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Ethical Power Europe?

- Assessing a possible future

***Abstract:** In my paper I am studying a possibility of more ethical European Union in the future. The discipline of IR should be more interested about possible futures, developments that are not yet realized. These scenarios or utopias help us to learn from the futures and direct political processes towards more wanted outcomes. Even if in social reality future remains essentially open, the realization of possibilities is dependent on several factors and some of them are already present. The idea of Ethical Europe is a concrete utopia for the future that does not currently exist but is politically possible to achieve, and feasible as an alternative way of organising social practices and relations. This utopia is dependent on different causal factors that condition its realization. By studying these causal powers it is possible to gain better understanding of the possibilities of more ethical EU in the future.*

1 Introduction: Ethical Europe as an ideal type

The limits of the possible in moral matters are less narrow than we think. It is our weaknesses, our vices, our prejudices, that shrink them.¹

The European Union has already from the beginning defined itself as a civilian power or a civilising process between nations². The EU defends certain self-declared norms and values and an ambition to work as a “force for good” in global politics. It is claimed to be a ‘different type’ of actor in global politics that abandons traditional power politics and promotes soft power means in its external relations. European actorness is also considered ‘normative’ in the sense that it is shaping what is considered ‘normal’ in international relations. All of these concepts are interlinked and share the view that the EU is promoting more normative foreign policy practices because of its own nature demands so. But there is no shared understanding about the European normative nature or role and its actual consequences.

¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, book II, chap. 12, Para.2.

² Francois Duchêne formulated the idea in the early 1970s and it has been developed since to include varieties of civilian power conceptualisations (Diez & Manners 2007,177).

The 'distinctive' normative nature of the EU is highly problematic claim. The EU is not always as normative as it says, and other actors have their own conceptions of the normative. During the history many states have based their foreign policies on some normative underpinnings. Does the EU differ from these others, or are its policies only another version of 'exceptionalism'³, ideas that legitimize policies whatever the real causes are behind? Obviously the European Union has mixed motives behind its actions - at the same time it tries to promote certain values and defend its important economic and political interests in the global area. But there are no pure normative or ethical actors in global politics, and even if there are normative goals, the outcomes of politics are usually only suboptimal. That is why I am defending a more utilitarian understanding of ethical actorness in politics. It is possible to be ethical by trying to gain the best outcomes for everybody, including yourself. Ethical actorness does not mean only altruistic behaviour and hard sacrifices.

In my research I am studying the future possibilities of more normative and ethical EU. I have mixed the concepts of normative and ethical power Europe⁴, because I understand the term normative in a more non-neutral way⁵ meaning more ideal or ethical type of action. In this sense normative power must deal with the goals, means and impact of an actor. For the purpose of my study this mixture does not make big difference because the main idea is to advance normative theorizing and critical argumentation about the future role and idea of the EU. As Ian Manners has noticed, the finality of the EU is never fixed in time, space or our imaginations. EU as a normative power is an open project involving constant contestation of the idea of normativity⁶.

Several studies have already empirically studied EU's normative power in different policy areas. My idea is to concentrate on possible future paths for the EU. Especially in the case of the EU alternative visions are highly relevant because the Union is an open-ended project constantly restructuring its vision. Visionary research can revise and make sense of the *telos* of the EU and raise more public debate about the Union's possible role in the world. This study includes also normative aspects because it defends the vision of more ethical EU in global politics. Future visions are important because they are capable of extending the limits of political reality.

³ This kind of exceptionalism has been offered also by the US (Smith 2010).

⁴ Ian Manners distinguishes these terms because he wants to be 'honest' about why and how foreign policy is conducted and in this sense there can be difference between normative power and ethical foreign policies. (Manners 2006a, 118.)

⁵ If normative power is understood mainly as a power to shape conceptions of the normal, it has to do with other actors as well. With this interpretation all powerful states are normative in those policy areas where they have power to influence on others and "rules of the game". (Tocci 2008, 5)

⁶ Manners 2006b, 130.

I am using critical realist ideas as a background for my construction of possible future for the EU. According to critical realist social science there is always a moral-political dimension in every study. Social sciences can reveal social relations of power and as such they include emancipatory potential. On the other hand the mere critique is not enough. The social scientist must offer better alternatives, better stories to tell about the existing and future practices. By offering an *alternative vision* or a *concrete utopia* for the future development of the European Union, I am following this critical realist logic⁷. I believe that the essential task for social scientist is to build visions about possible futures.

Because future is not determined but open, by our acts and choices we are contributing to a certain kind of visions. By criticizing recent practices and offering reasonable alternatives, social scientist can make her contribution to better future. Visions can be truly transformative and influence political choices if they manage to make transparent the outcomes of political choices in the longer time span. It is not possible to make all of these visions come true. They can be more or less realistic future developments. But even if they seem unlikely at a certain geo-historical moment, they can show the potentials for change and motivate actors to do something.

