

## Introduction Chapter

# European Union as a Global Agenda Setter?

BORUT RONČEVIĆ & ERIKA DŽAJIĆ URŠIČ <sup>1</sup>

The book deals with the intricate processes concerning the formulation and adoption of grand developmental strategies (like the EU's grand strategic visions till 2030 and their global impact). The EU has been continuously rethinking its global position amidst emerging economic and geopolitical challenges and attempting to formulate strategies to increase its competitiveness. The EU recognized the importance of long-term strategizing by adopting, implementing, and monitoring the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) and Europe 2020 (2010-2020). The approach taken by the authors contributes to understanding and proper response to key global and European challenges such as demographic changes; digitalization of society; environmental challenges; inclusion and citizenship; investment, reforms, and governance; and technological change and the future of work. It will start with an introductory chapter. The content of the book is divided into three sections, outlining the main concept of the volume: evaluating and shading the light to different policies surrounding the (global) strategic visions of the 2030 Agenda of the EU.

The implementation of the EU grand strategies is a phenomenon that has already been the subject of intense interest by both researchers and policymakers (Makarovič et al., 2014; Haverland and Romeijn, 2007; Borghetto and Franchino, 2010). The most researched is the Lisbon strategy, which concluded in 2010. Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach is here based on evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention of dominant discourses (Jessop, 2004; 2010; Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008), as well as on mechanisms of selectivities (Sum and Jessop, 2013), focusing on the impact on the implementation deficit of the EU's grand strategies and its global impact.

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The European Union implementation deficit has become proverbial and the Lisbon Strategy itself is widely perceived as a failure, a phenomenon being the subject of intense interest by both researchers and policy-makers (Makarovič, et al., 2014; Haverland and Romeijn, 2007; Borghetto and Franchino, 2010). Nevertheless, great effort was made into the development of cybersecurity and data protection, artificial intelligence and supercomputers, strengthening democracy, strengthening the economy, creating a climate-neutral Europe fit for the digital age, and many more. Nevertheless, the prospects for Europe 2030 remain open for research and discussions as well (Fric et al., 2023; Džajić Uršič, 2020; Golob and Makarovič, 2021).

The book has three general Sections with several Chapters dealing with EU Industrial Policy and Security Challenges in a Globalized World; Challenges and Opportunities in Developing EU Regional Policies: Retaining Competent Experts, Balancing Real Estate and Tourism, and Assessing the Effectiveness; European Union's Grand Strategy: Balancing Local Communities, Reflexivity, and Human Dignity.

This book is an effort to scratch the surface of the implementation of The Agenda 2030 with CPE2030, although more systematic research is yet to follow, especially based on data collected during the project.

Starting with the introductory chapter, the book will propose three sections and chapters as follow:

## **Part I. Exploring EU Industrial Policy and Security Challenges in a Globalized World**

### **Chapter 2: EU as an Industry Leader? Positioning EU Industrial Policy in Danube Regions Reality**

The world is rapidly changing, and the Covid-19 consequences demonstrated the disrupted global value chains. The occurrences revealed the fragility of the pre-Covid global economy. In such a situation the question arises of what the EU can do for its industry to prevent similar fragility in terms of dependence on distant suppliers. The main question guiding the discussion is in fact the question of how local/regional industrial ecosystems should be shaped to ensure the sustainable value chains of the sector. Special emphasis will be made on the potential of advanced manufacturing and the potential of local transnational networking of small, advanced manufacturing laboratories. The guiding premise of the discussion is going to be the proposition that localization seems to be the best response to pitfalls of globalization as we experienced in the pre-Covid era.

### **Chapter 3: Strengthening Circular Economy through Industrial Symbiosis: The *NextGenerationEU* Opportunity**

This chapter assesses recent contributions to the principles and objectives of EU policies in adopting one of the main circular economies' approaches – industrial symbiosis. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the European Green Deal represents fundamental long-term contributions to industrial symbiosis. All guide the transition to a model of economic development, with an aim not only at profitability and profit but also at social, and political progress and environmental protection. In this context, the chapter touches on the strategies, policies, and obstacles of essential aspects of rational and sustainable management of natural resources, but also the growing awareness of the new initiatives caused also by the health emergency generated by the Covid19 pandemic. Contributing to several dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, the EU has now proposed to make the new Green Deal strategy systematic and coherent. In doing so, the EU made the green transition and digitization among the conditions for the acceptance of projects that will be part of the *NextGenerationEU* fund. The research question in this chapter is based on an analysis of the effectiveness of current rules, political activity, and practice in order to determine whether current initiative(s) is sufficient to meet the conditions of international green and digital duties of the EU.

### **Chapter 4: The EU's Approach to Security through the Lens of IR Paradigms**

The global security environment is becoming extremely unpredictable, with wide-ranging traditional as well as emerging unconventional threats. In an extremely globalized and complex world with severe geopolitical tensions, the EU needs to take responsibility for both external as well as internal security and increase its capacity to become a stronger global actor in this field. The chapter will present current security threats for Europe and explore the EU's trajectory of its understanding of security after the end of the Cold War. The analysis will be conducted within International Relations theories and their evolution. The EU's understanding of security is examined at the institutional, policy, and normative levels, with a particular focus on the main security innovations.

## **Part II. Challenges and Opportunities in Developing EU Regional Policies: Retaining Competent Experts, Balancing Real Estate and Tourism, and Assessing the Effectiveness**

### **Chapter 5: Causes and Challenges of the Danube Region Countries in Attracting and Retaining Talents as One of the Key Competitive Advantages of the Future**

Assuring an appropriate number of competent experts in different professional fields, dealing with new technologies and new challenges, embedded in the tapestry of social, cultural, historical, religious, etc. differences is a growing reality of the post-industrial era. As the Danube region is one of the most diversified areas in the world and thus quite an inflammable one, where a misunderstanding can turn into open military conflict, sadly proven in the last few decades in ex-Yugoslavia countries, besides, Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia (today Northern Macedonia) and especially Bosnia and Herzegovina. The blurred situation also continues with war operations last year in Ukraine...

