The European Union and Member States: analysing two arenas over time

Our puzzles: traditional approaches and beyond

_Fifteen into one?_ takes up traditional approaches to political science. Since Aristotle it has been considered useful to compare constitutional and institutional dimensions of polities and not least to discuss ‘optimal’ models of policy-making. In view of the European Union’s multi-level and multi-actor polity, we add to a vast literature by highlighting the complex procedural and institutional set-up of nation states preparing and implementing decisions made by the institutions of the European Community (EC).

Unlike volumes on the general structure and culture of European political systems, this volume focuses on _reactions and adaptations to a challenge_ which is common to all — i.e. the policy-cycle of the Union. We thus intend to explore structural commonalities and differences with a common point of reference. Fifteen traditional systems and their variations may be better explained when the comparison is based on the fact that they are reacting to the same challenge. In looking at the emerging and evolving realities of the European polity we are interested in how European institutions and Member States (re-)act and interact in a new institutional and procedural set-up. Thus, our major puzzle is: how do governmental and non-governmental actors in different national settings — involving different national traditions — adapt to common challenges, constraints and opportunities for which they are mainly themselves responsible?

Given the features and the dynamics of the evolution of the EU system, we expect to find generally observable trends in the ways that national systems meet the demands of the Union. How do actors perform when they become objects and subjects of the same interaction structure?

_Fifteen into one?_ aims to offer a mixture of conventional and specific analyses and insights for different groups of readers. For scholars of international relations, European integration and comparative politics, these
evolutions are of specific interest: they involve looking at both the national level, as in comparative studies, and at the European level, as in integration-related approaches.

We thus try to identify from our comparative research some general trends that can be drawn from our analysis of the Member States. These expectations are based on the assumption that, in response to para-constitutional changes – the SEA, the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties – national institutions and actors will have altered their roles, rules and interaction patterns during the period of research. Are we witnessing – owing to the similar pressure for adaptation in each Member State – a trend towards a common and unique model, or rather towards the reinforcement of existing divergences? Will national institutions converge towards one multi-level EU system or will national variations remain? Are the institutions resistant to change or are they subject to a trend of ‘Europeanisation’? Does a consideration of national institutions enable us to draw some final conclusions on the future of the Member States – that is, will the European choir sing with one voice or will there still be fifteen distinct sounds in future?

The ‘One’: evolution into what?

Fifteen into one? goes beyond a strictly comparative approach of academic curiosity. It deals with the issue of how traditional institutions of the West European nation states are shaped by becoming part of one new and different polity. This issue is of growing relevance as frequent institutional and procedural revisions and amendments of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) have provided the Union’s members with additional rights and obligations. With respect to their history, West European states have – in the last half of the twentieth century – created a new and particular kind of political system, which offers opportunities and incentives for making public policies beyond the borders of individual countries.

We follow the conventional wisdom that in studying the EU polity it is also necessary to look at the national – constitutive – parts of the EU system. Since the early days of studying the integration process it became obvious that the political system of the Member States could not be treated as a ‘black box’, which would be irrelevant for the Brussels arena. As a logical consequence academics and practitioners have chosen to analyse how national governments, parliaments and interest groups react on the national level.

Major areas of decision-making have shifted partly or mainly from the state arenas to the EU ‘space’ in recent years. Many key issues – of utmost political sensitivity – have become part of the subject matter of the European Union. Even if one discounts how the features of ‘governance’ in the emerging EU political system have been analytically appraised by academic scholars, one fact has become obvious: the European integra-
tion process has had a significant impact on the characteristics of national political systems. This is not merely because the individual Member States have to implement Community legislation, but also – and even more importantly – because national institutions are increasingly involved in preparing and making binding decisions. Within the individual Member States there is an ongoing reaction to the challenges of the evolving EU system. National institutions have made substantial efforts to cope with the self-made and challenging devices of the European Union. Some indicators highlight the validity of the impact of the European Union for the national political systems.

Within the Union, institutions take decisions which are binding on the fifteen Member States and their citizens. The dynamics of recent decades are considerable: in amending the original treaty via the SEA (1987), the Maastricht (1993) and Nice (2001) versions of the EU Treaty, Member States – acting as ‘masters of the treaties’ – have enlarged the scope of policy fields for common activities. They have added new articles which define specific competencies and procedures (from 86 in the EEC treaty of 1957 to 254 in the EU Nice Treaty of 2001) and have revised again and again the institutional and procedural set-up. The overall output of their activity – taking various forms from regulations and directives towards legislative programme decisions and non-binding recommendations – has evolved from 1952 to 1998 towards a total of 52,799 legal acts in December 1998. Many of these decisions apply to relatively short time periods or are regularly replaced by new legislation. If we focus on the total amount of ‘legislation in force’ – the ‘acquis communautaire’ with which the Member States must comply and which applicant countries have to adopt – we observe a smaller number of legal acts, but even the acquis communautaire more than doubled from 4,566 legal acts in 1983 to 9,767 in 1998 (Figure 1.1).

