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Forum Section

Who Is Afraid of Cumulative Research?

Improving Data on EU Politics

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Introduction

The study of European Union (EU) politics has matured in important ways in the past two decades. In place of the grand yet vague focus on the study of European integration *writ large*, scholars have increasingly organized themselves into research communities focusing on particular aspects of European Union governance. With this specialization, scholars in each community have advanced towards agreement on definitions and conceptual characterizations. These 'ground rules' are essential to the collective research enterprise and the advancement of knowledge. However, we are concerned that this advancement is retarded unnecessarily by the dearth of public and systematically collected data on EU politics. In short, such data are essential if the field endeavours to move toward 'normal science'.

It is our opinion that too little attention has been given to disseminating information about available data and, more fundamentally, to the collection of such data. In this essay, we argue that the cumulation of knowledge in the study of European Union politics depends crucially on expanding the amount

of public systematic data. We then describe the data currently available across a broad range of research communities. In so doing, we hope this essay provides an effective means of disseminating information about available data. We intend to provide a continuously updated list of such data sets on our journal website. Finally, we describe an agenda for future data collection, focusing on a variety of areas in which data are particularly scarce.

Cumulation in the study of EU politics

In political science and elsewhere, many people have recognized recently that we need to invest more time in what is the normal standard in the natural sciences – cumulation. By this we mean that we are able to establish empirically tested theory only if a large enough group of people works on the same problem and cumulates knowledge through the repeated and competitive testing of its key propositions. Although the critical rationalism advocated by Karl Popper has some flaws, its one key insight still seems valid: we can accept a certain hypothesis only if it survives critical theoretical challenges and empirical replications. In international relations, the key proposition of the democratic peace literature that pairs of sufficiently democratized states have a lower likelihood of engaging in militarized conflicts has survived repeated challenges by leading methodologists and is now considered to be one of the few non-trivial insights within the subfield (e.g. Russett and Oneal, 2001). In comparative politics, a large body of replication studies has confirmed that economic factors influence voters' decisions across a wide range of political systems (e.g. Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000).

The success in establishing the democratic peace and economic voting as key insights was, however, possible only because the research community started to build on the same resources. One key prerequisite of cumulation is thus the existence of some core data sets on which groups of scholars with different theoretical priors can rely. Obviously, building up such data sets does not solve all problems because researchers still might disagree over the proper definition of some key concepts or use different methods. Yet, without data that are accessible to many colleagues, we cannot even move to the stage of competitive testing.

Although the study of EU politics has developed considerably, we still lack scientific maturity in the key area of data accumulation and integration. On the positive side, conflict over the scope of study in many areas of EU research is no longer a crucial impediment to the advancement of knowledge. But few research communities have built a common data set that is sufficient to advance knowledge. One example is the study of public support for

integration. In that community, most scholars acknowledge a set of ground rules regarding the value and use of survey data in studying mass behaviour, the characteristics of competing models and the established empirical regularities. Consequently, scholarship in this field can focus on further developing these models and testing their implications. Richard Eichenberg's (1999) paper 'The Measurement Matters: Cumulation in the Study of Citizen Support for European Integration' attempts to do just that, by appealing to data that are publicly available and systematically collected: the Eurobarometer surveys conducted by the European Commission.

Another exception – one that, unfortunately, did not exert a great impact on the general field – is a volume on *European Community Decision Making* edited by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Frans Stokman (1994). In this work, these two scholars and their colleagues compare different decision-theoretic and game-theoretic explanations of decision-making in the EU. One key prerequisite for this joint endeavour was, however, again that all researchers relied on the same empirical source.

