

# THE REJUVENATION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES THROUGH A PRACTICE-GUIDED ANTHROPOLOGICAL GAZE

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## ABSTRACT

This article elaborates on the valuable resources offered by the Bourdieu-inspired contemporary practice theory to broaden the scholarly understanding of European Union (EU) studies. The time-wise, geography-wise and responsibilities-wise contextualised selves of scholars retain a prominent role in the production of contemporary scholarship. It is their own authorship and understanding of the chosen setting that seeps so prominently through their academically rigorous accounts. Their specific selection of human informants and the acquisition of diverse empirical data from responsive individuals are subject to their own meanings attributed to specific institutional fields, evolving collegialities, and dynamic social relationalities. The individual lenses and their fleeting character have a prominent role in Bourdieu-inspired contemporary practice theory. The latest practice scholarship elucidates that authorship is comprehensively situated as well.

**KEY WORDS:** *Bourdieu-inspired contemporary practice theory, European Union studies, self-reflexivity, academic careers, regionalisms.*

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## Introduction

This Bourdieu-inspired contemporary practice theory article offers conducive conceptual pathways and considerations tied to the expanding methodological toolbox in political science. The aim is to encourage a more pronounced onboarding of various methodological elements into political science studies to increase the overall explanatory potential of the future research outputs. This article builds upon a multifaceted scholarly enquiry into cross-disciplinary research and the experiences of cross-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary research groups hosted in various advanced education, research and training centres adjacent to several regional and international organisations (for example, see Šime, 2024). In essence, practices are ‘socially meaningful patterns of action’ (Bremberg, 2024, 514). They are performed through ‘conscious role-playing’ attuned to the formal and informal routines of appropriate behaviour in specific social circles (Michalski, Danielson, 2020, 333–334, 340). Among the key elements of many studies of practices is background knowledge or prior accumulated expertise. This intellectual ownership informs, motivates and guides the conduct of certain routines (Bremberg, 2024, 515; Sjöberg, 2024, 270–271).

This article is guided by the following research question: What resources does Bourdieu-inspired contemporary practice theory offer to broaden the scholarly understanding of European Union (EU) studies? The answer is relevant to the broader realm of social sciences. Furthermore, the answer to this question is not

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one-sided and exclusively congratulatory of the accomplishments of the selected practice theory scholarship. Namely, the article includes some points concerning the challenges that arise from an increasing reliance on practice theory-founded findings. The research question is formulated with a full awareness of the need to pay sufficient attention to the design balance of the research. The research question is attuned to the scholarly preoccupation of keeping clear and measured research goals in parallel with an expansion of selected and applied methods. Thereby, this is not an unequivocal call to argue for the supremacy of practice theory in comparison with other more established theoretical currents in political science and the social sciences more broadly. Instead, this article gives a balanced account of the role that practice theory takes in the overall analytical landscape of political science, particularly in the context of EU studies. The chosen scope of EU studies helps not to overgeneralise or water down the analytical take on the chosen topic. The scope of the selected EU studies builds on the prior academic acknowledgement that scholars from this domain ‘have made landmark contributions to all major subfields of political science’ (Hodson, Puetter, 2018, 470). Thus, it is a notable domain of political science to explore future scholarly pathways.

Practice scholars make many sociological and anthropological considerations more understandable to political scientists, especially those who are preoccupied with multi-level governance, new institutionalisms and regionalism studies. For instance, the restrictions of the pandemic accelerated the overall receptivity to heterogeneous interpretative methods such as autoethnography and netnography. Partially, it makes new governance more prominent by allocating more analytical attention to networks and a broad range of entities with some agency capacity on the international scene (Granum Carson, 2025, 21). Furthermore, qualitative approaches such as narrative analysis, analytical narrative and multiple ways of processing virtual and on-site field notes further the creative combinations of methods to offer some curiosity-driven inventiveness in several thematic strands of studies adjacent to political science. The new and emerging mediums of communication and meaning-making have to be continuously accounted for in the methodological toolbox and the exploration of relevant empirical material.

Both findings from studies developed in an anthropological disciplinary manner and elements from the anthropological toolbox imported into the political science scholarship help to clarify some under-researched aspects of typical topics in political science, such as statecraft and the routines of multiple levels of public administration. While scholars of public administration offer a systematised picture of the prevailing formats in which policymakers acquire multidisciplinary knowledge from a range of scientific disciplines (for example, see Capano et al., 2024, 745), practice scholars offer a more fine-grained picture of what these forms of expertise provision put in motion in terms of the overall circulation and context-specific moulding of knowledge, including before and beyond the time frame of the examined expert formats. The competition among election observation organisations in Tunisia noted by Holthaus (2025, 7) is one of the most vivid recent examples.

