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Introduction

## Disrupting and Re-imagining European Studies: towards a More Diverse and Inclusive Discipline

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## Abstract

This Special Issue is the culmination of the Diversity, Inclusivity, Multi-Disciplinarity in European Studies (DIMES) project, undertaken under the aegis of the University Association of European Studies (UACES). DIMES was initiated in recognition of the under-representation (broadly conceived) of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) academics and to address the over-representation of Western European and North American scholars and knowledge production within UACES and European Studies more generally. This introduction to the issue establishes the context for the contributions that follow. It outlines the ways in which DIMES sought to address the lack of inclusivity in European Studies, and speaks also to the further aim of DIMES, the extension of the disciplinary focus of European Studies. Here, then we introduce the contributions to this special issue, which are representative of some of the many conversations held over four years with a wide range of scholars, all committed to disrupting European Studies, albeit through different means. We argue that debates about decentring, about decolonising, on the need to acknowledge the privilege and Eurocentricity that continues to dominate knowledge production traditions, are pertinent to European Studies.

## Keywords

European Studies, Diversity, Inclusivity, (Multi-)Disciplinarity, Disruption, Decolonisation, Decentring.

In 2019, UACES and the European Studies Association of Sub-Saharan Africa (ESA-SSA) launched a project funded by the European Commission's Erasmus Plus Jean Monnet Projects. The aim of the programme was to encourage and promote diversity within European Studies - broadly defined. The project, 'Diversity, Inclusion and Multidisciplinarity in European Studies' (DIMES) sought to explore ways to increase diversity within the field of European Studies, in particular with regards to the ethnicity, disciplinary focus, geographical location of its participants and eventually knowledge production within European Studies itself. The outlined aims of the project were threefold: 1) to improve the representation of BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of colour) academics within UACES and European studies more generally; 2) to move away from the emphasis on Western European and North American academics towards greater inclusion for scholars from under-represented, even marginalised geographies; 3) to broaden the disciplinary focus of contemporary European Studies to include adjacent/related disciplines such as anthropology, human geography, cultural studies and sociology.

The early vision of the DIMES team was to organise three workshops to debate the issues at hand. These were ultimately held: at [Leiden University in early March 2020](#); online (as a result of Covid-19 lockdowns) in February 2022; and at [University of Pretoria in February 2023](#). The hope was for collaborative and provocative discussions in which all participants were willing to be challenged, even discomfited. Our initiative dovetails with growing calls for greater reflexiveness in the Humanities and Social Sciences and acknowledgement of privileged positions and views in the respective disciplinary canons. This particularly concerns how the partial and partialised narratives that dominate in academia can reproduce and perpetuate injustices in societies. Social Sciences and Humanities departments of universities have started projects to decolonise curricula and to acknowledge their own histories and contribution to colonial pasts and the lasting legacies of these histories in today's world. Still, as we found throughout the project, there remains a good deal of resistance to such projects. We also encountered a good deal of debate about the extent to which a break with past practices is required, about the relative virtues of bridge-breaking versus bridge-building.

The first event in Leiden was key to much that followed in the lifetime of the project. 'Disruption' was discussed extensively during the second day of this workshop and is the concept that went on to underpin our many and long conversations about the articles now published in this special issue. The Leiden event was held shortly before lockdowns took hold in Europe but some participants from further afield were already unable to travel. Their contributions were facilitated via the video links that we would all become very familiar with but at this very early stage of the pandemic, we could already see the inequalities when it came to travel, to the capacity to be "in the room". At the same time, other than the DIMES team and invited speakers, few travelled from Europe to Africa for the closing conference in Pretoria. The reasons for this are many and include those border and visa issues that constrain freedom to travel, as well as other deeply inequitable structures, such as access to financial resources. But they reflect structural obstacles that are more universally experienced, for instance, jammed schedules that limit what we can do in terms of stepping away from our immediate responsibilities, especially to acquire new knowledge and listen to the voices of those outside our carefully constructed networks. The changes that disruptive practices seek to achieve are contingent on the availability of both time and space, or the capacity to make them available, which too few manage.

Cognisant of the structural barriers to participation and in line with the broader aims of the project, the DIMES team and the UACES secretariat worked consistently to ensure access for those who were unable to attend. Moreover, to ensure that the perspectives presented at workshops and conferences were captured, we made consistent use of available technology that allowed participants to produce and/or contribute to blog posts, videos and podcasts from the workshops. These have been curated by the UACES

secretariat and archived on the [UACES's website](#) to serve as an enduring repository for all European Studies scholars.