Unfortunately, most other communities of scholarship on EU politics are not similarly positioned to cumulate knowledge. As one observer recently wrote, 'European integration studies have found it difficult to produce cumulative research' (Hooghe, 2001: 1). This retardation of empirical research is not for lack of hypotheses to test. On the contrary, the imbalance between the number of novel theoretical propositions that make it into scientific journals and the quantity of replicated empirical findings is still extremely large. This situation cries out for empirical tests. But lacking a common set of data appropriate for testing competing models, and lacking serious efforts to integrate data sets on different aspects of EU politics, we rarely see empirical analyses that seriously evaluate alternative hypotheses (or even a null model) or see replication studies on 'key' findings.

Not surprisingly, whereas political scientists in other fields are developing new analytical tools at an accelerating rate, our empirical research has yet to generate any comparable methodological attention. We feel this is owing, at least in part, to the fractured nature of empirical work in our research community. In the absence of common data that are crucial to several scholars' work, the question of how best to analyse these data is irrelevant.

Existing data on preferences and on institutions and outcomes

We find ourselves in this state of affairs for a variety of reasons; for example, funding agencies often constrain the focus of data collection, scholars value

their intellectual property and communities of research are sometimes poorly coordinated. But improving the data infrastructure is crucial for the advancement of the field. To that end, we summarize some of the available data on (1) actors' preferences in EU politics (key independent variables in much EU research) and (2) the organization and activities of the EU institutions and the policy outcomes they produce (key dependent variables in much EU research). Because the proper definition of some other key concepts in political science (information, ideas, culture, etc.) is still hotly debated, we do not mention them here. Neither is it our aspiration to list all data sets. Instead, our focus is on existing data in these two areas, in order to specify the cumulation challenge more clearly.

Actors' preferences

Voters

A growing literature on EU politics considers mass political behaviour as relevant for understanding political outcomes, in particular the process of integration, and for evaluating the performance of the EU institutions (such as the quality of representation). For these questions, mass surveys provide valuable data regarding voter preferences and attitudes regarding European integration.

The most famous and widely used such survey is the Eurobarometer, which has been conducted regularly since 1970. Since the Eurobarometer will be the focus of a future Forum Section, we provide only a superficial description here. The Eurobarometer consists of mass surveys, funded by the European Commission, that are conducted by independent polling agencies in each of the EU member states. These surveys are of three general types. First, a core set of survey questions about citizen attitudes towards European integration is included in Eurobarometers twice a year. Each of these surveys also provides additional focus on a particular political, social or economic question, which is not repeated consistently over time. For example, as part of the European Election Study, the Eurobarometer includes a specific battery of questions in surveys close to elections to the European Parliament. Data on the responses to the core set of questions are combined in a cumulative data set, the *Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File (1970–1999)*, which allows for time-series analysis.¹ Second, the Commission carried out a European Continuous Tracking Survey (CTS) from 1994 to the end of 1998. The CTS sampled a much smaller number of respondents than the regular Eurobarometer, although the surveys were conducted in 44 weeks of the year. Yet it provides much needed time-series data regarding citizens' awareness of EU issues and attitudes toward institutional reforms, among other issues.² Finally, the

Commission conducts Flash Eurobarometer surveys, which are intermittent and focus on specific target groups and timely issues. For example, a recent survey focused on public attitudes in Ireland following the Irish referendum on the Nice Treaty.³

The value and prominence of the Eurobarometer are due in large part to its consistent application across member states and time. However, the price for this homogeneity of data is that the Eurobarometer often ignores substantive and interesting mass political issues specific to member state electorates. Fortunately, a variety of surveys have been conducted independently at the national level. The complete list of such surveys is enormous, and not all of these data are publicly available. But several EU member state governments have supported routine surveys that include questions about attitudes towards the European Union. For example, the British General Election Studies and French National Election Studies have been used fruitfully to study how issues of European integration affect national electoral politics (Evans, 1998; Scheve, 1999).

The Commission also surveys citizens of up to 20 East and Central European countries in a Central and Eastern Eurobarometer (CEEB), which was relaunched as the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer (CCEB) in 2001. The standard CEEB and CCEB monitor citizens' attitudes on economic and political issues and include a battery of questions regarding European integration and membership in the European Union. The survey is conducted once a year and goes back to 1990.⁴ The Commission has also conducted some special surveys in these countries to address particular issues.