Arguably, a considerable share of prolific scholars of practices write their works without being highly preoccupied with disciplinary demarcations. Thus, their intellectual wanderings may easily traverse disciplinary boundaries, and obtain some cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary elements.

The main points elaborated in this article are crafted from several years of doctoral research and various advanced research engagements that occurred in parallel with the preparation of the doctoral work (Šime, 2026). This remark is meant to spare the article extensive references to the author’s own prior published research. Although largely based on the most recent studies on various facets of the EU, the literature review in this article is not restricted solely to EU studies. In the spirit of cross-disciplinary research, there are passages where recent scholarship on the EU did not offer an extensive existing body of knowledge or relevant findings, and those draw upon relevant scholarship from other disciplines that are worth incorporating in a comprehensive outlook on present trends and future directions of the academic enquiry into the EU.

## 1. Cross-disciplinary introspection: generalising through reliance on perspectives

This section summarises several aspects of how practice scholarship draws on several domains of the social sciences to develop more thorough and more nuanced conclusions concerning the studied phenomena

of EU studies and EU external action milieus and quotidian routines. This article recognises that, when doing research, it is essential to take a stance and prioritise. Thereby, the article argues that the established political science studies research threads (noted also by Gibbon, Sylvester, 2017, 253) and their ongoing work will not become more convincing solely by expanding their empirical scope and offering more longitudinal studies. Without contesting the importance of that work, this article argues that the further enhancement of political science analysis and methodology should embrace practice theory-guided considerations, and the burgeoning contemporary scholarship founded on Bourdieu's intellectual heritage.

Moreover, anthropology thickens the contextualisation of some complex and intertwined processes that some classic and widely adopted approaches in political science, such as the qualitative content analysis of official documents, cannot deliver. This observation is based on recent findings founded on well-established research design elements for the study of various documents. Two illustrative examples are Torrejón Rodríguez's (2018) analysis of the documents adopted at the European Parliament concerning the Western Sahara, and Petrović, Petri and Biedenkopf's (2022, 429) qualitative content analysis of the plenary interventions made by the members of the European Parliament concerning the role of China and India in the evolving global climate governance. Recalling the following studies devoted to the EU executive branch, the EU trade discourse analysis by Couvreur et al. (2022), with a focus on the College of Commissioners and directors-general of the European Commission and the EU trade frame analysis based on the strategic plans and annual management plans of the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission by Christou and Damro (2024) are telling examples to solidify the stance that an anthropological gaze is essential to amplify the contextual awareness beyond these officially worded analysis-centred research outputs. The anthropological take goes beyond an enquiry into the public statements of senior political and bureaucratic leadership, and institutional stances captured in routine institutional documentation. Interpretative and highly context-specific insights pose challenges for generalising findings. Nevertheless, without these conclusions, political science scholarship would risk not fully realising the situatedness of all findings. At the very least, science diplomacy scholarship might miss out on a lot of its valuable angles (Barrett et al., 2024, 274–276).

Most importantly, the sociological and anthropological enquiry into various expert circles and institutional milieus does not only inform about these chosen research topics. The methodological intricacies require some introspection from the researcher or the research group into their own motivations, feelings, and most memorable episodes about the experienced interactions. In comparison, the visual and aesthetic turn demonstrates the profound importance of visibility and sensorial stimulus (Moze, Spiegel, 2022, 3). This turn in international relations seeks to explore emotional and affective stances (Hozic, 2017, 203; Steele, 2017, 213), such as those that are taken by the creators of certain artistic decorum in notable diplomacy settings and buildings. For example, Ruijter (2023, 199) invites the further study of perceptions of artistic installations shared by the visitors. The pandemic destabilised the 'scripted routines of multilateral diplomacy', and offered a space for creative inventions for status, positionality and prestige projection via various elements employed during video calls (Danielson, Hedling, 2022, 245). These studies deliver contemporary insights to the existing body of science diplomacy scholarship concerning the historical role of 'iconographic material' (Grevsmühl, Briday, 2023, 267), and publicly staged and politically curated appearances of notable figures in international scientific circles (Medori, 2023, 182–183). The Curies are one, but far from the only, example of such intellectual rites. The Curies' accomplishments in various societal causes and some burning societal challenges are continuously being reinterpreted.

