Normative power in the planetary organic crisis

Ian Manners 🆔

Abstract

The lead intervention article argues that the new reality of the planetary organic crisis awaits a normative critical social theory of planetary politics, a means of understanding the sharing of relationships within International Relations and an agenda for action in concert found in the normative power approach. The article and subsequent 20th anniversary special issue provide an opportunity to reflect and develop the ideas of the original Journal of Common Market Studies 'normative power' article through a prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis. The special issue sets out a prospective on theorising normative power in the rapidly shifting context of 21st-century planetary organic crisis involving interacting and deepening structural crises of economic inequality, social injustice, ecological unsustainability, ontological insecurity and political irresilience – as demonstrated by the global financial crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine. It begins by setting out the normative power approach to planetary organic crisis, where 21st-century politics are characterised by truly planetary relations of causality that can only be understood and addressed holistically. In the wider context of climate emergency, food and water insecurity and their socio-economic and political consequences, a planetary political approach to understanding the European Union is an essential starting point.

Keywords

critical social theory, European Union, normative power, planetary organic crisis, planetary politics

Introduction: 40 years of neoliberalism, 30 years post-Cold War, 20 years since the Journal of Common Market Studies and 10 years since the last Cooperation and Conflict special issue

Forty years of neoliberalism, 30 years since the end of the Cold War, 20 years since the 2002 normative power article and 10 years since the last *Cooperation and Conflict* special issue have seen the gradual emergence of a 'planetary organic crisis'. The planetary organic crisis involves 'interacting and deepening structural crises of economy/development, society,

Corresponding author:
Ian Manners, Department of Political Science, Lund University, Box 52, Lund 221 00, Sweden.
Email: ian.manners@sve.lu.se

ecology, politics, culture and ethics – in ways that are unsustainable' (Gill and Benatar, 2020: 171). While the 2013 *Cooperation and Conflict* special issue on normative power focused on the normative foundations of power in a globalising, multilateralising and multipolarising era (Manners, 2013a), this 20th-anniversary special issue broadens its horizons to develop the normative power approach (NPA) through a prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis. The NPA is located in the normative critical social theory (CST) of agonistic cosmopolitics questioning notions of normativity and power; it uses CST to understand sharing ('communion') relationships by international, regional and transnational actors; and it uses CST to imagine normative power as empowering actions in concert that reshape conceptions of normal for the planetary good (Manners, 2002a: 252, 2013a: 320–321, 2020: 146, 2021b: 70–73, 2023; Parker and Rosamond, 2013: 230–231; Whitman, 2013: 188–189).

This article is the lead article in a special issue that brings together 11 contemporary voices on normative theory and normative power, the European Union's (EU) external actions, and emergent planetary politics. The special issue sets out a prospective on theorising normative power in the rapidly shifting context of 21st-century planetary politics characterised by truly planetary relations of causality that can only be understood and addressed holistically (Litfin, 2003: 481; Manners, 2020: 148). This lead article argues that the new reality of the planetary organic crisis awaits a normative CST of planetary politics, a means of understanding the sharing of relationships within International Relations and an agenda for action in concert found in the NPA. In the context of climate emergency, food and water insecurity, and their socio-economic and political consequences, a planetary political approach to understanding the EU is an essential starting point.

The rest of the article takes a holistic prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis by focusing on the EU as a regional organisation, its member states and transnational actors, all within a planetary context. The next section analyses the first of five symbiotic dimensions, focusing on economy and the principles of freedom and social solidarity. While the EU was historically constituted as a sustainable peace organisation, since the 1980s the single market and free trade have become central foci. The third section looks at the dimension of society and the principles of human rights and equality. The fourth section analyses the consequences for ecology and the principles of sustainable development and combating climate change. In the fifth section, the structural impact of economy, society and ecology is examined through conflict and the principles of sustainable peace and rule of law. The sixth section analyses the cumulative impact on polity and the principles of democracy and good governance. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of how the special issue helps develop the NPA for application to international, regional and transnational actors, as well as states, within the context of planetary organic crisis.

Normative power in neoliberal inequality

Forty years of neoliberal economics since the 1980s have had a dramatic effect on inequality across the planet. Neoliberalism is the privatisation of public life, including the deregulation and privatisation of nationalised industries, financial services, welfare state and government (Manners, 2021a: 161–163).

According to the *World Inequality Report 2022*, global income and wealth inequality have been increasing since the 1980s with the top 10% of income earners capturing the largest share of total income and wealth, particularly in the Middle East, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, South and South-East Asia (Chancel et al., 2022: 10–12). In contrast, massive decreases in income shares by the bottom 50% of income earners are seen in Russia, China, India, the United States and Canada since 1980. Similarly, changing gini coefficients of income inequality are also seen in UN University WIID data, with most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries experiencing increases in inequality since 1980. While EU gini income inequality coefficients have broadly remained around approximately 0.30 ± 0.05 since 1980, more neoliberal economies such as South Africa (0.67), Brazil and India (0.51), China (0.43) and the United States (0.42) have seen dramatic increases (UN University, 2023). Wealth inequality in OECD countries is double the level of income inequality and is also increasing (Balestra and Tonkin, 2018; OECD, 2021, 2023). Taking 28 OECD countries as a whole, on average the wealthiest 10% of households own 52% of total wealth, while the poorest 60% of households own 12% of total wealth. Over the past decade, this pattern has worsened with the wealth shares of the wealthiest 10% increasing at the expense of the remaining 90%. In comparison, the wealth inequality gini coefficient in the EU is approximately 0.70, while in the BRICS countries and the United States the wealth inequality gini coefficient is above 0.80.

