

Malcolm MacLaren

The European Union as mistake – realizations of European unity¹

Introduction: Churchill and Duda?

On 9 October 2018, Andrzej Duda, current Polish President, was to speak in the Aula of the University of Zurich on «The Future of Europe – Foundations of Unity of the States of Europe». On 19 September 1946, Sir Winston Churchill, recent British Prime Minister, made an appeal in the same room «Let Europe Arise!» What may seem like a stark contrast – in terms of personalities, circumstances, and above all messages – shows on closer inspection a fundamental similarity.

Both leaders offered their perspective on Europe at a time when the European idea was / is in a deep crisis. Europe does enjoy today a stability, well-being and prosperity incomparable with the Continent's a year after the Second World War. However, its unity now, as then, is an open, debated question, more than just geopolitically. The structure under which Europe can «dwell in peace, safety and freedom» has not been / is longer, in Churchill's words, «generally and spontaneously adopted by the great majority of people in many lands». The «European Family», whose re-creation he called for, is dysfunctional, if not again broken. The present leaders of Poland and other European countries seek to check political action or even reverse existing achievements of integration.

¹ Relevant developments were taken into consideration and internet addresses cited were actual until 2018's end.

The similar contexts and purposes of the two speeches raise many interesting issues. One is not that history is simply <repeating> itself some seventy years on. Instead, the iterative nature of discussions and proposals for European unity is itself significant. Decades of dramatic events on the Continent (and beyond) separate 1946 from 2018. Above all, the existence of the EU distinguishes Churchill's reality from Duda's. The EU is a comprehensive project, pursued with an unprecedented and unparalleled effort, at realizing unity, in institutional form.

Yet the fact alone that Duda and others are currently testing the foundations of unity suggests that the success of this attempt is not complete or even certain. The further problems that plague the EU today are well-known. There are a variety of <deficits>, <crises>, <divisions>, <threats> concerning its legitimacy, migration, Brexit and the Euro, respectively. In short, the EU may not be the exceptional instance of successful regional integration long hoped for by many; rather it is becoming a failed project for Europe.

In the following essay, I reflect on the fact that the EU seems to be joining a long line of historical disappointments. I do so according not to the details of given attempts but to the epistemological magnitude of repeated failures. How should the ongoing history of <Europeanizing> Europe be understood, and what does this experience point to in the future? I believe that the development of the EU (and its precursors) raises not only obvious, less interesting first-order questions about political science, but also novel and intriguing second-order questions about knowledge. It is a good example of how in our scientific understanding we can move, in the terms of the present journal issue, «from error to knowledge». For the failure of the EU project offers important epistemological as well as political lessons.²

² In my analysis, I draw on literary and cultural texts or discourses. These offer a rich resource for explaining the projects for European unity. Their tropes can capture and convey aspects of human action and society that escape the scientific, economic or legal language typical in political discussion.

A historical perspective: ‹Not even past›

The starting point of my analysis is that the way that the EU is commonly viewed lacks real historical perspective. For ‹[t]he past is never dead. It's not even past›.³ The past is actually present, be that in Dixieland or the Old World today. The prevailing thinking suffers from a ‹myopic epistemology›, a sort of nearsightedness in understanding that limits what thinkers and actors know and how they learn from experience.

The EU's birthdays are, it is true, observed in the press. Last year, the 60th anniversary of the signing in Rome of its founding treaty was the occasion for considerable stocktaking and reckonings. Those dominant leave, however, much to be desired. Such commentary tends to consider the EU on its own terms, separate from its changing context. When the past is referred to, the reference is rarely analytical, let alone critical. The EU's much-touted achievements should be assessed more objectively. For example, its post-war economic growth was not, and its present prosperity is not, unique in global terms.⁴

An alternative view of ‹the state of the union› may be taken and different findings made. Indeed, profound insights may be gained if we engage in a thorough-going, open-ended inquiry into past plans for a united Europe. As this text is not intended to offer a history lesson, I will not detail the centuries – millennia? – during which particular plans have been proposed, promoted and pursued.⁵ Instead, I make general observations on these projections.

The *first* insight is that there is a palpable, seemingly irresistible desire to unify Europe that transcends specific individuals, times

³ William Faulkner: *Requiem for a Nun*, New York 1950, Act I Scene III.

⁴ For example, political scientist Charles King describes Europe as ‹a place defined in large part by a wilful misperception of its own past›. Charles King: *States of amnesia*, in: *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 October 2005, 7.

