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**Review**  
**Of the doctoral dissertation by Lasha Markozashvili, MA**  
**titled**  
***System Approach to the European Union Studies***  
**(Poznań 2016)**

**General Remarks**

Many scholars of the European Union claim that it is build according to a logic of a political system which, although it is *sui generis* in character, in many components resembles a political system of a country. One of the more popular system approaches to the EU is based on the Multi-Level Governance (MLG). It cannot be denied that the structure of the EU to a large extent takes into account the existing parameters of MLG. In the political system of the EU decisions concerning institutional reform which deepen integration are made carefully, gradually and after an extensive debate. However, the system is of a transformative nature and is constantly changing.

System approach to the European Union studies has becomes the main focus of interest for Lasha Markozashvili MA in his doctoral thesis (Poznań 2016).

The following review of this dissertation comprises of three parts: 1. Notes on the methodology and formal remarks, 2. Notes on the content, 3. Conclusions.

**1. Notes on the methodology and formal remarks**

The submitted doctoral thesis is 248 pages long and consists of five chapters (as well as the bibliography, the list of abbreviations and the list of figures).

My first remark concerns a lack of titles for all chapters in the list of contents, which might make it difficult for a reader to have a quick, general view of the whole thesis and to see the coherence of its structure. Fortunately, originally constructed (non-classic) chapter titles are shown within the text of the dissertation, which makes up for the aforementioned

difficulty. When I mention the originality of the chapter titles, I mean that they comprise of 2-3 key words rather than titles which show the problematics of the chapters.

The author is not consistent in his use of general remark sections at the beginning of chapters. If that is done in chapters I-IV, why is not there such an introduction in Chapter V? Obviously, a choice to prepare the potential reader for the chapter content and the intention of the author is in itself a very good solution. A similar remark concerns the conclusions of each chapter. I do not understand why only chapters III and IV include a concluding section in the end, while such a section is missing in the other three chapters? This proves the Author's lack of consistency, and generally illustrates a bad realization of a good idea.

The structure of the dissertation is balanced and logical, which means that the division of the material into chapters does not raise any concerns. The structure is purely problem-oriented, in this case theoretical and empirical, as the Author starts from a general theory of systems and analyses theories of European integration, definitions of a system and theories of European integration from a system perspective. The whole work is concluded with a chapter which explains the essence of the political system of the European Union.

The dissertation is written in grammatical third person, which is an excellent solution, giving the Author certain reserve towards the discussed subject.

From the very first page of his introduction, the Author points out two main objects of his research: 1. EU as an organization/system, 2. Process of the European integration as an invariant activity of the system. They are supported by two main directions in his research: 1. Systemic epistemology applicable to the problem, 2. Attempts to utilize the proposed model to analyse the system of the EU. Thereby formulated objectives are problem-oriented and well thought out.

One of the most important tasks of this dissertation is to show the system identity of the European Union.

The main research hypothesis of this work is a claim that the European Union is a self-reflexive system, which is constituted by autonomous sub-systems (variable ones). Such a research task and main hypothesis are problems which may be independently resolved and are undoubtedly creative suggestions for the proposed research project. What is more, the Author does not avoid the basic problem which in this case is managing the EU system via communication between its sub-systems.

The ontological discussion of the Author focuses on an observation that very often the ontology that the EU scholars focus on is rooted in a static tradition. This tradition assumes that a political subject consists of agents that create structures, which as a result implies that

these structures limit the agents' behaviour and are comparable. The domain of this comparison is politics, understood in a traditional sense. Moreover, European studies often ignore an understanding of a system that is organizationally independent.

On the other hand, the discussion of the epistemological framework of the undertaken research suggests that the scholars of systems should be experts in one detailed field and then should broaden the scope of their analysis to a higher systemic level. Such a shift from a given detailed field to a systemic level should begin with establishing the borderline between them.

When it comes to methodology, the Author declares to use a mixture of research methods. The main one is QSA (qualitative systemic analysis). Moreover, the Author declares to sequentially use the statistical method, retrospective research, qualitative content analysis and fuzzy cognitive mapping (FCM).