What these data demonstrate is that neoliberal inequality has spread across the planet over the past 40 years, including the EU. The EU's single market, single currency, Global Europe trade policy and response to the European sovereign debt crisis have all worsened this problem and deepened the symbiosis with other dimensions such as society and ecology. As Rosamond (2014: 143) points out, 'straightforwardly equating "neoliberalism" with "economic liberalism" misses the complex range of intellectual currents that have fed into the economic thought of the EU'. Bachmann and Moisio (2020: 254) show how the planet faces a 'complex entanglement of militarism, neoliberal austerity politics, malign nationalism, potentially militarist and violent populism, and uneven geographical development' and go on to 'observe how the two aspects of (neoliberal) inequality and ethno-nationalism go hand in hand as threats to democratic state structures and a normative orientation of the state, or rather, the European polity' (Bachmann and Moisio, in press). This means that, with so many critical of the EU as a neoliberal political project (Manners, 2007: 77), a prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis must be conscious of rising neoliberal inequality.

The EU should be constituted as a 'social market economy' through principles of freedom and social solidarity (Manners, 2006: 21–22, 2013b: 218–225, 2021b: 75–76). Article 3.3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) sets out this objective: 'the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment'. The principle of freedom is based on the four freedoms of the single market, a commitment to 'free and fair trade' in its relations with the wider world and a Global Strategy pursuing free trade agreements in an 'open and fair economic system' (TEU article 3.5; EU, 2016: 41). The principle of social solidarity is found in 'solidarity and mutual respect

among peoples' in its relations with the wider world, and 'greater synergies between humanitarian and development assistance, channelling our support to provide health, education, protection, basic goods and legitimate employment' at that same time as working with 'our international partners to ensure global responsibilities and solidarity' (TEU article 3.5; EU, 2016: 31, 28).

While the tensions between the communitarian project of social market economy and the principles of freedom and social solidarity are well established, the challenge for a NPA to the planetary organic crisis is to pursue normative power as empowering actions in concert that reshape conceptions of normal for the planetary good (Manners, 2021b: 72–73, 2023). In order to begin to address the planetary organic crisis, the planetary good should be understood as the advocacy of homeostasis (maintaining stable ecological conditions) and the advocacy of human equality within and between societies. To address rising neoliberal inequality, regional organisations, their member states and transnational actors should take empowering actions in concert with actors in other regions to reduce economic inequality within and between their societies. For the EU, addressing neoliberal inequality within and between societies around the world is particularly challenging because of the colonial and postcolonial conditions of its member states. EU actions in social solidarity through development assistance have resulted in heavy criticism of paternalistic and neocolonial attitudes, as well as poor results (Manners, 2000a: 190, 2013b: 225). Thus, in order to begin to address neoliberal inequality, normative empowerment involves changing the focus of freedom from free trade to fair trade and moving the emphasis from colonial to postcolonial to decolonial development.

Realising and addressing neoliberal inequality through the achievement of social market economic equality, as well as principles of fair trade freedom and decolonial social solidarity, is a crucial step towards a holistic understanding of addressing the planetary organic crisis that will also involve social justice, ecological homeostasis, ontological security and political resilience.

Normative power in demographic and intersectional injustice

Thirty years of social and demographic transformation since the end of the Cold War has significantly changed injustice across the planet. Demographic shifts include rapidly altering human populations, the changing nature of employment and moving patterns of migration, refugees and asylum seekers (Manners, 2021a: 165–166).

Among the 38 members of the OECD, mean, not median levels of social justice climbed throughout the 1990s and 2000s, but the global financial crisis (GFC) has revealed deteriorating quality of life below pre-2008 levels (Hellman et al., 2019; OECD, 2020). As the OECD How's Life? 2020 survey reveals, an average of 12% of people live in relative income poverty in the OECD, one in five people report having difficulty in making ends meet and more than one-third of people are at risk of falling into poverty. Poverty risks in many non-EU OECD countries are much greater than the EU average, led by Israel, the United States, Korea, Mexico, Chile, Japan and Turkey (Hellman et al., 2019: 19–29). Declining intergenerational justice is also a feature of the past decade with a general failure to link the concerns of younger generations with those of older

generations (Hellman et al., 2019: 92–94). With female educational attainment, together with sexual and reproductive health and rights, driving declining fertility rates across the world the global population is projected to peak at under 10 billion in the 2060s (Vollset et al., 2020). The halving of population by 2100 for many countries around the world, such as Japan, Thailand, Spain, South Korea, Italy and China, means that intergenerational justice is a crucial component of addressing the planetary organic crisis. Improving health, in terms of declining infant mortality and increasing life expectancy, has been a general feature within the OECD except for the worst hit countries of Greece, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Hellman et al., 2019: 117–128). The OECD How's Life? 2020 survey reveals that deaths from suicide, acute alcohol abuse and drug overdose (in particular the USA's opioid epidemic) disproportionately affect men compared to women and represent significant gender differences in life expectancy at birth. What is clear is that consideration of social justice requires an understanding of the intersections of poverty, health, youth and gender in order to analyse the demographic and intersectional dimensions of social injustice.

These data demonstrate that social, demographic and intersectional injustice has shifted and become more widespread since the GFC, including the EU. The combination of the social consequences of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, the refugee crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and energy and inflation crisis have significantly worsened social, demographic and intersectional injustice at the same time as deepening the symbiosis with other dimensions such as ecology and polity. Noutcheva (2016: 704) has shown how adopting a more holistic societal perspective helps the understanding of how the EU can 'empower societal groups to act as agents of change' in addressing feelings of injustice. Focusing specifically on gender injustice, David et al. (2023) set out how the analysis of normative power must involve feminist (re)imagination of planetary politics. Debusscher (in press) argues that normative power in the planetary organic crisis should include the principles of intersectional power, social justice and a transformative approach to focus on the most oppressed, relationality, reflexivity and voice and diverse knowledges. These insights mean that a prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis must be aware of social empowerment as part of addressing social, demographic and intersectional injustice.