⁵ European unity. *The history of an idea*, in: *Economist*, 30 December 2003. Further see Anthony Pagden (ed.): *The Idea of Europe. From Antiquity to the European Union*, Cambridge 2002.

and realms. Many thinkers, such as philosophers, polemicists and political scientists, have over the centuries eagerly drafted *grands projets* for the Continent.

In the 14th century, Pierre Dubois, counsellor to the Duke of Burgundy, called already for a European federation. Immanuel Kant, German philosopher, made a celebrated call for «perpetual peace». French novelist Victor Hugo proclaimed mid-19th century that one day, all nations of the Continent would be «merged within a superior unit». One historian counted at least 600 publications in the Interwar proposing a united Europe.⁶ Unity, such thinkers have promised, will bring peace and subsequently, prosperity. It is to be realized through inclusion of all the Continent's territory, creation of a common legal code, the issuance of a common currency, and the construction of infrastructure across the region (nota bene: each means being actually used by modern-day builders of Europe).

The *second* insight offered by a historical review is that political actors, such as emperors, dictators, kings and statesmen, have tried variously to effect such conceptions. These conceptions have been rarely shared: they have been more often disputed, and in some cases, resisted. They have sought to reflect «Europe» and at other times, to appropriate it.

In the Congress of Vienna (1814–15) and Paris Peace Conference (1919), Europhiles see precursors of contemporary European unification. These established alliances and structures of cooperation among nation-states that worked through persuasion, example and regulation, rather than through military threats and force. Euroskeptics like to add that the EU has also drawn on other, less admirable efforts to restore the Continent's unity, namely efforts by a major power like Germany to achieve hegemony by conquest and subjugation.⁷

⁶ Perry Anderson: *The New Old World*, London 2009, 495.

⁷ For example, British conservative commentator John Laughland sees European unity today as being «tainted» by the «undemocratic origins» of latter-day attempts to create a new Europe. John Laughland: *The Tainted Source. The Undemocratic Origins of the European Idea*, London 1997.

The *third* learning is a corollary of the two previous. Failure, or at least wholesale reform, of the individual project has proven unavoidable.⁸ From a historical perspective, less triumphalism and condescension seem called for now; the past can teach us to be humbler about ongoing efforts and show greater understanding for earlier efforts. «[T]o laugh at failed projects», a US literary scholar notes, «is to forget that ours, too, is a projecting age.»⁹ Each will prove futile in face of countervailing forces, as these will always be more powerful than the efforts in support.

What became the EU came about from «the utter failure of the alternatives»¹⁰ evidenced in the preceding European Civil War. It may be suitably *sui generis* in its composition; still, the form given is proving to have been a mistake. The tell-tale signs are many and are hard to miss. National leaders shuttle constantly between capital cities, in and out of high-level talks, roundtables, and summits, with few substantial results to show for their busy-ness. The continent's citizens have become disenchanted and are rejecting the policies of the powers-that-be, seeking alternative approaches, and turning to political outsiders and populist solutions. Appropriately, commentators are questioning the EU's future and developing theories of its disintegration.¹¹

Equally predictable is that if thinkers or actors don't at first succeed, they will «try, try again». Herein is a *fourth* lesson.

⁸ The Economist wrote upon the EU's 50th birthday of it reflecting on its past «somber[ly]» and experiencing a «mid-life crisis». Leader. Europe's mid-life crisis, in: Economist, 17 March 2007. Implicit in this metaphor is the idea that the EU is mortal. At some point, maybe after enjoying the «golden years» of senescence, this incarnation of European unity too will decline and die.

⁹ Jason Pearl: Design for Plenty. A forgiving approach to the ideas of the past, in: Times Literary Supplement, 25 May 2018, 35.

¹⁰ Ch. King: States of amnesia, 7.

¹¹ For example, see Philippe C. Schmitter, Zoe Lefkofridi: Neo-Functionalism as a Theory of Disintegration, 8 July 2015,

<https://www.eui.eu/Documents/DepartmentsCentres/SPS/Pro-files/Schmitter/Neo-F-Disintegration.final.pdf>

The history of European integration teaches us, to paraphrase the scholar Lucy Inglis, that «people don't learn from others' mistakes. We have a need to make our own.»¹² Rather than checking and verifying the sense behind these efforts, they continue to pursue such projects.

