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# European communion: political theory of European union

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## ABSTRACT

Political theory of European union, through an engagement between political concepts and theoretical understandings, provides a means of identifying the EU as a political object. It is argued that understanding the projects, processes and products of European union, based on 'sharing' or 'communion', provides a better means of perceiving the EU as a political object rather than terms such as 'integration' or 'cooperation'. The concept of 'European communion' is defined as the 'subjective sharing of relationships', understood as the extent to which individuals or groups believe themselves to be sharing relations (or not), and the consequences of these beliefs for European political projects, processes and products. By exploring European communion through an engagement with contemporary political theory, using very brief illustrations from the Treaty of Lisbon, the article also suggests that European communion embraces three different readings of the EU as a political object – the EU as a constellation of communities; as a cosmopolitan space; and as an example of cosmopolitical coexistence. In other words, the political object of European union may be identified as sharing 'European communion'.

**KEY WORDS** communion; cosmopolitical; European Union; political theory

For we must face the fact that in 30 or 40 years Europe will constitute a UPO - a sort of unidentified political object - unless we weld it into an entity enabling each of our countries to benefit from the European dimension and to prosper internally as well as hold its own externally (Jacques Delors 1985 in Drake 2000: 24).

The Treaty of Lisbon brings Jacques Delors' 'unidentified political object' hovering ever more closely into view, providing a moment to reflect on the 'European dimension'. Despite six decades of European integration and scholarship the identification of the 'nature of the beast', the European Union (EU), remains as difficult today as it has done in previous generations (Puchala 1971; Risse-Kappan 1996; Bretherton and Vogler 2006). One possible reason for this difficulty may be the increasing disjuncture between political concepts and theoretical understandings, in other words the need for a political theory of European union appropriate for the post-Lisbon era.<sup>1</sup>

This is not to say that there have not been a plenitude of attempts to identify the political object over these past generations. Initial attempts during the early decades of European integration included the identification of the European Community (EC) as a 'political system' (Lindberg 1967), a 'level' (Camps 1971) in 'two-level' policymaking (Bulmer 1983) or in a 'multilevel political system' (Webb 1983; Laffan 1983), rendering it 'less than a federation, more than a regime' (Wallace 1983). More recent attempts have introduced hyphenated-identities into the identification of the EC/EU as 'neo-medieval' (Bull 1977; Minc 1993; Zielonka 2007), 'post-modern' (Ruggie 1993; Diez 1997), or as a 'region-state' (Schmidt 2004). The post-Lisbon period suggests a need for engagement with contemporary political theory that embraces the wider transformations of society, economy and politics

that constitute both Europe and the globe. Political theory is understood here as ‘a commitment to theorize, critique, and diagnose the norms, practices, and organization of political action in the past and present, in our own places and elsewhere’ (Dryzek, Honig and Philips 2008: 4)

Rather than revising existing conceptual paradigms, an approach to conceptualising ‘European communion’ as the projects, processes and products of European union is articulated here.<sup>2</sup> The concept of European communion is defined as the ‘subjective sharing of relationships’, understood as the extent to which individuals or groups believe themselves to be sharing relations (or not), and the consequences of these beliefs for European political projects, processes and products. As will be discussed in the next section, European communion differs from existing conceptualisations in terms of *context, situation, theory* and *method*.

By embracing the interweaving of projects, processes and products, European communion makes possible a wider understanding of the historical, social, economic and political *context* in which the contemporary identification of political objects take place. European communion is *situated* in contemporary debates concerning the legitimacy, form and role of the EU under conditions of European and global crises. European communion facilitates engagement with contemporary political *theory* rather than presuming theories of regional integration or focusing solely on governance theories of everyday policy and polity functions. Finally, European communion requires *methodological* consideration of ideational projects; social, economic and political processes; and political products/objects through interpretive rather than objective means – what do individuals or groups believe?

In sum, European communion provides a conceptualisation of European union which recognises the interplay and co-constitution of discursive projects, socio-econo-political processes, and political products that other approaches are either unwilling or unable to contemplate.

The rest of the article first attempts to develop a concept of communion and situate it within the terminological terrain dominated by the dichotomisation of supranational integration and intergovernmental cooperation. Next the article explores the concept of European communion through an engagement with the three broad approaches of communitarian, cosmopolitan, and cosmopolitical theory.<sup>3</sup> Under each approach a number of different theoretical perspectives will be discussed to shed light on the concept of European communion. The article then briefly suggests how European communion might be understood by using a number of illustrations taken from the Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) after the Treaty of Lisbon (ToL). It concludes that rather than integration or cooperation, the emergent consolidation of the EU (as briefly illustrated by the ToL) is better characterised by the concept of European communion in the context of contemporary crises.

