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Introduction

The Limits of EUropean Legitimacy: On Populism and Technocracy. Introduction to the Special Issue

Russell Foster, Jan Grzymski and Monika Brusenbauch Meislová

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Abstract

This article introduces the special issue on populism and technocracy in the integration and governance of the European Union (EU), framing these opposing approaches in the context of polarised debate on the (il)legitimacy of the EU. The special issue was conceived as an interdisciplinary approach to questions of the EU's legitimacy in the aftermath of structural crises (the eurozone, sovereign debt and the election and appointment of governing agents) and spontaneous crises (migration, external state and non-state security challenges, Brexit and Euroscepticism). Since the special issue's conception the unanticipated Covid-19 pandemic, and responses from the EU and its member states (current and former) starkly illuminated debates on how the EU should operate, the limits of its power and the limits of its popular legitimacy. The era of passive consensus has been replaced by claims of legitimacy based on active expert-informed intervention, alongside populist claims of the EU's inherent illegitimacy as an undemocratic technocracy. As such the special issue's objective is to critically analyse manifold ways in which the populist-technocratic divide is narrated and performed in different regions, disciplines, and social and political systems in an era of growing internal and external challenges to the Union. We observe that the EU's institutions remain highly adaptable in responding to challenges, but that member-states have continued and accelerated a tendency to nationalise success and Europeanise failure, with the EU acting as a perennial scapegoat largely due to the ease with which it can be narrated as a site of projection for mistrust, resentment, and social grievances. We argue that the relationship between populism and technocracy is rapidly evolving from an imagined binary into a much more fluid, overlapping, and reversible set of political narratives. We conclude that despite the changing nature of populist-technocratic debates and the resilience and adaptability of the EU, it faces accelerating challenges to its legitimacy in the new era of 'politics of necessity'.

Keywords

Populism; Technocracy; European Union; EU governance; Crisis

EMERGENCY EUROPE: BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This special issue was originally conceived in September 2019 through our UACES-funded network '*The Limits of EU-rope*'. Through this network, the issue's themes were introduced and discussed at one of the last face-to-face academic conferences – the 49th UACES conference, held in Portugal on the tenth anniversary of the Treaty of Lisbon. Speculating on whether or how the new British government of the recently-appointed Boris Johnson would ever resolve Brexit, and why and how the *Spitzenkandidaten* system had been abandoned in the transition from Jean-Claude Juncker to Ursula von der Leyen, we imagined that this special issue would address what we anticipated would be a running theme into the future – a tension between the unelected experts of technocracy versus the sweeping promises of populists. What we could not anticipate in Lisbon in September 2019, was how much this vague binary would solidify.

The Global Covid-19 Pandemic has seen EUrope, and the entire world, plunged into emergency governance mode for more than a year. In this sense, the perspective of this special issue is now obviously different than when it had been conceived. We originally aimed at investigating the relationship between populism and technocracy and the growing gulf between 'populist' and 'technocratic' systems of knowledge production within EUropean politics, and specifically how populist agendas in EUrope challenge a consensus-based EUropean decision-making model. Since then, priorities and players have changed. The United Kingdom (UK) finally broke its Brexit deadlock and, for better or worse, left the EU. A new European Commission was chosen behind closed doors, antagonising national leaders and the European Parliament while reigniting early 2000s narratives of the European Union's (EU) supposed democratic deficit. Hungary and Poland threatened to mortally wound the EU by derailing the planned seven-year budget amidst culture wars. Yet similar events of the past year, from wildfires to drone assassinations to the Suez Canal, have been overshadowed by the pandemic. Unprecedented state intervention and control over citizens' lives, vaccine wars, and record levels of spending (too much for creditors, not enough for debtors), and an entirely new era of expert-led technocracy versus populist anger.

Although EUrope, as well as the rest of the world, has endured the largest shock since the end of the Second World War, changes to the functioning of EU institutions are less than one could expect. Most importantly, the conceptual limits of EUrope remain mostly unchanged. 'Emergency Europe' is undoubtedly not new, but rather an expansion (albeit a very large one) of the EU's crisis mode of the past ten years or so (White 2020).

Since the onset of the Global Financial Crisis the EU has staggered from one emergency to the next. The eurozone and sovereign debt crisis, the so-called migration crisis, Crimea and the ongoing war in Donbas, Brexit and the rise of authoritarian anti-EU politicians, to name but a few, effectively triggered emergency rule in the EU long before the pandemic. It became an opportunity for elevating the importance of technocratic expertise, introducing exceptional policy tools and giving more prerogatives to EU executive institutions. In turn, this extension of technocratic governance fuelled resentment at an ostensibly distant and unelected bureaucracy, creating a favourable environment for populist politicians demanding a return of sovereign powers, restrictions on EU powers and greater popular agency against the emergency doctrine of 'politics of necessity' which by definition leaves little room for alternative policy options. The Covid-19 pandemic is a global emergency, but its impact in Europe (including the UK) was significantly exacerbated by appearing in a political, economic and social context of widespread existing mistrust, resentment and division. It tested the resilience of both supranational and intergovernmental capacities of the EU (Salvati, 2021), and starkly highlighted long-simmering resentments between national capitals and Brussels. It is reasonable to say that with the pandemic added on top of previous crises, there is a 'normalisation of EU public policy responses in times of permanent emergency' (Wolff and Ladi 2020: 1031).

On one hand, the EU's responses to the pandemic exposed the potential of EUropean integration. The first symbolic manifestation of this was when many EU nationals used repatriation flights under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, to return home following the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. Arguably the most significant manifestation was the creation of Coronavirus Bonds and an EU Recovery Plan, which has smoothed the worst impacts of lockdowns, but which has simultaneously added to tensions between creditor and debtor nations. Notwithstanding EU-UK tensions over the Irish border, and a tense relationship between the European Commission, national governments and the AstraZeneca corporation, the EU has demonstrated its continuing, remarkable ability to survive its semi-permanent state of crisis. But greater, large-scale solidarity between EU members is now of vital importance for the future development of EUropean integration and, arguably, survival. That includes a common purchase and distribution of vaccines among the EU population (regardless of the initial delays) and the largest ever EU economic recovery plan 'Next Generation EU' (NGEU) with sharing public debt and issuing common EU bonds, alongside preparations for future emergencies.

On the other hand, the pandemic simultaneously stimulated EUropean disintegration. In particular, UK-EU tensions over vaccine procurement and distribution, manifesting in damaging smear campaigns and poorly-managed executive orders relating to the Irish border, alongside other EU neighbours in the east and south being effectively excluded from the fast supply of vaccines. This raised critical voices warning against the rise of the alleged 'vaccine nationalism' and continues to imperil an already delicate post-Brexit relationship between an EU and a UK growing increasingly disillusioned with one another. As a result, this strengthened the chasm between the EU, its member states and its European neighbours, in relation to both the post-Brexit UK and those in east and south of the EU. Moreover, the initial 'nativist' reactions of the majority of EU member states during the first lockdown, to bring back home 'our' nationals, even if that was supported to some degree by the EU repatriation flights scheme, was a visible sign that in the moment of existential crisis. It is primarily the 'nation state' model which was expected to provide with rudimentary safety and protection, not the EU. Hence, the pandemic has not overridden the conceptualised limits of EUrope, but to some degree it has only magnified them, where the processes of EUropean integration and disintegration are dialectically intertwined.

At the same time, Covid-19 underlined other issues in relation to both technocracy and populism. The most obvious was that the sense of urgency legitimised yet again the technocratic governance model in the name of the 'politics of necessity'. This manifested itself in unprecedented securitisation of intra-EU mobility with the selective suspension of freedom of movement in the Schengen zone (although not for the first time) and the imminent introduction of an EU Digital Green Certificate, or 'Covid-19 Passports'. In this context, the role of technocratic expertise was critically linked with public trust in science. It is worth noting that the universal population vaccination became contentious before the pandemic, with vaccine hesitancy rising among EUropean populations and picked up by many populists. Scenes from Berlin, Amsterdam, London and across the European continent, as anti-lockdown protestors swelled the ranks of anti-vaxxers, demonstrated the limits of technocracy as European populations swung from faith in science, to faith in public consensus. The Covid-19 pandemic added a new layer to the discussion of technocratic, expert-driven public policy decisions, as local lockdowns and the closing of many sectors of national economies and social life was followed by de-politicisation and heavy reliance on expertise. Yet this came at a price.

LEGITIMISATION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: THE POLITICAL AND A-/ANTI-POLITICAL

In such new and extraordinary circumstances, the analytical context of this special issue is even more relevant. The rise of populist movements in the 2010s exposed the limits of

the legitimisation of EUropean integration. Since its inception after the Second World War, integration was based on 'permissive consensus' among Western European democratic elites and relied on distinctly undemocratic, technocratic forms of governance, where legitimisation was based on assumed aggregate support among member state populations (Habermas 2015) and an emphasis on input/output legitimacy of EU decision-making as justification for EU-level policymaking. Notwithstanding questions of 'throughput' legitimacy (Schmidt 2010) and whether the EU should be democratically accountable to the people (Majone 1998), this mantra is continually deployed as evidence of the EU's democratic deficit. The urgency of 'politics of necessity', following the Global Financial Crisis and austerity politics and the EU's (and member states') responses to national and transnational problems, including (but not limited to) the 'migration crisis', only strengthened the discussions of this ostensible deficit. Populist movements challenge the technocratic model by presenting it as the rule of unelected administrators ignoring the will of 'the people' in order to promote the interests of a transnational 'elite', and in a fraught domestic and European climate characterised by the 'Age of Anger' (Mishra 2017) such arguments enjoy widespread popularity. As a result, EU politics are caught between the two poles of populism and technocracy, with few solutions on the horizon.

There are numerous ways in which populism and technocracy are defined, and this special issue does not aim to provide new definitions. It is more concerned with studying the relation between them and to expose the conceptual limits of both terms in the context of EUropean integration. In general, populism is conceptualised in several ways: as 'a thin-centred ideology' in which society is separated into two homogeneous and mutually antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' (Wodak 2015; Müller 2016; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2015: 18; Hawkins and Kaltwasser 2017); discourse (Lacalu 2005; Aslanidis 2016), political style of communication (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Moffitt 2017); political strategy (Weyland, 2021; Rueda, 2021; Barr 2018); and eventually as the form of contestation of liberal democracy (Stanley 2017; Albertazzi and McDonnel 2007). Technocracy is most commonly defined as a specific form of governance drawing on bureaucratic and technical expertise in political, social and economic areas (Stie 2012; Radaelli 2017; Kuus 2014). Expertise is, therefore, the basis for a legitimate governing, where 'decisions should be guided by an informed understanding of the most efficient means to achieve determined goals' (White 2020: 107). As a form of governance technocracy is preoccupied with 'depoliticisation, harmonisation, rationalisation and objectification of policymaking and evaluation, and which promotes the role of technical experts in policy-making' (Kurki 2011: 216). It is perceived as bringing objective solutions to social problems, hence the legitimisation of technocrats and their self-image is based on political objectivity. Finally, technocrats are seen as those who 'transform discourses of expert knowledge into discourses of social policy … They are makers of politics' (McKenna and Graham 2000: 225).

The underlying puzzle for this special issue was a problem that emerges in many discussions of populism versus technocracy. Both populists and technocrats show similarities when saying that they offer exclusively legitimate solutions. Populists claim to represent the interests of 'the people', while technocrats claim to be implementing an objectively correct set of procedures. Both sides offer radically different approaches to address political, economic, and social issues, and both exclude pluralist solutions. Hence, both are in a way a-/anti-political, where 'the political' is assumed to be based on a respectful confrontation of opposing political, economic and social visions (Mouffe 2000; Laclau 2005). Both are 'essentially anti-political visions of collective decision-making, postulating a unitary, general, common interest of a given society (a country)' (Caramani 2017: 60).

