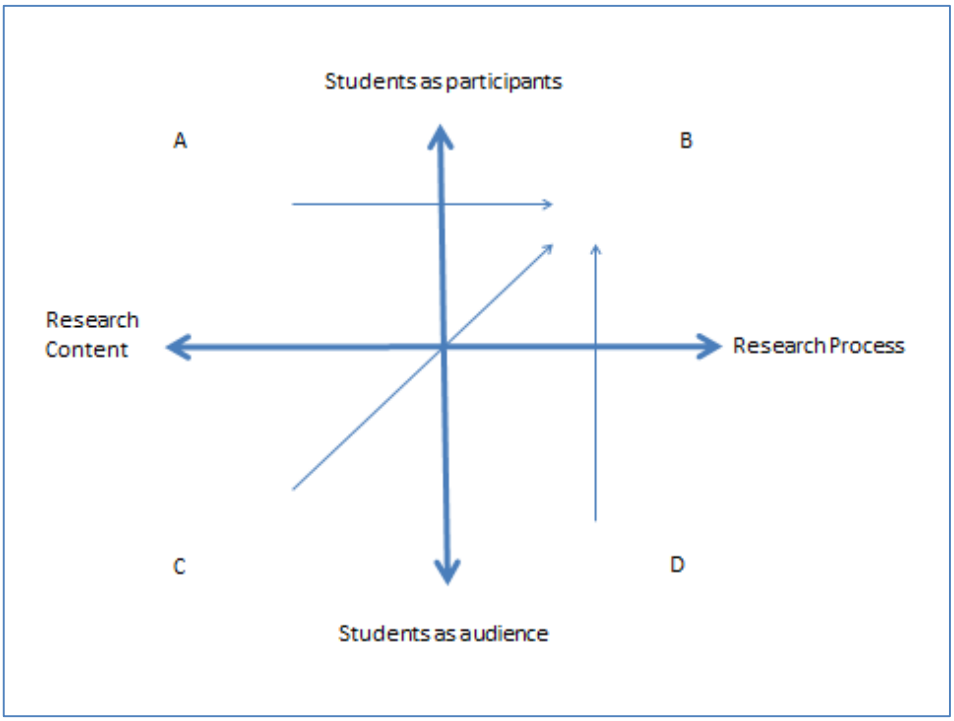
THE PEDAGOGIC RATIONALE FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Changes in the higher education sector have affected how we teach politics.The pressure to teach fee paying students from diverse social backgrounds in ways that make them both critical and employable (eg Hale 2008)has challenged politics' pedagogic fooprint of lectures and seminars and focused more on the students themselves, a focus long practiced and debatedin other disciplines (Rachman 1987; Bates & Rowland 1988).More recent work has reflected on the balance between student, teacher and topic and focused less on the individual than the moment of interaction.Rather than seeing HE tutors as constrained by the demands of the marketised HE Sector, tutors should let go of traditional practices and become entangled with students in the pursuit of knowledge about their subject or even

to realise radical political change (Mcabe & O'Connor 2014; Hobson & Morrison-Saunders 2013; Giroux 2004).

One particuarly interesting development has been the rise in research based learning for students (eg Healey et al. 2010).This assumes that we want students to be active participants in the generation of knowledge rather than passive audiences who receive it.This shift in teaching is illustrated graphically in the Healey matrix beneath.In the bottom left hand corner (C) of fig. 1 students receive research content passively as an audience, for example by listening to a lecture that reviews the main literature on a subject.Students critically engage with published research content by reviewing literature (A).They also discuss methodology and theories of knowledge (D).All of these forms of learning are brought to bear when they actively research empirical material (B).

Figure 1: Healey's Research Teaching Nexus



Delivering student research skills is therefore a combination of increasing the student, rather than teacher, centredness of the teaching and of developing the practice of research, rather than the incorporation ofknowledge.Redefining "student vs teacher", "learning vs knowledge" dichotomies has generated long standing debate over the relationship between teachers and students in HE(Rachman 1987; Kember 1997).A wide range of literature now exists that describes a suite of practices for student engagment including inquiry led teaching (Justice et al. 2009; Levy & Petrulis 2009) and the use of placements in politics programmes (Curtis et al. 2009). At Warwick University a study of politics placements demonstrated that treating placements as research led,rather than as work experience (Curtis 2012) had dramatic effects on student motivation and final performance (Sherrington et al. 2008).

In University College Cork tutors went to considerable lengths to present an engaging, relevant and politically significant opportunity for students to engage with (Buckley & Reidy 2014). Their engagement with politics programme had three primary aims:

1. "Train students directly in policy research and writing skills.

2. Enable students to participate in a national debate on the choice of electoral system, demonstrating their mastery of the subject area.

3. Provide a forum in which students, politicians, academics and citizens could engage collectively in policy discussion." (2014:5)

Against the backdrop of one of the worst economic crises in Irish history students were invited to present 5 minute contributions to national political elites on how future political leaders would be selected. This would allow them to demonstrate their technical knowledge of the single transferrable voting system and of the operation of the parliamentary system as a whole. In addition they were also encouraged to draft an article for publication in a new peer reviewed journal designed for undergraduates and by undergraduates in conjunction with staff. For those who participated in the project it was a career high at the University. However the evaluation of the project indicated concern that only 8 students responded to the challenge, despite the quality of the interaction offered and the staff resources dedicated to the project (ibid).The authors suggest that the low take up may have been on account of a number of issues. First there was an understandable lack of confidence in students who were concerned about presenting their work to a committee or professional politicians. There was also a tight time line for students to produce reports in order to make a timely submission given the deadlines that the committee was following. Finally the additional workload that students face both as undergraduates and often as employees needing to generate income to fund their studies (ibid).

Clearly there are great opportunities for using engagement to create spaces in which students and tutors can embrace the excitement of exploring and discovering new ideas through research led teaching. They also offer opportunities for new dialogues and even radical pedagogy. The Cork example demonstrates that elite level political practitioners were capable of and interested in finding out what students think about issues of great constitutional significance. Perhaps the low take up could have been addressed if the project was delivered in a module whose objectives were aligned to the student and teacher interests in policy engagement (Biggs 1999; Larkin & Richardson 2013)? Module aims could be designed to focus on building student confidence and research skills, engagement could be integrated into the workload of the module and student assessments could be submitted and marked in line with the practitioners' timeframe.

But how can we be sure that such activities are no more than a gimmick? Could this form of activity be little more than a public relations opportunity to excite the Vice Chancellor and plump up CVs? Does it not just distract star struck students from learning critical material and offer them up as the youth vote to an ambivalent political elite interested only in consulting students to shore up their tenuous positions? Let us retain some of these questions to the end of the paper. But before we do we can at least discuss the pedagogic value of policy engagement that both flattens the student teacher hierarchy and motivates them both to attack difficult challenges that raise the likelihood of them increasing their final scores. The next section examines how practitioner engagement creates an unfamiliarity in students that offers great opportunities for teaching, learning and enjoyment in the political studies.

COGNITIVE DISEQUILIBRIUM AND CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT THROUGH PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

One of the main tasks of effective teaching is to challenge student epistemes.This is central to the process of learning:

> Individuals' cognitive schemes allow them to establish an orderliness and predictability in their experiential worlds. When experience does not fit with the individual's schemes a cognitive disequilibrium results, which triggers the learning process. This disequilibrium leads to adaptation. Reflection on successful adaptive operations leads to new or modified concepts, contributing to re-equilibration (Maclellan & Soden 2004:2)

In other wrods, shaking students from their comfort zones by presenting them with a different perspective is a valuable teaching resource because it forces students to reflect on the challenge, adapt and so learn.Traditionally we might do this by presenting a competing normative framework to critically engage with mainstream approaches.So while we being our modules with mainstream approaches to European integration, such as liberal intergovernmental approaches, we may try and risk more critical perspectives later on in the module by presenting new lenses based on Marxism or feminism.This uses literature to critically engage literature and so reflects and can esily sustain the pedagogic signature of political science: it can be taught in lecture halls and seminar (Murphy & Reid 2006).

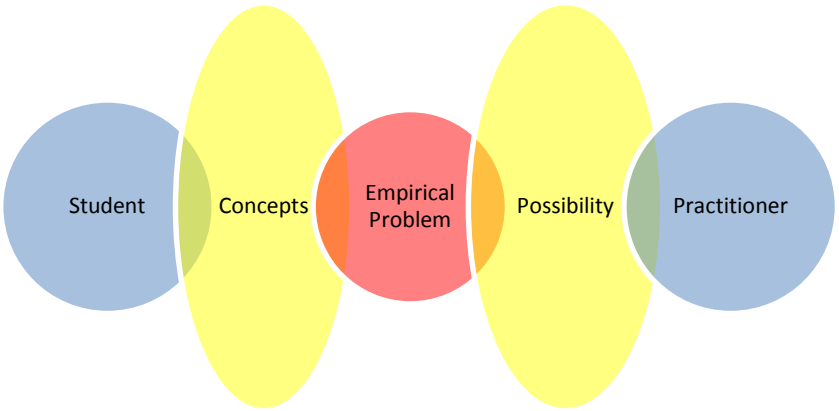
By pure chance the author of this paper had 10 years experience training pre EU accession candidate country officals on the EU. These training sessions involved delegates from a wide range of professional backgrounds[1].In some ways their syllabus was similar to that of University students as they were taught about similar policies (eg Economic and Monetary Union, Single Market, Common Agricultural Policy etc) and issues (accountability, democracy etc) typically covered in an EU politics module.

However there were also important differences. First the practitioners were interested in the policies of the EU to do different things. They needed knowledge to resolve specific practical and institutional problems, rather than test theoretically informed puzzles.Second practitioners required different sorts of information to students.While some conceptual frameworks were helpful, both for context and for clarity, the priority was for succinct, accurate and credible information that could be used to inform effective decision making. Usually this was in the form of policy documents, formal decision making procedures and legal or quasi- legal texts. These materials did not offer interpretation nor were they organised conceptually.

