Towards a research agenda on the European Union as a Model of Regional Integration. *

Philomena Murray**

Abstract
This article discusses some challenges inherent in drawing up a research agenda on the European Union (EU) as a model of integration in other parts of the world. It suggests that a research agenda could profitably develop more expertise on concept-building. Concept-building encompasses the need for further attempts to advance our understanding of concepts such as region and integration, both theoretically and comparatively, and for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of both ‘region’ and ‘integration’.

* This article draws on ideas first presented in my paper to the Fifth International Conference of the EU Studies Association of Korea/The First International Conference of the EU Studies Association of the Asia-Pacific on European Integration and the Asia-Pacific Region, Seoul National University, 30-31 May 2003. I am grateful for comments made by participants and the anonymous referees.

** Dr. Philomena Murray, Jean Monnet Chair, Dept. of Political Science and Contemporary Europe Research Centre, University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, Australia. Tel: +61 3 8344 5151. Fax: +61 3 8344 7906. Email: pbmurray@unimelb.edu.au
Introduction
This article discusses some challenges inherent in drawing up a research agenda on the European Union (EU) as a model of integration in other parts of the world. Since the EU’s origins in the 1950s, considerable attention has focused on the process and experiences of innovative cooperation among West European states. Historically, the momentum for institutionalised interstate cooperation in the new European agency, known initially as the European Community (EC) and later as the European Union, is the end of World War II. This innovative form of participation in a new political and economic decision-making arena led to the creation of new institutions and to political outcomes that were ‘unique’. They did not replicate intergovernmental negotiations. They were not comparable to nation states’ domestic politics. They did not constitute simply an international organisation. Past analyses of the EU as an exemplar of regionalism have been in waves – depending on the apparent success of the EU’s integration project. There has been relatively little comparative analysis of the EU and other entities, as the specific nature of the EU experience gives credence to a perception that it was sui generis. The need for a debunking of this approach has been given increased credence in recent years. Further, the debate on the role of European integration (EI) became more pertinent in the context of globalisation of financial markets and trade liberalisation. The latest wave of the study of regionalism began in part due to disillusionment with multilateralism in the 1990s and the fact that an increasing number of states acted on an impetus to regionalise in some manner. Some academics chose to disregard the EU as a putative model, due to their critiques of the EU’s protectionist agricultural policy, thereby misunderstanding other aspects of integration. Some simply misunderstood – or ignored - the implications of the far-reaching policy-formation, institutional integration and merging of competences taking place in the European Union.

Within political science, and international relations in particular, realists did not fully grasp the importance of this innovative European agency, with its new institutions above the nation state; its common policies and economic and political outcomes which are distinctive from those arising from more conventional international bargaining and national policymaking. Realists were not the only analysts to regard the centrality of the nation state as sacrosanct. The state’s role was critical to most analyses of the EU, within the integration paradigm. It has been argued that EU studies have tended in the past to focus disproportionately on the issue of the changing role of the nation state and the extent to which it might or might not have been transformed (Rumford and Murray, 2003a). The study of the EU can run the risk of focusing on integration and on the role of the state in the process of regional integration to the exclusion of other factors. In attempting to build concepts for a comparative study of the EU as a region, it is important that scholars do not succumb to the temptation to take integration as a given. This would result in inadequate attempts to question the use of concepts such as integration and regionalism and to address the “multiple contributory factors to the process” (Rumford and Murray, 2003a, p. 86).

Scholars have been analyzing the EU’s comparative potential with other regions as regionalisation becomes increasingly apparent in many parts of the world (Beeson and Jayasuriya, 1998; Boyer, 2002; Higgott, 1998; Hurrell, 1995; Mansfield and Milner, 1999; Feng and Genna, 2003). Many analysts have regarded regional economic
integration as the primary issue of comparison, not surprisingly, given the difficulties inherent in political integration.

This article suggests that a research agenda could profitably focus on concept-building as a means of further developing a research agenda on comparative regional integration. Concept-building encompasses the need for further attempts to advance our understanding of concepts such as region and integration, both theoretically and comparatively, and for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of both ‘region’ and ‘integration’. It is particularly relevant in the context of significant transformations wrought by developments in the EU, such as Enlargement and the Constitution.

The article invites further debate on attempts to consider whether the EU is a useful model of regional integration (RI), and, if so, in what contexts. While it is tempting, and useful, to list the features of the EU that render it a useful paradigm, and those that render it inappropriate for comparison, caution is recommended. A research agenda must be appropriate to the ever-increasing complexity of both regional integration and globalisation. Further, the relationship of integration and globalisation requires considerably more attention than that accorded to date in most of the scholarly literature. Finally this article argues that a research agenda should be interdisciplinary in its attempts to build concepts and bridge islands of understanding.