When passions subside and guns fall silent, uncomfortable questions resurface in times of peace about how individual countries are able to attract talented people and how they are able to retain them. This chapter will be devoted to processing the latter two questions on the example of the Danube, with an emphasis on its less developed part, where the challenges are even more demanding.

### **Chapter 6: EU Tourism Development in the Context of the Estate Business**

In the theory and practice of tourism development, especially in the last three decades, the question of the relationship between tourism and real estate is raised from the aspect of social interest, i.e. the interest of the local or even national community. The term "residential tourism" is used with contradictory interpretations of whether or not it is a form of tourism. There is no agreement in the literature regarding the use of this term in the field of tourism development, just as there is no agreement regarding the positive and negative effects of the "symbiosis" of tourism and the real estate business. The chapter aims to further intensify the discussion on the topic of the relationship between tourism and real estate in the domain of the development perspective of a tourist destination. For this purpose, a review of the literature and discussion concerning the given problem was done.

### **Chapter 7: The Effectiveness of EU Regional Policies - A Longitudinal Review**

This chapter examines the efficacy of EU Grand Strategies for Regional Development and assesses regional success in areas such as GDP, poverty, employment, and health rate. While the EU's Cohesion Policy aims to stimulate economic growth, job creation, and long-term development in developing countries, the emphasis is on longitudinal data comparison from selected regions in order to estimate the overall performance of regional

strategies. It contributes to the ongoing debate on the efficacy of EU regional programs over time.

### **Part III. European Union's Grand Strategies: Balancing Local Communities, Reflexivity, and Human Dignity**

#### **Chapter 8: Bringing EU Grand Strategies Closer to Local Communities: The Role of Community Foundations in Substantiating EU's Strategic Thinking on Sustainable Development**

The chapter explores the challenges that the EU has in maintaining its global leadership while also addressing local sustainability issues. The EU's democratic deficit is viewed as a constraint that could make it difficult for the EU to establish and solidify a more dominant worldwide position and effectively implement global strategies. However, the chapter also emphasizes the inspiring work being done by European local communities in building their own processes and methods for solving sustainability concerns. The chapter illustrates the potential of community infrastructure and functional methods to address local sustainability concerns, which could inspire communities worldwide.

#### **Chapter 9: Introducing Reflexibility as a Path towards Society 5.0**

In the chapter, we introduce the concept of reflexibility, which merges the notion of reflexive thinking and responsible behavior. It is considered a key to more sustainable and prosperous living conditions on the planet. It is fueled by the recognition that the current situation ranging from the depletion of natural resources to the deprivation of people is calling for a new social order to emerge. It is not only about technological solutions, and new policy intervention, but it is also about a new paradigmatic shift in ways of imagining and steering a new society.

The concept of reflexibility renders the potentiality that eco-social crisis has on the emergence of novel and more favorable social conditions. Current turmoil on a macro societal level is precipitating disturbances, disorientation, and stress on a level of individuals, but is, however, also an opportunity to thrive (Sathouris 2010), while encouraging actors on different social levels to act properly within the contested social conditions.

The concept of reflexibility takes into account the macro structural conditioning on the one hand and the reactions of agents whose motivation is shaped by the existing socio-cultural settings on the other. It is based on Archer's view of reflexivity seeing it as the mediator between structure and agency and as the crucial component of social change. In addition, the concept of reflexibility is intertwined with the outcomes of reflexive deliberations leading to behavioral practices contributing to sustainable systemic and living conditions.

With the concept, we shed light on the structural, cultural, and agential relations by examining the emergent properties of each social stratum separately and observing how they interact with each other. In that regard, we deploy the morphogenetic approach to discern the complex interplay between all societal levels. As an analytical proxy for sustainable settings on a macro and micro level we take the idea of Society 5.0 which superimposes the concept of Industry 5.0. We analyze the dynamics of the emergence of Society 5.0 in the evolutionary context by taking into account historical and synchronic factors.

## **Chapter 10: The Contemporary Paradigm of Human Dignity and the EU Context**

A Strategic Agenda 2019-24 adopted by the European Council focuses on protecting citizens and freedoms, promoting European interests and values on the global stage. In this context, the concept of human dignity plays a crucial role as the first article of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that “Human dignity is inviolable”. It must be respected and protected.« Human dignity has broad support among almost all political groups in the European Parliament. For this reason, it is important to improve our understanding of the concept of human dignity and recognize its cultural and historical aspects. The chapter presents traditional and contemporary paradigms of human dignity relying on its cultural and historical aspects and points out its relevance in the context of the European Union.

Last, but not least, it's important to note that this book aims to make a significant impact both in academic and educational spheres. It will cater to the interests of various groups, including EU studies researchers, educators, EU studies students, policymakers, and the general public. The book's focus will be on relatively unexplored aspects of EU studies, specifically the development and execution of the European Union's long-term strategies.

Of particular significance is the book's relevance to scholars employing the Cultural Political Economy approach. This work will showcase the approach's analytical strength and its unique contribution through innovative data collection techniques tailored to this context.

The timing of the book's release aligns with the EU's upcoming strategy, The Agenda 2030, centered around the Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2021-2030. Concurrently, various communities, including academia, policymaking circles, and the public, will be reviewing the outcomes of the previous strategy, Europe 2020. As such, this book will serve as a comprehensive and methodical contribution to this subject matter.

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