The Social Construction of Europe

Edited by *Thomas Christiansen,*
Knud Erik Jørgensen & Antje Wiener

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SAGE Publications
London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

Contents

Preface

This book introduces a novel perspective to students of European integration. It offers a concise insight into an emerging debate about the pros and cons of applying constructivist perspectives to European integration. While constructivist thinking has been discussed in different disciplines for some time, constructivist approaches have not been introduced in a thorough and systematic way to the study of European integration. The goal of this book is to provide such a focused perspective on the relevance and applicability of constructivism, as well as to contribute to the development of constructivist theory.

Most of the chapters evolved out of a conference on 'Constructivism and Research on European Integration' sponsored by the Danish Social Science Research Council and organized at Femmøller Strand by the Department of Political Science at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. Other chapters, including those in the debating section, were written later in the process. The volume includes a thoroughly revised and updated introduction, and, demonstrating the broad reach of, as well as an urgency about the debate, an entirely new chapter by Ernst B. Haas.

We are very grateful to the conference participants and to the anonymous referees for constructive comments on the draft chapters, as well as to the research assistants, Ida Sofie Belling and Niels Hovgaard Steffensen, for their assistance during the conference and their support in preparing the outcome for publication. Most contributions first appeared as a special issue of the *Journal of European Public Policy.* Hence, we are extremely grateful for Jeremy Richardson's support as the editor of *JEPP* and for the help of the editorial team at Routledge/Taylor and Francis in facilitating this publication. Finally, we have very much enjoyed working with Lucy Robinson of Sage Publications. Her unfaltering support, enthusiasm for the project and professional management throughout the publication process have been invaluable to this final product. All three editors have been part of the European Commission's *Jean Monnet Project* which has been vital in supporting and encouraging European and transatlantic collaboration in the field of European integration studies. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the project.

Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen and Antje Wiener
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Introduction

Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen and Antje Wiener

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain paradox in that what is often referred to as *la construction européenne* has not received any systematic attention from constructivist scholars.[1] As we witness the rise of a constructivist turn in the social sciences, it is odd that a process so explicitly concerned with the construction of a novel polity has largely escaped the attention of constructivist theorizing. Indeed, the European 'construction' is often regarded as so advanced that many European integration scholars have turned to comparative political analyses. In their view, the European Union (EU) has arrived at a stage where the shape and type of polity are less interesting than explaining variation in policy and politics (Caporaso 1998b: 335; Sandholtz 1998). This evolutionary approach to European integration builds on the observation that after intergovernmental beginnings 'as the EC has developed, the relevance of comparative politics has increased, along with its offshoots in policy analysis, interest group analysis and liberal theories of preference formation' (Caporaso 1998a: 7).

In proposing a constructivist approach to the study of European integration, we seek to go beyond explaining variation within a fixed setting. Instead, in this introduction we draw on recent international relations (IR) theorizing to stress the impact of 'social ontologies' and 'social institutions' on the continuing process of European integration. We argue that finding the tools to analyse the impact of intersubjectivity and social context enhances our capacity to answer why and how European integration arrived at its current stage. Undeniably, variation across policy areas is an important aspect of the integration process. However, neglecting the constructive force of the process itself, i.e. pushing intersubjective phenomena, and social context aside, lays the ground for missing out on a crucial part of the

process. If the process is to be explained, it cannot be done within a research context that is closed towards interpretative tools.

How can a philosophical position like constructivism be useful for research on European integration? In contrast to other introductory accounts of constructivism, we do not begin with a presentation of what various IR scholars, comparativists or legal scholars conceive of as being a constructivist stance.[2] In our view, such approaches are likely to reduce potential options to what is already present in the social science literature. We therefore approach constructivism at a philosophical level that in principle is independent of European integration, before turning to integration studies. This enables us to locate philosophically the theoretical origins of differing approaches. In subsequent sections we move down the ladder of abstraction towards constructivist theorizing of European integration.

What makes constructivism particularly well suited for research on European integration? A significant amount of evidence suggests that, as a process, European integration has a *transformative* impact on the European state system and its constituent units. European integration itself has changed over the years, and it is reasonable to assume that in the process agents' identity and subsequently their interests and behaviour have equally changed. While this aspect of change can be theorized within constructivist perspectives, it will remain largely invisible in approaches that neglect processes of identity formation and/or assume interests to be given exogenously.

Proceeding in three steps, this introduction charts a path towards a constructivist research programme for the study of European integration. The *first step* develops a general understanding of the nature of constructivism; the *second step* highlights the debate over constructivist approaches in IR and demonstrates how they have become central to a constructivist research programme; the *third step* highlights the potential of this programme for European integration. By way of conclusion, we argue that a constructivist research programme bears enormous potential for research on European integration and ought to be actively pursued to overcome limitations in the field.

FOUNDATIONAL CO-ORDINATES OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

While definitional exercises are seldom rewarding, they can nevertheless result in heuristically fruitful pointers for subsequent moves. Since this book constitutes a plea for applying constructivist approaches in research on European integration, this introduction needs to define constructivism. John G. Ruggie, who has consistently explored processes of international institutionalization, provides a particularly succinct definition, stating that

> At bottom, constructivism concerns the issue of human consciousness: the role it plays in international relations, and the implications for the logic and methods of social inquiry of taking it seriously. Constructivists hold the view that the building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material; that ideational factors have normative as well as instrumental dimensions; that

they express not only individual but also collective intentionality; and that the meaning and significance of ideational factors are not independent of time and place.

<div align="right">(Ruggie 1998: 33)</div>

Ruggie thus specifies a social ontology (human consciousness and ideational factors) and argues that it has particular epistemological ramifications. It follows that at an abstract level of reasoning, constructivists merely claim that there is such a thing as socially constructed reality. To some, this may sound trivial or common-sensical, but it nevertheless runs counter to several research strategies, informed by positivism or materialist philosophies of the social sciences. In our view, the claim has five consequences.