This article also stresses the importance of introspection exerted by the scholar himself or herself. Shepherd (2017, 221) neatly captures the fact that, irrespective of whether a particular research enquiry examines humans, words, images, or any other kind of material, a scholar must be fully aware that her or his every decision made throughout the scholarly work poses certain implications on the overall chain of choices and their corresponding results. The various smaller and bigger possibilities pursued by the scholar during the research stages make a difference. The weighting of some options, and choosing one or some over the rest, are consequential. These are not neutral decisions. Many of these choices are rigorous in their own unique way. Thereby, academic rigour in itself is contextual and situated.

To build on Loukianov (2023, 154) and Mauger (2025, 6), the uniqueness of everyone's sensing, acumen and attendance of the world requires fully acknowledging that the specificities of such individual ways of perceiving should be acknowledged as much as possible not only among human informants in a study but also concerning the scholar or co-authors of the study. This is where individual relationality gains weight. The author or group of co-authors are not neutral, distant and innocent observers. The author has strong agency. Through scholarly engagement; this individual puts in motion certain relationality dynamics. This introspective component is an equally important element for all the intertwining perspectives and positionalities that feed into the research method, the exploration of the empirical findings, and the drawing of conclusions.

Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that some academic affiliation considerations intrude into the overall reasoning mode, such as individual positionality in the routine university or institute, departmental or unit-level performance evaluation, and the desired individual or aggregated metrics (Borlaug, Jungblut, 2025, 100; Hokka, 2023, 1334; Pölonen *ir kt.*, 2021, 77–78; Sivertsen, Aagaard, 2025). 'The construction of subjectivity in academia is similarly influenced by economisation and metricisation. Research evaluation systems in particular aim to encourage certain practices in individual researchers' (Krawczyk, Szadkowski, Kulczycki, 2023, 270). These are everyday considerations that cannot be completely separated from scholarly engagement, because that intellectual enquiry is so profoundly influenced by the evolving performance, appraisal, nudging, and internal and external funding allocation principles. While researchers attempt to better understand the routines of their selected theme of EU studies, they cannot detach this intellectual devotion from the routine administrative environment and their employment conditions, which impose certain constraints and reward structures on their intellectual engagement. To put it simply, their intellectual horizons are far from infinite. Many of them do not have the luxury to pursue blue-sky science. A considerable part of contemporary research is financially conditioned academic or grey literature output. These deliverables are channelled through platforms and review processes that are selected based on administrative convenience and compliance with binding research management guidelines.

Moreover, the strong relationality component of the study of practices in such a manner combines what the researcher or group of researchers perform in a strictly academic sense with what and how they feel about those experiences in the light of all their prior academic and professional experiences, intellectual accomplishments and formative stages. These are essential considerations to better understand what multi-dimensional motivations guide the contemporary advancement of political science and EU studies. As Hokka (2024, 909) stresses, these are people with perspectives, judgement and emotional stages strongly related to people, places and ideas that shape the production of academic knowledge. In the aesthetic turn, these insights are referred to as 'the rendition of the self through the consumption of experiences' (Belfrage, Gammon, 2017, 229), or simply 'lived experiences' (Pusca, 2017, 235). This article invites us to bring into the scope of the analysis, in a more nuanced manner, their individual and collective agency. These agential routines feed into the overall process of meaning-making. Thereby, this accumulated agency is indispensable to understand how established or novel academic knowledge gets instituted, reproduced and reinterpreted under current management conditions governing science, advanced research, technological development and innovation domains.

It is essential to note that the present-day Bourdieu-inspired manner of personal reflection on practices in advanced analytical terms does not resemble the established tradition of memoirs or personal recitals. With reference to Etkind (2004, 41, 56), writing memoirs is mostly an individual engagement to construct a longitudinal past experiential trajectory. For some, memoirs are a means to legitimise and explain the overall virtue of their past actions, impactful decisions, and corresponding positive outcomes. Some memoirs are self-made restitutions against the minutiae of criticism and blame games experienced during the running of the speedy policy and media treadmill. Thereby, memoirs become one direct public communication channel to directly address diverse audiences. This is the aspect that connects memoirs with book diplomacy. Hadadian-Moghaddam and Khalifa (2024, 62) refer to the term 'book diplomacy' as occasions when books are used 'in cultural diplomacy to achieve foreign policy goals [and] involve state and non-state cooperation in activities like book translation programs, book donations, book exchanges, and the like'. To add one more term to the continuously increasing number of niche diplomacies, this article refers to the specific genre of internationally accessible literature as 'memoir diplomacy'. This new term helps to distinguish occasions