## **I. CONCEPTUALISING EUROPEAN COMMUNON**

Since the 1950s scholars have primarily discussed the processes of European union in terms of a dichotomy between supranational integration and intergovernmental cooperation. For example, Miriam Camps distinguished between the 'supranational approach' involving a

‘new form of “action in common” among governments’ and merging ‘sovereignties to form a new political unit’, and ‘intergovernmental cooperation’ based on retaining ‘national influence and control’ (Camps 1956: 3, 1957: 7). For Carol Edler Baumann (1959: 363), this dichotomy involved differentiating between ‘schemes of integration which ... impinged upon sovereignty’ and ‘closer coordination between governments’. Such understandings of supranational integration constitute the most common approach to political integration defined as a process whereby political actors in several distinct settings are persuaded to shift their expectations and political activities to a new centre (Haas 1958: 16; Lindberg 1963: 6). While the emphasis of supranational integration shifted to ‘supranational governance’/‘political system’, and intergovernmental cooperation to ‘preference convergence’/‘liberal intergovernmentalism’, the supranational-intergovernmental dichotomy remains (Branch and Øhrgaard 1999). In contrast to this dichotomisation, conceptualising communion involves considering the *projects*, *processes*, and *products* of European union.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Projects of European union***

The *projects* of European union comprise the ideas and norms of political actors who believe themselves to be sharing relations in and on Europe. Supranational conceptualisations of European integration tend to emphasise the project of laying ‘the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe’ (Treaty of Rome 1957). Intergovernmental conceptualisations of European cooperation place more emphasis on the project of being ‘united in diversity’ (Lisbon Treaty 2009). In contrast, the conceptualisation of European communion emphasises a project of ‘a destiny henceforth shared’ (Treaty of Paris 1951). The emphasis placed on ‘sharing’ as the centrepiece of the conceptualisation of European

communion comes from Jean Monnet's stress on the principle of 'pooling' or 'sharing' sovereignty: '[t]he indispensable first principle of these [Schuman] proposals is the abnegation of sovereignty' (Monnet 1978: 316 in Fontaine 2000: 17). Robert Schuman's declaration of 9<sup>th</sup> May 1950 proposed that 'la mise en commun' or 'pooling' of production would provide 'common foundations' for Europe. But the notion of mise en commun or pooling is commonly interpreted as 'sharing' in contemporary attempts to explain the project of 'making common' in European communion (Panizza 2009).

### ***Processes of European union***

The *processes* of European union are made up of relationships and practices of political actors who believe themselves to be sharing relations in and out of Europe. Supranational conceptualisations of European union tend to assume that most social, economic and political processes are leading towards an ever closer and more integrated community of Europeans. Intergovernmental conceptualisations of European union place more weight on social, economic and political processes ensuring a diverse yet cooperative union of member states. In contrast, the conceptualisation of European communion argues that social, economic and political processes (both European and global) shape and are shaped by beliefs and practices of sharing relations across Europe. The changing roles of subjective sharing of relationships in terms of communion have been expressed more generally in the social and humanistic sciences, including sociology, social psychology, and the study of rhetoric. These approaches suggest that sociological categorisations, social psychological behavioural processes, and rhetorical argumentative techniques can involve processes of sharing termed communion.<sup>5</sup> In sociological terms, communion has been articulated as neither community nor society, but a type of social relationship (Schmalenbach 1977; Vidich

and Hughey 1988). In psychological terms, communion is neither selfish nor selfless behaviour, but a consideration of others (Bakan 1966, Abele *et al* 2008).

### ***Products of European union***

The products of European union comprise the organisation and institutionalisation of the ideas and beliefs, relationships and practices, of political actors who believe themselves to be sharing relations in and out, on and of Europe. Supranational conceptualisations of European integration focus on the product of European community, in particular the supranational institutions of the EU such as the Commission and Parliament. Intergovernmental conceptualisations of European cooperation tend to focus on the product of European union, in particular the intergovernmental institutions of the EU such as the European Council and Council of Ministers. In contrast, the conceptualisation of European communion widens the focus to include products of shared institutionalisation, whether they are organisations such as the EU, Council of Europe, and OSCE, or the vast range of intergovernmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations such as the OECD, WTO, G20, Oxfam, Amnesty International or Greenpeace. This focus on different forms of shared institutionalisation reflects the way in which 'communion' involves the consequences of beliefs about shared relations (or not) for political products, whether these organisations are in the past or present, in Europe or elsewhere. A brief comparison of these three concepts and their foci in terms of project, process and product is illustrated in figure 1: conceptual comparison.

