

## In Conversation with: UACES Lifetime Achievement Award Winners

EMILY LINNEMANN SPEAKS TO GEOFFREY EDWARDS, EMIL KIRCHNER AND BRIGID LAFFAN

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Facilitator: Thank you everyone for being here today. I am Emily Linnemann, I am the Executive Director of UACES and it is really nice to be here with some of the lifetime achievement award winners that UACES has awarded the prize to over the years, and we have Emil Kirchner from the University of Essex, Brigid Laffan from the EUI and Geoffrey Edwards from the University of Cambridge.

So, first of all, just to get started, it would be great to hear from each of you when you joined UACES and what prompted you to do that in the first place.

Emil: I became a member in 1980 and what prompted me was basically trying to meet other people who were in the field of European Studies. I thought it was a good opportunity. In those days, I was still young and seeking cohorts of similar interests is what motivated me.

Brigid: I joined in either 1980 or '81. I was a very young scholar at the time, based at an Irish university very few people on the island of Ireland working on the EU at the time, and I knew that I had to get off the island to meet people who worked on the EU. So, in a way, the two different UACES and ECPR were really my training as an academic.

Emil: ECPR particularly.

Brigid: It really helped me transform myself from an early career scholar into a reasonable scholar and UACES; we must remember also in the late 70s early '80s that academia was not that internalised. Political science wasn't as internationalised as it is now, and so these were the opportunities that you met colleagues, like minded people working on the same things, and for me, it was absolutely central to my development as a scholar.

Geoffrey: I joined in 1975, having done European community issues in the Foreign Office immediately before, so it seemed logical to continue when I left. I left and I joined the Federal Trust for education and research and UACES rented a single room from the Federal Trust in central London at that point and so I immediately went onto the committee as an ex-officio member, since I was the rent holder as it were. At that point, we all crammed into this very small room whenever the committee met.

Facilitator: I have seen all that in the minutes and it's really interesting the way in which we had to team up with people in order to be able to have even an office space. Things have changed I think. Over the course of your careers what would you identify as the major changes and shifts in the discipline of European studies?

Emil: Well, if I go back I think there was a lot of theory when I started out. I myself did functionalism, Neo-functionalism I think over a period of about 35 years if I reflect back. Theory has become less dominant and it's become more events driven, you have the refugee crises, the Euro crises. Many such events which now seem to dominate the agenda much more but on the other hand we have to become more competitive, so there is something to offer in terms of other disciplines and the same looking externally international relations have become more of a focus. So, from a more narrow driven integration theory per se' we have expanded quite a lot over those years and I think it's been a good thing on the whole.

Brigid: I would agree with that, we were schooled in the greats. Haas, Hoffman, Lindberg and Scheingold, all of those early theories of European integration. There's always been a dialectic relationship between the developments in the EU and then scholarship on the EU. One of the other characteristics of us that were involved at a very early stage is that we knew an awful lot about what was happening in the EU at the time it was possible to know a lot about lots of policy areas, institutions but as the EU developed and become a more complex polity and economic space then the capacity to in a sense have a grasp of everything that was happening in the EU declined so what we saw was a differentiation in scholarship I think with much more specialisation.

So, people became specialist in different aspects of integration, there were various turns like the comparative politics turn, the governance turn, the identity turn, the constructivist turn and all of that was really important but one of the downsides I think was as Emil said, it become somewhat events driven. We forgot some of the larger issues of European integration, the big macro questions of the nature of the polity that was developing so there has been enormous change.

Geoffrey: I'm not so sure I would agree with that last point; of course there has been huge change. It certainly shows that the discipline if we want to call it a discipline has expanded as the competencies of the European Union have expanded necessarily. I think it is still the case that the political scientists dominate and we lack economists and we lack lawyers and so on in the right numbers of sociologists; that was mentioned at the conference.

But one of the things that I think that has been so interesting in terms of that widening of interest and preoccupation it has also meant specialisation so it does mean that we have been widening and deepening at the same time which I think has been all to the good but I don't think we've necessarily lost sight of some of the bigger issues. I mean we've had two or three panel discussions, even at this conference on the bigger issues. Whether it's the particular issues of migration or the Euro crises but it's been set within a context of integration/disintegration.