Finally in making their decisions policy officals would be rewarded for their expediency, strategy and immediacy rather than the intellectual apparatus behind their answers.Students, would be rewarded for methodological rigour andtheoretical clarity. Students and policy practitioners therefore would observe an empirical policy problem through different lenses: the former through concepts the latter through the limits of possibility[2]. See figure two.

In this module the aim is to present the material from, as far as possible, “both sides” of the problem. The pedagogic aim of this is to create cognitive disequilibrium that the students will learn to overcome through the use of concepts and research skills taught on the module.This problem based method is therefore different to one that uses case studies to illustrate contemporary issues (eg Craig & Hale 2008). The focus here is on using problem based approaches to provide opportunities “… to explore potentially daunting theoretical and philosophical questions in an accessible way” (Craig & Hale 2008:166).The development of inductive and deductive case studies, with the former based on stories from practitioners and the latter identifying issues from concepts assumes a causality between the material and the concepts which structures the interactions between case materials and student in a way that may limit the cognitive disequilibrium so important to the learning process.

Figure 2: The lenses of students and practitioners



The module beneath also selected materials on an inductive and deductive basis.The themes of the module address concepts like soveriegnty and empirically pertinent themes like euroscepticism.But it stops short of providing case studies. Rather the themes and materials were linked by questions that propose a relationship for the students to investigate.For example the lecture on the UK's accession discusses Dell's idea of a foreign office mistake (Dell 1995) and introduces a question that the students must answer through reading core texts.But it also directs students to answer the same question by reading empirical documents from the National Archive website and suggests that they supplement their researchusing historical newpaper archives like *The Times Gale Digital Archive*.These are not case studies but open questions and so do not offer the cognitive certainty of a steer by the tutor or a limited range of documentation. The questions are left open for discussion in the seminars.

The cognitive disequilibrium comes from trying to answer the same question from the two perspectives.Stephen George's assertion that the UK is an Awkward Partner is hard to see in evidence from, for example, minutes of the Council of Ministers because even abstentions from agreement are seldom recorded for the UK.It does not make sense and this creates a disequilibrium between how we understand an enduring relationship between the UK and the EU and the evidence in front of us. This forces us to think more critically and so presents a useful opportunity to explore the methodological weaknesses of George's Awkward Partner thesis or to consider why, despite these weaknesses, the idea has had such an enduring influence on the disipline.

Bigg's concept of "constructive alignment" was used to link the various parts of the module around this tension.Initially developed to show how linking clearly stated learning objectives with learning and assessment activities could help to integrate students from diverse backgrounds (Biggs 1999) this approach also focuses teaching onto the actions of the student, encouraging them to construct their own knowledge inside and outside the classroom (Wang et al. 2013).Constructive alignment identifies learning outcomes and designs learning resources and assessments that focus on delivering these outcomes explicitly. If engaging with policy practictioners is a module aim it therefore needs to be integrated into other objectives, like skills development and assessment. If the module is designed to create cognitive disequilibrium then there need to be resources in place to support the students through these challenges and a strong incentive structure to encourage them to go through with it.

In the following section we demosntrate how the concepts of cognitive disequilibria and constructive alignment inform theorganisation and delivery of the module in question.

INTRODUCING THE MODULE

"Britain and the EU" (PIED 3310) is a final year undergraduate module at the University of Leeds.The module aims include developing research skills and offering evidence to policy makers. Last year, for example, ten students submitted reports to the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices (FCO) Review of the Balance of Competence in a range of policy areas and their submissions will be formally considered and acknowledged in the final reports. The year before four students presented their reports to the House of Lords Select Committee on EU Affairs, one of the UK's most reputable venues for discussing Britain's relationship. Their reports all addressed a question similar to that which the Committee had been addressing: "Is EU Enlargement in the British Interest?" These students discussed their reports with Lord Boswell, Lord Trimble, Lord Hannay and Baron Maclennan in the House of Lords in May 2013.In both cases the students were informed at the beginning of the module of the expectation that their work would be submitted to an elite policy audience.

Figure 3: Module Objectives

- To introduce the complexity of the UK's relationship with the EU;
- Study key periods, issues and phenomena of the UK's relationship with the EU, its impact on UK politics and on the EU;
- Develop skills in the gathering, analysis and presentation of empirical data;
- To apply and critically engage with competing conceptual frameworks of Britain's relationship with the EU;
- Offer evidence to the FCO's ongoing "Review of the Balance of Competences"

This presented a "high challenge" environment for students to work in that was alien to their previous experiences. In order to make this a constructive experience high levels of support were therefore required (Larkin and Richardson 2013). The module used a range of learning support to deliver skills to the students that were in addition to the standard 11 lectures and 11 seminars of the one semester length module. Blended learning and problem solving were used throughout the module to develop the familiarity of students with the challenges of interpreting empirical information in the classroom.

There were two forms of assessment. The first of these was a 1500 word report that required students to collate, analyse and present data on a specific policy related topic.Usually only one question was offered and was designed with policy makers in mind or in consultation with them, with the work submitted after the midterm reading week in accordance with the practitioner's timeframe.The aim of this assessment is to baptise the students in the use of empirical data in its many forms (speeches, archives, statistics etc).

The other 50% of the final mark was awarded to a project submitted at the end of the semester. This 3500 words project assessed the students' ability to contextuailse a research question and test it using empirical information.Students were encouraged to consider how this was done in journal articles and to mimick some of the presentational and organisational characterisitcs of a journal article.This pair of assessments were specifically designed to build on the research skills and analytical confidence that the students acquired through the mid term report.

ALIGNING THE STUDENT WITH THE MODULE

The module alignment began with the students. In order to demonstrate why the aims and outcomes related to each other it was important that a connection was first made between the teaching structure and the students themselves. In addition to the usual informal kick off discussions about Britain and its relationship with the EU, the first seminar session with the students invited them to reflect on what kind of learner they are. This was done by asking students to explain to their partners how they would assemble a piece of flat pack furniture (the "IKEA test"): would they follow the instructions, call a friend or "have a go". This enabled students to identify with their different strengths (as "readers" (who follow the instructions), "talkers" (who call a friend) and "doers" (who jump straight in)) and thereby encouraged them to reflect on the skills they have and/or need. As well as encouraging them to think about their strengths and weaknesses this exercise also explains to the students how the different elements of the module fit together. There were three parts: a "reading element", a "doing" element and a "discussion" element each organised around a set of questions.

The weekly questions were developed in the lectures to guide the students in two key exercises. First the questions directed students on what answers to find in the literature from the module guide, which often included a chapter from a textbook and two or three key articles. By reading the literature and assessing how it related to the lecturer's question (and any of their own) students actively engaged with the literature and came prepared for seminar discussions to discuss how the literature answers the question.

For the second exercise, the same lecture questions were used to organise web links. These were administered through an online "virtual learning environment" that students accessed in preparation for their seminars. The links took them to empirical resources such as Minutes of Cabinet meetings in the National Archives digitised collection, key speeches of PMs on Europe (in text and video), procedures of the EU select committee homepage, Council Consilium monthly summaries, Commission Annual Work Programmes, archives, videos etc. Students could then try to answer the same questions by referring to the empirical material. In doing so they were encouraged to consider the quality of the data and what it meant in relation to the literature they had read. The intention of the links to empirical information was to enable students to identify how (if at all) the empirical information answered the questions of the week.

The third dimension of learning – the discussion - integrated the doing and the reading under tutor supervision in the seminars. These were organised as follows. The first five minutes involved a discussion of current affairs and stories, usually led by a student, and related to the issue of the week or the module more generally. Students were encouraged to offer their views and analysis. Next the lecture was discussed and clarifications of literature or the lecture provided. Following this the structure was looser with students encouraged to bring what they have done to the discussion. This may be readings that offered an interpretation of the question or policy documents and speeches that provided information on the contingencies surrounding the event. In this way theories and concepts from the literature could be discussed alongside empirical material printed from the weblinks. This allowed the class to interrogate how effective the theories or concepts were, what their weaknesses may have been and whether this was because of failings in the concepts or the quality of the data.

For example, in the session on sovereignty the lecture concluded by asking "What does sovereignty mean in the UK and how is it defended in relation to the EU?" The literature explained how "de jure" and "de facto" sovereignty are organised and the web links take the students to the Parliament's scrutiny system to explore "de jure" sovereignty in the procedures of the UK parliament. We could also discuss how this 2011 EU Act amended this process and what this told us about the management of Parliamentary sovereignty by the core executive. To understand "de facto" sovereignty (or autonomy) we explored the Council Of Ministers (aka CONSILLIUM) "Monthly Summary of Council Acts". This data recorded how member states voted in the Council of Ministers in the legislative

process and offered brief explanations as to why these positions were held that could be explored further by students or in the class[3].In the seminars the conceptual and practical implications of the coexistence of these two forms of sovereignty were discussed and illustrated through reference to the literature and committee reports. Through these discussions we were also able to discuss the research processes, why certain links were chosen and what makes the available material credible.

Students were therefore actively participating in research and dealing with empirical data in its most raw state. They were relying on their judgement and research skills to analyse the material and to draw effective conclusions. This would all help to develop their confidence in handling data and interpreting it in relation to the assessment questions. These were skills assessed in the report. This evaluated the students on the quality of the data that they accumulated, the synthesis and analysis that they undertook on that data and the efficacy of their presentation. Through this they demonstrated that they are able to make sense of the material in relation to its context.