In other words, the treaties and their policy provisions have been extensively exploited by the Member States acting jointly within the Council of Ministers and with the European Commission and – to a growing extent – together with the European Parliament (EP).

The ‘Fifteen’: ‘Europeanisation’ as a key feature of mutual reinforcement

The Union is considered to have made a marked difference to its constituent units. In this way, the ‘masters of the treaties’ challenge their other role as ‘masters of their own constitution’. Although Member States have been the architects of the emerging EU system, the challenges for their own traditional polity were and are considerable. Not only has the scope and intensity of EU decision-making increased, but also its complexity. It is thus not surprising that national actors of several kinds and levels have pursued different strategies to retain or even increase their say – at both the European and the national or regional level. This volume
points to a considerable variety in these approaches. Through various loops of push–pull dynamics between the European and the national levels, the struggle for a voice has even increased the institutional and procedural differentiation in the national as in the European arenas. Consequently, we anticipate that we shall witness a further stage in the evolution of the West European state.

Comparative studies of the fifteen political systems of EU Member States can thus no longer remain separate from the emerging ‘One’ – i.e. the evolution of the Union. The exclusion of the European dimension from research into the major trends of national systems will increasingly lead to distorted results.

_Fifteen into one_? thus discusses the ‘into’ – i.e. the actual process of integration and what we call ‘Europeanisation’. Europeanisation of national actors and procedures is measured first by a shift of attention and participation. With regard to its processual character, ‘Europeanisation’ means ‘the incremental process of reorienting the shape of politics to the degree that EC/EU political and economic dynamics become integral parts of the organisational logic of national politics and policy-making’. At one extreme, ‘Europeanisation’ could lead to a full synchronisation of national politics with EC/EU imperatives. National institutions would turn into strong multi-level players using their access and influence in one arena for improving their role in others. Actors would profit from a _mutually reinforcing virtuous circle_, upgrading or at least retaining the opportunities to have a say in ‘their’ European business.
In order to analyse these tendencies we have developed a typology which differentiates between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ adapters at both the national and the ‘Brussels’ level. Developing this approach, the chapters on the Member States in Part II examine the governmental and non-governmental structures of institutional adaptation. How, and to what extent, have these actors shifted their attention to ‘Brussels’?

Given that time is a scarce resource for political actors, the creation, and especially the use, of institutions and procedures which provide linkage to the EU machinery should be seen as relevant. But relevant for what? What we cannot offer, with the modest means we have available, is a socio-psychological analysis of the attitudes and belief systems of the individuals involved. We assume that they learn more about Brussels and their partners in Europe – an important part of some kind of community-building, but we must be careful about our conclusions – in terms both of the evaluation of the common endeavour and of the behaviour of the actors involved. Nevertheless, the chapters on the Member States in Part II indicate that those elites involved in the EU policy-cycle seem to develop some kind of positive ‘orientation’ towards European governance; they certainly invest a considerable amount of their time in dealing with the Brussels–Strasbourg arena.

Linking two arenas
In analysing this process we focus on two research areas – the European and the national – and compare evolutions on the European level with those in the national setting. In this regard, several developments point to a kind of ‘parallel’ and simultaneous evolution owing to the creation and use of opportunity structures at the EU level. The evolution of the Council and of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and its related working groups went hand in hand with the creation of ‘European’ departments in more and more ministries of the Member States. Similarly, new demands for joint problem-solving induced institutional differentiation in the Commission (new Directorates General), the Council (new Council formations) and in the Member States (new services within existing ministries). To a certain extent direct elections to the EP and the successive allocation of powers to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have generated the institutionalisation of European Affairs Committees in the parliaments of the Member States. Early attempts at regional and structural policies induced institutionalisation processes at both the European and the national as well as the regional levels. Institutional adaptations to a changed or changing environment are reactions to demand ‘pulls’ from the Brussels arena, which are by themselves the results of the ‘push’ of actors from Member States. In other words, multi-level governance creates a ‘loop’ of adaptation.
‘Fifteen’ and the ‘One’: a new kind of relationship?

Fifteen into one? aims to provoke a debate on what the evolution of the state in Western Europe will look like. Will the EU bodies dilute and replace national institutions which are the product of centuries-old evolutions and revolutions? Or will the latter dominate the Union without being seriously affected by the Brussels arena in their day-to-day activities? Thus as shapers which are not shaped by themselves, the ‘Fifteen’ would remain unaffected by a rather less important or even marginalised ‘One’. Or have the ‘masters of the treaties’ created additional and essential incentives to alter their own politico-administrative set-up in order to strengthen their problem-solving capacity? Several actors would then have to mobilise energy and attention in order to play a game in an arena which offers more effective instruments for solving problems. For this purpose they have to gain additional material knowledge, procedural skills and political sensitivity. National actors have to enlarge their channels for action and their style of interaction. Existing machineries will at the same time increase their functional differentiation and their co-operation mechanisms. The ‘One’ would become a major force for the evolution of the ‘Fifteen’. Thus, the very process of European integration raises the even more demanding issue of linking trends on both arenas in a multi-level analysis.19 Fifteen into one? is thus more than a comparative study: it raises the issue of how a linkage between several levels of government can be established within a novel mode of governance beyond the nation state.

