

Transnationalism in the European Union
ESF Exploratory Workshop
Portsmouth, 20-22 June 2003

Scientific Report

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1. Executive summary

This exploratory workshop aimed at creating an interdisciplinary basis for the analysis of the dense cross-border networks and social communication of non-state actors below the level of EU institutions and their role in the progressive formation of a European society. Since the mid-1990s, the study of such transnational relations has developed increasingly rapidly, but it has mostly been applied to transregional and global societal links, while EU studies remained focussed on supranational institutions and policy-making, national governments and domestic preference formation. The EU constitutes a common cultural space with a historical tradition of close cross-border contacts, however. It is also an increasingly institutionalized common political space, with integration encouraging much denser societal links and in turn being partially driven by transnational societal actors. Against this background, the workshop focussed on the specificities of transnationalism in the EU from an interdisciplinary perspective of (mainly) international relations, political economy, sociology and social science informed contemporary history. It did so by combining four theoretical-conceptual papers on transnationalism with five empirical papers on particular case studies. In order to contribute to the long-term development of this research field, ten bursaries were advertised to allow PhD students from across Europe to participate in the workshop and to give brief presentations on their research, too.

As the feedback from paper-givers and PhD students documented below (7. Feedback from participants) testifies, the workshop was highly successful in bringing together leading young and aspiring researchers from different disciplines, who had not up until then worked with each other or, in many cases, known of each others' work, creating a stimulating intellectual environment for the discussion of transnationalism. The combination of more abstract conceptual papers with papers on specific case studies allowed at the same time for the interdisciplinary discussion of theoretical issues which will be important for the future development of this research field, and of methodological and other issues related to the application of these theories and concepts to concrete empirical research. The inclusion of the participating PhD students (chosen from 130 applicants from across Europe) proved highly successful, too, as they gave high quality presentations and in many cases made important contributions to the wider debate. This demonstrated both the importance of freeing younger researchers from their relative isolation in scattered institutions in an emerging research field like this one, which naturally requires especially intensive transnational collaboration, and the medium- and long-term importance of transnational relations as an analytical framework for better understanding the growth of a European society as well as contemporary European politics.

The workshop participants agreed that the theme of transnationalism in the EU was very important for the development of Europe-related research agendas in their respective disciplines, and that it required much closer European and interdisciplinary collaboration in the future to develop theoretical understandings and refine methodological tools beyond the current state of the art. In an emerging research field, the state of the art is still characterized by national, language and disciplinary fragmentation which can only be overcome through systematic networking. In confirming the original plan at bidding stage, the paper-givers agreed, as a first step, to cooperate in the publication of a book based on the presentations at the workshop, and devised a plan for increasing its internal coherence through cross-commenting and –referencing. The book will be edited by the conveners, Wolfram Kaiser and Peter Starie, who will seek a major international English language publisher like OUP/CUP or Routledge, with whom they and/or some of the authors of individual chapters have already worked in the past. This book, which will come out in 2004, will disseminate the results of the workshop to a much larger academic audience and hopefully stimulate research on transnationalism in the EU further.

At the same time, however, the participants felt that they (and others) were still only at the beginning of developing the research field and that the forging of more long-term network structures to facilitate European and interdisciplinary research on transnationalism in the EU would be highly desirable. It was agreed, however, that the research field was not sufficiently developed and the new personal contacts resulting from the workshop not strong enough yet to aim at bids for major collaborative projects or very large-scale networks, which could be funded by the ESF member organisations and the EU respectively. As a result, they resolved, as an initial step, to develop a bid to the ESF by the next deadline of April 2004 for the funding of a three year network with six workshops. It was agreed that such a network should refine the overall interdisciplinary approach to transnationalism in the EU and, at the same time, deepen the conceptual perspectives of contemporary historical transnationalism, transnational (policy) networks, transnational socialization and transnational socio-economic relations. The participants felt, however, that these conceptual perspectives of the initial workshop could usefully be supplemented with one or two others, especially sociological approaches to understanding the EU as a public space, combined with communication and media studies approaches to researching transnational political communication, as well as transnational law-making and enforcement. Further publications and eventually, major collaborative research projects could then be developed from such a three year network.