First, it needs to be recognized that social constructivism is a specific position in the philosophy of the social sciences (Guzzini 2000; Jørgensen 2001). It therefore cannot, in itself, serve as a substantive theory of European integration. It would be a mistake to compare *theories* of European integration such as neo-functionalism to constructivism. Furthermore, this is no attempt at developing a constructivist 'grand theory' of European integration. Even though there are connections between key *aspects* of neo-functionalist theorizing – e.g. processes of *socialization*, *learning*, transfers of *loyalty*, *redefinitions* of interest and, in general, the *transformative* perspective – and *aspects* of constructivism (Wendt 1992, 1994; Ruggie 1998: 11), such overlap should not lead to a conflation between one and the other.

Second, constructivism claims that in contrast to material reality social realities exist only by human agreement (Searle 1995: 1–29; Collin 1997). This accounts for social realities being both potentially 'changeable' and 'contestable' as well as durable. Furthermore, social realities tend to have a more 'local' than 'global' presence and are confined to a limited time-frame rather than to the discrete charm of timelessness. All this is most pertinent to the study of the European integration process that has as much, if not more, to do with socially constructed realities as it has with material reality.

Third, constructivism focuses on social ontologies including such diverse phenomena as, for example, intersubjective meanings, norms, rules, institutions, routinized practices, discourse, constitutive and/or deliberative processes, symbolic politics, imagined and/or epistemic communities, communicative action, collective identity formation, and cultures of national security. Even if these features merely constitute a point of departure, they indicate a whole range of social constructivist features that are ready to be employed in research on European integration. By emphasizing that social ontologies constitute a key dimension of constructivism, we distance ourselves from a view that reduces constructivism to primarily an issue of epistemology.

Fourth, at the philosophical level we can identify two basic currents of constructivism, something that complicates matters, but also multiplies our options for developing substantive theories about European integration. The two currents are:

[i] *constructive realism*, according to which the agent has an epistemic but not an ontological influence, that is, knowledge is constructive in nature, but the existence of the world does not depend on the existence of an agent . . . [and ii] *constructive idealism*, according to which the agent has both an epistemic and an ontological influence on the known world.

(Ben Ze'ev 1995: 50)[3]

Whichever option is selected evidently has profound consequences for the application of constructivism in European studies. Do Europeanists, by means of their research, effectively contribute to the 'Europe' they study? Indeed, can 'Europe' exist without the huge literature about it? For example, Kaiser (1966) in one of his early writings, was in no doubt that scholars are deeply embedded in the environment in which they work and that, in turn, they somehow contribute to the creation of the object they aim at exploring.

Fifth, constructivism is a social theory that reaches across disciplines which therefore helps us to transcend recurring inter-disciplinary squabbles, be it IR vs. comparative politics or IR vs. European studies. Furthermore, social constructivism has the potential to counter tendencies towards excessive specialization in studies of European integration, tendencies to know more and more about less and less (cf. Kratochwil 2001).

Having thus characterized some of the key defining features of constructivism, we now proceed to delineate where constructivism parts ways with different and, to a certain degree, competing perspectives.

CO-ORDINATES OF CONSTRUCTIVISM IN THE META-THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE

Constructivism can also be characterized *ex negativo*, that is, by reference to what it is not. A starting point is the current tendency to operate with the three meta-theoretical positions of constructivism, rationalism and postmodern approaches.[4] While these positions are often presented on a spectrum, we consider situating them on corners of a triangle as more adequate since, in general, scholars tend to position their work in-between the corners. See Figure 1.

Like constructivism, both rationalism and reflectivism are far from coherent and fixed positions. Both include several currents of thinking and, even if they are useful labels, they tend to have little meaning when attempts at explicit definition are being made. Indeed, when Katzenstein *et al.* (1998: 671) promise a section on rationalism, they deliver merely 'realism and liberalism after the Cold War'. Similarly, when Moravcsik (1998: 19) presents his 'rationalist framework' he avoids defining precisely the term 'rationalism'. However, employing the deductive method on texts written by self-proclaimed rationalists, it seems as if the following key words can help to nail down some substance: the deductive-nomological model of causal explanation, materialism, more or less strong rationality assumptions.

Reflectivism presents an even less coherent position, as readily admitted by most reflectivists. Some attempt to turn this into a virtue: according to Smith 'reflectivist
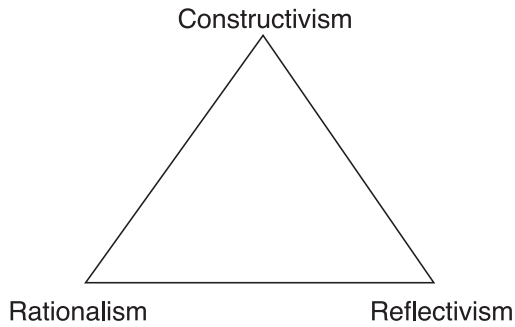
Constructivism

Rationalism   Reflectivism

Figure 1 Major contemporary theoretical positions

accounts are united more by what they reject than by what they accept' (1997: 172). He proceeds by listing postmodernism, feminist theory, normative theory, critical theory and historical sociology. However, with the exception of postmodernism, all remaining strands of theories appear to be compatible with constructivism. To give just one example: feminist theory comes in both postmodern and constructivist versions. Therefore, Smith's negative definition appears to be the most succinct and appropriate as reflectivism has an identity as simply the mirror-image or antithesis of rationalism.