This reveals two points, which address a major *desideratum* in contemporary European Studies. First, populists reject consensus-based decision-making and cultivate a polarisation of political life. By claiming to be the *vox populi*, they delegitimise technocratic

or centrist opponents as 'rootless cosmopolitans' at best, or 'traitors' at worst, and place them outside *their* legitimate area of 'the political'. Second, technocrats claim an exclusive access to the complexity of political, economic and social life, and encourage solutions negotiated through unelected experts. In this way, meticulous consensus is achieved, but it is mostly unavailable or unintelligible to a public who may lack the time, resources and training to scrutinise such negotiations, and who fear a 'creeping extension' of the EU into everyday lives already saturated with anxieties and frustrations over economic decline or stagnation, a sense of abandonment by political elites, and concerns over cultural change.

In both cases populists and technocrats claim to know best and delegitimise the other, based on their self-declared legitimacy as *vox populi* or specialists. As Caramani (2017: 54) emphasises, the main conceptual differences between populism and technocracy is that populism stresses 'the centrality of a putative will of the people in guiding political action', whilst technocracy stresses 'the centrality of rational speculation in identifying both the goals of a society and the means to implement them'.

Populists strongly rely on sharp political polarisation, and their ability to communicate seductive and simplified messages by appealing to emotion and by using social media (Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Strömbäck et al. 2017). They employ digital techniques and appeal to emotions to target message receivers, hence their focus is on 'emphasis framing' (Druckman 2001). In contrast, technocrats rely on complex messages which claim a monopoly on expertise, but which are unavailable, unintelligible or simply unappealing to member states' voting populations (Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley 2017). However, expertise is not a thing that one innately *has*, but something that one uses or performs (Kuus 2014: 3). Hence, expertise is a form of social relation, which gains its legitimacy only when it is accepted by non-expert actors as a form of knowledge production. The legitimacy of technocratic expertise is thus being eroded by populists who delegitimise technocrats (Leconte 2010). Paradoxically, this has recently led to technocrats invoking morality and ethics in defence of their policies, while populists enhance their affective and emotional rhetoric with the ostensibly objective, neutral knowledge afforded by small business 'common sense' economics (Müller 2016). Thus, both populists and technocrats exclude opponents as incompetent and/or illegitimate, and borrow from each other's repertoires of objective and subjective language, with an unequal outcome. Despite this similarity, though, populists enjoy a strategic advantage. In the 'age of anger' across Europe (Mishra 2017), right-wing populist movements can communicate their affective messages (Thomson and Hoggett 2012) with far greater impact than technocrats (Bartlett 2018).

RATIONALE AND STRUCTURE OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The exact nature of the relationship between populism and technocracy has garnered growing attention in academic studies, but with limited consensus. Most existing research has focused on how they differ and conclude that they are primarily opposed to each other. Within that, populism is understood as 'politics without policy' and technocracy understood as 'policy without politics' (Schmidt 2006: 9). However, as Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2015: 186) argue, there is also an important element of complementarity between them which says that both populism and technocracy are forms of critique of party democracy itself.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the contributions of this special issue attempt to develop empirical and conceptual understandings of the relationship between populism and technocracy. In doing so, readers will find multi-methodological and multidisciplinary perspectives on these relationships, as the contributions to this special issue come from political science, sociology, international relations, history and political economy. As such, this special issue tackles the relationship between populism and technocracy in different

ways applicable to different contexts. The major aim is to investigate various relations between 'populist' and 'technocratic' systems of knowledge production and their legitimisation within EUropean politics. In what follows, we briefly introduce the contributions to the issue and outline how they relate to the goal of the special issue and to each other. There are different kinds of contributions to this special issue: context-building commentaries, research papers, and articles which offer normative visions of different ways to legitimise EU governance. This mix offers readers various perspectives through different styles of academic expressions. Each of the articles collected here brings us a step further down the path to grasping the intricacies of the populism versus technocracy debate. On their own, each is necessarily insufficient and cannot possibly clarify the issue in its complexity. Considered together, however, the contributions in this special issue substantially advance our understanding of the multi-level discussion of populism versus technocracy. Through their unity in diversity, these contributions shed light on the multidisciplinary and multifaceted challenges, and opportunities, facing EUrope.

The first section consists of commentaries to establish a broader context. William Outhwaite explores the relationship between technocratic governance and geopolitical policymaking at the supranational and intergovernmental levels. In this way, the concept of the limits of EUrope immediately engenders geopolitical and territorial imaginations. In his commentary of EU institutions' and member states' approaches to integration efforts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Outhwaite reveals the paradox at the heart of EU territorial governance in the tension between an expansionist (in geographical and institutional terms) EU and hesitant member states wary of long-term EU efforts which cannot be instrumentalised by short-term politicians in national capitals, who are eager to maintain the EU as a potential scapegoat. In doing so, Outhwaite argues that the 'sovereignty games' which dominate European media are only a veneer over much deeper tensions between expansion and hesitation, and that the very drive to expand the EU may actually be counterproductive at national and local levels.

Gerard Delanty comments on the possible return of the nation-state in the context of de-Europeanisation. His piece highlights an important limit of neo-nationalism, namely how the nation state no longer exists in its original meaning as a historical entity. The resurgence of nationalism today is, in fact, partly an exemplification of the demise of the nation state. This happens now in the specific guise of neo-nationalism. Delanty concludes that the new nationalist forces do not have a capacity to bring about an end to post-national developments as they lack a capacity for major systemic transformation.

Russell Foster and Matthew Feldman comment on how structural and spontaneous disgruntlement with the political *status quo* in post-Brexit Britain has seen a blurring and shifting of the traditional appeals and affiliations of technocrats and populists. Five years of Brexit debates and the reduction of parliamentary procedure into a toxic and sacralised polarisation between Leave and Remain, has not been ended by, but indeed continued and exacerbated by Covid-19 countermeasures. The political and social pandemonium of the UK, once one of the most internally stable members of the EU, has seen former populists embracing medical and economic technocracy while former technocrats adopt populist appeals to nebulous and emotional tropes. The authors caution that in this reversal of roles and in a UK increasingly defined by social mistrust and political disillusionment, populism and the radical right thrive.

Following the commentaries, research papers examine manifold aspects of the technocrat-populist narrative. Agnieszka Cinaciara addresses the differentiation/legitimation nexus in the EU, empirically examining the national production of legitimating and de-legitimating narratives of differentiated integration (DI) and differentiated disintegration (DDI). Cianciara adopts a sociological approach and highlights (de-)legitimation practices, strategically pursued by purposeful political actors making justification and contestation

claims. Drawing on three case studies (France, the UK and Poland) and the structuralist interpretation of the Narrative Policy Framework, Cinaciara finds that DI was more likely to be legitimated with a technocratic narrative, whereas DDI was more likely to be legitimated with a populist narrative. Conversely, de-legitimation of DI is more likely to be pursued by means of a populist narrative, whereas de-legitimation of DDI by means of a technocratic narrative.

In contrast to dichotomous narratives of populism *versus* technocracy in which the two are assumed to be antithetical to one another, Benjamin Farrand and Helena Carrapico present an argument that the two styles are not merely capable of coexistence, they are coterminous. In contrast to an assumed binary in which populists weaponise *pathos* while technocrats exploit *logos*, the authors argue that both approaches are mingled in EU and MS responses to political challenges. This is argued through case studies of three challenges to the EU – Grexit, Brexit, and emergent Polish and Hungarian dissatisfaction – which display convergent themes of *pathos* and *logos* on both sides. This, the authors argue, necessitates a fundamental reimagination not only of the strategies of populists and technocrats, but of their very *ontos*.

Monika Brusenbauch Meislová investigates the main populist and technocratic narratives employed in the campaign in the run-up to the British EU referendum. Adopting the general orientation of the Discourse Historical Approach in Critical Discourse Analysis, she discusses how the language of the Remain and Leave camps bore signs of both populist and technocratic discourses. The key argument developed here is that while, at the most general level, the populist rhetoric was discursively appropriated by the Leave campaign and the technocratic rhetoric by the Remain campaign, the Remain side displayed a lower degree of narrative consistency. More specifically, unlike the Leave rhetoric which suggests a relatively consistent character of its discursive identity towards the EU in terms of presence of populist narratives and non-existence of technocratic ones, the Remain campaign's communicative behaviour took on features of both technocratic and populist discourses, thus being more ambiguous and, arguably, less clear.

Roberto Baldoli and Claudio Radaelli approach the relation between populism and technocracy from a different perspective. Their paper contends that in the real-life world of EU policymaking processes, precaution and innovation – the two foundations of regulatory choice – are pitched one against the other. Instead of seeing the two foundations as opposite, the authors explore their dyadic relationship and show that a conversation between the two is possible via their original reformulation. The reconciliation of precaution and innovation, they argue, needs a social foundation of regulatory choice. Hence, Baldoli and Radaelli propose nonviolence as a foundational framework. In their view, nonviolence can assist the EU and its citizens to endorse innovation that is socially responsible, future-proof and accountable, and enhance precaution as internalised commitment of decision-makers as well as scientific and social communities.

Emmy Eklundh picks up often overlooked left wing resistance to a deepening of the European project. This article analyses how left wing populist parties are in many ways rearticulating a particular 'European' way of life, which is not directly at odds with how European democracy in the EU works. In Eklundh's view, left wing populist are sceptical of the EU, but they are less sceptical of what it means to be European. As a result, they are promoting popular sovereignty to strengthen democracy. At the same time, many left wing populists emphasise national sovereignty in defence of a national working class, challenging conventional understandings of what is meant by populism and technocracy.

Hartmut Behr argues that it is the tragedy of EU politics being trapped in technocratic governance, that lies at the heart of attempts to understand contemporary approaches to European (dis-)integration and identity. Behr argues that any distortion of the balance between the three elements of the democratic triangle (will of the people, political morality and prudent political governance) is preceded by the distortion of one of the other

elements. Consequently, the populist challenge that currently threatens the EU and questions its legitimacy appears as a result of, and reaction against, a preceding imbalance, namely through technocratic hypostatisation as fundamentally and ambivalently entrenched in the fate of the EU. In Behr's view, the most important requirement for achieving democratic politics and fighting populism is the art of actively balancing all three elements so that they remain, whatever the political challenges and threats, co-constituting.

The radical right's rise is a consistent theme across Europe, and as Franco Zappettini and Marzia Maccaferri argue, Italy represents an alarming flashpoint for not only the rise of the hard right, but the limits of Europe itself. The authors analyse Italy's populist left and populist right to demonstrate how two fundamentally opposed groups utilise similar strategies which are neither populist nor technocratic, but both simultaneously. At the same time, the authors illustrate the ability of the two parties to delegitimise the current EU in the eyes of the Italian voters, and how this elevates Euroscepticism into the terminal limits of Europe, in what is arguably, post-Brexit, the EU's most disgruntled member.

Marta Jaroszewicz and Jan Grzymski analyse the populism-technocracy paradox with reference to migration from Ukraine to Poland. In this case, there is not much connection between the reactions of the public and the technocratic conduct of the securitisation of Ukrainian migration. This contrasts with most existing research of securitisation of migration in Europe, which documented the public's positive response to securitisation with populist 'speech acts' related to migration. Jaroszewicz and Grzymski's paper adds empirical evidence that securitisation can take place within routine technocratic practices and without populist legitimisation of political speech acts. This means that securitising and othering migration is not always driving populism and there might not be an inevitable link between technocracy and populism within the securitisation of migration.