**Figure 1 conceptual comparison**

| <i>concept</i>    | <i>project</i>        | <i>process</i> | <i>product</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| supranational     | 'ever closer'         | integration    | community      |
| regional          | 'henceforth shared'   | sharing        | communion      |
| intergovernmental | 'united in diversity' | cooperation    | union          |

To reprise, the concept of European communion understood in terms of the subjective sharing of relationships and their consequences differs from both supranational integration and intergovernmental cooperation in a number of ways. In contrast to supranational integration, European communion does not presume a process towards a new political unit. In contrast to intergovernmental cooperation, European communion does not presume a continued process dominated by relations between states. European communion differs in that it involves the continued negotiation and mediation of relationships, sharing, and subjectivities. While there are many other important conceptualisations (such as political system, multilevel governance or regional state) this difference is important in the way in which it contextualises and widens the analytical focus, requires an interpretive method, and facilitates engagement with contemporary political theory. In the context of perceived global crises such as the environment, the economy, and changing 'great power' relations, European communion encourages a broader approach to understanding Europe in a global context.

The next three sections deepen the understanding of the concept through an engagement with three broad approaches of communitarian, cosmopolitan, and cosmopolitical theory. These approaches are not intended to be exhaustive, but broadly representative of

contemporary political theory as found in the work of theorists such as Bonnie Honig (1993), Molly Cochran (1999), Seyla Benhabib (2002), and Toni Erskine (2008).

### III. COMMUNITARIAN THEORIES

In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1983: 15).

For Benedict Anderson, political communities are imagined by members because ‘in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’. Communitarian theories represent the predominant approach to understanding European union, with leading international political theorist Molly Cochran (1999: 8) arguing that ‘communitarianism is particularist and oriented to shared community life’. Similarly, leading social theorist Craig Calhoun (2003: 96) comments that communitarianism suffers from a ‘tendency to elide the differences between local networks of social relationships and broad categories of belonging like nations’. Honig, Cochran and Erskine identify the communitarian position with aspects of the work of Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, Mervyn Frost, and Alasdair MacIntyre.

Writing over three decades ago, Carole Webb (1977) introduced a distinction between intergovernmental cooperation, supranational community, and transnational processes in

the ECs which tends to assume communitarian understandings of how communities or groups serve to aggregate their interests.<sup>6</sup> In this respect the image of more exclusive communion lives in the minds of particular communities or groups, whether in member states, supranational communities, or through transnational processes.

### ***Member states***

One of the most common perspectives on European union is based on the role of member states engaging in intergovernmental bargaining in the Council of Ministers and at the European Council. The role of states and societies, governments and ministries has always been a central factor in understanding the politics and policies of the EC/EU. While early scholars placed considerable emphasis on intergovernmental cooperation within the ECs, the continued importance of member states was reemphasised in the 1960s and 1970s by the rejection of British membership and proposals for a 'political union' (Camps 1964; Bodenheimer 1967), as well as the centrality of national administrative inputs into the Community process (Wallace 1973). The contemporary relevance of intergovernmental theories focused on member state communities can be found in more recent work by Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006) and Hagemann (2008).

The communitarian understanding of national interests found in these works tends to assume that member states serve as the most appropriate and legitimate political communities for sharing European communion. However, the broader processes of European union, involving the subjective sharing relationships within and between the economies and societies of the member states, are more than the cooperative relations between EU governments. The 'Europeanisation' and globalisation of European economies

and societies, involving the reconfiguration of public and personal life, transcend intergovernmental cooperation (Lynggaard 2011).

### ***Supranational community***

A second common perspective on European union focuses on the role of supranational community, in particular the institutions of the EU such as the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. The role of the supranational institutions, actors and groups, such as the Commission, its commissioners and Directorates-General have also provided an equally important factor in understanding the politics and policies of the EC/EU. Miriam Camps (1956: 23 and 25) argued 'the strength of the supranational approach ... [is that] ... the High Authority has unique powers of initiative and the burden of proof has been shifted.... The substitution of wholly new premises may sometimes be the only way to break the pattern of reflex opposition'; and that the 'Common Market' created a 'strong community of interest'. The contemporary relevance of supranational community is illustrated by the assumptions of governance theories in more recent work by Kohler-Koch (1999), Conant (2002), and Cini (2007).

Rather than focus on national interests, the communitarian understanding found here assumes that EU supranational community represents a more appropriate and legitimate political community for sharing European communion. The broader processes of European union have not generated a shared sense of imagining Europe solely as a community, and the EC only created a 'strong community of interest' in the Single Market. Given the cultural-linguistic and social diversities inherent in transnational processes of

Europeanisation and globalisation discussed below, it is unimaginable that European community comparable to a 'nation' is possible.

### ***Transnational processes***

A third common perspective on European union goes beyond member state and supranational communities to consider the role of community in transnational processes. These communities include transnational actors and groups inside and outside the EU, such as those of transnational capital, transnational social movements, and groups within transnational EU institutions such as the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions. The role of transnational processes and communities was increasingly recognised as important from the 1960s onwards, with references to the 'transnational context' and 'transnational phenomena' in relations between EC member states (Bodenheimer 1967: 24; Camps 1971: 675). In the 1970s, Susan Strange asserted the importance of economic interdependence and transnational processes in international politics, including the 'new multistate community' of the EEC (Strange 1971: 311). The contemporary significance of transnational processes has dramatically increased with the assumptions of accelerating globalisation in the post-cold war era, as work on transnational groups, communities and processes by Guiraudon (2003) and Saurugger (2009) illustrates.