PROMOTING DEEP REFLECTION

Reflection was encouraged as students considered how the material related to what they had read, discovered and discussed. But by privileging the empirical reality of the practitioner perspective there was a danger that the understanding would remain shallow. In order to encourage deeper reflection students needed to be required to reimagine how the world might be or in this case how the material that the students were analysing could be newly interpreted through an alternative analytical approach or a new perspective (Ryan 2013).This form of deeper reflection was developed through splitting the module into three sections – history, process and policy. The historical dimensions to UK/EU relations were presented broadly at face value, with the focus being on trying tested approaches using archive material from the Public Record Office's digital collection or speeches.These related a wide range of factors together but did not do seek systematic underpinning explanations that linked them together.When we discussed the processes of UK scrutiny the political biases become evident in the institutional procedures that govern EU policy making. The core executive was clearly preeminent in this process, for example, raising questions as to the ways that the EU was deployed by political leaders. The final section of themodule addressed specific policy issues such as the economy, foreign policy and regional policies. These were all intended to reveal the imbalance of interests in EU policy making and the social and economic asymmetries that are the consequences of the UK's political system.Later lectures on UK and EU foreign policy for example, introduced the idea of structure by demonstrating how changes in the international system contributed to new EU agendas and influenced the position that the UK took on them. The lecture on the economic dimension of the UK/EU relationship built on the previous lesson of structure to place far greater emphasis on class relations and the role of the EU in redefining and confirming new class compromise in the UK.

By the end of the semester, and as students prepared their projects, there was much deeper reflection on the earlier sections of the module – the history and the processes – in the light of these discussions.Students were then able to explore and critique the concepts used in those earlier discussions by re examining the concepts against the empirical material available for that week.

STUDENT MOTIVATION

Figure 4: Student motivation

> *"I was pleasantly surprised by how much real discussion took place between us students and the Lords over the various topics we had each covered in our reports. I left [the House of Lords] with a feeling of great satisfaction and achievement" Britain and the EU student 2013*

As the module demanded a lot of the students, some consideration has been made to how the module aims motivate students. As observed in the Cork project, motivation is key if students are to benefit from the opportunities presented to them. The students were therefore motivated in three distinct ways.

First there is a specific goal orientated commitment to teaching excellence with the specific focus on delivering results. The introductory lecture identified how "teaching to get firsts" was one of the module's organisational principles. Students were shown how testing concepts and using carefully selected data enabled them to comply with the marking criteria for a first class grade which, the marking schedule identifiedwould require "the sophisticated selection, interpretation and analysis of evidence and a high level ability to relate this to theory" (POLIS 2014:26).The use of reports leading into projects would build on the fluency and confidence that the students gained allowing them to make claims in the delivery of their work that matched the descriptors for first class work.The students were also informed that the module had delievered very high levels of externally validated first class grades for the students (in excess of 20% for the past three years).

However not all students are motivated or interested in first class results so in addition to goal orientation students were also motivated by the potential of the module to acknowledge the importance of their research (both to themselves and to policy debates).This would ensure that students "realise that their judgements are respected" (Maclellan 2008: 417) (see figure 4). This was promoted through discussions of current affairs at the start of each seminar in which students expressed their views of relevant stories. These discussions would sometimes drift into the main part of the seminar as the students and tutor became entangled in the issues of the topic. In a formal sense the students recognised that a significant amount of trust was placed in them to deliver work that was of quality for professional policy makers. Almost without exception they have risen to this challenge.

Some of the students did find the experience of writing a report, often for the first time, anxiety inducing. Indeed the cognitive disequilibrium would require this. But this anxiety was discussed in a number of seminars, and the strain that this placed on students discussed and countered with encouragement and an explanation of how this related to their learning process. Support was provided collectively (in the form of regular discussions of report writing in seminars, additional lectures outside the teaching calendar).Once students had completed the report they became adept at taking on the new challenge of the project as the module progressed to present different challenges (Maclellan 2008).

THE ROLE OF ENGAGEMENT

What does engagement with policy practitioners bring to the educational experience? Other teaching techniques like student research projects or problem based learning offer students the opportunity to

develop their research skills. Political institutions offer a wide range of opportunities for students to access the decision making process both as an audience (most offer packages for students) and as participants (more irregularly as through consultations like the EU's "5 Ideas for a Younger Europe" (EESC 2013)).Students can "pretend" to be policy makers in simulations that provide an alternative experience and can visit and view political actors through the press, public events and even biographies.

The main benefit of using engagement as an educational objective is that it helped to integrate the diversity of activities in the module. Students are pelted with learning support opportunities and competing forms of pedagogy and websites that are intended to empower the student. But rarely are they given the opportunity to express their own views and to act on their own judgement without the "benefit" of text books, authoritative articles or case studies, authors and concepts. The focus on engagement as an objective enabled students to use the range of resources available in relation to their specific tasks of writing the report and project.

The module was designed to normalise and exploit the cognitive disequilibrium that students experienced when presented with empirical information by engaging with new materials from the first seminar. The historical archive demonstrates the uncertainties and complexities that policy makers were forced to work under. As the students worked through the different weeks they become familiar with understanding the limits of both political action as well as the limitations of academic interpretations of events and developed their own research skills to manage the uncertainties these produced. Once the report was completed the students were able to use these research skills and improved confidence to take on major debates in the literature, thereby generating new knowledge and higher grades in their projects.

Central to the approach was the generation of cognitive disequilibrium by incorporating the lens of the practitioner in the interpretation of the literature. Rather than following perceived wisdom presented in textbooks they were forced to challenge assumptions and seek new evidence. The different form of assessment also forced them to rethink how they would structure and undertake their work.

The engagement with practitioners motivated students by acknowledging their voice, developing a challenge they could overcome and improving their grades. Yet more work needs to be done if the interaction is to be genuinely political rather than pedagogic in value. Students were constrained by the nature of the report (which focused on empirical collation and analysis) rather than for example the critical literatures valued in the project. The tutor moderates the submissions and there were issues relating to the dependence of the tutor on the policy elites for access and future engagements. So these are not the "true voices" of students and perhaps working with more specific groups speaking to power would improve this.

The dependence on the cooperation of the policy elites could present an additional "teachable moment" in which students could reflect on why their reports were not influential in political debates. This would allow them to consider what the components of influence might be in relation to European policy and explore a wide range of political science approaches on advocacy coalitions, issue framing, agenda setting, policy learning etc. In addition students could draw on critical political economy approaches to highlight hegemonic ideas and dominant societal interests in policy making. This would encourage further reflective consideration by students especially. Currently the reports and projects are on separate issues but the reports could build directly into projects with exam board approval.

At this stage there is insufficient data to evaluate the effect of the methods on student performance generally. As mentioned above, students score a high level of firsts in relation to other final year students in POLIS. They also give positive feedback on the module and offer positive quotes (see fig 4?). However a better test would be to see better performance in other final year work by students

who have taken the module. Future research could expand on this through and examination of the performance of the PIED 3310 cohort of student dissertations with their peers.

THE PRACTICAL DIMENSION OF PRACTITIONER INVOLVEMENT

A final word is necessary on managing practitioner engagement. In the model outlined in this paper the involvement of practitioners is seen as important in the production of reports. Certainly there are benefits to this in terms of the recognition for students, currency of issues, and the profile that their collaboration might bring to the exercise and to the module. Organising the entire module so that the timetable converges with the rhythms of the practitioners will always therefore present a challenge. There are also practical issues in the presentation of evidence to policy makers. They will prefer evidence in a particular style (e.g. less than x pages, formal language etc.) and certainly value clarity, brevity and synthesis. Parliamentary bodies offer guidance that can help here. But the take up of ideas by practitioners is likely to be influenced by who they are coming from rather than the quality of the argument alone. Practitioners cannot grade papers under University regulations, but they can indicate strengths that could be incorporated into future evaluation frameworks.

There are also costs to working to the interests and timeframes of policy makers. Frequently the timeframes do not coincide, or place additional pressure on already tight University schedules. More importantly the potential for withdrawal (or explicit or implicit threat to do so) may limit the learning opportunities of the students. Students need to be able to submit work that is “critical” in its engagement, either to the practitioners or to other actors in the policy process in addition to those subject to their critiques.

This raises issues relating to the ethics of students practitioner engagement. Is it ethical for students to critique practitioners who are offering support in teaching outcomes? Is it ethical for practitioners to use students to legitimate policy decisions in which they do not have a formal “interest”? What, if any, understanding should there be between the users and producers of the reports and how should this be managed? Can critical work damage the reputation of the University or the practitioner institution perhaps fallaciously if students are less careful in their analysis than a peer reviewed article might be? If so at what point does the tutor block submission or edit sections? Furthermore there are issues relating to the amount of stress that students can be put under by this approach and whether this should be done by restricting the scope of the exercise or defining its limits more clearly.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined some of the pedagogic issues surrounding student engagement with real policy debates in a taught module format. By integrating the aims and objectives of the module towards practitioner engagement a number of advantages become clear. First the epistemic certainties of the average undergraduate can be challenged in a productive way. More research is required to test alternative explanations. For example: is the benefit acquired through just using a different form of assessment to traditional essays or exams, do the high marks of the module “select” high performing students, does the focus on teaching for firsts make a difference?

Second student motivation could also benefit from the engagement focus of the module. In addition to goal oriented motivators students are also experiencing confirmation that their voice matters. This is repeated throughout the module from chats about the news in the seminars to the potential to present to the House of Lords. Finally the module encourages reflection. The topics covered are of current interest and presented often to contrast to the received wisdom in the media and common debate. But more importantly the module is structured to encourage deeper learning and reflection

through the course of the module as the first weeks' presentation of historical fact gives way to more nuanced theoretically informed analysis. When students turn to their projects for their final assessment they are then able to reflect on the earlier sections of the module and to reinterpret the data there in relation to more critical constructs and research questions.

There are also additional weaknesses in the module. At present the module is very much problem solving in its engagement with policy elites rather than critical. With nine UK universities offering "Britain and the EU" modules (and possible similar modules in other member state universities) there is scope for a far more extensive debate about the UK and the EU in an informed and younger electorate. There is also potential to extend the range of students involved to include students from other disciplines such as law and business. However as much EU legislation is technical in nature there could also be potential for cross engagement across faculties to scrutinise proposals and offer evidence at the regulatory impact assessment stage of the legislative process that the EU and many member states undertake (Radaelli et al. 2013).With almost 2.5 million students studying at UK universities there is great scope for further elaboration of Engagement as an educational objective.

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[1]These included Ministries of European Integration, the United Nations, World Bank Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, EU institutions and a wide range of other NGOs.

