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# Historiography of the European Parliament

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Changing  
perceptions of the  
institution from  
the 1950s to today

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STUDY

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**Desmond Dinan**

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Changing perceptions of the institution  
from the 1950s to today

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This study charts the course and contours of academic interest in, and writing about, the European Parliament (EP) since its origins in the early 1950s. What began as a trickle of scholarly works on the EP turned into a flood in the early 1990s, after the EP acquired greater legislative power and became more like a 'real' (if not a 'normal') parliament. The study does not claim to mention every significant work on the EP, and may well mention some works that other scholars might not consider to be particularly significant. It aims to present a 'historiography' of the EP, without limiting itself to the study of historical writing. Accordingly, it ranges over a wide swath of scholarship, including history but also, primarily, political science.

## **AUTHOR**

This study has been written by Desmond Dinan, *Ad Personam* Jean Monnet Chair and Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University, Virginia, United States, for the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS).

Professor Dinan undertook the research for this work during his half-year as a Visiting Fellow at EPRS.

Based on research for this study, the author gave the inaugural EPRS lecture, 'A Parliament unlike any other? Academic perspectives on the European Parliament,' in the EP's Library Reading Room in Brussels, on 11 July 2018. See <https://epthinktank.eu/2018/07/23/a-parliament-unlike-any-other-academic-perspectives-on-the-european-parliament/>

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Anthony Teasdale, Director-General, EPRS.

To contact the publisher, please e-mail [eprs@ep.europa.eu](mailto:eprs@ep.europa.eu)

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[eprs@ep.europa.eu](mailto:eprs@ep.europa.eu)  
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<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Parliament (EP) is one of the most powerful, distinctive, and closely studied assemblies in the world. What was once a trickle of publications on the EP long ago became a flood, in many languages and on almost every conceivable aspect of its work. This reflects the institution's prominence and importance, and also its singularity: as a supranational assembly, directly elected from across the European Union's member states, the EP is a parliament unlike any other.

This study charts the course and contours of academic interest in the EP over time. Given the size and scope of EP scholarship, notably since the early 1990s, this is a daunting task. The study does not claim to mention every significant work on the EP. Rather, it aims to present a 'historiography' of the EP, without limiting itself to the study of historical writing. Thus, it ranges over a wide swath of scholarship, including history but also, primarily, political science, as well as contributions by practitioners/scholars in the EP itself. The study is arranged chronologically, with each of the four main sections corresponding to a specific stage of the EP's development.

The Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) appeared at a time of great ferment in international relations, as many new institutions and organizations emerged in the immediate post-war years. This generated considerable academic attention. Although scholars writing about the ECSC usually focused on the High Authority, the Council of Ministers, or the Court of Justice, there was pioneering scholarship on the Common Assembly, with articles appearing in leading journals, and the occasional book being published on the subject.

Serious historical inquiry into the origins of the European project, which began in the 1980s, did not initially pay much attention to the Common Assembly. Only much more recently has the Common Assembly become a subject of sustained academic attention, with the latest studies showing how, despite having limited formal prerogatives, the Common Assembly set out to apply the principles of democratic control of national political systems to the ECSC. It blazed a trail in the early years of integration, becoming a driving force for the formation of a European identity. Such scholarship shows how the Common Assembly developed into an influential legislature, capable of exercising a degree of control over the High Authority and even the Council.

The period from the launch of the European Economic Community, in 1958, until the first direct elections generated substantial academic attention at the time and in retrospect. Specific interest in the EP focused on budgetary affairs and the road to direct elections, which finally took place in 1979, thereby changing profoundly the nature of the EP and the character of the Community. Publications specifically on the EP appeared more frequently in the run-up to the 1979 elections, which some scholars saw as a harbinger of a more powerful EP. A perennial question about EP elections surfaced for the first time: do voters perceive these to be first-order European elections or second-order national elections? The academic consensus seems to be that the European elections are, in effect, additional national second-order elections.

A number of articles and books in the 1970s also explored the connections between national parliaments and the EP, covering topics such as the treatment of Community matters by committees of the national parliaments, and MP-MEP links. There was keen interest as well in political groups. Notwithstanding these contributions, the relative lack of academic interest in the EP at the time reflected a general view of the EP's continuing unimportance. Historical work on the EP's development in the 1960s and 1970s is also relatively limited.

Direct elections did not change the EP's formal powers. The EP finally acquired important legislative authority only in 1987, with implementation of the Single European Act (SEA). The acceleration of European integration in the late 1980s attracted huge academic interest. Scholars specifically

interested in the EP assessed the impact of the Parliament's 1984 Draft Treaty on the intensification of European integration later in the decade, and the extent to which the EP managed to influence the outcome of the negotiations that resulted in the SEA.

By the time of the SEA, but independently of it, historians were working systematically on the origins of the European Communities. Their scholarship almost completely ignored incipient European parliamentarianism. State-centric accounts of European integration paid little attention to national parliaments, let alone to the EP. Even as historical scholarship on the EU progressed to cover the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the EP remained a secondary concern, at best. Given the significance of the Draft Treaty of 1984, and the increase in the power of the EP thanks to the SEA, the relative lack of historical scholarship on the EP in the 1980s is striking.

From the point of view of EP studies, the most noteworthy development was not the advent of direct elections but Parliament's acquisition of legislative power. The Maastricht Treaty greatly extended the Parliament's legislative authority, by introducing the co-decision procedure. For that reason, the period since 1992 is the most significant for the historiography of the EP, as a trickle of scholarship quickly became a flood. While international relations (IR) scholars argued about the causes of the EC's transformation, and historians continued to work on the early years of European integration, an academic volcano was about to erupt and change the landscape of EU studies, and with it EP studies, forever.

A new generation of EU scholars pointed out that IR approaches, notably neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism, had served their purpose, and that comparative politics approaches were more appropriate for the study of European integration in its post-Maastricht stage of development. The ensuing comparativist turn caused a revolution in EU studies, which had profound implications for the study of the EP. Indeed, as the main arena for competitive politics, the EP was the major beneficiary of the sudden surge of academic interest in the EU. For political scientists trained in legislative studies and quantitative methods, the post-Maastricht EP was a fascinating laboratory in which to test theories and hypotheses. The result has been an explosion of literature on the EP, notably on issues such as legislative decision-making; political group organization and cohesion; the EP's internal organization and rules of procedure; the conduct of direct elections; and the EP's relationship with other EU institutions and with national parliaments.

The apparent similarity between the EP and other parliaments, which the work of comparative political science has strongly reinforced, is both advantageous and disadvantageous. On the one hand, the seemingly close comparison between the EP and its national analogues helps to make the EP more familiar to European citizens, thereby strengthening the institution's informal legitimacy. On the other hand, it misses or simply passes over the evident uniqueness of the EP. The best approach for analysing the EP may be to use comparative methods to the extent that they help students and scholars of the EU to understand better how the EP operates. At the same time, it behooves EU scholars to emphasize the uniqueness of the EU polity and institutional apparatus, including the EP. Otherwise, EU scholarship runs the risk of missing a vitally important point about the EP, which is, quite simply, that it is a parliament unlike any other.

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# 1. Introduction

Since its humble beginning as the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, in 1952, the European Parliament (EP) has become one of the most powerful and one of the most closely studied legislatures in the world. What was once a trickle of publications on the EP long ago became a flood, in many languages and on almost every conceivable aspect of the EP's work. Textbooks, scholarly monographs, refereed journal articles, and special issues of prestigious journals appear frequently on the subject of the EP. A number of leading academics have made their careers as EP scholars. This interest in the EP reflects the institution's prominence and importance, and also its distinctiveness: as a supranational assembly, directly elected from across the European Union's member states, the EP is a parliament unlike any other.

The EP does what most parliaments in liberal democratic systems do: it participates fully in legislative decision-making, jointly with the Council of the EU; and it has budgetary power. It is not responsible for putting or keeping a government in office, not least because there is no government in the EU system analogous to a government in national political systems. Nor does the EP have the right to initiate legislation. Not just for those reasons, but more so because of its supranational character and composition, and its strong sense of 'institutional patriotism,' there seems to be a consensus among scholars that the EP 'cannot yet be called a "normal" parliament' (Brack and Costa, 2018, p. 1). Ariadna Ripoll Servent, author of a leading textbook on the EP, observes that, 'in many respects, the EP functions like a "normal" parliament. In some others, however, it is not yet completely normal' (Ripoll Servent, 2018, p. 5).

The purpose of this study is not to attempt to answer key questions about the EP—whether it is normal or not; or the degree of its abnormality—but to chart the course and contours of academic attention to the EP over time. Given the size and scope of EP scholarship, especially since the early 1990s, when the EP acquired greater legislative power and became more like a 'real' (if not a normal) parliament, this is a daunting task. The study does not attempt, therefore, to mention every significant work on the EP, and may well mention some works that other scholars would not consider to be particularly significant. In a way, the study aims to present a historiography of the EP, without limiting itself to the study of historical writing. Accordingly, it ranges over a wide swath of scholarship, including history but also, primarily, political science.

The study is arranged chronologically, with each of the four main sections corresponding to a distinctive stage of the EP's development. Periodization is always challenging and controversial. In the case of the EP, it is relatively easy because the existence of the Parliament can be divided sensibly into two eras: pre- and post-direct elections. That is, the period before 1979, when the first direct elections took place, and the period thereafter. The earlier, pre-1979 era can also be divided easily into the period of the Common Assembly (1952-1958), and the period after that, following implementation of the Rome Treaties and the launch of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. What was the Common Assembly became the Parliamentary Assembly of the three Communities, in 1958, before re-naming itself the European Parliament.

The first direct elections were a big event in the life of the EC and particularly of the EP. They represented a coming of age for the European project. But direct elections did not bring about a major change in the EP's formal powers. Whereas the EP had acquired considerable budgetary power before then, it still lacked commensurate legislative power, which many saw as the hallmark of a 'real' parliament (Lodge, 1978). The EP finally acquired important legislative power in the Single European Act of 1986 (the cooperation procedure), and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 (the co-decision procedure, later substantially modified to the advantage of the EP in the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997). The year 1992—the year of the Maastricht Treaty and the target date for completion of the single market programme—was highly symbolic for the EU. It represented a new departure. For that

reason, and also because, thanks to the SEA and Maastricht, 1992 was the time around which the trickle of EP scholarship started to become a flood, the period from 1992 to the present is another distinctive period for the 'historiography' of the EP.

This study looks at EP scholarship during each of these periods of the institution's existence (1952-1958; 1958-1979; 1979-1992; and post-1992). It discusses both contemporary scholarship, mostly by political scientists and practitioners/scholars in the EP itself; and historical works. Historical scholarship on the EP (and the EU) does not yet exist for the post-1992 period, however. Nevertheless the amount of political science and other non-historical scholarship for the post-1992 period dwarfs the amount of combined scholarship for the three previous periods put together. Needless to say, scholarship does not begin and end neatly during each of these periods. Some articles and books range over a considerable swath of the EP's existence. Most include at least a cursory look at the EP's early years, which is where this study begins.

## 2. 1952-1958: The Common Assembly

The late 1940s and early 1950s was a time of great excitement for scholars of International Relations (IR) and International Organizations (IO). New institutions were appearing at an unprecedented rate, as officials, politicians, and statesmen grappled with the challenges of constructing a durable peace after the devastation of two world wars and an economically ruinous and politically unstable inter-war period. Globally, the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions—the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; the International Monetary Fund; and the World Bank—emerged at this time. In Europe, the post-war institutional architecture included the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, a child of the Marshall Plan; the Council of Europe, a forum for broad political and economic cooperation; and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the means by which the United States provided military security for Western Europe. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) completed the institutional architecture of post-war Europe, and was the final piece of the puzzle of a new settlement intended to strengthen stability and promote prosperity among participating countries, centred on France and Germany.

These initiatives and organizations engendered considerable public interest as well as academic scrutiny. The journal *International Organization*, published in the United States, came into existence in 1947, precisely at this time of new institution building. In its early years, the journal, which remains one of the most prestigious outlets for IR and IO scholarship, included numerous articles on the origins, functioning, and potential of the various international bodies then coming into being. Most of the authors of these and similar articles that appeared elsewhere, as well as books on the subject, were based at US universities. Indeed, they were mostly Americans. This reflected the emergence of IR as a flourishing sub-field of political science in the post-war years. American universities were flush with money from the GI Bill, which allowed demobilized servicemen to study at the government's expense. Federal sponsorship of international relations research also increased dramatically, not least because of the onset of the Cold War. Finally, private foundations and philanthropists contributed generously to the study of international relations at that time. For instance, the Ford Foundation supported much of the US-based research on post-war international organizations, including the ECSC and its successors.

A perusal of the early volumes of *International Organization* provides a reminder of the plethora of post-war European initiatives, ranging from the Council of Europe, to NATO, to the ECSC, to the (failed) European Defence Community and European Political Community, to the Western European Union, to the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. It provides a reminder too of the number of putative and actual assemblies (quasi-parliamentary bodies) that sprouted as a result of these initiatives. It has become commonplace to say that scholars largely ignored the Common Assembly, and later the EP until at least the first direct elections (in 1979), because of the Assembly's and the Parliament's apparent impotence during that time. Writing in 2003, shortly after the 50th anniversary of the first meeting of the Common Assembly, Hix and others noted that the Assembly, and later the EP for many decades, 'was marginal to the development of European integration and the politics of the EU. Initially the institution was essentially a consultative body ...' (Hix, Raunio, and Scully, 2003, p. 191).

Yet early academic work on these institutions suggests that the Common Assembly was not so marginal after all, and subsequent historical work has greatly enhanced knowledge about the Common Assembly and our appreciation of its contribution to the European project. In the early years, articles on the Common Assembly appeared in *International Organization* and elsewhere, and the occasional book was published on the subject. In the emerging field of European Community studies, however, this work was overshadowed by the scholarship of Ernst Haas and others, who developed the theory of neo-functionalism to explain and predict the trajectory of European integration.

Van der Harst (2008, p. 5) has observed that IR theory on the European Communities initially ‘was dominated by the so-called neo-functional school of thought, which was not only a-historical but also a-European, since [it was] dominated by American political scientists like Ernst Haas, Leon Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold.’ Even if it was a-historical, it is difficult to characterize neo-functionalism as being a-European (whatever that means) on the grounds that its three major proponents were Americans. For one thing, Haas was a naturalized American. He was born and brought up in Germany, and came to the United States shortly before the Second World War. His interest in European integration was both personal and professional. Personally, having left Germany in the run-up to the war, he was deeply committed to peace-building efforts in post-war Europe. He saw the ECSC and later the EEC in that light. Professionally, as a bright, up-and-coming scholar of IR, he became fascinated by the political laboratory of European integration. For their parts, Lindberg and Scheingold may have been American born and bred, but they were steeped in European politics and culture.

Haas became the best-known scholar of European integration. He spent the year 1956-1957 studying the ECSC, in Luxembourg. Jean Monnet, though no longer President of the High Authority, facilitated Haas's visit, knowing full well the value good publicity and sympathetic scholarship for the fledgling European project. Haas's fieldwork provided the basis for his seminal work, *The Uniting of Europe* (1958), in which he developed the theory of neo-functionalism, based on the centrality of the supranational High Authority and the inexorability of policy spillover.

Haas devoted a chapter of *The Uniting of Europe* to the Common Assembly, although he entitled it ‘Supranational Political Parties’. A tenet of spillover was that national elites, including politicians and business leaders, would gradually switch their allegiance—the focus of their professional activities—to the European level, as the European Community became more economically important and politically salient. Although the Common Assembly seemed unimportant at the outset, Haas was confident that it would develop into a key European-level institution.

