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Manners, Ian James; Rosamond, Ben

Published in:

Journal of Common Market Studies

DOI:

[10.1111/jcms.12771](https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12771)

Publication date:

2018

Document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):

Manners, I. J., & Rosamond, B. (2018). A Different Europe is Possible: The Professionalization of EU Studies and the Dilemmas of Integration in the 21st Century. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(S1), 28-38.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12771>

A Different Europe is Possible: The Professionalization of EU Studies and the Dilemmas of Integration in the 21st Century

IAN MANNERS and BEN ROSAMOND
University of Copenhagen

Introduction: Addressing the Deeper Implications of Current Crises

Rather than celebrating 60 years of the Treaty of Rome, 2017 looks like going down as the year in which the European Union (EU) faced a seemingly ‘perfect storm’ of crises (associated with the eurozone, the management of refugee flows, the politics of Brexit, the rise to prominence of explicitly ‘illiberal’ governments within the EU and the general rise of populist far-right politics across Europe) that together constituted a truly ‘existential’ moment for European integration (Dinan *et al.*, 2017). It is, of course, normal for academic fields to respond to ‘crises’. Real world events are bound to stimulate a scholarly reflex within established fields whose purpose must – by definition – incorporate the analysis of challenges to and change within their objects of study. This is a pattern that seems to have held throughout the six decades of scholarly work on the politics of European integration.

But it is also well established by sociologists of science that the nature of a field’s response to ‘external’ events is driven and determined by path-dependent norms, standards and practices from *within* the field itself. Put crudely, this means that prevailing standards of ‘normal science’ within a field tend to mediate between real world events and the field’s (internal) capture of those events (Abbott, 2001; Jasanoff, 2005). We know that different theoretical approaches within EU studies work with distinct understandings of what ‘crisis’ means (Schimmelfennig, 2017), which should remind us that ‘crises’ are never phenomena that are exogenously given. Rather crises are constituted discursively by both policy actors and academics. The former seek narrative clarity and appropriate problem and solution sets in the face of uncertainty, and the resultant crisis constructions may foreground particular political claims over others (Hay, 1996, 2016). The latter, sampling from the empirical past and established theory, develop claims about crises as punctuations that serve the goals of explanation and understanding (Blyth, 2006). But equally, the successful establishment of a scholarly narrative about what the object of study is and what is happening has the potential to privilege some approaches over others. Moreover, the policy and academic domains are not necessarily separated, and there is a growing body of work to suggest that the relationship between the two fields – in the co-production of knowledge – should be of particular interest to scholars of the EU (Adler-Nissen and Kropp, 2015; Mudge and Vauchez, 2012; Ryner, 2012; White, 2003).

Focussing on political science as the dominant scholarly mode within EU studies, our suggestion here is that the particular constitution of the field is important. We argue that scholarship in EU studies has been structured in ways that have taken the field away from

exploring the kinds of deep questions that would have aided not only explanation of the crisis *ex post*, but also understanding of various long-standing pathologies of the integration process that themselves stimulate and amplify the effects of crises dynamics within Europe. In part this is an issue of the extent to which the political science of the EU, practised within normal parameters, was ever able to anticipate the possibly disintegrative tendencies now at play on the continent (Joerges and Kreuder-Sonnen, 2017; Manners, 2003, 2007). It also presents us with a paradox: that the very real successes of EU studies in recent decades may have prevented the field from fully addressing the deeper implications of current crises.