Given that we aimed for a broader impact of the project beyond its immediate participants, the discussions that have occurred under the aegis of the DIMES were visible and accessible to a wider cohort of European Studies through three DIMES-sponsored panels at the UACES annual conference 2022 in Lille. Beyond the UACES community, there were also two DIMES convened panels at the 2023 biennial European Union in International Affairs (EUIA) Conference in Brussels. EUIA was an important venue for highlighting the ongoing research and approach cultivated by DIMES since it also included policymakers and practitioners as participants and attendees. Through presentations and critical debates on the teaching of European Studies, materials produced as part of DIMES have also been used at annual UACES Graduate Forum Doctoral Training Academies for early career researchers.

In this essay, we reflect on the culmination of some of those discussions as articulated in the contributions to this special issue. The discussions, reflections and collaborations facilitated by DIMES over the last few years are largely preserved as essential knowledge for the field and a wider public. Additionally, we hope that the themes featured in this special issue, which provide provocations to the mainstream, inform research and teaching on European Studies. Disrupting the canon will also begin to rectify the omissions and silences that have beset European Studies as both an academic discipline and a field of study.

Somewhat conflicting, European Studies is simultaneously a field and a discipline. As a field of study (in European studies), Europe is just one among many world regions to be explored and can be done so through a wide range of disciplines: political science, international relations, law, sociology, economics, history, anthropology, sociology, business studies, cultural studies. Such study might be mono-, multi- or interdisciplinary. In the field, the phenomenon of European integration may be a component of study but it is not the essence of it.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, it is similar to other area studies.

European Studies is perhaps most discernible as a discipline when examined through the lens of degree programmes and the related canon of literature. Such lenses demonstrate that when European Studies is articulated as a discipline, this is often in reference to studies on the European Union (EU),<sup>2</sup> which uncritically asserts Brussels and/or its member states as the voice and voices of Europe.<sup>3</sup> This discipline is itself multi- or interdisciplinary in form, reflecting the complexity of the system (Newell 2001) that is the EU. Yet, as evidenced by the discussions undertaken during the DIMES project, there are debates to be had about what insights from the various bodies of literature *could* be applied to the study of Europe and/or the EU but are not. Over the life of the project, we saw this most clearly in the discussions about decentring versus decolonisation. In these discussions, the former is seen as facilitating dialogue, the latter forming an obstacle to it, particularly in policymaking circles (see also Orbie et al. 2023). Readers of this special issue may find it useful to juxtapose the arguments of Antonio Salvador M. Alcazar III, Camile Nessel and Jan Orbie with those of Sharon Lecocq and Stephan Keukeleire to gain a broader picture of the debate.

Both the field and discipline will continue to have a European focus in terms of the subject matter. Yet, we should not assume that Europe or the EU are only studied in Europe. Stepping out of European geography to see how others study both the region and the integration project might be the most impactful way of understanding what Europe and the EU look like from afar. Indeed, this was one logic of holding one of the three workshops in Pretoria. Equally, one can remain in Europe to study Europe and still, as the contributions to this issue maintain, step away from Eurocentrism. This might be through more inclusive working practices, for example, centring the voices of BIPOC scholars. Or

it might require only an active acknowledgement that whilst European integration in its modern incarnation began after 1945, it did not start with a blank slate. This geographic area has a long and bloody history of impacting other peoples around the world, it is not inaccurate to argue that the EU (through its member states) was built on foundations of extraction, enslavement and appropriation. And, for many in other parts of the world, the EU and Europe are synonymous, their foreign policy practices still informed by the imperialist's instincts. Recognising such perspectives, moving beyond those Eurocentric philosophies, theories and epistemologies that pervade the canon has therefore been a key part of the DIMES efforts.

Gurminder K. Bhambra (2022) has pointed the way towards a 'decolonial project for Europe' building on postcolonial scholarship understanding Europe not as a story of successful modernity, nation-state building, and then post-war integration, but as an 'unfinished project of colonialism' (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Bhambra (2022: 240) argues that:

The decolonization of Europe will only happen once the colonial histories of Europe are explicitly reckoned with and Europe itself is understood to have been constituted by those histories – in all their variety. The injustices consequent to these histories can, further, only be adequately addressed through acknowledging the histories that have produced them as well as the historiographies that have obscured them.