Political parties

Political parties play an important role in many models of EU politics. National parties govern EU member states, contest European elections and organize into party groups in the European Parliament. Consequently, we are interested in identifying their preferences over policy. The policy preferences of national parties may influence the coalitions that form between member state governments and among national delegations in the European Parliament. They may also affect whether and how European issues influence national elections.

At the EU level, many national political parties – and their members serving in the EU institutions – participate in party federations based on ideological family. Hix and Lord (1997) contend that these party federations operate as effective umbrella organizations, structuring the policy agendas of their members in EU policy-making. Thus, we also would like estimates of the policy preferences of these 'Euro parties'.

Data on the policy preferences of national parties come generally from

three sources: expert surveys, mass surveys or manifesto statements. Several scholars have conducted surveys of political experts to identify the placement of national political parties on the left–right dimension, as well as on other policy scales. Castles and Mair (1984) and Huber and Inglehart (1995) estimate the left–right ideological positions of the parties competing in all the EU member states, except Greece.⁵

Leonard Ray (1999) conducted an expert survey that identifies national party positions on European integration, the importance of the issue to each party and the level of internal dissent within each party regarding European integration. Ray collected these data for the years 1984, 1988, 1992 and 1996. The appendix to Ray (1999) presents these data. Several expert surveys are also used to place parties on European integration in particular countries (see Ray, 1999: 285, for a description of these studies). Hooghe et al. (forthcoming) have extended this survey temporally and in specific policy areas. Their 1999 survey includes a measure of party support for European integration in seven policy areas: EU environmental policy, EU cohesion policy, EU asylum policy, EU employment policy, EU fiscal policy, EU foreign policy and expanding the European Parliament's power. They also ask experts to place parties on an economic left–right scale and a new politics scale.

An alternative method for estimating party positions is to infer these positions from the preferences of party supporters as gleaned from mass surveys. Eurobarometer 30 (1988), for example, asked respondents to evaluate the positions of the political parties in their national context. More generally, the Eurobarometer asks respondents to place themselves on a left–right dimension and to evaluate membership in the European Union and other aspects of European integration. Schneider (1995), Hix and Lord (1997) and König and Hug (2000), among others, used this source to place national parties and governments in terms of support for European integration.

Finally, scholars have estimated party policy positions with data on the policy statements of national party and European party federations from their election manifestos. The Manifestos Research Group (for example, Budge et al., 2001) has coded statements in national party manifestos into policy categories, including European integration. For placing parties on the left–right dimension, previous research offers a variety of data reduction techniques (see Gabel and Huber, 2000). To estimate parties' preferences regarding European integration, Carrubba (2001) focused exclusively on the prevalence of positive and negative manifesto statements regarding integration. Gabel and Hix (forthcoming) have used a similar method to assess the positions of European party federations on left–right and sovereignty dimensions. Using the coding technique of Laver and Garry (2000), they evaluated the manifestos of European party federations presented at European elections.

Interest groups

Data collection on interest groups in the EU has focused almost exclusively on the organizational character of groups rather than on their preferences in the EU policy process. For example, there have been numerous studies on the number of offices of interest groups in Brussels, the membership of these groups, their staffing levels and their budgets and sources of funding (such as Greenwood, 1997). Substantial information has also been collected on the connections between various interests groups and the actors in the EU institutions – such as the members of the European Parliament (for example, Wessels, 1999).

Probably the most comprehensive data collection project on the internal organization and operation of interest groups is Justin Greenwood's *Inside the EU Business Associations* (Greenwood, 2002). Part of the study involved detailed face-to-face interviews, following a structured questionnaire, with approximately 150 officials in over 50 EU business associations. Although the focus of these interviews was the organizational character of these associations, such as their membership structure and how they make representations to the EU institutions, a number of questions were asked from which policy preferences of the interest groups can be derived.