In my paper I will first concentrate on the theoretical framework and explain how critical realist meta-theory can help to make sense of my research ideas. Especially critical realist social ontology can explain the reality of different possibilities. Wider and deeper understanding of causal analysis will be useful in explaining how more ethical EU could become true. I am using Aristotelian causes in explaining and dividing different causal factors that could shape future possibilities. The selection of relevant causes is always subjective and in this sense open to criticism. I have chosen only some possible factors that could be important for the vision. It should be bare in mind that if the scenarios or utopias want to be relevant, they must be constructed on structural realities, prevailing possibilities and ideas. Some causes that will effect on my scenario to come true are already here. It is just what to do with them. Actors have the possibility to change the world and give new meanings to older ideas. In this sense past and present will shape futures. On the other hand these foundations should not condition and limit the formation of future alternatives too strictly, because future is not determined but remains essentially open.

⁷ Critical realism as such has not been so interested in the future studies. I am following Heikki Patomäki's ideas in this 'future orientation'.

2 Ontological Basis for Possible Futures

Critical realists are committed to *ontological realism* i.e. they believe that the world is real and independent of the researcher's knowledge of it⁸. The reality is stratified or layered into three different key levels. Roy Bhaskar makes distinction between the ontological domains of the empirical, the actual and the real (see figure 1)⁹. The domain of the real is distinct from and greater than the domain of the actual or empirical including causal structures and generative mechanisms of nature. But the concept of the 'real' should not be misconceived; all these levels are real in the sense that they exist. Critical realist ontology helps to explain why there are multiple possible futures all the time, and how these futures can be analyzed in terms of conditional stories and more or less likely possibilities of becoming.

Figure 1. Key Levels of Reality

	Domain of Real	Domain of Actual	Domain of Empirical
Mechanisms	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Experiences	✓	✓	✓

For transcendental realism $D_r > D_a > D_e$

Bhaskar emphasizes the critical and emancipatory potential of social science. In this sense critical realism has a normative dimension as it is willing to show that some of our theories and discourses concerning social reality are false. By criticizing these false beliefs it is possible to develop new alternatives and that way improve society and human flourishing¹⁰. Heikki Patomäki and Andrew Sayer have argued for a critical realist position that offers new concepts, explanatory models, scenarios, stories, concrete utopias etc. If social sciences are to be relevant they should also be able to say something about possible and likely futures¹¹. Responses to problems of global politics can be grounded on concrete scenarios about possible developments of temporal relational contexts – as conditional stories – that are based on explanatory models of contemporary realities¹².

⁸ Patomäki 2002,8.

⁹ Bhaskar 1998, 41-42.

¹⁰ In this sense critical realism contains Marxist ideas (Benton 2001, 136).

¹¹ Conventionally the studies in social science have focussed on examining the past. (Patomäki 2006, 1-9.)

¹² Patomäki 2008, 35.

The task of social science then turns out to be the construction of better possible futures in terms of concrete and feasible utopias. According to Patomäki a concrete utopia does not currently exist, but should be politically possible to achieve, and feasible as an alternative way of organising social practices and relations. The realisation of concrete utopia involves practical wisdom, lessons drawn from past and contemporary models, counterfactual reasoning about the possible effects of an altered context, as well as thought-experiments about the consequences of the transformed practices and systems.¹³ Concrete utopias do not come true automatically. They demand action and consciousness of the processes and their likely outcomes.

Of course all the future possibilities do not have the same probability. Lately Patomäki has underlined the relativity of the openness of social reality and its implications to utopia or scenario building¹⁴. The realization of utopias is dependent on several conditions. The study of possible futures must be grounded on the analysis of causally efficacious geo-historical layers of reality – agency, structures and mechanisms. But at the same time social reality remains open because there are several factors in human agency which can influence and change processes in it, purposely or not purposely. Because of the openness of social reality, meaningful and precise scientific predictions cannot be offered. This does not mean that we cannot say anything about the future.

In social reality there seems to be also some kind of tendencies and potentials. These demi-regularities are partial event regularities which prima facie indicate the occasional actualization of geo-historical causal forces or mechanisms over a definite region of time-space. In the IR there are many well-known demi-regs¹⁵ which questions the clear-cut dichotomy between open and closed systems. Systems are always open or closed only to a certain degree. The closer we get to a given point in the future, the more shaped and structured it is¹⁶. But these demi-regs are spatially and temporally limited and too unstable (either misidentified or liable to a rapid change), which makes prediction fundamentally problematic. Instead the attention should be focused on conditions that generate possible futures and modelling these in terms of scenarios and stories. Systematic modelling reveals various consequences of actions and their potentially cumulative or transformative effects.¹⁷

¹³ Patomäki 2002, 158-159.

¹⁴ Patomäki 2006,2008,2009.

¹⁵ An example of a demi-regularity would be the lower frequency of wars between liberal democratic countries than between democracies and other countries since the late nineteenth century (Patomäki 2008, 22).

¹⁶ Patomäki 2009, 3-4.

¹⁷ Patomäki 2008, 24.