It's been set within a context which has also a strong theoretical bias and I think one of the interesting things about theoretical development is that we've given up, yes, the grand theories but we now seem to have such huge variety of different mid-range theories which I think is particularly interesting. Because

when you think in terms of international relations for example it's nearly always been the case that the Brits and other Europeans have been off to America to learn what the latest theoretical position is.

Whereas on European issues, okay so we had trouble becoming recognised as a particular discipline rather than just an offshoot of something but I think now we offer, the Europeans offer the Americans some innovative and interesting new ideas about theory which is all to the good I reckon.

Brigid: Can I just say that when I said we had lost sight of the big questions I think they are back on the table because of the crises of the last ten years. But before then one could read paper after paper that one learnt about the minutia of particular decision routes.

Emil: Very descriptive.

Brigid: Policy but not the bigger question. But in a way crises have forced the big questions so you are absolute, I mean we don't disagree I think that the big questions are now back on the table and in a way the study of the EU both contributes to the development of social science and is now main stream in the social sciences.

Emil: I don't know whether you want to add the major challenges I think; one was and still is intriguing us interdisciplinarity, we started out with this great concept, do European studies because we bring in the different disciplines; economists, lawyers and so on in the discipline and it's been hounding us in many ways. I remember my own experience at Essex; we had six departments at one stage coming together and then the research assessment exercise basically blew a big hole in the back through your department it was and so on.

So, it is still an enormous challenge and when you go to the Jean Monnet Action Programme they still emphasis interdisciplinary, inter-projects, inter-teaching and so on. But it is a huge challenge and in my opinion rather than having succeeded we are actually having a regressive way going the opposite way, it's regrettable. But it's just one of those things in quite an adventurous way we've started out, yes, inter-disciplinary there is something to offer European studies which others do not do but it remains to be a challenge.

Facilitator: I think the new plan for say REF, which I think has become REF 2021, they do mention interdisciplinarity but I am not sure they really providing a solution on how they are actually going to assess inter-disciplinary research within the kind of framework that currently set up. Do you think UACES has a role to play in helping to improve interdisciplinarity and if you want to say that that's a good or a bad thing or whether it's a concept that needs revisiting?

Geoffrey: I think UACES has always been faced with the problem of always trying to overcome it. Whether it was in the 1970s trying to get more economists, I think when we appointed Peter Robson as the editor of JCMS, the idea was to get an economist to try and bring fellow economists in. We never had quite so much trouble with the lawyers, Allan Dashwood was there from the beginning and so on, so lawyers have not been such a problem but it has been the economists who for their own reasons have been drawn away from anything, as far as I can see anything practical in to number crunching and so on.

I am not sure UACES or anybody else in political science has the ability to overcome that.

Brigid: Economics as a discipline it's one of the few disciplines in the social sciences that has a high level of confidence in what it does and how it operates.

Geoffrey: Misguided confidence.

Brigid: Economists tend to, you can go to any economics department in the world and they all behave the same way, they know what the top five journals and that's what they do.

Emil: That's exactly it.

Brigid: They are very theoretical; I think one of the things that the crisis particularly the financial crisis, the global and not just the European has done is it's brought political economy back into fashion and if one can't in a sense it isn't possible to co-opt the theoretical economist then I think economic historians and political economists is where there might be some leverage.

Geoffrey: I think if our business schools and so on ...

Brigid: Yes, and some of the best economics is being done in business schools today.

Emil: Yes, and it is so reflective. If you look at the trend of market studies you look at the trend European integration the contributions by economists is very small because as stated they have their number one, number two, number three, economists [channels] they want to be seen in there and they don't want to waste their time literally publishing something somewhere which they know they won't get the recognition. So, its opportunity costs as they call it.

Facilitator: So, we have talked about the discipline and how that's changed and how definitions or understandings of interdisciplinarity have shifted, what about academia as a whole? So, the academic profession, how do you feel that's changed over your time as a member of UACES?