Another example of data collection on the behaviour of interest groups in the EU is David Coen's study of large firms in the EU (Coen, 1999). Part of this research involved a survey of how firms allocate resources in the process of trying to influence the EU policy process – for example, whether they are more likely to lobby their national government, the Commission or the European Parliament, or work through their national or European-level interest association. This information tells us a lot about how interests see power and access-points in the EU policy process. But the data do not say much about what policies these actors are trying to achieve when they are allocating resources to influence EU policy outcomes.

In short, as far as we are aware, no one has as yet attempted to conduct a detailed survey of interest groups' attitudes towards policy issues on the EU agenda. In most studies of EU policy-making where the role of interest groups is included in the analysis, the positions of these groups tend to be assumed deductively rather than based on systematic quantitative or qualitative data. A partial substitute is the Konstanz data set to be released in the second half of 2003. It contains information on the preferences and outcomes of the domestic pre-bargaining in four member states (Finland, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands) on 15 legislative proposals of the European Commission.

Governments and member states

Data on government negotiating positions rely on either secondary sources or surveys. An example of the former approach is to deduce from newspaper reports how the member states, the Commission and the European Parliament will vote on a particular piece of legislation. Garrett (1992) was one of the first to follow this particular strategy. He showed in a unidimensional model how the introduction of the Single European Act transformed the balance of power within the European Union. Many formal theorists have followed his lead and analysed the extent to which the European Parliament possesses agenda-setting power.

Although newspaper reports can be used to illustrate one particular case, their usefulness in a comparative setting is limited. This is why some scholars rely on Eurobarometer information to estimate the policy preferences of governments (for example, Schneider, 1995; König and Hug, 2000). One relatively infrequent strategy for gathering data on the preferences of governments and other EU actors is to conduct a survey of policy experts. Bueno de Mesquita and Stokman (1994) and König (1997) have interviewed experts to gather data on the positions of actors towards legislative proposals of the European Commission. König and Pöter (2001) demonstrate how such data can be successfully used to compare some of the competing spatial models of legislative choice in the European Union. In early 2002, a multinational research group concluded the collection of data on approximately 70 legislative proposals. This rich data set provides information on the saliency attributed to a particular issue and the occurrence of threats and promises throughout the negotiations. It will be made available in the second half of 2003.⁶

Political economy applications often rely on left–right scales to measure the ideological orientation of governments. One standard data set is the Comparative Manifesto Project (Budge et al., 2001). Its main advantage is that it captures the ideological position of a government from party programmes that the parties themselves, rather than experts, have formulated. However, there is limited variation in these positions over time. This reduces the explanatory power of such partisanship measures and similar political variables, such as government composition, in longitudinal research designs. More fine-grained preference profiles could be developed for the EU member states if a group of researchers were to follow, for instance, the path chosen by Susanne Lohmann (1998). In her analysis of the German monetary policy, Lohmann introduced different measures of German central bank independence, taking into account the political power distribution in the *Länder*.

Political and parliamentary elites

To study issues of representation, legislative politics and other elite-level aspects of EU politics empirically, scholars have collected a variety of data sets regarding elite preferences. The broadest such survey was the Top Decision Makers Survey sponsored by the European Commission. This data set, which was made available in 1996, consists of interviews with elected politicians, high-level civil servants, business and labour leaders, the media and persons playing a leading role in academic, cultural and religious life in the member states. These elites were asked about a variety of European issues, such as the perceived role of Europe in the world, attitudes to membership and benefits drawn from the EU and priorities for the EU in the next 10 years. These data are available in several data archives, including the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research in Cologne.⁷

Scholars have also assembled data on the preferences of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and members of national parliaments. First, the European Representation Study has assembled information relevant to questions of representation and electoral politics, particularly elections for the European Parliament. The study consists of four surveys: the European Election Study 1994;⁸ the European Candidates Study 1994, a survey of candidates for the European elections of 1994 in 12 countries; the Study of Members of the European Parliament 1996; and the European Members of Parliament Study (see Marsh and Norris, 1997; Katz and Wessels, 1999). The last two studies consist of surveys of members of the European Parliament and 11 national parliaments conducted in 1996 and 1997. These data are available from the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research in Cologne. The surveys included questions – compatible with each other and with the mass survey – about respondents' preferences regarding European integration, policy and institutional reform of the EU.