Spasimir Domaradzki and Ivana Radić Milosavljević explore the technocratic and populist narratives in Bulgaria and Serbia, which were exploited by the national executives in their interactions with the EU and with their domestic public. They take the case of the rule of law conditionality. Bulgaria, being the EU member, is still subject to the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism. Serbia is in the process of accession negotiations and, hence, it is subject to the European Commission's progress reports. Domaradzki and Radić Milosavljević analyse the political leadership of both countries' leaders, Aleksander Vucic and Boyko Borisov, in dealing with the Europeanisation processes and how they communicate it to their publics. They demonstrate what they term 'strategic defensive populist and technocratic techniques' to mitigate the impact of EU rule of law pressure, and to secure the persistence of the existing rule of law shortcomings within the process of European integration.

Our penultimate paper ends on an optimistic note by examining how citizens and science can work not as separate entities, but together. Baptiste Bedessem, Bogna Gawrońska-Nowak and Piotr Lis analyse the relationship between citizen participation in scientific research and public trust in research results within the social sciences. They place this in the context of a decline in trust in governance in the EU. Their case, based on online citizen science quasi-experiments concerning the delineation of metropolitan areas of Poland's two major cities, questions what source(s) of knowledge and information are more trusted within an atmosphere of social polarisation. They conclude that citizen-science is an opportunity to overcome polarisation. It allows the 'democratisation' of science and gives the general population chances to explore the rigorous and methodological reasoning of scientists. This might, overall, lead to increasing public trust in evidence-based knowledge and policies.

The special issue ends by coming full circle, returning to the author with whom we begin. Stefan Gänzle offers a review of William Outhwaite's *Transregional Europe* (Emerald, 2020), examining the interplay between regional policymaking and the deployment of

discourses to argue that perceptions and policies are not separate, but an ongoing dialogue which is crucial to answering and re-answering one of the most fundamental questions pertaining to the limits of EUrope – do Europeans *feel* European?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The near future will inevitably bring new challenges to EUropean politics, and the populism-technocracy dichotomy is likely to be pivotal. Both left and right wing Eurosceptics, and the established left and right more broadly, will challenge technocratic governance in EUrope. Across the continent the established left are in perhaps terminal decline in policymaking influence and net popularity, as demonstrated by the recent failures of Syriza, Podemos, Jeremy Corbyn's (and Keir Starmer's) Labour Party, and the evisceration of traditional centre-left socialist parties in 2017-2019 national elections in EU member states. But arguably post-pandemic economic and social crises are likely to elevate the left, and if not the old left, then perhaps a new variety. At the same time, right-wing Eurosceptic movements have been steadily gaining substantial power and support (Wodak 2015) with the ability to significantly influence government or even form governments, as witnessed by the ongoing and strengthening influence of Fidesz in Hungary, PiS in Poland, the Conservatives in the UK, the Austrian Peoples' Party, Italy's Lega, the Swedish Democrats, the growth of transnational Identitarian and ethnopolitical movements and various domestic right wing, radical right and far right movements in member states. Their public support will also increase, following the 'politics of necessity' during the Covid-19 pandemic and continuing appeal to 'promises of agency' in many EUropean societies. The future of EUrope appears to belong to populists of various positions. Assuming that politics can function in a Newtonian manner, in which every action has an equal and opposite reaction, perhaps it is precocious to proclaim the end of technocracy. The Covid-19 pandemic illustrated that there is still a crucial role for technocratic expertise, and perhaps, as witnessed by the United States, populations weary of populist pomp and bluster can seek more sober solutions to their problems.

One immediate consequence is that, from 2021 onwards, EUropean politics will be dominated by a struggle between technocracy and specifically right-wing populism among older and newer member states in many traditionally political areas, from electoral and constitutional politics to policies on social issues ranging from immigration, to state education, to women's and LGBTQ+ rights. This coincides with another imminent, more general, clash between established science and alternative self-declared science in the name of 'people' in areas such as climate change or public vaccination. This brings many urgent issue for the future of EUropean politics, like which model(s) of democratic communication should be pursued in the near future: continuing technocratic forms of governance, advocating even more deliberative practices regardless of limited appeal in the context of the recent rise of right-wing populism, or working towards agonistic pluralism models? And how can the EU's decision-making processes be rendered publicly accountable and legible to EUropean publics? This special issue aims at contributing to these fundamental questions.

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and inhuman patience in managing this project, and great thanks to the staff of JCER and UACES for not only setting this special issue, but commissioning it in the first place.

Finally, and a little self-indulgently, thanks from the three guest editors to each other. We have not met in person since Lisbon in 2019 but despite the lockdown, we have made a good 'quaranteam'. If, in the face of Brexit and Covid, three Europeans in three different nations can support each other and work together to reach a common goal, perhaps there is hope for Europe.

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Commentary

Technocratic Planning and Political Strategies: Territorial Policy in the EU

William Outhwaite

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Abstract

This commentary examines the EU's halting development of territorial policy, most recently in macro-regional planning, and the responses of member states' local and national governmental elites. Whether populist or not in their overall programmes, these elites have tended to resist EU initiatives in the name of a perceived national interest or to instrumentalise them in order to maximise their domestic political pay-off. These 'sovereignty games' (Adler-Nissen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008) have been a constant feature of the European integration process, but transnational territorial initiatives, involving a flexible mix of European and sub-regional bodies as well as national states (both members and non-members of the EU) tend to raise the stakes in these games.

Keywords

Macro-regions; Territorial Policy; Sovereignty; Cohesion

This commentary, drawing on more detailed analysis (Outhwaite 2020), examines the European Union's (EU) halting development of territorial policy (broadly conceived to include cohesion policy, cross-border cooperation and transport policy), most recently in macro-regional planning and the responses of member states' political elites. The themes of technocracy and populism which frame this special issue serve as a convenient way of posing the dilemmas which arise. The term 'technocratic' is used descriptively to refer to planning processes which may or may not involve representatives of civil society but are primarily conducted by European and national civil servants in conjunction with expert advisors. The highly contested term 'populism' (see Adam and Tomšič 2019) is also used in a broad sense to refer to a political style found in many systems and parties which might not normally be called populist, for example the British Conservatives or the Austrian ÖVP as distinct from the extreme right FPÖ.

Three current crises (Brexit, the rejection of 'truth' and climate change) have sharpened our awareness of this conflict between technocracy and populism. The Brexit debate was dominated by a wilful rejection of the available evidence and expertise. The Trump presidency was driven by a similar construction of an alternative reality, beginning with the rewriting of the inauguration narrative and the rejection of the evidence of catastrophic climate change and the threat posed by Covid-19. The pandemic abruptly shifted the balance in favour of respect for expertise and a remarkable public acquiescence in restrictions resulting from technocratic policymaking (see Delanty 2021). The tension however remains acute. As Hans Kundnani (2020) recently suggested, 'there is a symbiotic relationship between technocracy and populism', in which a backlash against 'depoliticized forms of decisionmaking' leads to 'the further expansion of technocratic governance as elites seek to insulate decision-making from politicians who are perceived as irresponsible or irrational'. As Kundnani (2020) notes, 'In Europe, there is a particularly acute version of this symbiosis – not least because of the EU, which is perhaps the ultimate experiment in technocratic governance'. Against the background of these controversies, this commentary addresses a topic in an area of European policymaking which might seem less contentious but which for a long time has raised important issues of the relation between levels and structures in European multi-level governance.

In the variable geometry of what has become the EU, the principal tension has always been between Europeanising initiatives and a resistance normally located at the level of the political authorities of the member states (Outhwaite 2021). Where national actors (usually heads of state or government) have supported such initiatives, we tend to look for underlying explanations in terms of perceived national interest, the domestic pay-off of being seen to lead a European programme or commitments entered into more or less inadvertently. 'Brussels' is characteristically blamed for anything unpopular by national politicians who take the credit for anything that looks good. They can however point out that they are mostly elected and that the European Commission is structurally biased in favour of European solutions where national or regional ones might be more appropriate. These 'sovereignty games' (Adler-Nissen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008) have been a constant feature of the European integration process, but transnational territorial initiatives, involving a flexible mix of European and sub-regional bodies as well as national states (both members and non-members of the EU) tend to raise the stakes in these games.

Populism comes in many varieties, and in a diffuse sense pervades modern post-democracy. Whether or not a party or government is properly called populist, a simplistic 'them and us' approach to EU political issues is a structural feature of most member states. In post-communist member states, there is the further twist of an understandable resentment at the EU's assumption of a 'civilising mission' in the region (for example Follis 2012: 202). The current fetishisation of national sovereignty by anti-European governments and parties is the tip of a much larger iceberg. Largely unrepresented in these conflicts between European planners (who are also nationals of member states) and

national and local political elites are the interests and concerns of local victims of top-down planning (whether European or national). Well-meant programmes may be counter-productive in their local impact. Transregional planning is therefore a good example of the tensions between technocracy and populism in the ongoing European integration process.

Michael Zürn (2018: 90) lists 'technocratic bias' as one of the mechanisms which undermine the legitimacy of global authorities, leading to contestation which may result in institutional adjustment or alternatively in gridlock.[i] However, it is also worth noting that the *antithesis* between technocracy and populism also allows for their *combination* in a 'technocratic populism' which invokes technocratic competence in its critique of established political elites, as for example in the Czech ANO before it came to power (Havlík 2019). There may be a similar fusion in Western Europe in a more long-standing resistance to European-level schemes, stressing local knowledge as well as national sovereignty and custom in opposition to 'ivory-tower' proposals dreamed up in Brussels.

Christopher Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti (2017) argue moreover that both populism and technocracy share a hostility to procedural legitimacy and mediation, in the sense of intermediary institutions between state and individual. Both are embodied in party democracy, which is where, they suggest, one should look for the twin pathologies of populism and technocracy. Their argument is framed in relation to the politics of national states, but it may well apply also to the European level. Here, although *party* democracy is much weaker, the main potential obstacles to technocratic initiatives by the Commission are the member states and, to a lesser extent, the regional states in devolved or federal member states, and MEPs and lobbying groups operating as often as not on a national basis.