when memoirs serve as tools of strategic communication and means to inform certain audiences abroad about relatively distant past personal experiences to contribute to the overall understanding and awareness of developments tied to a specific country, multilateral format or institution, and the favoured meaning to be associated with these former notable processes. Thereby, a memoir encapsulates a certain narrative, even *doxa*; in other words, the taken-for-granted truth concerning how and what should be understood and praised in relation to the selected country, multilateral format, institution or event (or sequence of events).

Contemporary practice scholarship goes beyond the well-informed review of academic publications, such as Håkansson's (2024, 373) on contemporary institutional evolution, for instance, and the increased weight of the Secretariat-General of the European Commission. Likewise, practice scholarship surpasses chronological academic overviews of various considerations tied to the enduring domestic debate on EU membership, such as the one recently co-authored by Rieker, Riddervold and Gunnarsdottir (2023) with a focus on fine-tuned EU defence and security policies amidst Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Most importantly, the scholarship of practices does not wipe the dust off the under-studied events of the grand old days of EU studies, such as Delors' 'saga of "Social Europe"'. This example refers to the unsuccessful attempt by the acclaimed president of the European Commission to strengthen the supranational social dimension of the Union (Bitumi, 2018, 210; Ross, Jenson, 2017, 122–123). Or, going even further back in time, the preoccupation with contemporary dynamics does not stress the importance of revisiting in great nuance the historical factors shaping European integration, such as the convergence of social standards across countries referred to by Kouli and Laborie (2022, 161) as 'a social Europe avant la lettre'. Practice scholarship cherishes and prioritises repositories other than archival paper stacks and vintage office binders. Unfortunately, the expanding online repositories that are developed by scholars and administrators of digital humanities, with the most prominent convening role shouldered by the Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (DARIAH), are of equally little relevance to practice theorists (Blümm, Schmunk, 2016; Candela et al., 2025; Candela, Rosiński, Margraf, 2025). However, the potential to work more closely with digital humanists in the future should not be completely ruled out. Currently, practice scholars tap into other, so far rather underexamined, media, with a considerably eclectic zest, to give a more in-depth meaning to a very recent past, present and relatively near future.

In essence, today's practice scholarship opens the door to sites and personal office spaces of experts and officers who are still working, or, due to the recent conclusion of some of their duties, remain intellectually and emotionally enmeshed in the glitz and contradictions of contemporary EU policies-related processes and meeting spaces. Science diplomacy scholars, such as Epping (2023, 320), propose to chase more of these insights via the 'in-depth analysis of on-site locations' as well. The overall saliency for tapping into a myriad of empirical data is the eagerness to explore how the articulation of national interest shapes staffing and internal work dynamics at EU institutions (Demmke, 2025; Hornát et al., 2023, 1633). Researchers continuously like offering their views on who matters, and why they are influential, controversial or resonant, or on the contrary, insignificant, ignored or misunderstood. Scholars show considerable zest in offering views of how the individuals they have chosen to study build a rapport on various administrative levels at EU institutions and with external interlocutors. These are preoccupations with contemporary dynamics and all the high-voltage social milieus that come with it, including the apprehension that this setting is too dense, too ubiquitous, and too fluid to be fully documented or grasped in a thick monograph or a dedicated series of books. However, this challenge of properly accounting for all the dimensions of the studied social space is not an excuse for not engaging with it in a contemporary Bourdieusian practice theory manner. It is simply an acknowledgement of a healthy dose of humility on the part of the scholar as the active meaning-maker of his or her prioritised, gathered and systematised elements concerning this multi-perspective chimaera.