Geoffrey: I think just one, because I'm not sure I can answer the bigger question but one of the things that I find really interesting, is the way in which especially in European studies in it's relation to the academy and it's relation to policy where we really have had trouble throughout our history in a sense, that at the outset that we are always considered to be so pro European, we are all a suspect.

That fell perhaps into abeyance once the UK became a member and so on but we were always in a sense suspect from international relations or political theories and so on as being perhaps a bit too policy orientated, perhaps forgetting some of the bigger issues and so on. That has had real problems simply because after all we did have something to offer policy. There was a structural problem in so far as policy makers always wanted to talk to us; it would be terribly easy to talk to officials whether in national capitols or especially in Brussels.

So, we've always had this close relation with practitioners which to some of the more *recherché* international relation scholars is always been problematic for us. But I think that problem of us being fairly close to the practitioners has lead us being suspect in some of the eyes of the other disciplines. I think that has now changed with the REF in so far as we are all now constructing these little relevant narratives.

Brigid: Impact studies.

Emil: Impact studies, exactly.

Geoffrey: So, perhaps the circle has come around and we are less suspect but we are actually still involved with policy.

Emil: I think in terms of there are two ways of looking at that; we have made a tremendous contribution to academia when you look at the number of journals which have been created. The number of books that have come on the market, that's a huge contribution. Secondly, we have opened also something called comparative regionalism, which science hasn't done, IR hasn't done and that I think is actually in many ways the future, this comparative regionalism. Where we really open up in many ways and learn from what is happening in Asia and Latin America as well as they learn from us the European experience.

I think has been delightful in many ways but a huge contribution to academia. We should be proud of ourselves in some ways as to the contributions we have made. Yes, there are those niggling questions about in terms of REF and so on; it's always when you compare them in the discipline, where have you published? Where is the [trend] of common market studies ranked or where is the academic science review ranked and so on? Yes, there are differences but there is only one way of looking at it, there are other ways.

Brigid: I would say I've observed two big shifts in academia over my career and not just in European studies. One is the internationalisation of our universities, but academic markets, particularly the UK academic market but not only, are much more open then what they were. When we started most of the departments were almost mono-cultured, mono-national whereas now there's been a dramatic change and shift in that. I think European studies attract a multi-national, multi-cultural group of scholars, precisely because of what we are working on.

Then the other quite different dynamic has been when I joined as a young scholar the department would tell me what its expectations where of me in terms of teaching but it really didn't bother me much after that. You developed your course outline, you delivered your lectures, you assessed your students and you did your own work. You went to departmental meetings but it was all very calm and collegiate whereas over time driven by increase in student numbers, more centralisation within universities, academic life has changed and its much less self-regulation and much more top down regulation than when I started out.

The other thing I observed is when I was a very young scholar; our university still had what we would call in Ireland characters. You know, professors of history who spent the afternoon in the pub regaling their students with all sorts of stories. Universities don't have room for these people anymore.

Emil: I think there is one other aspect worth mentioning and that is looking a little bit at the outside. The Jean Monnet Action Programme has done really a substantial help to us as European studies, lectures and researches. The funding alone is in many ways, we had chairs, and we had modules and then later on the centres and now projects and networks and so on, it's a huge contribution. Secondly, the Erasmus program, we should not forget, again we profited from that.

The exchanges would have taken place and so on, we plugged into a kind of framework which if we had to create that on our own would have been extremely difficult. So, I think we should give credit there too, to where we got help from.

Brigid: Yes.

Geoffrey: All of which Brexit raises questions.

Emil: Yes, exactly.

Geoffrey: I mean in terms of funding, in terms of teaching and teacher and in terms of students.

Emil: Horrendous.

Facilitator: I think we will come onto Brexit in a moment but I just wanted to just again return slightly to that internationalisation. So, I wanted to pick up Brigid, on what you were saying about internationalisation of higher education generally and I just wondered what your thoughts were, particularly someone who hasn't worked in UK academia but how UACES has affected academics, universities outside of the UK?

Brigid: It's very clear to me that UACES is easier in the US at one time may have been larger and may have attracted a larger number of people to its bi-annual conference. But certainly, for the last ten years I think UACES is the largest European studies association in the world. Certainly, the largest in Europe but I think in the world and so it's hugely important not just to scholars in the UK academia but European academia. You tend not to get Americans traveling to Europe for conferences that much but certainly its multi-European association now.

