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Commentary

What's changed in European (Union) Studies?

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I have been asked to reflect on my experience of 35 years publishing university textbooks in relation to the evolution and development of European Union Studies (which term I shall use to include the study of the EU's earlier incarnations in the European Community/Communities).

My engagement with EU studies actually started well before I became a publisher in 1979 as I had developed an interest in the subject as an undergraduate student of International Relations in the early 1970s and actually embarked in 1974 on writing a PhD on the relationship between European integration and disintegration which a combination of the theft of a car containing all my (not, I confess, all that many) notes, the advent of 'eurosclerosis' and the stymieing of Scottish devolution consigned to the dustbin of history (though it would have been very timely I guess today).

EARLY DAYS

The base line is easy to draw. Being responsible for a student textbook list, I did not publish a single book about European integration before the first edition of Neill Nugent's *Government and Politics of the European Community* in 1989. That was contracted in 1986, initially for Vincent Wright's *Comparative Government and Politics* series, and reflected a sense on our part that there were the first stirrings of a serious market for a student text on the subject – an intuition that was borne out by the success (even if modest compared to the sales of later editions) of the first edition.

The reason for my inattention to publishing in the subject, despite my own interest, was simple: before the late 1980s there were very few social science courses indeed that focused specifically on the EC and/or European integration. Early research I did about the market in sociology and politics turned up very few courses in either and surprisingly this seemed the case even in European Studies which was quite a fashionable growth area in the 'new' universities of the 1960s but which despite the name was much more focused on languages and humanities. Where it was studied it tended to be as a minor part of other courses; for example as a student of International Relations my only engagement with the EU was as a small part of a course on international organisation and the main issue was the extent to which it fitted that description - in which context I well remember reading the early contributions (largely by Americans) to debating the nature of the beast.

Where Britain's accession to the EU had had an impact on courses was in subjects like Law as British lawyers had perforce to engage with EU law (accounting perhaps for their greater presence in the UK European Studies community in its early days) - and, to a lesser extent Economics which seems to have engaged more with the economics of market integration then than it does today.

There were, of course, books being published on European integration, but these were for the most part written by people involved in some capacity as practitioners in the world of European integration or in the broad federalist movement, or by diehard opponents of British membership. Neill's was not the first general overview text on EU politics. That distinction probably belongs to Juliet Lodge's edited volume *Institution and Policies of the European Community* (1st edition 1983) and Stephen George's *Policy and Politics in the European Community* (1st edition 1985) which Stephen actually first broached with me when I visited Sheffield University at the start of that decade but at that stage I felt there was not enough of a market for a core textbook and he proceeded to publish it with Oxford University Press.

The success of Neill's text reflected a burgeoning of courses in the UK – and interestingly also in the US – as the EU emerged from its dog days of the late 1970s and early 1980s and the single market programme made the EU a more interesting institution to study for social scientists and one that a range of technical and business professions increasingly felt a need for their future practitioners to study.

THE EUROPEAN UNION SERIES

It also got me thinking about expanding our list in the area - and clearly got others thinking along similar lines. Separate discussions in late 1991 with Willie Paterson and with Vincent Wright, who was my general advisor on political science publishing as well as editor of his own series, revealed a shared interest in editing a series of books on the EU and its member states. And while they were drawing up a proposal after an initial meeting with me, Neill himself floated the idea – and sent me an initial proposal – for a series on EU institutions, political actors and policy processes. It clearly made sense for the three of them to combine forces and, those still being the days when publishers entertained (and even drank) at lunchtime we resolved to meet up for a discussion over lunch which Vincent chided me should be a good one. Accordingly a date was set to meet in April 1992 at La Tante Claire which I wrote to Neill and Willie was 'as Vincent can confirm one of the best restaurants in London but offering a set menu that even publishers can afford'. In the event, Vincent was prevented from attending by a combination of air and rail disruption on his way back from indulging his love of archival research in provincial France; Willie diplomatically told him afterwards that 'the food was disappointing'.