How might this be so? We offer a potentially provocative answer that centres on the dynamic of ‘professionalization’ within the field (Schmitter, 2002). Professionalization in this sense is associated with the appeal to particular forms of scientific rigour, methodological tightening, the eschewal of normativity, the narrowing of empirical foci and the proliferation of specialized subfields. Therefore, properly understood, professionalization within the academy inevitably involves various types of boundary drawing that in turn (and by implication) ensure the exclusion of perspectives and voices from the field as well as its internal fragmentation, albeit into sub-fields and sub-sub-fields that accord with standard disciplinary norms. While it is important to recognize that such dynamics are integral to (and inescapable in) just about every scholarly field, we maintain that they have, since the late 1980s in particular, operated in a quite distinctive way in EU studies. This period is important because it represents the moment in which ‘EU studies’ came to be fully constituted as a self-aware field of knowledge production in which crucial boundary work was accomplished. The version of the field that became ‘EU studies’ (at least in its political science variant) relied, we suggest, on the normalization of the EU as a polity whose character could be most fruitfully discerned through the application of the tenets of mainstream political science. This move also set aside and marginalized ‘integration’ as a central guiding *problematique* for the field, and this in turn relied upon a particular narrative of the pre-history of EU studies as – in effect – ‘unprofessional’. These developments in EU studies were a subset of broader trends in political science, but they produced local field-specific effects. Our argument is that the professionalization of the field has also hidden from view a series of key analytical and political dilemmas. This contribution sketches out some of the mechanisms through which the professionalization of the field has informed the way in which the field has encountered recent and ongoing crises.

I. Twists, Turns and the Professionalization of EU Studies

In recent decades, the various ‘twists’ in the evolution of the EU (such as treaty reform, institutional change, enlargement, redefinitions of policy competence, the growth of the single market, the emergence of monetary union, the rise of euroscepticism and a more differentiated approach to integration) have been accompanied by various ‘turns’ in EU studies (for example the comparative politics, governance, normative, constructivist and Europeanization turns). There is, of course, some merit in identifying the sources of ‘turns’ in the various ‘twists’.

As already suggested, this is a simplistic picture that treats ‘turns’ as largely benign intellectual reactions to events that take place within the object of study. For one thing, one

key facet of ‘turns’ (understood here as identifiable scholarly movements within a sub-field) is their capacity to define the very nature and scope of their object of study. In other words, what is understood as ‘going on’ within the EU is endogenous to scholarly discourses that – as a matter of necessity – are defining the EU in ways that are congruent with the terms of those scholarly discourses. To be clear, this is a precondition of ordered inquiry. But it does mean that other ways of reading an object like the EU are marginalized or indeed excluded in the process (Abels and MacRae, 2016; Manners and Whitman, 2016). For example, as comparativists sought to redefine and ‘normalize’ (Kreppel, 2012) the European Communities/EU as a political system with state-like features, so they actively displaced ‘integration’ as the central *problematique* of the field. That move was justified, we would argue, via a very partial reading of the literature on regional integration (Rosamond, 2016), a point to which we return below.

Also ‘turns’ in a field often reflect prevailing norms of inquiry in parent disciplines and/or the broader social sciences. There is no space to argue the point in detail here, but it should not be controversial to suggest that the types of work that have prevailed in EU studies over the past 25 years have almost always been rooted in broader trends within political science and its constituent subfields (Aspinwall and Schneider, 2000; Dowding, 2000; Rosamond, 2007). This is one aspect of what has often been thought of as the ‘professionalization’ of EU studies – its integration into the disciplinary mainstream of political science. Disciplinary mainstreaming is not simply about the adoption of widely used theoretical approaches and the treatment of the EU as a potential case of certain general phenomena. It is also about the adoption of wider disciplinary norms regarding what types of work count as valid and admissible science (Luke, 1999). Mainstreaming has done more than anything to deal with EU studies’ ‘ $n = 1$ problem’ and has helped to ensure that the study of the EU has not become ghettoized as a self-contained and insular sub-field. But it also risks the reproduction of the hard boundaries and exclusions for which (mainstream US) political science has often been criticized (Monroe, 2005).

