

# Being Neighbours

## Rhetoric and Legitimacy in the European Neighbourhood Policy

PER JANSSON

*Linköping University, Sweden*

*per.jansson@liu.se*

Paper to be presented at the EUSA Fifteenth Biennial Conference, May 4-6, 2017, Miami, Florida, Panel 8F External Legitimacy of EU Foreign Policy: Issues, Options and Implications II, Friday May 5, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

**Work in progress, all comments are welcome.**



The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation.

Treaty of the European Union, Article 8

A “neighbourly” relationship is a practice participated in, not in regard to persons living next door, but in respect of their understanding themselves to be “neighbours”.

Oakeshott (1975, 57)

## Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to explore some conceptual and normative aspects of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This is preparatory work for a comprehensive study of EU foreign policy legitimacy where the ENP serves as a case. My point of departure will be the claim that the adoption of a concept and discourse of neighbourhood in EU’s relations with its near abroad is both *significant* and *consequential*. *Significant* because the adoption of the neighbourhood discourse is a deliberate choice from which follows commitments to further values and ideas of how the EU should conduct its foreign relations. *Consequential* because the choice and use of a suggestive group of concepts centered on the idea and image of “the good neighbour” is likely to raise and define expectations among actors, hence setting limits as well as providing opportunities for policy-making. In other words, I am focused on the idea of neighbourhood and neighbourly relations that is implied by the ENP. Accordingly, this is not an analysis of policy but of ideas, based on the presumption that the coherence and intelligibility of guiding ideas are essential for the legitimacy and successful conduct of the policy itself. These issues are, I claim, largely occasioned by the fact that neighbourhood, as Michael Walzer has pointed out, is “an enormously complex human association.”<sup>1</sup> A neighbourhood brings together people who *find*

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983), p. 36 f.

themselves sharing a space and thus in a state of interdependence. After the great enlargement, the EU “found” itself located next to a number of countries on its Eastern perimeter which of course shared a recent experience of subjugation to the Soviet empire, but apart from that having different resources, needs and interests. But the meaning and significance of a proclaimed policy of neighbourhood is only in part determined by the authors of that policy. Bringing the concept of neighbourhood into the field of foreign policy-making is to open up an interpretative space where different expectations and understandings meet, but don’t necessarily merge.

I will try to discern a specific EU idea of neighbourhood and neighbourly relations. This is not primarily a question about the content and design of the policy in terms of action plans and programs, but the intended or unintended value basis of the policy. Being neighbours implies obligations and expectations in terms of appropriate behaviour. The question is what obligations and what expected behaviours. In the declared rationale of the ENP, what is the expressed or suggested meaning of neighbourhood and neighbourliness?

We are in effect posing questions about the implications and the significance of bringing the concept and the idea of neighbourliness into relations between international actors. The neighbourhood policy of the EU raises questions not only about what kind of relations the Union wants to establish with its immediate vicinity, but about what kind of community this is intended to create, or more to the point of the approach of this paper: what kind of community this may imply irrespective of the policy-maker’s intentions. To proclaim a policy of neighbourliness is an act with socially constitutive consequences as it raises a wide breadth of visions and expectations about the nature and reach of association. The meaning of a policy is not contained in or reducible to literal statements. Nor is it the intentions of the authors (if they can be found and reconstructed), but in the character of the relations that it creates and maintains.

Thus, the focus on the notion of neighbourliness in the ENP is a way of addressing the very essence of the policy, which implies that the policy is

an object of interpretation, i.e. containing meaning is not self-evident. In principle, we can know what the ENP “is” by reading the documents and guidelines, agreements and programs and observing the implementation. But in order to know what the ENP is *about*, we have to turn to interpretation, which means to conceive the policy as a coherent whole. The idea of a coherent whole is obviously problematic, but a necessary point of departure for any hermeneutical project. However, the assumption of coherence does not entail that the objective of interpretation is to reach (the) one authoritative meaning and understanding, whether we think of this as located in the intentions of the policy-makers, somehow in the policy itself, or subject to a dialogue between makers and recipients. On the contrary, policy-meaning is indeterminate. The objective of this discussion is therefore to demonstrate, or provide arguments to the effect, that the ENP is not a policy but a *policy complex*, of ideas, symbols and practices. As such the policy, contains and sustains a dynamic of its own by being essentially open and accessible to alternative interpretations, and thereby admitting change and development of its own interpretative potential.

