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Setting Agendas in European Studies: Some Reflections

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Draft. Comments welcome.

Introduction¹

Research and teaching on Europe and on the European Union (EU) have grown exponentially in recent years, both in Europe and throughout the world. There has been increased breadth and depth of conceptual development and theorising. The EU has increased its membership, influence, scope and reach, presenting new challenges for analysis. At the same time, there has been an increasing interaction among disciplines. The need to diminish the barriers between disciplines and sub-disciplines and particularly what Peterson calls, in the context of political science analysis, ‘phoney wars’ between International Relations and Comparative Politics has been recognised and acted upon (Peterson, 2001; Pollack, 2001; Rumford and Murray, 2003; Hix, 1999).

This paper attempts to briefly discuss some challenges related to teaching and researching about the EU. It attempts to set out possible agendas that scholars may consider, in examining possible future directions for the study of Europe in Australia.

It has become evident in recent years that a stocktake is required regarding how we as scholars teach about Europe and the EU, how we deal with the teaching-research nexus and how we develop curriculum. This first of a series of National Workshops on European Studies (ES) attempts to assess the current state of ES in Australia and to examine future pathways in curriculum development. The issues to be addressed and developed in this and subsequent Workshops include discussions regarding what is meant by European Studies; the state of European Studies in Australia; the rewards and difficulties associated with the development of European Studies programs in Australia. It will examine examples of best practice over time.

Conceptualising and expanding the study of the EU.

It is increasingly an accepted fact that there is no single theory of the EU or of European integration. The scholarly skirmishes regarding different theoretical concepts have been superseded by round table debates on the appropriate conceptual or theoretical framework for various issues or events and by more sophisticated

¹ This paper draws on ideas developed in Philomena Murray, “The uses and abuses of the concept of integration”, in Chris Rumford ed., *The Sage Handbook of European Studies*, London, Sage, forthcoming, 2008.

conceptualization (Jachtenfuchs, 2001). Peterson (2001, 313) has suggested that EU scholars need 'make choices about what they want to explain, and make the European Union a touchstone in the more general effort of political science to synthesise insights from comparative politics, international relations and public policy'. Egeberg (2004) argues that 'no single theory can adequately account for everything in this area'.

There are many ways to approach the study of the EU. Its depth and breadth prohibit it from exclusively belonging to one academic discipline or sub-discipline alone. The extension of the EU's policy remit, territory and tasks has encouraged the multiplicity of approaches and concepts and theories. This has enriched the study of Europe, non-EU-Europe, the EU, integration and international affairs in a number of positive ways. This is a considerable and often baffling expansion of tasks for both scholars and students. The term task-expansion was utilized by Haas (1968) in *The Uniting of Europe* in an attempt to explain European integration (Borzel, 2005). Yet the expansion of both the EU and the study of the EU means that we need to understand the historical underpinnings of the EU. This is critical to the comprehending the 27-member EU, whether it is characterised as hybrid, mixed, or post-nationalist (Chalmers, 2006). Further, the contemporary EU is a significantly different and more important actor than in the 1950s, as reflected by the divergent approaches and increased multi-disciplinarity in contemporary EU studies and in the analysis of the EU and an international actor or global player in trade, aid, humanitarian assistance, conflict-prevention and conflict-management and norms-exporting. These now feature in much of the curriculum on the EU.

Integration studies or area studies or Europeanization studies?

The study of the EU has been regarded as area studies or European Integration studies or, more recently, as the study of Europeanization.

The EU as **area studies** is understood as the study of a group of countries in one geographical area of the world and as the study of a regional entity. The first challenge for scholars in this context is that the EU is increasingly examined beyond its area or region, in its international role, in terms of its objectives in seeking to advance its regional integration agendas in a global context, for example. The second

is that the EU's actions and regulations have extra-territorial impact. The third is that the EU is regarded as no longer an N of One but as a reference point or even paradigm for regional integration in other parts of the world (Murray, 2004a, 2007a). Fourthly, area studies have been the study of a number of countries that have some commonalities yet remain distinctively sovereign nation states. This is not the case in the analysis of the EU, where there is pooling of sovereignty and an established and embedded institutionalization of cooperation above the nation state. The term 'area studies' does not seem to apply automatically to the study of the EU for these reasons.