In our view, each position has certain advantages and disadvantages. For some the benefits of postmodern approaches are clearly associated with an awareness of the political. As Smith notes, reflectivism has 'much wider notions of politics', has much to say about the 'deeper questions of identity and governance', 'questions of inclusion and exclusion', the 'nature of society–state relations', the 'nature of democracy', 'gendered aspects of the new Europe', and inquiries into the construction of the 'other' (Smith, 2000). Others argue that the prime merit of postmodern approaches is that they 'change the perspective' (Diez 1996, 1998c: 139), or 'that the European Union can best be understood as a post-modern text, and perhaps as a post-modern polity' and emphasize – in a characteristically postmodern fashion – that 'trying to "identify" postmodernism is, of course, the ultimate absurd act' (Ward 1995: 15). Nevertheless, Derrida's contribution (1992) is heralded as an attempt to 'uncover the semiotics of European studies' (1995: 17). In response, constructivists would note that there is not very much reflectivist research on European integration. It therefore remains to be seen whether reflectivist approaches have as much to offer as Smith claims. We suggest that constructivism has much to contribute on precisely the issues raised by Smith. The subsequent section elaborates further on this point. Here it suffices to state that one of the major contributions of constructivist approaches is to include the impact of norms and ideas on the construction of identities and behaviour.

Based on a comparatively narrower conception of European integration, rationalists seek to *normalize* the politics of the EU (Hix 1998; Moravcsik 1998: 4–5). Their interest in phenomena that are conceivable within rationalist assumptions

contributes to their theoretical strength as well as their weakness. It is a strength because a reduced number of features can be investigated in a more detailed and parsimonious fashion that is underpinned by a familiar positivist epistemology. It is a weakness because causal explanation is considered the only form of explanation, thus leaving conceptions of social ontologies, i.e. identity, community and collective intentionality, largely aside. This configuration of focal points and delineations has prompted Risse (1999) to claim that the rationalist position can easily be subsumed within a constructivist perspective which, however, can offer much more, since it is based on a deeper and broader ontology. This volume seeks to provide evidence for this claim.

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST TURN IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

With a view to exploring the possible analytical capacity of constructivist thought for research in European integration, this section turns to the constructivist debate in IR.[5] The argument builds on a problem that has been identified in a seminal article by Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986) as the contradiction between epistemology and ontology immanent in regime theory. They argued that, unless the constructed nature of norms were theoretically addressed, regime analysis would continuously face the problem of contradictions between (positivist) epistemology and a social ontology (norms). As they wrote:

> [I]nternational regimes are commonly defined as social institutions around which expectations converge in international issue-areas. The emphasis on convergent expectations as the constitutive basis of regimes gives regimes an inescapable intersubjective quality. It follows that we *know* regimes by their principled and shared understandings of desirable and acceptable forms of social behaviour. Hence, the ontology of regimes rests upon a strong element of intersubjectivity. Now, consider the fact that the prevailing epistemological position in regime analysis is almost entirely positivistic in orientation. Before it does anything else, positivism posits a radical separation of subject and object. It then focuses on the 'objective' forces that move actors in their social interactions. Finally, intersubjective meaning, where it is considered at all, is inferred from behaviour. Here, then, we have the most debilitating problem of all: epistemology fundamentally contradicts ontology!
>   (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986: 764; emphasis in original)

Three moves in IR theorizing have contributed to what has come to be dubbed 'the constructivist turn' (Checkel 1998) in the discipline. For our argument it is important to recognize that the sequence of these three moves was not necessarily temporal, but that it is essentially analytical. The first move was epistemological, highlighting the consequences of bringing intersubjectivity into the analysis of regimes. The problem arose on the basis of a lacking match between the concept of 'regime' as entailing converging views on norms, principles, rules and decisions in a specific issue area, on the one hand, and an epistemological framework that assumed

actors' interests as given, on the other. As Kratochwil and Ruggie pointed out, the perception of shared norms was conditional on an analytical framework that allowed for an understanding of intersubjectivity. It followed that a conceptual framework that was not fit to conceptualize intersubjectivity could not properly understand how regimes work. Indeed, they found that

> [I]n many . . . puzzling instances, actor *behaviour* has failed adequately to convey intersubjective *meaning*. And intersubjective meaning, in turn, seems to have had considerable influence on actor behaviour. It is precisely this factor that limits the practical utility of the otherwise fascinating insights into the collaborative potential of rational egoists which are derived from laboratory or game-theoretic situations. To put the problem in its simplest terms: in the simulated world, actors cannot communicate and engage in behaviour; they are condemned to communicate through behaviour. In the real world, the situation of course differs fundamentally.
>
> (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986: 764–5) (emphases in original)

They saw three possible solutions to the problem. The first imaginable solution was to deny it altogether. The second solution was to adopt an intersubjective epistemology that could be claimed to be compatible with a positivist epistemology, and the third solution was to open epistemology to more interpretative strains. While, at the time, the last option appeared most valid (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986: 765–6), the constructivist turn and the ensuing debate among IR theorists in the 1990s demonstrated that the other solutions were not entirely misplaced either. The tendency to combine a positivist position with an intersubjective ontology, which is common among sociological constructivists in particular, proves the point (Wendt 1992, 1994; Jepperson *et al.* 1996).