Actively focusing our attention on how legacies of colonialism continue to shape European and other societies allows us to understand how they affect relations between Europe and other parts of the world is therefore a prerequisite for the decolonisation of European Studies. A distinction, we would argue, should be made between "decolonising" and "decentering", despite shared commonalities such as disrupting Eurocentrism. Few working in this area would disagree that a consideration of these impacts and relations from the perspectives of others is essential to decentre the study of Europe, in a colloquial sense, and contextualise it. But as our conversations through the lifetime of the DIMES project clarified, for some, decentering is insufficiently ambitious in view of what needs to be rectified (see also Orbie et al, 2023). Within the study of African-EU relations, some scholars have concentrated on showing how the legacies of colonialism have material negative economic and social impacts (Hansen and Jonsson 2014a, 2014b; Haastrup 2020), and how the European integration project assumed economic contributions from African colonies almost as 'dowries' being brought into the European project (Hansen and Jonsson 2011). Beyond this, paying attention to the legacies of colonialism also highlights the omissions in knowledge production about Europe, the EU itself and its engagement with the world (Haastrup 2020). In some cases, studies on the EU can occupy outsized roles in their explanatory insights, creating blindspots and knowledge gaps with implications for policy, as demonstrated by Dina Sebastião and Bruno Luciano's contribution to this issue. In their analysis of polycrisis, Sebastião and Luciano make a compelling case for the utility of comparative regionalism for EU Studies in a way that potentially challenges prevailing explanations of global phenomena. Drawing on two examples of the 2008 financial crisis and the trends in migration since 2015, they show that perspectives from other regions, which often sit on the margins of regionalism studies, can enrich and enhance our understanding of Europe. A wider scope for European Studies will afford us more nuanced critiques of Europe and policies, pointing the way to more just domestic policies and external relations. The normative agenda underpinning contributions to this issue parallels the increase in discourses around decolonising, supported by a range of initiatives being undertaken across higher education globally.

Among others, various well-known European Studies centres of excellence are actively reconsidering their practices and curricula. For example, after George Floyd's killing in the United States at the hands of police officers, and the demonstrations across numerous

countries against structural racism that followed, the Amsterdam Centre for European Studies at the University of Amsterdam responded by launching a radical programme that included decolonising curricula, diversifying the student and staff bodies and enhancing linguistic diversity. The goal was to provide a space for reflection and action on how racism and various forms of discrimination inhabit institutional spaces and structure relations to detrimental effects. Colleagues have proposed problematising the self-definition and self-presentation of European Studies. They have advocated for the need to foreground 'Europe' as a highly contested project, paying substantive attention to racialised, ethnic, sexual, religious diversities and corresponding structural exclusions within European societies, and they launched a series of discussions on these matters (ACES 2023). To a limited extent, the European Institute at the London School of Economics has also set itself the objective to cultivate its research and teaching in a way that would go 'beyond Eurocentrism'. They use this expression 'to play a twin role in our thinking about what we do and who we are: it serves to highlight that we both look beyond Europe in a regional sense and look beyond Eurocentrism in a philosophical-political sense' (Glendinning 2023). Similarly, the Decolonising Initiative at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence aims to decolonise knowledge and practice by creating a forum for dialogue and change which challenges colonial privilege, narratives and assumptions. It invites its community to reflect on what they consider knowledge and its biases and to seek to examine and address the colonial legacies that shape the material structures of the institution and knowledge creation. The EUI's initiative poses questions about how definitions of the curriculum and existing practices unknowingly reproduce patterns of hierarchy that have implications for knowledge production and how they perpetuate the underrepresentation of people from certain European or non-European places (EUI 2022).

In line with these agendas, in this special issue, the co-authored article by Christopher Changwe Nshimbi, Patrick Develtere and Bacha Kebede Debela reflects on what European Studies means outside of Eurocentrism, both geographically and epistemologically. Situated within new practices of science diplomacy, they provide an account of how a new African-European higher education collaboration platform sought to engender co-creation and co-production as a challenge to prevailing patterns of knowledge production. It recognises that scholarly frames of understanding are often defined from positions of academic privilege anchored in colonial relations that continue to inform knowledge production. Engagement between and among bodies of knowledge originating from the Global Souths and from Europe could change the very terms of debate, as Sebastião and Luciano's, and Nshimbi, Develtere and Debela's contributions to this issue demonstrate.