The article commences with an examination of the EU as a putative paradigm. The understanding of the paradigm is dependent on the academic discipline of the writers, on their in-depth understanding of the EU and on their critiques of, or admiration for, the EU experience. It seeks to demonstrate that there is no single model of integration – integration means different things to different people and its characteristics have changed over time. Integration can be understood as economic regionalism while others suggest it denotes a political model of European unity (Feng and Genna, 2003). It has been regarded as an example of the achievement of peace and democracy. Some analyse it in terms of a European Social model (Hay et al, 1999). The EU is also, to an extent, proposing its own type of models, for example in global governance and trade regulation. This article suggests that these issues, and not solely regional economic integration, need to be examined in an increasingly interdisciplinary and multidimensional manner.

The article thus examines the process and extent of European Integration (EI), as a model of interstate cooperation in a macro-regional context. It attempts to contribute to conceptual debates within political science on regional integration theory and attempts to contribute to a better understanding of difficulties in implementing an innovative integration. It attempts to contribute to an understanding of comparative integration and seeks to understand community-building in terms of institutional aspects and capacity-building for the achievement of practical outcomes of integration. It proposes that we develop methods to analyse integration as a multifaceted process, encompassing both process and outcomes. It suggests that there is scope to broaden the current offerings in regionalism literature. In its call for concept-building, it invites debate on increased dialogue among area specialists, economists, political scientists and specialists on identity and culture, all in a comparative integration studies approach.
The Transformative Nature of Integration

It is commonplace for many scholars to suggest that considerable change resulting from both globalisation and the processes of regional integration – most notably that of the EU - has engendered changes in inter-state relations and the negotiating patterns of states, whether within a regional bloc or in negotiation with one. Traditional interstate bargaining game has altered, and there is increased understanding of what can be called a New Regional Bilateralism (NRB) of the EU and other regions as negotiating entities in the global and multilateral settings for decision-making (Murray, 2003a).

What types of understandings are there of the EU outside of its orbit? What aspects of the EU might be instructive for other regions? Does it depend on the advances already made in interstate bargaining in the different regional groupings throughout the globe? Are some parts of the EU more useful templates than others? Is economic integration the most pertinent? To what extent is financial integration pertinent? What is the significance of a single currency? How might territorial boundaries be defined politically, as community? To what extent is an extension of policy scope feasible? Does an integration paradigm necessarily encompass governance? To what extent might community-building include identity or citizenship? Is a security community the most or least appropriate type of community-building? One of our important tasks is to develop our understanding of the factors that influence choices of states and regions in attempting regionalism. Who are the important actors? What are the drivers of integration in the regionalising states? What role is accorded to civil society and to inclusiveness of actors?

One reason for the study of the EU as a model is the fact that it is not only regarded as successful in integration in its own territory. It is also deemed to be a powerful international actor, to the extent that there are increasingly suggestions that it expand its role in new areas and even become a counter-hegemon to the USA. The international actor status of the EU transcends economic integration. The desire for an effective Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and recent efforts in peace-promoting initiatives also present a picture of the EU as a key world actor. The EU has an increasingly active foreign economic policy; common foreign and security policy; aid policy and humanitarian aid policy. It is also a form of civilian power (Padoa-Schioppa, 2004). These elements are increasingly scrutinized as examples of advanced forms of political as well as economic integration.

In addition to commercial and aid and other agreements of a New Regional Bilateral nature, it has become increasingly a feature of the EU’s external role to engage in macioregional links, that is, new bilateralism of region to region – what can be termed New Inter-Regional Bilateralism (NIRB), with groups of nation states such as ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) or in the context of the Asia Europe Meetings (ASEM). ASEM is a key example of NIRB in dialogue. Thus, at the same time as the EU is, itself, increasingly characterized as a regional integrated entity, it has also engaged in inter-regional dialogue with other “regions” such as Asia (EC Commission, 1994; 2000; Richards and Kirkpatrick, 1999: Lawson ed. 2003).

Which model? Which integration?