Such an issue is not only of academic interest. If the constituent cornerstones of the EU system – the ‘Fifteen’ and the ‘One’ – become more heterogeneous, the structures, processes and networks which link the different branches and layers of governance will become even more complex for the policy-makers as well as for the citizenry.

Which direction? Expectations from theories

To orient our analysis we look at a set of theory-led expectations about the evolution, the patterns and their impact on Member States and their structural frameworks for the EC/EU policy-cycle.20 The ‘acquis académique’ on European integration delivers an ever-increasing variety in the concepts and terms used for identifying major characteristics of the EC/EU. It seems that Donald Puchala’s elephant is apparently a beast with more and more parts which are quite often looked upon separately. But there seems to be a broad consensus that although the elephant is slow-moving, he is still far from moribund.

One can distinguish between approaches which concern the conceptualisation of the EU’s organisational nature, the actual process of integration, and specific policies, institutions and decision-making networks. Among the most prominent concepts include those referring to...
the Union as a ‘quasi-state’, a ‘regulatory state’, or a ‘supranational federation’. Perhaps highest on the current political science list are the conceptual models of multi-level, supranational, network (without government), ‘polycratic’ or multi-tiered governance. Other terms identify core features, such as ‘layered intergovernmentalism’, ‘deliberative supranationalism’ and ‘multi-level constitutionalism’ or concentrate on the Union’s political and socio-economic processes following the Treaty of Maastricht.

This range of characterisations demonstrates the difficulties in applying the traditional categories of territorial ‘state’ and ‘international organisation’. However, in spite of the manifold approaches which refer to governance in the Union as ‘sui generis’, there is one common feature which almost all scholars of European integration studies share: unlike other international organisations, the EC/EU system takes binding decisions which affect the way of life of its citizenry. Legal acts – regulations, directives, decisions, etc. – and the evolution of the actors involved in the production of commonly defined measures, are thus major characteristics of the EC/EU construction. They can therefore be used as significant indicators for the evolution of the political system which is permitted to authoritatively allocate values. Given that we identify this feature almost everywhere within the ruling paradigms, we can link these characteristics with traditional elements of political science and in particular the political system approach.

Whatever the language used, political scientists and lawyers classify the EC/EU as a system for joint decision-making in which actors from two or more levels of governance interact in order to solve common (and commonly identified) problems. Whereas the areas of co-operation and integration were originally restricted to the coal and steel industry and its related labour markets, the European Union of the third millennium pertains to a much wider scope of potential action: nearly every field of traditional state activity can become subject to policy-making beyond the nation state. The intensive research on operating networks, single institutions and policy fields as well as on multi-level governance has contributed considerably to our understanding of the post-Maastricht system. But what kind of systemic dynamics can we observe in an overall view over the last fifty years?

(Neo-)functional and (neo-)federal expectations: downgrading and superseding national actors

From the well-known neo-functional or neo-federal lines of argument one could expect a linear or even exponential growth in the making of a sui generis European polity, i.e. a rather smooth process upwards towards some kind of a federal union. In this case, the very nature of integration follows the stimulating definition, which describes ‘the process whereby
political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. The end result of a process of political integration is expected to lead to a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones.37 The main feature of integration here is the concept of functional, institutional and procedural spillover: a process which refers 'to a situation in which a given action, related to a specific goal, creates a situation which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition and need for more action, and so forth'.38 Consequently, spillover gradually involves ‘more and more people, call[s] for more and more inter-bureaucratic contact and consultation, thereby creating their own logic in favour of later decisions, meeting, in a pro-community direction, the new problems which grow out of the earlier compromises’.39

Neo-functionalism would thus predict that actors tend to expand the scope of mutual commitment and intensify their commitment to the original sector(s).40 In the view of this approach, the revisions of the European treaties are the legally sanctioned products of spillover processes which provide the EU institutions with more exclusive powers for shaping outputs which bind the Member States. The latter accept their roles as part of a process the final outcome of which is not fixed. The ‘finalité’ is not officially declared. Neo-functional spillover or Hallstein’s ‘Sachlogik’41 within policy fields and from one policy area into another would lead to a widening of the functional scope of EC/EU law – i.e. to an increasing number of treaty provisions for a growing number of policy fields. The EC/EU-related structures and procedures of Member States would be oriented to an emerging supranational bureaucracy.42 The latter would be expected to act as a ‘political promoter’ which formulates far-reaching policy agendas, articulates ideals and brokers strategies for the deepening of the integration process. The influence of national actors would wither away.