The second move was ontological. It suggested that, while global structure was important for state behaviour in international politics, it was not established by the principle of anarchy in itself (Waltz 1979), but resulted from social interaction among states (Wendt 1992, 1999). Subsequently, it stressed the impact of the social interaction of states on the structure of the international system. This approach has most prominently been promoted by Alexander Wendt's suggestion to apply Giddens' structuration theory as a second order or meta-theoretical approach to IR theorizing (Wendt 1987, 1991). Defining the third move, others have more recently contributed to refine sociological constructivism by elaborating on institutional aspects in particular. Setting out to design a research programme based on the importance of shared norms in international politics, they defined the third move. While some constructivists have shown the impact of national norms on international politics (Finnemore 1996a; Klotz 1995; Katzenstein 1996a), others stress the impact of international, as well as European, norms on changes in domestic politics (Forschungsgruppe Menschenrechte 1998; Risse 2000). The three moves have contributed differently to the debate over norms and communication. Indeed, IR theorists developed different ways of approaching the impact of norms on IR, and it is possible to divide constructivists roughly into two camps.

The first group of scholars combined insights from the macro-sociological institutionalism of the Stanford School around John Meyer with Giddens' structuration theory. The coupling of these two sociological approaches founded the *sociological constructivist* perspective in IR, which has promoted constructivism as a research programme (Katzenstein 1996a). The major goal of this programme is to study the impact of norms on actors' identities, interests and behaviour. While symbolic interaction constructs meaning, it is assumed that social reality does exist beyond the theorists' view. Following this logic, sociological constructivism stresses the importance of empirical work in order to approach the world out there. The constructive power of language plays a role in the context of processes of 'arguing' (Risse 1999) or 'persuasion' (Checkel in this volume).

The second group of scholars employs constructivism in a more radical way. It does not assume an objective world out there, but seeks to understand the ways in which the world is constructed. Following Wittgenstein's concept of language games, it is assumed that construction involves more than symbolic action of speechless actors. Instead, *Wittgensteinian constructivists* propose to include language as action. The assumption is that, beyond mere utterances, language constitutes meaning within specific contexts. If successfully performed, speech acts cause a particular meaning that, in turn, leads to rule-following. This version of constructivism seeks to explore the constructive power of language interrelated with rules that are inherent to a specific social context (Hollis and Smith 1990; Onuf 1989; Kratochwil 1989; Fierke 1998; Buzan *et al*. 1998; Zehfuss 2001).

ESTABLISHING THE MIDDLE GROUND

The assumption of mutually constitutive social action as a significant factor towards the construction of identity, and therefore interest and behaviour in global politics, offers a theoretical perspective that challenges both neo-realist and neo-liberal IR theorizing. As such, it is paralleled by constructivist moves in various communities of IR scholars. Debates in Britain, Scandinavia, Germany and Canada on IR all centre around developments in constructivist thinking. The point of this brief detour into IR theorizing is to stress the intersubjective nature of constructivism itself. Theorizing does not develop out of context; instead, the respective political culture and the participants of a debate bear on the way theories, or for that matter research programmes, are shaped too. To situate constructivism in the field of IR theorizing, it is helpful to refer back to the theoretical debates which in the 1970s have come to shape a triangle with the three corners of liberalism, realism and radicalism. In the 1980s, that triangle has taken the shape of a kite stretching towards the extreme of rationalism beyond its head, and towards reflectivism at its tail, respectively (Wæver 1997a: 23) (Figure 2). The difference between the two is epistemological. It is manifested in the assumption of endogenous and exogenous interest formation, a gap that offers little choice for synthesis.

Yet, with the constructivist turn in the 1990s, in between these poles a constructivist interface is emerging. According to most observers this constructivist space is located in the middle ground between rationalist (neo-realist, neo-liberal)
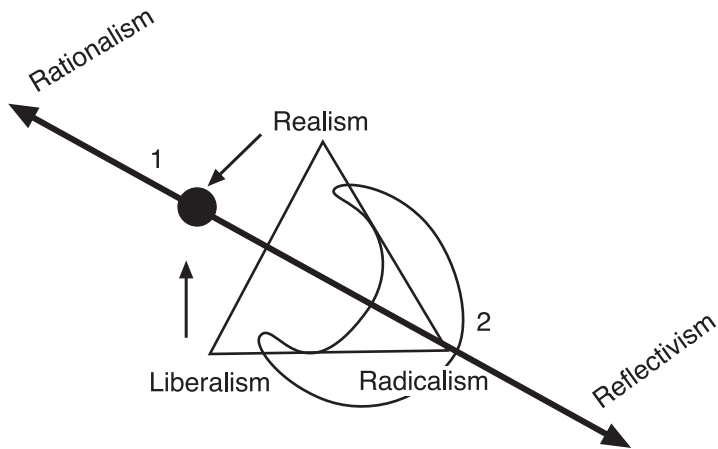
Rise and fall of the inter-paradigm debate

Figure 2 IR debate of the 1980s (Wæver 1997a: 23)

and reflectivist (postmodernist, post-structuralist) positions which are dia-metrically opposed in their fundamental epistemological assumptions (Keohane 1988). Constructivist approaches are developed from positions between these incommensurable theoretical standpoints, being able to 'talk' to each. Most constructivists take great pains in pointing out aspects of commonality with and distinction from both extreme poles. As Adler has pointed out, constructivists 'juxtapose constructivism with rationalism and poststructuralism' to then 'justify its claim to the middle ground' (Adler 1997b: 321; see also Risse 1999: 1).