2. Scientific content of the event

The workshop discussed the state of the art in research on transnationalism as applied to the study of the EU as a highly institutionalized transnational political space with particularly dense cross-border societal structures and contacts, with important repercussions for a refined understanding of a growing European society as well as contemporary EU politics. While this emerging research field can build on important recent publications by authors such as Thomas Risse and Jeffrey Checkel, it is still very fragmented and could profit very much in its further development from greater European and interdisciplinary collaboration for which the workshop marked an important beginning. The participants who gave the theoretical-conceptual papers were in agreement that their (sub-) disciplines were traditionally state-centred in their research on the EU and concentrated for a long time on supranational policy-making, national governments, domestic preference formation and inter-state bargaining. In fact, some theoretical approaches to understanding the EU, for example by Andrew Moravcsik, have even negated the relevance of transnational forces altogether, which for a long time did not encourage research in this direction. It was noted, however, that transnationalism is not only relevant in relation to EU policy-making, but involves other very important dimensions that have increasingly been addressed in research in different (sub-) disciplines more recently, such as transnational social learning or socialization and its impact on policy transfer below the EU level, for example.

In his paper (attached as a first draft for the book), Wolfram Kaiser (Portsmouth, co-convener) emphasized the state-centred focus of much of the recent contemporary historical research on the evolution of the EU, which is the result of the predominant extreme national focus of research on modern European history and of methodological and practical research problems. In the last few years, however, contemporary historical research has begun to look into such questions as the informal transnational policy networks of parties, trade unions, cities and other actors, although this often remains somewhat descriptive and fails to identify its cross-border or European-level impact on policy-making. The second theoretical-conceptual paper by Peter Starie (Portsmouth, co-convener) discussed the different approaches to understanding networks in IR/political science, from the German-Dutch variant of networks as a new form of governance to the dominant British understanding of networks as influencing and being supportive of governmental action. The paper demonstrated how these approaches have recently been applied to the study of transnational networks and ‘epistemic communities’, while also discussing continuing problems of some of this research in assessing the resources invested in such transnational activities compared to national activities, as well as their policy impact.

Bastiaan van Apeldoorn (Amsterdam), in his paper on transnational socio-economic relations, discussed the shortcomings of much of the recent research on lobbying at the EU level, which often takes a more ‘supranational’ than transnational approach and – in his view – fails to adequately address questions about the relative power of different social groups and transnational actors and the conditions under which they can establish policy hegemony in the EU. In contrast, Apeldoorn presented his own preferred neo-Gramscian approach to understanding the EU liberalisation agenda as largely driven by a relatively cohesive transnational ‘capitalist class’, and how such an approach might help to understand the emergence of the Single Market Programme or the extension of market liberalisation to the East European accession states, for example. Although this approach was controversially discussed at the workshop, it was also agreed that it provided a refreshing, provocative theoretical perspective. Lastly, Frank Schimmelfennig (Mannheim) presented different conceptual approaches to understanding transnational social learning and socialization. In particular, he concentrated on the ways in which such processes and their impact on behaviour and policy could be traced and measured. While his own preferred approach is influenced by rational choice theories, emphasizing the importance of coercion and material incentives for socialization, his paper showed a great openness towards other approaches (by Checkel, for example) that emphasize norm internalisation through transnational social contacts, an approach also used by some of the PhD students in their work on the role of political foundations in Eastern Europe and of city networks in the EU, for example.