*The Uniting of Europe* was seen at the time of its publication as one of many new contributions to the rapidly changing landscape of post-war international relations. Publications on the European Community were still relatively few, although a number of academics, not only in the United States, were becoming experts on the subject. Most of their output explained and assessed the ECSC and, later, the EEC in general terms. If they focused on a particular institution, it was usually the High Authority, the Council of Ministers (including its preparatory committee, working groups, and decision-making procedures), or the Court of Justice. The Common Assembly, apparently the least glamorous and important institution, often got short shrift.

Nevertheless, there was pioneering scholarship at this time of the Common Assembly. Noteworthy books include: Forsyth (1964), *Das Parlament der Europäischen Gemeinschaften*; Heidelberger (1959), *Das Europäische Parlament, Entstehung, Aufbau, Erfahrungen und Erwartungen*; Kapteyn (1962), *L'assemblée commune de la Communauté européenne du charbon et de l'acier: un essai de parlementarisme européen*; and Van Oudenhove (1965), *The political parties in the European Parliament: the first ten years*. Articles and book chapters include: Kapteyn (1960), ‘The Common Assembly of the ECSA as a Representative Institution’, in Lindsay (ed.), *European Assemblies: The Experimental Period, 1949-1959*; and Stein (1959), ‘The European Parliamentary Assembly: techniques of emerging “political control”’.

Some of these works were overly descriptive, although they described something that was new and little known outside Luxembourg and Strasbourg. They included brief histories of the emergence of the ECSC and specifically the Common Assembly, as well as explanations of the Assembly's organization and functions. Van Oudenhove even included a detailed seating plan of the Strasbourg chamber (pp. 260–61). Most of the early scholars of the Common Assembly shared not only an enthusiasm for the subject, but also an appreciation that the Common Assembly was already growing in institutional importance. Often they compared the Common Assembly with the

assemblies of other international organizations, notably the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly, and concluded that the former was significantly more influential than the latter, just as the European Communities were surpassing the Council of Europe in terms of economic and political impact. Just as the ECSC and the EEC were extraordinary International Organizations, the Common Assembly was an extraordinary international parliamentary body.

What interested these early scholars about the Common Assembly, in particular, was that, formally, it had the power to hold the High Authority to account. The High Authority itself was a novel international organization; the fact that it was accountable to a trans-national assembly added to its distinctiveness, and to the distinctiveness of the ECSC as a supranational entity. Even more striking was that, soon after the Common Assembly met for the first time, its members organized themselves into trans-national political groups corresponding to the three main political families in post-war Europe: Christian Democratic; Liberal; and Socialist, and sat according to their political affiliation, rather than according to country of origin or in alphabetical order. Supplementing these early scholarly accounts, and presaging later contributions by practitioners to academic inquiry into the EP, was a report on the work of the Common Assembly by Pierre Wigny (1958), a prominent Belgian politician and leading Assembly member, published by the ECSC's publications office.

For three decades or so after the publication of these works, there was little scholarship specifically on the Common Assembly, even as its successor, the EP, became increasingly important. Serious historical inquiry into the origins and development of the European project, which began in the 1980s, did not at first pay much attention to the Common Assembly. Thus, in the ground-breaking histories of the early years of European integration, notably the works of Milward (1984 and 1992), Gillingham (1991); and Küsters (1982 and 1988), the Common Assembly was largely neglected. Gerçek (1998), who wrote specifically on ECSC institutions, is an exception. Only much more recently has the Common Assembly become a subject of sustained academic attention, due to the work of the post-Milward generation of historians. The renaissance of scholarship on the Common Assembly owes much to the encouragement of the EP, and particularly the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS). As the EP has matured, it has become more interested in learning about itself and promoting its own history. It has also organized its archives in a way that invites historical inquiry.

The EP has produced its own histories pertaining to the Common Assembly, under the aegis of the Archive and Documentation Centre (CARDOC). These include a history of the committees of the Common Assembly (Piodi, 2008); a history of the EP's efforts, including those of the Common Assembly, to establish a system of direct elections (Piodi, 2009); and a history of the positions taken by the Common Assembly on the negotiations that led to the Rome Treaties, with a focus on the Working Group which followed the treaty negotiations (Piodi, 2007), the annex of which includes many previously unpublished documents. In addition, the EPRS published a briefing paper on the impact of the Common Assembly on the negotiations for the Rome Treaties (Salm, 2017).

Independently of the EP, historians have been working in recent years on the Common Assembly, as has Berthold Rittberger, who fused history and political science in his inquiry into the origins of the Common Assembly and the development of the EP (Rittberger, 2005). Foremost among these historians is Sandro Guerrieri, whose work on the Common Assembly, including numerous journal articles spanning two decades, culminated in the publication in 2016 of his magnum opus, *Un Parlamento oltre le nazioni. L'Assemblea comune della CECA e le sfide dell'integrazione europea (1952-1958)*. In it, Guerrieri shows how the Common Assembly, despite having limited formal prerogatives, set out to apply the principles of democratic control of national political systems to the ECSC. Accordingly, it blazed a trail in the early years of integration, becoming a driving force for the formation of a European identity and voice for public opinion, focused especially on workers' rights.

On 14 June 2018, the EP Historical Archives organized a public roundtable on the history of the Common Assembly, based on Guerrieri's book. Apart from Guerrieri, speakers included a former Member and Quaestor of the EP, and a former Director-General for Information and Public Relations

of the EP. The event took place in the ornate, former EP hemicycle in the Robert Schuman Building in Luxembourg.<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars who have contributed to a better understanding of the role of the Common Assembly in the development of European integration include Murray (2004), who wrote a seminal article on transnational political groups in the Common Assembly and the early years of the EP as accelerants of deeper integration; Mittag (2011), who wrote on the beginnings of transnational groups in the Common Assembly; and Bonfreschi, Orsina, and Varsori (2015), whose edited volume, *European Parties and the European integration process, 1945-1992*, contributed to EU historiography by comparing parties' discourse, platforms, and policies, and developing national, comparative, and transnational approaches.

Rittberger's work on the creation and empowerment of the EP sheds important light on the origins of the Common Assembly. In a series of articles and a book, *Building Europe's Parliament* (2005), Rittberger asks why national governments created the Common Assembly and, over the span of fifty years, successively endowed its successor, the EP, with supervisory, budgetary, and legislative powers. His answer, based on democratic theory, is that political elites realized that the transfer of sovereignty to the supranational level would generate a legitimacy deficit, which triggered a search for institutional solutions, including the creation and empowerment of a supranational parliament. Support for such a solution varied across countries, reflecting different national traditions of democratic government, but was sufficiently strong at key junctures of the EU's trajectory to favor the development of the EP.

In his book, Rittberger tests this arguments by looking at three landmark cases in the EP's history, the first of which is the creation of the Common Assembly. Accordingly, he delves into the history of the negotiations on the ECSC's institutional arrangements, without necessarily casting new light on the negotiations themselves. Here, Rittberger did what Andrew Moravcsik had done earlier in his famous book, *The Choice for Europe* (1998): he brought together history and political science in search of a theoretical breakthrough. As in the case of Moravcsik's work, some historians have been critical in their response, questioning the thoroughness and originality of Rittberger's scholarship. Some have also demonstrated what could be seen as professional insecurity, leading them to dabble in political science and elevate theory excessively in their own work.

The work of two younger historians is especially noteworthy when considering the origins and development of the Common Assembly: that of Jakob Krumrey and Mechthild Roos. The title of Krumrey's book, *The Symbolic Politics of European Integration: Staging Europe* (2018), hardly hints at the book's contribution to the history of the Common Assembly. Yet two chapters of the book explore the activities of the Assembly in great detail, focusing especially on the attention that Assembly members paid to the fledgling institution's internal organization, including its rules of procedure, and to symbolism and pageantry. The Assembly's members knew that if they took their work seriously and behaved as parliamentarians were expected to behave, then their interlocutors in the High Authority and the Council were likely to take the Common Assembly seriously as well. Krumrey gives as an example the first tour by the Assembly's President, in 1954, of the ECSC's national capitals, where he insisted on meeting the heads of state or government. On a more mundane level, the Assembly was adept at pushing the limits of its prerogatives in clever ways. For instance, the Treaty required the Assembly to meet only once a year. Assembly members chose to meet more often. When the Council complained, members announced that their various meetings during the year were in fact a continuation of its annual meeting, which had merely adjourned from time to time.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/luxembourg/fr/actualite-presse/evenements/table-ronde-les-pionniers-d-une-europe-parlementaire.html>

In a recent article in the *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 'Far Beyond the Treaties' Clauses: The EP's Gains in Power, 1952-1979' (2017), Roos shows that despite the minor role assigned to it by the Paris Treaty, which established the ECSC, the Common Assembly developed into an influential legislature, capable of exercising a degree of control over the High Authority and even the Council. She examined the various strategies by which Assembly members gradually acquired greater parliamentary power. Her analysis, which goes beyond the time of the Assembly and includes the 1960s and 1970s, seeks to refute what she calls the dominant view of the EP 'as a fairly powerless talking shop prior to its first direct elections in 1979, demonstrating that treaty basis and political reality differed remarkably' (p. 1056).

Both Krumrey and Roos situate their studies of the Common Assembly in the framework of competing international assemblies in post-war Europe. As Krumrey points out, there were several transnational assemblies jockeying for prominence at that time. 'As a model for an interparliamentary pan-European assembly, the Council of Europe quickly proved to be an astounding success: It had set a powerful precedent that other European organizations felt compelled to follow. Over the course of the 1950s, more and more European organizations created assemblies either based on or even derived from the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly: the Western European Union in 1954, NATO in 1955, the Nordic Council in 1953, and the Benelux Union in 1957 ... In 1952, the Common Assembly had been only the second assembly on the European scene. By 1958, however, all European organizations except the OEEC had a deliberative body of some sort' (pp. 115-136).

From the outset, the Common Assembly sought to distinguish itself from the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly, despite meeting in the Consultative Assembly's chamber in Strasbourg. Two strategies stand out: (1) the CA cast itself as a 'real' parliament, responsible for holding the executive to account (i.e. capable of dismissing the High Authority; posing parliamentary questions; forming influential committees; etc.). In so doing, the Common Assembly developed a quasi-adversarial relationship with the High Authority and a genuinely adversarial relationship with the Council. (2) The Common Assembly seized the opportunity to become the Ad Hoc Assembly to draft the treaty for the proposed European Political Community, as part of the European Defence Community initiative, after the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly had declined to do so.

In another important respect, the Common Assembly was able to distinguish itself from the rival Consultative Assembly and assert its distinctive parliamentary character. That was by pushing for direct elections, a matter on which Article 21 of the Paris Treaty required a unanimous decision of the member states. No sooner had the Assembly first met than its members began advocating for direct elections 'with gusto' (Costa, 2016). As early as 1960, the Common Assembly drew up a Draft Convention on the Election of the European Parliament by Direct Universal Suffrage, based on the Dehousse Report. Assembly members saw direct elections not as an end in themselves, but as a means towards acquiring greater power and promoting further integration at the supranational level. A lengthy publication by the EP's Political Affairs Committee (1969) includes copies of all of the Common Assembly's deliberations on direct elections, as well as an extremely interesting introduction by Fernand Dehousse.

To quote Krumrey at some length: 'What set the [Common Assembly] apart was that its members were keen to enact the fiction of the EC's constitutionalism, whereas the notorious divisions in the Council's Consultative Assembly prevented its members from forming any coherent idea of their role in post-war Europe. Rules mattered too. But what made the difference were not the rules of an incipient European constitution, but simply the Parliament's rules of procedure that gave it greater freedom to authenticate its self-image: not as the supervisor of economic policies, but as Europe's *Constituante*. The [Common Assembly] represented a logic curiously at odds with the functionalist character of the EC. It married the realist approach of integration to the solemn mission so far associated with the Council of Europe. The [ECSC]'s supposed special nature did not single out the

[Common Assembly]; [rather the Common Assembly] lent credibility to the intellectual fiction of the EC's special nature. Without the [Common Assembly and later the EP], the EC would have been about trade and tariffs. With it, it was about Europe' (p. 150).

One of the striking things about the success of the Common Assembly is that its members were part-timers, whose main jobs were as national parliamentarians. Not that every member of the Assembly was actively involved in its work. Italian members were notoriously absent. Moreover, Euroscepticism was prevalent (although the word was not used at the time), both on the nationalist right (Gaullism) and on the Communist left. One thing that helped the activist members enormously was the support of the Assembly's officials, a self-selecting group of ardent supranationalists. These pro-Europeans fully supported—indeed, in the case of the Legal Service, enthusiastically encouraged—an expansionist view of the Common Assembly's role and responsibilities (Krumrey, pp. 119-120).

Assembly members made their case for greater institutional power in a series of reports. For instance, 'In a report on the organization of the Common Assembly, Alain Poher stressed the greater similarity of the Common Assembly to the national parliaments than to other international organizations, a declaration that in 1955 appeared revolutionary to many.' (De Feo, 2015, p. 22). The development of the Assembly owed much to the report by Pierre-Henri Teitgen, which spawned other reports that helped to shape the function and activities of the Common Assembly. Other influential reports included those by Carboni, on relations with international organisations; Fohrmann, on the functioning of political groups; and Dehousse, on the powers of the Assembly and the revision of the Treaty (De Feo, 2015, p. 22).

The behaviour of activist members of the Common Assembly set a precedent for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and helped to instil a culture of combativeness in the institution. Like their Assembly predecessors, MEPs had to fight for their rights and responsibilities, in the face of an indifferent or hostile Council (although the attitudes of governments varied). Building on that insight, perhaps scholars of organizational behaviour and knowledge management could contribute new perspectives on the development of the EP's institutional DNA.

The Common Assembly was present at the creation of the EEC. Assembly members took a keen interest in the intergovernmental negotiations of 1956-1957 that resulted in the Rome Treaties. Historians explored those negotiations, although not necessarily the Assembly's contribution to them, many years later. Important contributions include the volume edited by Serra (1989) on the revival of European integration leading to the Rome Treaties; the book chapter by Palayret (2001) on Franco-German negotiations on institutional issues in the run-up to Rome; and, more recently, the article by Loth (2017) on the constitutional foundations of the EEC and Euratom. The aforementioned EP publications, by Piodi (2007) and Salm (2017), also stand out in that regard.

As these studies show, institutional arrangements were among the last questions to be resolved by government ministers in the conference that resulted in the Rome Treaties, as was the case in the negotiations for the Paris Treaty to establish the ECSC. One of the most contentious issues was the role of the EP in the new Communities' institutional arrangements. The German and Italian governments supported a relatively robust role for the EP. In the end, at a final negotiating session, in January 1957, the foreign ministers agreed to give the EP only limited responsibilities, except for its right to force the Commission to resign, by a two-thirds majority vote, which had its roots in the Paris Treaty. The EP's powers were far less than what the Common Assembly had advocated, but experience suggested that members of the new body would attempt to extend their influence as much as possible, and would succeed in doing so.



### 3. 1958-1979: From the Parliamentary Assembly to the directly elected Parliament

The period from 1958 (the launch of the EEC), until 1979 (the first direct elections to the EP), covers a considerable amount of EU history. Key developments during that time include the Empty Chair Crisis of 1965-1966, which was the greatest constitutional crisis ever to befall the EU; the Hague Summit of 1969, which appeared to presage a revival of the EC's fortunes following the Gaullist challenge of the previous few years; the first enlargement, in 1973, when Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Ireland joined; the setbacks of the 1970s, as the EC struggled with economic and political shocks; and the launch of the European Monetary System, in 1979.

Institutionally, the architecture of the EU changed during that time with the launch of the European Council, in 1975. Originally envisioned as a forum for national leaders to meet occasionally in order to provide direction for an EC beset by serious internal and external challenges, the European Council soon became the key decision-making body with respect to major developments in the EU, such as enlargement and Treaty change. Existing EU institutions changed at the same time. The Commission suffered a serious political setback in the aftermath of the Empty Chair Crisis, and remained relatively weak throughout the 1970s. The most striking changes happened in the EP, thanks principally to enlargement, which saw a marked change in its size and composition; Treaty changes in 1970 and 1975, which gave the EP considerable budgetary authority; and the advent of direct elections in 1979, which provided a huge boost to the EP's image and morale, although not necessarily to its actual power.