Aside from determining both the substance and the conduct of inquiry, professionalization also provokes a degree of fragmentation as new sub-fields develop and consolidate themselves within the broader field. Again, this variation is often noted as a distinguishing feature of EU studies, particularly since the ‘boom’ in the field that is typically dated from the early 1990s (Jensen and Kristensen, 2013; Keeler, 2005; Paterson *et al.*, 2010). Fragmentation is, as we have noted, a standard feature of academic subfields, and its recent history cannot be separated from broader trends within the academy and higher education, which are in turn nested within and constitutive of a broader political economy of knowledge production (Becher and Trowler, 2001). The consolidation and progress of subfields within disciplines and of subfields within subfields brings with it the risk of non-communication amongst the resultant scholarly silos (Almond, 1990). There is some evidence that the general journals (especially the *Journal of Common Market Studies* and the *Journal of European Public Policy*) perform something of an integrating function within EU studies (Jensen and Kristensen, 2013). But even if the coverage in general journals is representative of the field as a whole, it is doubtful that many scholars read each issue cover-to-cover. And with key research material on the EU being published in discipline (political science) and field (public administration, comparative politics, International Relations) journals, it becomes harder for EU scholars to follow all of (even

Anglophone) EU scholarship – as was certainly possible in the 1960s. The sociology of the discipline matters here, especially in contexts where self-identification as a ‘Europeanist’ or as an ‘EU scholar’ is at variance with the standard sub-field configuration of political science (Andrews, 2012; Kaufman-Osborn, 2006). In other words, fragmentation brings with it an incentive to mainstream.

So far we have thought about professionalization in EU studies in terms of two key features: conformity to the norms of the parent discipline and increasing specialization/fragmentation within the field. Both features can be thought of as carrying advantages and risks for the field. There is also a third feature of professionalization that has been rather neglected to date, namely the very constitution of ‘EU studies’ as a field in its own right. The concept of ‘EU studies’ was itself a product of changes taking place in the field in the late 1980s/early 1990s – the period typically associated with the rise of ‘professionalization’ and the displacement of older scholarly frames (Manners and Whitman, 2016, pp. 5–6). Google Scholar data¹ suggest that ‘EU studies’ was unused before 1994 and it was not until 1995 that the term gained any sort of traction – and even then sparingly. Yet by the late 1990s ‘EU studies’ had become a very common marker for work being done on European integration and its institutional expressions. It might be assumed that the shift is a direct field reflex to the changed language of the EU itself following the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, but the same data show that obvious antecedents such as ‘EC studies’, ‘European integration studies’ or ‘regional integration studies’ were hardly used prior to the early 1990s. For example, Google Scholar finds just one recorded mention of either ‘regional integration studies’ or ‘European integration studies’ during the whole of the 1960s.

This implies that the early 1990s marked not just a key juncture in the field’s history, but also the advent of the discursive construction of the field itself. This matters because the emergence of ‘EU studies’ was also the moment where ‘professionalization’, in terms of both practice and discourse really began. It follows that the various ‘turns’ in the field are perhaps better read in terms of the solidification of professionalizing practices and thereby the re-definition and de-limitation of EU studies’ object of study, rather than as evidence of the field simply responding to developments within its object of study. Moreover, this constitutive moment was also made possible through the development of narratives about the field’s past, some of which are virtually impossible to sustain empirically (Rosamond, 2016). The resultant stories about the (pre-)history of EU studies, aside from deploying simplified narratives of both the contours of past debate and the substance of previous scholarship, also had the effect of actively ‘forgetting’ or at least downgrading certain lines of scholarship that were no longer seen as relevant to explaining or understanding the ‘new Europe’.

II. Integration as the Central *Problematique* of EU Studies

One of the key features of the ‘professionalization’ of EU studies and the associated scholarly ‘turns’ was the displacement of ‘integration’ as the central *problematique* of the field. The upshot is that most of the subsequent ‘turns’ in EU studies have tended to treat the EU as a polity of some kind (Hix, 2007; Jachtenfuchs, 2007; Kreppel,

¹Searches at scholar.google.com undertaken on 21 June 2017.