As this volume seeks to demonstrate, however, constructivists do not exactly 'seize' the middle ground as a territory which has become available as the result of an interparadigm dispute. Instead, constructivist debates are part of a process that is best identified as *establishing* the middle ground. This process expands according to a logic of arguing over theoretical positions. Constructivists share the practice of distancing themselves from the rationalist and the reflectivist poles, respectively. This shared practice forms a distinguishable starting point of all constructivist approaches. While constructivists do not share one epistemological position, they agree on the relevance of ontology over epistemology. Consequently, constructivist positions do not converge on a third point of the theoretical triangle, but form a semi-circle over the two incommensurable poles of rationalist and reflectivist approaches. This semi-circle emerges as each constructivist position is formed by the distance to each pole on the hypotenuse. This position is defined by three aspects. First, a preference of ontology over epistemology, second, a distinction from the incommensurable positions of rationalism and reflectivism, yet the ability to engage in talk with both, and, third, the variation in preferences for method-ological tools (e.g. identity, speech-act, learning, persuasion, discourse). In a word,

all constructivists keep a distance from the poles, they allow for variation amongst themselves, and they share the crucial focus on ontology. The positions on the semi-circle which result from these theoretical preferences do keep with the principle of the theoretical triangle (see Figure 1), however, since their distance to the poles varies, so does their position on the semi-circle. Subsequently, the interface that ultimately results from positioning forms the shared middle ground that is established by and through constructivist debates. The Thales theorem of an angle inscribed in a semi-circle is a right angle, represents this dialogue over theoretical approaches most accurately as one of establishing the middle ground on a semi-circle in which the shared assumptions are represented by the interface of all triangles (see Figure 3).

The new theoretical space provided by this process involves any chosen point on the semi-circle above the hypotenuse. The image of this semi-circle is key to constructivist theorizing because it allows us to assess the process of *situating* positions that emerged from debates within the middle ground. Different from the practice of 'seizing' the middle ground – presumably, a strategic act of territorial conquest – the metaphor of establishing the middle ground thus reflects the process of arguing about differing positions. On the centre stage of IR in the 1990s, this process of theoretical positioning has largely focused on juxtaposing 'constructivist' thinking with the two corner positions on the hypotenuse. What this volume sees emerging not only in IR but increasingly in approaches to European integration, is the establishment of middle ground positions. While these positions differ amongst themselves, they take on the challenge of contradicting epistemological and ontological preferences which was once identified as a major challenge for IR scholars. The constructivist turn in European integration thus evolves from and offers a contribution to further development of key theoretical debates in the field of IR theory.
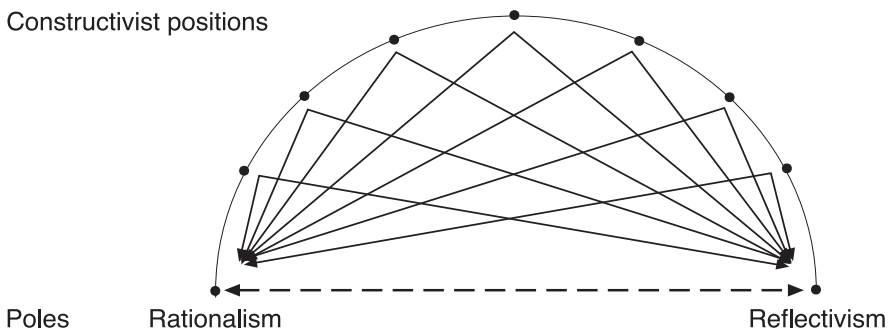

Figure 3 Establishing the middle ground

INTEGRATION THEORY AND META-THEORY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE EURO-POLITY

The previous sections demonstrated the extent to which constructivist approaches have become integral to debates in philosophy and IR over the past decades. So where is the corresponding turn in the study of European integration? It is our contention that a research programme similar to that of constructivism in IR has not been developed, even though both the rationale for, and the building blocks of, such a programme are clearly there. Building on a critique of developments in integration theory, this section substantiates our argument. We demonstrate that constructivist thinking about European integration is seriously underdeveloped, despite the great potential of a number of approaches which have been, or could be, utilized in the analysis of the process.

As we noted at the outset, it is in the 1990s that integration theory has diversified beyond the traditional debate between (liberal) intergovernmentalism and supra-nationalism/neo-functionalism. Approaches inspired by IR theory have been accompanied by comparative politics approaches, on the one hand, and by the treatment of European integration as 'new governance', on the other. These developments leave integration theory as a three-cornered race, with *sui generis*, IR-based and comparative politics approaches providing different models of analysis based on very different assumptions about the nature of the integration process. Where does this leave theoretical choices? By drawing the line between rational and constructivist approaches it has been suggested that the binary debate be continued. For example, in contrast to establishing a middle ground – the way ahead proposed here – Hix stresses the differences between theoretical approaches, thus suggesting positions not *in relation to* the poles but *at* the poles (Hix 1998).

This leaves out the arguably more important question of how the *move* from interstate bargaining to politics within an emerging polity actually happened and where it might lead. Studying integration as *process* would mean concentrating research efforts at the nature of this change, asking to what extent, and in which ways, a new polity is being constituted in Europe (Christiansen 1998). In our view, it is the constructivist project of critically examining transformatory processes of integration rather than the rationalist debate between intergovernmentalists (implicitly assuming that there is no fundamental change) and comparativists (implicitly assuming that fundamental change has already occurred) which will be moving the study of European integration forward.

In order to move beyond binary oppositions and instead establish a constructivist middle ground in European integration, we introduce a number of constructivist approaches. There are three ways in which constructivism can have an impact on studies of European integration:

- development of theories
- construction of frameworks of analysis
- meta-theorizing.

First, development of middle-range theories seems to us to be a fertile and imperative strategy for constructivists. Second, constructivist theories could be combined in different frameworks of analysis in order to develop an understanding of aspects of European integration. Our image of the constructivist turn in research on integration is therefore not a 'grand' constructivist theory of European integration, but rather bringing together various – currently disparate – constructivist approaches within frameworks of analysis. Third, meta-theorizing, e.g. structuration theory, may also be included as a research strategy. It simply *opens* avenues for inquiry where several other theories *reduce* features that can be investigated. This means, for example, that a social constructivist approach would not seek to ignore or invalidate the rationalist search for 'member state preferences', but that it addresses the wider question of how state preferences have come to be socially constructed.