TERRITORIAL PLANNING

In the early years of the Communities, this was firmly off limits and a national prerogative for the states which engaged in it. Territorial planning (*aménagement du territoire*) is sometimes presented as uniquely French, though it is also practised in the Netherlands and Sweden and was foreshadowed by interwar attempts by the Soviet Union and Italy to mitigate uneven development (in the east and south respectively) and even in Britain, in response to early deindustrialisation. A report produced for the Commission in 1997 by a United Kingdom (UK) group of authors noted the diversity of terminology and practice in this area:

> it should be understood that spatial planning when used in the EU sense does not mean precisely '*aménagement du territoire'*, town and country planning, *Raumordnung, ruimtelijke ordening*, or any of a number of other terms used by Member States and regions to describe the particular arrangements for manging spatial development which apply in their territories. … Therefore, the term 'spatial planning' has been adopted by the European Commission. This is a neutral generic term. (European Commission 1997: 23)

In France, the idea of balanced development was continued in the French and later European concept of 'cohesion', which neatly captures the interplay between territorial and socio-economic relations and the implication of forms of solidarity and mutual interdependence in an imagined community. In the EU case, the formal introduction of the concept was foreshadowed from the beginning in the subterranean social policy implications of the Coal and Steel Community and, more substantially, the Common Agricultural Policy for citizens employed in or dependent on those sectors. The French planning tradition can be traced back as far as Louis XIV's minister Colbert. Its predominant emphasis on central control, criticised as Jacobin by regional activists (Pierret

1997) was mitigated in the 1960s with a decentralising emphasis on regional centres (*métropoles d'équilibre*), with the idea of balanced development continued in the SCoT (*Schéma de cohérence territoriale*) of 2000. Territorial power was a focus of Michel Foucault's work, which has inspired a good deal of writing on Europe mainly shaped around Foucault's concept of governmentality (Foucault 1991). Even if his analysis is not always reliable (Elden 2013: 8-9), the basic idea of the link between power and territory, ruling and region, is important. It is most powerfully related to Europe by Jensen and Richardson (2004), who develop a notion of European planning as the pursuit of a 'monotopia' in which Europe is conceived as a whole and all internal obstacles are removed (see also Scott 1998; Richardson 2006). Given the 'four freedoms' (the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people), they focus in particular on the EU's encouragement of transport networks and infrastructure and on transnational or polycentric development plans, especially in border regions. Even with the EU as a framework, there are internal differentiations between the eurozone and the rest; the Schengen area includes non-members and transnational initiatives may also include 'third countries' outside the Union (see Grzymski 2019).

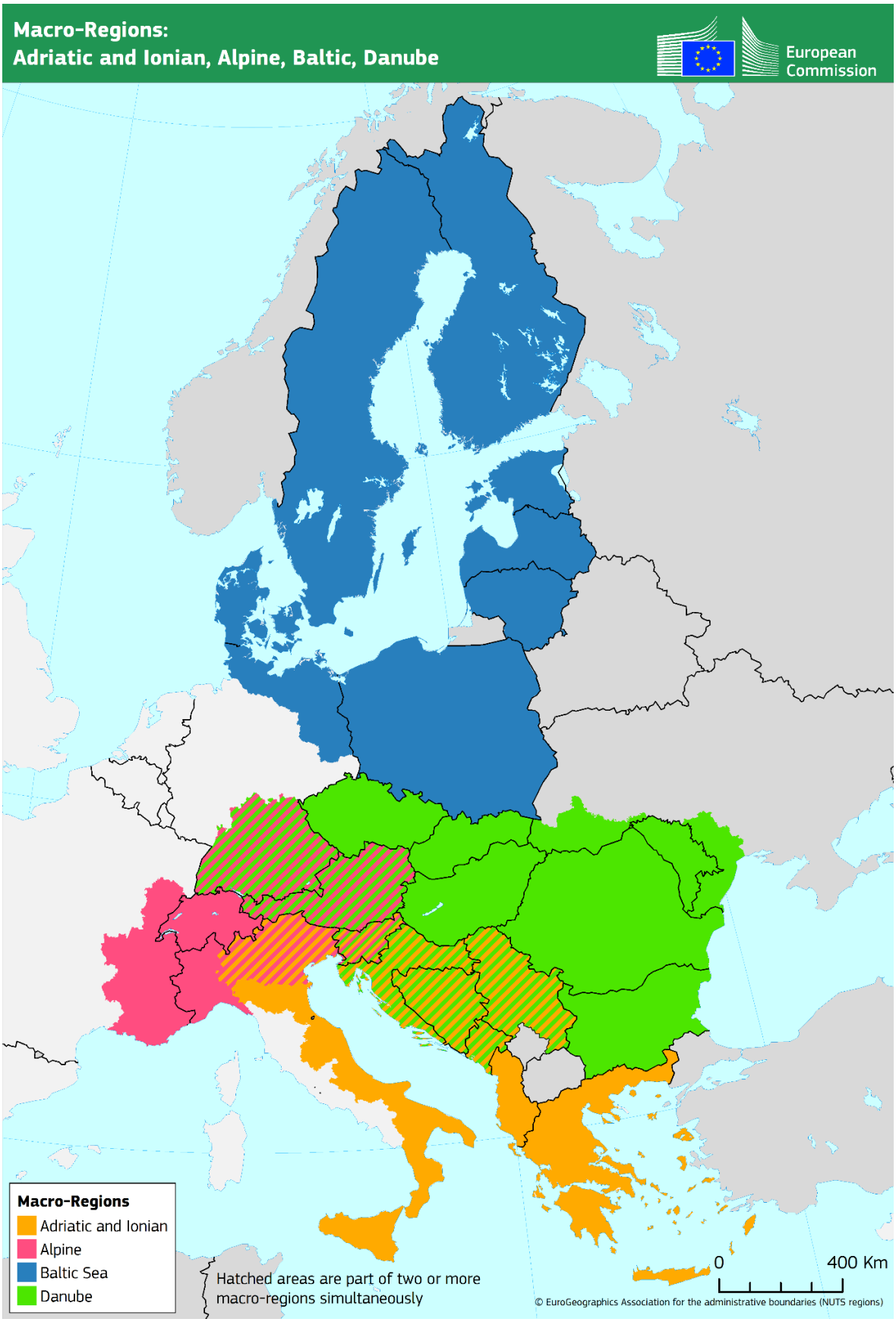
The transfer of a territorial planning approach from a national to a European scale is one dimension of EC/EU policy (Atkinson and Zimmermann 2018).[ii] The other is a more diffuse and bottom-up process of the formation of links between border regions such as the EUREGIOs, one of which developed into what came to be known as the Atlantic Arc of western maritime states (Wise 2016). The focus of this commentary is on the macro dimension, but initiatives at this level can draw on experiences on a smaller scale. Following on earlier initiatives such as the European Spatial Development Perspective (see Europa 1999), the *White Paper on European Governance* (2001) addressed the theme of multi-level governance and a 'scoping' document of 2005, updated in 2011, *Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union*, linked a territorial approach to a macro-regional focus:

> common regional features in European macro-regions – such as the Northern, the Central, the Eastern, the Alpine, the Mediterranean one – as well as in micro-regions – such as numerous cross-border ones – influence the territorial capital of a region. (European Commission 2011: 5)

In 2007 the *Territorial Agenda of the European Union* stressed cohesion (European Commission 2007: 9), and it was followed in 2008 by a *Green Paper on territorial cohesion.* This discussed the example of the Baltic Sea Region which remains much the most impressive of the EU's macro-regional initiatives (see Figure 1). Finally, the Commission's discussion paper *Macro-regional strategies in the European Union* (2009) marked the consecration of the term, while qualifying this approach with what it called 'Three No's': no new funds, legislation or institutions.

Macroregional planning in an explicit form has emerged, then, from the EU's earlier focus on subnational regions. As Sebastian Büttner (2012) has brilliantly demonstrated, the EU has developed a developmental programme shaped by global convergence on 'instrumental activism' and 'social mobilization' (Büttner 2012: 5) at the level of subnational regions (see also Piattoni 2016; European Commission 2020). As Büttner notes, however, the EU's achievements in this area have been modest, and a question must be raised about the transferability of this model, with the 'activism' which it imputes to regions and on which in part it relies, to macro-regional entities which will tend to be less integrated and self-aware.

Figure 1: EU Macro-regions (European Commission 2017a)



COHESION

In 1986 the EU had already taken up the concept of cohesion (important because it came with a threefold increase in structural funding to nearly a third of the EU budget) in a way which combined the equalisation of conditions across the EU with the looser idea of its cohesiveness as a territorial space. This was furthered by the removal of borders and improvements in transport. The Single European Act included a commitment to 'reducing disparities between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions'. From an EU point of view, with its cohesion agenda, there is no difference in principle between a subnational region and a transnational macro-region, though the coordination of policy may be expected to be more problematic in the latter case, and not just for reasons of size. The EU deliberately runs together the subnational and transnational dimension, as in the Single European Act of 1986 and a 2008 Commission document (cited in Büttner 2012: 92) which referred both to 'large areas such as the Baltic Sea region and improving conditions along the Eastern external border … [as well as to] … promoting globally competitive and sustainable cities' and the problems of 'remote regions'. The cohesion narrative was later given a neoliberal twist by the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 in its stress on competitiveness. It can be argued that what Kristan Olesen (2014) calls the 'neoliberalisation of strategic spatial planning' has exacerbated the long-standing tension between the competitiveness and cohesion dimensions of EU policies (Rumford 2000).

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE EUROPEAN SPACE

The EU's territorial conceptions conflicted with a trend in human geography away from objectivist conceptions of 'Euclidean' or Newtonian space towards a stress on what Benno Werlen (2005) calls an 'action-centred' rather than 'space-centred' approach and a 'shift of focus … from regional analysis to … the analysis of everyday regionalizations' (see also Faludi 2018; Debarbieux 2018). In the case of the EU and its diverse agencies, the very idea of transnational planning confronted the entrenched suspicions of member states, often focussed on cartography (see Foster 2015). Even without baleful gaze of the UK, the broader issue remains. The conception of macro-regional planning inevitably clashes with the national priorities of member states, especially where border areas include substantial national minorities, as is often the case in central and eastern Europe (where it has bedevilled the Danube project).

Since 2010, despite doubts from regional geographers and others (see Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones and Minca 2013), the EU has engaged in what was described as a 'macro-regional fever' (Dühr 2011: 3; Dühr 2018; Dühr, Colomb and Nadin 2010). The Baltic initiative (2009) was followed by the Danube (2011), with the Adriatic-Ionian (2014) Alpine (2015) and the others gradually developing. The North Sea programme, now linking Denmark, Norway, western Sweden, northwest Germany and parts of Flanders and the Netherlands, located in an area destabilised by Brexit, is to remain as merely an INTERREG programme in 2021-8 (Danson 2017a; 2017b). The rather random nature of its 'contact points' indicates its marginal status: a Flemish enterprise agency, the Hamburg Senate, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency, the Western Norway regional government, the Western Gothland region and (until the departure of the UK) its Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Whereas Norway is well integrated into this and other programmes, a post-Brexit UK can only be expected to withdraw into isolation and decline. The Atlantic Arc mentioned earlier is also blighted by Brexit (though Wales and Cornwall remain members), leaving something of a vacuum on the Western flank of the Union. The Black Sea has a Cross-Border Cooperation programme which seems unlikely to go much further in the foreseeable future, though several of the participating states are also in the Danube programme, and the Eastern and (to a lesser extent) Western Mediterranean also confront familiar problems (Laruffa 2019).