Those developments lay far in the future when, following the establishment of the EEC and Euratom, the Common Assembly was dissolved on 28 February 1958. On 19 March 1958, the joint Assembly of the three European Communities met for the first time. Almost immediately, the new body passed a resolution to rename itself the 'European Parliamentary Assembly.' Krumrey describes what happened next: the German and Dutch translations simply called it the 'European Parliament,' but France continued to use the official name. In 1962, the Assembly insisted that the Council call it the European Parliament. 'After deliberation among the six governments, the Council reached an agreement that strangely foreshadowed the famous 1966 Luxembourg Compromise: the six governments agreed to disagree. While five Council members aligned themselves with the designation of parliament, they also recognized that the French government reserved the right to differ on the issue and would continue to speak of an assembly instead' (Krumrey, pp. 139-140). Only in 1987, with implementation of the Single European Act (SEA), was the name 'European Parliament' officially recognized.

The struggle over the name was symptomatic of the EP's assertiveness on a range of other, more substantive issues, covering policies, enlargement, and institutional reform. In particular, the EP fought against national governments—the masters of the treaties—on three fronts following the launch of the EEC, in an effort to increase its prerogatives and powers. Each of these corresponded to the established, liberal-democratic view of how a parliament should be constituted and what a parliament should do. The three fronts were direct elections, budgetary power, and legislative power. The EP won the struggle for direct elections and budgetary power during the period 1958-1979, but was not successful in its quest for legislative power until a later stage of the EU's development.

Contemporary academic interest in the new European Economic Community was high. (The European Atomic Energy Community attracted relatively little attention). Although Haas's landmark book dealt with the ECSC, its appearance in 1958, at the same time as the launch of the EEC, seemed to bear out its prediction about deeper European integration. Some scholars, notably Lindberg (1963), followed in the neo-functional tradition; others merely described the new Community. By

contrast, interest specifically in the EP remained limited. Nevertheless, a number of the previously cited works on the Common Assembly, such as Van Oudenhove's book on political groups (1965), appeared at this time, and included coverage of the early years of the EP.

The Empty Chair Crisis was the most important political event in the early life of the EC. A dispute over budgetary authority was central to the crisis. Budgetary power in the original Rome Treaty was concentrated in the Council, with Parliament playing only a consultative role. Immediately after implementation of the Rome Treaty, MEPs began to argue in reports and plenary debates that, as the EC's parliamentary body, the EP should play a prominent part in determining the EC's budget. A key democratic principle—parliamentary control over the budget—was at stake. The dual mandate—the fact that the EP was composed of members elected in their national parliaments, who often had extensive budgetary experience there—helped MEPs to make their case. The first Treaty change—the Merger Treaty of April 1965—had not benefited the EP. This only strengthened MEPs' determination to press for additional authority, especially in the budgetary field (see De Feo, 2015b, pp. 11-26).

The Commission was keen in the mid-1960s to present a plan for financing the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and at the same time switch to a system for funding the EC based on the Community's own resources, something which the Treaty anticipated following completion of the common market, by 1972 at the latest. Commission President Walter Hallstein, with support from some national leaders, and strongly encouraged by the EP, believed that the new funding mechanism should include measures to strengthen the role of the Commission and the Parliament in budgetary matters. Indeed, Hallstein announced his proposal first to the EP, in March 1965, before presenting it to the Council. This was the proximate cause of the crisis, as it triggered the reaction that resulted in President Charles de Gaulle withdrawing French representation in the Council, in June 1965 (on the inter-institutional origins and development of the crisis, see Ludlow, 2016; on the EP's involvement, see De Feo, 2015b, pp. 29-37).

The Luxembourg Compromise of January 1966, which ended the crisis, severely curbed the use of qualified majority voting (QMV), an instrument of supranationalism. This was de Gaulle's core concern. Also as a result of the crisis, the Commission lost prestige and political authority. These setbacks for supranationalism had a chilling effect on EU studies. Far from being an inexorable process, European integration seemed moribund, and with it neo-functionalism. Stanley Hoffmann, a realist, sounded the death-knell of neo-functionalism in an article that celebrated the resilience of the nation-state in light of the Empty-Chair Crisis: 'Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe' (1966). Although Lindberg and Scheingold returned to neo-functionalism in 1970, with the publication of *Europe's Would-Be Polity*, by that point Haas and others had largely abandoned the field.

The success of the Hague Summit, in December 1969, after de Gaulle's departure from the scene, was a false dawn for a resuscitated EC. Nevertheless, an agreement among member states on funding the EC by means of its own resources led to Treaty changes in 1970 and 1975, as a result of which the EP acquired considerable budgetary authority (on the negotiation and conclusion of the 1970 and 1975 Treaty changes, see De Feo, 2015b, pp. 47-55; and Knudsen, 2009 and 2012). According to De Feo, the 1970 Treaty 'implied the timid commencement of the creation of democratic control over budgetary decisions' (De Feo, 2015b, p. 47). It opened the door to a new balance of competences between the institutions, with a modest reinforcement of the role of the Parliament. For the first time, the EP obtained a degree of influence over expenditure; became fully responsible for its own budget; and became the discharge authority. 'The first manifestation of collaboration on the budgetary procedure took shape, as the institutions realised that in an expanding European Community budgetary powers could not be concentrated in a single institution' (De Feo, 2015b, p. 47).

In the wake of the 1970 Treaty, the Commission convened a group of independent experts, chaired by Professor Georges Vedel, 'to examine all the implications of extending the powers of the European Parliament,' with a view to helping the Commission prepare for the October 1972 Paris Summit, where institutional affairs were to be on the agenda. The Group first met in October 1971 and submitted its report the following March (Vedel, 1972). The report advocated a considerable extension of the EP's budgetary and, especially, legislative authority (on the Vedel Report, see De Feo, 2015b, pp. 58-62). This added to the political momentum that resulted in the 1975 Budget Treaty, which further strengthened the EP's role (on the 1975 Treaty, see De Feo, 2015b, pp. 62-73; and Knudsen, 2009 and 2012). There was little progress in the 1970s on the EP's legislative authority, however.

Following the optimism generated by the Hague Summit, the Werner Plan of 1970 called for economic and monetary union by the end of the decade. Also thanks to a breakthrough at the Hague Summit, the EC enlarged for the first time, in 1973, when the UK, Denmark, and Ireland joined. Shortly afterwards, however, the EC suffered the effects of global financial instability and economic recession, which brought market integration to a standstill and derailed plans for EMU.

The period of stagflation and Eurosclerosis, from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, seemed to be the dark ages of European integration (Keohane and Hoffmann 1991, p. 8). Historians have been keen to dispel this image (see Laursen, 2014). They point out that, despite the long shadow cast by the Luxembourg Compromise, the lingering weakness of the Commission, and prevailing economic and political difficulties, the 'middle years' from 1973 to 1983 were far from bleak for the EC. Thanks to the first enlargement, regional policy became an important area of EC activity. The EC also made significant strides in the fields of environmental policy and global development policy, and member states took their first, tentative steps in the highly sensitive area of foreign policy cooperation. EMU proved far too ambitious in the 1970s, but member states launched the European Monetary System in 1979, with eight out of the nine of them participating from the outset in the Exchange Rate Mechanism.

There were important institutional developments at that time. The launch of the European Council, in 1975, was hugely important for the EC. So was the informal agreement among national leaders to link this institutional innovation to the direct election of the EP, as a nod to supranationalism at a time when intergovernmentalism seemed to be in the ascendant. At the request of national leaders, Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Prime Minister, drew up a report on strengthening European integration through further institutional reform and new policy initiatives, which he submitted to the European Council in April 1976 (Tindemans, 1976). The momentum for direct elections was growing. Member states unenthusiastic about the prospect gradually gave up their opposition to it (under Article 108 of the Euratom Treaty and Article 138 of the EEC Treaty, the decision to hold direct elections required unanimity in the Council). Nevertheless, differences persisted among member states over the precise arrangements. The first direct elections finally took place in 1979, thereby changing profoundly the nature of the EP and the character of the EU.

These developments generated extensive literature at the time, some of which dealt specifically with the EP. The EP's struggle for greater budgetary power had elicited some academic interest, as had various initiatives in the 1970s for institutional reform. One of the members of the Vedel group, who wrote an article about the report in *Government and Opposition*, was none other than Mary Robinson, the future President of Ireland and, after that, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Robinson, 1972).

Publications specifically on the EP appeared more frequently in the run-up to the first direct elections. Fitzmaurice, who had already published a book in 1975 on party groups in the EP, a revised version of his doctoral dissertation, published a general book in 1978 on the EP. In it, he stated confidently that: 'Direct elections would be the most important single event in the development of

Parliament and perhaps of the Community' (Fitzmaurice, 1978, p. 51). Marquand (1979) saw direct elections as a harbinger of a more powerful EP.

Herman and Lodge published a text on the EP in 1978. This and Fitzmaurice's book of the same year sought to situate the EP in the framework of familiar national institutional arrangements. Especially in light of the forthcoming direct elections, they dwelt on the issue of the EC's weak democratic legitimacy. They also explored the connections between national parliaments and the EP, which were bound to be weakened after the likely demise of the dual mandate, following the advent of direct elections. Similarly, a volume edited by Herman and Van Schendelen (1979) explored the relationship between the EP and national parliaments, covering topics such as the treatment of Community matters by committees of the national parliaments, and MP-MEP links.

In a review article in the *Journal of Common Market Studies* in 1979, Annette Morgan commented on the 'abundant literature' existing by that time on the organization and functioning of the EP, an institution she described as having 'imprecise and evolving contours' (Morgan, 1979, p. 198). There was still keen interest in political groups. Examples include books by Pinder and Henig (1969) and Fitzmaurice (1975). Bieber (1974) wrote a book on the EP and the 1973 enlargement. Hagger and Wing (1979) wrote an article on committee work in the EP, specifically in relation to the development of regional policy and social policy.

Scholars who wrote on the EP almost uniformly supported the institution, even if they were not necessarily European federalists. In the final chapter of their book, Herman and Lodge advocated a bicameral parliament for the EC, consisting of an Upper House (the Council of Ministers) and a Lower House (the EP). In retrospect, this seems reasonable, and even prescient. At the time, however, it elicited mixed reactions. Morgan called the idea of a bicameral parliament 'a flight of constitutional fancy which might be intellectually neat and would no doubt warm the hearts of impenitent federalists, but bears little relation to recent evolution, and its chances of implementation are infinitesimal' (Morgan, 1979, p. 201).

Notwithstanding these contributions, the relative lack of academic interest in the EP at this time, compared to interest in other institutions, reflected a general view of the EP's unimportance. Herman and Lodge (1978) put it succinctly in an article in 1978, whose title asked: 'Is the European Parliament a Parliament?' Their answer, based on the EP's limited legislative powers, budgetary authority, and control or oversight powers, and based also on comparisons between the powers of the EP and those of the member states' national parliaments, was that 'in no widely accepted comparative sense can it be considered a parliament as it fails to meet a series of basic political, constitutional, and decision-making requirements concerning the performance of legislative, financial, and control functions.' Despite their sympathy for the subject of their study, they concluded regretfully that: 'The European Parliament is not a parliament (or, more accurately, not much of a parliament), because it fails to meet a series of basic political, constitutional, and decision-making requirements concerning the performance of legislative, financial, and control powers' (Herman and Lodge, 1978, pp. 64-65).

Historical work on the EP during the 1960s and 1970s is also relatively limited, but is kinder in its assessment of the EP. Although primarily interested in the Common Assembly, Guerrieri has written as well on the evolution of the EP before the first direct elections, especially since the end of the de Gaulle era in 1968 (Guerrieri, 2010a, 2010b). Similarly, Roos's study of the EP's activism extends beyond the era of the Common Assembly, and includes the years 1958-1979 (Roos, 2017). Other historical studies have looked at topics such as the establishment and initial endeavours of the European Parliamentary Assembly, from March-June 1958 (Piodi, 2008); the behaviour of MEPs, according to nationality (Benhamou, 2010; Guerrieri, 2011; Knudsen, 2012a); the formation, activities, and impact of political groups (Meyer, 2011; Salm, 2011); and MEPs' general career interest (Knudsen, 2014).

Historians have also looked at the emergence of the EP's committee structure (Knudsen and Rasmussen, 2008), and at the contribution of committees to policy development, notably regional policy and environmental policy (Meyer, 2011 and 2014; Varsori and Mechi, 2007). In addition, Salm (2011, 2016) has written on the impact of transnational socialist networks in the 1970s on EC development policy and on southern enlargement policy.

In 'Challenging Intergovernmentalism and European Political Cooperation,' Tulli (2017) shows how the EP attempted in the 1970s to increase its role, powers, and visibility in the field of external relations. The article focused on three things: the creation of an inter-parliamentary mission with the US Congress, in 1972; the launch of the European Community Visitors Programme; and the EP's strong interest in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which resulted in the Helsinki Accords. In doing so, the EP tried to become involved in the intergovernmental process of European Political Cooperation. EP activism in these and other policy areas buttressed the EP's case for the introduction of direct elections.

The EP was especially interested in the CSCE's focus on human rights, as Gfeller (2011) demonstrates. So does Salm (2018), in a fascinating EPRS briefing paper on the EP's position on the 1978 World Cup in Argentina and the 1980 Moscow Olympics, in the Soviet Union, in view of concerns about human rights violations in both countries.

Historians have since looked at the EP's institutional development during that time. Knudsen (2009) examined the decade-long debate among the Community's institutions over how and what to delegate to the EP in the Budget Treaty of April 1970. The 1970 Treaty is also one of the case studies in Rittberger's book on the empowerment of the EP (Rittberger, 2005). Haroche (2018) also looked at the empowerment of the EP, but in this case, at how national parliamentarians helped. Thus, he showed that when governments decided to transfer some national competences to the European level, many national parliamentarians threatened to oppose the reforms unless their governments agreed to increase the EP's powers, as a means of compensating for their own lost powers. The transfer of budgetary powers to the EP, in 1970, is one of the case studies; the first transfer of legislative powers through the SEA, in 1986, is the other. In both cases, the author argues, an inter-parliamentary alliance between the EP and national parliaments facilitated the EP's empowerment.

## 4. 1979-1992: Becoming a 'real' Parliament

Writing in 1980, Valentine Herman, a scholar of the EP, stated that: 'the direct election of the European Parliament in June 1979 was one of the major political events in the European Community since its inception' (Herman, 1980, p. 79). Yet he, like other experts on the EP, was under no illusion about the EP's standing in the Community's institutional framework, or in the hearts and minds of voters. Herman identified a number of factors that 'contributed to the Parliament's failure to emerge as a visible Community institution, including the calibre of MEPs; the holding of committee meetings in camera; its peripheral position in Community decision making in all but budgetary matters; and the technical and complex nature of many Commission proposals which decrease the likelihood of interesting debate in the chamber' (Herman, 1980, p. 88).

The quality of MEPs improved markedly as a result of direct elections, and the EP introduced internal reforms and improvements in the post-1979 era in order to strengthen its overall standing. The EP could do little about increasing its formal power, which lay in the hands of the member states. As Herman observed, it was 'unlikely that member states will be willing ... to agree that the powers of the Parliament should be increased after its direct election ... [Accordingly] the door to a formal increase in the elected Parliament's powers via Treaty amendment remains closed' (Herman, 1980, p. 88). Yet, in less than a decade, the member states had negotiated the most significant and far-reaching Treaty change in the history of the Community, which included a major increase in the EP legislative authority. As a result, by the end of the 1980s, the EP was on its way to becoming what most people would recognize as a 'real' parliament.