The term '**European Integration studies**' is equally problematic. The study of the EU is considerably more than the study of integration processes and theories, for example (Murray, 2000, Warleigh, 2006). This has been recognised by those who seek to move beyond the comparative politics versus International Relations debates, the supranationalism versus intergovernmentalism debates and studies of individual policies. Phoney wars are ending but still there are many assumptions that tend towards normative or moralistic approaches. There is still a close relationship with the European Commission, which has a capacity to fund research on European Integration, which the Commission defines in its *Vademecum* for applicants for funding, as issued in 2003, as follows: "the term European integration studies is taken to mean the study of the construction of the European Community and the institutional, legal, political, economic and social developments related to this process".

The term 'integration' has been exploited for so many purposes over the years that it has become almost meaningless and diminished in stature (Murray, 2008, forthcoming). European Integration refers to a long-term political project, which is often promissory. Integration refers to process, political goal and to theory. It is the justification for EU policy actions and at the same time risks being justification for the lack of cogent intellectual action: it remains ill-defined.

The term 'integration' is utilised to explain many of the considerable changes and process that have taken place in Europe, regardless of whether it is part of the EU or due to the EU. Not everything that takes place within the EU is due to transformations wrought by the EU (Rumford and Murray 2003b). There have been transformations

and synergies that have taken place on a number of levels and in trans-national contexts.

EU Studies as the **study of Europeanization** is gaining increasing leverage in the examination of the EU, particularly among scholars located within the EU itself. The transnationalism and interdependence of EU and of national administrative and governance systems form an important part of the ever-expanding literature on Europeanization, which can perhaps be regarded as a new means of examining the EU that does not focus exclusively on integration. Green Cowles and Risse (2001, 3, 217) define Europeanization as involving the “evolutions of new layers of politics that interact with older ones”. This may refer to the transformation of the nation state and of policy domains. For Radaelli (2006) the “concept of Europeanisation combines a variety of mid-level concepts, so that even though it is not a theory in itself, Europeanisation does perform an important role as an ‘orchestrating approach’”. The view is certainly more dynamic, multifaceted and multi-disciplinary than many other approaches.

Scholars need to move to an understanding of Europeanization not just by the EU but also the transformation of the EU by the member states. This is not a simple symmetry of approaches. It requires a study of transformation that is not only involved with transition studies such in the East and Central Europe. In order to re-think the state and reassess how we understand power in the EU, we need to also re-examine our concepts. It is perhaps in this context that the study of the many facets of Europeanization can be advanced. Europeanization has both EU-to-member state and member state-to-EU level dynamics. The external impact of Europeanization also merits increased scholarly attention.

Future Agendas

The study of the EU can usefully be contextualized in a broader and more globalized context (Rumford and Murray, 2003a). For example, if the study of the EU is to be genuinely comparative, then comparative regional integration is a field of study of which the EU is simply one part – albeit an important one. There is a need to emphasise that the study of integration theory is not only about integration process and the EU but also comparative regionalism and inter-regionalism for example

(Breslin and Higgott, 2003; Hettne and Soberbaum, 2000; Murray 2004a, Murray, 2008). In the context of Europeanization the transformation of the EU and its transformative impact on the state require more examination.

The study of the EU can be introspective in dealing with the EU's internal process and conflicts, for example. Examinations of the EU in an international context often tends to deal with its relations with individual countries and, occasionally, regions, such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) or Mercosur, the Common Market of South America. From outside the EU, some perspectives regard the EU as a rather successful economic entity but do not necessarily understand the transformative nature of the EU in political or normative terms. For example, Jachtenfuchs (2001, 256) has argued that 'the most exciting and most important aspect of European integration - namely the transformation of traditional nation-states into constituent units of a new transnational political system that is not going to become a state – is largely overlooked from the outside'.

Transformation has been a feature of the EU since its origins. This is evident in the expansion and transformation of membership, scope, goals, institutional architecture, policy concerns and international impact. It is apparent in the interaction between the nation states that have been altered, which has led to altered dynamics of international diplomacy, trade relations, and the role of global actors. It is apparent in the ways that the EU has partly rewritten the international rule book for negotiations as it becomes an increasingly influential actor in global and multilateral forums, in trade aid and in its attempts to be a manager of globalization and a norms entrepreneur and norms exporter. This has been a significant transformation of sovereignty, as the EU rewrites the rule book of international diplomacy, international negotiations, regional integration and the EU role therein.

