

EXACT Report on Dr. Faber Course

Date: 28./29. 10. ; 25./26. 11. 2010; 29./21. 01.2011

Author: Marlene Gottwald



Objectives

The course aimed at providing the students from different disciplinary backgrounds with an understanding of essential theoretical approaches and methodological tools for conducting their own research in the field of EU external action. Furthermore, general principles of “good” science and research were discussed. More specifically, the seminar focused on the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the research projects of the participants. A reader was prepared in advance with compulsory, basic texts on different theoretical approaches and qualitative methods.

In order to receive six credit points (6 ECTS), the participants were required to attend the seminar regularly, to prepare reading assignments and participate in the discussions, as well as to present their own research design¹ and discuss it in class. At the end of the course, a written exam of six questions for one hour was taken.

Content

In the first part of the course, held in Brussels at the Fondation Universitaire from 28 to 29 October 2010, different theoretical models were discussed with regard to their „fit“ and usefulness in the field of EU external action.

The first day of the session started off with an introduction by Dr. Anne Faber on the seminar structure, organisational matters and requirements. Following, Marco Siddi held a presentation on “EU external action as a research project” based on the assigned readings on the nature of European Foreign Policy and its relations with International Political Economy, linking the presented findings to his own Ph.D. project on “EU-Russia-relations: Bilateralism and the challenges to a frail strategic partnership”. The second part focused on disciplinary approaches to EU studies, such as history, political science and economics, based on an introductory presentation by Leonhard den Hertog. Furthermore Leonhard explained how an interdisciplinary approach fits into his own research proposal on “The interplay

¹ This report refers to the then presented Ph.D. proposals and their working titles, although the research designs might have been further developed and the (working) titles changed in the meantime.

between EU development cooperation and its immigration measures: towards coherence or divergence?”

In the afternoon the participants had the opportunity to attend a conference organised by ISIS (International Security Information Service) Europe on “Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in (post)Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the European Union (Security; economic and social development, confidence-building and inter communal bridge building in Afghanistan, DRC and Kosovo)”. Due constraints of the organisers, only two Ph.D. students (Nicole König and Marlene Gottwald) were admitted to participate. The conference presented the findings of a research project with 12 partner institutes EU wide funded under the 7th framework programme of the European Commission (for more information see <http://www.multi-part.eu/>).

Tatjana Petrovic Rava opened the second day of the Brussels session with a presentation on principles and paradigms in social sciences as well as of her research topic with the working title “The EU and effective multilateralism in regional conflicts – the case of Western Balkans”. The understandings of philosophy in social sciences were explained by Vanessa Boas during the afternoon session as well as the relevance of norms and ethics for her research project on “The EU as a normative foreign policy actor in Central Asia”.

Dr. Anne Faber closed the first two days of the seminar by leading a discussion on the paradigms and philosophy within social sciences and about the definition and the role of norms and ethics in International Relations.

The second part of the seminar, held in Cologne at the EXACT offices from 25 to 26 November 2010, focused on different research methods in the social sciences. The first day concentrated on theoretical approaches to EU external action, starting with a presentation by Miguel Haubrich Seco on Realism and Comparative Regional Integration and their relevance for his envisaged thesis on “Exporting patterns of governance and regional integration? – The impact of EU interregionalism on Mercosur and the Andean Community”. Simon Stroß subsequently introduced two other theoretical approaches, namely Social Constructivism and Institutionalism, and explained how he uses the latter in his own research design for his thesis with the working title “A new institutionalist perspective on policy formulation processes in the field of EU external action”.

The afternoon session was devoted to the link between theories and the empirical world on the basis of a presentation by Dana Depo. James Nyomakwa-Obimpeh continued with his introduction on research designs and methods and the presentation of his Ph.D. proposal on the Economic Partnership Agreements of the EU with ECOWAS and CARIFORUM. The second part of the seminar ended with a brief presentation by Dr. Anne Faber on gender perspectives on EU studies.

Part three of the seminar was held in Berlin at the Institut für Europäische Politik from 20 to 21 January 2011 with the overall focus on research designs and research methods. Nicole König started the first day with a presentation on case studies in general and the relevance of case studies for her research proposal on “Coherence and the Conflict Management Cycle: The European Response to Complex Emergencies”. The afternoon session concentrated on expert interviews presented by Niklas Helwig, who also introduced the participants to his Ph.D. project on the High Representation and the institutionalisation of leadership in CFSP.

On the second day of the Berlin Andrew Byrne held a presentation on the research method of discourse analysis and his own research project on the U.S. perception of EU external action. Finally, Marlene Gottwald introduced two additional methods, namely process tracing and quantitative content analysis, as well as the relevance of these methods to her own research project on “Human Security within EU conflict prevention and crisis management”. The seminar ended with a written exam of six questions about the course content.

Assessment

The course provided a comprehensive overview of different theoretical and methodological approaches towards the respective Ph.D. projects of the participants. Moreover it sensibilized the students to the general principles of “good” science and research and thereby provided them with different tools to develop their own research designs. In addition to that, the framework of the seminar gave the participants additionally the opportunity to present and to discuss their own research project not only with Dr. Anne Faber, but also with the other participants and thereby to receive some helpful feedback and comments.

Most of the students agreed upon the fact that the content of the course “was tailored to our needs”. Dr. Anne Faber has apparently put a lot of effort in the preparation of the seminar as she chose the readings carefully by taking into account what methods and theories are especially relevant for the participants. Thus, she was perceived as to be “extremely well prepared” and her comments and suggestions on the individual research proposals were seen as very useful. Furthermore, she was also responsive to our suggestions in changing topics. “Due to the considerable amount of reading it would have been ideal to have six individual days spread out across different weeks.” Nevertheless most of the students considered the respective readings as a “very useful curriculum” also for the future, besides some „difficult texts, which were hard to digest“. In general, the course provided a “good teaching of methodological basics” notwithstanding that it was perceived as „at times too theoretical and abstract“. In the end, some of the participants were not very pleased with the examination procedure in the form of a written exam. What could have been improved was stricter confinement to the course objectives. Namely, “regarding the presentations of the fellows, Prof. Faber could have placed a stronger focus on the direct link

between the topic at hand and the PhD project. This would have narrowed down the discussion and prevented an overlap with the ‘Oberseminar’.” Furthermore, there often was sometimes a strong overlap in the fellows' presentations and Prof. Faber's summaries following the presentations. Some others rated the seminar “as probably the most useful course of all.”

Participants

	Name	Affiliation
1	Byrne, Andrew	EXACT
2	Boas, Vanessa	EXACT
3	Den Hertog, Leonhard	EXACT
4	Depo, Bogdana (Dana)	EXACT
5	Gottwald, Marlene	EXACT, “fellow in charge”
6	Haubrich Seco, Miguel	EXACT
7	Helwig, Niklas	EXACT
8	Kizilkan-Kisacik, Zelal	PhD student of Prof. Wessels
9	Koenig, Nicole	EXACT
10	Marchesi, Daniele	European Commission, PhD student of Prof. Wessels
11	Nyomakwa, James	EXACT
12	Petrovic Rava, Tatjana	EXACT
13	Stroß, Simon	EXACT
14	Siddi, Marco	EXACT