The EU should also be constituted as an inclusive 'social model', based on social justice and solidarity, through principles of human rights and equality (Debusscher and Manners, 2020; Manners, 2006: 23, 2013b: 226–231, 2021b: 76–77). TEU article 3.3 also sets out this objective: 'It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child'. The principle of human rights is founded on the European Convention on Human Rights and Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, and a Global Strategy promoting 'justice, solidarity, equality, non-discrimination, pluralism, and respect for diversity' (TEU articles 3.5 and 6; EU, 2016: 26). The principle of equality rests on gender equality between men and women (TFEU article 8), democratic equality of its citizens (TEU article 9), equality of member states (TEU article 4) and article 10 of the TFEU: 'the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation'.

Similar to the tensions between social market economy and neoliberal inequality, achieving an inclusive social model while promoting human rights and equality raises many questions. An NPA to social injustice in planetary organic crisis, fuelled by neoliberal inequality, requires empowering actions in concert to achieve stable ecological conditions and to address human inequality and injustice. Beyond recognising the symbiosis between neoliberal inequality and demographic injustice, normative empowerment involves regional organisations, their member states and transnational actors shifting the agenda of human rights from purely political rights to include social rights and shifting the focus from combatting discrimination towards achieving equality.

Realising and addressing social and demographic injustice through the achievement of inclusive social models of justice, as well as principles of political and social human rights and achieving equality, is another critical step towards a holistic understanding of dealing with the planetary organic crisis, including economic equality, ecological homeostasis, ontological security and political resilience.

Normative power in climate unsustainability

In the 20 years since the 2002 normative power article, the optimism of the Rio Earth Summit and the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC has collapsed as annual increases in global greenhouse gas emissions ensure unsustainability and climate catastrophe across the planet. This unsustainability is caused by aggressive human consumption, grotesque human pollution, devastating ecosystem collapse and extinction of wildlife, and the catastrophic climate emergency (Manners, 2021a: 167–170). While the origins of the global COVID-19 pandemic remain uncertain, what is certain is that accelerating numbers of pandemics will be driven by ecosystem collapse (Benatar and Daneman, 2020: 1300; The Lancet Planetary Health, 2021: e1).

Aggressive human overconsumption among the world's wealthiest people has increased every year since records began in 1961 according to humanity's 'ecological footprint' and has exceeded the Earth's rate of regeneration since 1970 (WWF, 2022: 66–69). In relative terms, China, the United States, and the EU have the world's largest ecological footprints, while the United States has the largest per capita ecological footprint that is 5 times the world's average biocapacity per person (WWF, 2019: 14). Grotesque human pollution is the product of neoliberal overconsumption in the form of air, water, occupational, soil, chemical and metal pollution (Fuller et al., 2022; Landrigan et al., 2017). Across the planet pollution is the largest environmental cause of disease causing 16% of all premature deaths, and 25% in the most severely affected countries (Landrigan et al., 2017: 1). Some of the worst affected regions are South Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Africa, with India, China, Russia and Brazil having some of the highest death rates from household and ambient air pollution in cities (UNDP, 2020: 384–387). Devastating ecosystem collapse and extinction of wildlife is caused by neoliberal overconsumption and pollution, and human encroachment and abuse of other living species. Compared to the species extinction rate of the past 10 million years, current rates are tens to hundreds of times higher leading to approximately 1 million species currently threatened with extinction (IPBES, 2019: 11–12, 24–25). The culmination of human economic, social and ecological abuse of the planet is the accelerating, catastrophic

climate emergency which, when humans double atmospheric CO_2 from pre-industrial levels, will lead to the planet heating between 2.6°C and 4.1°C, expected to occur this century (Sherwood et al., 2020).

The data demonstrate that ecological and climate unsustainability has accelerated since the IPCC Third Assessment Report, Climate Change 2001 and the 2002 normative power article. Across the EU and the planet, heat waves, droughts, fires, floods and storms are early warning signs of the catastrophe to come. The EU's 'European green deal' and package of 13 energy and climate inter-connected legislative proposals on pricing, targets, standards and support measures are a first step towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions but should have been enacted in the 1990s and will not be able to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere quick enough (Dyke et al., 2021; European Commission, 2021). As von Lucke et al. (2021: 47–48) have argued, the last 20 years have seen the EU begin to 'better understand the limits of its normative power and [acknowledge] different pathways towards global climate justice). Developing this argument, von Lucke (in press) sets out how orchestrating normative power in the climate crisis must involve the EU in moving towards climate justice and normative power as mutual recognition and shared leadership. As the 2013 *Cooperation and Conflict* special issue underlined 10 years ago, the EU's 1990 'environmental imperative' drove its normative power during the 1990s, but the last 20 years have witnessed hard opposition to addressing the climate crisis from most large countries around the world (Manners, 2000b: 39–49, 2013a: 315, 318). These observations mean that a prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis must comprehend the accelerating consequences of ecological and climate unsustainability.

The EU should be constituted as a regenerative 'circular economy' through principles of sustainable development and addressing climate change (Manners, 2006: 23–26, 2013b: 232–238, 2021b: 77–78). The TEU and TFEU set out the objective of 'sustainable development . . . balanced economic growth . . . and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment' (TEU article 3.3), 'the sustainable development of the Earth' (TEU article 3.5) and 'combatting climate change' (TFEU article 191.1). A regenerative circular economy is the sustainable opposite of the unsustainable linear industrial economy (Raworth, 2017) which the EU has been implementing internally (European Commission, 2015, 2020; Leipold, 2021: 9–10) and externally (Ferenczy, 2019: 114; Łukaszuk, 2020: 70). The principle of sustainable development is founded on the general provision that 'environmental protection requirements must be integrated into the definition and implementation of the Union's policies and activities, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development' (TFEU article 11), where the EU follows the Brundtland Commission's understanding of sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The principle of addressing climate change involves 'promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems, and in particular combating climate change' (TFEU article 191), and a Global Strategy increasing 'climate financing, drive climate mainstreaming in multilateral fora, raise the ambition for review foreseen in the Paris agreement, and work for clean energy' (EU, 2016: 40).