2012). Our argument is not that the comparative politics and governance ‘turns’ represent some kind of historic mistake – far from it. Rather, we suggest deeper exploration of the idea that losing sight of ‘integration’ in EU studies has had some negative consequences, particularly in relation to how the field deals with the current constellation of crises.

It is worth noting two misrepresentations that are typically built into the claim that the field in the 1960s and 1970s was shaped by an increasingly unproductive conversation about ‘integration’. The first is that the past of the field was dominated by work from scholars of International Relations, that there was little input from the cutting edge political science of the time and (thus) that there was little treatment of the communities as a nascent political system. A glance at the work of Lindberg (1963), Etzioni (1965), Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) and the papers gathered by Lindberg and Scheingold (1971) should be enough to, at the very least, qualify this claim (see also Rosamond, 2007). The second point is more central to our argument. It is to note that the conception of ‘integration’ built into the standard narrative of the field’s past relies upon a bifurcation between simplified renditions of neofunctionalist and intergovernmentalist uses of the concept (roughly spillover plus supranational activism versus the primacy of power politics and governmental interests). This bifurcation certainly captures something important, but it strips much of this scholarship of its granulation and nuance. Ernst Haas described the project of integration theory as the observation of ‘the peaceful creation of possible new types of human communities at a very high level of organisation and of the processes which may lead to such conditions’ (1971, p. 4). Indeed, much of the neofunctionalist work of the 1960s and early 1970s focused on the necessary and sufficient background conditions that would enable post-national integration projects to become sustainable.

We suggest that a renewed focus on integration (broadly conceived) would enable the field to contemplate the ways in which crisis dynamics interconnect with and amplify three founding and (and unresolved) dilemmas of the European project (see also Rosamond, 2017). These can be summarized as (a) the constant tension between the goal of delivering an EU-wide market order versus the desire to ensure social solidarity, (b) the tension between the development of a legal-constitutional order versus the need to secure appropriate channels for democratic authorization of policy decisions, and (c) the tension between a developing cosmopolitan social order characterized by free movement on the one hand and ongoing national communitarian impulses on the other. These tensions open space for different theoretical perspectives on the dilemmas of the European project, in particular an agonistic cosmopolitical approach from within critical social theory (Manners, 2013). Put bluntly, we wonder whether the downgrading of the *problematique* of ‘integration’ and the ‘normalization’ of EU studies has taken scholarship away from problems that have undoubtedly been exacerbated by the current crises, but which were always hiding in plain sight. These three dilemmas cannot be captured or explored through a simplified dichotomy, but they are undoubtedly puzzles of ‘integration’, that might – in turn – put us in a better position to understand the spectre of ‘disintegration’ and the extent to which the cluster of current crises are associated with the onset of disintegrative dynamics in the EU. Put another way, did forgetting about integration make it harder to think about disintegration?

III. Researching Integration in EU Studies

It should be understood that the problem of ‘forgetting’ integration is not simply about a shift in the core subject matter of EU studies, which in turn provokes an inability to ask appropriate and salient questions. Our point is rather that this has tended to be accompanied by a ‘professional’ approach to social inquiry that rests solely on the achievement of internal disciplinary criteria to deliver scholarly progress. Once again, this is an entirely valid and necessary pursuit. We simply suggest that it comes at a cost and that this cost could and should be offset by the field constituting itself in ways that treat as valid and admissible concerns about normativity and the input of hitherto marginalized scholarly voices included through more agonistic cosmopolitics. This amounts to advocacy of a version of EU studies that balances the quest for systematic knowledge about its object with intellectual openness, an aversion to unnecessary boundary-drawing and a willingness to re-integrate normative concerns as a central feature of academic practice.