[2] There are other very important issues that also separate undergraduate teaching from the policy world, not least the importance of a concrete reality with sanctions and consequences, which a constructivist pedagogy, like "constructive alignment", would avoid.These issues and specifically the issue of the material or ideological nature of policy making presents many "teachable moments" not discussed here.

[3] Later in the module we may discuss how Euroscepticism has accompanied the rise of popular sovereignty through discussions of UK Independence Party (UKIP).

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Research Article

European Studies and Public Engagement: A Conceptual Toolbox

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Abstract

This article examines public engagement strategies for academics working in the field of European Studies. Should academics engage with the public? What are the most effective outreach strategies? And what are the implications for universities and departments? The article argues that engaging with the public should be considered an integral part for academics working on topics that relate to the European Union or European politics. The article has a theoretical and a practical dimension. The first part of the paper deals with the nature of public engagement, explaining why it is an important issue and how it differs from the mainstream understanding of public engagement. The practical part of the paper presents the idea of building an online presence through which academics can engage with the public debate both during periods of low issue salience and high issue salience. The final section includes a toolbox for academics as well as some thoughts on what universities and departments need to change in order to fulfil the public engagement function discussed in the first part of the paper.

Keywords

Public engagement; European studies; impact; teaching; learning; teaching European studies

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Recent years have seen a dramatic change in public perception of EU topics. The economic crisis in Europe, debates about the future of the eurozone, the EU's relations with Ukraine and Russia, TTIP, ACTA and even institutional questions such as the role of the European Parliament in the election of a new European Commission president have become widely discussed topics. The role of academics in these debates remains a contested issue. There is a view that academics have the responsibility to inform and – to a certain extent – shape the public debate on these issues. Others claim that academics should focus on research and teaching and should stay away from the public discourse. However, two factors have had a major impact on this debate and have made it almost impossible to stick to the idea that academics should stay in their ivory towers. The first factor is the changing nature of higher education systems in the UK but also across Europe. Universities and individual academics are increasingly evaluated by the societal impact of their research output. While there are numerous problems with the concept of impact, universities have started showing the relevance of their research output by creating impact stories that involve various public engagement elements. Seen from that perspective, public engagement is often perceived as yet another burden on academics. Unfortunately, this is the result of a basic flaw within the rather static public engagement agenda put forward by governments and universities alike; it is their sincere belief that there is only one definition of public engagement and it is implicitly expected that each individual, each university, each department does exactly the same. But these arguments underestimate the diversity in academia, they do not consider what it means in terms of costs, risks, time and workload and they do not take into account differences between individuals and universities. The second factor that fundamentally changed the role of how academics can get involved in the public debate is the possibilities brought by digital outreach tools and strategies. The digital revolution has not only changed personal communication habits, it also fundamentally changed the nature of political debates. Building an online presence is one of the most important and promising outreach strategies for academics in this new environment. This article presents a few ideas on how to get started and how academics can use established platforms and tools to engage with the public debate. The article has a theoretical and a practical dimension. The first part of the paper deals with the question of

what is public engagement, why it is an important issue and how it differs from the mainstream understanding of public engagement. The second part provides a set of practical recommendations for researchers. Although the article should be seen as part of the higher education debate in the UK, many of the issues raised are relevant for researchers across Europe. However, the article is a reflection on the current developments in the UK higher education system and may be more relevant for scholars working in UK universities. It is also worth noting that the topic should resonate with social - and political scientists who do not have a research interest in European issues.

WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

The definition of public engagement is closely linked to how we conceptualise the role of the university and its place within society. Is academia an end to itself or do scholars have a responsibility to serve the wider society? It is not the intention of this article to dive into this debate about the nature of academic research and scholarly traditions. However, fundamental questions about the role of scholars in the public arena are probably as old as the idea of universities and academic research themselves. Looking at the concept of public engagement we are faced with multiple overlapping debates and definitions that aim to answer two questions: What exactly is engagement? And who or what is the public?

Two main approaches inform the term engagement - notions of a scholarship of engagement and the idea of being a public intellectual. Both notions also define the way we can think about the "public". A starting point for the purpose of this article is the observation "that research that informs public deliberation and praxis is just as important as research that is of interest mainly to other academics" (Bridger et al 2011: 173). By acknowledging that the scholarly profession is partly linked to serving the public, we can establish that academics are by definition some sort of public providers of knowledge. This also corresponds with Ernest Boyer's paradigm of academic scholarship which he defines as a mixture of four "interlocking functions": a scholarship of discovery (research and knowledge production), a scholarship of integration (focus on context and interdisciplinary exchange), a scholarship of sharing knowledge (dissemination among peers and teaching) and the scholarship of engagement (service to the community) (Boyer 1996). The first three functions are linked to the more traditional way of looking at academia; the fourth function of engagement is adding an additional dimension to the definition of academia. Another consideration in this context is the nature of European Studies as an academic subject and its links to the wider social sciences. Thinking about the function of social science, Gerring and Yesnowitz observe that "social science is science for society's sake. These disciplines look to provide answers to questions of pressing concern, or questions that we think should be of pressing concern, to the general public" (Gerring and Yesnowitz 2006: p.112). Using this line of argumentation, it is not too difficult to establish why European studies is relevant to the general public. The effects and developments connected to European integration have become headline news across Europe. Issues connected to EU politics, the impact of EU policy, the future of the eurozone, phenomena such as euroscepticism or more institutional questions about the interaction of different institutions have become a constant feature of public discourse.

Defining engagement as a "service to the community" and "social science" as a "science for society" allows us to think about public engagement in a much broader sense. Engagement is always an individual choice and it is worth highlighting that, in fact, different activities can be labelled as engagement. Examples could include writing an op-ed for a national newspaper, editing *wikipedia*, writing a blog, advising community groups about how to work with the EU, visiting a local high school to explain EU politics, being part of an expert committee, a submission to a governmental report, a secondment posts in ministries, drafting a report for a think tank or a writing a book that aims at the non-academic market. This broader definition of (public) engagement can also resonate

with university departments as they can find an individual approach to engagement that creates a balance between institutional aims of the university and personal interests of academics.

Engagement in European Studies can also be justified by the current debate about the EU which often seems uniformed. A recent *Eurobarometer* survey found that Europeans have a severe lack of understanding when it comes to "knowledge about the EU": 47 % of European say they do not understand how the EU works. 46% of Europeans do not know or think it is "false" that members of the European Parliament are directly elected by citizens. (European Commission 2013). European Studies scholars across Europe are in a position to address this by subscribing to an agenda of public engagement.

The second set of concepts that spring to mind when looking at public engagement of academics is the idea of public intellectuals which relates more to the engagement in the public sphere and can be defined as a sub-category to the engagement argument presented above. Theoretically everyone can become a public intellectual, and over the years there have been numerous debates about the role of the so called public intellectuals. This article does not aim to replicate arguments on whether we need public intellectuals; it merely wants to point out that there is a long history of academics being present in the public debate. In order to look at the phenomenon from a more functional perspective, Lightman et al. (1999) define a public intellectual as someone who is “trained in a particular discipline (...) and who is on the faculty of a college or university. When such a person decides to write and speak to a larger audience than their professional colleagues, he or she becomes a "public intellectual"” (Lightman et al. 1999). However, the label public intellectual usually triggers all sorts of mostly negative connotations and many popular intellectuals are accused of dumbing down research and being more interested in media attention than rigorous academic research. Public intellectuals operate in a marketplace of ideas, which is indeed a market (Damrosch 1995), and thus follow certain principles that resemble markets. Attention seeking headlines, superficial synthesis instead of deep analysis, and controversy instead of moderation are just a few features that many would associate with this marketplace of ideas.

I would like to present an alternative, a more nuanced view of the public sphere that does not necessarily correspond to the view sketched out above. In order to this, it is useful to think of a differentiation in the public sphere. Using the example of European Studies we are basically dealing with a European Studies public sphere, a sphere that mainly deals with European issues. This differentiation continues on the personal level, as it corresponds to individual research interests. The public sphere for a researcher who is interested in EU environmental policy is different from the public sphere of a researcher dealing with eurosceptic parties. Although there is some degree of separation, we also have to realise that the public agenda is mainly events driven and each of those sub-sections can dominate the public discourse for a while. EU environmental policy is in the spotlight during a Climate Change summit and European Parliament elections are prominent in the news cycle when eurosceptic parties are headline news. This observation has significant implications on how to think about engagement in the public sphere, as it requires researchers to be flexible in their engagement with the general public. The level of engagement is linked to the news cycle and fluctuates between phases of high and low issue salience. Both extremes require different approaches as we are dealing not only with two different discourse environments, we are also faced with two very different target groups that are prominent in each scenario: a more expert target group during the cycle of low issues salience and the general public during the phase of the high issue salience. In practical terms researchers need to follow two different public engagement strategies; one for a period of low issue salience and another one for periods of high issue salience.

a) Public engagement during low issue salience

Low issues salience, ie when an issue is not considered important by the public, is one of the most common challenges for scholars working on EU topics. Although this is slowly changing, it is safe to argue that not all EU topics enjoy the same amount of public interest. In the aftermath of the European Parliament elections 2014, the issue of euroscepticism was understandably more important than EU environmental law. However, in terms of public engagement this is not necessarily a problem. Low issue salience allows researchers to focus on network- and reputation building. For many researchers these are already part of their routine. However, it may be useful to think about network building in a more strategic fashion. The aim should be to become an established source of expertise in the non-academic environment of the respective field of expertise. In other words, the specialised public sphere needs to get to know the name and the research interests of the scholar in question. One way to start this process is to carry out a mapping exercise that allows the identification of the key groups and individuals that act as gatekeepers in each area. Following the two examples from above, a researcher focusing on EU environmental law needs to think about the main journalists that cover environmental issues in the country he or she is based in - as well as a handful of journalists working on the EU level. The next step is to identify organisations or individuals that shape the debate – think tanks, NGOs, business organisations, trade unions etc – and regularly visit their events, follow them on social media and engage with them on a regular basis. The aim is to establish a researcher (or a department/project team) as source of expertise within a specialised public sphere. Organising public events that don't resemble academic conferences could be another idea to attract a wider audience. However, all those activities need follow-up strategies that keep the outside audience regularly informed about the work of the researcher(s). The most important (and cost effective) tools in this context are digital. Blogs, podcasts, videos, social media combined with regular and personalised emails are useful ways to stay in touch and start a conversation with the previously defined target group (see toolbox below for a more detailed description of those tools). Over time this will create a solid reputation for individual researchers and will allow the creation of a non-academic network. It can also be a promising strategy to use existing projects for public outreach or include public engagement strategies into new funding applications. It may not only increase the public footprint of the said project, but it may also be possible to raise additional funding to cover the costs for public outreach activities. The mix of what is effective depends however on the choices of the individual researcher, the institutional environment and the subject area in question.