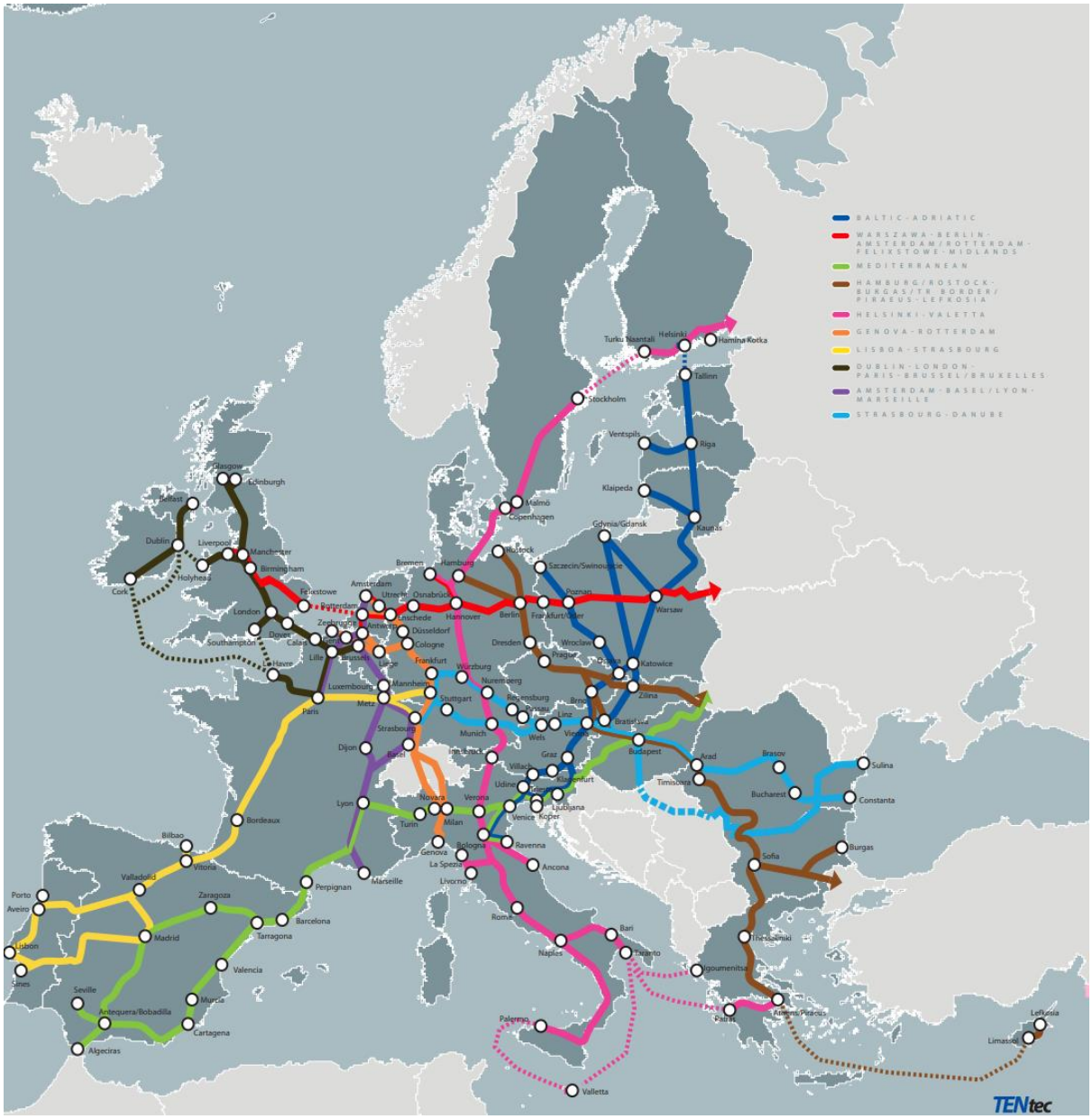
A 2017 DG REGIO document noted that although the EU's macro-regional strategies have so far been mostly on its eastern borders, and 'from a "soft security" perspective and pre-accession support perspective, this is where they will likely bring the greatest added value … There are also large shared ecosystems in other parts of Europe … e.g. the Rhine corridor' (European Commission 2017b: 156). These various initiatives have been described ambitiously, as they were in a European Commission (2013: 5) report, as 'regional building blocks for EU-wide policy, marshalling national approaches into more coherent EU-level implementation'.

Environmental issues such as pollution and river management have formed a major focus of many of these emergent programmes. There is also however an idea in the background that geographical proximity or common challenges will necessarily form a basis for intensified political cooperation. It is this element of geographical determinism which inspires doubts. Being on opposite sides of a river or a maritime fishing ground may encourage cooperation, or it may be a focus of competition and opposition as in the Danube dam projects. The EU's contribution to the development of rail links across Europe has been substantial, with €30 billion allocated to rail in central and eastern Europe in the 2014-20 funding period and 2021 announced as the European Year of Rail in the context of the European Green Deal. This was an obvious area for European-level intervention, with incompatible infrastructure and trains impeding interstate travel (Badenoch and Fickers 2010). For equally obvious reasons, plans were conceived in macro-regional terms: TEN-T 'corridors' linking major cities across the subcontinent (see Figure 2).

In the related area of tourism, however, progress has been slower than one might have hoped. The Council of Europe's (2017) trans-European cultural travel routes programme 'Routes4U', based on the EU's four macro-regional areas and to which the EU has also contributed, is an impressive small-scale initiative. It could however have been expected that an activity contributing much more to Europe in value terms than agriculture would have received more attention, for example representation by a Commissioner.

Macro-regional planning, as we saw earlier, is perhaps the most explicit challenge to member states' conceptions of their sovereignty, since it lumps them together with other states under European leadership and also often valorises the status of subnational regional bodies and others. In the Baltic region, for example, tourism is coordinated not by a national member state but by the state government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. This combination of national, subnational and supranational institutions creates patterns of regular interaction in multi-level governance which amount to quasi-institutions, despite the official requirement that macro-regions should not involve new institutions and their associated costs (Gänzle 2017: 411). The 'three no's' were one expression of this anxiety. The Baltic region states were relatively cooperative, but the more authoritarian and nationalistic regimes in the Danube area have been less willing to compromise, and this has been a major contributor to the sluggish progress of the region. Hungary, in particular, was very supportive of the Danube Strategy in its early stages when it held the EU presidency in 2011, but has since withdrawn its support under Orbán's increasingly ultra-conservative and authoritarian regime. Attila Ágh (2016), who conducted a four-year project on the EUSDR, is particularly pessimistic about what had been achieved. Franziska Sielker (2017) is less negative, while also stressing the need for support from stakeholders. In the Mediterranean there seems little prospect of macro-regional initiatives, always somewhat unrealistic (Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones and Minca 2013) being extended.

Figure 2: Trans-European Transport Network TEN-T network (European Commission n.d.)



Finally, it is worth considering some of the downsides of European-level initiatives. In a critique of the Carpathian Euroregion on the Polish-Ukrainian border, for example, Chris Hann (1998) argued that it had increased antagonism towards the population on the Ukrainian side and that the existing informal bazaar was a much more effective link: 'All the Euroregion has really done is supply a further opportunity for the nationalists to whip up anti-Ukrainian sentiment, and to combine this with the ever-present powerful resentment felt towards a superfluous bureaucracy' (Hann 1998: 254-5). More than twenty years on, his critique still has some relevance to current initiatives. Karolina Follis, working in the same area from 2003, provides a somewhat more optimistic view of the interplay of externally imposed policies and local initiatives, while also arguing that 'The technocratic rebordering of the EU exists alongside the material and mental residues of old systems of rule and social organization, starkly visible in the discourse and practice of Polish-Ukrainian partnership' (Follis 2012: 173).

The other side of many of the infrastructural projects is the environmental damage caused by the continuing and expanding use of private cars, most still powered by petrol or diesel, and that caused by high-speed rail projects which largely benefit urban centres rather than the communities through which they pass. The EU, though more willing to listen to citizen initiatives and NGOs than most member state governments (at least those outside the Nordic region), has not been particularly receptive to local interests fearing the impact of large transport or dam projects.

The impact of EU accession and EU-inspired regional policy on peripheral regions has also been critically examined in a number of studies. Fischer-Tahir and Neumann (2013) and Loewen (2018) put the situation in central and eastern Europe in a broader context of the differential effects of regionalisation on inequalities in developed and less developed states and regions. What has been called the "regional innovation paradox", (Oughton, Landabaso and Morgan 2002) suggests that the least well endowed and organised regions are also least effective at accessing EU resources. More broadly, Amanda Machin (2019: 209) has pointed to what she calls 'double depoliticisation' in the EU's discourse and practice of 'ecological modernisation' or 'sustainable development':

> political dissent is smoothed over by economic rationality; market competition and innovation replaces political regulation. Further, the discourse itself is reified as the only feasible strategy, a matter of "common sense" and therefore one that is "outside" or "beyond" politics. Not only is politics taken out of the discourse, but the discourse is taken out of politics. (Machin 2019: 209)

Her analysis has clearly a much wider application across the whole spread of macro-regional planning (in which of course ecological issues play a large part). Follis (2012: 195) argues similarly that what James Ferguson (1990) called the 'anti-politics machine' of 'development' could also be said of 'rebordering'. Machin (2019: 227) concludes:

> Might it be possible to open up policy-making to a more "agonistic" contestation between alternative and conflicting discourses and strategies? Any real shift to sustainability surely must be a result of political decisions that do not, and cannot, satisfy everyone and everything; stricter and more explicit regulation and a brake on capitalist expansion may well be both ultimately requisite and hotly contested.

The symbolic character of much EU planning has long been noted. As James Wesley Scott (2002b: 140; see also Scott 2002a) wrote:

> Spatial planning and regional development concepts that have emerged since 1990 from EU agencies as well as ministries of member states emphasize spatial metaphors such as networks, regions, nodes, links, gateways etc., that create a sense of strategically interlinking communities. Since 1990, European spatial policies have also been conspicuously cartographic in nature. Evocative maps of co-operative regions such as the Atlantic Arc and Alpine, Danubian, and Baltic areas, and transportation networks linking the continent have emerged as central elements in the definition of an integrating European economic and political space … Together with more global paradigms of environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness, visionary maps and metaphors attempt to make the European integration and enlargement process more intelligible to citizens and local communities.

Despite this, there remains a dissociation between what Vivien Schmidt (2008: 303) has called 'coordinative discourse among policy actors' and 'communicative discourse between political actors and the public'. Another important dimension of this is the emergence in

post-communist countries of what Kovách and Kučerova (2006) aptly termed a 'project class' of well-educated young semi-professionals equipped to apply for and manage externally funded projects. *Transnational* projects, one may assume, are particularly dependent on people with linguistic and other skills.

CONCLUSION

The tension between technocratic planning and both democratic and post- or anti-democratic politics persists. The remedy is to be found in more democracy. Democratic participation has the potential both to curb the excesses of planners (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones 2013) and to outflank nativist populism, as the 'sardines' movement did in Italy in 2019-20. Another promising development is the growing appeal of deliberative democracy and citizens' assemblies in many European countries, regions and cities, as well as at the EU level. The theme of communication suggests a further reflection, paralleling the analysis by Bickerton and Accetti. Recent research in science and technology studies on interdisciplinary collaboration has stressed its affectual dimensions, for example in controversies over meetings between participants in drug studies and researchers (Hillersdal, Jespersen, Oxlund and Bruun 2020: 76-77) as well as among the researchers themselves; a concept of 'interdisciplinary expertise' involves these dimensions as well as others. In a transnational context of policymaking, the difficulties of interdisciplinary communication will tend to be compounded by differences between national research traditions, especially when experts are also representing their respective member states or regions. Andrew Barry (2012: 329-330) addressed this issue in terms of the concept of the 'political situation' as a complement to the concept in science and technology studies of the 'knowledge controversy':

> A controversy that is ostensibly about the environmental impact of the construction of a dam might well be taken by some participants in the controversy to be just one episode in the history of continuing conflict between the state and minority populations in the region. In turn, and conversely, a political situation – such as the conflict between an ethnic or religious minority and the state – is likely to contain multiple knowledge controversies.

Politics, then, is inescapably present in the policymaking arena even if it is occluded in the public presentation of policies.

The development of what could be called transnational expertise has been well studied by Keith Middlemas (1995), Didier Georgakakis (2012) and others, and the interplay between science and technology studies and transnational expertise may together usefully inform work on policy contexts such as the transregional example briefly discussed here. On the issue of legitimation which is one of the frames of this special issue, I suggest, in conclusion, that while projects of the kind I have discussed are an important potential source of support for the EU, in that they demonstrate the added value of a European approach, as well as delivering visible benefits in infrastructure and other areas, they also raise unresolved tensions over the legitimacy of European-level initiatives.

