



DEPARTMENT  
OF POLITICAL  
AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCES

***‘We, the People’ vs. ‘We, the Peoples’—  
the Debate over the Nature of the Union  
in the USA and Canada and its Lessons for  
European Integration***

**Dennis-Jonathan Mann**

**Ph.D. thesis defence on 12 November, 2012**

**Abstract**

Dennis-Jonathan Mann’s thesis contributes to a growing body of literature that uses the framework of comparative federalism to “make sense” of the European Union. On an empirical level, the thesis contrasts the EU discourse with an in-depth analysis of two (historic) cases of nature of the Union debates: that of the (early) United States and Canada. Empirically, a core insight of the study is that the puzzle regarding the nature of the EU is largely misunderstood as being an exceptional or sui generis case. Rather, a (temporary) “state of limbo” is found to be the rule and not the exception in the systems studied. In terms of its theoretical contribution, Dennis-Jonathan Mann’s thesis seeks to overcome the positivistic (and often teleological) approaches prevailing in the field of comparative federalism by drawing upon insights from constructivist epistemology. Thereby, a positivist reliance on “hard facts”, strict typologies and formal institutions can be shifted towards a perspective that allows for an analysis of the debates and discourses about the systems’ alleged “facts” and structures. Hereby, Dennis-Jonathan Mann not only shows remarkable analogies between the three nature of the Union debates, the findings also raise questions over some of the core assumptions found in the European integration literature. Above all, the findings suggest that essentially contested federal systems can be sustained in spite of rivaling concepts regarding their nature and telos, thereby refuting widely held beliefs that the European Union must either “clarify its nature” or fail. Contrary to the latter view, the findings of this thesis actually suggest that—rather than endangering them—a contested nature and constitutional ambiguity is what holds these Unions together and what enables them to “go on”.



**Jury:** Susanne Schmidt (Univ. Bremen), Robert Howse (New York University School of Law) (Co-Supervisor), Dennis-Jonathan Mann (candidate), Sven Steinmo (EUI), Friedrich V. Kratochwil (formerly EUI) (Supervisor)

**Bio:** Dennis-Jonathan Mann holds an MA (Magister Artium) in Political Science, Media Studies and Corporate Law from the University of Bonn and an MRes (Master of Research) in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute (EUI). During studies at University of Bonn, Dennis-Jonathan spent an academic year at the University of Mexico (UNM), he further spent a semester at New York University (NYU) as a Global Visiting Scholar in the course of his doctoral research at the EUI. Next to pursuing his PhD at the EUI, Dennis-Jonathan has been involved in other research projects, including an interdisciplinary commentary on the EU Lisbon Treaty and an edited volume on Legal Culture. He also served as an adjunct lecturer at University of Bonn (Master-level, 2011-2012).

Dennis-Jonathan's research interests include European integration, North American and German federalism, constitutional theory and constitutional courts.

As of September 2012, Dennis-Jonathan has joined the political science department at the University of Kaiserslautern as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow ("wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter"). He teaches Political Science at the Bachelor's and Master's level, in a wide range of topics.