This is indispensable research, because not all former employees have the luxury of writing entire books relatively soon after concluding their work, such as Claessens' (2023) valuable and nuanced personal account of his professional and personal experiences while working at the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). Another vivid example is Salla's (2021, 90, 135, 189, 195) doctoral dissertation on the gradual increase in the power and political weight of the European Commission during the euro crisis that she prepared in parallel with her temporary agent duties at the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), the

former European Commission's in-house think-tank. By the time many emblematic officials reach retirement, a considerable share of their personal reflections has transformed and gained multiple additional layers stemming from other life experiences. These additional layers taint the initial impressions and emotions provoked by immediate developments during the crucial days of their active duties. Or, as Epping (2023, 127) notes, retrospective accounts might be skewed towards portraying one's own actions, positionality and statements in a positive light. Building on Kaiser (2025, 42), this could be considered a somewhat tainted perspectivity that has been overpopulated with too many subsequently accumulated biases and afterthoughts. Some remarks made on the way Norwegian research governance is shaped by people who take on responsibilities, and, along with this engagement, make their own ideas more prominent (Wittrock et al., 2025, 62), are a helpful example. This piece of research assists in arguing that it is notably important to perform some analytical enquiries before considerably decisive individuals have started to become overwhelmingly preoccupied with other institutional milieus and the new responsibilities assigned to them. To translate this point into an EU setting, an individual who is stupendously preoccupied with daily routines tied to the constant enactment of the post-Westphalian telos is a much more resourceful human informant than a person who has already distanced himself from the urgencies and pressing needs of 'an ever closer union' in favour of new professional milestones. Individual or collective retrospectivity, combined with daily preoccupations with exigencies other than Union ones, is a tainted account, because it does not project only the EU's momentousness.

The study of contemporary supranational governance characteristics cannot be left solely for some research projects to be conducted in the decades to come. Some of it already happens and should continue to happen simultaneously or shortly after some noteworthy event or political advancement. Therefore, with their openness to using diverse methodological approaches, practice scholars perform notable intellectual work in maintaining European Studies research as multi-perspective and more representative of diverse professional, institutional and geographically situated perspectives than some more established political science compartments might accomplish on their own. Similar enquiries into policy milieus other than the EU one are worth pursuing. These would bring equally interesting insights to the existing body of political science scholarship.

To conclude, the individual sense-making of EU governance processes is shaped by a myriad of facets of enduring academic exploration appeal. To offer some more context on how this compelling domain of enquiry is met by administrative and other regulations stipulated in the academic management framework, the next section elaborates more on the peripeties with time.

## 2. Research as a time and resource-constrained errand

This section outlines some of the recently widely debated matters of time management and time allocation in advanced research and career-enhancing writing and publishing pursuits. These are informative episodes about some European sentiments of the day across the academically productive workforce. Perspectives on the processed data and empirical material are inescapable. The anthropological take on some traditional political science themes and conceptual elements renders this embeddedness in a specific context much more apparent. The intellectual influences of the day, the time, and parallel duties at the employment institution come to light. An equally important imprint on the research process and outputs is exerted by the resource constraints felt by the research implementers due to the funding strings attached. This readiness to combine political science and anthropological study elements is often not simply a matter of skill. More importantly, it is about properly allocating time and attention to interact with other academic communities, and listen across disciplinary boundaries. Among the terms used to refer to such practices are 'slow spaces' (Blanchard, Bjørnerud, 2025, 121) and 'thinking spaces' (Bleiker, 2017, 260). For instance, 'boundary organisations' is a term used to refer to entities that foster stronger interdisciplinary ties in close alignment with policy considerations (Sobral et al., 2024, 3, 9). Overall, there is plenty of enthusiasm to draw on. This list of examples is not exhaustive. These three examples are stated concisely for illustrative purposes.

Firstly, such a readiness to foster a more interdisciplinary approach is shown among the leading scholars of energy justice (Heffron, McCauley, 2017, 664). Researchers from various disciplines, including some with

substantial high-level political experience, study social prosperity (Czarnecka, Krazniewski, 2024, 195). The ongoing energy transition brings comprehensive changes, with substantial implications for societies, thus raising several questions concerning the exact practical implications and responsibilities to be shouldered by EU member states (Kaschny, 2023; Kaschny, Lavrijssen, 2023, 736). This ambiguity merits an analytical assessment from the standpoint of several academic disciplines.

Secondly, science diplomacy is framed as ‘an umbrella of approaches and practices’, spanning multiple advanced research domains (Barrett, Homei, 2024, 171). Science diplomacy is described as a broad, heterogeneous and evolving concept that is regularly enriched by many thinkers, policy experts and researchers worldwide (Beltran et al., 2024, 241). Historical case studies, for example, on economic botany expeditions in the 18th century, inform about the intersections between various sciences captured in the mission of the respective expedition, and the multidisciplinary expertise of the expeditionary team (Morrison, 2017). In a contemporary EU setting, science diplomacy is seen as an important enabler of societal transformation (Ordoñez de Pablos, 2024, 221).