The paper proceeds as follows. I start out by offering an overview of the EU conception of good neighbourliness, based on the main policy documents produced between 2003 and 2015. This account is followed by an explorative discussion of the normative meaning and implications of neighbourly relations among states, and how this applies to an understanding of the ENP. This is not to say that there is a one true meaning of neighbourliness, among people or states, but where the concept is applied and used there will be meaningful ideas and expectations that make this kind of relationship significantly different from other possible notions of close associations. Thus, in private life as well as in international relations we cannot exchange “neighbour” for “friend”, or “kin”, or “ally” or “partner”, without diluting some of the essence of neighbourliness. How characteristically neighbourly relations, or a neighbourhood, are constituted and maintained as a stable and mutually advantageous form of association, is far from self-evident. Legitimacy is at the heart of the matter. How is legitimacy claimed for this policy and how does the policy in turn lend legitimacy (or not) to the project of the European Union? I don’t claim to provide answers in full to

these overriding questions, but they will serve as a guide and point of reference.

## The EU conception of good neighbourliness

In this section I attempt a reconstruction and an overview of the EU conception of good neighbourliness. This will primarily be done through the ENP strategy documents, by identifying the associated terms and concepts that serve to more closely determine the EU understanding of neighbourly relations. What I am looking for is not the detailed content of the policy as such, but what is conveyed in terms of what kind of relationship and association is envisaged. This is an exercise from *within* the EU policy discourse, as it were. The approach is hermeneutical in that I will presume that some fairly consistent and coherent vision of neighbourliness is indeed involved in the formulation of policy plans, although this may not, and usually be not, thoroughly reflected and developed in the discourse.

This latent ideal of good neighbourliness is reconstructed according to three different categories of ideas: objectives and values, instruments and strategies, and relationship characteristics. These distinctions are obviously analytical, rather than corresponding to actual categories in the textual material. Objectives and values correspond not only to the immediate goals of the policy, but more importantly the ideals which may be taken to inform more concrete policy objectives. Instrument and strategies do not in the first place imply specific actions, but questions about appropriate measures within the framework of a neighbourly relationship. Finally, relationship characteristics indicates the terms into which neighbourliness is translated and further explicated.

It is not much of surprise that the EU consistently emphasizes the ENP's character of a *shared* project. The various objectives of the policy are regularly preceded by the predicates shared, mutual or joint. The effect is to communicate that the policy essentially is *not* an EU project, being offered to (or imposed on) countries which are found, and find themselves, on the

periphery of the expanded Union. Whether or not this is a rhetorical stratagem, intended to obscure that the ENP is indeed an EU project which requires influencing a set of countries in directions that they would otherwise not have elected, is open to debate. In any case, sharing burdens as well as benefits appear to be a fundamental element of the conception of neighbourliness that has informed the EU policymakers.

At one level this is a matter of affirming the objective of realizing and maintaining mutual values, objectives and benefits. The policy is in fact a process and a vehicle for social change, intended both to establish the idea of the European neighbourhood, and to mould its constituent societies in a way amenable to EU interests. At another level, the values and objectives are made somewhat more concrete. We discern what may be understood as a mutually supportive triad of concepts: security, prosperity, and stability. From the EU's point of view, the logic of a neighbourhood focuses on managing the environment towards conditions for social, economic and political development.

The notion that security is closely aligned with other core objectives is frequently brought out, and balanced by conditionality. On the one hand,

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) aims at developing a special relationship between the EU and each of its partner countries, contributing to an area of security, prosperity and good neighbourliness.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand,

The choices made by some countries will require greater differentiation in the relations between the EU and its partners, in order to respond to the expectations and needs of each partner, while also safeguarding the EU's own strategic interests.<sup>3</sup>

It is noteworthy that this is one of the few instances in the material that the Commission is making explicit reference to the ideal of good neighbourliness, and in addition the well-established foreign policy trope "special rela-

---

<sup>2</sup> COM (2014) 12 final, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

tionship”. The latter is likely to evoke a rich historical imagery of mature, stable and mutually beneficial relationships, and the prospect of friendship and unflinching support.