Many social scientists and policy-makers, both within and outside the EU and the community of scholars of the EU, regard the EU’s regional economic integration as a
model for other parts of the world (Katzenstein, 2000; Laursen, 1999; Mattli, 1999). It is also seen as a model of social and political governance internationally, and of the achievement and maintenance of democracy and respect for human rights (Pogge, 1995; Prodi, 2003; Vittorino, 2002). It is no longer novel to suggest (Higgott, 1998; Dieter, 2001) that the experience of European integration is relevant to the Asia Pacific region, to Mercosur or to NAFTA. In particular, economic integration as initiated by the EU is suggested as a model for the Asia Pacific. In the Asia Pacific, economic cooperation; coordinated trade liberalisation have been a focus of ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum (Hurrell, 1995; Drysdale and Vines, 1998; Beeson and Jayasuriya, 1998) and, in the case of ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three (South Korea, China, Japan), the case of monetary union has also been analysed (Dieter, 2003; Tao Nuo Ing, 2003). Dieter (2001, p. 29) does not regard the EU as a blueprint, but sees its value as illustrating that the main ingredients for successful regionalism, in trade integration and in monetary affairs, are genuine leadership, which can also be provided by a group of countries, and a common goal. The role of political leadership is highlighted by Tao Nuo Ing (2003) for monetary union, for example. She regards the central issue as the political resolve to achieve the union, rather than the satisfaction of Optimum Currency Area criteria. Like Dieter and Mattli (1999), she regards visionary leadership as crucial for the achievement of Asian monetary union. These are all elements of community-building.

What features might render the EU a putative empirical and theoretical model of analysis for other geographical areas? Why do some reject it and others embrace it? To what extent does this depend on understandings of regionalism which emanate from national experiences in dealing with the EU? For example, it can be argued that the Australian experience of conflictual negotiations with the EU on agriculture has led to a negative perception of the EU as a closed regionalism characterized by a Fortress Europe mentality (Murray, 2003a) and is hence of little value elsewhere. A research agenda could attempt to analyses this issue of external perceptions of whether integration has negative or positive outcomes for other regions and/or countries.

The attraction of the European Integration “model” depends in part on the reasons for possible adoption of its features. Academics have become fascinated by the fact that the EU may help to present solutions to interstate conflict and a means of avoiding the need to ‘reinvent the wheel’ in establishing a regionalising forum of some description. The EU, a successful regional trading bloc, and an increasingly growing one, is the largest trading entity in the world. It has a seat at the world trading and market governance tables such as the WTO. The fact that it is accorded international actor status in trade is also complemented in political spheres, increasingly, despite critiques of its actions during the recent war in Iraq. Its sheer size and economic strength, as well as its ability to influence international agendas, had been admired by some at the same time that it is viewed with apprehension by others. This renders it a potential threat as a ‘fortress Europe’. Its increasing involvement in global agenda-setting, in trade, regulatory regimes and climate change and other environmental issues, all render it an example of a regional body managing international affairs. The European Commission is actively involved in agenda-setting and the promotion of its approaches to issues relating to international governance; ‘good governance’ and the promotion of democracy.
Are there any comparative lessons from the EU’s successes and failures? How do we study regions, regardless of model? What are the implications of “bringing regionalism back in” in international studies (Hettne and Soderbaum, 2000, p. 347)? The European integration process may well be instructive for governments and other actors seeking a form of regional integration, providing, for example, some understanding of the capacities that are required of the constituent states. The process may hold lessons about what constitutes community—whether economic or political (Feng and Genna, 2003). Finally, it is useful to discuss the EI process in comparative and interdisciplinary dialogues. Integration both needs to be better understood and unpacked as process, ideal and goal, for example—and as a possible model. Integration also needs to be understood from political science, legal and economic and financial perspectives. It is important not to underplay societal aspects and the EU discourse on a social model.

Specialists on the EU tend not to be specialists also on the Asia Pacific. Increased interaction in conceptual and comparative work will be beneficial for communities of scholars. Value judgments and normative accounts of, for example, the EU, can be attenuated by looking in from the outside. While misunderstandings of the EU may abound outside of its immediate orbit or near abroad, there is also considerable benefit in the long view, the distant gaze and the acknowledgement that the view of Europe from Paris, Brussels or Stockholm is very different from the perspective from Beijing, Canberra or Buenos Aires. Kühnhardt’s comment that Europe may appear more united when viewed from a distance than from nearby is pertinent in this context (Kühnhardt, 2004, forthcoming).

The attraction of the EU as a model

While it is clear that the EU is in a state of transformation, nevertheless a number of significant achievements tend to be enumerated in any discussion of the EU as a model. The post-war decision to maintain as a key tenet the avoidance of war and the resultant Franco-German reconciliation have led some to dub the EU a peace community (Gardner Feldman, 1999). This was assisted by some remarkably visionary leadership by government elites at the time. Political imagination and a commitment to new political institutions therefore are at the basis of this novel venture. This led to a innovative type of interaction among the constituent states, based on reconciliation, stability and building of the capacity to act in a manner that deals with changed sovereignty—and new limits on state actions.

The EU has been admired for its relatively high level of prosperity and economic growth. The original Community was based as much on functional integration as it was on political ideals and the last half-century has witnessed an expansion of its policies and policy-reach. The achievement of trade liberalisation and a single market have been admired. The creation of the single currency, the Euro, while a difficult political and economic exercise, has been studied in a number of contexts. The expansion of the EU’s territory with successive enlargement of membership has also resulted in a perception of the EU as a major international actor in interregional and international fora.