Thirdly, Norwegian research funders have invested in attempts to engage in genuine transdisciplinarity and radical interdisciplinarity (Granum Carson, Kaiser, 2025, 272–273). It is noteworthy that the Norwegian political leadership goes against the European mainstream by aiming to increase the basic funding for higher education institutions and removing performance metrics from research oversight (Solberg, Drange, 2025, 82). Many obstacles have already been expressed in recent studies. The following are vivid examples: ‘interdisciplinary and unconventional research is disfavoured’ (Langfeldt et al., 2025, 7), responsible research and innovation do not fully match scientific excellence criteria (Sivertsen, Meijer, 2025, 26), and transdisciplinary research does not fit with the mainstream criteria of quality and evaluation routines (Borlaug, Svartefoss, 2025, 14). Nevertheless, these caveats do not seem to deter scholars with various thematic specialisations from proceeding with their intellectual journey across several disciplines. After all, the historical resonance of some very influential thinkers, referred to and reinterpreted by the senior leadership of international organisations over recent decades, builds upon a synthesis of various academic disciplines, with the aspiration to provide a comprehensive world-view (Kern, 2024, 147–148; Shortall, 2024, 848). It remains to be seen whether the removal of typical academic performance criteria might have any impact on the originality and pursuits of praised novaturient paths, in an international advanced research landscape where other partners remain accountable to different institutional and national steering systems, and their actions are continuously guided by performance metrics. One country or individual in a research group opting out does not make tectonic shifts in the prevailing governance modalities. Other countries and individuals remain encouraged to find and maintain partnerships with those who follow steering measures and productivity metrics of a similar content and nature. Ultimately, science is not national. And recognised science is an internationally acclaimed, not domestically satisfactory, accomplishment. It remains to be properly empirically assessed after this academic freedom regime comes into force whether the absence of typical performance guardrails in one country might have any international resonance or impact on its partnering states and peers.

To contextualise the performative aspect of EU studies and political science even further, this should not be viewed narrowly as a return to some form or element of ‘slow scholarship’. This is not an intellectual U-turn to orient towards a scholarly practice that does not feel overwhelmed with the neoliberal pressures to publish ever faster for the sake of avoiding perishing. Any attempted escapism from this type of routine pressure on academia is illusive, to say the least. However, a well-thought-out escape from or reservation against various evolving artificial intelligence extravaganzas to, in some appallingly convoluted way, turbocharge the traditional qualitative research process deserves further contemplation (DeVerteuil, 2022, 227; Martin, Nevins, 2024; Nolan, 2025). Placing practice scholarship on technological steroids is neither recommended by this article nor needed. There is no right amount of time and technological research solutions that apply to all aspects of EU studies and social sciences at large. At the same time, simply doing research slower is not a guarantee of better results, more academic resonance, or enhanced academic profundity, either. Additionally, the pace of research may not be the only factor affected by a greater personal commitment to interacting with

people outside one's frequent social circles. Such somewhat exploratory engagements come with a wealth of other considerations and potential uncertainties.

It is neither the speed of research output production that is questioned nor the fact that some scholars simply find themselves in overwhelmingly complicated situations tied to the scarcity of time and resources. Some of them feel trapped in moral saturation, overburdened by various demands, feeling exposed to the perpetual encroachment of administrative burdens, unfairly treated during peer reviews, and perplexed by the challenge to assess properly the societal value of their activities (Aagaard, 2025, 70; Aksnes, Langfeldt, 2025, 42; De Grandis, 2025, 99–100; Jungblut et al., 2024, 289; Langfeldt, 2025, 31; Reymert, 2025, 60; Sivertsen, Rushforth, 2025, 50). Referring to the widespread practice of developing international academic careers through mobility across countries and research administration systems, this burden can weigh more heavily on academic nomads who cross national higher education and research systems that are distinctly or considerably different in their evaluation and measurement approach to those where they have obtained most of their academic credentials. The diversity of approaches taken to evaluate scholarly books in social sciences and humanities across Europe (studied by, e.g., Giménez-Toledo, 2019, 240; Engels et al., 2018) is a vivid example of this heterogeneity of criteria that internationally oriented academics should be expected to adhere to.