Up to a point, the five empirical papers on particular case studies exemplified these different conceptual approaches. In his contemporary historical paper on transnational trade union cooperation, Patrick Pasture (Leuven) emphasized the cultural and ideological barriers to deeper transnational cooperation of trade unions that have an internationalist ideology, but largely developed for many decades in nationally-dominated contexts. Karl Magnus Johansson (Stockholm) and Monica Den Boer (Brussels) applied the network approach with their papers on Christian Democrat party cooperation and informal police cooperation in the EU – demonstrating, *inter alia*, the importance of informal political party cooperation even for major political transformations such as the Maastricht Treaty, and of growing informal transnational cooperation of state actors, such as police forces, as well as of private police and security companies, which has accelerated since September 11. Finally, Daniela Schwarzer presented her research on informal economic policy coordination in the context of the Euro-12 group, and Peter Zervakis discussed the socializing role of German political foundations in the democratic transition of Spain and Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1990s respectively in comparative perspective.

Many of the research projects of the PhD students at the workshop were fruitfully linked to the different conceptual perspectives in one way or another. They included some, like those mentioned above, that adopted the network perspective for the study of transnational contacts of societal actors, and others that were more interested in the role of societal actors in the formation and cross-border transfer of norms, such as one project on the role of the Catholic Church as a societal actor in the EU's Eastern enlargement. One research project also dealt with the increasingly important role of transnational university networks in the EU in advancing university reform in the wider context of the Bologna process, and for coordinating student exchanges and research. Due to the intrinsic academic quality of this project, but also because it exemplifies very well the cross-border dimension of what researchers of transnationalism in the EU are themselves doing to advance research in their field, the conveners and editors resolved to integrate a chapter on this topic by the Dutch PhD student in their forthcoming book.

3. Results & contribution to the future direction of the field

The workshop participants agreed that transnationalism in the EU was a growing research field which could in the future make an important contribution to understanding the growth of a European society and the impact of transnational relations on European politics in a wider sense both at the supranational and the sub-European level (including the cross-border transfer of political concepts and policies). It also became clear, however, that this emerging research field still suffers from a great degree of national, language and disciplinary fragmentation which needs to be overcome. Moreover, earlier research on transnational relations (also in the EU context) has often been criticized for its alleged lack of theoretical sophistication as well as for its supposed methodological deficiencies in relation to establishing the actual impact of transnational relations beyond the descriptive treatment of networks and socialization agents and their various transnational activities. These were also identified as important challenges for the workshop and for any future networking and collaborative research.

Against this background the workshop for the first time established the state of the art in research on transnationalism in the EU from an interdisciplinary perspective. This will be documented in the planned book to come out in 2004, which will disseminate the workshop results to a wider academic audience. The workshop could not of course claim to cover all relevant disciplines and conceptual perspectives, but it did arguably bring together the most important ones. The contemporary historical perspective in particular broadened the so far mostly social science driven research agenda and established the different ways in which history (and perhaps other humanities disciplines) can contribute concepts and empirical evidence. The participants did, however, identify a more strictly sociological perspective on European public space and transnational political communication as also of great importance for this research field, so that its more systematic inclusion in any future collaboration would be highly desirable. At the same time, legal perspectives on transnational law-making and enforcement, although represented up to a point in Den Boer's treatment of transnational law enforcement, could complement the future research agenda in a fruitful way, too.

As for the alleged lack of theoretical sophistication of much of the social science research on transnationalism, the participants were largely in agreement that for the time being, the aim was not and should not be to develop yet another exclusive theory of EU integration, not least because the significance of transnational relations within the EU context (as explained above) goes beyond its importance for the EU itself. In any case, the EU theory debate has recently become very sterile, basically varying well-established IR perspectives that are opposed to comparative politics approaches to studying the EU which, however, often

fail to capture the continuing differences between national political spaces and the EU. In view of this situation, the workshop essentially took stock of the theoretical state of the art and discussed ways and means by which medium-ranged theorizing of transnational society formation and policy-making could be advanced in the future, while avoiding often artificial theoretical conflicts. Such conflicts could well deflect from the growing and diverse empirical research on actual transnational phenomena, their forms and influence, which should be the main priority for the foreseeable future.