b) Public engagement during high issue salience

High issue salience for general EU topics occur on a more regular basis but niche topics may only break into the mainstream once a decade. The public debate and the media usually revolve around events which often define high issue salience. Some of these events come as no surprise; such as summits, elections, new treaties, referendums, sessions of the European Parliament or anniversaries. Other events are however not that easy to predict such as scandals, wars, crisis, natural disasters or the media response to individual Commission proposals. In order to understand the public debates in the periods that generate a lot of public interest, it is useful think about how the media works in these situations - and how it relates to the low issue salience phase. In periods of high issue salience expertise is not only sought from trusted sources that are able to react quickly, it is also important for journalists and editors to know the likely main line of argument. One of the most sought after skills in these periods is the ability to explain complex issues in simple language. Academics that are known to have this skill will find it easier to talk to journalists and editors. However, there are close links to the period of low issue salience. Without having established a presence within the specialised public sphere during a period of low issue salience, it is difficult to engage with the media during a period of high issue salience. Editors tend to rely on established and

trusted contacts – or indeed *Google,* which points to the importance of a well-established online presence. In periods of high issue salience relevant research needs to be easily accessible, the website needs to look trustworthy and contact details should be easy to find. It is also helpful to have access to a body of already published articles on a particular subject, this helps for example to "recycle" certain ideas or republish articles with minimal changes. Another consideration is the length of the high issue salience period which can range from a day to several weeks. The longer this period takes, the more chances exist to engage with the debate. However, any contribution in this phase also involves careful planning. This is especially true for events that are part of the normal news cycle and it is worth preparing a few interventions or planning an event that corresponds to the real life event. These so called "media pegs" are useful for structuring public engagement activities for academics. It can also be useful for departments to keep a calendar of upcoming relevant "media pegs" and integrate them into the general planning of departmental events. In terms of substance, "media pegs" can be used to link research to current events by explaining the background, giving an overview of the main actors involved or simply by offering a fact checking service. Interventions by academics in this phase do not necessarily need to set the agenda, instead academics should inform and provide the background to current events.

Periods of high and low issue salience are interconnected. If someone is inactive in the low issue salience phase it is unlikely that he or she will have success during a period of high issue salience, especially if one wants to get picked up by the mainstream media. However, there is also an element of self-initiative involved. It would be a rare occasion if an editor or journalist contacted an academic out of the blue. At the same time, the focus on the mainstream media may be slightly misleading in this context as - compared to other scientific disciplines - many media outlets have correspondents in Brussels and rely on news wire services for background stories. The role of academics to provide additional insights may be limited. As a result, academics should also think about engaging directly with the public rather than focusing on the mainstream media. Essentially two recent phenomena are behind this change: The most obvious factor is the so called "digital revolution" which essentially made it possible to connect directly to a non-academic audience that is interested in EU issues. The internet brings together communities based on shared interest that can be defined as a specialised public sphere. The challenge is to find the right community and start engaging with it. The second factor that is changing is the public sphere itself: the slow demise of print media and the potential of online journalism are coupled with the changing news consumption habits of internet users. The changing print media system means that academics don't necessarily need to appeal to the editors of the mainstream press; academics can safely opt for an online-only engagement strategy. How people consume news and information online should be seen as a chance in this context, as the trust and reputation of individuals that publish online is becoming more important than the name of a specific media brand. This has huge implications for academic public engagement as it allows academics – and indeed universities or individual departments - to become a trusted source of expertise. This can be achieved with the help of a range of cost-effective communication instruments.

TOOLBOX FOR ACADEMICS IN EUROPEAN STUDIES

The second part of this paper is a practical public engagement guide for academics working in European studies, social science or political studies. It basically follows the idea outlined above that cost-effective digital tools can be at the heart of any engagement strategy that aims at influencing the public debate.[1] The idea behind the toolbox is to give academics a better idea about how to establish an online presence and how to use this online presence to communicate with the wider public (which includes journalists and practitioners). There are obviously costs and risks involved and it should be highlighted that this toolbox is not suitable for every academic or every topic connected to European Studies. At the same time, individual academics, universities and departments should spend some time thinking about objectives and the mix of tools to achieve those objectives.

a) Communicating research

Communicating research or engaging with the public brings some additional challenges to academics. The most important consideration is that all public engagement requires serious time investment. The second most important issue is that 'engaging in the public debate' is a skill that needs to be learnt and practised. The basics of how to communicate research, how to write for a non-academic audience or how to use technology require the willingness to spend the time to learn new skills. Writing for a non-academic audience is a case in point and goes well beyond the advice to drop academic jargon; it basically requires learning a completely different style of writing. However, it may not be as time consuming if linked to existing writing projects. The core argument of a journal article can be turned into an op-ed or blog post. It is also a good exercise to summarise the argument of each journal article in a couple of sentences, this may also improve the quality of the journal article. Book projects can also inspire a series of articles for a non-academic audience. However, copy-pasting is not an option as the structure and the style of non-academic articles differs significantly from academic articles: In a nutshell, articles are shorter (600-800 words), the headline is punchier, the focus is one core argument and there is usually a link to the current public debate. Third, it is important to be willing to experiment and being able to accept a "trial and error" approach to public engagement. New technologies appear and disappear; some things work for some academics and don't work for others. Communication habits change and trends come and go. It is also a chance to be creative and experiment with new tools such as podcasts, infographics, *youtube* videos or tweets. In this context training should be seen as an opportunity. Workshops on journalistic writing skills or how to survive a TV or radio interview can be useful activities. And last but not least, a regular evaluation of the use of engagement instruments should also be part of any engagement strategy.

b) Political blogging

Blogging has become mainstream over the past decade and there are several overlapping debates about blogging in an academic context (see for example Kirkup 2010; Davies et al. 2007; Kjellberg 2010; Erwins 2005; Bertram 2014). Instead of continuing this debate it may be more useful to make a distinction between academic and political blogging, the latter being more important for academics working in European studies, although several overlaps to the former will always remain. Academic blogging is often dubbed as "blogging by academics for academics" and blog posts often tend to discuss university specific topics, research ideas or indeed higher education policy. Of course this is a laudable activity and can be useful to connect with other scholars, to create communities or engage with the higher education debate but if we discuss this in terms of public engagement we may end up with an academic bubble talking to itself.

European studies scholars that are serious about public engagement should however move beyond this classic academic focus of blogging and engage in political blogging. This form of blogging aims at engaging with the political discourse. Political blogging is as diverse as journalism. It can include opinion pieces, in-depth fact checking articles, longer essays, the odd video or an info-graphic. Political blogging is also about stories and topics that the mainstream does not (sufficiently) cover – and European politics is a case in point. Journalists often tend to focus on the big events such as summits or the most controversial topics of the day. In-depth explanations that put issues in context, articles explaining details of certain policies are often missing. Although opinions are important in political blogging, academics should try and focus on transmitting knowledge or using knowledge to explain current debates. This after all is the added benefit of academics getting engaged in the public debate.

The next question is how to get started? Full control of design and functionality can only be achieved by opening a self-hosted blog. Technology has become more user-friendly over time which makes it easy to set up and maintain a blog. However, the constant pressure to keep it updated can develop into a problem. A solution could be the creation of a group blog that involves a number of academics interested in a similar topic. For example, writing one blog post every two weeks while having a team of four or five scholars can easily produce a well maintained blog with new content twice a week. But even with a group blog it remains difficult to attract a large audience without spending considerable time on advertising. The platform *Ideas on Europe*[2] was set-up by UACES, the academic association for Contemporary European Studies, to tackle this problem. *Ideas on Europe* is a blog hosting platform which provides a space for informed analysis by scholars engaged in European issues. The platform automatically provides an audience for individual blog posts but allows academics to keep complete control over the content. At the same time, a separate online presence can be set up which can prove useful for individual projects, groups, or networks that need a space to disseminate their research findings. It also helps to disseminate content as the platform uses dissemination mechanisms of UACES - a large membership association. Another model are the magazine blogs or multi-author blog platforms specifically set-up for academics; examples include the *LSE Europpblog*[3], *openDemocracy*[4] or *The Conversation*[5]. The main difference to traditional blogs is the existence of a team of professional editors who help academics to make the most of the individual articles. They also act as commissioning editors to ensure that the content that is published on these platforms is relevant for the public debate. At the same time, this professionalisation increasingly turns these platforms into online magazines that compete with mainstream media outlets – a development that may not always be in the interest of academics as the model tends to favour content written specifically for periods of high issue salience. A third group of blog platforms have been set up by universities with the aim to promote the universities or individual departments. Examples include the various blogs of the London School of Economics[6]; *Politics in Spires*[7], a blog jointly run by the University of Cambridge and University Oxford; *Ballots & Bullets*[8], the blog of the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham or *Politics @ Surrey*[9], a blog of the School of Politics at the University of Surrey. It is also worth regularly reading a number of blogs (subscriptions via RSS or email) to get a feel for how it works, which issues are covered and how to engage with the debate. Finding the right platform is key for researchers but a mix of having an own blog (for periods of low issue salience) and contributing to other more mainstream platforms (in periods of high issue salience) may be a useful model that allows the establishment of an online presence by using a range of different platforms. Being present on social media can also be used to curate, disseminate own content and reach a wider audience. Writing a blog can be a creative, inspiring and enjoyable process, it can even lead to new project ideas and can serve as a networking tool.