Second, several scholars have conducted surveys of national parliamentarians about their attitudes toward European integration. For example, a team of British researchers conducted a survey in 1994 of the attitudes of British parliamentarians towards European integration (see, *inter alia*, Baker, 1998). The British data are available at the European Consortium for Political Research Data Archive, based at Essex University.⁹

Third, a number of scholars have investigated the preferences and attitudes of MEPs independently of the European Representation Study. Luciano Bardi (1989) conducted the first detailed survey of MEP attitudes. Bowler and Farrell (1993) followed with a survey of 200 MEPs, investigating their links to their constituents and how the electoral rules of their member state affected their behaviour in the EP. Raunio (2000) interviewed MEPs regarding their links to national parties and their process of candidate selection, from which

the influence of national party positions on MEP behaviour can be derived. In December 1999, the European Parliament Research Group conducted a detailed survey of the MEPs in the fifth directly elected parliament. This included a batch of questions asking the MEPs to locate themselves on a series of basic ideological dimensions (such as left–right and pro–/anti Europe), as well as on some 40 policy issues on the EU agenda.¹⁰

Hix (2001) and Noury (2002) use data from roll-call votes in the European Parliament (EP) to identify MEPs' ideal point in the policy space of the European Parliament. This involves applying the NOMINATE statistical procedure, developed for the study of voting behaviour in the US Congress, to voting behaviour in the European Parliament in 1984–9 and 1989–94 (Noury) and 1999–2001 (Hix). The result is a predominately two-dimensional space (left–right and pro–anti Europe), with specific locations for each individual MEP on each of these dimensions in each period. Kreppel and Tsebelis (1999) apply correspondence analysis to the positions of national parties in roll-call votes in the 1994–9 parliament, and come to similar conclusions to those of Noury and Hix about the ideological structure of voting in the EP: that it is two-dimensional and positions in this space are determined by transnational party affiliation rather than national interests. The confirmation of this finding shows why cumulation is important. It particularly demonstrates that the usage of different methods (NOMINATE or correspondence analysis) does not affect the main insight.

On attitudes within the Commission, Liesbet Hooghe (2001) conducted approximately 250 interviews and questionnaires with senior officials in the administration of the Commission. The focus of these questionnaires was to assess these officials' attitudes towards European integration and the EU policy agenda, and whether these attitudes are shaped by individual ideological views, national affiliation, political party support, interest group links, employment in a particular directorate-general or service of the Commission, or other factors.¹¹

Institutional organization, activities and policy outcomes

A huge amount of detailed information about the operation of the EU institutions and the policy activities and outputs of the EU can be found on the EU's website. The problem, however, is that this information does not appear in a general form.¹²

The Commission

Current data on the basic organization and budget of the directorates-general and other services of the Commission are readily available on the

Commission website.¹³ It is more difficult to obtain comprehensive data on how the organization and individual budgets of the internal administration of the Commission have evolved over time. There have been several detailed studies of the internal organization and staffing of the Commission (such as Page, 1997). Most of this information is available in the annual General Reports of the European Commission. However, the data in these various studies and reports are not available in an integrated form. This lack of a common format also hinders comparison of the different advisory committees on which the European Commission relies. Although these advisory boards are forced to reveal substantial information about their deliberations since the BSE scandal, it is still impossible to unmask the source of opposition on some occasions.¹⁴

Similarly, at the level of the College of Commissioners, most research on the Commission includes information about the Commissioners' previous careers, national and European partisan affiliations and make-up of their cabinets. However, again, this information is scattered between several studies, and has not been integrated into a single data set stretching back more than 20 years, let alone to the days of the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community.