The 1980s saw a major improvement in the EC's fortunes. Growing support among business and political elites for deeper economic integration culminated in the SEA and the single market programme at the end of the decade. Democratization in Greece, Portugal, and Spain paved the way for a new round of enlargement, between 1981 and 1986. A huge increase in the EC budget, largely to fund cohesion policy, accompanied the drive for completion of the single market by the target date of 1992. By that time, spillover from market integration to economic and monetary union, together with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and German unification, had set the EC on the road to another major Treaty change (on the EP's involvement in these events, see European Parliament, 2009; and Sierp, 2015). The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 gave additional power to the EP, notably in the form of legislative co-decision with the Council of Ministers. Academic attention to the EP grew accordingly.

Even though the SEA and Maastricht were pivotal developments in the history of the EP, the first direct elections stand out as an iconic event. Direct elections helped not only to legitimize the EP, but also to define and strengthen the EC (and later the EU) as a political system. Voter turnout in June 1979 was a respectable 62 %, with notable variations from country to country. Many advocates of direct elections were disappointed that more people had not voted, but the symbolism of the occasion, which itself was a political statement, was obvious.

The first elections triggered a number of publications on the conduct and outcome of the campaigns, and on the nature of the EP. Writing about the 1979 elections, Schmitt (1980) compared the results of the EP elections with the results of national election, noting an apparent discrepancy in voter behaviour. Herman and Lodge commented critically on the elections in a journal article (1980) in which they examined the campaigns to increase voter awareness of the EC and stimulate a high turnout in the EP elections. They began by assessing the aims and effects of the 'non-partisan' European Elections Information Programmes launched by the Commission and the Parliament, and briefly detailed their implementation in the member states. The second part of the paper sketched the campaigns of the transnational party organizations—the European People's Party, the Confederation of Socialist Parties, and the European Liberals and Democrats—for the elections. The article concluded that the effectiveness of the programmes and political campaigns had been

limited due to political factors at the national level in many member states. They elaborated on this in a book published two years later: *Direct Elections to the European Parliament: A Community Perspective* (1982).

A perennial question about EP elections surfaced for the first time: do voters perceive these to be first-order European elections or second-order national elections? In a seminal article in the *European Journal of Political Research* (1980), Reif and Schmitt reached a definitive conclusion that echoes to this day. They noted that the composition of the newly elected Parliament did not precisely reflect the 'real' balance of political forces in the EC as a whole, and concluded that as long as national political parties ran the show, the European elections were, in effect, additional national second-order elections. Thus, the outcome of EP elections was likely to be determined more by domestic political cleavages in the member states than by alternatives originating in the EC, but in a different way than if nine first-order national elections took place simultaneously. That was the case because European elections occur at different stages of the member states' respective electoral cycles. Such a relationship between a second-order arena and the chief arena of a political system was not at all unusual. The difference here, according to Reif and Schmitt, was that one second-order political arena was related to nine different first-order arenas. Their analysis of the 1979 results justified the assumption that EP elections should be treated as nine simultaneous national second-order elections. This assessment of EP elections, which helps to explain lower voter turnout in EP compared to national elections, as well as voters' choices of candidate or party, remains largely unchallenged to this day.

The 1979 elections saw an increase in publications on the EP more broadly. Some of these were quite descriptive, such as Palmer (1981), *The European Parliament: What it is; What it Does; How it Works*, whose author was a senior EP official. A contribution by Kirchner (1984), *The European Parliament: Performance and Prospects*, described the EP only in a general way. The aforementioned article by Herman (1980), described the powers and functions of the directly elected Parliament, focusing on the budget.

Subsequently, the first direct elections attracted less attention from historians than one would expect for such a significant event. An edited volume by Thieme and Raflik (2015), on European political parties and the 1979 elections, stands out. So does Piodi (2009), *Towards Direct Elections to the European Parliament*, published by the European Parliament Archives and Documentation Centre (CARDOC). Written to mark the 30th anniversary of the June 1979 elections, Piodi's study recalls the debates about direct elections in the Common Assembly; the Parliamentary Assembly's 1960 Draft Convention on European elections (based on the Dehousse Report); the EP's return to the subject in 1969, with a resolution calling on the Council to act; the ensuing interactions between leading MEPs and national government ministers; the EP's new Draft Convention, of January 1975; and the agreement by the European Council, in July 1976, which paved the way for the 1979 elections. An EPRS study (2015), commemorating the 40th anniversary of the 1976 Act, includes voluminous archival material and makes a valuable contribution to the literature on the first direct elections, as does an EPRS briefing (Whitfield, 2015) on the subject.

Another study, written for the EPRS by Olivier Costa (2016) examines the long road to the first direct elections and assesses the impact of the 1979 elections on the EP itself. Costa first addresses the question of democracy in a supranational entity, before examining the events leading to the 1976 Act, which allowed for direct elections, and which Costa sees as a huge step forward for the process of European integration. He also explores the political differences on the issue among the member states. Costa then assesses the elections themselves, before examining the strategy developed by the newly elected MEPs to increase their power and advocate for a uniform electoral procedure. A leading scholar of the EP, Costa characterizes direct elections as a uniquely European political feature, one of the most symbolic events in EU political life, which constitute a central and growing means of legitimation not only for the EP, but also for the Commission, given that MEPs now elect its president and approve the College.

Having achieved a long-sought-after goal, many MEPs turned—or returned—their attention to increasing the EP's influence both formally and informally in the EU policy-making process. Whereas some academic observers lamented that, notwithstanding direct elections, the EP was essentially powerless, others painted a brighter picture. In a 1984 publication, Van Schendelen argued that the EP had already acquired political influence beyond its legal powers, and that 'the concept of political influence should never be considered synonymous with that of legal powers' (Van Schendelen, 1984, p. 57). This theme has recurred in academic studies of the EP.

The EP's legal powers included, since 1975, the right to reject the EU budget. The EP did so in December 1979, as much for political as for financial reasons. Encouraged by the veteran Eurofederalist Altiero Spinelli, who was vice-chair of the Budgets Committee, the EP took a stand against what many of its members saw as the Council's mismanagement of the budget. At the same time, MEPs demonstrated the greater assertiveness of a directly elected parliament (the EP rejected the budget a second time, in December 1984).

Broader budget battles dominated the EC in the early 1980s. Margaret Thatcher, who became UK Prime Minister in 1979, demanded a reduction in her country's contribution to the Community budget, and pressed for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, which consumed most of the EC's expenditure. The European Council was the battleground, with national leaders often at loggerheads. They finally resolved the seemingly intractable 'British budget question' only in June 1984, at the Fontainebleau summit.

The ill-tempered and protracted budget dispute obscured the fact that members of the European Council had in the meantime spent considerable time discussing ways to increase economic growth and employment throughout the EC, notably by means of completing the single market. For some national leaders, deeper market integration was a means of achieving ever-closer union. French President François Mitterrand, who was instrumental in achieving the breakthrough on the budget, set out his vision for the EC's future in a major speech in March 1984, which he chose to deliver at a plenary session of the European Parliament, in Strasbourg (Mitterrand, 1984).

As Mitterrand well knew, the EP had devoted considerable time, since convening after the 1979 elections, to debating the EC's future. Spinelli led the charge for far-reaching reform. In July 1980, he formed a group of MEPs (the Crocodile Club), who shared his commitment to drafting a new treaty. This led, in January 1982, to the formation by the EP of an ad hoc committee 'responsible for making proposals on the current state and future development of the Community.' The committee duly produced the Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union, which the EP adopted in February 1984, in one of its most celebrated votes. Consisting of 87 articles, the Draft Treaty covered the institutional structure, policy scope, and financial management of the proposed EU; enshrined the principle of subsidiarity; and reaffirmed the primacy of EU law. The background to the Draft Treaty, and Spinelli's broader contribution to the European project, is examined in an EPRS briefing (Lugarini, 2014). Political scientists appreciated at the time the potential importance of Spinelli initiatives (Lodge, 1984a; Schmuck, 1987).

Adoption of the Draft Treaty, Mitterrand's speech, and resolution of the British budget question, all within a matter of four months in 1984, suggested that European integration was gathering momentum after the apparent lethargy of the middle years. At the Fontainebleau summit, the European Council decided to establish a committee, consisting primarily of national representatives, to consider institutional reform as part of an effort to deepen European integration. By the time that the so-called Dooge Committee presented its report to the European Council, in March 1985, Jacques Delors had become Commission President and was preparing a White Paper on completing the single market. Taking the legislative steps necessary to implement the Commission's plan would require greater recourse to QMV in the Council, which in turn strengthened the case for giving the EP a legislative role beyond the limited consultation procedure. These were the core institutional issues discussed in the Intergovernmental Conference of 1985, which resulted in the SEA.



The second direct elections, in June 1984, therefore took place at a time of increasing enthusiasm for the European project. The results of the elections were nonetheless disappointing, with a turnout of 59 %, down from 62 % in 1979. Lodge (1984b) concluded that, despite the Draft Treaty and Mitterrand's Strasbourg speech, Europeans knew or understood little about the EP (for other contemporary assessments, see Bourguignon, 1985; and Reif, 1984). Writing in 1989, on the eve of the third direct elections, Vernon Bogdanor noted that the first two elections were marked almost everywhere by disappointment. Not only was turnout low, but the elections seemed to be more in the nature of plebiscites on the performance of national governments, rather than genuinely transnational contests, and politicians found it difficult to demonstrate their relevance to a wider public. The fact that small, radical new parties, such as the Front National in France, were able to exploit the elections in 1984 for their own advantage was a cause of concern, and a harbinger of things to come.

Especially in light of the Draft Treaty on European Union, the newly elected EP was keenly interested in the 1985 IGC, but had only limited means of affecting the outcome. Mostly, the EP drew on the support of sympathetic national parliamentarians and national governments, notably Belgian and Italian. Not least because of the high expectations raised by the Draft Treaty, the EP was disappointed with the results of the IGC. In the ensuing SEA, the EP acquired greater legislative power through the cooperation procedure, but this was far less than what it had wanted. Richard Corbett, then an EP official, wrote about this at the time, in one of the first of his many contributions over the years to EP studies (Corbett, 1987).

MEPs were not the only ones to express disappointment with the SEA, which came into effect in 1987. Few predicted at the time that what had emerged from the efforts of the previous few years would so dramatically transform the EC. By the late 1980s, however, it was evident that European integration had a new lease of life. The single market programme generated strong political momentum and had the support of big business. '1992,' the target date for completion of the single market, which would nonetheless always be a work in progress, became a popular slogan. The Commission, under Delors' leadership, regained its stature as the motor of European integration. Buoyed by the success of the single market programme, Delors immediately pressed for EMU. Given a mandate by the European Council in 1988, Delors chaired a committee, consisting primarily of national central bank leaders, to draft a blueprint for EMU. He presented the committee's report to the European Council in April 1989. Most national leaders were favourably disposed to it, and to holding another IGC in order to make the necessary Treaty changes to bring EMU about. By the late 1980s, European integration was accelerating at an unprecedented rate.

It was not only politicians, EU officials, business people, and ordinary citizens who became caught up in the euphoria of 1992 and impending EMU. Academics were highly enthusiastic as well. The SEA and related developments spawned an impressive amount of new scholarship, and resulted as well in the strengthening of the weak academic infrastructure for EC studies.

The acceleration of European integration brought with it nothing less than a revival of EC studies. The most striking initiative was in the United States, where the study of the EC had begun in earnest in the 1950s. Thirty years later, in 1988, the European Commission Delegation, in Washington, D.C., invited a group of scholars to discuss developments in the EC. As a result of this meeting, the group formed a committee to explore the possibility of forming an academic association to promote EC studies. This was the genesis of the European Community Studies Association (now the European Union Studies Association), which quickly grew into a large membership organization. The Association's inaugural conference, held at George Mason University in May 1989, was a resounding success. Over 400 academics and practitioners attended, more than half of them from Europe. The conference's 42 panels covered a range of policies and institutional affairs, and included several papers on the EP. The success of ECSA/EUSA prompted the revival or the launch of similar national associations for EC/EU studies in Europe. Nevertheless, a preponderance of European participants remains a hallmark of EUSA's biennial conferences.

The biggest question that political scientists asked at the time concerned the origins of the SEA. In 1991, *International Organization* published an article by Andrew Moravcsik, 'Negotiating the Single European Act: National Interests and Conventional Statecraft in the European Community'. In it, Moravcsik inquired into the timing and the content of the SEA, and asked why this reform had succeeded when so many previous efforts had failed. As a first step toward answering these questions, he presented an account of the negotiations that led to the approval of the SEA by the European Council in February 1986. From this, he concluded that the SEA resulted from interstate bargains between the governments of Britain, France, and Germany, whose economic policy preferences converged. This explanation was more consistent with a realist view of regime change, which stresses traditional conceptions of national interests and power, than with supranationalist or neo-functionalist integration theory (Moravcsik, 1991, pp. 20-21).

In his groundbreaking book, *The Choice for Europe* (1998), Moravcsik built on his 1991 article and produced the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism to explain the origin and development of European integration. His analysis rested on research into five of the big events, grand bargains, or decisive agreements in the history of European integration, 'from Messina to Maastricht'. These concerned the Rome Treaties; the Common Agricultural Policy; the European Monetary System; the SEA; and the Maastricht Treaty. In each case, he argued, economic interdependence was the primary force compelling the governments of France, Germany, and the UK to act. Politicians rationally pursued national economic advantage through the exploitation of asymmetrical interdependence and the manipulation of institutional commitments.

Moravcsik's work was ambitious not only because it proposed a new theory of European integration, but also because it sought to bring together the historical study of European integration with theoretical inquiry into the sources of international cooperation. Some historians were taken aback by Moravcsik's disciplinary trespassing. A number of them combed through his sources for the case of the CAP, and questioned the thoroughness of his research and the methods of his inquiry (Lieshout, Segers, Van der Vleuten, 2004). Despite their misgivings, Moravcsik's book was a triumph of scholarship and a major contribution to EU studies.

Moravcsik's assessment of the SEA challenged what was, by 1990, the predominant view that the EC's first major Treaty change resulted from an elite alliance between Community officials and pan-European business interest groups. It also rejected the influence of federalist ideals and the skill of political entrepreneurs such as Jacques Delors. More broadly, liberal-intergovernmentalism was diametrically opposed to supranationalism, which returned in the wake of the SEA as a contending theory of European integration. In contrast to Moravcsik, Sandholz and Zysman (1992) interpreted the SEA as a response by European elites to international structural change, with the Commission as policy entrepreneur playing a decisive part.

The EP got short shrift in these interpretations of the SEA. Liberal-intergovernmentalism focused almost exclusively on the role of national governments, specifically the governments of the three largest member states, and supranationalism saw the Commission as the leading institutional actor. Writing much later, Rittberger (2005) examined the SEA as one of his case studies of EP empowerment. Like Moravcsik, he blended historical research and political science techniques, in this instance in an inquiry into why national governments decided to delegate legislative powers to the EP in the late 1980s. Rittberger rejected both liberal-intergovernmentalism and supranationalism as valid explanations, and argued instead that the logic of democratic legitimacy impelled governments to increase the EP's legislative decision making power.

By the time of the SEA, but independently of it, historians were working systematically on the origins of the European Communities. Hanns Jürgen Küsters had written a book, in 1982, on the founding of the EEC. Walter Lipgens' monumental work, *A History of European Integration 1945–47: The Formation of the European Unity Movement*, also came out in 1982. Alan Milward's trailblazing history,

*The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-1952*, followed two years later. At the end of the decade, Enrico Serra produced an edited volume on the background to the Rome Treaties. Finally, in 1991, John Gillingham's *Coal, Steel and the Rebirth of Europe, 1945-1955: the Germans and French from Ruhr Conflict to European Community*, appeared. Wilfried Loth, a prominent German historian, has made more recent contributions to the early history of the Communities (2015 and 2017).