Economic and political objectives have been closely linked in an agenda to create “an ever closer union of the peoples of Europe”, as set out in the preamble of the Treaty of Rome. The agenda has been closely linked to a decision-making method that assisted
in rendering conventional the institutionalisation of means to diminish interstate rivalries of old. The EU was never simply an economic or functional project. EU discourse repeatedly refers to the achievements of peace and liberty. The use of financial mechanisms in the cohesion funds to bring about a redistribution of funds in order to advance economic and social progress is distinctive. Social components were evident in the objectives to improve living and working standards.

A form of political teleology was – and is – evident in the ideal of the transformation of the original EC into a “European Union”, towards an undefined end point of integration. Steps towards that end point are often presented, in EU orthodoxy, as the achievement of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the launch of the Euro; and the increasing incorporation of to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe into the EU sphere of influence and membership. These are complementary to common economic policies, increasingly common or harmonized political policies and cooperation in justice and home affairs. What further renders the EU novel as an international organisation is the fact that the EU possesses its own budgetary resources. The combination of its own treaty base; institutional independence; procedural code and *acquis*; Budget; policy creation and management; visibility; common and harmonised policies; Single Market and extensive external relations and diplomacy characterizes the EU as the most sophisticated form of regional integration to date.

All of these factors might present an erroneous impression that there was a form of master plan of integration and that these were the steps towards a defined form of integration. That is far from the case. The process has been at times sporadic and at times sclerotic. The commitment of the political elites had varied over time. The tension between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism has been at the base of the integration bargain. The very features that appear to render the EU both an attractive model and an important interlocutor for other regional groupings and states have been the result of hard bargaining and conflicts regarding material gains and national interest. The politics of the EU is the politics of conflict and consensus.

While this is not an attempt to undermine the substantial achievements of the EU, some caution must be advised in considering adaptation of aspects of the EU in a different context. Historical contexts differ. The EU is the product of historic circumstances of post-war ruin and reconstruction. It also had the express support of the United States, which the countries of Asia, for example, could not count on to date in their efforts to regionalise. The EU had relatively little input at its creation from below, unlike efforts in Asia. Rather, the EU, a product of dominant political elites, imposed integration from above. There were few initiatives from business and other non-state actors for advanced market integration until some years later (Murray, 2004, forthcoming).

Are there instructive lessons in comparing the EU at all? It is often portrayed as a unique and distinctive international organisation. It is not exclusively *sui generis*. Perhaps it is most usefully subjected to comparison when it is not compared as a unit of policies, territory, institutions and *acquis communautaire* in a 50-year block. Worthwhile comparison with other parts of the world might profitably focus on processes of, for example, market integration or monetary integration or the achievement of peace. It might compare specific historical periods and economic and
political circumstances. In other words, partial comparisons might be a useful pathway to develop concepts. This would obviate the danger of falling into the temptation to conflate integration into something that it is not, as integration has become a “useful” term to describe much that occurs within the boundaries of the EU. It has been argued that it is difficult to accept that developments such as the ever-increasing complexity of the EU’s institutional arrangements, wholesale enlargement to the east and the Europeanisation of social, political and cultural realms be captured by the term integration (Rumford and Murray, 2003a).

Just as it is instructive to accept that there is no single definition of integration, so too there should be an acceptance that there is no single definition of the EU – or of EU studies (Rumford and Murray, 2003b). To date, there is no scholarly agreement on what constitutes either integration or region. The subject of less dispute is the fact that the EU's processes are transformative, that is, they have produced changes in the configuration and nature of interaction between European nation-states. The EU experience has brought about a distinctive structure and pattern of governance. Adaptation at the domestic level for the member states has been considerable (Green Cowles et al eds., 2001) if uneven. There has been adaptation too by other actors and states external to these processes. The EU has had a significant impact on international diplomacy and international trade relations. The EU’s actions and influence have also impacted on our ability as analysts to theorise governance, polity and global actor. Theorists as well as practitioners seek to understand and conceptually do justice to the alteration of previously-understood boundaries between domestic and international politics. The apparent mosaic of complex political arrangements, innovative institutional practice and distinctive governance norms of the EU render it a difficult subject of study at times. At the same time, it fascinates those who regard (or promote) it as a putative model for international governance norms and standards as well as regionalisation – a feature that has been advanced by the Prodi European Commission (Prodi, 2001, 2002; Lamy, 2001; Vitorino, 2002).