But good progress was made on the series and it was agreed additionally that, in keeping with my publishing remit at Macmillan, we should add a strand of general texts on the EU into the mix. By the summer we had agreed an initial plan and a series contract had been issued. And in short order, thereafter, this particular army very definitely marching on its stomach, a series of excellent dinners hosted by Vincent at Nuffield led to successive refinements to the plan, a name (*The European Community* but 'probably will have to be *The European Union*' series'), and the designation of four colour-coded sub-series – red for texts, orange for institutions, green for policies and purple for member states (to which much later we added blue for issues).

We little imagined the impact and reach the series would have and, despite Vincent's death in 1999, cut down in his prime after a bravely borne illness, the series has gone from strength to strength, eventually covering most key institutions and policy areas, though the member states volumes proved harder to bring to fruition (and harder - for all but a very few key states - to sell). Many of the obvious gaps that remain are the result of delayed delivery or withdrawal of contracted authors (the most jinxed subject being the economics/political economy of the EU which has gone through more potential authors than the series editors have shared hot dinners).

The 'core texts' strand has been particularly successful in offering a range of different approaches and thus increasing the choices available for people teaching courses. In that respect, a particular highlight was the publication of Simon Hix's *Political System of the EU* of which the 1st edition appeared in 1999 and rapidly established itself as a landmark in the field – and another was Dirk Leuffen, Berthold Rittberger and Frank Schimmelfennig's *Differentiated Integration* in late 2012 which may well come to be seen as another.

And that impact was even greater if one takes into account its offspring – or, perhaps better, belated sibling – *Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics* (PSEUP and hence known to its friends as 'pea soup') born of a brief conversation over lunch with my then counterpart in Palgrave Macmillan's scholarly division, Alison Howson. Following a week in which I had sent her even more proposals than

usual that had been sent in for the EU series but were too specialised for us, she enquired with apologies 'if it was a stupid question' why we had not set up a companion scholarly series (my reply was that it was us being stupid rather than the question) and whether Neill and Willie might like to edit such a series (which together with Michelle Egan - and with the help of a small editorial advisory group - they have been doing ever since).

THE RISE AND RISE OF EU STUDIES

One notable change over the lifetime of the EU series has been the pattern of internationalisation of sales over time. I remember a discussion at the first ECSA-World conference in Brussels in 1994 with Jacqueline Lastenouse of the commission directorate responsible for this initiative to bring together people from national European Union studies associations around the world. She asked me to explain why it was that when Britain was in so many ways the EU member state least keen on European integration, they had received so many applications to attend from the UK compared to other member states, both in terms of academics to participate and publishers to display. It seems that the latter in particular had given rise to mutterings from participants from elsewhere (and maybe the former too as not only were publishers not invited to exhibit in later years but academic attendance was largely restricted to invited paper-givers and national association officers). But the reason was simple: apart from an earlier orientation to international events among British academics and publishers, teaching, research and publishing on the EU had taken off far more rapidly and developed further in the UK than elsewhere in Europe.

As noted above, initially sales of EU titles were largely concentrated in the UK and the US where an enthusiastic community of Europeanists had a long tradition of studying European politics and travel to/engagement with their countries of study (and at a distance where teaching about Europe as a whole and the EU within that perhaps was more appealing to students than studying individual countries). But with the increasing use of English as medium of teaching in continental Europe (spurred on by the Bologna process and other initiatives that led to more students moving between countries for whom English was the most obvious *lingua franca*), the balance of sales shifted towards continental Europe: northern Europe in the first instance, where political science and interdisciplinary European studies fitted more easily into the organisation of higher education, followed by Central and Eastern Europe, and, to a lesser extent because of the often more disciplinary, legal and sociologically-orientated traditions, elsewhere.

Another key contributory factor in the spread of European Union studies, which I have been surprised not to find more commonly noted, has been the proliferation of Jean Monnet chairs first in member states and then beyond. The changing geographical availability of funding has, on occasion, seemed to correlate quite directly with the ebb and flow of sales, especially outside Europe. But much more significant has been the impetus that the availability of EU funding to establish new posts has given to the appointment of specialists in EU studies. In a large proportion of cases, chair holders have been kept on at their host universities expense once EU seed funding has run out.