Accordingly, based on an overview of policy objectives and values, the EU conception of neighbourliness appears to be focused on the *interrelationship of the values of prosperity, stability and security*. The precise and actual composition may differ from one statement to another, but the overall pattern is that they go together and are mutually supportive. There is likewise focus on *managing the environment* towards conditions for social, economic and political development. The neighbourhood is in a sense a constructed community: the whole project is about setting up a community which in turn requires careful management. In this sense, the European neighbourhood is not conceived as a “natural” community. Finally, in the EU conception the Union is without doubt the active, initiating and supportive partner. The rules of neighbourly relations are laid down by the EU, for the neighbours to accept or not. Accordingly, the idea and concept of a neighbourhood and neighbourly relations appears quite compatible with the presence of a dominant actor.

The next question is how, by what instruments and strategies, these objectives are supposed to be realized. Again, there appears a triad of frequently used concepts: “more for more”, “differentiation”, and “conditionality”. Closely connected to these is the less used concept “incentive-based”. The idea of “dialogue” is a more subdued theme in the documents. Thus, the main means of realizing policy objectives is inducement:

... the more deeply a partner engages with the Union, the more fully the Union can respond, politically, economically and through financial and technical cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

The ENP [...] is a partnership for reform that offers ‘more for more’: the more deeply a partner engages with the Union, the more fully the Union can respond.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> COM (2007) 774 final, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> COM (2010) 207, p. 2.



[A] ‘Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity’ [...] is an incentive-based approach based on more differentiation (‘more for more’): those that go further and faster with reforms will be able to count on greater support from the EU.<sup>6</sup>

The policy is based on new features, including a “more for more” approach, ....<sup>7</sup>

“The more a partner country makes progress, the more support it will receive from the EU. This will include increased funding for social and economic development, larger programmes for comprehensive institution building, greater access for partner countries to the EU internal market, increased EU financing towards investments, including EIB loans as well as EU budget grants blended with loans from EIB and other IFIs and enhanced policy dialogue”.<sup>8</sup>

There is an increasing divergence in democratic reforms in the neighbourhood countries. The EU will therefore respond in a more nuanced manner, based on the ‘more for more’ principle and a rigorous review of reform commitments.<sup>9</sup>

In these terms, the ENP comes across as an instrument for control and strategy framework which relies heavily on managing and changing behaviour of the prospective neighbours through various forms of incentives.

What kind of relationship correspond to the particular values and objectives, and instruments and strategies? In this context, it may suffice to say that the EU has introduced a range of concepts, which serve directly or indirectly to indicate variable understandings of the meaning of neighbourly relationship. A “special relationship” is one.<sup>10</sup> A partnership, involving contractual relations and joint ownership is another, essentially suggesting a business-like arrangement, rather than deep, value-based community.<sup>11</sup> The most suggestive of these is perhaps the original idea of the ring, of friends or well-governed countries:

---

<sup>6</sup> COM (2011) 200 final, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> COM (2012) 14 final, p. 2. Cf. Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> COM (2012) 13 final, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> COM (2013) 4 final, p. 6. Cf. Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> COM (2014) 12 final, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> COM (2004) 373 final; COM (2005) 1521, COM (2006) 726 final; COM (2008) 164; COM (2009) 188; COM (2007) 774; COM (2012) 13 final.

The European Neighbourhood Policy's vision involves *a ring of countries*, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration.<sup>12</sup>

... make a particular contribution to stability and good governance in our immediate neighbourhood [and] to promote *a ring of well governed countries* to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations.<sup>13</sup>

The communication proposes that the EU should aim to develop a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood – *a “ring of friends”* – with whom the EU enjoys close, peaceful and co-operative relations.<sup>14</sup>

It may be argued that this reflects an essentially *defensive* attitude to the international environment, the ambition to secure the EU within a cordon of reliable and obliging neighbours. The ring is furthermore consistent with an idea of the *limiting* function of a neighbourly community. Parallel and closely connected to these interpretations is the objective to establish a buffer-zone. The neighbourhood policy thus appears to be founded on the perception that the EU has a vital interest in establishing a flexible and controllable security zone between itself and the world beyond. The discourse actually suggests an important inside/outside perspective where order within is contrasted with disorder beyond Europe and the prospective neighbourhood. In this sense, management and re-ordering of the international environment emerges as an important theme. The neighbourhood policy can be seen as a project to appropriate, not territory, but the collective mental and political image of Europe and its borderlands, motivated by the need to catch the surrounding states and societies in a web of signification, i.e. making them think of themselves as “non-European”, in the sense of being in principle

---

<sup>12</sup> COM (2004) 373, p 5, italics added.

<sup>13</sup> COM (2004) 373, p. 6, italics added.