The Council

The situation as regards the Council is a mirror image of that of the Commission. Current information on the organization and activities of this inter-governmental institution is available on its website.¹⁵ In addition, numerous works on the Council have documented in great detail the internal rules, organization, operation and membership of the Council at their time of writing (such as Westlake, 1995; Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace, 1997). Limited information is also available on an annual basis in the Annual Reports of the Council of the European Communities/Union. But, as with the Commission, multi-annual data on the Council are not readily available in a collated and regularly updated form.

Some systematic, but still rudimentary, information is available on Council voting since 1994. This has led to some studies that attempt to examine the voting behaviour in the intergovernmental setting. In particular, Mattila and Lane (2001) apply multidimensional scaling to all recorded votes in the Council between 1994 and 1998. The result is a two-dimensional policy space and some surprising results; in particular, Germany is the most likely member state either to exercise a (losing) negative vote or to abstain. However, it was also clear from this analysis that only a minority of issues are put to a formal vote in the Council. This might also explain the finding by Mattila and Lane (2001) of a very high number of unanimous votes in the Council.

The lack of data on Council decision-making is simply a consequence of the lack of transparency that surrounds this institution. Although we now have the possibility to access the final voting result, we do not have systematic information on the amendments made during the deliberations of the ministers of the member states. It is thus still not possible to reconstruct in every detail what positions a government took and whether it lived up to a possible negotiation mandate from its domestic constituents. The situation is even worse for the European Council, where the public does not even know the agenda under discussion. The preferences of the member states have been reconstructed only for the Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs) and thus not for the regular summit meetings of the heads of government and state. Bräuninger et al. (2001) as well as Hug and König (forthcoming) analyse the IGC negotiations based on a detailed content analysis of the pre-bargaining documents of the EU institutions and member states.

The European Parliament

As the most transparent EU institution, in terms of public access to minutes, committees and votes, and as the most explicitly 'political' EU institution, it is perhaps not surprising that more data have been systematically collected on the European Parliament than on the Commission or Council. Again, current data on the organization and activities of the parties and committees and information on individual MEPs are available on the European Parliament's website.¹⁶

In contrast to the main textbooks on the other institutions, the leading introduction on the European Parliament (Corbett et al., 2000) contains a great deal of historical data – at least on the full period of direct election of the Parliament – such as the party make-up, the structure of the committees and the results of key votes. Similarly, a large amount of information on the evolution of the membership and organization of the party groups in the European Parliament can be found in Hix and Lord (1997), Raunio (1997) and Kreppel (2002).

In a major collaborative data-collection project, Simon Hix, Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland have collected the total population of roll-call votes in the European Parliament – a total of over 12,000 votes by more than 2000 MEPs (see Hix et al., 2002). These data should be publicly available at the end of the current parliament in 2004.

On data relating to outputs from the European Parliament, George Tsebellis and his collaborators tracked the full history of all European Parliament amendments to 131 pieces of EU legislation between 1989 and 1993.¹⁷ These amendment data enabled the first large-n empirical test of theoretical claims about the powers of the Parliament under the co-operation and co-decision procedures to be carried out (Kreppel, 1999; Tsebellis et al., 2001).

However, as with the Commission and the Council, many of the data on the Parliament have not been systematically collected. For example, we do not yet have an integrated data set from the full period of direct election on the membership of the committees, the assignment of committee positions and rapporteurships, the changes to the Parliament's rules of procedure, dates of service of MEPs (and their national party and party group affiliations) or the background and career path of MEPs since 1979.

The European Court of Justice

Until relatively recently, research on the European Court of Justice (ECJ) was the preserve of legal scholars. Most scholarship focused on explaining or arguing the legal consistency or implications of particular ECJ rulings or opinions. As a result, unlike the study of courts in the USA, few systematic data have been collected on the type of ECJ judgments in particular policy areas and on the success or failure rate of different actors or interests before the Court.