At the outset we argued that constructivist approaches are particularly well suited for the study of European integration. It will be clearer with a view to the study of polity formation as a major challenge for integration studies why we argue this case. Constructivism is of intrinsic value to the social sciences, but it ought to have a special place in the study of what is a process of long-term political and social change in Europe. Therefore, in studying a process in which the social ontologies are subject to change, research failing to problematize these ontologies has severe limitations. By contrast, the constructivist project explicitly raises questions about social ontologies and social institutions, directing research at the origin and reconstruction of identities, the impact of rules and norms, the role of language and of political discourses. Moving from this recognition to developing frameworks of analysis requires the identification of the elements of the process of polity formation, and an indication of the way in which constructivist approaches will help us to understand these. In doing so, we need to return to the generic aspects of constructivism established in the first part of the article.

Above we referred to various social ontologies (norms, institutions, practices, etc.) that concern constructivist research because they offer a plethora of phenomena to be researched. We argue that while these phenomena have been investigated by some scholars, they certainly have not been comprehensively studied. What has been lacking is a coherent framework that would bring together existing approaches and indicate the way ahead for further research. In the following, elements of such a framework will be outlined. In particular, we will look at theories designed to study the juridification and institutionalization of politics through rules and norms; the formation of identities and the construction of political communities; the role of language and discourse. With respect to each of these we will discuss existing work and seek to demonstrate the potential of future applications. These approaches, as elements of a constructivist research programme, facilitate the systematic study of European integration as polity formation. It is a strategy that promises to advance substantially our understanding of transformatory processes in Europe, and thus to achieve the aims we set out at the beginning.

RULES AND NORMS IN EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE

If integration is understood as 'integration through law', as it has been by the substantial community of EU law scholars for decades, rules and norms are of paramount significance. Without rules, and without compliance with these, the EU would not be what it is. Rules and norms in the EU are not just treaties, secondary legislation and the case law of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Beyond these we also need to consider the often unwritten administrative procedures of the EU policy process, as well as a multitude of common understandings, inter-institutional agreements and informal modes of behaviour which are reproduced every day in the political and administrative practice of the EU.

The study of the formal rules and legal norms of the integration process has been the reserve of legal scholars for most of the post-war period. Despite Weiler's pioneering work on the dynamic relationship between legal and political integration – what he termed the 'dual character of supranationalism' (Weiler 1986) – it has taken integration researchers some time to recognize the significance of rule-making in the EU. During the 1980s and 1990s there has been more interest in various aspects of legal regulation among political scientists, and there is now a growing body of literature on the 'juridification' of the EU (Bulmer 1997; Joerges and Neyer 1997a). Furthermore, studying the legal dynamics of integration has been the means of seeking to transcend the traditional divide between law and political science (Shaw and More 1995; Stone and Sandholtz 1997; Armstrong and Shaw 1998).

One way of bringing the study of rules and norms into a constructivist framework of analysis is the application of Giddens' structuration theory to European integration. Apart from the influence of this approach on IR theory, it has also been utilized in the study of European law (Snyder 1990). There is a need to come to grips with the nature of the European polity as an increasingly rule-bound arena for social interaction. The EU has developed institutional features beyond the original design and certainly beyond the purpose of managing economic interdependence – it is more than simply a 'successful intergovernmental regime' (Moravcsik 1993). As it stands, the EU is not exclusively based on the original set of political and legal organs, but has come to include shared norms, commonly accepted rules and decision-making procedures. As such, it is structured through a saturated regime of legal and institutional norms – the *acquis communautaire* (Wiener 1998b; Jørgensen 1999).

The dynamic interaction between institutional norms and political action is an aspect of the integration process that has made in-roads into both institutional and policy analysis of the EU (Aspinwall and Schneider 2000). With regard to the former, there has been the introduction of a constructivist or sociological variety of neo-institutionalism. The aim of these approaches has been to locate EU institutions at the interface between structural change and political agency rather than to study their formal role (Bulmer 1994; Pierson 1996). The discussion of the rules and norms of integration leads inevitably towards a wider debate about the 'constitutionalization' of Europe which has been of growing interest both to legal

scholars and political scientists (Curtin 1993; Dehousse 1995; Weiler 1995, 1997; Nentwich and Weale 1998; Shapiro and Stone 1994; Stein 1981; Christiansen and Jørgensen 1999). This process is closely linked with '"European" citizenship practice' (Wiener 1998a). The relationship between individuals and the emerging polity is an increasingly important focus of research, both in terms of the development of the institution of Union citizenship and in terms of re/constructing identities through the practices of, for example, socialization and symbolic politics.

POLITICAL COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE EURO-POLITY

This close association between the principles of 'citizenship' and 'nationality' in the domestic context leads us to interesting questions about identity, community and inclusion/exclusion that can be addressed through constructivist research. The concept of community played a key role in classic integration theory (Haas 1964; Deutsch *et al.* 1957). Contemporary constructivist research focuses on security communities (Adler and Barnett 1996) and on political identity in Europe (Neumann 1998; Neumann and Welsh 1991; Bakke 1995; Witte 1987; Smith 1993; Laffan 1996; Howe 1995). Despite these examples, it is difficult to claim that systematic efforts are under way to explore community-building processes in European integration. Constructivist research on identity formation exists in three categories. First, research into the nature of a potential 'European identity'; second, research into the reconstruction of national identities under the influence of the integration process; and, third, informed by the results of both the above, there is the question of the plurality of national identities and cultures, and the extent to which a European political identity or political culture can be founded upon such difference. Theories of identity formation are imported to the study of European integration. These approaches – fairly close to the reflectivist end of the semi-circle in Figure 3 – deliberate the likelihood of a non-ethnic, 'postnational' community of citizens, perhaps to stand alongside Shaw's conception of postnational constitutionalism (Shaw, in this volume). The argument that a non-homogenous 'community of Europeans' will form despite the existing diversity of national identities – a claim contested by others (Howe 1997) – demonstrates both the need and the challenges for further research into questions about identity in Europe. A corollary to such questions about the construction of a political community in the EU is research into Europe's international identity (Bretherton and Vogler 1999).