The workshop also brought out the diversity of actual empirical research on transnational phenomena in the wider EU context, from the inter-societal contacts of non-governmental actors which are largely unrelated to EU-level policy-making to cross-border cooperation of state actors like government ministers and police officers who, however, often act in non-formalized transnational, semi-private contexts. The participants agreed that it was important not to narrow the transnational approach down too much to the transnational cooperation of strictly non-governmental actors only. The grey zone between intergovernmental cooperation and transnational contacts of non-governmental actors was very large, and it was especially important to advance research on the linkages in this area to avoid a convenient, but also unrealistically neat compartmentalization between research on intergovernmental and on inter-societal relations. For example, German political foundations are highly independent in their transnational activities, but dependent on government funding. They are societal actors, but with close financial and personal links with political parties as well as state institutions.

Finally, the workshop made a very important contribution to bringing together researchers from different disciplines with a shared interest in theoretical and empirical aspects of transnationalism in the EU in order to facilitate the same transnational networking and collaboration that they are actually researching. As the feedback from participants demonstrates, the workshop was highly successful in this main task to establish a sound basis for European interdisciplinary cooperation in this emerging research field. Unlike in many other fields of social science research, successful work on transnationalism in the EU does not simply profit from European-level activities such as this ESF workshop as a kind of ‘add-on’, but must essentially be transnational itself in order to be able to make a significant contribution to our knowledge of the growing European society and contemporary politics.

4. Final programme

European Science Foundation
Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS)

ESF/SCSS EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP

Transnationalism in the European Union



Portsmouth, United Kingdom

20-22 June 2003

Convened by:

Wolfram Kaiser and Peter Starie

*Centre for European Studies Research
School of Social, Historical and Literary Studies
University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom*



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European Science Foundation - SCSS Exploratory Workshop
Transnationalism in the European Union
Portsmouth, United Kingdom, 20-22 June 2003

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Objectives:

The workshop will analyse the dense cross-border networks and social communication of non-state actors below the level of EU institutions and their role in the progressive formation of a European society. It will do so from a clear interdisciplinary perspective of international relations, political economy, sociology and social science informed contemporary history and law, combining theoretical and methodological with empirical papers in a highly systematic way. Workshop participation consists of 10 paper-givers from 6 European countries and of 10 PhD students from across Europe who have been selected on a competitive basis (letter of motivation and PhD description). The workshop will lead to the publication of a book, which will form the ideal basis for future research in this field. Moreover, the workshop is designed to lead to more long-term European network-based collaboration along thematic or more traditional disciplinary lines, but always encouraging interdisciplinary exchange in this exciting new research field.

FINAL PROGRAMME:

Friday 20th June 2003 Milldam Building, Burnaby Road, Room 1.04

14.30-14.45	<i>Registration</i>
14.45-15.00	Introduction Wolfram Kaiser and Peter Starie (<i>Portsmouth</i>)
15.00-15.25	Transnational Western Europe since 1945 Wolfram Kaiser (<i>Portsmouth</i>)
15.25-15.50	Transnational Co-operation of Trade Unions in the ECSC/EEC 1950-1972 Patrick Pasture (<i>Leuven</i>)
15.50-16.20	Discussion
16.20-16.45	<i>Coffee break</i>
16.45-19.00	Short presentations of 10 minutes each by 9 PhD Students, with 5 minutes questions/answers per presentation
20.00	<i>Dinner:</i> Rosie's Wine Bar Elm Grove Portsmouth Southsea

Saturday 21st June 2003 Park Building, King Henry I Street, Room 2.16

09.00-09.25	Transnational Networks in the European Union Peter Starie (<i>Portsmouth</i>)
09.25-09.50	Christian Democratic and Conservative Party Networks in Europe Karl Magnus Johansson (<i>Stockholm</i>)
09.50-10.15	Transnational Police Cooperation in Europe Monica den Boer (<i>Brussels</i>)
10.15-10.45	Discussion