<sup>14</sup> COM (2005) 1521, p. 4, italics added.

locked out from the EU, but in positive terms as “neighbours”. In effect, the project of the neighbourhood policy can be understood as an ideological one, not in the first place because it is intended to proliferate characteristically European values, but because it offers an account of what kind of environment the EU sees, or want to see, itself situated in.

## Good neighbourliness and international relations

Let me begin this more explorative and reflective part of the paper by raising some doubts. What is the point of analysing and evaluating the ENP on the basis of some kind of developed understanding of the meaning of neighbourliness as a social condition and practice? Clearly, this is not a question about being neighbours in “the real sense”; the N in ENP is supposed to be suggestive, to hint at *some* kind of friendly and productive relationship that follows from or is necessitated by a close proximity that was not the case before the great enlargement, not a *specific* form of normative or ethical arrangement. The neighbourhood component is “just” a metaphor, an obvious rhetorical expression, and a well-understood shorthand for the “near abroad” or the immediate vicinity of the EU, which hardly calls for a closer conceptual analysis.

Alternatively, it may be argued that designating some states as “neighbours” and devising a policy complex specifically for this “neighbourhood”, is an obvious rhetorical scam intended to elicit support and compliance. It is quite reasonable to attribute the ENP to rational egoism, i.e. that the policy’s pretensions of establishing a special relationship is a rhetorical sham designed to camouflage a European self-interest in acquiring secure borders of the Union. From a realist point of view the “circle of friends” is nothing but a *cordon sanitaire*, established to maintain the military, social and cultural security of Europe. In international relations “neighbourhood” is closely connected to “sphere of influence”. And few would deny that such concerns are involved, i.e. the ENP is an essentially self-serving instrument.

Evidently, an inquiry into the meaning of neighbourliness and how this relates to the ENP raises some fundamental questions about the role of rhetoric in politics and policy-making. Accordingly, to refer to bonds of neighbourhood in a policy context can be conceived as a rhetorical stratagem, a means of persuasion. In a starkly rational and realist understanding of politics as a struggle for power and interests we are prone to subsume rhetoric under the practice of politics, as an instrument for persuading people to do or accept things they would otherwise not have done or accepted. Politics is separated from ethics, being what can and must be done in order to safeguard and promote interests, not what should or ought to be done according to some moral standard. And ethics is seen as antithetical to rhetoric. The ethical dimension is accordingly made irrelevant to the conduct of politics. In an equally stark idealistic understanding of politics as a means for accomplishing and maintaining some idea of the good, political practice will be directed by ethical concerns, while rhetoric will be viewed as unethical and consequently excluded as an instrument of politics.

In an alternative understanding of the relationship between politics, ethics and rhetoric all three elements are necessary for the proper conduct of social and political affairs. Politics involves the use and management of power, but ethical knowledge cannot be ignored since a policy entirely lacking ethical considerations is unsustainable.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the rhetorical element of the neighbourhood policy should not be ignored; the idea of a neighbourhood carries powerful ethical connotations and thus considerable persuasive potential. But this is so because “neighbourhood” communicates a strong vision of the good in the guise of an idealized image of mutually beneficial coexistence, patterned on civil society norms. Accordingly, the ENP cannot be dismissed either as a rhetorical ruse intended to promote EU power interests, or as a naïve vision of good-natured cohabitation. Even if the neighbourhood discourse *was* introduced to cover a power-oriented policy of tranquilization or subjugation, it still communicates and supports key norms and ethical standards of international relations.

---

<sup>15</sup> Cf. E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Reissued with a New Introduction and additional material by Michael Cox (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001).

The broader context for understanding a proclaimed policy of neighbourliness is the possible range of close associations between states.<sup>16</sup> The ENP is quite obviously not the only example of neighbourhood policies. The U.S. Good Neighbour Policy towards Latin America readily comes to mind, but the contemporary international system exhibits a number of foreign policy projects of this genre. The common denominator appears to be that regional great powers, typically in ascent, have a particular interest in establishing friendly relations with their immediate surroundings.<sup>17</sup> In a strictly realist understanding, states relate to each other on an equal basis in the sense that states are entirely self-interested, and every alliance or cooperative relationship is and must be expendable when national interests are at stake. But international relations are more complex than this, which most realists realize and acknowledge but discount for the sake of analytical rigor. States do develop special relationships, based on an appreciation of shared culture, historical experience, and destiny. Being neighbours amounts to a “special relationship”, i.e. a relationship between parties that *differ* significantly from the kind of relationships that these same parties entertain with other states and international actors.<sup>18</sup> Referring to other states as neighbours and embracing them in a neighbourhood policy, indicates that these states are being singled out for some sort of special, and indeed preferential relationship.