Essentially, looking beyond the complex list of considerations mentioned when touching on the multifaceted considerations tied to the slow scholarship debate, the willingness to fully expand cognisance without losing the groundedness in one's initial scientific foundation is at stake. Among the factors contributing to this safe harbouring in disciplinary circles are some of the prevailing administrative steering and performance appraisal routines. The heterogenous regulatory requirements, including those that make cooperation with some domains, such as the performing arts, more complex to provide proper documentation in substantially administrative terms (see Lewandowska, Kulczycki, Ochsner, 2023, 27), may cast a negative spell over the individual academic performance trajectory. All in all, there are plenty of systemic preconditions in place across Europe to water down the individual readiness to widen one's receptivity towards novaturient démarches. Individual choices to distance oneself from this myriad of prevailing administrative standards, or opt for an unwavering followership, gain prominence.

In their elaboration on a new format for the knowledge organisation system, Szostak, Gnoli and López-Huertas (2016, 6) note that through their promotion of interdisciplinary scholarship, they do not call for uprooting 'researchers from their paradigmatic framework'. Being rooted is not an issue. They stress neatly the importance of finding compatible analytical grounds for scholars from various disciplines to build on what they theoretically, conceptually and methodologically can agree on at a specific period in time, and leave points of contention out of the prioritised intellectual engagement (Szostiak, Gnoli, López-Huertas, 2016, 213). In fact, a quick excursus into some historical episodes, such as those linked to the teaching of political economy elaborated by Chakrabarti (2024, 536–537), demonstrates reasonable grounds to question whether resonant academic disciplines can emerge as siloed and evolve in silos at all. It is important to add that there is no one correct formula for how to go about designing such pluri-disciplinary get-togethers, because of the myriad of unique considerations that come along with each individual's habitus, prior academic specialisation, and former and ongoing collaborative experiences. There is always a considerable share of experimentation in all these intellectual ventures. That is why self-reflexivity cannot be underestimated. The performance of one's own positionality and various Bourdieusian capital transaction pursuits should be combined with constant introspection; because it is the individual agency, mood and mindset that matter and become the defining driving or stagnation force in various collaborative initiatives.

Temporality plays a crucial role, because academic disciplines and theories have their own evolutionary path with their own historical twists and turns (Szostiak, Gnoli, López-Huertas, 2016, 116). Those dynamics are most prominently felt by scholars who take up central positions in their frequented circles, or to use Bourdieu parlance, fields. Drawing on historical wanderings penned by Zakariya (2024, 388), it is indispensable to add that shaping the academic dynamics through engagement with other disciplines does not automatically entail the ambition to render political science complete. This article is written with the full awareness that, with its inception and core allegiance to social sciences, political science will never be com-

plete. Obviously, political science is expected to evolve continuously; its sub-strands remain a constant work in progress. This evolution does not have the ultimate goal of reaching some specific status of completeness. This article advocates the aspiration to constantly look for ways of reinvigorating the prevailing scholarship and engaging with conceptual and methodological influences from other academic domains to address understudied aspects crucial to comprehensive political science and EU studies scholarship.

In conclusion, this section explained the role of time and other forms of constraint that already shape and will continue to impact contemporary advanced research output and thematic strands developed by political scientists. These influences are both systemic in terms of impacting the manner in which research output is processed, published, reviewed and evaluated, and individual or even personal in terms of the concerns and contemplations that these constraints place on each intellectual and their capacity to carry out relevant, impactful and authoritative research.

## Conclusions

To respond to the guiding question, it is the reflexive self that is the most consequential resource in the research process and research outcomes. This reflexive self is proposed to be more prominently accounted for in future studies. As was elaborated in the section devoted to cross-disciplinary introspection, many selves populate a high-voltage social milieu. They are resources that are not always adjudged in the scholarly enquiry process and its outputs. Time-wise, geography-wise and responsibilities-wise situated selves represented by scholars and individuals they place under the academic magnifying glass form this densely charged social field of multi-layered and fluid relationalities. Bourdieu-inspired contemporary practice theory proves valuable in making this aspect much more prominent. Consequently, it highlights the fact that EU studies are man-made. EU studies and social sciences are more broadly affected by academic and policy continuities and discontinuities of practices linked to the human resources turnover. This intellectual production process depends on diverse constellations of administrative planning, scientific performance, academic rigour, and resource allocation considerations. In all of this dense context, the self remains one of the most agential and performative resources. One of its vivid embodiments is 'memoir diplomacy'. This newly coined niche diplomacy helps to shape the contemporary narrative and public understanding of past events, prominent institutional sites, and individuals.