The perspectives presented in this special issue are ontologically and epistemologically diverse but they share the same underlying assumption that inspired DIMES: when we ignore hierarchies of knowledge and silence historically marginalised voices and spaces, our knowledge and understanding of Europe, and of Europe in a changing world, is invariably limited and limiting, with negative consequences for the discipline. In the contributions from Lecocq and Keukeleire, and Alcazar III et al. both sets of authors interrogate what it means to 'decentre' Europe. Nora Fisher Onar and Kalypso Nicolaïdis (2013) called for an agenda to 'decentre' European studies, and more specifically to 'decentre' EU external action studies (Fisher Onar and Nicolaïdis 2021). For them, the practice of 'decentring' encompasses three dimensions: 'provincialising' Europe (acknowledging Europe as just one of many regions whose realities matter), engaging with other regions (understanding others' perspective on the world and interests), and reconstructing European identities through historical memories (including incorporating understanding of how the past influences how others perceive Europe and are impacted by it).

Lecocq and Keukeleire take this logic further in their contribution to this issue. They expound on the value of decentring the study of EU external action. For them, 'the argument (in favour of) decentring pertains to a sense of unfairness regarding core-

periphery relations that have characterised world politics, and the production of knowledge about the world and within Europe', as Eurocentric approaches have led to the perpetuation of unequal power relations and 'research practices that oppress critical and dissident thinking'. From a practical perspective, they argue that decentring can lead to more nuanced situational knowledge of the world in which EU external action is exercised, reducing policy failures. Lecocq and Keukeleire propose understanding decentring as a debate that is disrupting mainstream studies of EU external action and problematising Eurocentric assumptions. Crucially, they point to the value of both critical and problem-solving theorising within the decentring debate in driving this agenda of disruption forward. Critical work aims to fundamentally disrupt the mainstream canon and rebuild the discipline, and represents a 'deeper' form of disruption, whereas problem-solving theorising is disruptive in different ways through 'adapting and improving existing frameworks (i.e. recalibrating existing scholarship and policy to make them less Eurocentric)'. In conversations with Lecocq and Keukeleire, a contentious aspect was the paradox they highlighted, that critical approaches may be confined to more critical circles, alienating particularly those with the power to make policy and so bring about change. By contrast, they argued (both then and here) that the more limited ambitions seen in problem-solving approaches might be a faster avenue to counter Eurocentrism and to decentre EU external action studies and policies, constituting a step towards broader acceptance in the mainstream of more critical approaches. In our workshop discussions, others argued that the decentering agenda is not sufficiently disruptive in view of the nature of the problem, since invariably the problem to be solved is about improving the European approach: in this reading, the decentering agenda ultimately ends up centring that which is supposed to be decentred.

Alcazar III, Nessel and Orbie also argue for provincialising Europe, removing it from a privileged standpoint, to focus on how partners experience interactions with the EU, and to imbue partners with agency. They set about disrupting the study of EU trade policy, which has been dominated by research focusing on the institutional and intra-EU social dynamics related to trade, despite the fact that the effects of trade are by their very nature global. They argue that mainstream EU trade studies have centred around the idea of power, focusing on what kind of power the EU has and how it wields it to attain its aims. They propose a decolonial approach to studying trade policy, particularly specific areas of EU trade policy that directly apply to trade relations with the Global Souths: the Generalised System of Preferences; the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) organising economic relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific states, and the trade and sustainable development chapters in new bilateral trade agreements. The approach they suggest entails first deconstructing Europe as a knowledge-subject as this 'alerts us to the ways in which dominant knowledge regimes and political discourses objectify peoples and places that the EU deems less modern, less developed, less capable' and justify particular paternalistic policies. Secondly, they propose rehistoricising silences, and paying attention to historical (colonial and post-colonial) relations between Europe and other regions. The third strategy in their approach requires eschewing assumptions that trade policy is technocratic and neutral, through engagement with those targeted by external interventions and how they experience and interpret the material impact of those interventions. Finally, they advocate centring subaltern subjectivities and alternative political subject-hoods to escape the limitations of Eurocentric approaches. Understanding EU trade policy in a decolonial way would therefore entail problematising existing assumptions regarding the benevolent, or at least neutral, character of EU trade interactions with the global souths, and abandoning the underpinning focus in the scholarship on EU power. It would additionally entail engaging with researchers and scholarship generated in the Global Souths to focus on Global Souths' interactions with EU trade policy, their impacts, as well as their agency in how they shape trade, and how interests, values and understandings of trade policies and their effects emerge from historical legacies of colonial pasts. Ultimately, this perspective hopes to reform EU external relations via trade policies.