In contrast to member state or supranational communities, the third emphasis on transnational communities focuses on the roles of transnational firms and business, transnational trade unions and NGOs, as well as transnational parties and networks as appropriate and legitimate communities sharing European communion. The uneven

processes of European union incorporate and disincorporate differing transnational communities in very different ways. The variation of participation and incorporation within and without Europe suggests that such transnational groups, communities and processes will not, on their own, constitute the civil society or social capital of a imagined European community anytime soon (see discussion in Favell and Guiraudon 2011).

While the image of communion might live unevenly in the minds of particular European communities or groups, such imaginings are inherently circumscribed in space and time, rather than being pan-European. The limitations of member state relations, diversities of supranational community, and splintered nature of transnational processes ensure that communitarian theories alone do not provide the only relations or subjectivities shared within European communion. At best, these plural imaginings are part of the constitutionalisation of the EU as a constellation of communities.

#### **IV. COSMOPOLITAN THEORIES**

[T]he enactment of a European communion (a more demanding word than 'community'), looked to an eclipse of tribalism, of sectarian violence, of brute power-relations. This foresight of hope had, after Europe's near self-slaughter, every rational legitimacy (Steiner 1996: 10-11).

For George Steiner, European communion is more demanding than community, and looks to 'an eclipse of tribalism, of sectarian violence, of brute power-relations' for legitimacy

beyond communities. Cosmopolitan theories that look beyond communitarian understandings have slowly (re)emerged in the post-cold war period, with Cochran (1999: 8) defining cosmopolitanism as 'universalist and individualist in orientation'. Calhoun (2003: 105) surmises that 'cosmopolitan means belonging to all parts of the world; not restricted to any one country or its inhabitants'. Cosmopolitan theories thus differ from communitarian theories in arguing that concerns for humanity as a whole, or the rights of the individual within humanity, should provide the basis for legitimate political actions (Cochran 1999: 21-51). A more critical cosmopolitan position can be identified with aspects of Benhabib's 'cosmopolitan federalism' (Benhabib 2004) and Erskine's 'embedded cosmopolitanism' (Erskine 2008).

While cosmopolitan theories can take more liberal form, the focus here is on critical cosmopolitan perspectives that involve the recognition of, and engagement with, difference. This is not to argue that more liberal cosmopolitan approaches are unimportant, but their proximity to neo-liberal globalisation has led many theorists away from liberal cosmopolitanism and towards cosmopolitan democracy over the past two decades.<sup>7</sup> The critical cosmopolitan perspectives considered here draw on critical theories, feminist perspectives, and post-structural theories to emphasise deliberative, gender, and difference politics which cut across communal boundaries.<sup>8</sup> In this particular respect, a more inclusive European communion is enacted through an eclipse of communitarian concerns of self and an openness to cosmopolitan concerns of others through understanding deliberative, gender, or difference politics.

### ***Deliberative politics***

Jürgen Habermas' critical theory and his advocacy of 'communicative action' in the public sphere provides the basis for deliberative politics. Deliberative politics demands an expansion of EU deliberative democracy, union citizenship, and the EU public sphere in order to facilitate communicative action in the form of politics based on public deliberation and communication (Warleigh 2003; Habermas 2009)<sup>B000AQ4RBM</sup>. The role of deliberative politics as providing a more legitimate basis for EU actions and policies has been advocated by Deirdre Curtin (1997), Justine Lacroix (2003), and Seyla Benhabib (2004) in their discussions of cosmopolitanism and deliberative democracy.

Scholarship focused on the role of deliberative politics in European union advocates that deliberation and argumentation are the most important, appropriate and legitimate aspects for sharing European communion. However the absence of any one EU public sphere where deliberative politics could take place render this approach to European communion problematic.

### ***Gender politics***

In contrast to deliberative politics, gender politics provide critical cosmopolitan perspectives that seek to understand European union based on feminist insights.<sup>9</sup> Gender politics demand feminist insights into the role of social relations, subjectivity, power and 'the political'. The role of gender politics in understanding and transforming EU politics has been argued by a large number of scholars, including Jo Shaw (2000), Catherine Hoskyns (2004), and Annica Kronsell (2005).