In parallel to the inherent tensions in neoliberal inequality and demographic injustice, arriving at a regenerative circular economy, achieving sustainable development and addressing climate change before ecological and climate catastrophe cascades through the planet's tipping elements seem unachievable. An NPA to ecological and climate unsustainability in planetary organic crisis, driven by the problems of neoliberal inequality and social injustice, also requires empowering actions in concert to return to homeostatic, stable ecological conditions and to address human inequality and injustice. There is simply no way for any one regional organisation, state or transnational actor alone to radically transform unsustainable neoliberalism to sustainable development and to address the climate crisis in time to avoid approximately 2°C to 4°C temperature rise.

Realising and addressing ecological and climate unsustainability through the achievement of regenerative circular economy, as well as principles of intergenerational sustainable development and combatting climate crisis, is an essential step towards a holistic understanding of tackling the planetary organic crisis including economic equality, social justice, ontological security and political resilience.

Normative power in proxy insecurity

In the 10 years since the last *Cooperation and Conflict* special issue, it has become clearer how economic inequality, social injustice and ecological unsustainability are symbiotic root causes of insecurity and conflict across the planet. The Central American Dry Corridor from Panama through Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala to southern Mexico has become a region of climatic and political instability driving climate refugees northwards since 2009 (Lustgarten, 2020; Quesada-Hernandez et al., 2019). At the same time, the combination of climate change and food shortages in the Middle East and North Africa, together with drought and desertification in the Sahel, have acted as stressors or multipliers that have amplified the underlying causes of the 'Arab Uprisings', regional conflict and subsequent refugees since 2011 (Werrell and Femia, 2013). In 2023, climate change increased drought severity in the Horn of Africa, including over 4 million inhabitants, leading to chronic food and water insecurity which exacerbates state fragility and conflict (Kimutai et al., 2023). Root causes of insecurity and conflict such as these underlie proxy measures of ontological insecurity, societal safety and security, ongoing domestic and international conflict and militarisation (Manners, 2021a: 171–172).

Ontological insecurity is the extent to which individuals and groups experience emotional anxieties and fears about themselves and their world (Kinnvall et al., 2018: 250; Manners, 2002b: 12). Eurobarometer public opinion polls illustrate how EU respondents' main concerns at the personal, country and EU levels since the GFC have been primarily economic issues (inflation, unemployment and economic situation) until the 2020 emergence of health and environment/climate change as concerns, followed by the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the rise of inflation, international situation and energy as concerns. The only significant exception to this pattern of concerns and fears was the issue of immigration at the EU level from 2015 to 2019. Societal safety and security refers to internal and interpersonal aspects of violence, such as crime, homicide, imprisonment or terrorism (IEP, 2022: 30, 80–81). In general, societal safety and security

has slightly deteriorated across the planet over the past decade with improvements in Europe offset by insecurity in Ukraine. In 2022 Iceland, Norway, Japan, Denmark and Singapore had the highest levels of societal safety and security, while Afghanistan, Venezuela, Yemen, DR Congo and South Sudan had the highest levels of societal risk and insecurity. Ongoing domestic and international conflict refers to the extent to which countries are involved in internal and external conflicts, as well as their role and duration of involvement in conflicts (IEP, 2022: 31, 80–81). In general, ongoing conflict has deteriorated more significantly over the past decade with levels of conflict and deaths much higher than 10 years ago, driven by Russia, although there has been an improvement in peacefulness in South Asia and the MENA region. The lowest levels of ongoing domestic and international conflict are found in Botswana, Bulgaria, Iceland, Mauritius and Singapore, contrasting with the highest levels of conflict in Syria, Yemen, Russia, Afghanistan and Somalia. Militarisation refers to a country's level of military build-up and access to weapons and its level of peacefulness, both domestically and internationally (IEP, 2022: 31–32, 80–81). In contrast to both safety and security, and ongoing conflict, militarisation has declined over the past 15 years with armed service and military expenditure declining, although the Russian invasion of Ukraine is expected to reverse this trend. The least militarised countries in the world include Iceland, Slovenia, New Zealand, Hungary and Malaysia, compared to the most militarised countries of Israel, Russia, North Korea, the United States and France.

The data demonstrate that proxy insecurity has deteriorated since the GFC and become more omnipresent across socio-economic, environmental and health domains, as well as civil and political unrest, accelerated in Europe by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The European Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon all introduced aspects of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy and Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. But as the data suggest, addressing inflation, unemployment, and economic insecurity, health care concerns, fears about the environment, climate change, and energy, as well as civil and political unrest associated with the decline of democracy requires a more holistic approach to proxy insecurity. Noutcheva and Zarembo (in press) demonstrate how, since the Russian 2014 annexation and 2022 invasion, 'Ukraine has made democratic advances irrespective of the ongoing and persistent attack on its security [which] demonstrates that an EU normative approach to boosting political resilience intersects with addressing ontological insecurity'. Michelle Pace (2023) shows how 'policy interventions around water and food insecurity . . . cannot ignore intractable conflicts such as the Israeli–Palestinian issue and their ensuing implications for planetary politics'. These reflections mean that a prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis must recognise the ontological and physical insecurities that lie behind proxy conflicts.

The EU should also be constituted by its emphasis on 'sustainable peace' addressing the causes, rather than just the symptoms, of conflict and violence through principles of sustainable peace and rule of law (Manners, 2006: 26–28, 2013b: 239–245, 2021b: 74–75). TEU article 3.5 sets the objective that 'in its relations with the wider world, the Union . . . shall contribute to peace [and] security. The principle of sustainable peace is found in the 2008 Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (Solana, 2008: 19): 'there cannot be sustainable development without peace and security,

and without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace'. The Global Strategy set out that 'sustainable peace can only be achieved through comprehensive agreements rooted in broad, deep and durable regional and international partnerships' (EU, 2016: 10, 29). The principle of the rule of law involves the 'strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter' (TEU articles 3.5 and 21.1) and a Global Strategy respecting 'domestic, European and international law across all spheres' (EU, 2016: 15, 39).