Just as it is important not to regard integration as given, it is important also to remain aware that there is much that is contested and critiqued in the EU. Critiques may come from international interlocutors or scholars, for example. Reference has been made to a perception of the EU as a Fortress Europe. This perception is evident in the image of the EU as a protectionist bloc, in particular in its CAP. For example, one observer summed up a perception as follows:

“The EC is the featherbed that produced butter mountains and wine lakes and lots of cushy jobs for failed politicians and their friends.”

Critiques of EU development aid policies as neocolonialist have been levelled. Some groups regard the EU as capitalist, neoliberal, and an agent of globalisation. It is regarded as inward-looking, self-engrossed, Euro-centric (particularly West Euro-centric) by its interlocutors (e.g. Murray, 2003a, NCRE, 2003). Although the EU has political and social dimensions, its policies have come under attack as overly market-oriented. It is criticized for both advancing a Europe social model and for not promoting one enough.

Almost since the EU’s origins in the 1950s, there have been demands that it become more transparent; accountable and democratic. Assumptions that the EU is a polity has meant that expectation regarding a nation state have been directed at it. While many federalists advance a model of an EU federation, as seen in the debates on the Constitution, others are concerned about the project of EI appearing to advance in a single, incremental manner in a direction that is teleological, with an undefined goal of political union (Murray, 2000). Expectations of the EU’s capacities abound – for example regarding its international role in developing its CFSP, especially since the breakup of Yugoslavia and the recent war in Iraq. Normative accounts desire more or less supranational structures and institutions. Its public persona has been perceived as over-technical, technocratic, bureaucratic and even corrupt. Further, the EU resembles a “moving target,” a constantly changing entity, complex to analyse at times, and some of these features may not be “exportable” or useful in a comparative context in other parts of the world.

**Building Capacity and Community**

Analyses of regional integration (Bhalla and Bhalla, 1997; Coleman & Underhill, 1998; Higgott, 1998; Hurrell, 1995; Mattli, 1999; Webber, 2001) often enumerated comparative indicators of successful regionalism. These include what can be broadly categorised as community-building indicators such as nation states in defined geographic region; culturally similar countries and shared objectives. Capacity building is made possible by binding agreements; an institutionalised system; a commitment to some type of legal patrimony of “acquis communautaire” and a sectoral integration of policies. Positive outcomes can lead to the desire for increased community and capacity-building. Such outcomes might include an increase in intra-regional trade. The desire for a security community can also be at the basis of initiatives for regionalism, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum. Economic community-building is brought about by integration of economic policies. The capacity to create and maintain the community can depend on whether new institutions are created. The capacity to act as a cohesive regional actor depends in part on the creation on a body of law, which may even have constitutional or quasi-constitutional status and applicability and direct effect. Economic and social advantages are often regarded as intra-regional distribution of resources and the creation of a single regional market for goods, services, labour and capital.

What creates a community of member states of a regional body? Feng and Genna argue that it is the homogeneity of domestic economic institutions (such as inflation, taxation, government regulation and economic openness) that is a necessary condition for the formation of an economic union (2003, p. 280). In other words, integration is likely to be more successful if the member states can diminish variances of these economic conditions. On a more overtly political level of interstate interaction, it is useful to draw on a study by Nugent regarding member state domestic engagement with the EU. Factors discussed by Nugent (1999, p. 473), that are also of relevance in drawing up a conceptual framework for the comparative analysis of regional integration, would include: the size of the state that is represented; the importance of the state to particular negotiations; the desire of that government to play an active role; the capacity of the government to play an active role; relations with other governments; the procedures which apply to the decision-making on that particular issue and the competence of governmental negotiators. Further, consideration could be given to the importance of the particular issues/negotiations to the state; the
importance of the state to the issue; the domestic influence on the third country’s decision-making; the role of public opinion; the role and position of the opposition; the role of non-state actors and the interest of the media in the issue and in the regional body in general. Europeanisation involves the “evolution of new layers of politics that interact with older ones.” (Green Cowles et al, 2001, p. 3; p. 217). Regional integration may therefore require that member countries deal with new layers of politics (along the lines of, for example, EU institutions and regulations).

The EU’s advanced economic integration in a single domestic market and common commercial policy also, distinctively, encompasses political integration. While integration projects vary considerably (Bhalla and Bhalla, 1997; Dent, 1997), there are some common factors which can are regarded as conducive to a successful integration community, such as shared historical and diplomatic experiences, informal understanding and frequency and intensity of interaction.

A key feature of the EU experience has been the development of an acquis communautaire over time. It is open to debate as to whether and to what extent such a legal and procedural patrimony might develop in the Asia Pacific region. Acceptance of pooled sovereignty is central to the creation of a patrimony, due to its being largely binding in nature and directly applicable to whom it is addressed. The sovereignty issue remains central to discussions of regionalism (Acharya, 1999). Further, there is the capacity to encompass change and the transformation of process, goals, membership and scope.