It's been very important in terms of what it does for young scholars, not just in providing the opportunities to deliver the first and early paper but all of the other things it does for young scholars. So, I would say Ireland had a very small association of European studies that I was secretary of for several years but we were tiny so without UACES we'd have been locked into this tiny tiny academic community. So, I think it's been hugely important, not just in the UK context which is obviously its role but much more widely in European terms.

Geoffrey: The only thing that I will just emphasises the point about young scholars because I think that has been a critical role for UACES. But I think also the way in which it's not just at giving papers at the annual conference but the funding of smaller conferences and research groups.

Facilitator: Going forward we have obviously mentioned one of the particular challenges that is coming down the road for European studies, but what do you see as the major developments in European studies in the next few years and you may want to bring into that Brexit and how that might affect the discipline.

Emil: Well, I think youth really has to be the focus. If we do not now recruit sufficiently and there are dangers because Brexit being one, we have de-emphasising European studies now for some time, language programs have gone down, if we lose sight of that I think then the future looks indeed very bleak so whatever efforts can be made to reach out and help bring in those young scholars, PHD students or MA students even to some extent into the fold, I think the more important it will become.

That's certainly one development and Brexit is coming. The second is what we referred to already, the need to engage more in comparative regionalism, so that we as UACES can go out and say okay UACSA in America what are they doing? Arbeitskreis in Germany, but also looking at Asia is becoming more and more a focus there, enterprising in terms of the conferences and so on. So, comparative regionalism I think we have to show the young scholars it's not just Europe it's part of this strive to say this global environment, it's climate change and so on, we can connect.

I think the two are linked in many ways, looking at youth, trying to bring them in and offering them more scope in terms of what can be done in comparative regionalism. That's not to say IR, again, should not be excluded either but I think we need to be thinking a little bit more in terms of how can we move on to the good things we have done in the past and compliment them with some new ideas.

Brigid: I would say, firstly in substantive terms what are the sorts of areas we need to focus on and understand to get a better grasp of what happening. I would say we know a lot about systems of multi-level governance, the act of constellations, the policies we know a lot less about multi-level politics and the problem they are in. So, I would say we need to marry multi-level governance and multi-level politics which requires those who work on elections, public opinion to work more with people who work more on policy processes so I think that's disaggregated at the moment and it's problematic.

I fully agree on the comparative regionalism, the role of the EU in the world of perennial area of research, extremely important and the relationship between European integration, inter-dependence and wider processes of globalisation so I would say in other words there are a lot of substantive issues that are analytically challenging, theoretically challenging and empirically challenging out there. So, there is no shortage of substantive issues.

Then on the supply side or what Brexit may mean, I think we simply don't know yet. I would envisage that the UK will ask to continue to be part of Horizon 2020, the Monet programs and all of that and we'll pay a fee for that. Therefore, the United Kingdom Universities will continue to be part, but there is something about not being a member state that plays into the dynamic.

Emil: Yes, of course.

Brigid: I'm part of a consortium at the moment that's developing a bid for Horizon 2020, we are not the co-ordinators but I was very struck by someone saying well, we can have one UK partner but certainly not two. In other words, they are factoring in the shift in the UK, so I think there will be costs unfortunately and consequences. Although I don't envisage a situation where UK universities will be completely outside these programs, that's not what I envisage. But whereas now the UK is a leader, it will forego that leadership position.

That is detrimental to higher education in the UK but also to Europe because the UK has an extremely strong and vibrant higher education system and there is no reason for it to marginalise itself within the EU but unfortunately the macro political dynamics are much greater. I think that paradoxically the European question will bedevil the United Kingdom following Brexit. Whereas this was a relatively low salient issue in politics prior to the Bloomberg speech in 2013, yes it bothered some people.

But it really wasn't seen as a major issue by most people. I would predict regardless of how Brexit pans out in other words what form of Brexit, that the European question will bedevil the United Kingdom for decades ahead and I remind everyone of the role of the Irish question in British politics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Irish question was rarely off the agenda, it brought governments down, it had a major influence on parliamentary processes in the United Kingdom.