Nevertheless, data have started to be collected on other aspects of the organization and operation of the EU's judicial authority. One prominent example is Stone Sweet and Brunell (1998), who collected data on all references to the ECJ by national courts between 1961 and 1993 and on the policy area in which these references were made. Alter (2000) collects a similar data set, for the period 1961–97, from the Annual Reports of the ECJ. A large data set has also been compiled at the University of Virginia on national court compliance with ECJ decisions in preliminary reference cases between 1958 and 2000.¹⁸

Legislative and policy outputs

Most of the outputs of the EU institutions – from non-binding resolutions in the European Parliament, to directives and regulations from the Council and Parliament and decisions by the Commission – are available in the *Official Journal*. The complete collection of the legislative output of the EU is available through EUR-LEX.¹⁹ The *Annual Bulletin* of the European Communities/Union contains detailed information on the activities and outputs of all the institutions in each year. The full history of individual pieces of legislation – from the original proposal, via opinions in committees of the Parliament, to final decisions of the institutions – can be found on the European Parliament's Legislative Observatory.²⁰

However, it is striking how little research has been conducted that systematically integrates these various output data in order to explain variations in outputs of the EU system. Two exceptions are the studies by Golub (1999) and Schulz and König (2000), which seek to explain the variation in

time-lag between the initial proposal by the Commission and final adoption by the Council for all legislation between 1974 and 1995 (Golub) and between 1984 and 1994 (Schulz and König). Another exception is the research by Franchino (2001), which systematically measures the amount of delegation and discretion (by the governments to the Commission and the national administrations) contained in all the major pieces of legislation.

Where to go from here? An agenda for cumulation

It would be wrong to conclude from our evaluation that we simply need more data. Obviously, more data are generally better than fewer data. But it has to be acknowledged that many scholars already gather data and that these individual attempts often lead to impressive contributions. A case in point is Ray (1999), who collected national party positions on European integration. The problem with the current data-gathering efforts is thus not so much the quantity but rather the difficulties in integrating the individual efforts. What we need are research efforts that overcome this problem of fragmentation and that trace representative samples of decision-making cases from their beginning to their end. Currently, we tend to focus on one episode – say, the implementation of some regulations, whose selection might bias our results in favour of specific hypotheses. Yet, in quantitative and qualitative research on the European Union, we lack sufficient development of optimal strategies of case selection. On the contrary, it seems that our personal predilections often guide our research design. This is probably one reason case studies in the domain of environmental politics still outnumber policy evaluations in much more representative fields of EU legislation such as agriculture or fisheries.

One further, and certainly the most political, problem is that much information – for example, the protocols of the Council of Ministers – is not available to the research community. The lack of transparency on behaviour in the Council has hindered our understanding of whether or not oversized coalitions really occur as frequently as is claimed by Mattila and Lane (2001) or whether or not inefficient vote-trading is the norm rather than the exception in the intergovernmental arena. In general, we possess much more information on the supranational institutions, such as the Parliament, than on the intergovernmental ones. This enables us increasingly to test theories in which these institutions play an important role. Competitive evaluations of theoretical claims are, however, not yet possible in domains in which the less data-rich institutions matter.

Although this dearth of cumulation is deplorable, we, as a research

community, do not have to accept this state of affairs. Improvements are, however, not very likely if the research community cannot overcome the collective action problem faced by cumulative research. We thus propose a series of reforms that would create what Olson (1965) called selective incentives and institutions to lower the motivation to free ride.