It seems to me that this is part of the explanation for the scale of student numbers and for so many texts on the European Union having been among the best sellers in political and social science through the 1990s and 2000s while the numbers and sales of texts on other important topics (like comparative politics and the political and social systems of students' home states) have fallen off.

A particular victim, in my view has been the study of comparative European studies. It was no doubt inevitable – and not undesirable – that Europeanization and globalization (using both terms in the broadest sense) would change a situation in which a text on French politics was the most commonly occurring recommendation on UK reading lists when I first researched political science publishing at

the start of the 1980s. But the presence of many EU specialists understandably putting on courses on the EU meant that other courses on Europe seemed less of a priority when course structures came under review. And the presence of substantial numbers of EU specialists surely contributed to a perception, when departments envisaged further new appointments, that Europe was already well covered.

THE FUTURE

While the market for texts on the EU remains quite buoyant, it has definitely now started to wane.

In the US, this is no doubt, in part, the result of an increasing interest in other parts of the world and notably Asia which seems to be reflected in a changing balance of specialisms as an older generation of Europeanists retire (though mitigated by the establishment of a network of ‘centers of excellence’ encouraged by the EU). Interest in Asia has clearly been a factor in Europe too: even in the UK (where Asia has always been less studied than on the continent) there are now an increasing number of courses especially on China. I’ll never forget, by way of comparison, that when I published the first edition of Macmillan’s text on Chinese politics, there were only two courses of any size on Chinese politics on offer in the UK. And neither of them happened to be running that year as the people teaching both of them were on leave.

But in a UK context, particularly, the big change has been the rise of International Relations. When I was a student of IR in the early 1970s it was a tiny subject taught (in almost all cases in small separate departments) in a number of universities you could count on your fingers. Today by comparison it has become a dominant or central element in the curriculum of politics departments with introductory courses on global politics often the most popular with students and an increasing presence right through degree programmes. The same trend is prevalent elsewhere, if on a smaller scale, and has had two primary effects on EU studies, most obviously as an alternative pole of attraction for students choosing courses but also in the increasing focus on studying the international dimensions of EU policy despite the considerably smaller influence of the EU in those areas than others.

In terms of the future of textbook publishing more generally, I have long bemoaned the impact of the changing higher education and research culture in the UK which has made it an increasingly hard task to persuade people to sign up to produce textbooks and to find time to write and deliver those they have committed to. This process started earliest in the UK and contributed to the preponderance of authors based outside the UK on my list in recent years. Of course, this was partly a good thing both in terms of the quality of work being produced in continental Europe, North America, and elsewhere and the desirability for an international publisher to attract authors from around the world. And the expansion of teaching in English elsewhere and the increased interchange and migration of academics made a changing balance inevitable. But in many UK university departments – despite talk of the importance of ‘impact’ – it has become all but a capital offence to confess one is writing a text aimed at students. And in recent years the pressure to spend all available writing time on publishing specialist articles has spread much more widely around the world, making the job of my successors increasingly tough.

I have always believed that the analytical and research skills involved in writing student texts are much underrated. What is more, such texts play a crucial role in systematising and communicating fragmented research findings, making cutting-edge issues accessible to new generations of students and establishing new baselines for researchers in an ever-more specialised world.

I can only hope that the changing political economy of higher education – in the form of less research money and more competition for fee-paying students – will start to redress the balance. Several

colleagues surprised me when I left Macmillan by hailing my 'relentless optimism' – not a trait that I had particularly observed in myself. In that spirit I'll comfort myself, and hopefully encourage them, by noting such straws in the wind as departmental web sites focusing on the texts written by department members and making a pitch to prospective students of offering the opportunity to learn direct from the horse's mouth.

Note from the Editor

Steven Kennedy was until recently a publisher and director at Palgrave Macmillan specialising in student paperbacks. He is now a publishing consultant providing services to publishers, universities, professional associations and others. The views expressed here are entirely his own.