With the exception of Lipgen's book, which looked at the European movement, those historical works mined national government archives in pursuit of knowledge about post-war reconstruction and the origins of European integration. Milward had not been interested in European integration when he started his research on post-war reconstruction. Rather, it was his research on post-war reconstruction that led him to the study of European integration. As the Marshall Plan had not sufficed to fix a broken Continent, Milward had concluded in *The Reconstruction of Western Europe* (1984) that the ECSC had become an additional, necessary institutional arrangement to repair Western Europe and complete the reconstruction effort.

By the late 1980s, Milward was ensconced at the European University Institute in Florence, having succeeded the late Walter Lipgens as professor of history there. Lipgens had been a federalist, whose work was strongly influenced by his belief in the inevitable demise of the nation state and the rise of a supranational Europe. Milward had little regard for such views. He set out, in his next book, to debunk the federalist interpretation of European integration and to demonstrate conclusively that national governments remained firmly in control. Nevertheless, Milward was struck by a paradox. At the same time that national governments were becoming more powerful in the post-war period, they were surrendering sovereignty to a supranational entity that, its proponents claimed, was the antithesis of the nation state. How could nation-states be strengthening and weakening at the same time? Milward concluded that 'there is no antithesis between nation-state and supranationality,' and that 'the evolution of the Community since 1945 has been an integral part of the reassertion of the nation state as an organizational concept' (Milward, 2000, pp. 2-3). Indeed, the two were inextricably linked.

Milward's thesis was that national governments went beyond traditional international interdependence and surrendered sovereignty in key policy areas in order to ensure their own survival and enhance their own authority. Far from undermining the nation state, as federalists believed that it would, European integration therefore became an essential means of strengthening the nation state under the circumstances in which Western Europe found itself in the mid-20th century. This was the argument that Milward presented in his highly influential book, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (1992, 2000).

This scholarship almost completely ignored incipient European parliamentarianism and the role of the Common Assembly. State-centric accounts of European integration paid little attention to national parliaments, let alone to the European Parliament. Even as historical scholarship on the EU progressed to cover the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the EP remained a secondary concern, at best.

Given the significance of the Draft Treaty of 1984, and the increase in the power of the EP that came about because of the SEA, the relative lack of historical scholarship on the EP in the 1980s is striking. An EPRS project on the history of the European Parliament in the 1980s aims partly to remedy this gap (EPRS, 2017). The project seeks to research the character and culture of the first two directly elected European Parliaments, from June 1979 to May 1989, and the role they played in the institutional development of the Community and in the launching of the single market programme. In March 2017, EPRS organized a roundtable discussion to launch the project. It brought together Birte Wassenberg, Wolfram Kaiser, and Laurent Warlouzet, the authors of the three studies.

Wassenberg, who is looking at the character, composition and culture of the first two directly elected Parliaments, underlined the importance of the first direct elections for understanding the

EP's character and culture in the decade ahead. She argued that the first direct elections not only gave the EP a more democratic outlook, but also served to boost the EP's confidence to become an engine for democratisation in Europe and the world. In addition, Wassenberg asks whether the direct elections led to an increase in representativeness among MEPs, and how direct elections affected MEPs' affiliations and political behaviour inside the EP's various bodies.

Kaiser, responsible for studying the EP's impact on the institutional development of the Community, underlined that the Parliament created a trajectory for its own advocacy of institutional reform from the time of its foundation in the 1950s. Looking at the 1980s, Kaiser noted that the EP saw the Draft Treaty on European Union as its main contribution to the renewed debate on institutional reform. His study emphasizes the futility of judging the EP's impact based solely on Parliament's limited formal legal power in the 1980s. Rather, it is important to focus on how the EP, political groups, and individual MEPs used networks and expertise to advance particular positions regarding legislative issues, regardless of their formal powers. At the centre of his study is the EP's efforts to reform and transform the EC political system by adopting both a minimalist strategy geared towards achieving change in institutional practices falling short of Treaty change, and a maximalist strategy focused on changing the entire EC system, especially through strengthening the powers of the EP when Treaty change became possible.

Warloutzet, writing on the Parliament's impact on launching and completing the single market programme, pointed out that the EP asserted its role in policy-making in the 1980s by rejecting two draft Community budgets, in 1979 and 1984. Drawing from various Parliament reports, Warloutzet stressed that the EP was able to exert intellectual influence in the debate on how to design and set up the single market programme. Warloutzet is looking at the EP's interactions with the Commission, the Council, and individual member states in defining the single market agenda, and the practical work of the Parliament in amending single market legislation proposed by the Commission.

As these studies surely attest, the EP was not a bystander in the dynamic decade of the 1980s, but acted to the best of its ability to shape Treaty reform, the single market programme, and the incipient EU political system. The third direct elections took place in 1989, at the height of excitement about the possibility of EMU and the potential for geo-political change in view of the revolutionary change in Central and Eastern Europe. The outcome of the elections were nonetheless disappointing, with voter turnout once more falling, albeit slightly, this time to 58.5 %. Political scientists again provided analysis. Curtis (1989) commented on the widespread increase in support for Green parties. Others lamented the continuing prevalence of national rather than European issues in the election campaigns.

By 1991, member states were involved in another IGC, the second in only six years. Once again, the EP stood on the cusp of acquiring greater legislative power. As with the IGC leading to the SEA, the EP tried to influence the content of what became the Maastricht Treaty, as Derek Beach shows in *The Dynamics of European Integration: Why and When EU Institutions Matter* (2005). The SEA had increased the EP's legislative role through the introduction of the cooperation procedure; the Maastricht Treaty gave the EP much greater power through the introduction of the co-decision procedure. Although Parliament was still not the legislative equal of the Council, the acquisition of such power triggered an explosion of academic work on the EP. Within what soon became the burgeoning field of EU studies, EP studies became a thriving sub-field.

Before assessing EP studies in the post-Maastricht period, two books on the EP, which appeared in the early 1990s, are worth noting. First, in 1990, Francis Jacobs and Richard Corbett published a book entitled simply *The European Parliament*. The blurb was as straightforward as the title: 'Written by two officials of the European Parliament, this book guides the reader through the complexities of this multinational body. It describes the historical basis of the Parliament, how it operates, what its powers are, and what political groups are represented.' The book did indeed explain the development of the EP over time; Parliament's internal organization, political groups, and

committees; and how MEPs carried out their budgetary, legislative, and oversight responsibilities. The book must have been a success, because it is now in its 9th edition (with Darren Neville, 2016; other editions include Michael Shackleton as an author). Jacobs, Corbett, and Shackleton were EP officials, and brought a practitioner's perspective to their assessment of the institution. Corbett became a UK Labour Party MEP from 1999 to 2009 and again from 2014 to 2019. His many sole-authored contributions to EP studies include *The European Parliament's Role in Closer EU Integration* (1998).

Second, in 1992, Marc Abélès, a Belgian anthropologist, published a fascinating work of institutional anthropology: *La vie quotidienne au Parlement Européen*. Curious about the conduct of the 1989 direct elections, Abélès studied MEPs as a tribe, describing their activities, conventions, and rituals. He identified political groups (families) as the MEPs' clans; and nomadism (the Brussels-Strasbourg caravan), lobbyism (a vital link between MEPs and civil society), and multilingualism (essential for effective communication in the EP) as the main characteristics of those tribes. He also described the EP in vivid terms as an extremely adaptable, living institution.

## 5. Post-1992: A powerful European Parliament

### 5.1. The comparativist turn

From the point of view of EP studies, the most noteworthy development in the history of the EP was not the advent of direct elections, in 1979, but Parliament's acquisition of legislative power. This began in earnest in 1987, with implementation of the SEA, and the introduction of the cooperation procedure. Before that, the EP had the right only to be consulted on legislative proposals. Although the Court's ruling in the *Isoglucose* case (1980) affirmed the EP's ability to delay legislative decision-making, this hardly amounted to a capacity to shape or influence legislation, let alone a significant role in making the decisions themselves. Only six years after the SEA came into effect, implementation of the Maastricht Treaty, in 1993, gave the EP additional legislative power, with the introduction of the co-decision procedure for some legislative acts previously covered by cooperation, and an extension of the cooperation procedure into additional policy areas hitherto covered by the consultation procedure. The legislative innovations of the SEA and Maastricht represented a remarkable breakthrough for the EP, and quickly brought about a major change in the way that academics perceived the EP and the EU as a whole.

While IR scholars argued about the causes of the EC's transformation in the late 1980s, and the Milward School of historians refined their ideas about the rescue of the nation state, an academic volcano was about to erupt and change the landscape of EU studies, and with it EP studies, forever. There were two crucial seismic events. One was the publication of a book, by the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, on the political significance of the single market programme. The other was the publication of an article in the journal *West European Politics* on the relevance of comparative politics for EU studies.

Edited by Alberta Sbragia (1992), the Brookings book consisted of a small number of chapters on the implications of the SEA, and the recently concluded Maastricht Treaty, for the soon-to-be EU's political development. Sbragia and her contributors eschewed IR approaches to the study of European integration, and examined the EU instead as a highly complex political system that could—and should—be studied using the tools and techniques of comparative politics. Sbragia was then a well-known scholar of US government, who had not previously written anything on the EU. Indeed, when she started her sabbatical at Brookings, in 1990, she had planned to continue working on American federalism. Instead, she developed a keen interest in what was happening in Europe, and invited a small group of comparativists, few of whom had previously studied the subject, to join her in a project on European integration.

The result was *Euro-Politics: Institutions and Policymaking in the 'New' European Community*, in which Sbragia argued that scholars needed to approach the EU as a political entity that possessed institutional dynamics and policy-making processes closely resembling those of a state, albeit a highly unusual one. As she explained, '... thinking about the Community comparatively will prove to be more fruitful analytically than simply describing the Community as 'unique' and consequently analysing it exclusively on its own terms. Theories, concepts, and knowledge drawn from the study of other polities can in fact be illuminating when applied to the study of the Community.' (Sbragia, 1992, pp. 12-13).

The other seismic event was the publication, two years later, of the journal article by Simon Hix (1994), entitled 'The Study of the European Community: The Challenge to Comparative Politics'. Although Hix had not yet completed his PhD at the European University Institute, his article was so compelling, so comprehensive in its grasp of political science, and so confident in its conclusions that it had an immediate impact. Hix's main point was that IR approaches, notably neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism, had served their purpose for the study of European integration, notably

the formation of the EC and the EU, and that comparative politics approaches were more appropriate for the study of the EU in its current, post-Maastricht stage of development.

'Although the political system of the European Community may only be 'part-formed' and largely sui-generis,' Hix wrote, 'politics in the EC is not inherently different to the practice of government in any democratic system' (Hix, 1994, p. 2). Thanks to the SEA and Maastricht, the EU 'now involves decision-making on questions of "domestic" rather than "international" politics; such as the regulation of the market place, the implementation of environmental and industrial policies, and the reallocation of substantial economic resources under the regional and social funds' (p. 11). Crucially, 'the EU is a political system in which parties, in the EP, compete along the classic 'Left-Right' dimension (p. 20).

Given that 'the EC displays elements of "cooperative federalism" and "consociational democracy"', comparisons needed to be drawn 'from politics in other federally organized and territorially pillorised systems' (p. 20). As Hix observed, 'The field of comparative politics has only recently woken up to the possibility of applying its theories and principles to political behaviour and action in the Community ... If the Community is treated as a system of government decision-making, the substantial comparative literature on interest organization and representation can be applied to politics in the EC' (pp. 12, 14).

In the final paragraph of the article, Hix celebrated the appearance two-years previously of *Euro-Politics*, one of the few contributions so far to EU politics 'which attempts to claim the study of the "internal" politics of the Community for the field of comparative politics ... As more academics and students become interested in the significance and functioning of the European Community the time is right for "comparativists" to take up their pens and challenge the dominance of the international approaches' (p. 24). The article was a clarion call 'for comparativist research' on the nascent EU (p. 22).

This is exactly what happened almost immediately in the field of EU studies, which had profound implications for the study of the EP. Indeed, as the main arena for competitive politics, the EP was the major beneficiary of the sudden surge of academic interest in the EU. For political scientists trained in legislative studies and quantitative methods, the post-Maastricht EP was a fascinating laboratory in which to test theories and hypotheses. Hix developed his ideas about the EU in an influential book, *The Political System of the European Union*, which appeared first in 1991, and is now in a third edition (with B. Høyland, 2011). At the same time, he became the foremost scholar of the EP.

This section provides an overview of the booming field of EP studies since the early 1990s. It looks at scholarship, first, on legislative decision-making; second, on political groups and the EP's internal organization; third, on direct elections; and finally on other aspects of the EP.

## 5.2. Legislative decision-making

While Hix was writing his comparativist manifesto in 1994, hard-core quantitative political scientists were already turning their attention to the EP, drawn by the advent of the cooperation procedure, and later the co-decision procedure. George Tsebelis, a specialist in political systems and formal modelling, made an early contribution, which had a major impact on EP studies. In 1994, Tsebelis published a celebrated article in which he argued that the EP, under the cooperation procedure, had acquired an important power: it could make proposals that, if accepted by the Commission, were easier for the Council of Ministers to accept than to modify, as only qualified majority was required for acceptance, whereas full unanimity was required for modification. Tsebelis claimed that this power, which he called the power of the conditional agenda setter, had not been recognized in previous scholarly work, and was likely to increase in time (Tsebelis, 1994).

In a related article the following year, Tsebelis elaborated on his main argument that the cooperation procedure placed significant decision-making powers in the hands of the Parliament. First, he explained how this conditional agenda-setting role of the Parliament (as well as the Commission) was responsible for the adoption by the EU of the most advanced social regulation policies of the world. Second, he delved more deeply into the EP itself, and showed that, because of its internal organisation, more specifically the role of rapporteurs and the cooperative decision-making process that takes place inside committees, the power of the EP as a 'conditional agenda-setter' holds for the actual EP of several hundred members, not merely for an idealised, unitary EP (Tsebelis, 1995).

Tsebelis' articles generated considerable interest in academic circles, and in the EP itself. It was flattering for MEPs and officials, at least those who had an academic and intellectual interest in their work, to see the EP's role in legislative decision-making being discussed in such prestigious journals as the *American Political Science Review* and the *Journal of Legislative Studies*, and by a political scientist of the calibre of George Tsebelis. Moreover, Tsebelis' claims about the cooperation procedure engendered a lively back-and-forth among political scientists.

Peter Moser, another prominent political scientist, wrote a critique of Tsebelis, which also appeared in the *American Political Science Review*. Moser argued that Tsebelis' principal claim was based either on an incomplete analysis or on inaccurately specified decision rules. In Moser's view, an accurate modelling of the cooperation procedure as stated in the SEA and as applied in practice, changed the results considerably (Moser, 1996). Tsebelis immediately shot back, criticising Moser for analysing the cooperation procedure using a model that assumes one dimension and complete information. Tsebelis showed that because of these two restrictive assumptions and Moser's misunderstanding of the strategic implications of the cooperation procedure, Moser's conclusions were mistaken. In particular, Moser's major institutional prediction, that the EP played no role in decision making except in the second round of the cooperation procedure, was contradicted by thousands of parliamentary amendments, the major part of which are accepted in the first round (Tsebelis, 1996).