The EU has considerable external impact and extraterritorial influence and this warrants more attention from scholars than has occurred to date. The EU is developing its global agenda, which is based on factors such as its history and memory of war and peace, its constitutionalising milestones, its economic might, its influence in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its efforts at international peace-promotion. This global dimension to the EU has not led to fulsome praise and

admiration throughout the world. There remains a perception of the EU as a Fortress Europe in some parts of the globe (Murray, 2007b).

Just as EU's policy reach is not confined to Europe, neither are the influences upon it confined to its member states. The EU is not immune to the forces of globalization – and this understanding must be increasingly embedded in the study of the EU (Rumford and Murray, 2003a).

Mapping Future Agendas for European Studies and EU Studies in Australia

It is anticipated that future Workshops may address a number of themes. The first may discuss the theme of European Studies or EU studies? It will attempt to discuss that is meant by European Studies, whether it is the study of the EU; of non-EU Europe; of East and Central Europe; of one country in Europe or comparative studies of several European countries.

A second theme might focus on European Studies in Australia, asking how we teach European Studies in Australia; whether there is a need for curriculum adjustment when teaching European Studies in Australia, for example. It could draw on debates relating to whether there is value in a core curriculum. It could address the issue whether there are specific topics to be addressed in the Australian context – or an Asia Pacific one. What are the best applicable teaching methodologies in Australia? It would also address practical questions relating to hurdles encountered in establishing a European Studies Programme; the value of interdisciplinarity; the means to access EU financial and logistic support – and other support - for strengthening or creating European Studies programs. Finally it may discuss the value of collaboration among universities, centres and associations.

A third potential theme for a Workshop is that of the research/teaching nexus. This would explore the nature of the research-teaching nexus and how is it developed in the study of Europe and the EU. Issues to discuss might include where research on individual countries fit in the EU context. It would draw on research on the EU as a global entity. Other issue of interest relate to what nation-state membership might mean for Europe, EU-Australia relations and EU-Asia relations. Other themes worthy of exploration are the debates regarding European borders, defining Europe and the

potential limits to EU membership. This could relate to issue regarding European identity, such as ethnicity, religion and secularism, memory and the past and the possibility of a shared future.

Concluding remarks

This is an exciting period for scholars, in terms of the development of conceptual and analytical tools and the development of research and curriculum – and a research-teaching nexus – on a multiplicity of issues relating to historical period, country, length and experience of membership of the EU, and attitude to membership and external impact, for example. The EU has been examined as possible regional state (Schmidt, 2004), a superpower (Leonard, 2005), a civilian power (Duchene, 1972, Manners, 2002, 2006), a soft power and a metrosexual superpower (Khanna, 2004) and with pertinent questions as to the nature of EU power (eg Sjursens, 2006).

The EU's significant economic and political weight has led to an increasing transformative affect on international agendas, for example through its ability to vote *en bloc* in international and multilateral forums. This has led to a re-evaluation the EU's extra-territorial influence. There is a need to further examine the ways the EU has positioned itself as an international political actor and to assess its impact, whether in its broad foreign policy agenda or its role in global trade or as a development aid provider or as a norms exporter.

Finally, the EU experience of 'integration' has been regarded as a useful paradigm for other parts of the world, in particular the ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, South Korea) region (Murray, 2005b). Just as the term 'integration' is over-used within EU analysis, there is a danger that this tendency will be replicated in non-EU contexts too, as the EU is often admired as a model of regional integration. A further, worrying aspect of this issue is the self-conscious efforts by some EU actors to advance the EU as a model not just of economic integration but also as a European Social model and as the manager of globalization and prototypical example of good governance – both global governance and EU governance norms and values (Murray, 2004b).

The practice of examining the EU as simply a package comprising the study of institutions, theories and policies is becoming less dominant. The desire for a streamlined approach to the study of the EU – and for a core curriculum - must be resisted (Rumford and Murray, 2003b). The study of the EU is increasingly dynamic and can usefully be placed within the context of European Studies, while not constituting its only focus.

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