3 How to Make Sense of Future Possibilities?

As we have learnt, future can be analyzed in terms of conditional and more or less likely possibilities of becoming. But how should we evaluate the different probabilities of these scenarios? It is important to understand how past and present make the potential for the future. Many future possibilities are already here as structural potentials and it is possible to experience them in some form¹⁸. These potentials can work as a starting point for the construction of different scenarios. With well-grounded analytical scenarios about present era we can see likely consequences of our actions. Scenarios can then present ideal type of developments with best possible outcomes becoming true. Concrete utopia of more ethical Europe can be such an example. On the other hand scenarios can present what is the worst possible development if everything goes wrong. So everything between idealisations and storm warnings is possible.

On the other hand, history can also offer useful lessons for future in the form of analogies¹⁹. Everything in history repeats itself. Learning from the history should make humankind wiser when time goes on. Obviously this has not usually been the case. But historical lessons are still underestimated as a vehicle for attaining better future. If past failures and successes were better analyzed and studied, they could offer valuable source for learning. Even if there are never exactly similar events and outcomes, it is necessary to remember tragedies etc. in order to avoid them in the future. This is the positive aspect of crises and catastrophes. They are negative in themselves and especially if we do not learn anything from them. This is what Marx wrote about history repeating itself, “the first time is a tragedy, but the second time is a farce”²⁰. Scenario building demands also imagination and abstraction. First there are several candidates for possible futures, and these are eliminated step by step until only few most likely are left.

In order to assess the probability of certain utopias we need to construct an explanatory iconic model of the relevant causal complex behind the utopia. There is never one cause but several causes that will produce the outcome. Iconic model is a descriptive picture of a possible causal complex, which is presumed to be responsible for producing the phenomena we are interested in explaining²¹. Scenario building and distribution of probabilities is a subjective exercise and opinions may differ.

¹⁸ Patomäki 2007, 172.

¹⁹ There can be very similar events occurring in different times that will produce same kind of outcomes. For example Patomäki sees similarities between the era of 1970-2007 and 1870-1914 which can warn us about possible trouble (Patomäki 2008, 36). That is how it is possible to learn from history.

²⁰ Patomäki 2008, 5.

²¹ Patomäki 2002, 78-79.

But information and understanding of causal relationships will co-determine the form scenarios and utopias can take. Utopias must refer to the real world and be open to revision and new information. It is also possible to assess the probability of various possibilities in a qualitative manner on the basis of systematic scenarios by employing contextual human judgement, open to intersubjective contestation and argumentation²². And as the time goes on, probability assessments must be updated and revised. Some relevant things can radically change future possibilities and even open new alternatives. Causal forces are never fixed in social reality.

In order to study the future possibilities deeper and wider understanding of causality is also needed. For realists what is important in tracking causal connections is not identification of law like regularities of empirical observables but rather the description of the real properties, structures and generative mechanisms that underlie the actualisation of events and their empirical observations. By adding causal complexity and unobservable causes to the analysis of social reality, it is possible to understand causality in a new way. In social world same causal powers may produce different outcomes and different causal powers may cause the same outcome. That is why social scientific causal explanations are always approximate and limited in duration. But only through studying causes it is possible to see how outcomes and processes develop and are produced. Future is the outcome of different causal processes, and this is why it is crucial to analyse causes in a more detailed way.

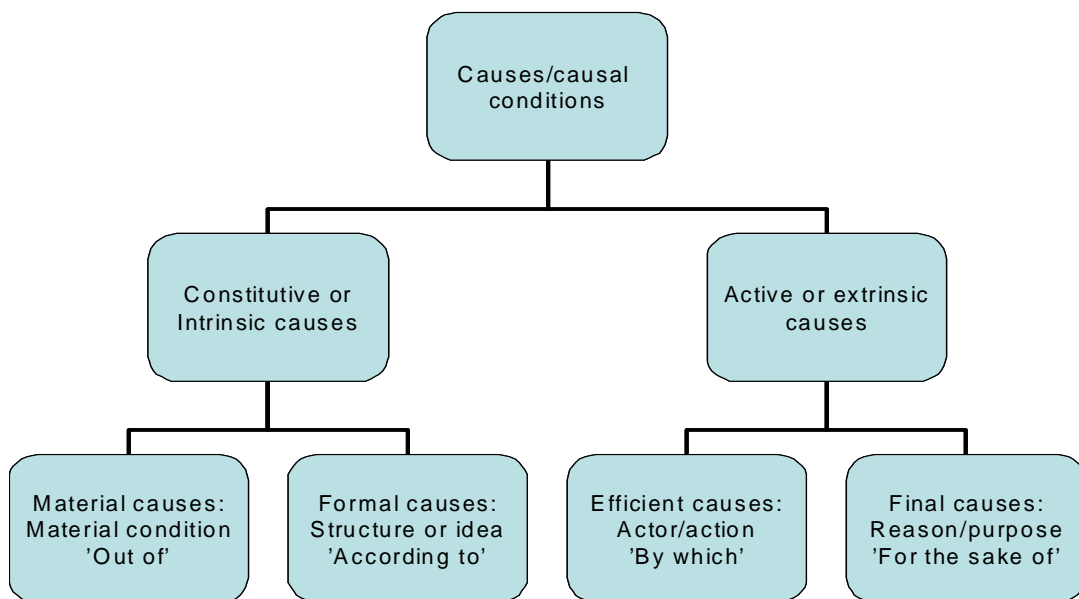
Milja Kurki has gone beyond the critical realist understanding of cause and developed wider understanding of causality in the discipline of the IR from Aristotelian perspectives²³. Aristotelian notion of causality provides grounds for overcoming the modern tendency to understand causality only in the 'efficient cause' sense. Actors are important in making changes in social reality but also material and formal causes effect on the possibilities of actors. Aristotle categorised causes into four basic types of constituents: material, formal, efficient and final causes. These causes work in different ways – they don't just 'move' things: they also 'constitute' or 'condition' things.²⁴ Aristotelian causes always work in relation to each other, never in isolation. For social scientific explanations this point is crucial and leads towards a better causal analysis and explanatory practices.