Tiffany Williams's article likewise demonstrates the importance of paying attention to historical legacies. She reveals how the assumption that EU values are universal has led to observing and defining the EU's Eastern Partnership relations from a Western perspective aiming at greater Europeanisation. She argues that the EU has branded Europeanisation and rapprochement to the EU as a solution to the problem of instability in the region. Through a process of first 'othering' and then 'sameing', the EU has made the deepening and expansion of relations with Eastern neighbours conditional on these states accepting and approaching EU standards and the EU's definition of 'European'. This EU-centric approach has not only ignored the domestic situation of these others, of their preferences and historical, cultural and social specificities, but it has blinded the EU to an understanding of how these multiple domestic realities of any partner state affect relations with the EU. A corollary is the blinding of the EU to the limits on its power to generate transformative change in each state, let alone to transform others in precisely the same way, seen so visibly in its relations with Armenia and Belarus, as Williams sets out. Achievement of the EU's objectives in the Eastern Neighbourhood, Williams argues, would require both a willingness and a capacity to de- and reterritorialise the region but this is impossible given that the EU is neither fish nor fowl when it comes to colonialism in its Eastern Neighbourhood:

In order for the EU's brand of Europeanisation to achieve and sustain the intended transformation and integration, the ties to national and regional identity that impede its Europeanisation efforts would (will) need to become undone and reconstructed through de- and reterritorialisation. However, as discussed in theoretical debate and shown historically, e.g. colonialism and imperialism, hegemonic power is required to achieve this profound degree of transformation and integration.

This over-estimation of its capacity (or misunderstanding of what is really required) to reproduce its peace project on its borders to the east holds dangers for the Eastern Neighbourhood - and for the EU itself. The blinkering effects of EU-centricity account for the different outcomes we see in the EU's relations with those to its east and, in the cases where association has turned to accession, explains the backsliding from EU values we have seen in some member states. All told, Williams's article articulates the perils of Eurocentrism in the EU's external relations. She demonstrates how the conditionality inherent to its dealings with others puts unnecessary pressure on the ties between a culture, people, place and identity, and is counter-productive to the goal of uniting Europe.

The three articles collectively demonstrate the practical value of decentring European studies and consciously incorporating perspectives and experiences of 'others' in research. Defending the value and opportunities that can arise from more systematic comparative perspectives and studies in regionalism, eschewing the primordial position granted to the EU and theories developed to explain the EU, Sebastião and Luciano implicitly advocate for the provincialisation of the EU in regionalism studies. They call for a more rigorous and consistent agenda of comparative regionalism, with greater attention paid to regional dynamics in the Global Souths. This is necessary if we are to overcome the limitations of the study of regionalism(s) which has tended to apply theories and understandings developed in the case of the EU to other regions, thus imbuing regionalism with a Eurocentric bias. Focusing on the polycrises of the last fifteen years, they review scholarly literature on how regional organisations have responded to these polycrises, and show how that Eurocentric bias limits our understanding of regional integration and how regional projects can operate in times of crises. They find a predominance of studies investigating the response of the EU to these crises, more so than other regional projects, despite, as they point out, the Global Souths responding to far greater refugee and migratory movements, for instance in Jordan, or South American migration out of Venezuela. In contrast to the Western securitised approaches to migration regulation, South American countries have emphasised human rights and regularisation over incarceration and



deportation (Brumat 2020), and as Sebastião and Luciano discuss, by focusing more (solely) on the EU, we are missing out on lessons from approaches in the Global Souths that lead to more just outcomes. Furthermore, their findings reveal how research based in other regions pays greater attention to citizens and societies affected by regional initiatives, in contrast to EU Studies, where the Eurocentrism and disciplinary predominance of Political Science, has led to research focused on institutions, structures and elites. Indeed, even comparative regionalism research that sought to break away from Eurocentrism and 'integration snobbery' (Murray 2010) privileging the particular European model, has concentrated on institutional developments, political and elite dynamics resulting in different types of regionalism (De Lombaerde et al. 2010; Warleigh-Lack and Van Langenhove 2010; Telò 2014; Börzel and Risse 2019). Yet, the crises have affected mainly under-represented objects of research: economically and socially excluded citizens and minorities. In their contribution, Sebastião and Luciano show the limitations of mainstream approaches to EU Studies and propose a research agenda that takes account of the extra-institutional dimension of regionalism (Mattheis et al. 2018), that focuses on people and the subjects of regionalism and takes advantage of a cross-fertilisation of ideas and approaches via comparisons with regionalism in the Global Souths.