According to federalist thinking, national actors’ struggle for access, voice and veto powers, e.g. for an effective control of the Brussels arena, has not been, is not and will not become, successful.43 Instead, Member States’ institutions and actors will become increasingly marginalised and substituted by EC/EU bodies. Such Member State institutions will be transformed from arenas for national actors into autonomous bodies replacing national influence. Each step of treaty (constitution)-building would increase the role of supranational institutions and decrease the veto powers of Member States. The behavioural pattern of the Council of Ministers would be dominated by the use of articles which allow for qualified majority voting (QMV). Where the treaty permits strong parliamentary involvement, co-decision would replace other weaker procedures
for parliamentary participation. Those EU-related bodies which bring the national actors together (Council, COREPER and its related working groups) would be seen as primarily serving parochial national interests and as a limited part of a proper federal system which alone could guarantee efficient, effective and legitimate European policies. Concomitantly, the attempts of national administrations to lock into the EC/EU system of a supranational governance evolving towards a real government are rejected as a strategy against the real will of the European people (demos) and the desirable path to a federal union.44 In this view the EP is a key institution of the constitutional set-up of the (future) EU government. Federalism assumes a legitimate supranational order in which the EP formulates far-reaching policy agendas, articulates ideals and brokers strategies for the deepening of the integration process. As weak adapters, the national actors – governments, administrations and their EC/EU-related agencies – would be downgraded to secondary actors.

(Neo-)realist assumptions: strengthening or rescuing the nation state
In contrast to this approach (neo-)realist thinking conceives the sovereign nation state as the authoritative actor in cross-border interaction.45 Although various intrastate actors participate in the making of political decisions, the nation state is identified as a unified defender of clearly defined interests and preferences.46 Following neo-realist assumptions, the Union and its institutional set-up are products of a general strategy of national governments and their administrations to gain and to keep influence vis-à-vis other countries.47 ‘The fundamental goal of states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities.’48 Within the framework of the Union, the principal task of Member States is to retain their supremacy as ‘masters of the Treaties’.49 National actors defend and shape an institutional balance favouring the Council and – to a growing extent – the European Council. The Council’s infrastructure is then considered as an addition to national institutions sharing the control of the Commission’s activities and thus preventing an evolution towards an unrestrained supranational bureaucracy: ‘The influence of supranational actors is generally marginal, limited to situations where they have strong domestic allies.’50 The style of European law-making is characterised by conflict between Member States in which zero-sum games predominate. Accordingly, the behavioural pattern of actors in the Council of Ministers would be characterised by unanimous decision-making and distributive – ‘quid-pro-quo’ – bargaining.

Strictly Realist expectations for post-‘Maastricht’ developments stress that the 1989 ‘geopolitical revolution’ and the subsequent radical transformation of the international system makes West European integration look like a child of the Cold War period.51 From this perspective the Maastricht Treaty was already outdated at the time of its signature.
Neo-realists, however, could interpret ‘Maastricht’ as the product of a new ‘integrative balancing’ \(^52\) between Member States. The provisions of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) would reconstitute the ultimate power of Member States: more veto rights for Member States, a benign neglect of the EP and reduced influence for the European Commission. The use of ‘Maastricht’ and its new or revised provisions – however supranational they might look – will follow an intergovernmental regime of domination by national governments. With regard to the EP, Member States would rather try to exclude MEPs than allow the involvement of a new set of actors who are difficult to control. Instead, neo-realism would expect national parliaments to provide the necessary means for democratic scrutiny of EU business. National administrations would be regarded as essential in maintaining the ‘institutional balance’ and overall legitimacy in the Union. The interaction style between the two levels of a co-operative governance would follow a model of diplomatic administration. Civil servants – usually seconded from foreign ministries and prime ministerial departments – would prevent any attempts among supranational actors to gain influence. Thus national administrations remain the key protagonists, strengthening or at least ‘rescuing the nation state’. \(^53\) ‘The European Commission and the EP would remain ‘weak’ European actors.

Unlike classic realism, the liberal intergovernmentalist variant of neo-realism analyses the construction of national preference-building. ‘National interests are . . . neither invariant nor unimportant, but emerge through domestic political conflict as societal groups compete for political influence, national and transnational coalitions form . . . new political influence, national and transnational coalitions form, and new policy alternatives are recognised by governments.’ \(^54\) The analysis of the configuration of national interests therefore includes a consideration of how groups of actors beyond the core of governments and administrations steer the definition or – as regards public opinion – the background of interests and preferences: ‘Groups articulate preferences; governments aggregate them.’ \(^55\) Liberal intergovernmentalism therefore shares the (neo-)realist assumption of the centrality of Member States’ actors within the EC/EU and it explicitly ‘denies the historical and path dependent quality of integration’, \(^56\) which neo-functionalism stresses as the rationale behind the very process of ‘supranational governance’ \(^57\) in the Union. In following these assumptions, few national institutions would become ‘strong’ multi-level players, most would simply have to play the role of strong national actors.