Scholarship stressing gender politics in European union contends that feminist perspectives on power/political and constructions of gender are the most important, appropriate and legitimate aspects in studying European communion. However the extent to which gender politics is considered important, or not, in the broader processes of European union is of major concern here as there are significant differences in gender relations across Europe north, south, east, and west.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Difference politics***

Difference politics emphasise post-structural approaches to understanding how and why discursive practices construct and legitimate difference in and through European union. Difference politics demands a recognition of the roles that constructions of difference play in EU politics, polity and policy, as well as an advocacy of methods of deconstruction and genealogy to reveal such constructions. The importance of understanding the role of difference politics in the construction of European community can be found in the work of Julia Kristeva (2000, 2001) on abjection, strangeness and freedom. More recent works on difference politics by Rumelili (2007), for example, emphasises the role of difference politics in the construction of regional communities.

Such scholarship emphasising difference politics in European union argues that understanding discursive practices and constructions of difference are the most important, appropriate and legitimate aspects of sharing European communion. However not only do communitarian constructions of difference continue to retain hegemonic power, but recent

'muscular' reactions to multicultural perspectives illustrate an omnipresent conservatism against a more inclusive European communion.

While the eclipse of tribalism, sectarianism and brute power relations may be achievable unevenly through European union, such critical cosmopolitan enactments are endangered by the growth of neo-nationalism and neo-racism in response to perceptions of globalisation and Europeanisation. The limitations of a pan-European public sphere, defensive masculinity, and monoculturalism ensure that critical cosmopolitan theories do not, on their own, provide a satisfactory basis for European communion. At best, these openings towards others are part of the constitutionalisation of the EU as a cosmopolitan space.

## **V. COSMOPOLITICAL THEORIES**

[A]t the very heart of the European Union is the concept of a communion of equals. Our ... historical experience of international relations ... had been governed by an ethic of predator and prey; where the small and the weak were dominated by the large and the powerful; and where cultural diversity was seen as a threat to the powerful core.... The collegiate nature of the European Union provided a new model for international relations – a model based on mutual respect, regardless of size and on co-operation rather than coercion (McAleese 1999: 8).

For Mary McAleese, European communion involves equality, mutual respect, and cooperation in international relations. The increasing challenges of multiculturalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has led political psychologists of globalisation to seek an ethical middle ground between communitarian and cosmopolitan approaches they term 'cosmopolitics' (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011). Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011: 92) contend that 'cosmopolitics combine communitarianism with cosmopolitanism ... If cosmopolitanism relies on a discourse of individual rights, communitarianism is based on a discourse of social rights that is often expressed in exclusive and localist terms. Both run the risk of substituting ethics for politics'.

Cosmopolitical perspectives differ from cosmopolitanism in that they seek a 'strong sense of cosmopolitanism [which] calls for confrontation with deep and necessarily contentious differences between ways of life', rather than a 'soft cosmopolitanism . . . aided by the frequent flyer lounges (and their extensions in 'international standard' hotels) [where] contemporary cosmopolitans meets others of different backgrounds in spaces that retain familiarity' (Calhoun 2003: 106-7). At the same time, cosmopolitical approaches seek to engage with communitarianism by establishing a connection to the 'idea of political action rooted in immanent contradictions of the social order', where 'immanent struggle for a better world always builds on particular social and cultural bases' (Calhoun 2003: 102-3). Besides Calhoun, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, the cosmopolitical position can also be identified with aspects of Honig's 'agonistic cosmopolitics' (Honig 2006) and Cochran's 'contingently held foundations' (Cochran 1999).

The cosmopolitical theoretical approach considered here focuses on reconciliatory, identity, and ethical politics as part of trying to understand the roles of equality, mutual respect and cooperation in European communion. In this respect, European communion is best conceived in terms of achieving reconciliation and equality in order to overcome historical experience; recognising and respecting identity and cultural diversity; and acknowledging an ethic of cooperation rather than coercion. These three cosmopolitical perspectives of reconciliatory, identity, and ethical politics will be considered here.

### ***Reconciliatory politics***

Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt, Catherine Guisan (2011a) argues that the EU has forgotten its 'lost treasure' of ethical and political impulses behind the fifty-year-old European integration process. The role of the EU's 'principles of action' have been hermeneutically retrieved by Guisan's (2011b) studies of the principle of *reconciliation*, the principle of *power as action in concert*, and the principle of *recognition* in the memories and actions of participants. Guisan (2011a) argues that reconciliation is a forgotten, yet crucial aspect of European integration, starting with Franco-German reconciliation with the 1951 Treaty of Paris, and extending to post-cold war reconciliation in central Europe, as well as between Greece and Turkey.

Scholarship on reconciliatory politics in European union emphasises the importance of achieving reconciliation and equality in order to overcome historical experiences as crucial elements of sharing European communion. While processes of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have become widespread throughout the world, the centrality of reconciliation to European union has been forgotten. And yet somewhere between

communitarian particularisms and cosmopolitan universalisms lie the subjective sharing of relationships through practices of cosmopolitical reconciliation inherent in European communion.