²² Patomäki 2009,11.

²³ Kurki 2008.

²⁴ Kurki 2008, 219-220.

Figure 3: Aristotelian causes



In critical realism the fundamental role of material causes is noted. Materiality is a basic ontological condition of all existence. On the other hand formal causes like ideas, norms and discourses are highlighted by critical realists as well as constructivists in their explanations of social reality²⁵. But Aristotelian conception of formal cause can be seen as a ‘constraining and enabling’ type of cause, not a ‘pushing and pulling’ active cause. Forms shape and define matter i.e. make matter intelligible. For example social structures are material but also formal conditioners of action. In this sense formal and material causes form the potential: a singular simultaneous causal conditioner of agency.²⁶

Efficient causes are usually central in social scientific explanations because agents cause things. Efficient causes are ‘active’ in the sense that they put the potential in motion – and make the real change. But it is clear that action can take place only in a certain context or environment. Taking into account the material and formal preconditions for action is important. Agency cannot be understood without the final causes which refer to the intentions of actors. Final causes must be separated from efficient causes, because they are not physically powerful particulars. Aristotelian teleological orientation can give actor’s purposes, intentions and motivations the fundamental role they deserve.²⁷

²⁵ And in this sense, taking into account both material and ideational counterparts critical realism can offer a better explanations and understanding of reality than realists or constructivists.

²⁶ Kurki 2008, 228.

²⁷ Kurki 2008, 225-226.

This wider understanding of causality helps us to reach a better understanding of causal powers in the social world. Concrete utopia or scenario can be assessed only through various sorts of causes that are intertwined and cause in different ways. For example social structures have many different forms of causal power. Which types of causes are most prominent ones in a certain scenario is, of course, a matter of empirical enquiry and can be analysed better afterwards. With the help of this wider understanding of cause it is possible to build more accurate models for the future and also understand the present. This alternative way of understanding causality is not merely a meta-theoretical issue but it also has important normative and political consequences. That is because the issue of causality has been in the history of philosophy closely tied to the idea of moral responsibility. Conducting causal analysis in this wider sense raises also new normative and ethical questions in the discipline of international relations.²⁸ In the case of constructing a concrete utopia of more ethical Europe, this development is of course highly relevant.

4 The Possibility of More Ethical Europe?

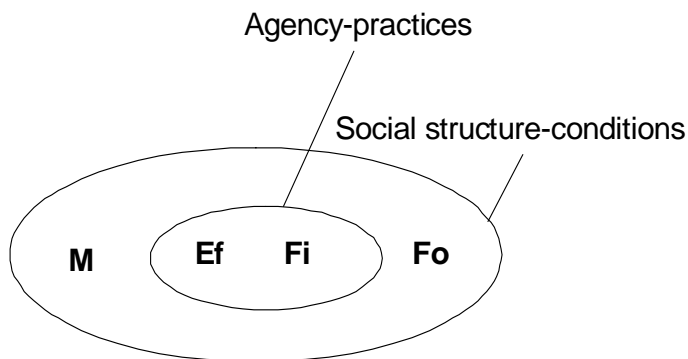
The critical realist meta-theory and wider causal analysis can offer useful and interesting perspectives when theorizing about the future of the European Union. There is a need to develop alternative future visions and scenarios for institutional reforms and transformations. I am not offering several scenarios for the EU but obviously there are other possibilities as well. These alternatives can be even more likely. I have chosen the concrete utopia of ethical Europe because it is a self-constructed idealization inside the EU. More ethical Europe is not a statement about actual reality, but rather a highly controversial idea. But as a vision it can help to understand the potentials and limitations that it carries with it. And of course, it is a vision worth striving for, inside and outside the Union.

Scenario building could be conceived as a self-critical and reflexive exercise that makes visible the processes and outcomes of different policies²⁹. In order to change or become more ethical, Europe needs this kind of self-reflective practices. Instead of adjusting to probable future realities the idea is to shape worlds, change patterns of actions and structural conditions to alternative directions. In the following I am trying to make sense of the different causal powers that are relevant in the realization of more ethical Europe.

²⁸ Kurki 2008, 308-309.

²⁹ Patomäki 2009, 20.