c) Audio/video podcasts

Audio or video podcasts are one of the most underrated public engagement instruments. Surprisingly, there are relatively few podcasts on European politics or EU affairs. Podcasts are hugely popular and can be a cost-effective tool to reach a wider audience if disseminated via platforms such as *itunes*, *soundcloud* or *youtube*. The production costs are rather low; a good microphone and free audio editing software (for example *audacity*) are sufficient to produce a good quality audio podcast. Video podcasts are bit more complex to produce as editing videos generally takes longer and setting up the recording equipment can be more challenging. The key is a good camera and a professional attitude to get it right. As a general rule, audio podcasts are easier to produce and can sound more professional without having to spend a fortune on equipment; it usually takes a bit more time to produce a video podcast that looks truly professional. However, the most important question is what sort of content can academics produce using podcasts as a format for public engagement? A podcast production needs to start with a decision on the format. Podcasts can either follow an interview or a conversational format; the former involves a host and guests, the latter is a more informal discussion between several people on a chosen subject. However, both formats need some scripting i.e. deciding on topics, questions and a plan that defines the general flow or structure of the conversation or interview. The perfect length of a podcast is another consideration. A short podcast (10 min) is a good format for a quick interview, longer more conversational formats can last around 30 min. The content of a podcast on EU affairs could range from discussions or interviews on current EU affairs but could also include book reviews or educational segments such as “EU facts of the week” or a short explanation of a certain EU related process or phenomenon. Podcasts can also involve the audience by replying to questions or involving students. Podcasts can be a good tool to showcase the research expertise of an entire university department. It could also be the basis for collaboration with campus radio stations or media studies departments – an opportunity to involve students and ensure a professional and low cost production.

d) Social media

Social media is a conversation. Used in a professional capacity social media channels (*twitter*, *facebook*, *acdemia.edu*, *linkedin*, *research gate* etc.) can help to establish an online presence, build trust and help with networking activities. Social media is "social" and should not be used as a dissemination channel only. Of course, it is a good way build up a readership but the key is to be prepared to follow-up and engage in a conversation, regardless of what social media platform is used. If a researcher does not make time to engage in a conversation the rewards of being on social media can be minimal. If used in a constructive way, social media can be an enriching experience for researchers. It can be a good channel to follow news and the latest developments in a specialised public sphere. It is however important to realise that for a successful and enriching experience on social media some time needs to be invested to secure connections to a useful group of people; building trust through social conversations usually takes some time. For academics working in European Studies *twitter* can be a good platform to get in touch with journalists, commentators and practitioners. *Academia.edu, Linkedin* or *researchgate.net* are platforms that are more about networking with colleagues. Social media can play a role in an integrated communication strategy, but using social media as the only tool in an engagement strategy may backfire. Social media is most powerful if used in combination with other tools. What happens on social media and how it relates to other engagement tools is an important indicator of why academics should consider a social media presence. Increasingly, people use social media (and not the comment sections) to discuss blog posts or podcasts. Social media can be used to disseminate the content and then the direct feedback can often be used to write new blog posts or record podcasts. Last but not least, social media is about the "first contact" in terms of networking. The low social barrier to contact people can be used to engage with people that in the past used to be out of reach for academics. This may also be useful for departments as it could lead to more interesting speakers during the next student trip to Brussels or indeed new partners for a research projects.

d) Working with the media

The relationship between the mainstream media and academics is not that straightforward. First, of all academics need to understand the importance of "newsworthiness" or what defines if a story is also a news story or an event is considered to be a relevant news item. The second element is to think about how stories about the EU get reported, which sort of stories get reported and what is missing. And finally we should reflect on what could be the role of the academic in this process. Dealing with the mainstream media also means understanding the differences in how newspapers, magazines or TV and radio report EU issues and what this means for academic involvement. Broadly speaking, there are different opportunities for academics to get involved – different media outlets have different needs for external expertise. More ambitious academics may be involved in the production of a radio or TV documentary; others prefer writing an opinion piece for a newspaper or providing a 20 seconds soundbite. However, writing for the mainstream media or being interviewed by journalists requires exactly the skill set sketched out above: the ability to explain complex issues with simple language, being proactive and the willingness to spend time on networking and building relationships. As outlined above, media training can help to acquire those skills – from interview techniques, on-camera training and writing in a more approachable style. Cowley's (2013) guide on how to deal with the media includes a list of useful recommendations: It is vital to be proactive, helpful and responsive when dealing with journalists. Academics need to be clear about what to say - and it can be helpful to produce a one pager summarising the main research findings. Research results need to be accessible in terms of access but also in terms of language.

e) Dissemination strategies

For a successful public engagement strategy all tools described above need to be combined and some dissemination tools need to be part of the mix. Although a lot of dissemination is happening via social media these days, one of the most useful and reliable instruments in this context is a simple newsletter in conjunction with a database of relevant contacts. Sending a personalised email (via a mailmerge if possible) with the latest blog post or podcast to a list of selected journalists, policy makers and practitioners can be an easy solution to stay in touch with a network of contacts and disseminate new content. This public engagement mailing list should be separate from private contacts and academic contacts. Emails to journalists also should have a different tone to academic mailing lists: 2-3 bullet points with the core argument and a link to a longer article might be enough.

A survey looking at what policy makers in the UK expect from academics should also be considered in this context (Talbot et al 2014). The results suggest that policy makers and officials perceive academics as useful knowledge providers. When it comes to how they access academic research and expertise the study finds “that ‘first contact’ with research or expertise may often come through various indirect routes (newspapers, professional journals, academic journals, direct submissions) but that Senior Civil Servants tend to follow this up by accessing the direct reports of the actual research” (Talbot et al. 2014, p 11). Basically policy makers are interested in journal articles but often lack the necessary subscriptions. In terms of dissemination, academics may consider attaching a free copy of the journal article to an email summarising the research conclusions. Some other interesting results show a “direct, personal, involvement and preference for the ‘spoken word’ and oral exchange forms a significant component of how civil servants access academics” (Talbot et al. 2014, p.12), pointing to the importance of events and conferences that also involve practitioners. Although the costs of accessing expertise through university websites, blog platforms and social media were low in comparison, the authors note the potential in this area and explain it as a "supply side" problem as few universities operate convincing social media strategies and/or accessible websites. The conclusions in terms of public engagement are similar to what has been argued in this paper: “social media and ‘web presence’ are increasingly important, and may provide opportunities to support engagement between the two communities to a greater extent in the future” (Talbot et al p.12).

CONCLUSIONS: THE SIDE EFFECTS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The implications of a properly executed public engagement strategy are far-reaching. It can be enriching for individuals, it may have a positive effect on the image of European studies as an academic subject and it can be used to demonstrate impact - which is becoming one of the key features of UK academia.

Individual academics should perceive public engagement as a chance to acquire new skills and an opportunity to learn how to communicate more effectively – a skill that can also be useful in other situations. It can be a good way of networking and it may even be useful for finding new research angles. Communicating research to the public and thinking about ways to do it is a creative process and can be an enriching experience. Public engagement also matters for European Studies as an academic subject for several reasons. It can increase the reputation of European Studies as an academic subject and it can make the field more visible. For universities and departments it can bring additional publicity. Engagement can also help to attract students and make academics aware of the challenges faced by graduates in a non-academic environment.

Public engagement is also often linked to the impact debate in the UK. Impact can be a useful side effect of public engagement. At the same time, impact is a notoriously difficult concept to grasp and an evaluation of societal impact of research is difficult to carry out (for an overview of the debate about how to measure impact see Bornmann, 2012; the LSE's Impact Blog[10] or the impact section on the ESRC website[11]). However, the impact debate is a reality not only in the UK but in universities across Europe and many academics are forced to think about impact more seriously. In the UK the assessment of impact has become an important part of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). According to a REF report impact includes “all kinds of social, economic and cultural benefits and impacts beyond academia” and should “show a distinctive contribution of the department’s research to that public engagement activity. This must go beyond showing how the research was disseminated” (Research Excellence Framework 2010: 3). Public engagement as discussed in this paper offers some ideas how to create "impact stories". Showing impact is often a framing issue which combines several activities to show the bigger picture. Public engagement can be framed as impact if it is embedded in a wider strategy. In order to do this, departments need to set up systems that not only keep track of public engagement activity but also help to plan certain activities as part of larger projects.

Public engagement is a personal choice and universities need to find ways to deal with it. Recruiting editors or communication professionals, creating units that support academics' outreach activity may be a useful strategy for individual departments. Universities can offer training and workshops and encourage departments to organise events targeted at the public. Universities that put money and resources into this field are generally more visible and have a bigger public footprint. However, an equally important challenge is to change the incentive system for academics. Basically each of Boyer's different scholarship functions (research, interdisciplinary exchange, teaching, publishing and engagement) should be treated equally when it comes to evaluation and career progression. As long as this challenge is not being addressed by the higher education sector as a whole, we will only see punctual change at those universities that can afford to hire additional staff to deal with public engagement.

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1 Note that other issues that have been defined as "engagement" above such as secondments, book projects, involvements in think tanks, helping community groups, teaching in high schools, engaging with policymakers etc are not part of this toolbox.
2 Ideas on Europe: http://www.ideasoneurope.eu
3 LSE Europpblog: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/
4 OpenDemocracy: http://opendemocracy.net/
5 The Conversation: http://theconversation.com/uk
6 LSE Blogs: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/
7 Politics in Spires: http://politicsinspires.org
8 Ballots & Bullets: http://nottspolitics.org/
9 Politics @ Surrey: http://blogs.surrey.ac.uk/politics/
10 LSE Impact Blog http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/
11 ESRC: Impact and findings http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/

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Book Review

Hikaru Yoshizawa, *Waseda University*

THE EU'S FOREIGN POLICY: WHAT KIND OF POWER AND DIPLOMATIC ACTION?