The construction of this 'Europe' has depended on the parallel construction of 'others' (variously located in the East, South, West or in Europe's past) against which a separate European identity is seen as being constructed, created or invented (Neumann and Welsh 1991; Ward 1997; Schmitz and Geserick 1996). This kind of discussion leads to the question of inclusion and exclusion (Neumann 1999) and to research about diverse national and temporal interpretations of what 'Europe' actually constitutes (Wæver 1990; Holm 1993; Jachtenfuchs *et al*. 1998). Indeed, the success of the European project might well depend on the distinctive interpretation each nation can extract from the discourse on 'Europe'.

DISCOURSES, COMMUNICATIVE ACTION AND THE ROLE OF IDEAS

If the study of identity formation is accepted as a key component of constructivist research, the role of language and of discourses becomes crucial. Treaties, directives and communications from and to the European institutions speak a specific and unique language which is often only understood by a limited circle of insiders. However, with the growing importance of EU policies in the 1990s, a lobbying community has produced an entire professional class that shares the language.

Language is also important when considering *Euro-speak*: the purpose-built vocabulary of terms to describe (and shape) the reality of the EU. Asymmetrical integration, opt-outs, flexible integration, the pillar structure of the Treaty, plans for a multi-speed Europe, the 'regatta approach' to enlargement are terms and concepts which have dominated the debate about integration (Schmitter 1991). While actors clash over the meaning of specific issues, the expansion of a unique vocabulary into increasingly common knowledge contributes to bind them together and assists the construction of a European political class. Understood in this way, the development of a particular language of integration occurs both in a broad sense (the European project) and in a narrow sense (within particular policy areas). Discourse on subsidiarity is a prominent example of a discourse which gives meaning and direction to the integration process (Neunreither 1993; Hueglin 1994; Sinnott 1994; Armstrong 1993; Smith 1993; Somsen 1995; Wallace, H. 2000). Discursive constructs such as the 'democratic deficit' or the 'partnership principle' in structural policy are other examples of the abundance of targets for future discourse analysis.

In general, language is operative in every aspect of the EU, and there are numerous starting points for studies of discourse. With their focus on the impact of language in processes of deliberation, bargaining and negotiation, Habermas's theory of communicative action as well as Wittgensteinian speech-act theory offer great potential for integration studies. So far, Habermas's theory has been brought into IR theory debates (Müller 1994, 2000; Risse 1999; Linklater 1998; 119–23) and its relevance for studies of diplomacy and negotiations in the EU has been suggested (Joerges and Neyer 1997a; Lose 2001). Given the specific institutional and social context for élite communication in the EU, the significance of such approaches for a constructivist programme is evident. While rationalists often dismiss 'merely symbolic' discourse, the theory of communicative action enables analysis of these otherwise ignored dimensions of policy-making. Discourse analysis therefore constitutes a fruitful avenue for constructivist research, and indeed there are already quite a few examples of this being employed in European integration studies (Diez 1998a, 1998b; Larsen 1997; Holm 1993; Rosamond, this volume).

Another arena for the constructivist analysis of European integration is the role of ideas (Jachtenfuchs 1995) and of epistemic communities (Haas 1992), which have been important areas for constructivist research elsewhere. In a broad sense, a starting point here is the study of the 'European idea' and the way in which this idea has contributed to the creation of novel forms of governance (Morgan 1980). Given the advanced state of European integration, there have also been applications in

more specialized areas of research. The field of monetary integration, in particular, has attracted research into the role of ideas (Marcussen 1998b; Verdun 1996). Such work has emphasized the significance of a common belief in neo-liberal economic and monetary policy for the consensus among decision-makers and central bankers in bringing about the economic and monetary union (EMU) project. Recognizing the importance of common beliefs and values leads to the recognition of episte-mic communities as a research agenda, resting on the importance of technical knowledge and scientific expertise for European governance (Joerges 1996), and demonstrating the way in which the role of ideas, knowledge and epistemic communities can be integrated in constructivist EU policy analysis (Radaelli 1995, Surel 2000).

POSITIONING CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES IN THIS VOLUME

The contributions to this volume are positioned on the semi-circle above the imaginary line linking the two extreme poles of rationalism and reflectivism (see Figures 3 and 4). While the exact positions are arguable, to be sure, the positioning that most authors have more or less explicitly carried out in the process of writing their contributions includes two steps: (1) a differentiation from the poles, and (2) the distinction of the author's own position among a larger field of constructivists.[6] The location on the semi-circle as presented in Figure 4 is none the less the product of what the editors have identified as crucial indicators for each contributor's approach. We briefly explain the respective positioning 'clockwise'.