For this purpose it is useful to divide the causal powers to those that are central to the social-structure conditions and others that are obvious when agency-practices are assessed.³⁰ This division helps to deal with different causes but these causes are still closely related to each other. The relationship between the notions of ‘cause’ and ‘condition’ is also clarified with the Aristotelian model of causality. Even critical realists have been unsure about the ontological difference between causes and conditions. In this model conditions are one type of cause³¹. These conditions are both material and formal. The agency of the European Union is efficient shaper of these conditions. But it is located in a certain material and formal context. Final causes like the intentions move actors into certain direction. In this case, maybe towards more ethical world politics.



Aristotelian causes and social structures (M = material causes, Fo = formal causes, Ef = efficient causes, Fi = final causes)

Choosing the relevant tendencies or processes for the realization of the scenario of ethical Europe is by no means unproblematic. All of these tendencies have some competing alternatives that might as well explain the future. That is why their selection should be somehow justified. The problem is that this kind of justification can only rely on subjective and inter-subjective basis and becomes proved when time goes on. In this paper I am dealing with only some of the ‘nodal points’ or important factors that will be crucial for the realization of ethical Europe utopia. Of course these selected ones can be the wrong ones. And existing tendencies do not cause in any deterministic sense, there can be surprises and changes on the way. But better understanding of the different causal relationships that could construct a more ethical EU is necessary, if we want to understand the already existing potentials and shape future in some way.

³⁰ Kurki 2008, 229.

³¹ Kurki 2008, 230-231.

4.1 Conditions for More Ethical Europe

As we have learned this far, both material and formal causes make the conditions for the utopias or scenarios³². In the case of the EU, there are several factors that condition the realization of more ethical policies. Critical realists have been attracted by the idea of social structures as ‘passive’ conditioners of action. The social context is causal because it is a necessary condition for any act, even if we accept the view that agents also actively shape social structures. Social positions are also real material positions with certain resources that have been developed through history. Material resources are also dependent on other actors in world economy, and material differences between actors can change rapidly. Material possibilities cannot alone actively change conduct or policies, other causes are needed in order to use material conditions correctly.

European Union has pretty good material position³³. As the EU exerts most influence in trade policies, this policy area should not be underestimated as a vehicle for change. There are lots of resources and material possibilities that enable more ethical policies. Partly the material status of the Union raises expectations in others as well as its own promises and statements. On the other hand the accumulation of material resources to the European Union has historical background. Maybe this historical responsibility could be one possible claim why it should adopt more ethical policy. It is not probable that the material status of the Union could change dramatically even though economic recessions can effect on the willingness to help. So there are material possibilities but they are deeply dependent on ideas and intentions.

Material causes are fundamental to any explanation; material potentiality and conditionality make the context for all action. But it is not entirely clear what entities can be fitted in to this flexible category. The controversial concept of social structure is interesting in this sense. Social structures and relations have material embodiment and material properties. For example relations of production, distribution of employment and resources have also material meaning and existence. From this perspective the EU in the world is materially dependent also on several different relations and structures. Especially important conditioning factors are of course its relations to other organisations, states and regional groups. These ‘others’ will causally change the material possibilities of EU actions.

³² Critical realists have been unsure whether there is an ontological difference between causes and conditions. Here conditions are understood as one type of cause. (Kurki 2008, 231.)

³³EU makes 19% of world trade and is leader in foreign direct investment (2007).
http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/february/tradoc_142372.ppt#410,4,Dia 4

Social structures and relations are dependent also on formal causes like ideas, rules, norms and discourses. Theories about the European Union highlight the central role that different formal causes: ideas, norms and values play in its actions. These things work as causal shapers of social life: they are the ‘according to which’ social agents form their identity, intentions, decisions and actions. Formal causes also define and structure social life by relating agents to each other, material contexts, their social roles and meanings of their practices.³⁴ The self-identity of the Union is highly dependent of certain ideas, norms and values that are constructed so that they fit together and form coherent wholes that can be called stories or narratives.

These narratives are developed through history and they help in legitimizing the position and policy of different organizations. Telling stories or narratives demands reflection of both the past and the future in a systematic way. These reflections are constitutive of the actions of organisations. A story or a ‘myth’ has motivating power or charisma because it gives meaning to something that might otherwise appear to be either routine, mechanical repetition or simply chaotic, absurd and incomprehensible. Every myth and story locates presence as part of a wider and structured temporal whole. Myths and stories organise the anticipations of futures.³⁵ So from the future perspective these stories and narratives have very important role to play. They both interpret past and organize future directions.

There has been already from the beginning of the European integration process a narrative about Europe with an ethical or normative connotation³⁶. The European Union was seen as a civilizing project between nations and also civilian power that prefers the power of persuasion and diplomacy. The more recent descriptions deal with Normative Power Europe argument presented by Ian Manners meaning that the EU is different compared to pre-existing political forms and changes the normality of “international relations”³⁷. European actorness is conditioned by certain universal norms and principles in a way that cannot be compared to any other actor. It is exceptional and has also power to change other’s actions. Even if the concept of Normative Power Europe has become famous both in policy debates and academic studies on foreign policies of the Union, it has not become clear what the concept of NPE actually means. Ian Manners has tried to redefine the concept and explain more fully what it entails³⁸, but it has not helped to remove the confusion³⁹.