As was elaborated in the section on time and resource constraints, advanced research management rules and productivity requirements defined for academic staff are among the quotidian employment policies that define an individual ability to engage in outreach across disciplines in a more experimentalist way and pursue less conventional academic ventures. Therefore, research design and publishing outputs should be acknowledged as pragmatically devised compromises of these considerations as well. They depict some form of conformity with expectations enshrined in institutional rules and public policy.

Furthermore, this elaboration dedicated to EU studies has broader implications. It is academically well established that the EU and studies on the EU, as helpful, in-depth, analytical, consultative material, offer an inspiration to other parts of the world to venture into region-building initiatives. EU practices introduce the word of regions. Thereby, the evolution of EU studies gains a broader resonance across the world in various regionality contexts. The theoretical twists and conceptual turns experienced by EU studies are points of consideration among those who earlier found inspiration in regionalism and new institutionalism studies to design and develop multilateral forums and their supportive institutional structures in other parts of the world.

Of course, none of this learning from the EU experience is a simple replication exercise. First and foremost, such a simple transposition cannot occur because the EU is *sui generis*. The Union does not have institutionally and mandate-wise similar counterparts in other parts of the world. The EU is granted exclusive competencies and supranational responsibilities allocated to specific EU institutions. No other region has gone as far in its evolution from a purely intergovernmental working mode towards a considerable proportion of pooled sovereignty. Secondly, learning from good practice is not a technical transposition process either. Learning and borrowing good practices is an inventive accommodation process. When ideas are brought to new contexts, they may experience considerable mutations and variations to fit local and institutional specificities. Consequently, this

article is not written with the expectation that the practice theory scholarship will unfold in other geographical contexts and intellectual circles in a similar manner to how it has developed in Europe and in the writings of many practice scholars referred to in this article. Instead, the potential emergence of practice scholarship in other parts of the world might help EU studies in the future to clarify its unique traits in comparison with the literature dedicated to the contemporary routines of other regional organisations. There is great potential for developing a more nuanced understanding of the EU habitus, its doxa and fields in a comparative perspective, with traits captured in these Bourdieusian elements in other regional forums, organisations and multilateral settings. This is not a prediction of some forthcoming othering exercise to fence off EU telos from outside influences. Instead, it is the anticipation that having a better realisation of one's own character and traits may arise from a more attentive gaze turned towards other regionality peers, irrespective of how different they might be from the EU historically, institutionally, and in terms of country composition. In essence, this is the anticipation of continuous self-discovery through a closer look at other geographical, institutional and multilateral settings of, so to say, 'not-exactly' peers, but rather partners in dialogue and cooperation.

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## POLITIKOS MOKSLŲ IR JŲ INSTITUCINIŲ TYRIMŲ ATNAUJINIMAS TAIKANT PRAKTIKĄ GRINDŽIAMĄ ANTROPOLOGINĘ PRIEIGĄ

ZANĖ ŠIME

Norvegijos mokslo ir technologijų universitetas

### Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje aptariami P. Bourdieu išvalgomis grįstos šiuolaikinės praktikos teorijos ištekliai, leidžiantys praplėsti Europos Sąjungos (ES) studijų akiratį. Laiko, geografijos ir atsakomybės požiūriu kontekstualizuotas tyrėjo subjektyvumas išlieka esminis šiuolaikinėje mokslinėje veikloje. Būtent autorių santykis su tiriamąja aplinka ryškiausiai atsiskleidžia jų akademiškai pagrįstuose naratyvuose. Informantų pasirinkimas bei empirinių duomenų rinkimas tiesiogiai priklauso nuo to, kokią reikšmę tyrėjai teikia konkrečioms institucinėms sritims, kintančioms kolegialumo formoms ir dinamiškiems socialiniams santykiams. Individuali, laike kintanti perspektyva užima svarbią vietą P. Bourdieu įkvėptoje praktikos teorijoje. Naujausi tyrimai pagrindžia, kad mokslinė autorystė visada yra visapusiškai kontekstualizuota.

**RAKTINIAI ŽODŽIAI:** *Bourdieu įkvėpta šiuolaikinė praktikos teorija; Europos Sąjungos studijos; savirefleksija; akademinė karjera; regionalizmas.*

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