Addressing the three dilemmas of integration is paramount to opening spaces that make a different Europe possible through research agendas that actively connect questions of public interest, democratic sovereignty and transnational solidarity (Scholl and Freyberg-Inan, 2018). We suggest that this move is especially important in light of questions and crises that sit at the heart of the pieces assembled for this issue of the *Annual Review*. Addressing the first dilemma (a) of the tension between EU-wide market order and social solidarity requires both the deep *interrogation of austerity policies* that have, for several years now, been the default economic policy instruments of eurozone governance and the acknowledgement of the public interest stated in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union: the sustainable development of Europe. The shocking socio-economic evidence of the failure of austerity in Greece and the UK reinforces the intellectual and institutional rejection of austerity measures by the OECD and IMF (Blyth, 2013; OECD, 2016; Ostry *et al.*, 2016). The importance of research into this economic integration dilemma demands work that explores the EU public interest found in achieving sustainable development through balanced economic growth and price stability, full employment and social progress, and environmental protection (Art. 3.3 TEU). In particular, post-crisis research into the public interest in maintaining sustainable public services of general interest is crucial (Art. 14 and Prot. 26 TFEU). Approaches that analyze and critique the ideological ‘common sense’ of economic orthodoxy (such as constructivist political economy, historical materialism and neo-Gramscianism) develop quite distinct understandings of economic sustainability and social justice. They also self-consciously seek to break with the integration codes that have been characteristic of both scholarly and policy practice in the EU (Bieling *et al.*, 2016; Ryner, 2012).

Addressing the second dilemma (b) of the tension between EU legal-constitutional order and democratic authorization requires scholarship that works from the premise of *defending democracy* and the acknowledgement of democratic sovereignty found in Article 10 of the Treaty on European Union: ‘the functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy’. The defence of democracy involves striking a democratic balance between political forces driving where the ‘Union acts to better achieve together what cannot be achieved apart’ (Manners, 2013, p. 487) and democratic needs where ‘decisions are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen’ (Art. 1 TEU). The importance of the democratic integration dilemma suggests that research should be directed

towards core questions of EU democratic sovereignty: the achievement of representative democracy throughout all EU policy competences, particularly socio-economic policy, in order to ensure that shared competence, the ordinary legislative procedure, and publicly-open democratic debate and decision-making is found throughout the EU Parliament and Council, as well as member state, regional and local legislatures. Focal points for post-crisis research and debate into democratic sovereignty should include economic and monetary union generally, the role of an EU economic and finance Commissioner/minister responsible for the eurozone, EP Parliamentary and public scrutiny of the eurozone council/group meetings, and public oversight of a common eurozone budget, bonds, or monetary fund. In terms of theoretical voices, the likes of Habermasian critical theories of the public sphere and feminist theories of the power of masculinities within EU and member states' public spheres provide different understandings of democratic sovereignty (Kronsell, 2016; Manners, 2007).

Addressing the third dilemma (c) of the tension between EU cosmopolitan social order and 'national' communitarianism requires exploration of the prospects for *co-ordinated transnational solidarity* and the acknowledgement of transnational solidarity as stated in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union: 'the promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States'. The necessity of research into EU and member state support for co-ordinated transnational solidarity to help vocalize and institutionalize opposition and counter-proposals to orthodox policies within the EU can be found in an engagement with the critical social theory of agonistic cosmopolitics – work that links local politics to global ethics (Manners, 2013, pp. 482–485; Scholl and Freyberg-Inan, 2018, pp. 115–117). The agonistic actors that require support for transnational solidarity are those that act across member state spaces in support of economic and social cohesion and solidarity, including representative associations, parties representative of socioeconomic and civic civil society, trade unions and representatives of employers' organizations (Art. 11 TEU; Arts. 15, 163, 300 TFEU). Research should thus focus on how critical and agonistic actors can be supported through institutionalized transnational civil society, trade unions, youth and educational programmes, without compromising the integrity and critique of their heterodox, anti-austerity, non-national democratic grass-roots. The theoretical perspectives of critical social theory of agonistic cosmopolitics, postcolonial theories of ethno-cultural belonging, poststructural theories of violent state-bound practices, and sociological theories of cognitive framing in times of turmoil provide different understandings of transnational solidarity beyond nationalism (Borg and Diez, 2016; Kinnvall, 2016; Manners, 2013; Saurugger, 2016).