³⁴ Kurki 2008, 224.

³⁵ Patomäki 2006, 8-9.

³⁶ Linklater 2005.

³⁷ Manners 2002.

³⁸ Manners 2006a and 2008.

The idea of Ethical Power Europe was presented in an issue of *International Affairs* as an effort to move forward in the discussion and offer possibilities to raise new critical questions concerning the international role of the EU⁴⁰. Ethical power Europe is not a description about political reality but rather a critical question about the possibility, probability and legitimacy of a certain kind of narrative. If the normative power Europe discussion was mainly about the nature of the EU, Ethical power Europe concerns itself with the active role the EU could have in changing the world in the direction of its vision of the 'global common good'. The EU should be more capable and responsible for example by taking on new tasks in the area of crisis management, peacekeeping, state-building and reconstructing failing states. Ethical Power Europe conception captures in a best way the idea that is behind the European self-identity formation and discourse; Europe is not seen only as a normative power but also ethical power that presents 'a force for good' in the world.

The more ethical Union has also been discussed under two normative concepts or open horizons *responsibility* and *respect* by Hartmut Mayer and Henri Vogt⁴¹. These are ideals that the EU should take into account with its relations towards others. The basic idea is that institutions can bear moral responsibilities for many things⁴², and the EU has remarkably increased its usage of the word responsibility in its official statements. According to Mayer it would be more realistic and ethical to talk about Europe's global responsibilities rather than 'ethical power'. Because ethical foreign policy needs coherence and consistency more than ever, there should be well-defined and secularized notion of responsibility in the official rhetoric of the Union.⁴³ For sure the EU is responsible for historical reasons, but what this responsibility actually means?

European responsibility can be understood to mean at least three separate things: responsibility as a capability to do something, retrospectively responsibility for things done in the past or prospectively meaning responsibility for future developments. Europe has material capabilities to help others, it is obviously responsible for many things that have happened in the past and in the future Europe has central role and possibilities to make change in world politics. Andras Szigeti has also listed six basic principles of responsibility that can be applied to the politics of the European

³⁹ According to Manners the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or says, but what it is. This normative nature of the EU is crystallized in nine cosmopolitan normative principles or norms that include sustainable peace, social freedom, democracy, human rights, rule of law, inclusive equality, social solidarity, sustainable development and good governance. (Manners 2008.)

⁴⁰ Aggestam 2008, 1-3.

⁴¹ Mayer & Vogt (eds.) *A Responsible Europe? Ethical Foundations of EU External affairs* (2006).

⁴² Erskine 2003.

⁴³ Mayer 2008, 61-63.

Union⁴⁴. Hartmut Mayer has defined European ethical behaviour in line with these principles to include at least realistic assessment of Europe's capacity, its policy-relevant communities, its past contributions to global order, the benefits rightly or wrongly acquired, and the promises made and expectations raised⁴⁵. Particular historical and material context can make sense of whether the actor has the demanded capabilities to answer the expectations that are raised. European normative or ethical nature is already severely suffering from contradictions like the well known capabilities-expectations gap⁴⁶, double standards and different treatment of other actors.

These normative perspectives show that there is already existing willingness and tendency to understand the EU project as an ethical undertaking. When assessing these reflections which take the form of narratives it must be remembered that our own being is always temporal and the present time influences on our interpretations of the past and future. Historical continuity in this discourse of the nature of the EU can be presently created for certain reasons. Presence can influence on our understanding of the historical tradition and narratives can become to serve our own purposes. From the history we can learn that many great powers have defined themselves as ethical or normative powers, not least the US that claims to represent 'force for good' in the world. Is the EU different or more ethical than other actors then? European ethical actorness can of course be seen to present just a continuum to European neocolonialism. On the other hand normative power Europe can be a discourse that has been developed to hide the real military weakness of Europe⁴⁷.

In the same way future choices and developments are in one way or another linked to the present understandings and interpretations. The dominant ways how social reality is conceived come to inform the intentions and actions of agents. But stories can also start to live a life of their own without correspondence to empirical reality. They can present the views of powerful elites and attain authority status. That is why it is important to remember that all stories have also effects of power and they should be constantly open to contestation and revision.⁴⁸ In the case of ethical Europe more intersubjective or international legitimisation of the concepts is surely required. The ethical or normative status should be open to discussion inside as well as outside Europe. Now it seems to be concentrated on European self-identity reflections. Europe's self-image and outside views of it are nowadays not in tune, and EU seems to have a mixed record as an "ethical power".

⁴⁴ Szigeti 2006, 31.

⁴⁵ Mayer 2008, 78.

⁴⁶ Capabilities-expectation gap was first introduced by Christopher Hill.

⁴⁷ This is exactly what Robert Kagan claimed in his *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (2004).

⁴⁸ Patomäki 2009, 22.

On the other hand European ethical actorness narrative can benefit from the hard power politics of the US. In this sense the US can make better conditions for the realization of the utopia. The normative power of the US is less credible than the European version at the moment. European way of acting in the world is more process-oriented and slow even if the impacts of EU and US foreign policies on world order would not be as opposed as usually thought⁴⁹. But even if the impacts have a major role in ethical evaluation in global politics, the intentions and motivations of an actor are also relevant from the ethical perspective. Intentionality is in many ways also the most obvious form of causality. Final causes capture this relevant aspect of human agency.