Thus, the idea of neighbourhood points at an ethical, not an empirical state of affairs. A neighbourhood is an association that implies rules and norms, usually implicit, understood rather than encoded, and to be a member of this neighbourhood is coupled with obligations and expectations of

---

<sup>16</sup> See Simon Koshut, & Andrea Oelsner (eds.), *Friendship and International Relations* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); P.E. Digeser, “Friendship Between States”, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39 (2008), pp. 323-344; Kristin M. Haugevik, *How relationships become special: Inter-state friendship and diplomacy after the Second World War* (Oslo: Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Steven F. Jackson, “Comparative Foreign Policy of “Neighbors” and “Neighborhoods”, paper for the ISA Annual Meeting, Toronto, March 28, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Haugevik, p. 215: “States are expected to interact differently with those they systematically and over time portray as their ‘friends’, than with those they portray as ‘rivals’ or ‘enemies’, or those they do not mention at all.”

behaviour, e.g. reciprocity, in various situations. In fact, it is difficult to engage with the idea of neighbourhood relations without assuming some of the ethical content of the idea of the *good* neighbour. This may even be the very purpose of the policy, to signal a benevolent intent and willingness to assume the standards and responsibilities of the area. In another time Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his 1933 inaugural address, famously expressed the gist of the “Good Neighbour Policy”:

In the field of world policy, I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbour—the neighbour who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others—the neighbour who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbours.<sup>19</sup>

Even if the purpose of the EU’s neighbourhood policy from a critical point of view can be understood as a power practice to establish and maintain the EU’s frontiers by creating a *cordon sanitaire* of well-disposed and well-behaved neighbours, invoking the idea of neighbourhood relations implies to conjure a narrative of shared existence, even shared destiny. The neighbourhood is a realm of belonging and sharing, not by choice, but by coincidence. Consequently, neighbourhood is a loose and essentially self-defined association, with an equal propensity to cooperation and conflict:

Continuous proximity and frequency of contact imply not just mutual encouragement and support but also the possibility, indeed probability, of some degree of restriction and negativity; and only as long as the *positive* side predominates can a relationship claim to display genuine community”.<sup>20</sup>

So, the neighbourhood as model for international relations is at the same time ambitious in the sense of holding forth the prospect of deep community, based on shared habits, memories and values, and inherently problematic

---

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Rosenman, ed., *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Volume Two: The Year of Crisis, 1933* (New York: Random House, 1938).

<sup>20</sup> Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, ed. Jose Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 30.

due to the frictions and conflicts that stem from physical proximity and interdependence. Following Tönnies, the *Gemeinschaft* element of the neighbourhood concept offers a promise of community beyond merely interest-based contractual – *Gesellschaft* – arrangements, but this very prospect of partnership and communion risks creating extensive negative fallout if expectations are not met.

According to this reasoning, using a neighbourhood discourse (understood as a system of concepts and patterns of reason built around the image of the good neighbour) is indeed a significant and consequential act, that prompts us to better understand how this discursive practice works in a power perspective.

The distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* offers *one* frame of reference and *one* narrative of the neighbourhood and adjacent concepts such as friendship and kinship, which emphasizes the organic character of neighbourhood relations, and thus the limited range of rational, calculated and contractual policy-making in this context. As general social phenomena, neighbourhood and neighbourly relations are rarely defined or circumscribed by explicit rules and norms. In particular, whatever laws that may impinge on the conduct of neighbourly relations, these are essentially made for other purposes and in order to regulate relations among citizens in general, whether they happen to live in each other's vicinity or not. Hence the neighbourhood is largely an institution of *civil society*, predicated on customs and norms that make sense to the concerned parties in their understanding of themselves as *being* in the first place neighbours to each other. Substantially, these customs and norms can be assumed to differ between different societal and cultural settings. What is exactly expected of me as a neighbour in a Western European, let's say a Swedish, suburban community and in a Papuan tribal village will most likely differ in significant respects, although I suspect there will be a considerable set of similar neighbourhood norms. Of course, the details of the neighbourhood value system will also differ notably between, let's say a rural village community in the north of Sweden, and an upper middle-class neighbourhood in central Stockholm.