As Campbell et al. (2007) and Scott (2016) have argued over the past decades, the synergies of neoliberal inequality, social injustice and climate unsustainability are instability accelerants, threat multipliers and conflict catalysts in the 'age of consequences'. An NPA to proxy insecurity in planetary organic crisis, accelerated by the consequences of inequality, injustice and unsustainability, requires empowering actions in concert to address the root causes of ontological insecurity and conflict across the planet. By addressing ecological instability and human inequality and injustice, wealthier and (former) colonial regional organisations, their member states, and transnational actors can recognise, repair and reconcile the damage they have done to the fabric of the planet.

Realising and addressing insecurity and conflict through the achievement of ontological and physical security, as well as the principles of sustainable peace and rule of law, is a vital step towards a holistic understanding of engaging with the planetary organic crisis that involves economic equality, social justice, ecological homeostasis and political resilience.

Normative power in ethno-nationalist irresilience

Together with these anniversaries of neoliberalism, the end of the Cold War, the 2002 normative power article and the previous *Cooperation and Conflict* special issue, it is vital to analyse the cumulative impact on contemporary polities and politics, in particular through the principles of democracy and good governance. The rise of ethno-nationalist parties and leaders across the planet has been a defining feature of the past two decades including, for example, Netanyahu in Israel, Orbán in Hungary, Putin in Russia, Heidar and Strache in Austria, Kjærsgaard and Thulesen Dahl in Denmark, Erdoğan in Turkey, Kaczyński in Poland, Xi in China, Modi in India, Trump in the United States, Salvini and Meloni in Italy, Bolsanaro in Brazil and Johnson in Britain (Manners, 2021a: 174–176). Ethno-nationalists are rent-seeking elites who use populist, ethnic and nationalist appeals to legitimise their concentration of power (Vachudova, 2019a: 64, 2019b: 701). More specifically, ethno-nationalists such as Putin, Trump and Johnson practice 'sadopopulism' in making electoral promises they have no intention of delivering; instead, their lack of policies makes the suffering of their popular constituency even worse (Snyder, 2018). Shelly Gottfried (2019) finds that ethno-nationalism and sadopopulism are driven by the needs of a neoliberal oligarchy to disguise their failures by supporting 'populist oligarchy' across the planet, arguing that the governments of Trump, Johnson, Orbán and Netanyahu are all predicated on the need to protect the wealthy elite.

The crisis of trust in EU member states can be illustrated through responses to Eurobarometer questions regarding relative levels of trust in EU member state

parliaments, governments and the EU institutions. Over the past three decades, the lowest levels of trust in the EU have been 37% (Asian financial crisis 1997), 31% (Eurozone sovereign debt crisis 2012–2014) and 32% (refugee crisis 2015), while the highest levels of trust in the EU have been 53% (11 September 2001 terrorist attacks), 50% (2004 enlargement), 57% (2007 enlargement) and 49% (COVID-19 pandemic, 2021). During the same 30-year period, trust in EU member state governments and parliaments has been approximately 10%–15% lower than trust in the EU. For the 17th consecutive year, the decline in global freedom continued in 2023 (Freedom House, 2023). Almost 75% of the world lives in countries with a deterioration in civil liberties, driven by economic and physical insecurity, violent conflict, and the pandemic. According to *Freedom in the World 2023*, erosions in civil liberties were most resisted by free democracies while partially free and unfree countries (80% of the world's population) were most susceptible to decline including, for example, Libya, Nicaragua, South Sudan, Tanzania, Turkey and the Central African Republic over the past 10 years. At the same time, decline of political rights and democracy is accelerating with both Freedom House and The Economist (2023) arguing that democracy has been in retreat for the last 17 years. According to this evidence, only about half of the world live in a democracy of some sort, while less than 8% live in one of the 24 'full democracies' led by Norway, New Zealand, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Ireland and the Netherlands (The Economist, 2023: 7). In contrast, most of the ethno-nationalist parties and leaders rule 'not free' authoritarian or hybrid regimes (China, Russia and Turkey), 'partially free' flawed democracies (Hungary and India) or 'free' flawed democracies (Brazil, the United States, Israel, Poland and Italy) (Freedom House 2023; The Economist, 2023).

The data demonstrate that political resilience, 'the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises' (EU, 2016: 23), is being damaged by ethno-nationalist irresilience. The Copenhagen criteria on stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the suspension clause and the provisions on democratic principles in the TEU all attempt to enhance democratic resilience. But as the suspension proceedings against Poland and Hungary for their serious breaches of human rights and the rule of law illustrate, ethno-nationalist governments continue to attempt to damage democracy in Europe and beyond. The *Freedom in the World 2023* report argues that 'over the past 50 years, consolidated democracies have not only emerged from deeply repressive environments but also proven to be remarkably resilient in the face of new challenges' (Freedom House, 2023: 1), but as the data suggest it is not clear that democratic resilience can continue to rebound from the synergistic effects of neoliberal inequality, social injustice, ecological unsustainability and proxy insecurity that the ethno-nationalism of the populist oligarchs promote. Bachmann and Moisio (in press) set out how sociomaterial inequality produces sociospatial hierarchisations that are often accompanied by alienation processes and ethno-nationalism that are detrimental for the functioning of democracy. Juncos and Pratt (in press) argue that 'building state and societal resilience' involves recognising that progress towards democracy, peace and security is not a linear process but requires a more structural, long-term, non-linear approach to vulnerabilities. But there is a deeper question here, as Nicolaïdis (2024) describes, over the advent of a planetary democratic transformation that relates to democratic geopolitics, or the geopolitics of democratic resilience in the competition between

geopolitical imaginaries and the political systems that underpin them. These critiques mean that a prospective on the use of normative power in addressing the planetary organic crisis must come to terms with the crisis of trust, erosion of civil liberties and decline in political rights and democracy of ethno-nationalist irresilience.