- 1 **Rewarding systematic data collection.** One major impediment to cumulative research is that scholars do not have sufficiently high incentives to engage in the painstaking effort to accumulate data or to replicate studies by their colleagues. University boards who decide on the appointment or promotion of young academics judge only the end product of a project – the number of published articles and books – and not the effort that goes into them. This output perspective works to the disadvantage of colleagues who collect their own data and pushes them toward research areas in which data already exist. One easy way around this problem is to encourage people to list the data sets they have created on their websites. A more important incentive is the opportunity to publish short articles in which major new data sets or updates of existing data sets are announced and described. As editors of *European Union Politics*, we would be most happy to publish such articles in the future and encourage the community to send us such articles.
- 2 **Encouraging collaborative data collection.** One success story in comparative research is the Comparative Manifesto Project (Budge et al., 2001). Its success is due to its ability to gather together a large number of people to collect data over a long time period. However, such projects require repeated funding from research foundations, government agencies or the European Union. Because funding for research projects is most often thematic, data projects face considerable difficulties. It would, however, help a great deal if one segment of the research budget going to the social sciences were reserved for the development and updating of important data resources that the research community needs. Such projects could be attractive to government officials. For example, a project that would interest the EU institutions and the research community alike would be the systematic gathering of data on the professional backgrounds of key decision makers, the composition and agendas of committees and the position of member states on EU legislation and treaty amendments.
- 3 **Inciting measurement discussions.** In the 1970s, extensive discussions took place in the social sciences over the proper way to operationalize some important concepts. Three decades later these discussions have, more or less, completely disappeared and have given way to other

debates. The field of European Union politics can, however, become more cumulative only if we devote energy to some very mundane questions: How do we measure actors' preferences in EU politics? How reliable are expert interviews? How do we measure the content of EU policy outputs? At the moment, there is no intensive debate on such issues. It is our intention to change this by publishing short research notes on these topics. Through such discussion, we can improve the quality of the data we collect.

- 4 **Making institutions (and researchers) more accountable.** Although this recommendation may sound trite, it is high time that the European public became capable of tracing how EU institutions make decisions. One of the main consequences of more transparency will be the possibility of building encompassing data sets. Openness is a requirement that is also playing an increasing role in the research community. In line with other research journals, *EUP* asks authors to submit their data sets upon publication of their articles. We are, however, still far from a true replication policy, whereby the data would be sent to the editors at the time of submission. It is possible that *EUP* and other journals will move to such a policy relatively soon. Because articles with replication data sets are more frequently cited than are articles without them (Gleditsch et al., 2002), authors have an incentive to submit their data early.

We strongly believe that advanced research on the European Union will become more cumulative and exciting if some of our recommendations are followed.

Notes

- 1 <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/eurotrend/Homepage.html> (all websites cited in the notes were last consulted on 20 June 2002). The Eurobarometer survey data are available through several data archives, including the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu>) and the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research in Cologne (<http://www.gesis.org/en/za/>).
- 2 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eo_en.htm.
- 3 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/flash_arch.htm.
- 4 See for instance http://www.gesis.org/en/data_service/eurobarometer/ceeb/.
- 5 See the above citations for access to these data. Mavgordatos (1984) provides estimates for Greece.
- 6 The data set will most likely be posted at <http://www.niwi.knaw.nl/us/homepag.htm>.
- 7 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/top/top_en.htm.

- 8 The mass surveys are part of the Eurobarometer survey and focus on voting behaviour and electoral issues in addition to the typical attention to attitudes towards European integration.
- 9 <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/findingData/introduction.asp>.
- 10 See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/depts/eprg/data.htm>.
- 11 <http://www.unc.edu/%7Ehooghe/data.htm>.
- 12 http://www.europa.eu.int/index_en.htm.
- 13 http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm.
- 14 http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sc/index_en.html.
- 15 <http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm>.
- 16 http://www.europarl.eu.int/home/default_en.htm.
- 17 <http://www.ssenet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/tsebelis/eurodata.html>.
- 18 <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/ecj/>.
- 19 <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/index.html>.
- 20 <http://wwwdb.europarl.eu.int/dors/oeil/en/default.htm>.

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