**Views of governance approaches: polycentric, non-hierarchical multi-level co-ordination**

In view of the major approaches within the modern (i.e. post-1989) school of governance, the institutional and procedural changes in the EU treaties
should be analysed as one particular element of rather minor relevance within the complex multi-level game of the Union. The EU polity is seen as a ‘post-sovereign, polycentric, incongruent’ arrangement of authority which supersedes the limits of the nation state. Assuming a non-hierarchical decision-making process, the EU does matter but only as one realm of collective decision-making and implementation. In other words, ‘policymaking in the Community is at its heart a multilateral inter-bureaucratic negotiation marathon’. Given that formal and informal networks among different groups of actors are the decisive arenas for decision-making, formal rules are generally seen as a less important factor.

The ‘governance-inspired’ pendulum thesis then assumes some kind of cyclical up and down between ‘fusion and diffusion’. This ‘pattern of the pendulum varies over time and across issues, responding to little endogenous and exogenous factors, and including shifts between dynamics and static periods or arenas of co-operation’. With ‘Maastricht’ as a more permanent fixture, this to-ing and fro-ing leads to an ‘unstable equilibrium’ where trends of ‘Europeanisation’ and ‘re-nationalisation’ come into close competition. In clear contrast to neo-realism and intergovernmentalism, some contributions of multi-level governance would conceive the EP as an active player in the game. ‘Irrespective of whether the EP provides legitimacy of European executive decisions, it certainly interferes with the negotiating process.’ It can, and sometimes does, overturn the results of negotiation in and around the Commission and the Council. ‘Maastricht’ would not however constitute a major structural change for the daily governance of the Union. Even if the EP is seen as ‘perhaps the largest net beneficiary of the institutional changes in the TEU’, multi-level governance would not view the EP as a key player in the EU arena.

From the perspective of this school of thought, Member States are not seen as unified actors. Rather, they are viewed as arenas of collective decision/preparation and implementation, thus indicating a new stage for both administrations and for the state. European governance therefore contributes to a ‘decrease in the unilateral steering by government, and hence an increase in the self-governance of networks’. National actors follow a plurality of different adaptation strategies and so we would expect to see weak and strong multi-level players. In any case the monopoly of the state in steering this process would wane. Accordingly, we would expect an ‘erosion’ of the traditional politico-administrative systems of nation states and a shift of the EU towards a new ‘middle ages’ of overlapping complex authority structures and divided loyalty configurations. We would then discover a ‘post-modern state’ in a ‘post-national constellation’. Eventually, national administrations might need to rearrange their relationship with both the Union and the national core channels for policy-making.
The fusion view: Europeanisation and communitarisation

The fusion theory goes beyond the analysis of integration at a given (set of) time(s) and tries to offer tools for understanding the dynamics of the EU system over time. It regards EU institutions and procedures as core channels and instruments by which national governments and administrations, as well as other public and private actors, increasingly pool and share public resources from several levels to attain commonly identified goals. Institutional and procedural growth and differentiation – starting from the ECSC – signals and reflects a growing participation of several actors from different levels, which is sometimes overshadowed by cyclical ups and downs in the political and public mood. However, each ‘up’ leads to a ratchet effect by which the level of activities in the valley of day-to-day politics will have moved to a higher plateau of a supranational communitarisation. The major feature of this process is a transfer and a ‘fusion’ of public instruments from several state levels linked with the respective ‘Europeanisation’ of national actors and institutions. The steps of treaty-building are typical products of the attempt by the ‘masters of the treaties’ to improve their capacity for effective problem-solving and, at the same time, for retaining and even improving their national ‘voice’. The result is a new degree of institutional and procedural complexity which is documented in the treaties. From this view the legal output would be expected to increase; the EP would become a real ‘co-legislator’, and the speed of decision-making would depend on procedural frameworks, national and cross-national interest formation as well as on external pressure.

On the national level the fusion thesis suggests a significant trend towards ‘Europeanisation’. EU policy-making thus triggers institutional adaptation in the Member States and alters domestic rules and the inter-institutional distribution of the means for effective participation in European governance. National and regional actors are socialised into the EU legislative process, and continue to adapt to the procedures. Thus, in this view, institutions from both arenas would become strong multi-level players, able and willing to pursue an ongoing positive-sum game.

Grasping the ‘One’ and the ‘Fifteen’: on method and approach

In a historic retro-perspective, as well as in terms of shaping the future of Europe, the subject of our research is both rather unique and yet also ‘in the making’. We therefore face a dual methodological challenge: that of analysing a rather unfamiliar polity which at the same time has not remained static but is undergoing considerable change. Unless we focus on the process, we risk missing some basic features of the dynamics of European integration. Static analyses and evaluations might be outdated by the time of their publication.
The quantitative exploration of the ‘One’

Our approach is to analyse expectations of how national actors have behaved in EU governance after ‘Maastricht’. The method applied is deduced from our reading of historical neo-institutionalist theory. We thus use a ‘macro-political’ perspective within a systematic institutional framework that transcends policy fields and permits an analysis of the Union’s politico-administrative system and its procedural features over time. In this first step we focus on the evolution of the para-constitutional and institutional set up and of the de facto use of legal and procedural instruments at the disposal of Member States and EU institutions. We look at the essential features for understanding the actual process of EC/EU integration and co-operation as well as at the different devices used to shape the ‘legal’ constitution of the Union. Accordingly, we proceed to analyse the effective use of structures for joint problem-solving by the key actors concerned. We try to give answers to the question whether para-constitutional revisions, such as Treaty amendments, matter and how they matter for the set-up and evolution of policy-making structures. Finally, we use the results to readdress the question of whether integration-related approaches provide evidence to support some of the theoretical assumptions elaborated by the academic community.