Editors: Mario Telò and Frederik Ponjaert

This edited volume constitutes an important addition to the existing work on EU foreign policy with its thorough analysis of the combined impacts on the EU of the Lisbon Treaty, the global financial crisis, and subsequent Eurozone crisis, as well as the systemic constraints brought about by the emerging multipolar world order. In this context, Telò, Ponjaert and their international team of foreign policy experts make a timely contribution to the literature by providing a new framework for the analysis of EU foreign policy in times of difficulty and change. The authors share dissatisfaction with 'the past dual conceptualisation –the EU as an idealistic "normative power" and a "global security actor in the making" vs. "the EU as an irrelevant entity"' (p. 7), and have attempted to draw a realistic picture of the EU as an international actor in the making, theoretically and empirically.

The edited volume consists of three main parts. Part I (Chapters 1-3) explains the rapidly changing post-Cold War world order with special reference to the emerging multipolarity, evolving transatlantic relations and the ongoing financial crisis, while critically examining the institutional changes and effectiveness of post-Lisbon EU foreign policy. Part II (Chapters 4-6) analyses the European External Action Service (EEAS) established at Lisbon from three distinctive theoretical perspectives, namely the functional analysis of bureaucracy, the policy cycle model, and diplomatic coherence and consistency. Part III on EU external relations in the near and far abroad (Chapters 7-12) has a broad scope and critically examines not only the EU's neighbourhood policy (Chapter 7) and its interregional relations (Chapter 8), but also the strategic partnerships. Chapter 9 provides an overview of 10 existing strategic partnerships between the EU and third states, whereas the three final chapters (10-12) focus on the EU's three strategic partnerships with China, Japan, and India respectively. The authors of Chapters 10 to 12 come from these Asian countries, reflecting the editors' intention of avoiding the potential pitfalls of delivering excessively Eurocentric or inward-looking approaches to the study of EU foreign policy (p. 2).

The volume is far-reaching but rests on four recurrent contentions. First, that the performance of post-Lisbon EU foreign policy has been much poorer than many expected. One major cause of this is that the Lisbon Treaty increased rather than decreased the institutional complexity of the EU in external relations. As Telò (p. 27) succinctly puts it, in the long process of treaty revisions until the Lisbon Treaty, 'each progress towards enhanced coherence was paradoxically increasing internal complexity' (see also Chapter 5). One consequence of this is a structural problem in the form of ineffectiveness in the newly created position, High Representative/Vice President of the European Commission (HR-VP). Since the responsibilities of HR-VP are vaguely defined and too broad to be undertaken by one person, it is no surprise, according to the authors, that performance has been deficient, especially in the areas of security and defence (pp. 68-70; p. 92). The second contention is that the EEAS has so far played a limited role in shaping a consistent and cohesive EU foreign policy, although it is becoming a key institutional actor in bureaucratic, routinised aspects of diplomacy (p. 86). In other words, member states, especially the larger ones, remain key actors in the policy process. Third, the financial crash of 2008 and the Eurozone crisis since 2010 have brought serious

budgetary constraints on EU foreign policy. In fact, 20 member states cut their defence budget between 2009 and 2010, severely challenging the idealistic idea of the EU as a global military power (p. 69). Last but not least, the EU has not clearly identified and articulated its own place in an emerging heterogeneous multipolar world in which the USA and rising powers such as Brazil, China and India play key roles, and not necessarily on a multilateral basis (Chapter 1, Gamble). Overall, the volume sends an important message: it is of vital importance to ascertain the consequences that the current fundamental shifts, both internal and external, have brought to the EU as an unprecedented kind of international actor.

The key strengths of this collective work concern three aspects: theoretical innovation; the use of original materials; and comprehensiveness. Concerning the first point, the collection goes beyond empirics and provides numerous conceptual and theoretical tools tailored to the analysis of the EU. Part II is the best example of this point. Lequesne (Chapter 4) analytically distinguishes the three roles of the EEAS, namely that of a vertical and horizontal coordination builder, an information provider, and producer of global strategic ideas; while evaluating its mixed performance in each aspect. In turn, Carta (Chapter 5) discusses the formal and informal role of the EEAS and its relationship with other national and EU institutions from the policy cycle perspective. Finally, Mayer (Chapter 6) identifies five specific dimensions of diplomatic consistency and coherence (vertical, horizontal, strategic, narrative and external engagement), whilst criticising the EU's obsession with this issue as 'a European debate for Europeans' (p. 115) detached from the issue of external effectiveness. Altogether, the chapters help to analyse the new institution from various angles.

In respect of the second key strength, the most original material is to be found in the last three chapters on the EU's strategic partnerships with major Asian partners (by Zhimin, Nakamura and Bava). Specifically, the chapters play two essential roles. On the one hand, they empirically reaffirm the limited efficiency and external visibility of the EU explained in Parts I and II, and this complementary role illustrates the overall cohesiveness of the three-pronged book. On the other hand, they bring in specific issues not addressed in the other parts, indeed, issues seldom discussed in textbooks on EU foreign policy: the EU's increasing economic and financial reliance on China and declining leverage in negotiation after the financial crisis (pp. 182-185); ideational divergence on certain issues, (e.g. the death penalty and conservation of bluefin tuna) even between two like-minded civilian powers, Japan and the EU (p. 207); double standards employed in EU foreign policy which seriously undermine its self-image of a norm entrepreneur (pp. 214-215) (e.g. the tendency to lecture India on human rights, while strengthening ties with China, which is not a democracy). It is worth noting that Grevi's chapter (Chapter 9) plays a pivotal role in Part III in that it contextualises and adds coherence to the subsequent chapters on strategic partnerships which could otherwise have seemed rather detached from each other.

Finally, the thematic and geographical scope of this work is vast. It analyses the EU's power in the transatlantic and global context as well as institutional reforms especially the establishment of the EEAS and the new function of HR-VP. Bilateral relations with Mediterranean countries (Chapter 7, Gillespie) and the strategic partners are examined in depth, whereas Ponjaert provides a comprehensive survey of interregional cooperation as a distinctive instrument in the EU foreign policy toolbox (Chapter 8).

While the book as a whole is consistent in terms of policy analysis, whether the same can be said about policy recommendations is a moot point. Chapters 2 and 3, for example, deliver quite different, possibly irreconcilable policy proposals. According to Telò, the EU is a civilian power by default (p. 39), with Germany leading the demilitarisation process, especially after the current financial crisis. He concludes that the EU should develop a structural foreign policy: a long-term, holistic approach, taking stock of the EU's main asset, namely its internal socioeconomic policies, as well as its foreign and security policy instruments (p. 53). Then, Howorth (Chapter 3) not only

underlines the unsustainability of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU, which was largely ineffective even in the 'archetypical' case of Libya in 2011, but also suggests enhancing the effectiveness of the CSDP 'through and within' the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (p. 75). The book could have delivered a more direct message to policy makers if it elaborated on whether and to what extent these two policy recommendations - one suggesting a distinct EU approach with relative autonomy, and the other recommending further cooperation and the pooling of resources between the EU and NATO - are compatible with each other, even if the two authors fully agree that the EU as such cannot become a global military power.

Summing up, the text provides an excellent account of the EU's external relations in a critical and dispassionate way. The value added of the book more than compensates for those shortcomings identified. Thus, the book is recommended for all those looking for a clear and exhaustive account of the moving target that is EU foreign policy.

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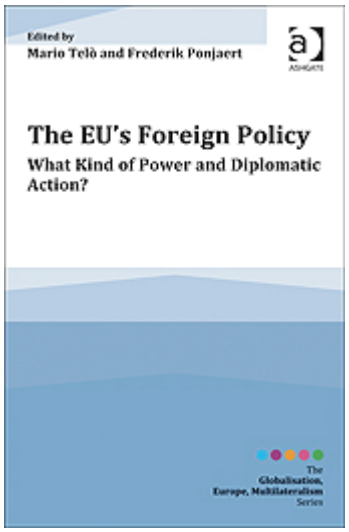

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The EU's Foreign Policy: What Kind of Power and Diplomatic Action?

Editors: Mario Telò and Frederik Ponjaert

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Book Review

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RUSSIAN ENERGY SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY

Editors: Adrian Dellecker and Thomas Domart

Russia, according to Adrian Dellecker and Thomas Gomart, is *the* energy behemoth par excellence, sitting on the largest natural gas reserves in the world and the eighth largest oil reserves. The editors of the book assert that in Eurasia, 'energy and geopolitics are closely intertwined' (p. 1), and accordingly seek to answer the key research question of the book, how energy influences Russian foreign policy. Given that hydrocarbon-based energy (oil, gas and coal) is dominantly used in modern industrialised economies and increasingly in newly industrialising nations, security of supply is a foreign policy issue, mandated by a country's geographical position and control over the resources it is naturally endowed with or the lack thereof. The concept of 'energy security' is hence the key dimension of the book.

Dellecker and Gomart seek to examine their research question in eleven chapters, divided into three parts, written by internationally recognised experts on Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including economists, political scientists and practitioners. Russia's recent annexation of Crimea, a former Ukrainian peninsula in the Black Sea, has led to increasing discussions about Europe's dependence on Russia's resources and its according foreign policy lever. Hence, the research question is eminently important, not only for an academic audience, but also for decision-makers in the areas of foreign and security policy, energy and environmental policy. Russian energy and foreign policy is an immensely complex issue, as it entails multiple dimensions such as geology, commerce, law, economics and politics. The editors navigate the complexity well at the introductory level, providing a clear structure and orientation: they divide the book into examinations of the link between Russia's domestic and foreign energy policy, its relations with other suppliers in the post-Soviet space (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and its relations with transit countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine).