In collaboration with Geoffrey Garrett, Tsebelis turned his attention more broadly to the EU's policy-making process. He and Garrett pointed out that two basic frameworks had been offered to understand legislative dynamics: power index analyses of bargaining in the Council of Ministers, based on cooperative game theory; and non-cooperative institutional analyses of the interactions among the Council, the Commission, and the Parliament. They argued that the institutional approach generated considerably more insight into European policy making than did power index analysis, which failed to take into account the effects of differences in national policy preferences on bargaining dynamics in the Council, and underestimated the importance of the Commission and the Parliament under the EU's post-SEA and post-Maastricht legislative procedures. By contrast, the institutional analysis of Tsebelis and Garrett remedied these weaknesses by analysing the impact on policy outcomes in terms of differences in the institutional location of agenda-setting power and veto power (Tsebelis and Garrett, 1996).

Roger Scully, then an emerging scholar of the EP, took issue with Tsebelis and Garrett, refuting their argument that, contrary to conventional wisdom, in most cases the EP's ability to influence policy is likely to be greater under the cooperation rather than the co-decision procedure. Scully identified serious flaws in their modelling of co-decision, and also claimed that the empirical evidence clearly demonstrated that the EP's legislative power had increased since the introduction of co-decision (Scully, 1997a). While applauding Scully's rigorous approach to studying EU legislative decision-making, which combined deductive theorizing and empirical testing, Tsebelis and Garrett nonetheless disagreed with his arguments and his evidence, and stood by their original conclusions (Tsebelis and Garrett, 1997).



Scully had another exchange with Tsebelis and Garrett, when he published a rejoinder to their position on the EP and co-decision (Scully, 1997b). This time, Tsebelis and Garrett were less restrained in their response: 'Scully's latest critique of our work compounds his earlier behaviour. He now uses humour to shrug off his mistakes ("I thank Tsebelis and Garrett for identifying this inconsistency in their own work") and belittles points he does not understand, most importantly backwards induction (which he calls "simplistic to the point of true banality"). What is worse, he distorts our arguments. Not content to claim that our published work is inconsistent, he contends that we have revised our argument (concerning the co-operation procedure) to move closer to his position. He writes: 'I accept Tsebelis and Garrett's wish to alter predictions made elsewhere. They must acknowledge, however, that they have diminished the force of their own argument.' Nothing could be further from the truth' (Garrett and Tsebelis, 1997, p. 139).

Tsebelis and Garrett were established political scientists. Scully was a freshly minted PhD, making a name for himself in the field of EU studies. The fact that scholars at different stages of their careers were engaging so passionately on the subject of the Parliament's legislative power demonstrated the degree to which academic interest in the EP had surged since the early 1990s. Moreover, their publications, and those of other scholars working on the subject—notably Simon Hix and Amie Kreppel—demonstrated how theoretically and empirically sophisticated such work had become. With each passing year, more and more data became available on the EP's legislative activity. Data sets of committee membership and leadership, of legislative and amendments, and of roll-call voting were grist to the mill of quantitative political scientists, many of whom were discovering the EU and the EP for the first time.

Academic works on legislative decision-making quickly became a staple of EP studies. General assessments of the legislative powers and impact of the EP include Maurer (2003), which, after explaining the development and use of the legislative procedures, considered how growing legislative power has affected the EP's internal development; how far the EP has been able to influence EU legislation; and whether EP involvement in legislation had enhanced or impeded the efficiency of the EU legislative process. The article concluded by considering possible areas for further reform of the EP's role in the EU's legislative system.

Research on legislative decisionmaking, and specifically on the role of the EP, was becoming more specific and elaborate (see, for instance, Farrell and Héritier, 2003, 2004, 2007). Judge and Earnshaw, who would later co-author one of the leading textbooks on the EP, examined the use of the co-decision procedure in the 'early days,' soon after implementation of the Maastricht Treaty (Judge and Earnshaw, 1995). Their article analysed the first 32 legislative proposals under co-decision, in order to make an initial assessment of the legislative impact of the new procedure on the EP. Given that the EP became a more equal partner in legislative decision-making, with 'a rightful place alongside Council in several important policy areas,' the authors noted that informal inter-institutional linkages expanded as a result of co-decision, including a marked increase in the interactions between EP and the Council. This resulted in 'an increasingly bipartite bargaining process' (between the EP and the Council), which 'placed the Commission in a considerably more ambiguous, and weaker, position than in the cooperation or consultation procedures' (Judge and Earnshaw, 1995, p. 624).

In an article in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of European Public Policy* — a journal that had come into being because of the huge increase in the EU's policy scope and impact in recent years — Judge, Earnshaw, and Cowan (1994) sought to go beyond general assessments of the EP's influence, which tended to see the EP's policy impact in aggregate or absolute terms. 'If the measurement of legislative influence is an enormously complex undertaking at national level, it is even more so in the context of EC "competitive federalism".' (Judge, Earnshaw, and Cowan, 1994, p. 27) Accordingly, the authors looked at the extent to which the EP exerted policy influence within specific policy areas (environmental policy, and research and technology policy) and the variables that help to explain the variation in policy influence.

Kreppel (1999) undertook a rigorous assessment of over 500 EP amendments under the cooperation procedure, based on a model of EP legislative influence and amendment success, to address 'the more complex, and perhaps more important, question of when the EP is influential. What impact does the type of amendment (technical v. political), subject matter, or the internal unity of the EP have on EP success in getting legislative amendments adopted by the Commission and the Council? Do the Council and Commission behave in similar ways?' (Kreppel, 1999, p. 522). Her research demonstrated that the EP had indeed become a significant legislative actor, able to amend successfully EU legislation in a way that was politically substantive. The EP was more successful when its amendments were largely technical or aimed at clarification, and when it was able to present a united front to the Commission and the Council regardless of the type of amendment being made. 'The research clearly demonstrates, not only that the EP can and does have a politically significant impact on EU policy, but that this influence is not constant. The type and subject of the amendment, as well as the internal unity of the EP all significantly affect the probability of eventual adoption of an amendment by the Commission and Council. In addition, the research lends support to the common belief that the EP and Commission are frequently allies working against a recalcitrant Council' (Kreppel, 1999, pp. 533-534).

Looking beyond procedure, Kreppel (2002a) examined other factors that affect the EP's influence in legislative decision-making. Based on an analysis of more than 1,000 successful amendments under the cooperation and co-decision procedures, Kreppel demonstrated that numerous other variables, such as internal EP unity and the type of amendment, have a significant impact on EP success. Her research revealed some empirical differences between the two procedures that had been largely ignored in the theoretical debate about the EP's legislative influence, but that have a major impact on the EP's success.

Academics have continued to examine the EP's role in legislative decision making, both generally and specifically, based, for instance, on case studies, on the work of particular committees, and on changes in the conduct of the co-decision procedure, which became the Ordinary Legislative Procedure in the Lisbon Treaty. With each successive Treaty change, beginning with the SEA, reform of legislative decision making has not only increased the EP's influence but also transformed the EP internally. The impact of this development on the EP's committees has been profound. As the EU's policy scope broadened and the EP's legislative role deepened, more EP committees became involved in decision making.

Ariadna Ripoll Servent (2012) explored the process of committee adaptation to changes in legislative decision making rules, or to the extension of legislative decision making into new policy areas. Such adaptation 'requires actors to learn the rules of the game and move closer to the patterns of behaviour defined by a specific set of legislative rules ... [and] affects the internal functioning of specific committees as well as their behaviour and values' (Ripoll Servent, 2012, p. 56). In order to understand how this process of adaptation occurs and what the consequences are, Ripoll Servent examined the change in decision-making rules that occurred in the committee for Civil Liberties and Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) after 2005, as a precedent for future changes. By looking at the impact of new rules on the LIBE committee, Ripoll Servent pushed the boundaries of research on the relationship between decision-making procedures and the shape of EU policies, and shed new light on the democratic credentials of the EP. (Ripoll Servent wrote an excellent book on the EP's role in the evolving field of Justice and Home Affairs, in 2015).

Earlier, Mamadouh and Raunio (2003) had explored the EP's committee system, looking at the committees' powers, modes of appointments, and report allocation. They did so by comparing the EP's committees with national counterparts in the member states, and examining the role of political groups in the committees. Having looked at appointments to committees, the selection of committee chairs, and the distribution of reports within the committees, they showed that national party delegations inside the transnational groups were key gatekeepers, and that the group leaders were often unable to direct the actions of their committee members. The two largest groups (PES

and EPP) monopolized the most important reports, with the national delegations in those groups playing an important role.

More recent research has refined this focus on committees by looking specifically at the selection and role of rapporteurs. Thierse (2017) looked at the role of rapporteurs in the enactment of the EU's highly complicated legislation on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), with a focus on the interdependence of institutional and ideational factors that cast rapporteurs as policy entrepreneurs. Hermansen (2018) conducted highly sophisticated research on the allocation of reports by political groups, who need to accommodate the collective needs and the individual requests of their members. Hermansen found that political groups allocated the most important reports (those under the co-decision procedure) to members who were more loyal, had experience with the relevant policy domain, and had previously worked as co-decision rapporteurs. 'Generally speaking, this analysis conveys the idea that political and procedural skills need to be coupled with policy expertise. The EP is not a place for the "all-around" politician' (Hermansen, 2018, p. 169).

Häge and Ringe (2018) used conceptual and methodological tools from social network analysis to investigate the composition and relational structure of the sub-groups of MEPs who work as rapporteurs and shadow-rapporteurs. In particular, they examined whether MEPs from small political groups participate more, are more central and have greater potential for brokerage in policy-making networks, or if the constraints associated with small party size and/or particular ideological leanings prevented this, based on an analysis of reports adopted during the 2009–2014 legislature. Their results showed that small group size does not affect MEPs' participation in policy-making networks, but increases MEPs' centrality and brokerage potential. The analysis also suggests that the relational benefits of belonging to a small party partially mitigate the structural disadvantages associated with it, and that policy making in the EP is quite inclusive, with any systematic exclusion tending to be the result of self-marginalization.

As the practice of legislative decision-making has changed, so, too, has the academic focus on the subject. Recent research highlights the informal politics of decision-making, notably the shift from public/inclusive to informal/secluded arenas, and the subsequent adoption of legislation by means of trilogues—inter-institutional negotiations at the beginning of the legislative decision-making procedure—and 'early agreements,' which is now the case for the bulk of co-decision files (see Reh, Héritier, Bressanelli, and Koop, 2011; Bressanelli, Koop and Reh, 2016). Scholars have examined this development with respect to bargaining success, democratic legitimacy, and legislative behaviour in the EP (see Farrell and Héritier, 2004; Héritier and Reh 2012; Rasmussen and Reh 2013; Reh 2014; Roederer-Rynning and Greenwood, 2015).

Reh, Héritier, Bressanelli, and Koop (2011) examined the conditions under which informal decision-making was likely to occur. Based on an analysis of an original data set of all 797 co-decision files between 1999 and 2009, they concluded that fast-track legislation is systematically related to the number of participants, legislative workload, and complexity. Their findings back a functionalist argument, emphasizing the transaction costs of intra-organizational coordination and information gathering.

Bressanelli, Koop and Reh (2016) have studied the impact of early agreements on political group cohesion. Given the reputational, political and transaction costs of failing to reach an early agreement, they expected political groups to invest heavily in discipline and consensus, and MEPs to vote accordingly in plenary session. Using data on co-decision from 1999–2011, they showed that the use of informal processes increased cohesion but only for centrist groups. Rapporteurships and votes on 'costly' legislative resolutions also mattered, but did not mediate the effect of early agreement.

In related research, Roederer-Rynning and Greenwood (2017) examined the political significance of trilogues. Their interest was not simply in the trilogues themselves, but in what the prevalence of trilogues revealed about the EP as a legislature and the EU as a political system. As they pointed out, trilogues are a key, informal institution, bridging legal provisions for bicameral law-making and everyday politics. They are controversial, being seen by some as an opaque and unaccountable form of decision-making. While there is consensus on the pivotal importance of trilogues, there is disagreement as to whether they are a harbinger of the EP's political decline or a sign of a legislator coming of age. Roederer-Rynning and Greenwood recast the debate about the EP as a 'normal parliament' into a debate about the EP as a 'potentially autonomous' actor. Seeing institutions as the building-blocks of political systems, they argued that the political significance of the 'EP-as-a-legislature' rests on its ability to develop strong rules and procedures that make it possible to 'exist apart' from the member states while becoming a visible 'interpreter' of EU politics (Roederer-Rynning and Greenwood, 2017, pp. 749-750).

Recently, Kreppel (2018) has gone beyond studying the changing power of the EP to look at the impact of the transformation of the EP on the other core EU institutions, particularly the Commission and Council. Her research seeks to fill a gap in knowledge about how the institutions work together, and the changing balance of power between them, by looking at policy preference congruence and inter-institutional policy coalitions. Kreppel finds that previous expectations of a stable policy coalition between the Commission and the EP—the EU's two 'supranational' actors—no longer hold. Increasingly, the EP and the Council share policy congruence and form effective coalitions. The historical dependence of the EP on the support of the Commission has diminished, while the Council continues to exert largely independent policy influence.

The EU's increasing effectiveness as a legislative actor, thanks to the use of trilogues and the frequency of early decision, raises questions about the balance between efficiency and democracy in the functioning of the institution. While priding itself on its democratic credentials, the EP has sought to defy expectations, especially within the Council, that it is inherently inefficient. Accordingly, the EP has become a highly capable player in the legislative decision-making process, even if such efficiency comes at the cost of curtailing internal debate and deliberation.

Brack and Costa (2018) explored this dilemma by examining the impact of changes in the EP's Rules of Procedure, from April 1979 to January 2017. They were primarily interested in the challenges faced by the EP due to the rationalisation of its deliberations, and the consequences of such procedural changes for the institution, its members, and its public image. They concluded that institutional efficiency had become an objective in itself, and that this has had a potentially damaging effect by reducing MEP's freedom of action. The various reforms, they argued, had strengthened 'democracy through parliament' at the expense of 'democracy in parliament', which could have consequences for the EP's public image, and accordingly for the perception of a democratic deficit (Brack and Costa, 2018, pp. 65-67).

Christopher Lord, who has worked extensively on questions relating to the democratic deficit (see Lord, 2013 and 2017), addressed the legitimacy versus efficiency debate in an article in the *Journal of Legislative Studies*, in 2018. Specifically, he looked at whether the distinction between a working and a debating parliament sheds light on how the EP can contribute to the legitimacy of EU law making. Lord explored the normative standards, practical challenges, and institutional choices that shape the EP as a working and debating parliament. He highlighted a predicament: 'Only by working alongside the Commission and Council in shaping the detail of legislation is the EP likely to provide the in-depth scrutiny needed for standards of public control and public justification where legislation is authored by complex modern bureaucracies with huge informational advantages over parliaments. On the other hand, the EP's success in developing practices that allow it to work alongside the Commission and Council throughout the legislative process may have been at some cost to the development of its role as a visible forum of public debate, which communicates the political system to the public, and explains and politicises political choices' (Lord, 2018, p. 34). Lord

concluded with some broad lessons for how parliamentary participation in EU law-making should be distributed between the EP and national parliaments.

### 5.3. Political groups

Transnational political groups are one of the most distinctive features of the EP, which contemporary commentators and historians alike have studied over the years. Following the increase in the legislative power of the EP, scholars paid close attention to the behaviour of MEPs, particularly within political groups. How would decision-making procedures affect their voting patterns? Would MEPs adhere more closely to political group positions on legislative proposals or would they vote more along national lines? As the domestic (national) political saliency of EU legislation rose, would MEPs find it more difficult, and politically risky, to stick to a trans-national, European party position, if that position was at odds with the positions of their national parties?

Fulvio Attiná (1990) was one of the first scholars to broach this subject in the post-SEA period. In an article in the *European Journal of Political Research*, he pointed out that, although MEPs are elected in nationally organized and domestically oriented contests, they sit in the EP in transnational political groups, or Europarties, which are much more than procedure requisites. The groups bring together MEPs from national parties, sharing a similar political ideology and strategy. Given that party integration within the EP is a decisive development in the broader process of European integration, Attiná offered a tentative assessment of political group cohesion by examining roll-call votes cast during the first and second elected Parliament (1979-1989). Although he did not reach definitive conclusions, Attiná used an index of agreement to measure party group cohesion, while also looking at the voting positions of the political groups, with the aim of pointing out the most important political cleavages and issues of the EU political system.