10.45-11.10	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.10-11.35	Class and Power in European Transnational Economic Relations Bastiaan van Apeldoorn (<i>Amsterdam</i>)
11.35-12.00	Transnational Consensus-Building in Economic Governance in EMU Daniela Schwarzer (<i>Berlin</i>)
12.00-12.30	Discussion
12.30-14.00	<i>Lunch:</i> HaHa Bar, Gunwharf
14.00-15.00	<i>Boat Trip round the harbour</i>
15.30-15.55	European Public Space, Socialisation and Social Learning Frank Schimmelfennig (<i>Mannheim</i>)
15.55-16.20	Party Foundations, Social Learning and the Europeanisation of Spain and Eastern Europe Peter Zervakis (<i>Bonn</i>)
16.20-16.50	Discussion
16.50-17.10	Conclusion (end of general part of the exploratory workshop)
17.10-17.30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
17.30-18.30	Discussion of book plan and future collaboration (paper-givers only)
19.30	<i>Dinner:</i> Still and West Bath Square Old Portsmouth

Sunday 22nd June 2003

Departure

5. Final list of participants

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6. Statistical information on participants

In the British university system, statistical information on age, nationality and gender cannot be compiled other than by the institutions themselves and in a strictly anonymous manner. As a result, no precise information on the age average of paper-givers and PhD bursary students can be provided here, although details on their gender, country of origin and country of current employment will be given below on the basis of information supplied by the participants in advance of the exploratory workshop.

The age of the paper-givers varied from 30 to c. 45, with an average of probably just below 40. The age of the PhD students varied from c. 23 to c. 30, with an average of c. 27. The relatively low average age of the paper-givers shows how underdeveloped the research on transnational relations generally, and more specifically in relation to the EU, was for a long time from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, and how much more popular it is now becoming with younger, dynamic researchers who are moving into the still highly fragmented field at an increasingly rapid pace, but often without the possibility of close collaboration with older, more experienced colleagues who will not, as a general rule, use comparable theoretical concepts and methodological tools.

As for gender, 7 paper-givers were male, 2 female. Although the conveners made a systematic effort to identify suitable highly qualified female colleagues working on relevant topics, they did not, unfortunately, manage to include a disproportionate number of female researchers in relation to their current representation in this particular field in most national university systems. Of the PhD students, however, only 4 were male and 5 female, which shows a considerable advance compared to the generation of researchers from postdocs to younger professors.

Disregarding possible dual citizenship in some cases, four paper-givers were German, one British, two Dutch, one Swedish and one Belgian. Three of them worked in Germany, two in Britain, one in the Netherlands, one in Sweden and two in Belgium. Of the PhD students, three were German, one Dutch, one Belgian and four Polish. Four of them did their PhD in Germany, one in Britain, one in the Netherlands, one in Belgium, one in France, one in Poland and one in Hungary. The concentration of senior researchers in North and Central Europe is explained by the much more developed research on transnationalism in these countries and their academic systems and, to a lesser extent, the use of English as the working language of the workshop. Although the PhD bursary advertisement was widely circulated via the ESF and PhD students from Southern

and Eastern Europe especially encouraged to apply, only a tiny number of the 130 applications came from countries like France (1), Italy (1) and Spain (none), and only one (by a Polish student from Sciences Po in Paris) could be selected for participation on the basis of merit. Many applications were received from Eastern Europe, including Russia. With the exception of the Polish PhD students invited to the workshop (of whom one studied in France, one in Germany, one in Poland and one at the international Central European University in Budapest), however, most of these applicants were not well qualified (or at least not for this workshop theme) and motivated mainly by their (understandable) desire to establish links with the West European academic system. The experience of the advertisements for PhD bursaries to attend the workshop has thus demonstrated once more just how disconnected even many younger East European researchers still are from the West European and transatlantic research community, and that their inclusion (albeit on the basis of high quality research proposals and actual research) must be a major priority for future collaborative research activities in this research field as elsewhere.