4.2 Agency and Intentions

Usually the 'efficient causes' are considered most important in social science explanations. Social actors make the real changes and that is why agency is central for causal explanation. But this complex causal power analysis show that efficient causes are only one part of explaining and actually agency is very dependent on material as well as formal conditions for action i.e. social context. Actor's capacity to produce effects is in this sense very conditional. Efficient causes simply actualise things and are deeply related to other causes. Even if the agents can change social structures and transform practices, these work as a preliminary starting point for analysis.

Efficient causes need also final causes to guide them. Final causes underline the importance of agents' intentions and motivations. Agents always have some reasons and ideas for their actions and as Patomäki and other critical realists have noticed, reasons are also causes. Only through more hermeneutic and discursive methods it is possible to gain deeper understanding of human agency as a causal factor⁵⁰. Intentions are the purposes that drive agents actively forward. Intentional agents also shape and transform social structures and other contexts of their own action. There is important link between final and formal causes; motivations depend on ideas and discourses that are on their part the shaped by actor's intentional action.

In the case of the EU it is important to ask what are the intentions and reasons that are behind its actions. If there is an honest intention to help others, it is also important from the ethical perspective. But intentions or motivations can be ethical also when there are own interests as well noticed. From a more utilitarian perspective, the EU could drive policies that will be good for

⁴⁹ Smith 2008.

⁵⁰ Kurki 2008, 207.

everybody, also for itself. In this sense interests and ethical considerations should not be seen as two opposites. But it is also difficult to say in epistemological sense what are the real intentions and motivations of an actor, because they can be known only by the actor. That is why it is possible to study only those intentions that the actors show publicly. These intentions can be traced from the texts of different agreements and decisions the actor in question has made. For example in the case of the EU there are several possibilities to trace its publicly stated intentions. These intentions also give ground for several expectations.

If the actor wants to be ethical it must act according to its publicly stated intentions. If the outcomes of the policies of the Union are not in line with its intentions, some corrective acts must be made. In the EU there are severe problems of consistency and coherence between declarations and outcomes, different policy areas and different cases and regions. These present the most serious problems for the possibility of more ethical Europe. On the other hand these problems can be interpreted also as possibilities. If the EU learns from its past failures, develops efficient methods for self-reflection and really concentrates on these difficult consistency problems, it can get more ethical status in world politics. Its intentions for example to reduce world poverty could be taken then more seriously because there would be evidence of its effectiveness and coherence between intentions and policy outcomes.

Agents make the change and transformations in political culture through their active agency. This agency is always conditioned in many senses. Still actors in the social world are not determined by structures and relations in any final sense. Humans have the freedom to change structures, practices and policy developments because these are in the end their own creations. Motivations to end up with different outcomes and political reality can wake up structural transformations. But the transformation is always dependent on actor's knowledge and assessments of existing realities and future alternatives. Alternative utopias or scenarios can have motivating and transformative power. Careful self-reflection and learning are important vehicles for the change. Transformations of larger structural entities cannot be done by individual agents. It demands wider mobilisation and political support. The more democratic processes inside the Europe are essential for future change. Alternatives are not real if they present only the views of some bureaucratic elite. On the other hand Europeans are willing to see more ethical EU in the future.

5 Conclusions

As already noted in the beginning of this paper, Ethical Europe is a very contested and problematic issue. There has been a lot of debate about the role of the EU in the world, and obviously the interpretations vary a lot. Empirical reality does not always support the idea of more ethical Europe in the future. But even if the probability of the utopia of ethical EU would be less likely at a given geo-historical moment, relevant changes can take place and people can effect on future realities. Only by making these alternative futures manifest, it is possible to work towards their realization. In this sense it is important to theorize about concrete utopias as feasible alternatives to present state of affairs.

In order to understand how future is developed and shaped in present time, wider understanding of causal powers is needed. In this paper I have presented some preliminary thoughts of different and multiple interrelated causes through which futures can become actual. Future consists of different possibilities of which only some become realized through time. It should be remembered that in social world causes are never pre-determined and same causes may produce different outcomes. Still there are some regularities that can be analyzed. In the case of the EU some causes can definitely work towards the realization of more ethical future. I have chosen some possible developments that are directed to such an end. My purpose has not been to introduce inclusive list of factors that can cause more ethical EU in the future but only think some of the already existing tendencies and limitations that could fit to the chosen causal model. The selection is subjective and in many senses very limited.