The final articles by Ainre Maame-Fosua Evans and Danai Petropoulou Ionescu, and by Christopher Changwe Nshimbi, Patrick Develtere and Bacha Kebede Debela focus on teaching (and researching) practices and experiences of decolonising curricula and trans-continental partnerships respectively, as ways to overcome the silences, biases and reproduction of certain knowledge and standpoints that are widespread in academia and European Studies. They engage with the debates and concerns that academic institutions are increasingly attempting to tackle and provide practical examples to further inspire and advance these programmes. In this way, the final section of this special issue thus gives way to more practical examples of initiatives being implemented to contextualise and decolonise what is taught in European Studies, and to co-produce knowledge on Africa and Europe and their relations (Kotsopoulos and Mattheis 2018) in a more democratic and unbiased manner.

Maame-Fosua Evans and Petropoulou Ionescu introduce the basis and debates surrounding efforts to decolonise curricula. They highlight an agenda that moves beyond initial, sometimes tokenistic, steps of incorporation into reading lists of minority and under-represented authors and scholars. They suggest a series of purposeful actions to address the problematic canon of EU Studies in its focus on formal institutions and narrow definition of Europe and attempts to distance it from legacies of war, colonialism and violence to emphasise a positive narrative of idealised European ideas, values and progress. These actions include: contextualising the canon, discussing in the classroom the historical contexts of ideas and authors, and debating the problems that perpetuating and reproducing these ideas uncritically can and has caused; presenting alternative narratives and the experiences of groups affected by Europe. They also point to examples of approaches in their own institution in Amsterdam, of the incorporation of students' diverse lived experiences in the classroom, through active attempts to de-hierarchise knowledge and knowledge production and validating diverse points of views and experiences.

At a more macro-level, the PAES (Platform for African-European Studies) Initiative that Nshimbi, Develtere and Debela present in their article an ambitious coordinated endeavour challenging the historical Eurocentric nature of education cooperation and scholarship exported from Europe to Africa. PAES structures collaboration between eight universities in Europe and fourteen in Africa. A key aim of the Platform is to recognise and incorporate into curricula and teaching on both continents the pluriversality of knowledge, ontologies and epistemologies in order to decolonise African Studies in Europe and European Studies in Africa. It fosters greater visibility of the study of Europe from outside Europe and non-European perspectives, a valuable way of breaking from the strictures and biases of Eurocentric studies of Europe, opening avenues for more critical engagement with

European Studies. Simultaneously, more ambitious study and representations of Africa in Europe would be developed through new programmes on African Studies, co-created with African partners, eschewing the prevalent European scholarship on Africa centred on studying Africa as a locus of corruption, underdevelopment and problems. This innovative collaboration seeks to transcend the barriers of European Studies, to 'provincialise' Europe, and create a more democratic African-European Studies field to foster a new, more balanced, collaborative and egalitarian understanding of these regions and their interactions past, present and future.

Contributions to this special issue serve as the culmination of four years of principled, sometimes difficult, always thought-provoking conversation that has been the DIMES project. They reiterate the need for more inclusive scholarship and curricula and teaching materials, taking account of perspectives from the Global Souths, and marginalised groups within and outside Europe. As editors of the issue, we regard it as challenging us all to engage with those voices and ideas that for too long have heedlessly been ignored, even, perhaps especially, when to do so makes us feel profoundly uncomfortable. While debates on decolonising curricula, acknowledging privileged and Eurocentric positions in knowledge production traditions, and more broadly on the need for genuine postcolonial research practices and disciplinary shifts, are not unique to European Studies, they are especially pertinent due to the problematic history of the subject, particularly when narrowed to EU Studies. This special issue contributes to the growing literature and practical undertakings that are intent on disrupting that mainstream and shining a light on unacknowledged approaches, understandings of Europe and voices. The DIMES Project and contributions to this issue remind European Studies scholars of their responsibility to reflect, actively, on their research and teaching practices, to consider the silences and omissions in the canon and how they impact societies and individuals. A collective endeavour is required to reach a future where the themes and approaches highlighted in this issue need not be showcased in a special issue, but are part of everyday research and teaching practices in European Studies.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This argument, along with the field and discipline distinction, was persuasively made by Dr Meng Hsuan-Chou at the DIMES closing conference in Pretoria, February 2023.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of fluency, we refer to European Studies throughout this introduction, as a proxy for both European Studies (the discipline) and European studies (the field).

<sup>3</sup> We are grateful to Professor Ummu Salma Bava for this point, made at the DIMES conference in Pretoria.

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