I have to admit that such a choice of methods (irrespectively of their actual applicability and effectiveness) is extremely original and brave. In this collection of methods, one may find tools which are rarely used in political sciences (QSA, FCM), which must evoke additional interest in the research project presented by the Author.

My only reservation concerning methodology of the thesis is the fact that the Author often uses Principal-Agent Theory (PAT) in his work, although it is not mentioned in his theoretical and methodological assumptions; the Author does not mention the need or his plan to use this tool later on, although he does apply it in practice. Such an omission is peculiar.

In terms of the theoretical approaches noted by the Author, one must agree with the Author's initial assumption that the research concerning European integration is dominated by approaches of a reductionist character.

It is obvious that the key approach for the Author in the reviewed dissertation is the system theory. However, the Author does not avoid employing other theoretical approaches, such as: constructivism, institutionalism or intergovernmentalism. I absolutely agree with such a theoretical map in the proposed field of research.

My remarks concerning literature used by the Author has to begin with a strong statement that the collection of materials presented in this paper is representative, non-accidental and largely corresponds to the assumed research tasks. It is difficult to understand, however, why the Author in his research used only few texts in Polish. As some such texts are mentioned, one may assume that the Author uses Polish efficiently; therefore, it is incomprehensible why he did not make a more thorough review of the Polish scholarship, which especially in the field chosen by the Author has "something to say." Due to those

numerous omissions, I cannot acknowledge that the presentation of the current state of research provided by the Author is full and exhaustive.

The theoretical and empirical character of the work results in the fact that some theoretical and methodological findings are included in the content chapters, therefore in my review I will move some of my remarks from this section to the Notes on the contents, which are dedicated to the particular chapters of the dissertation.

To conclude, one may state that the theoretical and methodological assumptions made by the Author are well-planned, that is, organized appropriately according to the research task, and – what is important – they are ambitious and they facilitate the research process. What is most important, not only did the Author justify his choice of theoretical and methodological approaches convincingly, but – what I would like to emphasize – he effectively applied these approaches in his research, and the findings are presented in the text.

**The remaining notes on methodology and formal remarks:**

1. The Author uses inconsistent spelling of the term: “autopoiesis” and “autopoesis”.
2. There are minor spelling errors, such as the surname “Weaver” with a small “w” (p. 77).
3. The Author uses the terms “self-reflection” and “self-identification” interchangeably. I have to admit that a footnote explaining these terms would be useful (are they synonyms?).
4. The Author uses the term “European Court of Justice (ECJ)” in his dissertation, while, at least in the universal sections of his text and in the sections concerning the period after the Treaty of Lisbon, he should have used the term “Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU)”.
5. Most of the graphs (tables and illustrations) are illegible and poorly visible. It seems that the reason is a poor technical preparation (or/and editing) of these illustrations.

**2. Notes on the content**

First, I would like to emphasize that the content of the dissertation is consistent with its topic and with the intentions of the Author.

The first chapter is devoted to the theories of the system (systems theory). The Author refers there to cybernetics (relating its findings to system organisation), organisation theory, etc. However, the dominating theory is the general systems theory, or downright systems science.

In his considerations the Author does not avoid those concepts which support his discussion, such as isomorphism, equilibrium or equifinality.

The Author's whole discussion in this part of the dissertation is founded on the classics (von Bertalanffy Ashby, Boulding, Wiener, etc.), which is a good basis for the Author's further research.

What is extremely interesting and creative in the field of the European studies is the discussion, which follows Koestler, concerning the Holonics and the holon (a part of a whole) and holarchy (hierarchy of holons). It is adequate to the field of the dissertation to provide a holistic claim that a hierarchical view of the world includes an idea according to which organization as a subject cannot exist in isolation, and every system is by itself open to interactions. Together with the surrounding subjects the system (organization) creates open hierarchical system, or holarchies (and a resulting criticism of heterarchy, or heterogenic hierarchy, which is a non-gradeable and horizontal order where each component has the same systemic value).