For the purpose of this volume these trends are taken as independent variables. In Part II, we look at how national institutions and intermediary actors (re-)act to the constraints and challenges from the EC/EU level.

Taking issues seriously: considering the fifteen ‘national appendages’ of the moving ‘beast’

Our analysis focuses on the overall relevance of the EU evolution for each national system. The central question which arises is: does, and in particular how does, the Union matter for the national systems in general? After a brief overview of the historical path of the respective country into the European integration process, each chapter in Part II refers to the basic attitudes towards, and concepts of, European integration in the Member State, and also considers parties, interest groups and public opinion, which potentially play important parts in the formation of a European polity. In this context, special attention is given to the development of public opinion. Apart from (neo-)functionalist approaches – which tend to stress only the role of elites – we must also take into account the role of the citizenry in European affairs because ‘public opinion applies not just to formal processes of regional integration or specifically to the development of the European Community but applies right along the continuum of internationalised governance’. What is the attitude of the general public in the national systems towards the European Union? How is this orientation expressed? Has the mindset changed over the years?
The analysis leads to the question of whether there are substantial differences between individual Member States and how these background variables might affect the politico-administrative set-up. Thus, we considered it essential to link fundamental patterns of Member States’ positions on the European Union with the efforts of governments, parliaments, administrations, regions and courts to adapt to European integration. This issue is highly salient: how do Eurosceptic states fare in the multi-level game?

Closely linked to the issue of public opinion is the analysis of political parties and party systems. In connecting the state with society and interest groups, parties act either as intermediary structures, which express society’s interests and needs, or as a ‘linkage between institutions and constituencies within the Polity’. Parties represent, aggregate, articulate and adapt conflicts, acting on the basis of social cleavages. With regard to West European societies, these cleavages are subject to ongoing change. Thus, another requirement is to show how far the European integration process has affected parties and party systems. Has European integration led to ideological changes at the national party level or is the traditional set of cleavages complemented by a European cleavage – leading to a system of anti- and pro-integrationist parties?

Interest groups provide another link between state and society. How do such groups react to the European integration process? How do they formulate concepts and strategies with regard to secondary EU legislation? Are they still orientated towards the national level or do they devote more attention to European issues?

If parties and other intermediary actors shape the ‘background’ of interests and preferences we also need to look at specific national priorities with regard to European integration. Given the socio-economic heterogeneity of and the geographical distance between Member States, one could expect different governmental interests with regard to European integration policy projects. Thus, we also look at the questions: since ‘Maastricht’, and in comparison to the pre-Maastricht era, what are the main policy areas of the Member States? Which European topics are discussed in national debates? Is there any evidence to suggest that major political events or national conflicts – such as national elections, changes in government, etc. – produce important changes in the tone or style of EU policy-making at the national level?

**National adaptation: structures and procedures for European policy-making**

A second – and, for us, highly salient – set of questions concerning the Member State level relates to the national structures and decision-making processes in relation the European Union and its institutional framework. The fifteen chapters on the Member States in Part II explore the roles and
analysing the European union and Member States

behaviour of institutions in the national policy-cycle, i.e. from the perspective of the national – and, where relevant, from the regional – capitals. The focus will be on the extent and intensity of participation by national institutions in the process of preparing, making, implementing and controlling EC/EU-generated decisions. Our central question is: to what extent are national institutions involved in the policy-cycle of the European Union? We look both at the Member States and how they interact with Community bodies. Special attention is given to the impact of the (Maastricht) Treaty on the European Union. Did ‘Maastricht’ matter for the single Member States, at least those twelve signatory states of the EU treaty? What constitutional, institutional and procedural changes have taken place since ‘Maastricht’? How relevant are the EC/EU oriented procedures as well as the institutional and administrative set-ups for the Member States and for their constituencies? What highlights – in quantitative as well as in qualitative terms – can we observe with regard to what is new or what seems to be strange in individual Member States? Has the Maastricht Treaty had any major impacts, such as leading to the establishment of new administrative units and co-ordinating bodies?

In this second step, opening up the ‘black box’ of the EU-related policy-cycle involves analysing the patterns of interaction between governments, parliaments, administrations, regional entities, constitutional courts and other actors, while bearing in mind how allies and competitors perform in the political space. The chapters in Part II describe who is involved at each stage of the policy-cycle.

We thus look into the manner in which the ‘established’ members shaped their institutions and procedures in the light of the major constitutional amendments and revisions of the (Maastricht) Treaty. As for the Member States that joined as part of the 1995 enlargement (Austria, Finland and Sweden), the authors analyse both the institutional–procedural structures and the adaptation and transformation processes.