A research agenda to examine the indicators of successful integration comparatively would need to identify whether the EU goal of a “United States of Europe” is applicable to the Asia Pacific or any other geographical area - or is simply one manifestation of regionalism among many. The current literature is divided regarding integration’s institutional preconditions (Hurrell, 1995; Laffan, 1997) and understanding of interstate cooperation in other regions, such as the Asia Pacific (Higgott and Stubbs, 1995). There is a number of indicators from the EU case to draw upon as a possible model. Necessary and sufficient conditions need to be elaborated (Mattli, 1999). The differences between political and economic conditions also need to be set out (Mansfield and Milner, 1999). Possible indicators to examine, then, with relevance to a comparison of parts of Asia, the Asia Pacific or Mercosur or other regions and the EU, are: culturally similar countries; shared objectives; binding agreements; an institutionalised system; nation states in a defined geographical region; commitment to an acquis communautaire (the body of common rights and obligations binding member states known as the EU “patrimony”), and, lastly, sectoral integration of policies. The question then arises: what if any aspects of these developments might be considered as appropriate for third countries to examine and even emulate in some form?

The EU has 50 years experience of the establishment of institutions; instruments; binding provisions; policies and understanding of the contexts of domestic decision-making. It is increasingly evident that the EU is a unique legal and international body of nation states, whereby it has been agreed to pool sovereignty in a legal, political and economic structure above the nation state that nevertheless contains member states as crucial actors in the decision-making process. Smith (1996, p. 247) refers to
the EU as not simply an actor but also as a process – “a set of complex institutions, roles and rules which structure the activities of the EU”.

The EU has transformed its institutional structure, expanded the scope and reach of its policies and its membership, since its inception. All of these are encompassed in the institutional network and the rules, laws and policy-making structures and policies of the EU’s members. It is characterized by a deepening of its integration process, with the aim of bringing the member states closer together in economic policies, in economic and monetary union and common foreign and security policy. The EU’s system of mixed competences is a locus where states and EU institutions jostle for influence (Meunier and Nicolaides, 1999). The EU possesses the legal capacity to enter into binding agreements in international law, with other states, organisations or regions at the same time that it attempts to present a united position in international organisations (Frieden, 2004).

One approach to the study of comparative economic integration has been the elaboration of steps or part of a continuum or journey (e.g. Feng and Genna, 2003). For example, Hurrell (1995) identifies five forms of regionalism as follows: firstly there is societal integration, which is based on both social and economic interaction of states and interdependence and is associated with the work of Karl Deutsch. Secondly there is regional awareness and sense of a regional identity and thirdly there is interstate cooperation that is characterised by formal agreements and institutionalisation. Fourthly, he presents regional economic integration that is state-promoted, such as the removal of barriers to trade. Fifthly, he posits a combination of these four elements leading to a consolidated regional bloc. The EU has been regarded as an example of these five factors of regionalism. There are problems with these categories as they can appear as ideal types and integration or regionalism does not necessarily take place in any particular order. In addition, it is worth reiterating that just as there is no single model of regional integration, there is not single path or “journey” to the creation of a regionally integrated bloc, however that integration may be defined. Capacity differs for a number of historical, cultural and political reasons.

**The EU as a social model and model of governance**

The EU is increasingly developing new capacities, as it extends its policy scope and projects its own governance model. There is fresh debate on the nature of EU efforts to promote a ‘European model’ globally. While it is accepted that the EU is the most advanced form of RI, nevertheless comparative or global analysis of the EU tends to assume European integration is a model which can be utilized in the analysis of other parts of the world (Laffan 1997, Mattli, 1999). In addition, the EU increasingly portrays itself as far more than a market: it also regards itself as a “social model.” Commissioner Lamy (2001) presents it thus:

“I think that what sets us apart from others (for instance the US) is a particular view of the relationship between markets, society and politics, which is often summed up as the “European social model” – a model that combines the efficiency of market capitalism with the equity provided by a redistributive political system while leaving room for the initiative of the individual and of societal organisations… it owes much to the German model of ‘Soziale Marktwirtschaft’”

Commission President Prodi (2002) has referred to the EU’s ‘consensual approach to industrial relations’ as a vital ingredient of ‘our European social model.’ Debates on
the definition, understanding and possible exportable quality of the European social model are characterised by several different conceptions (Hay et al., 1999), although there is evident in Commission pronouncements an understanding of the existence of a distinctive European social model.