Examining holons, their features and faculties, is a creative search for the essence of a system as such, but it may be significant for the political system of the European Union.

The following sections in the Author's discussion were devoted to the concept of autopoiesis, which was inspired by Chilean biologists Humberto Maturama and Francisco Varela. In reference to a system it may be claimed that it is autopoietic if it has semi-permeable borders created inside the system and produces reactions which recreate the components of the system. Therefore, an organization (a subject) is a part of a structure which refers to components and relations between them. A system preserves its identity only when the organization is intact. These findings presented by the Author are of a great importance for the political system of the EU, especially because organizations which have an ability to determine the borders of change are perceived as exceptional.

What is more, the social theory of systems, based on a widely understood communication by N. Luhmann is somehow applicable to the EU, especially because all functional analyses are based on a difference between the system and its surroundings (outer environment) of the system (the difference between the system and its environment appears usually because actions lead to further actions of the same type). In this way actions create and reproduce the system. Only an understanding of the expressed information makes communication complete. In this part of the dissertation, an important conclusion in the Author's discussion when it comes to the European Union is establishing which system can deal with upheavals and difficulties by a change in the environment.

The further part of this chapter concerns the classic elements of the political system, which are input and output (their types and their meaning for the system, etc.).

In summary, the first chapter allowed the Author to create the theoretical and conceptual foundations for further considerations.

Chapter Two concerns, above all, the conglomerate of the European integration theory. The Author begins with a genesis of the European integration and – obviously – gradually discusses neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism, but also applies other approaches from the field of European studies (transactionalism, supranationalism, Multi-level Governance, etc.).

The considerations referring to neofunctional mechanism of spill-over, its occurrence, specific features and its effects, are interesting. I appreciate that the Author also analyses other neofunctional or even neo-functional mechanisms, such as: spill-back, spill around, build up, muddle about. It is obvious that the Author refers here to research done by functionalists and neofunctionalists (Haas, Mitrany, Schmitter, etc.). What I do not understand is why in the spill-over typology the Author did not show and use cultivated spill-over, which is known in literature and could have proven useful in this dissertation.

Other pertinent references concern the approach founded in Principal-Agent Theory (PAT).

Another Europeistic theory analysed in the second chapter is intergovernmentalism. The Author provides its main constitutive elements and also here uses the Principal-Agent Theory (where the countries are the principals). Quite rightly, at this point the author provides considerations on the significance of institutions, the role of negotiations, and cost transactions – in other words, important elements in the intragovernmental approach and its liberal variety.

Another analysed concept is governance. The Author begins with a search for a definition of this term, and gradually moves on to a typology of governance (external governance, supranational governance, etc.), and to a developed concept of Multi-Level Governance (MLG).

An interesting discussion provided in this text concerns moving competences from the countries to the bodies of the European Union, and the reasons for this phenomenon. This section of the chapter includes many apt remarks and findings.

In the sections devoted to new institutionalism, the Author identifies three main trends of new institutionalism (a historical one, that of a rational choice and a sociological one).

One of the most important discussion in this part of the dissertation concerns the DNA of the European integration (also the European Union). What does not change in the EU, what is stable is its DNA (its identity).

In the theories of European studies, the Author also refers to constructivism. As in the case of other theories, also here the narrative beings with the main trends in constructivism (modernist, modernist-linguistic, radical), and moves on towards applicability of constructivist rules to his research.

Constructivism is very popular among scholars in the field of European studies. The Author tests terms of secularization, and politicization, but in constructivism it is crucial to examine the language and the discourse, as well as norms, rules, values and standards which govern given social groups. Therefore, the instruments of communication are extremely important.

However, I believe that in his analysis of constructivism the Author did not pay enough attention to the main internal process, that is, socialisation, its specifics and results.

A lot of consideration is given in Chapter Two to the EU identity. The Author claims that the scholars who examine the EU identity neglect the importance of political dynamics. One must agree with this remark, as there is a consensus in political science that the EU is constantly changing and evolving and the transformational processes have to be taken into account in research.