Later in the decade, Hix and Lord came out with a ground-breaking book on political parties in the EU (Hix and Lord, 1997). Based on a wealth of new research, they examined the emergence, organization, and importance of political groups in the EP, emphasizing the significance of the EP political group system for the EU political system as a whole. Their findings showed how MEPs coalesce in political groups, more so than in national delegations. Going beyond the political groups in the EP, they were among the first scholars to emphasize the role of the transnational parties in connecting politicians in the various EU-level institutions, notably the EP, the Council, and the European Council.

Kreppel and Tsebelis (1999) addressed the specific topic of coalition formation in the EP, based on an analysis of a random sample of 100 roll-call votes, under the cooperation procedure. They found that, generally, coalitions formed on the basis of ideology, not nationality, although they identified some national groups that occasionally voted against the majority of their political group. They also found that the political initiative within the EP at that time belonged to the left, and that the majorities required at different stages of the legislative procedure affected not only the outcomes of votes but also the coalitions formed in order to win those votes, with a slight variation in coalition building depending on the subject matter. This led the authors to suggest an alternative interpretation of the conflicts between the Council and the EP based on an ideological difference over more (EP) or less (Council) regulation, as opposed to more or less integration.

Kreppel's monumental book, *The European Parliament and Supranational Party System* (2002), remains one of the most significant contributions to understanding the nature and conduct of politics in the EP. Kreppel, who was already emerging as one of the leading scholars of the EP, examined the impact of the EP's growing legislative power and political authority on the institution's internal development, notably the composition, character, and behaviour of the transnational political groups. Kreppel demonstrated conclusively that the increase in the EP's legislative power since the SEA, and the corresponding changes in the EP's rules of procedure, brought about a

fundamental shift in the nature of the EP as a legislative institution. The book contained a mine of information on voting in the EP; on the EP's internal organization; and on the political groups themselves, especially the EPP and the PES. Kreppel looked specifically at the impact of Treaty reform (the SEA, Maastricht, Amsterdam, and Nice) on the internal organization of the EP, notably the revision of its own Rules of Procedure. Her research examined the significance of rules reform; how these have changed over time; and the balance between required reforms and internally and externally oriented strategic reforms (Kreppel, 2002b).

Hix, undoubtedly the most prominent scholar of the EP, has devoted considerable attention to the emergence and behaviour of political groups, with a particular focus on their internal cohesion (the extent to which MEPs adhere more to political group than to national party positions, in the event that those positions differ), and also whether groups collude with each other or compete against each other in the conduct of EP affairs. Hix has written about these issues extensively, in several sole-authored and jointly authored articles and books.

The question of collaboration or competition hinged largely on the behaviour of the two largest groups: the PES and the EPP. For much of the existence of the EP, there was a presumption that these two groups colluded more often than they competed against each other. After all, they held similar positions on many EU issues; EP procedures seemed to encourage collaboration; the two groups had a common interest in wanting to increase the power of the EP; and they also wanted to monopolize power within the institution, by marginalizing the other groups.

In an article published in the *Journal of Common Market Studies* in 2003, Hix, Kreppel and Noury looked more critically at the organization of the political groups and the nature of competition between them, which they identified as 'the two main features of the EP's party system' (p. 309). On the organizational side, they reviewed the foundation of the political groups and their evolution over time. On the competition side, they focused on the relationship between the PES and the EPP. They developed a set of competition propositions about PES–EPP collusion, and tested these arguments in the first ever statistical analysis of PES–EPP competition and collusion in all roll-call votes in the elected EPs, from the first vote in July 1979 to the last vote in December 2001.

Hix et al concluded that, contrary to what might be expected, the party system in the EP has become more consolidated and more competitive as the powers of the EP increased. The political groups in the EP now constituted a highly developed, relatively stable, and reasonably competitive party system (p. 327). In voting behaviour, the political groups were highly cohesive, and increasingly so, despite not having to keep a government in power, as is the case in most national party systems. Hix et al found that the propensity of the EPP and PES to compete or collude depended on their policy preferences, the internal rules of the EP, and the institutional structure of relations between the EP and the other EU institutions. Where the parties have similar policies (for instance, on EU integration and external trade) they tended to vote together, and where they have differing positions (for instance, on environmental, agriculture, economic and social issues) they tended to vote on opposite sides. 'Despite these policy preferences, however, when an absolute majority is required and turnout is relatively low, there tends to be high level of collusion between the EPP and PES. And, on final votes on legislative issues, when a united front helps the EP bargain with the other EU institutions, the PES and EPP prefer to vote together' (Hix et al, 2003, pp. 327–8).

Hix, Noury, and Roland built on a growing body of work on political groups in their highly influential book, *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament* (2007). Based on extensive research, including an analysis of more than 12,000 roll-call votes between 1979 and 2004, the authors demonstrated convincingly that the political groups are highly cohesive and that the classic 'left-right' dimension dominates MEPs' voting behaviour. Political group cohesion increased as the powers of the Parliament increased, in the post-SEA period. Ideology trumped nationality on most EU policy issues. Like-minded MEPs had strong incentives to maintain stable transnational groups, and to compete over EU issues on the basis of their ideological affinity and group membership. Going beyond their

analysis of roll call voting, the authors suggested that political group competition was a positive development for the future of democratic accountability in the EU. Thus, Hix et al contributed to the literature on voting patterns and political group cohesion in the EP, as well as to the debate about the EU's democratic deficit.

Faas (2003) contributed to the debate on political group cohesion by looking at patterns of defections of national party delegations from political group positions in the EP, using a total of 2,582 roll-call votes. The study hewed to the consensus view that political groups showed surprisingly high levels of cohesion, but looked deeper into this to explore the circumstances under which MEPs and their national delegations were more likely to defect, using the candidate selection process, the electoral system, and relationships between MEPs and their home parties as explanatory variables. Faas confirmed empirically that MEPs whose chances of re-election depended heavily on national parties were more likely to vote against their political group position in the event of a significant divergence between the political group and the national positions on particular policy issues.

More recently, Koop, Reh and Bressanelli (2017) studied the effect of electoral cycles on national party delegations' 'collective disloyalty' with their political groups in the EP, using a dataset of roll call votes cast under legislative co-decision during the parliamentary mandate of 1999-2014. Given that election proximity changes the time horizons, political incentives, and risk perceptions of MEPs, the authors showed that 'under the shadow of elections', national delegations' collective disloyalty with their transnational groups tends to increase, especially by delegations from member states with party-centred electoral rules. The results support a 'politicisation' effect, whereby delegations become more loyal over time, but the impact of election proximity is a driver of disloyalty. Moreover, disloyalty is more likely in votes on contested and salient legislation, and under conditions of Euroscepticism.

Whereas Treaty reform brought about major changes to the EP, enlargement altered the EP's size and character as well, and potentially the cohesion of the political groups. Hix, et al (2003) did not address the issue directly, but speculated that enlargement of the EU to Central and Eastern Europe should further stabilize the party system in the EP, by strengthening the incentives for MEPs to organize along transnational group rather than national party lines, by increasing the size of the two main groups against the smaller groups, and by strengthening the nature of competition in the EP (Hix, et al, 2003, p. 327).

Such has indeed been the case. On the basis of a survey of MEPs from the new member states, Scully et al (2012) concluded that established patterns of MEP behaviour and political group loyalty still held. Although MEPs from the new member states tended to be farther to the right, their attitudes on core issues of EU integration were similar to those of MEPs from the existing member states. Subsequent studies bore out the proposition that political group affiliation is what matters most to MEPs, regardless of their country of origin.

Recent research on political group membership and cohesion has looked at the behaviour of radical right parties in the EP, which became increasingly prevalent in the post-2014 legislature. McDonnell and Werner (2018) noted that, despite the high rate of policy congruence in the EP, radical right parties were divided between three groups: European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR); Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD); and Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF). They questioned why four radical right parties in the ECR and EFDD—the Danish People's Party, the Finns Party, the Sweden Democrats, and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)—neither joined the apparently more ideologically homogenous ENF nor allied with each other in 2014. Using mixed quantitative and qualitative methods, they found no policy logic explaining these parties' alliance behaviour, and observed instead that the parties privileged national 'respectability' calculations when deciding alliance strategies. Although their findings did not invalidate the prevailing view of political group formation and cohesiveness, it led the authors to propose an alternative theory of

group formation that sees some radical parties play a two-level game in which the perceived domestic benefits of EP alliances outweigh those of 'policy'.

## 5.4. Direct elections

Sustained interest in direct elections has been a continuing thread in research from 1979 to the present. A number of books and articles have been election-specific; others examine elections over time. In addition, the publication of two edited volumes on EP elections testifies to the perceived importance of the subject. The encyclopaedia edited by Déloye and Bruter (2007) includes entries by leading scholars on each member state; each political group; and over 140 political, historical, sociological, philosophical, and legal aspects of direct elections. The handbook edited by Viola (2015) is equally comprehensive, and more up-to-date, although the 2014 elections are covered only in an epilogue. The book lays out a general empirical and theoretical framework, and includes country chapters that follow a common template, which helps to compare data, methodology, and outcomes. A concluding chapter draws comparisons across the member states, and across the various elections. In addition to their scholarly significance, these books are invaluable sources of information on the EP.

Whether or not EP elections are second-order national elections remains as pressing a question today as it did in 1979. Although the EP has gained vastly more power since then, and even elected the Commission President for the first time in 2014, scholarship over the years has generally confirmed that the second-order model still prevails. In 1998, Marsh tested the second-order election model, originally proposed by Reif and Schmitt (1979). Using data drawn from four sets of EP elections (1979, 1984, 1989, and 1994), Marsh examined the impact of a party's national status, size, and character, as well as the national election cycle, on electoral performance. The analysis demonstrated the validity of most of Reif and Schmitt's original propositions, but refined their analysis of the relationship between EP and subsequent national elections. Marsh concluded that all propositions held more effectively in countries where alternation in government is the norm, which suggested that the distinction between first-order and second-order elections, although still valid, may not be as clear-cut as Reif and Schmitt originally proposed (Marsh, 1998).

A decade later, Flickinger and Studlar examined established explanations of turnout in EP elections, following the 2004 enlargement. That year's elections saw yet another decline in voter turnout and wide variation in turnout levels among the member states, including the ten new members. The authors used models developed from general participation studies and applied in earlier research on turnout in EP elections. Their updated and revised analysis reaffirmed the importance of both national and EU-level influences in explaining EP election turnout. While concluding that the second-order model is still persuasive, they noted optimistically that the increasing divergence of turnout patterns in 2004 suggested that EU issues were becoming important in some countries (Flickinger and Studlar, 2007).

Hobolt and Wittrock revisited the second-order elections model in 2011, this time looking at the micro-foundations of the phenomenon. Accordingly, they proposed an individual-level model of voting behaviour in second-order elections, and used experimental methods to test the individual-level propositions about vote choice in a controlled environment. They also examined the conditioning effect of information on the 'second-order' nature of voting behaviour. Their findings showed that, although voters still act primarily on the basis of domestic preferences, those who have additional information about the EU dimension of the election are also more likely to vote on that basis (Hobolt and Wittrock, 2011).

Direct elections continue to interest scholars for reasons other than their second-order nature. For instance, Somer-Topcu and Zar (2013) have shown how opposition parties can use EP election results to inform themselves about public preferences, and change their national policy strategies.



They point out that not all EP elections are the same and that parties should be more responsive to those that are more informative about public preferences. Looking at the results EP elections in 14 member states, they showed that opposition parties use those results and change their positions (a) when the turnout levels between national and European elections are similar and (b) when the EP election is close in time to the upcoming national election.

Data on direct elections allowed Pemstein, Meserve, and Bernhard (2015) to study candidate selection, focusing on the trade-off that parties in list systems need to make between a would-be candidate's policy-making potential, on the one hand, and other desirable characteristics, such as electoral viability, on the other. The authors developed a statistical ranking model to examine how parties facing varying strategic contexts construct electoral lists, and applied it to a data set chronicling the political backgrounds of candidates in the 2009 EP elections. Based on the ensuing analysis, they noted that the systematic variation in parties' candidate nomination strategies could fundamentally alter legislative output and partisan policy influence.

Looking at the low turnout in direct elections, Schäfer and Debus (2017) have argued that the closer citizens are to the parties running in an election in terms of the socio-economic (left-right) conflict and the European integration policy dimension, the more likely they are to participate in EP elections. Their analysis of the 2009 and 2014 European Election Studies datasets showed that the ideological left-right distance between citizens and parties mattered for participation in both of those elections. They also noted that the EU dimension became more relevant for voter turnout decision over the course of the euro crisis, but only in countries that are part of the eurozone. Their findings have implications for the nature of direct elections and representative democracy on the European level, and indicate that missing policy responsiveness can lead to lower voter turnout.

Dinas and Riera (2018) have explored the relationship between direct elections and the loss of support by large parties in national elections, in recent decades. Whereas most explanations for the decline in electoral support for large parties draw on theories of dealignment, Dinas and Riera advanced a novel, institutional, argument, focusing on the fall-out from direct elections. By bridging the second-order elections model, which explains lower vote shares for large parties (especially if they are in government), with theories of political socialization, they posited that voting patterns in EP elections tended to spill over into national elections, especially among voters not yet socialized into patterns of habitual voting. The authors derived a set of testable propositions to shed light on the underlying mechanisms of this relationship, and show that EP elections decrease support for big parties at the national arena by inculcating voting habits.

Specific direct elections remain of great interest to scholars. Most recently, the 2014 elections attracted considerable attention because of the relative success of far-right, Eurosceptical parties, and the link between the EP elections and the subsequent election, by the EP, of the Commission President. Sara Hobolt, one of the most acute analysts of the EP today, examined the context and outcome of the 2014 elections. She concluded that the success of Eurosceptical parties was unlikely to transform policy-making in the EP, where the pro-European centrist political groups continue to dominate. However, the results sent shock waves through a number of national political systems, demonstrated that many voters wanted a different direction for Europe, and emphasized the challenges ahead when it comes to finding common solutions. 'Rather than being "united in diversity", as the EU's motto proclaims, the elections highlight that Europeans are increasingly 'divided in unity.' They have been forced closer together, politically and economically, by the necessities of the eurozone crisis, yet this has only accentuated the lack of a common European outlook and the fragility of European solidarity' (Hobolt, 2015, p. 20).

Having looked closely at the 2014 elections, Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou (2014) point out that the success of far-right parties was neither a linear nor a clear-cut phenomenon. Indeed, support for the far right declined in many European countries compared to the 2009 results; some of the countries that experienced the worst of the economic crisis, including Spain, Portugal and Ireland,

did not experience a significant rise in far-right party support; and the label 'far right' is too broad, as it includes parties that are sufficiently different from each other to be grouped in one single party family.

Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2015) looked more generally at the rise of the far right in debtor and creditor countries, based on the results of the 2004, 2009, and 2014 elections. Their analysis showed that economic hardship was not the main reason for the rise of the far right, and that economic circumstances affected support for far right parties in many, complex ways. Comparing the experience of high-debt countries and creditor countries, and exploring the relationship between far-right party success on the one hand, and unemployment, inequality, immigration, globalisation and the welfare state on the other, they suggested that there might be a trade-off between budgetary stability and far right-wing party support, but the choice could be avoided if policy-makers implemented austerity measures more carefully and judiciously.