The EU is also setting itself up as a model in another manner too as a manager of globalisation (Lamy and Laidi, 2001). It can be argued that the EU is advancing its interests by deploying its new-found power as a global player to press for the regulation of global actors, in what the EU terms a moral framework for globalisation, anchored in solidarity and sustainable development (Rumford and Murray, 2003a).

In a recent speech to the European Parliament, Romano Prodi stated that the EU is “increasingly a reference in many countries for the development of civil society and political life. No other player on the world scene can boast of the same drawing power.” Referring explicitly to “our model”, he attributed its success to the fact that “On its own, each country would be at the mercy of greater and more powerful political and economic realities. But united we can guide the process in respect for democracy and the human dimension” (Prodi, 2003).

The EU as a Model of Regional Integration: Future Research Agendas

The cross-fertilization of research agendas on Europeanisation and comparative regional integration, which are multidisciplinary and multi-dimensional, has been limited to date. In order to proceed to an evaluation of the possible outcomes of, for example, a “United States of Asia” (Nakamura, 1994), the success of regional integration projects in the Asia Pacific region would need to be assessed in the light of chosen indicators, of both community and capacity, to assess the feasibility of the following outcomes: establishment of common and harmonised policies; creation of a Single Market; elimination of barriers to trade; increase in intra-bloc trade and investment flows; creation of a trade bloc and development of an acquis communautaire over time. Such outcomes can be classified as legal/constitutional (law above the nation state); financial (own budget and resource redistribution), economic (common policies, trading market), institutional (binding decisions, based on qualified majority vote) and political (transformation of the nation state and of regional governance) (Murray, 2003b).

The benefits and disadvantages of integration could be examined, taking as their base point the comparative regional integration literature (Bhalla & Bhalla, 1997; Best, 1996; Dent, 1997), and applied to the Asia Pacific, ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three as the focus. While accepting that Asia is a contested definition, attempts at interstate cooperation render this issue worthy of examination. The EU has been dismissed as an inappropriate model by some analysts who possess little understanding of EU

2 “Europe needs to shoulder its responsibilities in the governance of globalisation. The role it has to play is that of a power … seeking to set globalisation within a moral framework, in other words to anchor it in solidarity and sustainable development.” Presidency conclusions, European Council meeting in Laeken, 14 and 15 December 2001.


3 He continued: “The reason is clear. The Union has succeeded in putting the highest ideals into practice: peace, on which we have founded our Union; democracy, which we affirm and defend through all our policies; greater opportunities for economic prosperity and, together with these, solidarity towards the least-favoured regions and groups.”

integration. This article advances the proposal that a comparative and interdisciplinary synthesis of analysis and literature on the Asia Pacific and European integration, would advance our academic understanding of success indicators of regional blocs. It would advance our comprehension of comparatively structural and institutional weaknesses and strengths of Asia Pacific regionalism and the EU experience. McKay (2000, 39) makes a point about model for the EU as follows:

> The task of institutional design in the EU is not to identify an existing political system which could act as a template for the EU. It is, rather, to learn from those institutional arrangements which are most relevant to the European case.

This is pertinent to the non-EU case too – and taking as a template an evolving and transformative process of integration, evolving institutions and a new constitution carries with it intrinsic problems. Adopting a moving target as a model is fraught with danger. A research agenda, and a discussion of pathways and concepts for future research, would encompass comparative regionalism in terms of community building such as new or established patterns of cooperation; the desire for, and commitment to, trade liberalisation; the capacities for community building and the desire and capacities for the establishment of an institutional identity. Pertinent questions might include: What are the possible forms or shapes of Asia Pacific integration? What are the boundaries and limits of region? What are the boundaries and limits of regional integration? What is the direction of regional integration? Who is most and least in favour of regional integration and which types? What is the link between regionalism and globalisation (Wallace, 2000)? What is regional integration? Why is it relevant and important as a focus of study? What have regional integration groups in common? What leads to integration? To what extent is regionalism a response to the EU’s integration’s imperatives?

The EU is a hybrid system of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, a system of mixed competences (Sbragia, 1998; Sandoltz and Stone Sweet, 1998). Research is warranted on attempts by other regions to influence the EU agenda, especially in multilateral fora. It is imperative that we should not just focus only on EI in understanding the EU. It is important to realize there is no common understanding of integration. Further, we need to be aware of possible disjunctions of economic versus political, social versus political, binding versus voluntary regulation, and the role of state actors and of non-state actors. Gruber (2001) refers to the unbundling of territoriality in international society, whereby there is a plethora of new actors, including regional actors and transnational NGOs – these issues need to be firmly embedded in a research agenda.

Finally, it is also important to comprehend globalisation and regional integration as processes which are relatively unhindered by jurisdictional barriers, in attempting to understand capacity-building beyond borders. National borders and territorial boundaries of governance have less relevance with increased blurring of distinctions between the national and the international. Multilateral treaties, regional integration, international treaties and cooperation all transform and undermine traditional bilateral state-to-state relations.