The investigations in Part II also refer to the co-operation and interaction of national bodies with the European institutions in the Brussels sphere. We analyse how national institutions, especially governments or administrations, deal with European affairs. In this regard, the involvement of national parliaments in European affairs and the subsequent changes affecting the procedures of national parliaments is also examined. How do national parliaments deal with European affairs, particularly since ‘Maastricht’? Which methods of parliamentary participation have been used? With regard to regional actors the authors studied which channels of information and policy co-ordination have been set up by regional institutions. Finally, we take a look at the constitutional complaints and judgements of national (constitutional) courts and their interpretations.

We want to know if and how some well-known specifics of some
member countries survived the 1990s. Did the Danish parliament secure its gatekeeper role? What is the updated record of the renewed SGCI, which gained the reputation of representing an efficient, centralised system in France? How much success have the German Länder really achieved in the march towards Brussels and Bonn/Berlin? Which formula of national participation in the EC/EU policy process have the Swedish or the Austrian systems adhered to?

The search for best practices: what lessons can be learned?
One intriguing issue frequently present in political and academic debates is the question of the ‘best practice’ of adaptation to the EC/EU structures. Comparing the structures and processes in the fifteen Member States, we examine the national institutions in terms of a comparative performance test. Based on our findings, the foremost question of Part II is how well the individual Member States have adapted. Can we identify Member States which look more efficient than others? Why do some states succeed and others fail to reach their goals? Have the national institutions undertaken serious innovations? Thus, do the common challenges of handling the Brussels set-up lead national systems to adopt similar methods of organising the essential constitutional and institutional dimensions of their polity? Or do the reactions to these challenges lead to a strengthening of national approaches so that the traditional specifics of Member States turn out to be more relevant than the similarities?

For both the next round of newcomers to the Union and for the founding members we take up Aristotle’s vocation of going beyond description and analysis towards discussing improvements. If we focus on the multiple ways in which Member States have developed their systems, can we identify an optimal model which would serve as a reference point, or do we need to be more modest?

This enquiry refers to the debate about whether certain actors and – more importantly – whether certain Member States are more able than others to attain their goals or to cope with the challenges coming from the EU level. Is there a model of the most competitive Member State or institutional actor which might therefore serve as a point of reference for other members and for the institutional and procedural designs of the newcomers? Have institutional features such as the role of the Danish parliament, the UK cabinet system or the strategies of the German Länder served as models for other Member States? Remarks about the ‘unfair’ advantages of some partners are not unknown in Community circles. The Council’s internal debates about necessary reforms to streamline the co-ordination among its various formats and subordinated bodies lead directly to the question about which national model(s) of EC/EU-related policy co-ordination would fit(s) into an arena of twenty or more participants?

Patterns of adaptation might also be identified in terms of certain basic
models: *Fifteen into one* develops a typology of different ways in which national actors (re)act within and adapt to European integration. Will such an adaptation be asymmetrical? Will the point of convergence be dominated by specific structures of one Member State or a group of Member States?

The ‘goodness of fit’ category considers positions expressed by academics and political actors with regard to each Member State, thus permitting each author a – necessarily subjective – analysis concerning the ‘performance’ of his or her Member State.

**Methodological risks**

The methods used in this volume might be seen as conventional. Authors from the fifteen Member States analysed ‘their’ respective country on the basis of a semi-structured outline, which was collectively discussed and elaborated. The approach has its merits and limitations. It helps us to compare the structural and organisational reactions of a certain set of important actors but has the limitations of more subjective assessments, the latter being especially visible when authors analyse the extent to which a system has adapted to European integration. Given the limits of time and resources, an in-depth study of Member States’ relative competitiveness in different policy fields could not be pursued. However we hope that our findings may serve as a starting point for a broader set of case studies.82

There are further caveats. The evolutions and changes in states’ politico-administrative spheres are usually continuing, gradual and time-consuming. Tracing back an ongoing process of interaction and mutual adaptation between various actors always risks a timebound, backward-looking view. Accordingly we might need a longer-term perspective to identify the key patterns of evolution. However, using the 1960s–90s as a basis for our observations, we take the risk of privileging certain educated expectations about institutional trends within the emerging multi-level and para-constitutional system.

We realise that the EU system cannot be described and analysed simply by looking at the institutions of the EU and their policies in a narrow sense and from a sectoral perspective. Case studies on governance within different policy fields and related networks provide an essential intellectual input to our understanding about the evolution of multi-level and multi-actor governance.83 We admit that the links between the ‘constitutive’ elements of the Union cannot always be easily assessed. In this respect, scrutinising the institutional adaptation of national and sub-national actors to a ‘moving target’ beyond the boundaries of traditional policy making – the Union in recent decades – is subject to an obvious risk. Hence, we may observe different speeds of adaptation. We may also need to take into account the slower reactions of some Member States at
the national level. Member state A may remain immune to a new external
input whereas Member State B is characterised by a dynamic set of
changes in the politico-administrative system owing to European
demands. Member States C and D, at the same time, might not alter their
formal rules of EC/EU participation. However, the public discourse on
policy-making and administrative participation is characterised by an ever
growing ‘de facto internalisation’ of European issues into traditional
‘national’ spheres. Analyses of common trends of Europeanisation need to
account particularly for the roots of change.