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ENDNOTES

[i] There is of course a genuine problem with the relation between expertise and democracy, see Turner (2003: 15).

[ii] On the concept of scale, see Moore (2008) and, in relation to macro-regional planning, see Piattoni (2016).

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Commentary

Return of the Nation-State? De-Europeanisation and the Limits of Neo-Nationalism

Gerard Delanty

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Abstract

This commentary analyses the view that the resurgence of nationalism will lead to the return of the nation-state and an accentuated de-Europeanisation. I argue against this position. While neo-nationalism has become a major force in Europe and elsewhere, I claim it does not have a capacity to restore the nation-state. I discuss what I take to be the key features of neo-nationalism, central to which is authoritarianism, and outline four arguments why this kind of nationalism ultimately lacks a real capacity to bring about major structural change. These are: (1) it is a form of nationalism without the nation; (2) it is unable to solve the basic problem of societal polarisation; (3) it avails of divisions within the left and the centre ground rather than having any strength of its own; and (4) the global movement of which it is an expression lacks a global imaginary. Neo-nationalism has brought about a significant shift in political discourse but stops short of a major systemic transformation of European integration.

Keywords

Alt-right; Brexit; European Union; Nationalism; Nation-states; Post-nationalism; Populism; Radical Right; Trump

This commentary asks whether the resurgent forces of neo-nationalism brought about a swing of the pendulum back to the nation-state in Europe and as a consequence we can speak of de-Europeanisation of Europe? My position is that while there are signs of de-Europeanisation, it is not due to neo-nationalism, which is as much a product as a cause of the concatenation of forces that have re-shaped the political landscape. Since 2016, as marked by the Brexit referendum and the Trump presidency, neo-nationalism has made a significant impact world-wide and is no longer a marginal force. European integration and the established political parties in almost all European countries have been to varying degrees reshaped by radical-right wing political parties and organisations supporting them.[1] There has been a pronounced assertion of the national interest. How should be these developments be assessed? Does the assertion of the national interest signal a return to the nation-state? Have the resurgent forces of neo-nationalism gained the upper hand in contemporary politics? This commentary attempts to answer these questions with the focus on Europe and the European integration project.

By neo-nationalism I mean in part what is more commonly referred to as 'populism' (Müller 2016; Mudde 2010; Brubaker 2017). Both intersect and are difficult to disentangle (for example Joppke 2021). However, populism is strictly speaking a different phenomenon while encompassing in part neo-nationalism, it has right- and left-wing orientations, as well as hybrid forms. Neo-nationalism is almost entirely right-wing and much of it is radical in that it seeks a major transformation of state and society. If populism is in essence defined by the invocation of 'the people', it does not capture the most virulent aspects of many radical nationalist movements today, which while invoking a nativist definition of the people have other features that are more specifically nationalist. Indeed, many radical right-wing movements, such as the Alt-right, are not necessarily populist. Rather they are radical revolutionary movements that do not speak in the name of the people but a specific notion of the national community, which is generally defined in opposition to migrants and to cultural pluralism. The term neo-nationalism includes radical right-wing populism, the wider context of the Alt-right, anti-migration parties and xenophobic movements, as well as the extreme or far right (see Bergmann 2020). An underlying feature of all these movements is cultural authoritarianism as well as degrees of political authoritarianism. Their self-understanding is nationalist, but a nationalism that entails an exclusionary conception of the national community, as opposed to an inclusive one. An additional feature is that they are strongly anti-European Union (EU). For this reason, I am excluding traditional nationalist movements seeking self-determination, as in Scotland and Catalonia, as these are not driven by the same forces and entail to a larger degree an inclusive conception of the nation.

Neo-nationalism is not an entirely new, but has novel features. Perhaps most striking is that it is has become a significant force since the 1980s and more recently has entered the mainstream, as opposed to being a marginal or protest movement. Examples range include Orban's Fidesz in Hungary, the DPP in Denmark, Vox in Spain, AfD in Germany. Outside the parliamentary context, there are far-right nationalist organisations, such as the medley of forces that led to the storming of the Capitol building in Washington on 6 January 2021. The rise of identity politics in the 1980s, first around progressive and left-oriented movements such as gender and ethnicity, produced a cultural and political backlash that led to the re-assertion of reactionary white and national identities which were defined in opposition to post-national trends. These movements produced a new self-interpretation of the national community that was different from the older traditional nationalist movements of the late nineteenth century. What is new about neo-nationalism is that it is a form of nationalism that is defined by its opposition to migration, cultural pluralism, internationalism, and its assertion of the national interest against globalisation.

Second, there is the question of de-Europeanisation and whether it has taken root for reasons other than the rise of neo-nationalism. A survey conducted in 2019 showed that a majority of Europeans believed that the EU will come to an end in ten years (Boffey 2019). The spectre of collapse has a certain allure, and there is a now a wide and

interesting critical literature on the topic of the collapse of complex systems (McAnany and Yoffee 2009). Although this cannot be dismissed, my question is rather will the pendulum swing back towards the nation-state. In this sense, de-Europeanisation is more a question of a major historical reversal and reorientation, rather than of collapse. A few general remarks are necessary concerning 'de-Europeanisation', which I argue is not quite the same as the collapse of the EU or the end of European integration.

Arguably the European project has stalled for reasons that have nothing to do with the rise of nationalist and Eurosceptical currents, which are as much the consequence as the cause of wider societal change. The current crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed a fundamental weakness of the EU, which has failed in a collective response. The banking crisis of 2007/8 and the related problems with the single currency reveal a fundamental flaw at the core of the EU (see Offe 2015). Brexit is also one of the indications of a crisis of European integration, but does not presage its demise. The fact that something stops does not mean it will end.

However, despite these and other examples that could be said to be signs of de-Europeanisation, there are alternative readings of the situation. If Europeanisation is seen as inexorably leading towards the demise of the nation-state, then anything could be a sign of de-Europeanisation. From a more pragmatic perspective, the European project has from the beginning been a multi-tiered and perhaps also a multi-speed project that does not require the abolition of the nation-state but its structural transformation. I am assuming the latter and that therefore, as with any process of integration, there will be degrees of re-balancing and re-structuring (see Fabbrini 2019). However, de-Europeanisation does not necessarily entail a return of the nation-state in the sense of a return to something that once existed. European nation-states have been irreversibly and systemically transformed by Europeanisation and by wider processes of globalisation (Delanty and Rumford 2005). Nationalism and globalisation are not necessarily contrary forces (Halikiopoulous and Vasilopoulous 2011). The crises of the present do not necessarily mean a return to the past. Nation-states continuously adjust to external forces and European integration is in part a product of such readjustment in the nature of statehood. The nation-state was the dominant political form in Europe since the beginning of the nineteenth century and has undergone several major transformations during the twentieth century. There is no one single form to the nation-state or the state (see Sørensen 2003). The EU may one day collapse for any number of reasons, but de-Europeanisation is more complicated.

Zielonka (2014) has identified three scenarios of de-Europeanisation: while the EU could collapse spectacularly, more likely is that either it could break down as an unintended consequence of misguided attempts to remedy its flaws or it could suffer from sustained benign neglect under the guise of 'muddling through'. In his view, the result would not be the end of European integration but a major transformation that might led to other forms of Europeanisation emerging. In this vein, Patberg (2020) has argued for a notion of disintegration as an alternative to integration but does necessarily entail a notion of collapse or dissolution but partial reversals and reorientations, as in the for example opt-outs and various exceptions or negotiations by various member states as well as by non-member states (see also Jones 2018). In this view, de-Europeanisation as a form of disintegration is not a matter of dissolution but a way of changing the constitutional order of the EU, which may not be going forward to ever greater union but is also not going backwards. Posing de-Europeanisation in this way, the question of disintegration can be viewed in more nuanced terms. The EU indeed may one day collapse for any number of reasons. But will it collapse or enter terminal decline as a result of the rise of neo-nationalism and its declared aim to reassert the nation-state over the transnational?

Based on these considerations, I offer an analysis of the capacity of neo-nationalism to bring about a return to the nation-state. My argument is that despite its considerable destructive power, the resurgent forces of neo-nationalism lack capacity to bring about

systemic change to an extent that European integration may collapse. There are four reasons why I think this to be the case: the separation between the nation and nationalism; the growth of societal polarisation; the absence of a shared national imaginary in neo-nationalist movements; and the inability of the alt-right to construct a truly transnational movement.

NATIONALISM WITHOUT THE NATION

The main point that needs to be made is that, unlike in the past, nationalism and the nation have parted company. While invoking the idea of the nation, neo-nationalism has in fact left the nation behind. There is therefore a fundamental contradiction at the core of neo-nationalism in appealing to nationalist sentiment, in that it has abandoned the idea of the nation as a collective endeavour. Without some sense of the nation as a shared space, it is difficult to see how the nation-state can be resurrected.

A trend that neo-nationalisms of all shades share is their disregard for the idea of the nation as a shared realm. In the formative period of nation-state building from middle of the nineteenth century to the post-1918 period, nation-states were forged in many cases out of thin, if not non-existent, common bonds through the appeal to a common purpose and shared history, of rebellion against an oppressor. Nationalism, whether the patriotism of the established state or the republican liberation movements seeking self-determination, succeeded only by creating the idea of a common public culture based on citizenship. Without this aspiration, the nation-state project would have floundered. This is not to neglect the fact that in many cases such programmes entailed forced integration, they were often based on concocted histories and despite the slow movement to democracy, nation-state building was, in reality, deeply undemocratic and often embroiled in overseas colonialism. It is of course also the case that such nation-building projects involved processes of othering, as has been widely discussed in the literature on nationalism. Nonetheless, the myth of the nation as a shared political community prevailed, at least as an aspiration. The result, at least in western Europe, was the constitutional welfare state that consolidated in the post-1945 period (Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Doleza et al. 2008; Kriesi, Grande, Dolezal, Helbling et al. 2012). This was predicated on the idea of a national people, which could be extended to include newcomers, so long as the numbers remained relatively low. Many projects of nation-building were based on immigration and compatible with nationalism. While nationalism has always had to make a distinction between 'us' and 'them', the 'other' was for the greater part other nations. The strong sense of a 'we' feeling, that gave rise to the comfortable illusion of a single people, was thus predicated on the Other as outside the national territory.

Western European societies today are very different from the formative period of nation-state building when inclusion effectively meant membership of the nation-state. Today the national community has fragmented and the economic and social foundations of the nation-state have been eroded as a result of the transformation of capitalism. Exclusion and inclusion are now entangled in each other. Mainstream political parties continued to exist based on the old assumptions being still valid but have suffered the consequences of social reality glaringly contradicting those assumptions. The new parties of the right have capitalised on this situation. From being initially protest parties on the fringe, they have now become part of the mainstream.