The EU should be constituted as an agonistic cosmopolitical communion of equals, meaning mutual respect and recognition, empowering actions in concert, and reconciliation rather than predation, including principles of democracy and good governance (Manners, 2006: 28–31, 2013b: 246–254, 2021b: 78–79). The TEU specifies 'provisions on democratic principles' including the equality of citizens, representative democracy and participatory democracy (TEU articles 9–12). An agonistic cosmopolitics combines Chantal Mouffe's and Bonnie Honig's understandings of agonistic struggle, global ethics and local politics with Mary McAleese's idea of a communion of equals based on mutual respect and recognition, empowering actions in concert and reconciliation rather than predation (Manners, 2013c, 2020) The principle of democracy combines participatory democracy where 'decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen' (TEU article 1) with a planetary ethics of suprasidiarity to better achieve together what cannot be achieved apart (TEU article 5.3). The principle of good governance is a general provision where 'in order to promote good governance and ensure the participation of civil society, the Union's institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible' (TFEU article 15).

As Gill and Benatar (2020: 182) have argued, the trends reducing planetary resilience and generating critical tipping points demand a shift towards an eco-centric planetary perspective that 'acknowledges the need for a profound and socially just restructuring of global power, greater global solidarity, and the development of sustainability'. An NPA approach to ethno-national irresilience in planetary organic crisis, characterised by a crisis of trust, eroding civil liberties and declining democracy, requires empowering actions in concert to revitalise agonistic cosmopolitical democratic resilience. Realising and addressing ethno-nationalist irresilience is also a step towards a holistic understanding of coming to terms with the planetary organic crisis in order to grow a symbiosis of economic equality, social justice, ecological homeostasis, ontological security and political resilience.

Conclusion: normative power and planetary organic crisis

This lead article has set out how the NPA has developed since the 2002 normative power article, and in the 10 years since the last *Cooperation and Conflict* special issue. This concluding section discusses how the NPA has, and can be, developed for application to international, regional and transnational actors, as well as states, within the context of planetary organic crisis. It is first worth acknowledging that the planetary organic crisis has been a long time coming, and that this article provides very few surprises in this respect, as set out in Manners (2009: 14–15):

> More sustainable global economics, a more sustainable global environment, more just human development, and more sustainable systems of democratic global justice require different thinking and a different direction in national, international and transnational politics [if not] then we are likely to continue to reproduce and accelerate the great wars, great famines,

genocides, poverty and starvation, and impending eco-catastrophe that traditional international relations has cultivated.

Similarly, the necessity to think about holistic, contextual, inclusive and global studies has long been part of the NPA to understanding planetary politics (Manners, 2003: 79). As the 2013 *Cooperation and Conflict* special issue demonstrated, there is a much wider use of the NPA around the world to study non-EU political actors (Manners, 2013a: 307; Whitman, 2013: 179). There is no longer space in a single article to consider this much wider literature, but it is interesting to note that much of the literature applies ideas of normative power to 'emerging' actors such as China, India, Russia, Japan, Turkey, ASEAN and other polities (Manners, 2023).

This raises the question of whether an NPA to both EU and non-EU political actors is possible. As set out two decades ago, and regularly discussed since, the necessity of political actors to 'profess normative values and practice pragmatic principles' constantly raises questions about universal/cosmopolitan versus particular/communitarian values and principles (Lucarelli and Manners, 2006: 213–214; Manners, 2009: 24; Manners, 2018: 321–322). From a planetary perspective, normative power is empowering actions in concert that reshape conceptions of normal for the planetary good of homeostasis and equality (Manners, 2023). An agonistic cosmopolitical perspective involves valuing mutual respect and recognition of the other, an ethic of cooperative empowering action in concert, leading to impacts of a communion of equals through reconciliation (Guisan, 2012; Manners, 2018: 325–326, 230–231, 2020: 142–143, 148, 2021a: 177, 2021b: 71–73; Nicolaïdis, 2007). A NPA to studying the EU's profession of normative values and practice of pragmatic principles involves analysing how the TEU article 2 values (human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities) are enacted as policy principles (freedom, social solidarity, human rights, equality, sustainable development, addressing climate change, sustainable peace, rule of law, democracy and good governance).

As the concluding article discusses (Diez and Rosamond, in press), the NPA towards agonistic cosmopolitics and empowering actions is at odds with the hegemony of 19th-century International Relations that dominate our common senses. Drawing on William Connolly's 'agonistic respect' for the Other, Mouffe's 'agonistic pluralism' as the basis of democracy and Honig's 'agonistic cosmopolitics' as a productive paradox on behalf of future peoples, the article argued that radical agonistic cosmopolitical theory linking local politics with global ethics provides a means for thinking about international, regional and transnational actors and actions in that will inevitably be contingent and agonistic, rather than hegemonic and antagonistic. Empowering actions in concert clearly draw on Hannah Arendt's conceptions of 'power to' or 'power with', together with feminist work on the ethics of caring and transnational solidarities of sharing, where power is understood as a verb – 'to empower' rather than a possession or act of coercion. While the NPA seems non-common sensical to contemporary International Relations, the planetary organic crisis demands thinking otherwise.