Today, we see Europhiles, driven by ideals and ambition, doubling down on European integration: «crises offer opportunities». In his last state of the union speech, Jean-Claude Juncker, current EU Commission President, urged renewed efforts to integrate.¹³ For their part, think tanks are diligently drawing up new schemes out of contemporary crises «to take the European project to the next level».¹⁴ The Europhiles are convinced of the righteousness of their cause and blame not countervailing forces but self-serving critics for undermining their noble efforts.

A *final* observation raises a fundamental question, pregnant with significance. In the iterative process just described, is progress being made?

Every project is premised on a consequent improvement in the European condition. Indeed, Europhiles discern in the development of European unity a natural historical progression. The story is a subjective interpretation of continuous and considerable improvement, as captured in the designation of the change process as «evolution». In Europe, so this Whiggish narrative, «things are pretty good, they're going to get better».¹⁵

¹² On the Spot: Lucy Inglis (Interview), in: History Today 68, 8 August 2018, <https://www.historytoday.com/history-today/spot-lucy-inglis>

¹³ See https://ec.europa.eu/germany/news/20180912-lage-der-union-2018-stunde-der-europaeischen-souveraenitaet_de

¹⁴ «Europe in the 21st century: a new version is available», a call by young activists on Open Democracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/ulrike-guerot-victoria-kupsch/story-of-europe-in-21st-century-new-version-of-europe-is-available>

¹⁵ Further see: «[t]he European myth goes something like this: «European nations are old; European nations are wise; European nations learned from the second world war that war was a bad thing and therefore cooperate economically to form this thing called the European Union»».

Reference to the fate of the last great leap forward [sic] should certainly give Europhiles pause. The constitutional convention of 2001–03 represents an important and telling political juncture in the EU's development. It caused great confusion, controversy and conflict; the draft constitution ended up <in the bin>, and a return was hastily made to politics-as-usual, that is to the «[a]mbiguities, illusions and intentionally blurred visions»¹⁶ that characterize the European project today. Without being a Euroskeptic, one can conclude that historical progress, assumed to be a real concept leading over time to an improvement of the world, is neither linear nor steady and that it is at best asymptotic, never actually reaching the desired endpoint.¹⁷

Constituting the polity: <Reflection and choice> or <accident and force>?

As I have argued, the EU is the latest in a long line of failed attempts at European unity. Why then is the attempt repeatedly made – try, try again? One explanation lies close at hand, without making charges of megalomania, professions of European brotherhood, or allusions to technocratic presumptuousness.

This is based on objective need, be that political, economic, social or otherwise. Europe is <cramped>, a relatively small and narrow space housing many persons and different nations. These cannot pursue their destinies in isolation and constant rivalry, and they

Timothy Snyder: Political outrage. Why all sides get it wrong about the arc of history, in: Big Think, 8 September 2018, <https://bigthink.com/videos/timothy-snyder-political-outrage-why-all-sides-get-it-wrong-about-the-arc-of-history>

¹⁶ Michael Pinto-Duschinsky: All in the translation, in: Times Literary Supplement, 13 June 2003, 3.

¹⁷ An alternative but plausible interpretation of developments and trajectories would deny meliorism outright: seen with distance and objectivity, history has no shape or pattern, let alone an <arc> (following T. Snyder: Political outrage).

must therefore cooperate or more, collaborate. Put in poli-sci speak, efforts at regional integration are motivated by the desires to realize «mutual gains from cooperation in policy arenas characterized by high levels of functional interdependence»¹⁸ as well as to create and preserve «positive peace». Put in everyday speech, if an EU didn't exist, someone would have to propose one. However motivated, a will to order – and belief in societal malleability, depending on scheme – is always at hand among elites in Europe. It crystallizes in certain constellations, that is at particular moments, among particular leaders, and in particular forms.

Considered more abstractly, the historical experience of the EU and its precursors offers insights into the process of «constituting a polity». Each project is attempting to form and to formalize (constitute) a people and a political system (polity). Whereas in Western Europe, polities have usually been the products of hegemonic civic nationalism and historical trends, unifying Europe today is a matter of intergroup aspiration and collaboration.

This situation confirms the diagnosis of Alexander Hamilton, US founding father, that at issue when an old regime dissolves and a new regime is established is «whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.»¹⁹ Thinkers have eagerly taken up this challenge, seeking to design and drawing up blueprints for a new Europe. Germans like Dieter Grimm, Jürgen Habermas and Fritz Scharpf have keenly debated the existence or possible construction of a European *demos*. Is there nascent – can there be fostered constitutionally – a *Volk*-like community at the European level, as at the national?²⁰

¹⁸ Ph. C. Schmitter, Z. Lefkofridi: Neo-Functionalism as a Theory of Disintegration, 4.