   Jeffrey Checkel proposes to include the notion of 'learning' in seeking to go beyond rationalist assumptions that interests are given. To that end, he aims to explain variation in domestic norm changes in response to changes of supranational norms. The variation depends on domestic institutional contexts, as well as actors' capabilities for learning. Checkel endorses a combination of rational choice and
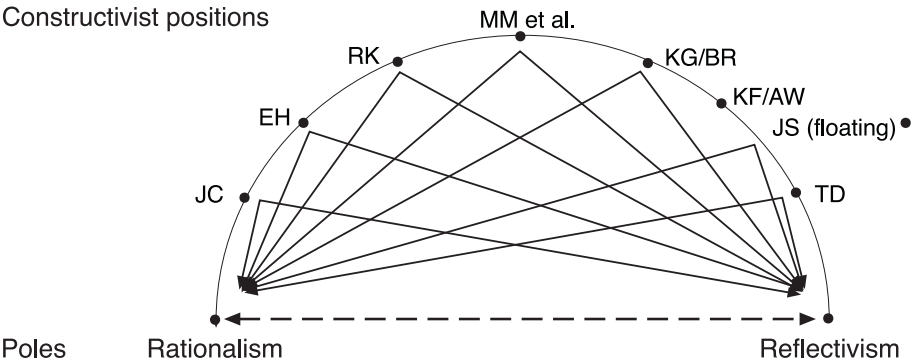

Figure 4 Positioning constructivists

sociological institutionalist approaches, arguing that sociological constructivists in particular, lack a proper account for agency. Ernst B. Haas compares the neo-functionalist theory of European integration (NF) to constructivism. He distinguishes among three different types of constructivism and subsequently makes a convincing argument for family resemblance between neofunctionalism and what he labels 'softly rational' constructivism. In reviewing these different types of constructivism, Haas expresses, however, strong reservations about the usefulness of hermeneutics and post-positivist approaches. Emphasizing the importance of shared ontological assumptions of NF with both, liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) and social constructivism he suggests, however, that NF parts company with LI regarding the epistemological dimension.

Rey Koslowski's contribution argues for a constructivist re-interpretation of the EU's development in terms of federal theory. His chapter demonstrates that, on the basis of such a re-interpretation of existing constitutional rules and norms, the federal elements of the Euro-polity can be identified. Martin Marcussen *et al.* argue that interests, identity and behaviour are dependent on norms. They seek to explain and predict behaviour based on the reconstruction of 'identity-options'. They thus agree with the structural approach of sociological constructivism. However, they add the importance of language for the emergence and change of identity-options in different national contexts. Ben Rosamond and Kenneth Glarbo are both concerned with the modes and effects of discursive constructions in EU policy-making. Rosamond analyses the construction of a discourse about 'globalization'. He argues that it is the social construct of the discourse 'globalization' rather than its material manifestations which drives the agenda of EU policy-making and structures subsequent political action. Glarbo argues for a phenomenologically informed position which is sociological interactionism. His contribution thus has a strong leaning towards interpretative frameworks of analysis including, for example, the element of intersubjective understanding. However, he also shares with the rationalists the ambition for first-order theorizing and parsimonious explanations that have been described by Jepperson *et al.* (1996) as 'normal science' procedures.

The Fierke and Wiener contribution makes a clear distinction from the exclusive reference to material capabilities of actors that is key to rationalist approaches, and suggests that instead, social capabilities play a key role in explaining decisions about the enlargement of international institutions. The reference to the ontology of speech-acts as a political practice which determines institutional identity distinguishes the approach of this chapter from the 'reflective' pole. The preference of a focus on speech-acts as part of a process of mutual constitution over, say, the process of learning, sets the specific position among constructivist positions.

The one contribution from a lawyer's perspective provides no clear positioning. While Jo Shaw avoids explicit reference to either the theoretical positions on the poles or to theorizing among constructivists, the chapter presents a normative position which is probably best characterized as constructive idealism, none the less. We therefore locate the contribution not on the circle, but 'floating by'

(possibly in search for constructivist tools on offer on the circle). Finally, Thomas Diez's chapter clearly endorses an interpretative epistemology. He begins with the assumption that discourse lies at the centre of constructing the world. Thus, actors are important insofar as they contribute to the discourse by the act of 'speaking'; discourse structures subsequent action. Diez's approach is epistemologically different from sociological constructivist positions since he emphasizes understanding (as opposed to explaining).

Andrew Moravcsik's and Steve Smith's respective chapters offer critical comments on this volume's chapters from two pole positions of 'rationalism' and 'reflectivism', respectively. Smith argues that it will prove difficult for constructivism to keep an independent position. He takes issue with the middle-ground argument offered by this volume, arguing that, eventually the epistemological divide will take its toll. Moravcsik, in turn, argues that constructivists do not live up to their own aims and ambitions, that is, they do not provide sufficient proof of their hypotheses. According to Moravcsik, constructivists remain too much at the level of meta-theoretical analysis, presenting unfalsifiable claims and not delivering what is to be expected from their theoretical claims, i.e. mid-range substantive theories that would be testable *vis-à-vis* competing theories. Both these critiques are likely to provoke responses from constructivists and hence stimulate further the debate about the merits of social constructivism.

This is demonstrated by Thomas Risse and Antje Wiener who, in their response to the comments by Moravcsik and Smith, reiterate the key aspects of social constructivist approaches as a theoretical perspective on European integration. They stress constructivists' preference for ontology over epistemology, and, subsequently, the key role of intersubjectivity and the impact of the social on decision-making processes. They point out that this ontological focus ultimately allows constructivists to engage in conversations which lead to establishing the middle ground for theorizing European integration, as a process that does not exclude conversations with the poles.

CONCLUSION

In this introduction we have put forward an argument for enlarging the theoretical toolbox of European integration studies. We envisage a 'constructivist turn' in the study of European integration. While meta-theoretical thinking has an impact on theorizing, it has been largely absent from the study of European integration. Constructivism, which has an important place in the social sciences, and which has demonstrated its value in IR, has yet to make as big an impact on European integration theorizing – a state of affairs all the more surprising in view of the traditionally strong link between IR debates and integration theory.

However, this introduction has also shown that many assumptions derived from constructivism are already contained in a number of important contributions to European integration research. It suggests that more are to follow, once a constructivist research programme is established. Beyond the examples provided,