

Counter-narratives to Regional Cooperation: Contesting European union

Käte Hamburger Kolleg/Centre for Global Cooperation Research

13-14 May 2019

Call for Papers

Organisers: Professor Wolfram Kaiser (University of Portsmouth) and Dr Richard McMahon (University College London) in cooperation with the Käte Hamburger Kolleg/Centre for Global Cooperation Research (University of Duisburg-Essen)

At a time when transnational and international cooperation increasingly faces aggressive criticism and outright opposition, this conference will explore the particular case of counter-narratives to European integration. From Brazil to the Philippines and the US to Hungary, political polarisation and international tensions are growing. Intellectuals and organised social and political groups are using ‘communitarian’ narratives to produce a churn of new or reinvigorated and refined anti-cosmopolitan narratives. Whether motivated ideologically by right-wing ethnocentric nationalism or left-wing rejection of economic globalisation, they seek a partisan advantage in domestic and transnational politics, and try to reshape international relations in a more intergovernmental and autarkic manner. Democratically elected political leaders have strongly promoted and sought to legitimise such narratives, from US President Donald Trump’s nationalistic rhetoric and rejection of international treaties to Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban’s advocacy of ‘illiberal democracy’ as a challenge to the European Union’s normative order.

As the world’s most intensive experiment in regional integration, European union (as something that can be more than and different from the European Union as an organization) is a lightning rod and key test for the rising opponents of regional cooperation and globalism. Multiple referendum defeats for European integration, from the 1992 Danish rejection of the Maastricht Treaty to the 2016 Brexit vote, reflect the demise of the public’s earlier ‘permissive consensus’ about integration. The economic crisis since 2008 and the refugee crisis of 2015 have dramatically ramped up political contestation of European union. Populist groups and political parties no longer just criticise particular aspects of European union, such as monetary union, but often challenge the desirability of any organised form of cooperation. Brexit represents the triumph of this project in the UK.

The conference will focus on the narratives, their historical lineage since 1945, cultural conditionality, semantic forms and political objectives, but equally on the individual and collective actors behind them. We are interested in narrative entrepreneurs and counter-

narratives to European union within Europe, whether nationally or transnationally drafted, developed and organised and whether they reject the EU as it stands, or any form of regional organisation in Europe. However, we are also interested in counter-narratives to European union from outside the EU, whether from neighbours such as President Putin and his Russian ‘trolls’ or from non-Europeans such as Trump.

We expect all papers to be based on original research. Moreover, all papers need to address, in a structured manner, both the actors who produce narratives and the narratives themselves, both to strengthen comparative perspectives and to facilitate a possible later collective publication in the form of an edited book or special issue.

Interested researchers should submit their paper proposal in one Word document with two elements:

- an abstract of your paper of no more than 300 words with information on its focus, key arguments and research basis
- a short biographical abstract with information on you, your institutional affiliation and relevant ongoing research projects and/or publications.

Please submit proposals to both organisers, Wolfram Kaiser (Wolfram.Kaiser@online.de) and Richard McMahon (rychumac@yahoo.com) no later than **5 January 2019**. The successful applicants will be notified no later than 20 January 2019.

We can ordinarily cover travel costs up to a maximum of 300 Euros and accommodation in Duisburg for one night (13-14 May 2019) as well as subsistence during the conference.