The NPA to planetary politics involving EU and non-EU political actors is located in the normative CST of agonistic cosmopolitics questioning notions of normativity and

power; it uses CST to understand sharing ('communion') relationships by international, regional and transnational actors; and it uses CST to imagine normative power as empowering actions in concert that reshape conceptions of normal for the planetary good of homeostasis and equality. The challenge of planetary politics lies in understanding how and why the distance between status quo international politics of planetary organic crisis is closing or lengthening to homeostatic and equal planetary politics. Central to closing this distance is a holistic understanding of the symbiosis between economic equality, social justice, ecological sustainability, ontological security and political resilience. This is the agenda of normative power in the planetary organic crisis.

ORCID iD

Ian Manners https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1897-4896

References

Bachmann V and Moisio S (2020) Towards a constructive critical geopolitics: Inspirations from the Frankfurt School of critical theory. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 38(2): 251–268.

Bachmann V and Moisio S (in press) An inquiry into the EU's role in global domination: Thinking normative power through the Frankfurt School. *Cooperation and Conflict* 59.

Balestra C and Tonkin R (2018) *Inequalities in household wealth across OECD countries: Evidence from the OECD wealth distribution database*. OECD Statistics working papers no. 2018/01, 21 June. Paris: OECD.

Benatar S and Daneman D (2020) Disconnections between medical education and medical practice: A neglected dilemma. *Global Public Health* 15(9): 1292–1307.

Campbell KM, Gulledge J, McNeill JR, et al. (2007) *The Age of Consequences: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Global Climate Change*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Chancel L, Piketty T, Saez E, et al. (2022) *World Inequality Report 2022*. Paris: World Inequality Lab.

David M, Guerrina R and Wright K (2023) Nakedly normative: A feminist (re)imagination of planetary politics. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Epub ahead of print 25 June. DOI: 10.1111/jcms.13496.

Debusscher P (in press) Intersectional justice and normative power in the planetary organic crisis. *Cooperation and Conflict* 59.

Debusscher P and Manners I (2020) Understanding the European Union as a global gender actor: The holistic intersectional and inclusive study of gender+ in external actions. *Political Studies Review* 18(3): 410–425.

Diez T and Rosamond B (in press) Conclusion: Normative power in the planetary organic crisis. *Cooperation and Conflict* 59.

Dyke J, Watson R and Knorr W (2021) Climate scientists: Concept of net zero is a dangerous trap. *The Conversation*, 22 April. Available at: https://theconversation.com/climate-scientists-con-cept-of-net-zero-is-a-dangerous-trap-157368

European Commission (2015) *Closing the Loop: An EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy*. Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission (2020) *Circular Economy Action Plan: For a Cleaner and More Competitive Europe*. Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission (2021) *'Fit for 55': Delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the Way to Climate Neutrality* (COM (2021). 550 final, Brussels, 14.7.2021). Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0550

European Union (2016) *A Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy*. Brussels: European External Action Service.

Ferenczy ZA (2019) *Europe, China, and the Limits of Normative Power*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Freedom House (2023) *Freedom in the World 2023: Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy*. Washington, DC: Freedom House.

Fuller R, Landrigan PJ, Balakrishnan K, et al. (2022) Pollution and health: A progress update. *The Lancet Planetary Health* 6(6): e535–e547.

Gill S and Benatar S (2020) Reflections on the political economy of planetary health. *Review of International Political Economy* 27(1): 167–190.

Gottfried S (2019) *Contemporary Oligarchies in Developed Democracies*. Chem: Springer.

Guisan C (2012) *A Political Theory of Identity in European Integration: Memory and Policies*. London: Routledge.

Hellman T, Schmidt P and Helle S (2019) *Social Justice in the EU and OECD: Index Report 2019*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.

IEP (2022) *Global Peace Index 2022: Measuring Peace in a Complex World*. Sydney, NSW, Australia: Institute for Economics and Peace.

IPBES (2019) *The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. Bonn: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Juncos AE and Pratt SF (in press) Pragmatist normative power: Resilience and evolution in planetary organic crisis. *Cooperation and Conflict* 59.

Kimutai J, Barnes C, Zachariah M, et al. (2023) Human-induced climate change increased drought severity in Horn of Africa. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4701486

Kinnvall C, Manners I and Mitzen J (2018) Introduction to 2018 special issue of European Security: 'Ontological (in) security in the European Union'. *European Security* 27(3): 249–265.

Landrigan PJ, Fuller R, Acosta NJR, et al. (2017) The Lancet Commission on pollution and health. *The Lancet* 391(10119): 462–512.

Leipold S (2021) Transforming ecological modernization 'from within' or perpetuating it? The circular economy as EU environmental policy narrative. *Environmental Politics* 30(6): 1045–1067.

Litfin K (2003) Planetary politics. In: Agnew J, Mitchell K and Toal G (eds) *A Companion to Political Geography*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 470–482.

Lucarelli S and Manners I (2006) Conclusion: Valuing principles in European Union foreign policy. In: Lucarelli S and Manners I (eds) *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy*. London: Routledge, pp. 201–215.

Łukaszuk T (2020) Normative power in marine affairs: India-EU cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. *The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies* 1: 63–81.

Lustgarten A (2020) The great climate migration has begun. *New York Times*, 23 July. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html

Manners I (2000a) Europe and the world: The impact of globalisation. In: Steven A and Sakwa R (eds) *Contemporary Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 182–201.

Manners I (2000b) Negotiation of a common EC position on climate change. In: Manners I (ed.) *Substance and Symbolism: An Anatomy of Cooperation in the New Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 39–81.

Manners I (2002a) Normative power Europe: A contradiction in terms? *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40(2): 235–258.

Manners I (2002b) *European [Security] Union: From Existential Threat to Ontological Security*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute.

Manners I (2003) Europaian studies. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 11(1): 67–83.

Manners I (2006) The constitutive nature of values, images and principles in the European Union. In: Lucarelli S and Manners I (eds) *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy*. London: Routledge, pp. 19–41.