¹⁹ Alexander Hamilton: Federalist No. 1, in: Ralph H. Gabriel (ed.): Hamilton, Madison and Jay on the Constitution. Selections from the Federalist Papers, New York 1954, 3.

²⁰ Their work received special impetus in 1994 from the German Federal Constitutional Court's *Maastricht* judgment, which postulated the «no

This focus, I believe, is misplaced: it should rather be on the «polity» in its alternate sense, that of a *polis* / political or governmental organization (including administration). The prospects for European unity depend ultimately on the ability of thinkers and actors to find a fitting form, to build – in more familiar terms – a «state» and not a «nation». Arrangements, bodies, policies etc. must be crafted to manage the public and civil affairs concerned, but to date an evident form for what Europe «is» is lacking.²¹

The question presents itself whether Europe can be captured and controlled through our reflection and choice? Are thinkers and actors, through awareness and assessment of its situation, capable of identifying, devising – and then agreeing on – the provisions for «good government» in Europe, which could facilitate progress toward peace and prosperity etc., now and in the future? To put it in epistemological terms, supposing that the final form that would be suitable to the challenge of constituting the European polity does exist, are we up to the task of finding it?

Some contextuality: The mess we're in

The leading reason for the reality that I have described – that is the iterative process and not a lasting outcome or successive attempts at unification rather than a final achievement of unity – has not been fully recognized among the thinkers, let alone acknowledged by the actors, concerned. It may be found in the inescapably contextual nature of efforts at European unity. We should accordingly talk in terms of contingency and change regarding the causes and consequences of developments in Europe.

demos thesis». *Inter alia* see Jan-Werner Müller: Für Brüssel sterben? Europa und der Verfassungspatriotismus, in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 5 December 2003.

²¹ Generally see Neil Walker: The Shifting Foundations of the European Union Constitution, in: Denis J. Galligan, Mila Versteeg (eds.): Social and Political Foundations of Constitutions, Cambridge 2013, 637–660.

There may well be other reasons for the failures hitherto to complete the projects proposed and pursued. I am not, for example, contending that an evident and bounded European people exists. The impossibility of demarcating Europe as a space also poses undeniable problems.²² Yet most significant is that each attempt is contingent on the time, place and *Zeitgeist* in which the project is conceived and/or launched. (For example, what was appropriate for post-war Europe is no longer appropriate today. With NATO, armed conflict between members seems unimaginable today; with the single market, economic barriers no longer divide Europe's countries.)

The accelerated pace of change symptomatic of contemporary life has only heightened the impact of contextuality on policy-making. We live in an ‹age of disruption›, in a time of political surprises, economic uncertainty, social upheaval, cultural volatility, popular lability. News breaks in a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week long cycle, and unexpected, shocking events pile up on top of each other, faster than we can process them. (Who foresaw clearly the global financial crisis of 2008, the war in the Ukraine from 2014, the migration ‹flood› in 2015, the Brexit referendum result of 2016, or the current risk of Italy being forced out of the Eurozone, to cite a few developments?²³) The decisiveness of context is amplified by the fact that the EU is subject to factors, influences etc. from inside and from outside the union²⁴ that, changing so often and so markedly, cannot be predicted, let alone determined, by Europhiles. In short, how the EU got into its present ‹state› may be seen; where it goes now is not visible.

²² Further see Daniel Innerarity: *The Political Innovation of the European Union*, in: *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto* 48 (2013) 56–58.

²³ Generally see Rudolph Lohmeyer, Erik R. Peterson, Paul A. Laudicina: *No One Saw It Coming*, in: *ATKearney*, March 2017, <https://www.atkearney.com/web/global-business-policy-council/article?/a/no-one-saw-it-coming>

²⁴ Europe is militarily, economically and demographically highly exposed to other countries by virtue of its geography – qua location, resources and neighbors.

The frequency, complexity and unresolved nature of the concomitant challenges facing Europe today should indicate the magnitude of what is involved in pursuing European unity and not the alleged incompetence of European leaders. Multiplicity and confusion confront and challenge our societies. Attempting to order, structure, tame, the unruliness that characterizes Europe is akin to nailing jelly on a wall. It is to do something very difficult or impossible, something even silly to attempt. One must realize in advance that pursuing European unity through projects such as the EU means «submitting to chaos and nevertheless retaining faith in order and meaning».²⁵

How might Europe be <projected>?