The 2014 elections were of particular interest to scholars because of the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure. Based on its interpretation of the Lisbon Treaty, the EP asserted that a vote in those elections would also be a vote for the President of the Commission. Accordingly, each of the major European political parties nominated a lead candidate (*Spitzenkandidat*), on the understanding that the candidate whose party received the most votes, or at least who could win the support of a majority of MEPs after the elections, would secure the post of Commission President. Much depended on whether the European Council would accept this institutional innovation. Several scholars examined the outcome. An article by Hobolt, in the *Journal of European Public Policy* (2014) stands out. After explaining the procedure and the results of the elections, Hobolt concluded that the *Spitzenkandidaten* did not play a major role in the election campaigns, except in a small number of countries, and had only a limited impact on voter participation and vote choices. However, the EP was adept at imposing its interpretation of the new procedure, against the wishes of some national leaders. According to Hobolt, this will have important implications for the inter-institutional dynamics in the EU and for the future of European democracy.

Braun and Schwarzbözl (2018) contributed to the debate about the introduction of the *Spitzenkandidaten* in 2014 by focusing on the political parties' efforts to make the candidates visible to voters. They argued that the multi-level character of the elections meant that there were large differences in individual parties' incentives to promote the *Spitzenkandidaten* in their campaigns. By analysing a novel dataset of campaign communication on Facebook, they found that only a few parties highlighted the *Spitzenkandidaten*, and that many did not. Thus, the selections of lead candidates by the pan-European parties had only a modest effect on national parties' willingness to showcase the candidates in their election campaigns.

Whereas Braun and Schwarzbözl focused on a practical aspect of the *Spitzenkandidaten* process, Shackleton explored its implications for the future of the EP and of the EU system more broadly. Shackleton saw the success of the process in 2014 as potentially ushering in 'an embryonic form of parliamentary government where executive power is channelled through the elected representatives of the people.' Because of the *Spitzenkandidaten* process, 'the executive [is] winning the backing of the legislature that had helped to get its President elected; the legislature [is] developing a programme for government with the executive that it had chosen. A new form of politics has certainly emerged ... [that could] fundamentally call into question the paradigm of representative government that has dominated the Parliament throughout its history.' Although the process might not succeed in 2019, 'it is the central argument of this paper that the events of 2014 witnessed the Parliament playing a leading role in challenging the institutional status quo and obliging a reconsideration of the future of representative democracy in the EU. The question at stake is whether the EU is ready to legitimate the idea of the Commission and Parliament constituting an embryonic form of parliamentary government ... What the Parliament did in 2014 was to take a lead in broadening the debate about how the EU should be governed. No-one can say where this debate will end' (Shackleton, 2017, p. 193).

## 5.5. Other contributions

Most academic work on the EP has focused on the role of Parliament in legislative decision-making; the EP's internal organization, including the composition and cohesion of the political groups; and the conduct and outcome of direct elections. A number of other issues and developments have also attracted academic attention. These include the EP's contribution to major, systemic changes in the constitution of the EU, such as enlargement and Treaty reform; and the increasing parliamentarization of the EU since the early 1990s. Recent developments, notably the various EU crises, have also been the subject of EP scholarship.

The EP itself has contributed to scholarship on the EP's involvement in epochal events in the life of the EU. Noteworthy items include an EPRS study, as part of its history series, on the 1995 enlargement of the EU, specifically the accession of Finland and Sweden (Whitfield, 2015); another study in that series, on the EP's involvement in democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe, 1989-1990 (Sierp, 2015); and a study of the EP and German Unification (Birchen, 2009).

The rise of EU parliamentarianism, not simply in terms of the EP's legislative and budgetary responsibilities, but also because of the EP's wider involvement in the EU system, has attracted considerable academic interest. Beginning with the Maastricht Treaty, the EP won the right to approve the Commission as a whole, and to approve the Commission President. Hix and Lord (1996) examined the implications of this development by exploring the EP's role in 'the making of a President'—Commission President Jacques Santer. The EP's willingness, not just its ability, to hold the Commission to account, leading to the resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999, was a milestone in the development of parliament-executive relations in the EU system. Ringe (2005) analysed the implications of the resignation crisis for government-opposition dynamics for the EU as a polity. Other scholars have examined the ways by which the EP used the appointment procedure to win commitments from the Commission on its future legislative action, and also shaped the composition of the Commissions formed in 2009 and 2014. As noted earlier, the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure, used to elect the Commission President in 2014, has major implications for parliamentarianism and for representative democracy in the EU (Shackleton, 2018).

Increasing parliamentarianism in the EU is related directly to Treaty change, which has attracted considerable interest among scholars of the EP. The Constitutional Convention of 2002-2003, resulting in the Constitutional Treaty of 2005, has been especially noteworthy. Beach, who has written extensively on the role of EU institutions in various rounds of Treaty reform, and has compared the role of the EP in the 2000 intergovernmental conference, which preceded the Lisbon Treaty, with the negotiations that resulted in the Constitutional Treaty, wondering why the two rounds of Treaty reform, held within a five-year period, yielded such different outcomes (Beach, 2007). Beach argued that the variation in results—specifically the more advantageous outcome of the Constitutional Treaty negotiations for the EP—was largely due to changes in negotiating structure due to the use of the Convention, which drafted most of the Constitutional Treaty's text. The Convention, which took place in Brussels and included a large contingent of MEPs, proved highly favourable to the EP. It allowed MEPs to build coalitions around ambitious yet realistic positions, leading to a final text that was a major step forward. Although the Constitutional Treaty was never implemented, most of its contents were later incorporated into the Lisbon Treaty.

Benedetto and Hix (2007) took a different approach to explaining the EP's gains in the Constitutional Treaty. Although the EP, as in every round of major Treaty reform beginning with the SEA, won greater power, it did not get everything it wanted in the Constitutional Treaty. Benedetto and Hix examined in detail the EP preferences in the negotiations, and the factors that determined whether the EP was successful or not in achieving agreement on them. They found that the EP gained power in areas where the national governments delegated new powers to the EU, but were uncertain

about the consequences of this delegation. They also found that public support for the EP played a role in the extension of the Parliament's powers.

Developments such as enlargement and Treaty reform have been highly consequential for the EU and for the EP. The biggest development affecting the EU at present is far different however. It is the crisis, or series of crises, that has afflicted the EU since 2010 (see Dinan, Nugent, and Paterson, 2017). Scholars have recently addressed the implications of the crises for the EP, and the role of the EP in responding to the crises.

Högenauer (2017) looked at whether MEPs' loyalty to their political groups crumbled under the pressure of the migration crisis, and concluded that, despite the fact that the migration crisis turned into a highly salient policy issue in the course of 2015, the MEPs' behaviour remained decidedly supranational. The EP's response to the euro crisis is of particular interest to scholars. Institutionally, the European Council came to the fore during the crisis, often taking decisions without consulting or involving the EP. However, there were occasions during the crisis when the European Council called for legislative action. O'Keeffe, Salines, and Wieczorek (2016) examined the EP's bargaining strategy in the negotiations with the Commission and the Council on two legislative packages called for by the European Council: the package for financial supervision and the package intended to strengthen the Stability and Growth Pact (the so-called 'six-pack'). They found that 'On substance, in both cases, the EP chose to focus on areas where a strong consensus existed [among MEPs] in order to maximize its bargaining power—notably regarding further European integration—instead of negotiating on ideologically loaded issues [on which MEPs were divided]. It mainly attempted to reinforce supranational institutions and ensure greater legitimacy and transparency by enhancing its own involvement in the processes and institutions being set-up' (O'Keeffe, Salines, and Wieczorek, 2016, p. 218). Looking at the form of the negotiations, the authors demonstrated that the EP followed similar tactics in both cases. Overall, the authors concluded that whereas the internal functioning of the EP is increasingly dominated by ideological and majoritarian features, externally the EP insists on promoting issues where a strong consensus exists to maximize its bargaining power.

Bressanelli and Chelotti (2018) looked in more detail at the EP's involvement in the negotiations for the 'six-pack' and the related 'two-pack,' focusing on the key differences between the co-legislators, and comparing the position of the EP with the Commission's legislative proposals, the Council's position, and the final legislative output. The authors were struck by the limited influence of the EP in both sets of negotiations, despite the EP's formal power under co-decision. Their main conclusion was that, in policy areas close to 'core state powers', such as budgetary surveillance, the national governments remained predominant: 'Despite the extension of co-decision, the EP is expected to act within the boundaries that member states define' (Bressanelli and Chelotti, 2018, p. 72).

## 6. Conclusion

This study has traced academic interest in the EP from the launch of the Common Assembly, in 1952, to the present. Although many contemporary academics turned their attention to the ECSC, there was relatively little academic work at the time, in the 1950s, on the Common Assembly, which seemed largely emblematic and lacked formal power. Nevertheless, early scholars of European integration realised that the Common Assembly was far more interesting and politically important than the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe. Several decades later, a handful of historians cast new light on the Common Assembly, notably on the sturdy foundations laid by the first generation of MEPs, on which their successors built the EP's power. Of particular importance was that members of the Common Assembly organized themselves into political groups, and pushed hard to maximise the political influence of their dual national and European mandates, aiming to extend the authority of the newly established supranational institution.

The period of initial interest in the Common Assembly was followed by a second phase of research, from 1958 to 1979, which was arguably the least satisfactory for the analysis of the EP. Developments in European integration in the mid-1960s contributed to the decline of academic interest in the EC, including the EP. After the false dawn of the 'Spirit of The Hague', some academics later suggested that the EC had entered the 'dark ages' of its development. Nevertheless, the news was not all bad. In addition to important policy initiatives, there were significant institutional breakthroughs, notably the Treaty changes of 1970 and 1975 granting budgetary authority to the EP; the launch of the European Council in 1975; and the related decision finally to hold direct elections to the EP, the first of which took place in 1979. The prospect of direct elections revived academic interest in the institution. As many of the ensuing academic works pointed out, however, the EP was still far from being a 'real' or a 'normal' parliament, primarily because it lacked legislative authority.

The period of research from 1979 to 1992—a year that symbolized the *relance européenne* brought about by the single market programme and the Maastricht Treaty—included assessments of the first direct elections, and those that took place in 1984 and 1989. Analysts of the first direct elections asked a question which recurs to this day: are such elections truly European or are they really separate sets of national elections? Reif and Schmitt (1980) were the first to answer this question, when they concluded that direct elections were really separate, second-order national elections. Subsequent academic analyses, after each round of EP elections, have essentially confirmed this. The first European elections in 1979 were nonetheless a huge event for the EC as a whole, and provided a much-needed boost for scholarship on the EP.

The fortunes of the EC, and with it the EP, changed profoundly during the 1980s, not only because of direct elections. The EP contributed to the *relance européenne* with its famous Draft Treaty on European Union, which emerged from the work of the Spinelli group. Academics at the time wrote about the emergence of the Draft Treaty and its possible impact on the intergovernmental negotiations that resulted in the SEA. Academics also appreciated that the SEA brought about a major increase in the EP's legislative power, as did the Maastricht Treaty, concluded only five years later. Though still unique, the EP was becoming more 'normal.'

Because of the emergence of the EU as a political system in the 1990s, thanks first to the SEA and then to the Maastricht Treaty, research on the EU increased greatly, and experienced a major turn towards comparative politics, based largely on quantitative analysis. The idea of the EU as a complex polity, as a system of multi-level governance, grew out of this approach. So did an intense focus on the EP, especially as a legislative decision-maker. Political scientists began to examine in detail the EP's involvement in the cooperation and, later, the co-decision procedures, particularly in its revised, post-Amsterdam form. Other topics of interest to a growing number of EP scholars included the organization and cohesiveness of the political groups; the extent to which the main groups

cooperate or collude in the conduct of EP affairs; the influence of the EP in the post-Maastricht Treaty reform; and the behaviour of individual MEPs.

The sheer output and sophistication of much of the EP scholarship was certainly impressive. Nevertheless, a gap began to appear between what political scientists observed and what officials and politicians experienced. People working in the EP undoubtedly enjoyed the dramatic increase in academic attention to their institution, although they may not always have recognized themselves or the EP in the books and articles that resulted from it. It was flattering for EP decision-making to be studied so intensively, but the ensuing scholarship was sometimes unintelligible to interested lay readers and becoming more and more comprehensible to only a small circle of political scientists. The contrast between works by practitioners and academics was sometimes striking, with thick description and empirical evidence being increasingly at odds with theoretical frameworks and conceptual approaches.

Scholarship on the EP was undoubtedly vibrant and important for explaining and assessing the work and character of the institution. Writing in 2008, in the second edition of their acclaimed textbook on the EP, Judge and Earnshaw observed that: 'The range and scope of academic writing on the EP continues to increase almost exponentially' (Judge and Earnshaw, 2008, p. xi). Nearly a decade later, however, Olivier Costa, one of the leading scholars of the EP, lamented that, over time: 'As is often the case in social sciences, the quantitative increase in the literature devoted to the EP was accompanied by a reduction in its marginal contribution to knowledge and the emergence of a certain routine.' Too often, scholars were applying 'a theoretical or methodological frame (often derived from congressional studies' that was ill-suited to the study of the EP (Costa, 2017, pp. 365-366, 369).

The following year, in the introductory article for a special issue of the *Journal of Legislative Studies*, Brack and Costa noted that: 'research on the EP has slowed down over the last ten years'. Not only that, but 'studies devoted to the EP have suffered from a routinization, due mainly to data-driven research' (Brack and Costa, 2018, p. 4). Brack and Costa were sounding a note of alarm, not so much about the quantity, but about the methodological approach and the subject matter of much of the academic output on the EP.

Martin Westlake, an EP practitioner-scholar, who has been writing on the institution since the early 1990s (see, most notably, Westlake 1994), commented in the special issue of the *Journal of Legislative Studies* devoted to the EP, in 2018, that: 'The low-hanging fruit [of EP research]—based on electoral statistics, roll-call analyses, opinion polling—has long since been plucked and processed.' But now, Westlake continued, 'longer-necked political scientists are beginning to graze on the fruit growing higher up in the trees' (Westlake 2018, p. 174). A problem, illustrated by the subject matter of several articles in the special issue, may be that the higher-up fruit deals with increasingly arcane parliamentary affairs.

The growing dissatisfaction with EP studies, noted by Brack and Costa, may not simply be the result of over-specialization, methodological innovation, and rising barriers to academic advancement. It could also be due to excessive faith in comparativism. The EP is, indeed, a parliament, to which the tools of parliamentary studies can, and should, be applied. However, the EP is not like any other parliament. It is a supranational, directly elected body, the only one of its kind in the world. The challenges and idiosyncrasies that come with such singularity risk being lost in highly quantitative, comparative analyses. The greatest loss may be the failure of many academic works on the EP to capture the colour, drama, and political theatre that infuse the institution.

The apparent similarity between the EP and other parliaments, which the work of comparative political science has strongly reinforced, is both advantageous and disadvantageous. On the one hand, the seemingly close comparison between the EP and its national analogues may help to make the EP more familiar to European citizens, thereby strengthening the institution's informal

legitimacy. On the other hand, it risks missing or simply passing over the evident uniqueness of the EP. The best approach for analysing the EP may be to use comparative methods, to the extent that they help students and scholars of the EU to understand better how the EP operates. At the same time, it behooves EU scholars to emphasize the uniqueness of the EU polity and institutional apparatus, including the EP. Otherwise, EU scholarship runs the risk of missing a vitally important point about the EP, which is, quite simply, that it is a parliament unlike any other.

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This study charts the course and contours of academic interest in, and writing about, the European Parliament (EP) since its origins in the early 1950s. What began as a trickle of scholarly works on the EP turned into a flood in the early 1990s, after the EP acquired greater legislative power and became more like a 'real' (if not a 'normal') parliament. The study does not claim to mention every significant work on the EP, and may well mention some works that other scholars might not consider to be particularly significant. It aims to present a 'historiography' of the EP, without limiting itself to the study of historical writing. Accordingly, it ranges over a wide swath of scholarship, including history but also, primarily, political science.

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