I wanted to show how formal causes become very important conditioners and explanatory factors in the case of the EU. The already existing discourse of normative or ethical Europe can be very important shaper of future realities and (self) understandings. The narrative has been contested already many times from different perspectives⁵¹ but it still has importance as a context for further discussion. In many cases the sole purpose of the presentation of this narrative has been to criticise and falsify its basic claims. If we accept the basic claim of critical realism that all knowledge is socially situated and contextual, we can see that narratives usually serve certain contextual purposes. But this should not be confused with judgemental relativism because some accounts can

⁵¹ For example neorealist accounts do not neglect the existence of ethical principles but claim that these serve only as second-order reasons for EU acts. Structural realism can explain with the help of systemic changes why the EU has become 'normative power'. This role is not purely ethical but rather a mixture of soft and hard power means. (Hyde-Price 2006).

be better than others. Causal accounts are ‘of’ something even if they are pragmatically bound and in this sense they can present reality in a more or less real sense. Some narratives gain more evidence and become more realistic and probable. The problem between realistic and more idealistic interpretations is that both gain empirical support and also sometimes at the same time. But dialogue between different interpretations should be still possible.

Agents act in reality that is full of different narratives and stories. These stories condition their life and self-understanding. The narrative of normative or more ethical EU is important as a context for EU citizen’s actions and self-perceptions. The EU citizens can evaluate the feasibility of this vision and its possibilities. It can become contested but also strengthened by citizen’s agency. If the EU citizens digest the vision of more ethical EU, they can demand consistency and coherence from their political leaders. Many NGOs work with such a purpose. On the other hand this narrative is already severely contested from outside. Europe’s ‘others’ do not seem to support the idea of ethical EU with present policies. It will be never easy to run principled and ethical foreign policies in the world because there are many pragmatic demands interrupting more ideal behaviour. In this sense moral behaviour in politics is never pure and can attain only suboptimal results. But as formal causes, these discourses or narratives constrain and structure political choices and action and also this way enable more ethical behaviour.

The European universalism is of course another kind of problem. The EU claims to represent universal values like peace, human dignity/human rights, freedom, democracy, equality, justice and solidarity. It is true that these values are universally-recognised and not particularly EU values, but the translation of these values and their consequences is typically European. For example in trade policies freedom is interpreted in the context of regulated liberalism⁵². It is not true that these values are as self-evident and easily interpreted as usually thought. The claims of universalism are also used mainly as a justification for intervention especially towards the countries of the non-European world, the populations of the poorer and “less developed” nations. As Immanuel Wallerstein notes there is a difference between European universalism and universal universalism⁵³. So the claim that European Union promotes universal values and acts as a force for good is actually problematic statement and should be delivered with caution.

⁵² Lucarelli & Manners 2006a, 203-204.

⁵³ Wallerstein 2006.

Sceptic (and maybe realist) might say that the probability of Ethical Europe scenario is pretty low. The EU has a historical burden that will affect on its ethical credibility. There are also structural problems inside the EU⁵⁴ that will paradoxically at least partly prevent the utopia of Ethical Europe to be realised. The overall global situation will both enable and hinder the utopia. Like Patomäki admits, the distribution of probabilities of the actualisation of different possibilities is always subjective. There are several relevant observations to be made and their meaning becomes understandable only through historical time. The building of scenarios in world politics is then highly selective process, because only some of the points are chosen to be important in different scenarios. So it is possible to choose only some processes that will strengthen the more ethical interpretation of the EU acts. But our visions are objected to criticism and they are revisable on the basis of new observations⁵⁵. As history unfolds, new events and turns are taken into account and scenarios and their likelihood of being actualised is re-assessed accordingly.

Even if there is a lot of scepticism about the more ethical Europe, it is important to offer it as an alternative future. It can be alternative among other alternatives. But surely there is willingness and need to develop this kind of possible future. Only by making visions more concrete and transparent it is possible to work towards their realization. Especially the critical comments are valuable as means to develop this vision further. However, visions can also fail for many reasons and also raise new problems. A concrete utopia can remedy some problems while generating again others. The new problems could be even worse than the old ones. Social life may therefore be frequently ‘dilemmatic’ as Sayer emphasises⁵⁶.

I will remind that visions or scenarios like more ethical Europe are not predictions. Future will remain open and scenarios conditional. They still serve as possibilities of becoming. But the possibility of scenarios hinges on our knowledge and reasons, as well as on our and others’ freedom to act otherwise. But it is important to be mindful of the dramatic force and motivating power of different scenarios. Through these models we can re-signify historical traditions and decide what we make of them. Only by thinking the long history of European integration and involvement in “soft power” means, we can realise the importance of our recent and future choices. We are always part of a longer tradition and have the power of writing our meaning for it. Somehow it should be kept in mind that world is not deterministic and future remains open-ended.

⁵⁴ Like democracy deficit, compromises in policy-making and sectoral policy divides.

⁵⁵ Patomäki 2009, 11-15.

⁵⁶ Sayer 2000.

How to motivate to argue for ethical Europe? Maybe partly because I do not want to admit that future is somehow pre-determined and limited by realist kind of interpretations of global politics. There has always been, and still is important component of EU action that cannot be explained from such an angle. Whether this ethical core is about (evolutionary) collective learning or some kind of collective conscience of Europeans, it should be strengthened. Real and true ethical ambitions with a more cosmopolitan perspective represent progress in global politics. Within organizations like the EU some sort of self-development is based on making these utopias transparent and public as part of future-making. Showing the possibilities and freedoms within the system provides fuel for self-reflection and alternative developments.

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