It was a major constitutional issue and it was never resolved until paradoxically I would say 2011 when the Queen visited Dublin or Ireland. The irony is that Brexit has destabilised that normalisation in relation to Ireland but that's not the point I want to make. The point I want to make is that the European question is now core on the UK political agenda. It is the big issue, and it will not be resolved by Brexit.

Geoffrey: No absolutely not. I absolutely utterly agree with that. Just on the Brexit issue, we talked about research and I hope in the bargain we may be able to strike in terms of remaining within the research area that somehow, we can also manage to keep European students as domestic students rather than foreign students. I've always been amazed why we get so many European students now when we charge them quite so much when they can be pretty much free of fees at home. If they now become international students this is going to have a terrible effect.

But the other thing I think about Brexit is not the researching on the students it's the actual people that teach it and I think the degree of uncertainty, the incompetence of the home office, the lack of credibility of the home office has got in terms of sending letters off to people, absolutely appalling, I mean how anybody can have any trust in the British Government sometimes amazes me.



Because I think that degree of uncertainty and the unpredictability of tenure and so on is an appalling issue.

Facilitator: Do you think UACES as a membership organisation can do anything to support its members, to mitigate some of these challenges, do you think it should have a role in this sort of thing?

Geoffrey: I mean is UACES about to establish a centre in Brussels or become a European body so that it can still receive funding and so on? I think that might be one answer but I think the point that is being made earlier, if you are one of the or the largest group of European studies then the network is likely to continue. After all Brexit is not the priority of anybody else in Europe, there are an awful lot of issues and problems that still need to be studied and researched and so on. We can make a contribution as Brigid said; I think everybody would hope that we could still make a contribution to that.

Brigid: I would say that UACES has got to because it's focused on the study of Europe and bringing together people who work on Europe, it has a fundamental role to play in the next phase because Europe will still be an issue for the United Kingdom but also the dynamic of integration. There are all those issues and given that there is such a concentration of scholars I do think UK universities will become less attractive to continental Europeans. That's unfortunate because even though Brexit, we are not leaving Europe as the strapline, well that's not how it feels to everyone else.

It's seen as leaving Europe. But I think domestically there is also a very important role to play, education role to play because one of the most striking things about the referendum campaign and even now is the lack of basic knowledge of how the EU works. We know that if people don't know and don't understand the political system there are issues of trust and buy-in. I'm very struck by people who should know, don't know.

Geoffrey: But who didn't want to know, that was the really sad thing about that campaign.

Brigid: So, I think UACES also has a very important educational role and public information role to play in the future. Because it's not that I expect everyone walking the streets to understand how the EU operates because if you ask them how the Polish parliament operates if we went out and did a VOXPOP now they wouldn't. But it's that they know enough to feel comfortable whereas clearly that was not the case in relation to the EU during the campaign and I think of course the problem the UK faces with the press on this issue is very serious. Because it's misinformation, it's deliberate misinformation.

I think UACES in a sense becomes more rather than less necessary but obviously we will have to work in a more challenging environment.

Emil: I agree with all that has been said really, what can or should be done. I think there might be two other areas, we have the Academy of Social Sciences in this country and one of the really big objectives is to fight educational cuts, to support drives like European studies I would assume to link with them. Ivor Crewe, for example, now the chair of that Academy of Social Sciences, I'm a fellow of that, that is why I know what is going on and the campaigns they introduced which is really quite far reaching.

They even published pamphlets on the topic and so on, so I think we should perhaps link with them. The second is the only really hope European socialist, European parliament I can see become more representative or seek contacts with MEP's, I know they will not be British anymore but otherwise use perhaps some of your colleague's, Germany, France and so on to lobby on behalf and so on. Because overall it is still in the interest of the European parliament to promote our cause to these people so these would be two areas that I can see some scope.

Facilitator: Well, thank you all very much for sharing your thoughts and hopefully it's given UACES some food for thought for the next 50 years as well.

Emil: That would be good.

Brigid: That would be good.

Emil: We will be knocking on the door in 50 years' time.

Brigid: The next ten would be good.