Further on, the Author enumerates two paths in the development of the EU identity: 1. Cosmopolitical 2. Pluralistic. What is more, the EU identity is shaped on two levels: political and social.

I have to praise the Author for a correct application of the logic of consequentialism to rational choice institutionalism, and the logic of appropriateness to constructivism, or de facto sociological institutionalism.

The third chapter was devoted to political systems, their typology, organisation, and - what is interesting – their behaviour. The content of this chapter shows the Author's consistency in narration, as the Author initiates previous sections with system definitions and their typologies.

The Author proves to be brave in his reference to thermodynamics. In this context, a discussion on equilibrium appears, although this has been done before (as the Author noted) by K. W. Deutsch, and a discussion of entropy. This helped, among other things, to search for the final state of the system (finality, equifinality, multifinality).

I noticed that the discussion on system identity appears in this dissertation in its various sections and various chapters. This is also the case in Chapter Three. System identity is described through the perspective of its organizational components, which additionally secure capabilities of the whole system.

Communication and conversation are often perceived as constitutive instruments of every organization. In my opinion, if organisations function through undertaken decisions, it may be stated that communication and conversation are constitutive instruments in the process of decision-making (decisions are kinds of communication). If one adds control as a method of communication, it transpires that an organization functions properly and is internally balanced.

One of the key terms in the research of organization and the study of systems is power (competences, functions, responsibility, etc.). Power is a particular crucial attribute of political systems.

One may repeat after the Author that Chapter Three constitutes an attempt to search for a real synthesis between an apolitical structure and a political organization.

Chapter Four includes references to democracy deficit and responsibility within the EU. In the case of the analysis of the theory of European integration from the systemic perspective one should note a strong connection between the fourth and the second chapter.

Instead of a classic dichotomy of supranationalism vs. intergovernmentalism, the Author proposes a dichotomy of structure vs. organisation. Of course, from the point of view of political system studies such a suggestion might be interesting, but it is still a part of supranationalism vs. intergovernmentalism dichotomy. Therefore, these two dichotomies do not replace each other, and definitely do not exclude each other, but rather complete each other and are complimentary. Obviously, most importantly the theoretical approach in a study of the political system of the EU should be process-oriented.

An interesting remark concerns the fact that scholars often describe a shift of the system from one systemic state to another, but the scholars are very adamant to capture the systemic unchangeable in the process. Such expansive logic of integration is offered by e.g. neofunctionalism, and in much broader terms (due to disintegration theory, among other things), neo-neofunctionalism.

The analysis of the importance of communication in a political system, which took place in earlier sections of the dissertation, was expanded in this chapter by inter-level communication, which in the EU, quite naturally, is linked to Multi-level Governance (MLG). Of course, MLG may be understood and applied in research in various ways. Different



approaches to MLG and its mutations are known. The Author himself notes, for example, two levels in the EU system (structural and organizational).

The further part of Chapter Four includes the Author's discussion of two federalisms (personalist one and integral one). When it comes to the latter, the Author notes interesting phenomena within the EU, known as the by-pass and competence distribution.

The sections concerning democracy deficit (in connection to *no demos* thesis) were linked to a search for advanced political integration in the EU. As it transpires, a system is political as long as its legitimization is determined by the public input.

It is true that in literature of the field there is a consensus about there being no European nation. However, the process of consitutionalisation and a constitution itself may lead to a conversion of demos into citizens, and it cannot be denied that there are citizens in the EU. Such observations may help in searching for European identity, as does stressing that plurality of individualism is (or may be) a determinant of common identity.

This fragment of the dissertation also informs us about demoi-cracy (the EU system as a union of people), understood both as a union of the states, as well as a union of citizens; and about responsibility and transparency of the EU institutions (as well as direct responsibility).

The Author proves that the more intergovernmental the practice in the EU is, the less political union we have. But stimuli coming from the member states determine the directions of the legislative processes in the EU.

Chapter Five includes an attempt to explain the EU political system and its economic, legal and political subsystems. One has to agree with the Author who claims that we should avoid utilizing the EU as organizational equivalent of Europe.