Manners I (2007) Another Europe is possible: Critical perspectives on European Union politics. In: Jørgensen KE, Pollack M and Rosamond B (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of European Union Politics*. London: Sage, pp. 77–95.

Manners I (2009) The EU's normative power in changing world politics. In: Gerrits A (ed.) *Normative Power Europe in a Changing World: A Discussion*. Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, pp. 9–24.

Manners I (2013a) Assessing the decennial, reassessing the global: Understanding European Union normative power in global politics. *Cooperation and Conflict* 48(2): 304–329.

Manners I (2013b) Den Europeiska unionen I en globaliserande värld. In: Bengtsson R, Manners I, Persson H-Å, et al. (eds) *Det Europeiska Projektet: Politik Och Juridik – Historia Och Framtid*. Malmö: Liber, pp. 209–258.

Manners I (2013c) European communion: Political theory of European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy* 20(4): 473–494.

Manners I (2018) Theorising normative power in European Union-Israeli-Palestinian relations. *Middle East Critique* 27(4): 321–334.

Manners I (2020) Critical social theory approaches to European integration. In: Bigo D, Diez T, Fanoulis E, et al. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Critical European Studies*. London: Routledge, pp. 139–152.

Manners I (2021a) European communion and planetary organic crisis. In: Brack N and Gürkan S (eds) *Theorising the Crises of the European Union*. London: Routledge, pp. 159–182.

Manners I (2021b) Normative power approach to European Union external action. In: Gstöhl S and Schunz S (eds) *The External Action of the European Union: Concepts, Approaches, Theories*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 69–84.

Manners I (2023) Arrival of normative power in planetary politics. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Epub ahead of print 13 June. DOI: 10.1111/jcms.13505.

Nicolaïdis K (2007) Trusting the poles? Constructing Europe through mutual recognition. *Journal of European Public Policy* 14(5): 682–698.

Nicolaïdis K (2024) The third democratic transformation: From European to planetary politics. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Epub ahead of print 17 March. DOI: 10.1111/jcms.13589.

Noutcheva G (2016) Societal empowerment and Europeanization: Revisiting the EU's impact on democratization. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 54(3): 691–708.

Noutcheva G and Zarembo K (in press) Normative power at its unlikeliest: EU democratic norms and security sector reform in Ukraine. *Cooperation and Conflict* 59.

OECD (2020) *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-Being*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

OECD (2021) *Inequalities in Household Wealth and Financial Insecurity of Households*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

OECD (2023) *Wealth Distribution Database (WDD), OECD Social and Welfare Statistics*. Paris: OECD.

Pace M (2023) The construction of EU normative power and the Middle East 'conflict' . . . 15 years on. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Epub ahead of print 27 April. DOI: 10.1111/jcms.13492.

Parker O and Rosamond B (2013) 'Normative power Europe' meets economic liberalism: Complicating cosmopolitanism inside/outside the EU. *Cooperation and Conflict* 48(2): 229–246.

Quesada-Hernández LE, Calvo-Solano OD, Hidalgo HG, et al. (2019) Dynamical delimitation of the Central American Dry Corridor (CADC) using drought indices and aridity values. *Progress in Physical Geography: Earth and Environment* 43(5): 627–642.

Raworth K (2017) *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*. London: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Rosamond B (2014) Three ways of speaking Europe to the world: Markets, peace, cosmopolitan duty and the EU's normative power. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 16(1): 133–148.

Scott JP (dir.) (2016) *The Age of Consequences*. Brooklyn, NY: PF Pictures.

Sherwood SC, Webb MJ, Annan JD, et al. (2020) An assessment of Earth's climate sensitivity using multiple lines of evidence. *Reviews of Geophysics* 58(4): e2019RG000678.

Snyder T (2018) *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*. New York: Tim Duggan Books.

Solana J (2008) *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy*. Brussels: Council of Ministers of the EU.

The Economist (2023) *Democracy Index 2022: Frontline Democracy and the Battle for Ukraine*. London: Economist Intelligence Unit.

The Lancet Planetary Health (2021) A pandemic era. *The Lancet Planetary Health* 5(1): e1.

UN University (2023) *World Income Inequality Database (WIID)*. Helsinki: World Institute for Development Economics Research.

UNDP (2020) *Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier Human Development and the Anthropocene*. New York: UN Development Programme.

Vachudova MA (2019a) EU enlargement and state capture in the Western Balkans. In: Džankić J, Keil S and Kmezić M (eds) *The Europeanisation of the Western Balkan: A Failure of EU Conditionality?* London: Palgrave. pp. 63–85.

Vachudova MA (2019b) From competition to polarization in Central Europe: How populists change party systems and the European Union. *Polity* 51(4): 689–706.

Vollset SE, Goren E, Yuan C-W, et al. (2020) Fertility, mortality, migration, and population scenarios for 195 countries and territories from 2017 to 2100: A forecasting analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study. *The Lancet* 396(10258): 1285–1306.

von Lucke F (in press) Towards orchestrating normative power in the climate crisis. *Cooperation and Conflict* 59.

von Lucke F, Diez T, Aamodt S, et al. (2021) *The EU and Global Climate Justice: Normative Power Caught in Normative Battles*. London: Routledge.

Werrell CE and Femia F (eds) (2013) *The Arab Spring and Climate Change*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Whitman R (2013) The neo-normative turn in theorising the EU's international presence. *Cooperation and Conflict* 48(2): 171–193.

WWF (2019) *EU Overshoot Day 10th May: Living beyond Nature's Limits*. Brussels: WWF.

WWF (2022) *Living Planet Report 2022: Building a Nature-Positive Society*. Gland: WWF.

Author biography

Ian Manners is Professor in the Department of Political Science at Lund University conducting research on the EU's normative power in planetary politics examining the symbiosis between planetary society, economy, ecology, conflict and polity. His research combines interests in critical social theory, EU polity- and policy-making, and Swedish, Danish, and UK relations with the EU.