If the older nationalism assumed a link between the idea of the nation and a common public realm, the new nationalism has severed this sense of a collective interest that rested on the notion of the public as the nation. Instead of the idea of the nation, there is a shift towards the idea of the people, as reflected in general rise of right-wing populism. While the idea of the people is ambivalent in that it can be used for different purposes, it has

been claimed by the new nationalism to mean a certain notion of the nation that does not rest on a shared public domain or interest. The people are whatever its guardians proclaim it to mean; it is generally intended to signify a closed as opposed to an open view of the nation (see Weale 2018). While the older notion of the nation was linked to rights and duties, the appeal to the people is much more nebulous and can be made to serve all sorts of interests. It can also have a subversive potential, as in the notion of a left-wing populism (Badieu, Bourdieu, Butler, Didi-Huberman et al. 2016). However, the notion of the people has been mostly appropriated by the populist right. There is a basic contradiction in their ideology, which reflects the ambiguity of the idea of the people. As populist movements they need to speak for the nation, but they have a much narrower support basis. This contradiction can be resolved only by manipulation and obfuscation as to who the 'real people' are or through the strategies of what has been referred to as 'technopopulism' (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2021). While the old nationalisms generally found the enemy outside the nation, as often mentioned in the literature on radical right-wing populism, the new populist nationalisms define the people in opposition to elites or the so-called establishment (see Mudde 2010). This becomes a problem when the populists succeed in becoming the elected government, as there is a limit to the extent to which it can be claimed that they are not elites.

One of the most striking features of the new nationalism is that the illusion of the nation as a common home has been abandoned. In the UK since Brexit this can also be seen in the pursuit of a version of Brexit that made no attempt to seek a compromise with the Remain side. Gone is the pretence of speaking for the whole nation. Neo-nationalism is a nationalism at war with the nation. The people versus elites polarity gives only some animus to neo-nationalism. If anything defines neo-nationalism it is the construction of an internal divide within the nation. The nation does not include everyone. The ideological worldview of neo-nationalism is profoundly hostile to cultural pluralism and more generally to liberal and cosmopolitan values. The reality of contemporary societies is considerable cultural difference, both on the level of the general cultural orientations of the society, as reflected in lifestyles and attitudes, and in terms of membership. Ethnic minorities, migrants and so on, especially in European countries, are no longer marginal groups but have become integral to society. The driving animus of neo-nationalism is not only opposition to such groups, but hostility to the liberal, cosmopolitan elements of society and the de facto reality of super-diversity[2]. The important point in the present context is that to the extent that neo-nationalism is defined by opposition to what can be described as one half of the society, it cannot offer a viable vision of the future for the nation-state, given that in effect it has abandoned the pursuit of the common ground.

My first argument, then, is that the resurgent forces of the new nationalism have abandoned the very idea of the nation and consequently the vision of the nation-state to which they subscribe not only lacks substance but is rife with internal divisions. It could be argued that the old nationalist movements were also partisan, authoritarian and reflected the interests of a dominant sector of the society. However, this is misleading in that they were products of a largely pre-democratic era or a time when democracy was relatively weak. Democracy today is deeply entrenched and societies that have experienced advanced democratisation do not so easily in their entirety fall under the sway of authoritarianism, not at least without a civil war to resolve the problem of opposition.

There is a paradox to this. Neo-nationalism is a product of democracy in that it was liberal democracy that made it possible. For the greater part, neo-nationalism is organised as political parties and competes within the democratic process. Euroscepticism has been similarly nurtured in the European Parliament by right-wing populist parties (de Wilde and Trenz 2012). But it is this very democratic basis to their existence and to their rhetoric (the people versus the elite) that makes possible a form of democratic authoritarianism. It is not the contrary to democracy, but is enabled by democracy, which does not prevent people from having authoritarian beliefs. It is a form of authoritarianism rooted in the appeal to the people, who are supposedly the voice of the nation and silences dissent. The

Brexit referendum is a good example of how a democratic instrument can be used to advance authoritarianism (the outcome was falsely deemed to have been a 'decision' that had to be implemented despite no agreement on the nature of the decision or that it was even a decision). Despite the often-violent origins of the nation-state, the course of history led to the formation of democratic societies. It is difficult to see how this process can be entirely reversed, even if regressions can occur. There are limits to the extent that democracy can be subverted by the invocation of 'the people'.

In any case, the nation-state that once existed is no longer. The British state, encompassing the UK as a whole, is now fractured. Neo-nationalism cannot restore it by force of rhetoric. Its demise was not caused by neo-nationalism, which is a symptom of the ruins of national cultures. Whatever kind of state that neo-nationalist might re-establish, shorn of the European project, it will not be a nation-state, but some kind of authoritarian state.

THE POST-NATIONAL CONDITION AND SOCIETAL POLARISATION

Neo-nationalism is fundamentally divisive. This is undoubtedly true of all nationalist movements, but it is more true today as a result of entrenched cultural pluralism and democratisation. Nationalism does not unite the polity but divides it. As an inherently divisive phenomenon, it does not seek to unite people and build on common ties. Pitting one half of the population against the other, it drives a wedge through the society. During the 1980s and 1990s when the radical right emerged, they were primarily anti-immigration parties. As such their nationalist ideology and rhetoric was decidedly xenophobic, with the national society defined against migrants. In recent years, the radical right has undergone a further transformation (Wodak 2015; Kreisi et al 2012; 2008; Bornschier 2018). Perhaps because of the success of anti-migration politics and the widespread adoption by the centre right of their policies, the radical right has moved to a new position of a more radicalised alterity. Instead of migrants being the main emanation of the Other, the enemy now also includes the liberal, cosmopolitan population. Another and more recent example, is the anti-vax movement and the embracing of opposition to lockdown policies to curb the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. In this fundamentally changed situation in which the nation has become post-national, the radical right redefine the nation against the post-national mainstream (Habermas 2001). What ensues is a re-politicisation of the nation whereby national cultures become themselves the site of struggle.

There are now many examples of a 50/50 divide in many democracies between what can be characterised as a conflict between the post-national political community and the nationalist one. Brexit exemplifies this: the referendum led to more or less this outcome and in the years that have passed, positions became entrenched on an issue that has defined British politics (Evans and Menon 2017; Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley 2017). Similarly in the United States (US), the Trump presidency exasperated an already deep division between Democrats and Republicans to a point that the US is now a fundamentally divided society without a realistic possibility of common ground emerging (Campbell 2016). This erosion of the middle ground is perhaps the major development in the political landscape of recent years. With the declining capacity of the centre to hold together, neo-nationalism offers an alternative vision that presents itself against the status quo. In a situation where the status quo has been considerably shaped by the medley of forces that can be summed up by globalisation, cultural pluralism and cosmopolitanism, neo-nationalism derives its strength in opposition to everything they represent, in essence the post-national order.

Since the 1990s, there has been clearly a growing 'cosmopolitanization', to use Ulrich Beck's (2006) phrase, of European societies. This encompasses processes as different as increased mobility and global communications, social identities, cultural diversity, and

interconnectivity of societies. European integration is in part an expression of these wider societal dynamics that can be related to the more general context of globalisation. While some accounts (for example Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Manuel Castells) have emphasised the more emancipatory aspects of these developments, others have stressed the new social realities that have come with a more globalised kind of capitalism that has produced increased global inequality and culminated in the financial crisis of 2007/8. The relevant consideration in the present context is that globalisation led to a transformation in the class structure of most societies. It led to a shift away from the older social divisions within the class structure and intensified the shift that had already taken place with the formation of post-industrial cultures and so-called post-material values. This trend had already produced a shift in politics from the old left to the new left, as marked by the shift from the predominance of the social question to cultural concerns (Boltanski and Chiapello 2006). However, until the last two decades this occurred within what were still fairly nationally delineated societies. What changed is that European societies became more and more European, and they increasingly lost their national particularity and became more and more post-national in politics and in identities (Risse 2010; Herrmann, Risse and Brewer 2004; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Bruter 2005). A new generation of university educated Europeans were socialised into a very different milieu from those who remained within the older lifeworld of national cultures, leading to the so-called divide between the winners and losers of globalisation. It was not surprising that this discord led to a political division.

What has taken shape in most western societies over the past two decades is a new division between those who largely identify with national culture and those whose horizons have been extended beyond the limits of traditional markers of class and nation. In the context of the post-2007/8 upheaval this set the conditions for a further cultural and political clash between two very broad spectrums of the population, which are be termed 'nationals' and 'cosmopolitans'. This cleavage, the basis of what Fligstein (2008) has termed a Euro-clash, is almost perfectly mirrored in the Brexit referendum, with Remain versus Leave as two internally diverse sectors of the population who are have come to occupy polarised positions (see Delanty 2017). Underpinning these political positions are quite different lifestyles and cultural orientations. Such divisions exist in most societies and are in effect a generational clash, but in the UK the referendum provided a fulcrum for them to be translated into a political division, which in turn reinforced the social and cultural difference transforming it into a condition of societal polarisation. However, this alone would not explain the full extent of the success of neo-nationalism, which has attracted the support of a wider spectrum of voters who are not all necessarily economically disadvantaged (for example, the support basis of the British Conservative Party, the Party of Freedom in the Netherlands or the Austrian Freedom Party). As argued elsewhere (Delanty 2021) one factor that underlies the diverse groups who are attracted to neo-nationalism is authoritarianism. Individuals with authoritarian cultural orientations are more likely to support parties with strong nationalist and populist policies, such as opposition to migration or hostility to the EU (Delanty 2021).

Neo-nationalism is unable to solve the basic problem of societal polarisation, which provides it with its conditions of existence. Contemporary societies are riveted by deep divisions, which are exacerbated by neo-nationalism. In this situation, it is difficult to see how anything like a project of nation-state building is possible in the absence of a politics of compromise and common ground. As I have argued, neo-nationalism thrives on division, discord, fear and polarisation. It feeds from resentment and the sense of being left behind; but it is also driven by latent authoritarianism.

A further limitation of neo-nationalism is that it lacks what is surely a premise of nation-state building namely the rule of law. A feature of neo-nationalist governments is the flaunting of the law, whether through outright corruption, defiance of legal processes, the systematic weakening of the juridical foundations of the state. For these reasons, it cannot be said that neo-nationalism is seriously a project of nation-state building. Rather it could

be argued it is the systematic weakening of the state. Again the UK exemplifies this destructive forces of nationalism. The implementation of the referendum has led to the weakening of the UK itself, whose constitutive parts – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – have been forced to follow a project that is driven by the conservative elements of England. Until now, the revived case for Scottish independence is the main expression of what Tom Nairn (1981) predicted as likely, 'the break-up' of the UK.

Finally, the resurgent forces of neo-nationalism illustrate what I would call the cultural collapse of the nation. It has become a battle ground of different positions. The nature of the battle is that it cannot be easily won under the conditions of what are still liberal democracies. The post-national space cannot be simply eradicated, but it can be fragmented with the result being societal stagnation.

THE ABSENCE OF AN IMAGINARY

One of the major weaknesses of neo-nationalism is that its success is due to the weakness of the mainstream right and left than because of any policies of its own. As widely recognised, it can be seen as filling the vacuum created by the declining fortunes of the parties of the centre. Its success is perhaps particularly due to the declining appeal of the traditional social democratic left and the related loss in social status of its traditional support basis in the industrial working class. The divisions within the mainstream provide neo-nationalism with opportunities to draw voters and generally win over public opinion. While many neo-nationalist parties have been very successful even to the point of becoming governing parties, as the examples of Poland and Hungary illustrate, such movements are more generally eclectic and feed off the main parties, which in turn adjusts to them. Thus, the British Conservative Party in the general election of 2019 staved off the Brexit Party (formerly UKIP) by simply taking on board its policies. To make a general point, neo-nationalist parties, while clearly now more powerful, are still predominately oppositional parties and movements. A notable exception is Austria, where the far-right Freedom Party has formed a coalition with the People's Party. To be sure, while Macron decisively won the presidential election in France in in 2017, Marine Le Pen of the National Front made it to the run-off. This is a stark reminder of the potential for a significant victory for the radical right. However, it is also an example of an unsuccessful campaign. While there can be no doubt of a tremendous expansion of the far right, it is still the case that these parties are most successful as opposition parties than as governing parties. The failure of Trump's presidency is perhaps the clearest sign of the limits of neo-nationalism at least to maintain its grip on the state.