However, the promised structure is not always delivered on to best effect and the contributions to the book vary in quality, coherence and relevance to the research question. As a result, the collection leaves out key issues and dimensions, and focuses on some issues repetitively. For example, Ukraine is a key transit country for approximately 80 per cent of Russian gas to the EU, only briefly examined in chapter 10: 'After the war: the Southern Corridor' by John Roberts. However, because of Ukraine's centrality as a transit country, it deserves a more detailed account. Meanwhile, there are three chapters examining Central Asia, chapters 2: 'Hydrocarbon production and exports in Central Asia' by William Tompson, chapter 4: 'The role of Central Asian gas: is it possible to bypass Russia?' by Maureen Crandall and chapter 9: 'Russia, Gazprom and the CAC: interests and relations' by Leonid Grigoriev. Since Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are addressed separately in chapter 5: 'Ups and downs of the Russia-Turkmenistan relationship' by Vladimir Milov and chapter 7: 'Uzbekistan: central Asian key' by Andrew Monaghan, the region is disproportionately covered, where Eastern Europe and China could receive more attention. That said, in respect of Central Asia, the Milov and Monaghan chapters are real highlights of the book and very valuable contributions to the field.

The book's lack of a domestic link to foreign policy is its key weakness. Frank Umbach briefly elaborates the question in chapter 1: 'Energy security in Eurasia: clashing interests' but it is insufficiently executed in terms of defining energy security and how it applies to relations between Russia and the rest of the world. The chapter would have benefited from a clearer discussion of the connections made between Russia's domestic policy and its relations with the rest of the world. For example, the author introduces terms such as 'resource nationalism' and 'spheres of influence' to describe Russia's relations with the Central Asian states, the EU and China, saying 'traditionally, energy has always been considered, and wielded, as a key tool of Moscow's foreign policy' (p. 36). Yet key questions remain unanswered, for example, how and why Moscow does so, what its principal energy policy vision is and how it developed during the re-structuring of the Russian energy sector in the 1990s. This does not suffice to draw the necessary link between domestic and foreign policy, as other works have done. For example, in his masterful account of the oil and gas industry after the Soviet Union's fall in *Wheel of Fortune* (Harvard University Press, 2012), Thane Gustafson shows how competition for acquiring the nation's sources of wealth led to the emergence of a state-centered business model under President Vladimir Putin that used control over the oil and gas industry as a tool to finance its foreign policy ambitions. The Dellecker and Domart collection would work better with more such context.

The book's key strength is the originality of the individual contributions it combines. For example, chapters like Tompson's 'Hydrocarbon production and exports in Central Asia: the impact of institutions and policies', taken on their own, explain a very complex issue with clarity, richness of data and sufficient coverage of the key dimensions of production, ownership, rule of law and key role for policy for investment climate. Likewise, the above mentioned contributions about Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and especially Uzbekistan are rare in the field, since those isolated countries are difficult to research. In his chapter on Uzbekistan, Monaghan convincingly argues that 'while Russia is an important regional actor, the region should be understood on its own terms, not simply through the prism of Russia/USSR' (p. 131). Beyond that, the author is able to show how complex the nature of Russian foreign policy can become in a region that is often far off Western policymakers' scope and where Russia-China competition is likely to increase. However, other contributions lack this quality. For example, chapter 3 'How to get a pipeline built: myth and reality' by Jérôme Guillet promises to lay out the business perspective, itself a valuable aspect, often lacking in comparative foreign policy approaches. However, the chapter required a more rigorous editing process; it lacks a coherent line of argumentation other than the simple truism that projects have to be economically viable for both sides. Improvements would have come with some case study reference or regional insight.

One criticism applies to the collection as a whole. While the use of data and methodology differs in quality, one key visual feature is missing almost entirely: maps. Since the region is geographically vast, it would have been useful to illustrate pipeline networks, key transit routes and the location of oil and gas fields. There is only one map of this kind in the entire book, on Kazakhstan's major oil and gas pipelines.

In conclusion, the book is recommended to specialists in the field who are keen to find original and important contributions to understanding Russia's foreign and energy policy. In its entirety, however, the book omits key dimensions of the research question and the contributions differ in quality, coherence and relevance. More content about China-Russia relations, key transit states such as Ukraine and recently intensifying tensions with the European buyer states are necessary for wider comprehension. However, as the issue of Russia's foreign and energy policy seems to increase in importance, the collection is a valuable contribution to a field which warrants further attention from researchers.

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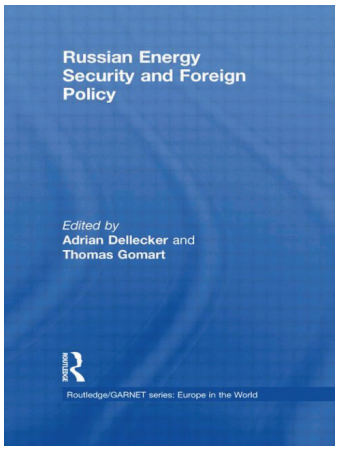

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Russian Energy Security and Foreign Policy

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Book Review

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TEACHING POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Editors: Cathy Gormley-Heenan and Simon Lightfoot

In the context of an academic landscape focused mainly on research output, this volume puts teaching excellence in Politics and International Relations in the spotlight. By showcasing various approaches and methodologies used in teaching political science, the book constitutes a valuable guide for educators at all stages in their careers and aims to contribute to enriching Politics curriculum design and to encourage the adoption of innovative pedagogical techniques. The body of literature dealing with teaching and learning design in political science is still considerably less extensive compared to similar output in other disciplines. This volume thus represents a welcome addition to the research on pedagogical aspects in Politics and IR, providing an insight into various discipline-specific teaching tools and methods.

Starting from a broader perspective, whereby Penny Welch (chapter 1) looks at the changing context for teaching Politics and IR and John Craig (chapter 2) outlines the specific features of this discipline that need to be reflected in pedagogical approaches, the volume then moves towards a more down-to-earth analysis of various tools and techniques, with an emphasis on active learning and alternatives to the traditional lecture/seminar format, such as using simulations, blogs, e-learning or social media. Closely linked to the teaching methods, assessment practices are tackled by Alasdair Blair and Sam McGinty (chapter 8), on the basis that they need to be synchronised with the learning goals and the design of the curriculum and the course activities.

The chapters that follow address specific aspects of the Politics and IR curriculum that present deeper pedagogical challenges, such as gender issues in ‘Contemporary Politics: Using the 'F' Word and Teaching Gender in International Relations’ by Christina Rowley and Laura J. Shepherd (chapter 11), terrorism in ‘Contemporary Politics: Teaching the 'Contested Concepts' - International Terrorism Taught To Undergraduate Students in a Multicultural Environment’ by Knut Roder (chapter 12) and race in ‘Teaching Race and Ethnicity: Towards an Engaged, Anti-Racist Pedagogy’ by Steve Spencer (chapter 13). Grounding contemporary politics in a deeper understanding of political theory is, as Lee Marsden and Heather Savigny point out (chapter 9), one of the challenges educators are facing, as they need to emphasise constantly the need for a thorough theoretical background when analysing ‘real world’ events.

In the final chapters of the volume, the focus shifts from content towards skills (research, thesis supervision) and, more importantly, to what a Politics degree curriculum should include in order to satisfy an increasingly demanding student population and a dynamic job market, a topic addressed in the concluding chapter ‘From Politics Past to Politics Future: Addressing the Employability Agenda Through a Professional Politics Curriculum’ by Matthew Wyman, Jennifer Lees-Marshment and Jon Herbert (chapter 17).

The book offers a review of the state of the art in teaching and learning Politics and IR and, thus, constitutes a comprehensive compendium of best practice in a wide variety of pedagogically related

topics. While the content flows naturally from a general overview of the discipline and the challenges educators are currently facing towards more specific considerations linked to building the curriculum and choosing suitable teaching methods, the volume would have benefited from a more rigorous organisation, grouping the chapters under several overarching themes. Formally dividing the book into three sections (setting the scene - what makes Politics different; teaching tools and methods; designing and refining the curriculum: knowledge and skills) would have improved the overall coherence, providing the reader with a quick insight into the internal logic of the volume and the essentials of its content.

While topic-wise the book remains generously wide in scope, as far as its geographical coverage is concerned it is mainly limited to contributions from scholars within the United Kingdom, one of the main reasons being that a large amount of research on the topic is currently being undertaken in the UK. Notwithstanding the specificities of the British education system, the insights provided are applicable to a certain extent to academic environments elsewhere in Europe and beyond. However, in order to offer a more comprehensive yet more nuanced account of teaching Politics and IR, contributions from further afield would have been a valuable addition to the volume.

'Teaching Politics and IR' can be read as a handbook on pedagogical practices in political science, a useful resource for both early career lecturers and more experienced academics aiming to redesign their curricula and refresh their teaching methods. Bearing in mind that, compared to similar literature in the natural sciences, there is still relatively little written on pedagogical approaches in Politics, this book definitely constitutes a notable step towards a hopefully more elaborate body of research on the educational aspects of the discipline. Beyond the undoubtable practical value, the various chapters and the volume itself are not framed within broader learning theories, remaining a collection of context-dependent, albeit rich, best practices. A stronger link to educational research, as well as a more coherent research design throughout the various chapters, yielding comparable results, would have enhanced the contribution the book brings to the overall body of literature on the topic. Moreover, in order to establish a connection with the general research on pedagogical practices, independent of disciplines, a further level of abstraction would need to be added, whereby the essentials of teaching Politics and IR are showcased as an illustration of more general pedagogical principles.

In an ever-changing Higher Education landscape, with various challenges ahead, focusing on teaching excellence becomes increasingly relevant. Reflecting on one's pedagogical practices and curriculum design, as well as sharing and collaborating with peers are essential elements in developing and maintaining a professional network providing both academic and practical outputs. In this context, 'Teaching Politics and International Relations' offers a very useful state-of-the-discipline overview with a practical added value and is thus recommended reading for anyone interested in innovating their teaching methods, bringing a fresh approach to the curriculum or developing new courses and programmes.

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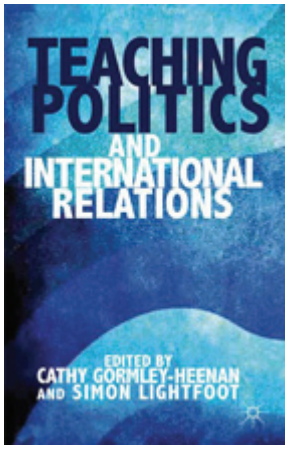

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