Communicative models in the European Union are based on particular types of operations (the conserving operations, changing operations). These operations determine and create communicative canals. A great role in the communication within the EU is played by euro speak and the system of coding information.

The EU is a system which synthesises the relations between autonomic subsystems (economic, legal, political). What is also important is the flexible relations between subsystems, as thanks to that the EU may adjust its institutional order to new reality. The Author claims that subsystems influence each other as they are connected. For example, the economic subsystem may send a pro-integration impulse to other subsystems, as it is in itself very advanced and highly integrated. Such a phenomenon happens in spite of certain features of independence of these subsystems (e.g. legal subsystem in the EU is normatively closed, but cognitively open).

Equally interesting is the Author's discussion of formal organisations which (including the EU) have the so-called theory-in-use (a theory construed on the basis of current behaviour and operation), and of judicialization, which is created by every judicial system. Judicialization explains how legal communication and normative interpretation lead to an application of legal norms in fields which are not covered by judicialization, or by non-judicial agents. Judicialization shows that legal cases influence areas so far reserved for political and economic actors. The Author links the discussion of judicialization with third-party dispute resolution (TDR).

In the further sections of the fifth chapter the Author examines the fundamental sentences of the Court of Justice of the EU (Van Gend en Loos, Costa vs. ENEL, AETR, Cassis de Dijon) to show the importance of the competence – ECJ competence (currently the Justice Tribunal UE-CJEU).

While discussing these cases, the Author provides an answer to a question on how ECJ broadened its competences, and, in consequence, how it escaped the control of the member states.

The Author provided a coherent presentation of the role of national courts, their relationship with CJEU and the consequence of using the EU law for the governments of the nation states. Thanks to using the EU, the national courts may influence sector politics realized by the nation governments of the member states.

A very good element of this part of the dissertation is the analysis of domestication of the legal system of the EU, which results in the fact that nation states become institutionally resistant to the attempts of national governments to weaken it. CJEU may also use national courts to limit the governments of the member states in undertaking extra-legal measures.

I believe that the Author concludes very convincingly that the success of the economic integration led to an intensification of political integration, but it has to be remembered, however, that the failure of the economic integration may lead to a political disintegration.

Further parts of the dissertation are devoted to external governance and the security system in Europe and the role of integrated structures (NATO, WEU, European Defence Community).

The Author stresses that the European Union is first of all a liberal-normative actor.

The conclusions proposed by the Author are disappointing. He does not refer to two main objectives of this dissertation and he does not settle whether his research hypothesis that had been stated in the Introduction was proven. Although in Conclusion the Author

summarizes his research, and reminds us that he has compared apolitical with political systems, refer to Luhmann and his model of autopoietic communication, but these remarks are rather a summary of the main sections of the dissertation.

Of course one should not forget the important findings that the Author recalls at the end of his dissertation. This would be a conclusion that a political system is responsible for a systemic narrative (theory-in-use), and at the same time produces an ideological identity of the EU (norms and values in relations to the economic success give the EU power to be a global actor).

One should also remember a conclusion that the legal system of the EU is an autopoietic one, which produces and reproduces legal norms, using a legal code.

Generally, the content of this dissertation has to be assessed as excellent, especially as the Author brings original elements and findings into the field of European studies.

### **3. Conclusion**

Lasha Markozashvili, MA, has prepared an extremely interesting doctoral thesis on the system approach to the studies on the European Union. His project is well prepared in terms of methodology (QSA, FCM), theory and contents. It may be indeed claimed that this project is well-advanced methodologically and theoretically. The text is well-written, although illustrations, as it has been mentioned earlier, are illegible (poorly prepared).

Few constructive criticisms do not change the overall very high assessment of the work.

Therefore, I evaluate the thesis to be excellent. Lasha Markozashvili's doctoral thesis fulfils all the requirements for the dissertations for the doctoral degree, established in the Academic Art Degrees and Titles Law of 18 March 20011.

In the current state of the affairs, I proclaim that the text given to me for a review should be the basis for finalizing the doctoral procedure.

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