Thus, the concept of civil society offers a somewhat different handle on the issue, as can be discerned from Lawrence E. Cahoon's work on civil

society and civility. The context is not international relations, but Cahoon's definition of neighbourhood in the sense of contemporary American communities seems nevertheless applicable to an idea of international society:

By "neighborhood" I mean ... an association of adjacent and nearby households whose fortunes are relatively independent, but who accept civility, the collective concern for the survival of the neighborhood, and the concern for the decent life of members.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, the neighbourhood is a special kind of community, in fact the paradigmatic form of civil society, and civil society differs both from a contractual and interest-based *Gesellschaft*, and a *Gemeinschaft* of shared cultural values.<sup>22</sup> The neighbourhood in this sense is a face-to-face community, a simple observation that to my mind expresses a fundamental aspect: I may choose my friends and acquaintances, but I don't in the same way choose my neighbours. These are people I happen to reside next door to and with whom I therefore have to co-exist. With some relationships of true friendship may develop, with others living in the same neighbourhood involves at best toleration and mutual respect. Hence Cahoon's claim that the neighbourhood is "an association of *civility*"<sup>23</sup> that rests on crucially tacit rules of behaviour. The rules of the neighbourhood are essentially restricting the ways in which members may pursue their individual interests.<sup>24</sup> Translated to the international realm, the pursuit of national (or unit) interests is delimited by the intrinsic rules and norms of neighbourliness. One aspect is the shadow of the future<sup>25</sup>: these are the polities and societies we will have to face, rely on, and take into consideration on a day-to-day basis: proximity in space coupled with joint histories and cultural values counts for something in international relations. Finally, the neighbourhood is characterized by a rough equality of power; the space of neighbourhood must not be controlled

---

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence E. Cahoon, *Civil Society: The Conservative Meaning of Liberal Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 245-246.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).



or dominated by a few powerful actors.<sup>26</sup> Relations among neighbours are essentially relations among approximate equals. Background, income, family fortunes etc. may differ, but not too much: “it must not be the case that the public space of the neighbourhood is controlled by a few”<sup>27</sup>. This is where the European policy may fail or be misconstrued; it aims to constitute a community of neighbours or partners, which are not and cannot be equal in terms of power. All attempts at neighbourhood policy-making run the risk of losing credibility, and legitimacy, if one of the involved parties is disproportionately powerful.

## Conclusions

This paper is an attempt to raise the analysis of the ENP above the level of policy-making and policy implementation, and address the conceptual and normative issues that are involved. I started out with the claim that the EU’s adoption of the neighbourhood concept and discourse (understood as a system of concepts and patterns of reason built around the image of the good neighbour) is both significant and consequential. *Significant* because the neighbourhood discourse implies further values and ideas of how the EU should conduct its foreign relations. *Consequential* because the idea and image of “the good neighbour” is likely to raise and define expectations among actors, hence setting limits as well as providing opportunities for policy-making. More specifically, I argue that the neighbourhood discourse is significant in that it constitutes or creates a worldview and a political order. The EU documents read not just as policy “statements”, but also as descriptions of the world that Europe as the EU inhabit, or aspires to inhabit, and attempts to define to its own purposes. This is an environment that now is populated by “neighbours”, “partners”, and “friends”. We may readily understand this move as an attempt to establish *order*, to communicate a set of perceptions and attitudes which will work to delimit and control the dynam-

---

<sup>26</sup> Cahoone, p. 246.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

ics of the enlargement process, and to create a secure border between the union and the threatening realm of disorder to the east and the south. The neighbourhood discourse is consequential in that it has the effect of establishing boundaries. The further point is, however, that the boundaries of the neighbourhood are essentially *undetermined*. We usually have difficulties in clearly defining the borders of neighbourhood we think of ourselves as living in. Some areas will indisputably be within the neighbourhood, and other areas will just as clearly be outside or beyond the neighbourhood. But in between there is a more or less extensive grey zone of territory – and people – whose status as our neighbours is uncertain, to them and to us. Notions like the “strategic neighbourhood” and “our neighbours’ neighbours” is in this sense problematic since it is difficult to see what they imply beyond an indication of the extension of interests.