Given the multifaceted and mutating context, projects for European *unity* will be – have to be – commensurably *messy*. The task of the thinkers and actors concerned is no longer to avoid the mess but to find the forms that accommodate it.²⁶ The projects should try to express the raw material, reacting thereby to contemporary political, economic, cultural etc. developments continually and rapidly. The rules, institutions etc. can be amenable to change themselves and be reformed at frequent intervals if these are to remain relevant and effective, that is adapted to maintain the same regulatory pressure and to achieve the same outcome – if nothing more.²⁷ As the old axiom has it, sometimes everything has to change, if

²⁵ Hermann Hesse: *The Glass Bead Game (Magister Ludi)*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, New York 1969, 169.

²⁶ Paraphrasing Samuel Beckett, quoted in Tom F. Driver: *Beckett by the Madeleine*, in: Lawrence Graver, Raymond Federman (eds.): *Samuel Beckett. The Critical Heritage*, Abingdon 1997, 219.

²⁷ Pointedly see: «Europa muss in seiner Organisation so findig sein wie das Leben selbst.» Adolf Muschg: «Kerneuropa». *Gedanken zur europäischen Identität*, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 31 May 2003.

things are to stay the same.²⁸ A deliberate decision can be taken in favor of ongoing reform and revival over stagnation and decay.

As first the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, the European Community, and now the European Union, the latest project for unity in Europe, has already successively expanded its competences and intruded into increasingly sensitive areas of national policy-making. The EU may well have to change markedly, fundamentally. Its powers, structures and policies will have to be reformed *inter alia* to handle the massive population movements today, to fill the gap of US military withdrawal, and to share fiscal risk to secure its economic foundation. (*The Economist*, for its part, looks mischievously to the past for the way forward. It has advocated using the Holy Roman Empire as a model for «European disunion done right», arguing that the Empire offers «surprising lessons for the EU today».)²⁹

What needs to be done?

Supporters of European unity would be wise to consider carefully their «reach» and their «grasp», and the relation of the two.³⁰ The aim itself of European unity – and the creation of a peaceable, liberal, law-based and generous great power³¹ – may be overly ambitious, greater than what can be realistically achieved.

²⁸ Following Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa: *The Leopard*, trans. Archibald Colquhoun, New York 1960, 40.

²⁹ See eponymous article in: *Economist*, 22 December 2012. Generally see Peter H. Wilson: *The Holy Roman Empire. A thousand years of Europe's history*, London 2016.

³⁰ Cf. «Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, / Or what's a heaven for?» Robert Browning: *Andrea del Sarto*, lines 97–98 in: M. H. Abrams et al. (eds.): *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, New York 1986, II 1274.

³¹ In contrast (if not opposition) to the Soviet Union/Russia, China and most recently, the US.

The commonly-used metaphor about man's reach exceeding his grasp is ambivalent. On the one hand [sic], it can be understood as an encouragement: not to settle, but to yearn, strive, and take <chances>, for it is through dreaming big and pushing ourselves to the limits that we excel. This understanding accords with the Enlightenment notions that have hitherto informed projects for European unity. These have been premised on the potential of social engineering as well as on ideals of liberalism, secularism, individualism etc. Europhiles, led by a transnational educated intelligentsia, bring to their work «faith in the power of our minds and our methods to order reality».³² On the other hand, the poetic appeal can be understood as an admonition, namely that we should be wary of overestimating our capabilities, of overreaching. Indeed, the same notions have led many in recent times to assume mistakenly that events, developments, relations etc. are readily subsumable to legal rules and political edicts. These notions are, as explained, questionable, and they bring, like political constructivism generally, considerable risks and grave consequences upon their failure. (Consider the setback to the cause of unification from the popular rejection of the Constitutional Treaty.)

Between encouragement and admonition, a compromise attitude is conceivable. Reference here may be usefully made to modernist notions. The only remaining <solution> to the challenge of European unification is to continue to attempt to rethink and rework the European project, whatever the prospect of success. We cannot but persist in acting – if only due to functional imperatives. Yet we should not hope for the fulfilment of our aims. The sought-for unity will never be realized, but the incidence of nationalism, the depth of division, the number of barriers etc. on the Continent might be reduced. Samuel Beckett's ironic advice is worth heeding in this regard: «Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.»³³

³² H. Hesse: *The Glass Bead Game*, 169.