Conclusion: A Different Europe is Possible

In light of the foregoing, we conclude by sketching out a series of five suggestions for how EU studies, and thus the EU itself, can move beyond crises. Implicit throughout is our working premise that scholarly fields and their objects are mutually constitutive.

First, there must be recognition that European integration requires **historical context** – that the EU does not begin with a 'year zero' moment on 9 May 1950. This historicization must include the origins of European integration in the processes of imperialism and colonialization; nationalism and xenophobia; international trade and interwar depression; and the wars of empire. It is certainly true – as Frantz Fanon

stated in the 1960s – that since its development has required the spoilation of the non-European world, ‘Europe is literally the creation of the Third World’ (Fanon in Manners, 2000, p. 200). As our discussion of professionalization makes clear, EU studies has increasingly lost sight of the historical context of integration as the central *problematique*. Similarly, the teaching of integration in EU studies has tended to overlook the global conflictual and political economy origins of European integration prior to 1950, while at the same time ignoring the postcolonial context of EU relations with the rest of the world (Kinnvall, 2016).

Second, there needs to be acknowledgement that the empirical agenda of EU studies has hidden in plain sight the **neoliberal preferences** for market economics over the everyday socio-economic concerns of ordinary EU and non-EU citizens. In the 1980s Jacques Delors argued that a ‘social Europe’ was a necessary balance to the Europe of the Single Market. The need for the development of European social models to counter neoliberal globalization is widely discussed outside EU studies (European Commission, 2017), but the relative absence of mainstream EU discussions of social Europe after 1992 has had negative effects on the field of EU studies (Manners and Murray, 2016).

Third, in this context, different research agendas and theories that are underused are vital to the health and future of EU studies beyond the crises. The study of EU **public interest** in sustainable development and social progress in the opposition to intellectually-bankrupt austerity measures; of **democratic sovereignty** in representative democracy and economic and monetary union in defence of democracy; and of **transnational solidarity** in economic and social cohesion and solidarity of progressive activist groups and civil society as an agonistic heterodoxy are all vital research agendas. In parallel different theoretical approaches to European integration must be utilized to enrich the field, including historical materialist and neo-Gramscian theories of economic orthodoxy; critical theory and feminist theories of democratic sovereignty; and critical social, postcolonial, poststructural, and sociological theories of transnational solidarity beyond nationalism.

Fourth, teaching and researching the field needs to be done in a much more open way. Rather than reifying and petrifying the field, EU studies and its students need to be aware of the rich **diversity** of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives on European integration. Our discussion of professionalization shows the problems that arise as the disciplinary mainstream of political science becomes dominant within EU studies, with single-discipline textbook approaches leaving EU studies blindsided by crises (Parker, 2016). In contrast, opening EU studies to disciplinary diversity (including other humanities and social science perspectives) and cross-paradigm theoretical viewpoints (including Marxist, postcolonial, poststructural, feminist and critical social theories) enriches both research and teaching, rendering both field and subject more robust (Manners and Whitman, 2016).

Fifth, achieving such diversity involves recognizing genuine **methodological pluralism**. Different methodologies – distinct understandings of the logics, structures and procedures of inquiry – should be acknowledged and their coexistence should be encouraged in order to reap two distinct benefits (Rosamond, 2015, pp. 32–33). The first recognizes that different methodologies offer different conceptions of scientific rigour, and hence less vulnerability to the kind of paradigmatic implosion seen in communist studies and neoliberal economics. The second acknowledges that dialogue and

interdisciplinarity yields far richer discussions about the research strategies beyond dichotomies, including the purpose, design and methods of different types of research (Manners *et al.*, 2015). To better reveal and address the challenges discussed here, a pluralistic field is one in which all the humanities and social sciences have something to contribute to the ontological, epistemological, and crucially methodological questions of European integration, EU studies, and understanding the EU itself in order to make a different Europe possible.

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