Institutional adjustments may not automatically lead to a direct and
swift alteration of policy processes in all areas simultaneously. There may
be fundamental hidden patterns which we are not able to grasp
through our empirical data.

Notes

1 See e.g. Helen Wallace, National Governments and the European
Communities (London: Chatham House, 1973); Christoph Sasse, Edouard
Poulet, David Coombes and Gérard Deprez, Decision Making in the
European Community (New York, London: Praeger, 1977); Spyros Pappas
(ed.), National Administrative Procedures for the Preparation and
Implementation of Community Decisions (Maastricht: EIPA, 1995); Kenneth
Hanf and Ben Soetendorp, ‘Small States and the Europeanization of Public
Policy’, in: Kenneth Hanf and Ben Soetendorp (eds), Adapting to European
Integration, Small States and the European Union (London: Longman,
1998); Yves Mény, Pierre Muller and Jean-Louis Quermonne (eds),
Adjusting to Europe. The Impact of the EU on National Institutions and
Policies (London: Routledge, 1996); Johan P. Olsen, ‘Europeanization and
Nation-State Dynamics’, in: Sverker Gustavsson and Leif Lewin (eds), The
Future of the Nation-State (London: Routledge, 1996); Robert Ladrech,
‘Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions. The Case of France’,
in: Journal of Common Market Studies, No. 1/1994, pp. 69–88; Klaus Götz,
‘National Governance and European Integration. Intergovernmental
Relations in Germany’, in: Journal of Common Market Studies, No. 1/1995,
pp. 91–116; Wolfgang Wessels, ‘Institutions of the EU System: Models of
Explanation’, in: Dietrich Rometsh and Wolfgang Wessels (eds), The
European Union and Member States, Towards Institutional Fusion?
(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 20–36; Caitriona
Carter and Andrew Scott, ‘Legitimacy and Governance beyond the European
Nation State: Conceptualizing Governance in the European Union’, in:

2 For the debate about the usefulness of International Relations (IR) and
Comparative Politics approaches see Simon Hix, ‘The Study of the European
Community: The Challenge to Comparative Politics’, in: West European
Analysing the European Union and Member States


6 See Rometsch and Wessels, 1996, op. cit.


10 See for Figure 1.1 in detail Andreas Maurer and Wolfgang Wessels, ‘The European Union matters: Structuring Self-Made Offers and Demands’, Chapter 2 in this volume, pp. 43–45.


21 See David J. Puchala, ‘Of Blind Men, Elephants and International Integration’, in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, No. 3/1972, p. 267: ‘The story of the blind men and the elephant is well known. Several blind men approached an elephant and each touched the animal in an effort to discover what the beast looked like. Each blind man, however, touched a different part of the animal, and each concluded that the elephant had the appearance of the part he touched … The total result was that no man arrived at a very accurate description of the elephant.’ A similar story can be found in ‘Nathan the Wise’ by the German drama author Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), which focuses – in the so-called ‘Ringparabel’ – on the way different persons look at the same thing. See Peter Demetz (ed.), *Nathan the Wise, Minna Von Barnhelm, and other Plays and Writings by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, German Library, Vol. 12 (London: Continuum Publishers, 1991).


Introduction


34 See Hix, 1999, op. cit.


49 German Constitutional Court, Judgement of October 12, 1993, op. cit.


53 Alan S. Milward, The European Rescue of the Nation State (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); see also Stanley Hoffmann, ‘Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State and the Case of Western Europe’, in: Daedalus, No. 3/1966, pp. 862–915.


55 Moravcsik, 1993, op. cit., p. 483: ‘The most fundamental influences on foreign policy are, therefore, the identity of important societal groups, the
nature of their interests, and their relative influence on domestic policy.’


57 Alec Stone Sweet and Wayne Sandholtz, ‘Integration, Supranational Governance, and the Institutionalization of the European Polity’, in: Wayne Sandholtz and Alec Stone Sweet (eds), European Integration and Supranational Governance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 5, who view ‘intergovernmental bargaining and decision-making as embedded in processes that are provoked and sustained by the expansion of transnational society, the pro-integrative activities of supranational organizations, and the growing density of supranational rules’. Consequently, they argue, ‘these processes gradually, but inevitably, reduce the capacity of the Member States to control outcomes’.


72 Maurer, 1999, *op. cit.*


80 For a recent analysis on the roles of national parliaments in EC and EU affairs, see: Andreas Maurer and Wolfgang Wessels (eds), *National Parliaments on their Ways to Europe: Losers or Latecomers?* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001).


83 See Tanja A. Börzel, ‘What’s So Special about Policy Networks? An Exploration of the Concept and its Usefulness in Studying European...
Introduction