### ***Identity politics***

Since the early 1990s Brigid Laffan has argued that the 'politics of identity have enormous salience ... for the EU ... because the Union is moving from issues of instrumental problem-solving to fundamental questions about its nature as a part-formed polity' (Laffan 1996: 81). For Laffan 'the Community's distinctive characteristics are its multi-levelled and multi-cultural nature' where 'shared loyalty, rather than an all-or-nothing shift of loyalty, is more likely than any radical transformation of identity' (Laffan 1992: 178 and 126). The importance of Laffan's contribution is this acknowledgement of 'multiple identities' through the distinction between seeing identity in a 'restrictive manner' of 'exclusive closed terms' and that of an 'open inclusive manner' which is 'open to identification with a political and cultural space that transcends national borders' (Laffan 1996: 98-9). Besides Laffan, the work of Laura Cram (2009) on identity and banal Europeanism is important in emphasising the contingent and contextual nature of identity, and the possibility of the coexistence of multiple identities.

Scholarship on identity politics in European union emphasises the importance of recognising and respecting identity and cultural diversity as crucial elements of sharing European communion. While the negotiation of identity politics has become one of the central challenges in global politics over the past two decades, the possibilities of diverse and multiple identities in European union has tended to be overlooked. Again, somewhere

between communitarian particularisms and cosmopolitan universalisms lie the subjective sharing of relationships through practices of cosmopolitical identities intrinsic to European communion.

### ***Ethical politics***

Cosmopolitical theoretical perspectives on moral and ethical politics of European union have become increasingly important over the past decade. In particular, Lynn Dobson has argued that 'the emergence of political theory on the EU is cousin to the reinvigoration of international political theory more generally' suggesting that 'when justification relates to supranational or international institutions, the presumption ought to favour impartial, not partial, modes of justification' (Dobson 2006: 522-3). Similar to Guisan and Laffan, Dobson's work attempts to develop cosmopolitical theory capable of European union after the TEU 'defined the EU as a distinctive political entity and unsettled existing concepts of, for example, political community, political legitimacy, democracy, sovereignty and citizenship' (Dobson 2006: 513). Scholarship on ethical politics in European union emphasises the importance of acknowledging an ethic of cooperation rather than coercion as a crucial element of sharing European communion. While the challenges of ethical politics have been hotly debated across the world over the last decade, the ethic of cooperation rather than coercion in European union has gone unseen. So somewhere between communitarian particularisms and cosmopolitan universalisms lie the subjective sharing of relationships through the negotiation of ethical politics of European communion.

Finally, while reconciliatory, identity, and ethical politics may not be central to European union, they do provide a sense of direction for European communion. The collegiate nature

of European union may indeed provide a new model for international relations based on achieving reconciliation and equality; respecting identity and diversity; and acknowledging an ethic of cooperation rather coercion as a satisfactory basis for European communion. At worst, these collegialities are part of the constitutionalisation of the EU as an example of cosmopolitical coexistence.

## **VI. THE LISBON TREATY**

The eight-year processes of negotiating and ratifying the ToL from December 2001 to December 2009 suggest that the March 2010 consolidated versions of the TEU and TFEU might provide some insight in the self understandings of the EU as a political object (European Union 2010). While the treaties have become the subject of extensive academic production which cannot be discussed here, they do also provide some very brief illustrations of the three different understandings of European communion discussed so far.

### ***Constellation of communities***

The ToL reinforces the communitarian understanding of the EU as a constellation of communities through its references to member states, supranational community and transnational communities. The 2010 consolidated versions of the TEU and TFEU, like all EC/EU treaties that preceded them, illustrate the primacy of member states as conferrers of competence: 'By this Treaty, the HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES establish among themselves a EUROPEAN UNION, hereinafter called 'the Union', on which the Member States confer competences to attain objectives they have in common' (TEU 2010 art. 1). The consolidated versions of the treaties also illustrate the importance of supranational

community as the recipient of conferred competence: ‘The Union shall pursue its objectives by appropriate means commensurate with the competences which are conferred upon it in the Treaties’ (TEU 2010 art. 2(6)). This dual nature of European union involving both supranational community and member state communities was captured by the opening article on the ‘Establishment of the Union’ in the 2004 Constitutional Treaty: ‘Reflecting the will of the citizens and States of Europe’. There are also manifold illustrations of the roles of transnational communities in the consolidated treaties, including references to employers and undertakings; employees and socio-economic representatives; civil society and citizen’s representative associations; and regional and local level government (TEU 2010 arts. 4, 5 and 11; TFEU 2010 arts. 101 and 300). What is also interesting is the extent to which transnational communities may be global as a consequence of EU external relations and engagement with the United Nations and international, regional or global organisations (TEU 2010 arts. 3 and 21). In all of these respects ‘the Lisbon Treaty did not change the nature of the Union, which remains a “partially federal entity”’ (Piris 2010: 331).