The concept of “neighbours”, and “the neighbourhood”, works by setting an overall framework for the conception and understanding of policy. On the one hand these are concepts which when filled with a content will indicate what the EU wants, or is prepared, to view as neighbourly relations. On the other hand, this is a use of language that raises expectations on part of those who are affected by the policy, and thereby serves to frame their understanding of their relationship to the EU. This is the rhetorical side of the matter: the EU is *using* the neighbourhood frame in order to elicit support and compliance. And so the EU as initiator of the policy faces a classical problem of rhetoric: it makes sense, and is even necessary, to use concepts and arguments, implied by or built upon potent concepts, so as to promote the interests of the Union. But the ultimate interpretation and understanding of the meaning of being neighbours and maintaining neighbourly relations is not within the power of the EU policy-makers to control. The question is what may happen when the perception of the actual policy diverges from a common sense, cultural understanding of neighbourliness and neighbourhood relations. If the European neighbourhood is a civil community, based on a principle or understanding of civility, this is where the ENP falls short: it is not based on or expressive of an understanding of civility, but utility.

On the other hand, at the same time as making use of the neighbourhood concept and discourse unavoidably is an appeal to an ideal of “good neighbourliness”, which corresponds to a conception of a close community among responsible, good-intended and supportive people, the details of the policy arguably indicate something else. In this understanding the ENP does not presume to set up an idealized good neighbourhood among equals, but quite explicitly sets out the conditions that in common-sense experience are frequently associated with conditions of co-existence among parties with sometimes greatly differing resources, needs and interests. Contrary to what may be expected, the ENP discourse reads as a rather candid statement of what neighbourly relations tend to be like: to some or a certain extent asymmetric, potentially intrusive in terms of values, imposing mores that may not be aligned with the individual values of all members; as it has been said in relation to the American Good Neighbour Policy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

The good neighbour does not pry into his neighbour’s affairs nor instruct him as to how he shall behave himself in his own home. To him the principle that “a man’s home is his castle” is an essential basis of good neighbourliness. But the good partner, particularly if he is the senior partner, must concern himself with these matters.<sup>28</sup>

\* \* \*

---

<sup>28</sup> Donald Marquand Dozer, *Are We Good Neighbors? Three Decades of Inter-American relations 1930-1960* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1959), p. 194.

## References

- Axelrod, Robert, *The evolution of cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
- Carr, E. H., *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Reissued with a New Introduction and additional material by Michael Cox (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001).
- Cahoone, Lawrence E. (2002) *Civil Society: The Conservative Meaning of Liberal Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Cahoone, Lawrence E., *Civil Society: The Conservative Meaning of Liberal Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
- Digester, P.E., "Friendship Between States", *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39 (2008), pp. 323-344.
- Dozer, Donald Marquand, *Are We Good Neighbors? Three Decades of Inter-American relations 1930-1960* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1959).
- European Commission (2003) 104 final, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours".
- European Commission (2004) 373 final, Communication from the Commission, "European Neighbourhood Policy – Strategy paper".
- European Commission (2005) 1521, Communication from the Commission, "Implementing and Promoting the European Neighbourhood Policy".
- European Commission (2006) 726 final, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, "On Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy".
- European Commission (2007) 774 final, Communication from the Commission, "A Strong European Neighbourhood Policy".
- European Commission (2008) 164, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, "Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2007".
- European Commission (2009) 188/3, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, "Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2008".
- European Commission (2010) 207, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, "Taking Stock of the European Neighbourhood Policy".
- European Commission (2011) 200 final, Joint Communication to the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, "A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean".
- European Commission (2011) 303, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the

- Committee of the Regions, “A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood”.
- European Commission (2012) 14 final, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “Delivering on a New European Neighbourhood Policy”.
- European Commission (2012) 13 final, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the Autumn 2013 Summit”.
- European Commission (2013) 4 final, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “European Neighbourhood Policy: Working Towards a Stronger Partnership”.
- European Commission (2014) 12 final, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “Neighbourhood at the Crossroads: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013”.
- Haugevik, Kristin M., *How relationships become special: Inter-state friendship and diplomacy after the Second World War* (Oslo: Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, 2014).
- Jackson, Steven F. (2013) “Comparative Foreign Policy of “Neighbors” and “Neighborhoods”, paper for the ISA Annual Meeting, Toronto, March 28, 2014.
- Oakeshott, Michael (1975) *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Rosenman, Samuel, ed., *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Volume Two: The Year of Crisis, 1933* (New York: Random House, 1938).
- Tönnies, Ferdinand (2001) *Community and Civil Society*, ed. Jose Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Walzer, Michael, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983).