³³ Samuel Beckett: *Worstward Ho*, New York 1983, 7.

What is to be expected?

The future is indeterminate and offers a spectrum of possibilities. If my preceding diagnosis is correct, however, the making of real, substantial progress should not be expected. The story of European integration is not over, but the dominant progress narrative reveals observers' own preference and teleological interpretation more than any underlying reality. Indeed, regress is conceivable and has been evidenced in political and economic (dis-)integration in other world regions.

There is an old saying in Brussels that times of crisis present opportunities and that it is then that the European project advances. More accurate would be to say that «Europe is the sum of the solutions» – *tout court*.³⁴ Crisis in the project enables reform that brings change; it does not ensure greater integration. Therefore, it is likely that the contemporary reform efforts will just manage. They will «muddle through»: they will achieve the minimum in keeping with exigencies (regional cooperation, global threats), and their achievements will be provisional until the next disruption.

From such a perspective, the much-criticized tendency of European leaders at their meetings to reach agreement merely to push contentious issues down the road for resolution at the next meeting – be it in hope that the situation takes an auspicious turn, that someone will come up with a better idea, or that a compromise may be found to paper over differences – takes on a new aspect and has a plausible justification. Likewise, the much-mocked aim of an «ever closer union»,³⁵ which defines a journey rather than a destination, might be viewed more sympathetically.

³⁴ Following EU founding father Jean Monnet who wrote that «Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises». Cited by European Commission President José Barroso in: A Europe for All Weathers, 30 November 2011, europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-11-838_en.doc

³⁵ The phrase appeared in the first clause of the preamble to the founding Treaty of Rome 1957 and is now found in Art. 6(1), Treaty on European

Conclusion: ‹This is where the home truth ends›³⁶

The way in which European unification, that is the emergence, development, and prospects of projects, is commonly viewed is distorted by a myopic epistemology. This epistemology lacks real historical perspective and has hindered observers in perceiving and understanding the European situation. My intent here has been to raise awareness of it, show its effects and diminish its harm to our discourse.

In order to develop corrective lenses for greater clarity, I have told some true but unpleasant facts about projects for European unity. The fundamental ‹home truth› is that there have been many attempts at constituting the polity but no complete realizations – at most only partial, provisional victories. When one considers this history, I believe that the only ‹realization› that has been / can be reached is epistemological. The EU is namely another mistake or ‹error› in attempts at unifying Europe. Simultaneously, this perspective suggests that from big mistakes can come ‹knowledge›, if the right lessons are learned.³⁷

A leading lesson is that no such projects for European unity are realizable. The political and legal forms that might be suitable to the challenge exceed our cognitive grasp. Invariably, the best-laid plans of European statesmen and -women have gone – and will go – awry, leaving us with grief and pain, for promised joy.³⁸ (Perhaps the trauma for Europhiles of the constitutional referenda is the best example of this failure and disappointment.)

One last lesson may be drawn from the history of projects for European unity. It is noteworthy that each failed attempt at con-

Union: «DETERMINED to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe».

³⁶ Elvis Costello: «Home Truth», from *Goodbye Cruel World*, 1984.

³⁷ See fundamental premise of conception of the present journal issue.

³⁸ Robert Burns: *To a Mouse*, 1785, lines 37–40: «But Mousie, thou are no thy lane, / In proving foresight may be vain: / The best laid schemes o' mice an' men, / Gang aft a-gley, / An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, / For promised joy!» in: M. H. Abrams: *Norton Anthology*, II 92.

stituting the polity has been an accelerated elite effort in which law is intended to determine the facts on ground, rather than vice versa. I ask myself whether it would be wiser, more advantageous for the cause of ‹good government› in the region to simply facilitate ‹accident›? In 18th-century usage, ‹accident› meant organic development. Might the manifestations and impetuses of everyday mass interaction prove more effective and enduring in realizing integration – and ultimately unity – than the projects (qua rules and edicts) of leaders in past? These are conceivably prerequisites for concerted action leading to lasting political change and binding agreements in Europe.

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PD Dr. Malcolm MacLaren, Universität Zürich, Rechtswissenschaftliche Fakultät, Rämistrasse 74/2, 8001 Zürich

malcolm.maclaren@uzh.ch