### ***Cosmopolitan space***

However, the ToL also illustrates a partially cosmopolitan understanding of the EU by opening new space through references to deliberative politics and gender politics, while raising questions about difference politics. Within the ‘provisions on democratic principles’ of the consolidated treaties, the principle of participatory democracy through deliberative politics is illustrated by references to ‘public exchange’, ‘regular dialogue’, ‘broad consultations’, and ‘citizen’s initiative’ (TEU 2010 art. 11). The consolidated treaties contain a number of illustrations of attempts to come to terms with some aspects of gender politics. These include references to, and policies addressing, ‘equality between women and men’

(TEU 2010 arts. 2 and 3; TFEU 2010 arts. 8, 153 and 157). More specific attempts to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation, to ensure equal pay for equal work, support positive discrimination, and combat domestic violence may also be seen in the consolidated treaties (TFEU 2010 arts. 79, 83, 157, and declaration 19). The consolidated treaties illustrate the problems of proclaiming as 'universal' values and principles such as human dignity, human rights, freedom, democracy, equality, solidarity, and the rule of law (TEU 2010 preamble and art. 21). Such claims of 'universal' create a politics of difference against countries and cultures who do not share such values and principles. The risks of constructing such differences are amplified by references in the preambles of the consolidated TEU and Charter of Fundamental Rights to particularistic claims of the 'inheritance of Europe' and 'moral heritage'. Such risks may be partially addressed through the innovation of creating a politics of 'neighbourliness', although reference to 'values' may also counteract such innovation (TEU 2010 art. 8). Jean-Claude Piris identifies the attempts to enhance democratic participation and legitimacy, as well as the new values and objectives of 'equality between women and men', pluralism, tolerance and respect for 'cultural and linguistic diversity', as important (Piris 2010: 71-3, 112-3). He argues that 'article 2 TEU on the Union's values is not only a political and symbolic statement. It has concrete legal effects' (Piris 2010: 71).

### ***Cosmopolitical coexistence***

Thirdly, the ToL illustrates a fundamentally cosmopolitical understanding of the EU as facilitating cosmopolitical coexistence through its aspirations for reconciliation, identities, and ethical politics. The consolidated treaties illustrate the role of reconciliation in both the preamble and respect for equality of member states. The reference in the TEU preamble to

the 'the historic importance of the ending of the division of the European continent and the need to create firm bases for the construction of the future Europe' suggests the importance of reconciling past divisions in Europe. In parallel, the reference to relations between the Union and the member states (TEU 2010 art. 4) suggests that 'the Union shall respect the equality of Member States before the Treaties as well as their national identities, inherent in their fundamental structures, political and constitutional, inclusive of regional and local self-government'. There are many illustrations from the consolidated treaties of the emphasis given to identity and diversity, particularly since the adoption of the motto 'united in diversity'. These illustrations include references to the desire 'to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions'; the objective of respecting 'its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced'; and the 'improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples' (TEU 2010 preamble and art. 3(3); and TFEU 2010 art. 167(2)). The consolidated treaties illustrate a number of aspects of ethical politics with references to, for example, the fundamental principle of subsidiarity in which 'the Union shall act only if ... the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, ... but can rather, ... be better achieved at Union level' (TEU 2010 art. 5). This emphasis on an ethic of cooperation between states, either at central or at regional and local level, is a central element of a shared *raison d'être* where the Union acts to better achieve together what cannot be achieved apart. In his concluding analysis of the ToL and beyond, Piris suggests that the European project's 'essential aim is reconciliation and peace among peoples who have fought each other for centuries' (Piris 2010: 339). He also suggests that the Treaty's emphasis on the concerns of member states and their 'essential functions' will not address

the major imbalances which affect the Union, most importantly concerns of its political legitimacy (Piris 2010: 332-4).

## **VII. (N)EVER CLOSER UNION**

This article has argued that political theory of European union, through an engagement between political concepts and theoretical understandings, provides a means of understanding the EU as a political object in the context of European communion. It also suggests that within European communion are three different approaches to the EU as a political object – the EU as a constellation of communities; the EU as a cosmopolitan space; and the EU as an example of cosmopolitical coexistence. In this respect the projects, processes and products of European union involve the recognition of the difficulties and diversities of constitutionalising an increasingly numerous and diverse political object in a globalising era.

It has been argued that the contemporary projects, processes and products of European union are neither solely characterised by supranational integration ('ever closer union'), nor by intergovernmental cooperation ('never closer union'), but by a recognition of communion ('sharing') involved in a more global EU. As brief illustrations from the consolidated treaties suggested, the notion of communion captures the multiple nature of the EU as a political object between imagined communities and cosmopolitan enactments – where local and global politics commune.