---

Mattli (1999) attempts to bridge political science and economics – we can build on this, with other disciplines and also by forging increased linkages among the sub-disciplines of political science, including international relations.
An interdisciplinary research agenda would need to encompass the fact that the subject matter is ever changing. It is imperative that adaptive conceptual tools be acquired and developed in order to contend with the evolving, often unpredictable nature of the EU and other regional bodies. There is no single comprehensive approach to this type of analysis – nor is it warranted. However, there may be much to gain from a synthesis of analytical approaches (Murray, 2000), whereby scholars might pool diversity and pool models. We need to avoid over-specialisation and to engage with other disciplines and sub-disciplines, to share our disciplinary expertise and to discuss culture and identity in the same breath and breadth as economics, trade and politics.

It is fundamental that both EU specialists and non-EU specialists engage increasingly in interdisciplinary dialogue, in order to achieve a comparative comprehension of models. How do we talk of preconditions for integration (Mattli, 1999)? What are the varieties of regionalism, such as geographical context; economic, social and/or political cohesiveness, as well as organisational cohesiveness (Hurrell, 1995)? There are valid reasons for examining the possibility of integration in different parts of the world. There is a need to understand:

- The reasons for joining or establishing a regional entity
- External factors which are similar or different from the EU
- Different time scales
- The role of the US
- Adaptation to different circumstances and crises, such as World War II in the case of the EU and the currency crisis in Asia.
- Perceived need for and benefits to all members of the group
- Willingness to engage in regionalism and to advance it in stages
- Willingness to develop a specific model or pathway to integration
- Agreement on market regulation and/or deregulation.
- Desire to engage with other regions as a region, in inter-regional dialogue
- Desire to pursue an increase in intra-regional trade flows.

The decision to pursue a policy of regional integration as community may depend on factors such as history; geopolitics; strategic considerations and the amount and value of existing trade flows between constituent states. Important comparative factors are therefore the history of both war and peace, and the role of trust in community-building. In terms of building capacity, the role and importance attributed to cross-border trade may be strengthened by cooperation among government officials, diplomats and NGOs.

In addition, we need more analysis regarding both aspirations and capacities to adopt a model of regional integration, as there is no assumed logic or imperative of collective action with a region. Regionalisation is contingent on factors, such as:

- The importance of the issue for all members individually and collectively
- Ability of the members to carry out the objectives, achieve aims within a time frame and process
- Willingness to cooperate among the participants
- Willingness to decide on the role of leader(s)
Evidence of leadership
Clarification regarding who are the main actors – government actors (ministries, officials, prime ministers etc) or non-state actors such as businesses, lobby groups, peak organisations.
Evidence of a desire for regional integration from above or below – or both
Evidence of shared goals, visions and commonalities.
Evidence of a commitment to norms of governance and regulatory mechanisms.
Commitment to the growth of the RI actor as an international actor in arenas such as the UN, WTO and other international or global fora.

With regard to economy-related integration, incipient partners in a RI context might include in their discussions the means to achieve extensive and increasing trade and investment flows; and agreements regarding market access issues and some forms of Common Market or Single Market for goods, services, capital and/or labour. Further discussion of the possible need to establish new decision-making structures, processes, institutionalisation and governance would feature on the strategic agenda.

The politically-related dimensions of integration might encompass aspects of capacity and community-building such as commonalities of interests, strategies, policies and values; the establishment of meetings in a ministerial forum; high level political and/or official contacts; parliamentary debate; foreign policy cooperation and, finally, cooperation on justice and home affairs, immigration and asylum issues.

Further research is warranted on EU attempts to influence or manage global agendas, especially in multilateral arenas. Further, it is also important to comprehend globalisation and regional integration as processes which are relatively unhindered by jurisdictional barriers. National borders and territorial boundaries of governance have less relevance with increased blurring of distinctions between the national and the international.

Conclusion
The EU’s increasingly global role in politics, economics, trade and the advancement of global governance norms, as well as the “exporting” of its model, render an analysis of the EU as model at different, if interconnected levels, pertinent. The increasingly active stance of the EU in promoting its values, both market and non-market related, raise questions about the extent of the EU’s reach. The distinctive nature of its experience and past history, renders its usefulness as a model of conditional value. Nevertheless the experience of this dynamic entity presents us with the opportunity to both compare and contrast it with attempts at regional cooperation in different geographical and political contexts and in an interdisciplinary manner.

References


Prodi, Romano, “Economic growth vs social policies: a false dilemma”. Breakfast with the DGB German Trade Union Federation, Brussels, 5 November 2002.