It is also been argued that contemporary political theory of European union suggests an engagement with three broad strands of theory – communitarian, cosmopolitan and cosmopolitical. This involves drawing together communitarian perspectives of member states, supranational community and transnational processes; cosmopolitan perspectives of difference, gender and difference politics; and cosmopolitical perspectives of reconciliatory, identity and ethical politics. The first discussion of communitarian perspectives suggested the extent to which this has constituted the dominant approach to understanding European union. The illustrations from the consolidated treaties, in particular the establishment and conferral of competence, reinforce this communitarian understanding. In contrast, the second discussion of critical cosmopolitan perspectives proposed how deliberative, gender and difference politics serve as an omnipresent reminder of how communities are never quite how they are imagined. Here the illustrations from the consolidated treaties, such as democratic principles, gender equality and engagement with difference, suggest that critical cosmopolitan concerns are not unimportant. Finally, between these communitarian and cosmopolitan approaches the innovation of introducing cosmopolitical approaches suggests that reconciliation, multiple identities and an ethic of cooperation are all found within European union. Again, the very brief illustrations from the consolidated treaties reinforced this innovative interpretation of cosmopolitical European communion.

It is further suggested that the past two decades of European union, in particular the ratification crises of the constitutional treaty, may mark a move away from a dominant analytical focus on the project of Union towards including analysis of the processes of communion. In other words, the bold political initiatives of IGC and treaty-driven integration may give way to EU and extra-EU policies in response to social and economic processes of

global interdependence and crisis. This change will make an exclusive focus on only supranational integration or only intergovernmental cooperation less likely, but processes of sharing and communion within and without Europe more likely. Following Favell and Guiaudon (2011), such a shift away from political project towards economic, social *and* political processes demands a reconfiguration of EU studies that European communion as concept *and* analytical approach facilitates.

To summarise, the article argued that the notion of sharing or communion provides a more appropriate means of conceptualising European union rather than terms such as integration or cooperation. The article further argued that within this new approach, contemporary political theory of European union contrasting communitarian, cosmopolitan, and cosmopolitical theory is appropriate. It is not suggested that the radically different theoretical approaches of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism are in anyway compatible, but that cosmopolitical theory is an attempt to mediate these distinctions. Furthermore, the article has suggested that one of the benefits of bringing together the concept of communion with political theories is that the study of European union becomes better equipped with concepts and theory appropriate for the post-Lisbon era. In this era the need to understanding the economic, social and political processes of European *union* become important to understanding the successes or crises of bold political projects of European *Union*. In the previous section, the article very briefly illustrated these political concepts and theoretical understandings with references to the post-Lisbon consolidated treaties without engaging in the considerable secondary literature on the subject. Clearly these illustrations are open to interpretation in the context of identifying and understanding the EU as an emergent political entity constituted through social, economic, and political

processes. European communion thus helps EU studies to come to terms with a post-Lisbon union perhaps characterised by less integration and more consolidation; with cosmopolitical theory characterised by less dichotomisation and more innovation; prepares for greater emphasis on broader patterns of social, economic and political change; and recognises the betweenness of an increasingly identified political object between state-like universalisms and region-like particularisms.

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## NOTES

1. The term 'union' (no capitalisation) is used here, following Adrian Favell and Virginie Guiraudon, to reflect the aim of (re)connecting 'the study of the European Union as a political construction' to 'the study of European union as an economic and social process' (Favell and Guiraudon 2011).
2. See initial discussions of 'European Communism' in Manners 2006a: 47-9, 2008a: 147-8.
3. For an introduction to these three broad approaches in EU studies, see Manners, 2008b, pgs. 67 and 79-80.
4. The distinctions between project, process and product of European integration used here come from Glyn Morgan, *The Idea of a European Superstate* (2007: 4-7).
5. In sociology the concept of communion is a 'form of inner-worldly experience' which distinguishes a 'relationship from those of community and society' (Schmalenbach 1977 in Vidich and Hughey 1988: 248). In social psychology 'communion manifests itself in the sense of being at one with others, in non-contractual cooperation, in relatedness and sharing' (Bakan 1966: 15 in Abele *et al* 2008: 436). In the study of rhetoric, 'communion ... consider[s] the status of values in argumentation and the role of rhetoric in the constitution and maintenance of community' (Graff and Winn 2006: 46; Marunowski 2008: 55).
6. See the use of Webb's three perspectives in Manners 2006b: 121-5, 2010a: 33-5.
7. For extensive discussions of more liberal cosmopolitan theories see Cheah and Robbins 1998, and Archibugi 2003.
8. For an introduction to these three critical perspectives in EU studies, see Manners 2006b: 125-30, 2007, 2010b: 35-6.
9. See discussion of 'the gender myth' in Manners 2010b: 77-9, 83.

10. See discussion in Pető and Manners 2006.

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