In more sociological terms, it could be argued that a greater weakness of neo-nationalism is that it lacks a social imaginary (Taylor 2004), or has at most a very weak one. A social imaginary is a way a society or movement articulates an image of itself. It is a projection of the self-image of a collectivity as a unity and entails symbolic, cognitive and normative elements (see Adams, Blokker, Doyle, Krummel et al. 2017). Nationalism, as Benedict Anderson (1983) outlined, is based on an imagined community in that it requires an image of the social life of the nation since people cannot directly experience the nation in their daily life. The success of nationalism in the past has clearly been related to its tremendous capacity to articulate an imaginary. According to Castoriadis (1987), all societies project an imaginary signification of themselves. Many movements have a radical imaginary that enabled them to bring themselves into existence. This is especially the case with a movement that seeks to create a new reality. The modern age witnessed the birth of a plethora of such movements, of which perhaps communism was the most striking, but the point pertains to many nationalist movements.

Looking across the spectrum of neo-nationalist movements, it is difficult to see many examples of anything that corresponds to a social imaginary. That is not to say there are

no examples. In the UK, the Leave campaign reveals a social imaginary at work, the imaginary of an imperial nation that had defeated European tyranny. However, this is an imaginary that does not easily translate into a viable political project. It is by definition nostalgic and does offer a vision for the future. Such an imaginary may be effective in political campaigns, but in order to create new realities they also need to be translatable into something more tangible than an imagined reality. Anderson's (1983) work drew attention to concrete and material phenomena, essentially in this case print media that made the imagined community of the nation a reality. This is the problem that neo-nationalist movements have today. To the extent to which they can articulate a social imaginary, it does not extend beyond the level of a fantasy and is underpinned by fear (see Wodak 2015).

One possible explanation why neo-nationalism lacks a capacity to create a social imaginary is that to expand their mass appeal they have to borrow from both the right and the left. While right-wing in spirit and substance, they distance themselves from the neoliberal end of the right and in some cases are defenders of the welfare state, while being opposed to progressive politics of the left (see Brown 2019; Balorda 2019). The more successful ones pursue authoritarianism on cultural issues while adopting social protectionism on economic issues. In this way, characteristic right-wing politics co-exist with the traditional policies of the left. The Johnson government in the UK is a very good example of this balancing act, which to varying degrees is adopted by much of the radical right. It was also reflected at least on the level of rhetoric by Trump. While this can lead to considerable success in the short term, for example in the polls, combining these orientations from the right and left is not a recipe for a durable political project, such as a return to the nation-state. Such a project would require a more inclusive conception of political community if it is to win popular support. In other words, a nation-state cannot be created on the basis of partisan support.

THE LIMITS OF THE ALT-RIGHT AS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

The resurgence of nationalism, the extreme right and various kinds of radical right-wing populist movements across Europe in recent years is not only a European trend, but is clearly part of a world-wide movement. To the extent to which it is a global movement, it is underpinned by the Alt-right. This is a white nationalist movement based in the USA but has a global reach with a civilizational mission (Hawley, 2019; Hermansson et al 2020). The election of Donald Trump to the US presidency in 2016 gave a boost to this movement, which has ties with Putin and is generally supportive of authoritarian leaders throughout the world (see Snyder 2018). The movement is also associated with conspiracy theories offering different political epistemologies, especially on climate change and on the Covid-19 pandemic. The Alt-right also seeks the destruction of the EU; it is it opposed to the liberal Enlightenment heritage of the West. It is, in short, a radical right-wing movement. Neo-nationalism is Europe is part of this more general movement and its post-truth politics. It is true that neo-nationalism in Europe preceded the rise of the Alt-right and is not dependent on it and this is the case with neo-nationalism in many other parts of the world. European neo-nationalist movements unlike the alt-right invoke the European heritage to add legitimacy to their xenophobic and racist policies. In that sense, they are perhaps not anti-western. Yet, the Alt-right movement gave to these movements, which are never coherent in their worldview, at least the illusion of a global movement.

On the one side, this global context provides neo-nationalism with a strength that it otherwise lacks, but on the other it also has its weakness. The global reach of the Alt-right is ultimately limited. The movement has its roots in white supremacist nationalism in the USA and as such it is limited to its American specificity. Through the efforts of its spokespersons, such as Steve Bannon, it seeks to gain international recognition by right-wing nationalist movements and anti-western leaders in other parts of the world. While it

had considerable success, there are limits to its expansion, which is underpinned by semi-organised and ad hoc trolls. It is a coalition of very diverse factions, including white supremacists and neo-Nazi organisation, Christian white nationalists, anti-Semites, anti-Muslim organisations, radical libertarians (Berger 2018). Many of these moments came together on 6 January 2021 in Washington in the occupation of the US Capitol, a symbol of modern liberal democracy. As a global movement, it is relatively weak in comparison to other global movements. These are highly diverse factions and many are illegal underground organisations that mobilise through the 'dark net'. The important point here is that while the radical right have enjoyed an undoubted boost since the election of Trump, this was from a low base. The left and generally progressive politics have suffered a setback, but are arguably in a stronger position when it comes to global politics. Without the Alt-right, neo-nationalism does not have a significant global power. The movement was ultimately held together by the existence of Trump as president of the US. His departure from the presidency, almost certainly means the movement will have lost its fulcrum.

Unlike progressive political movements, neo-nationalism does not, and cannot have, in any significant sense a global imaginary (see Steger 2008). Its worldview is a particular and closed conception of the nation and a politics of denial. Lacking not only the capacity to express a social imaginary, its politics requires the denial of the possibility of a global imaginary. As a global movement, it is limited to radical opposition to the left, liberalism and cosmopolitanism. Since it is opposed to the idea of the world as a common home, it cannot articulate a global imaginary.

For these reasons, I argue that neo-nationalism is ultimately weak and lacks a capacity for major systemic transformation. When modern nation-states were created from 1648 onwards, they were part of a post-Westphalian international political order that recognised the nation-state to be the basis of the modern world. Putting aside the European and colonial aspects to this and the fact that the new right has itself a particular brand of reactionary internationalism (de Orellana and Michelsen 2020), it is a reminder that modern nationalism, which was strongly influenced by liberalism and republicanism, was international in outlook and universalist in support of the constitutionalism and democracy. Neo-nationalism has no such outlook. In a world where everything is connected, a political movement that is based on the denial of such connectivity is doomed to failure.

When neo-nationalists proclaim a return to the nation-state, they fail to see that the historical nation-states of Europe were different from their narrow conception of political community. While nationalism has taken many different forms, ranging from liberal and republican constitutionalism to ethnic nationalism, Soviet socialism and fascism, the nation-states that were created in Europe, for good or bad, were highly universalist in their self-understanding.

CONCLUSION

Overall, neo-nationalism will not bring about a return to the nation-state because that particular historical entity no longer exists. The resurgence of nationalism today is in part an expression of the demise of the nation-state and in the particular guise of neo-nationalism the political community that the nation encapsulated has been all but abandoned. The growing influence of neo-nationalism, whether as opposition or governing parties, has been most evident in the politicisation of political discourse through nativism, hatred and fear. While such forms of nationalism are targeted against migrants or anyone seen to be an outsider, there is a new focus of hostility against those who hold to liberal and cosmopolitan ideas. This group, effectively half of the population, is equated with the mainstream or the establishment elites. In this way, the new-nationalism combines nativism and anti-elitism. This results in a significant shift in political discourse but stops

short of a major systemic transformation of European integration or the dissolution of the EU.

My argument is that the resurgence of nationalism does not alter the fact that the world is more interconnected than it is divided. These new nationalist forces do not have a capacity to bring about an end to post-national developments. Anti-cosmopolitan currents have certainly become more pronounced, but like all movements they are fraught with contradictions. I agree with Runciman (2013) that democracies are vulnerable to break-downs due to their fragility, but they are also resilient. Contemporary democracies are also post-national in Habermas's (2001) sense of the term in that they are not the nativist enclaves that neo-nationalists seek to retreat into. National societies are in reality post-national societies. European democracies have all been transformed by Europeanisation. The post-national constellation cannot be so easily unravelled.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Ireland is an exception, as was Spain until the recent rise of Vox and Portugal until the election for the presidency in January 2021 when a far-right candidate got 12 per cent of the vote.

[2] Super-diversity, or hyper-diversity, refers to cross-cutting diversity within and across ethnic groups, which as a consequence are no longer homogenous.

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Commentary

From 'Brexhaustion' to 'Covidiots': The United Kingdom and the Populist Future

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Abstract

One consequence of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic is the acceleration of Britain's shift towards populism, and the rejection of expert-informed policymaking in favour of vox populi claims. The continuation of this toxicity beyond Brexit means that nationalist narratives have become Britain's new 'politics of everything' (Valluvan 2019). The past five years have seen growing British contempt for technocracy, with 'us and them' populist narratives gaining widespread traction as the United Kingdom's (UK) volatile political environment moves away from the political procedures and economic values by which the UK has operated since 1945. Since early 2020, this narrative has been significantly accelerated by Covid-19 countermeasures, with anti-EU parties and narratives on the left and right becoming anti-lockdown or anti-vaccine advocates. This commentary approaches the surge in British populism as emblematic of the UK's shift from centrism towards polarised factions defined not by party, but by cross-spectrum contempt for technical governance. We argue that while populism is a worldwide phenomenon, it is not homogenous and the UK is particularly vulnerable to anti-status quo discourses and narratives. We argue that British populism should be seen not as a temporary phenomenon in response to specific events and conditions, but as a fluid, amorphous and heterogeneous 'new normal' which, in an environment of social mistrust, contempt for expertise and disillusionment with traditional politics, is now becoming the defining characteristic of British politics.

Keywords

Brexit; UK Politics; Anti-establishment Politics; Populism; Covid-19

> 'People in this country have had enough of experts'. Michael Gove (Financial Times 2016)

Between July 2019 and December 2020, four events marked a transitory period in which discussions of populism and technocracy dominated British political discourse in the aftermath of the 2016 European Union (EU) membership referendum (itself a debate framed, as the Michael Gove quote above illustrates, by discussions of technical expertise versus popular will). First was the Conservative Party's selection of Boris Johnson as party leader to replace Theresa May. Second, the December 2019 general election which saw the Conservatives gain their largest majority since 1987 while Labour were reduced to their lowest vote share since 1935. Third, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) signed between the EU and the United Kingdom (UK) on 24 December 2020, and Britain's formal departure from the EU on 31 January 2020. Fourth, the current global coronavirus pandemic and consequent state countermeasures, during which the Conservative Party morphed from an ethos of small state and limited spending into a wartime-measures party of unprecedented state intervention, spending and regulation of everyday life. The result of these four developments is an increased and highly emotional public discourse on the merits and limits of technocratic versus populist governance.

In this commentary we argue that these four developments have led to a greater visibility of the British radical right. Consequently, there is a need to critically re-interpret the contested concept of populism as neither a reaction to 'rational' grievances (for example economic change or globalisation) or 'irrational' anxieties (for example narratives of cultural decline or identity anxieties) which can be quelled through policy decisions; nor as isolated, temporary reactions to specific, localised political conditions. Nor is populism an entirely transnational phenomenon. We argue that recent developments to the British radical right, in the aftermath of Brexit and Covid-19, demonstrate the fluidity and flexibility of a radical right populism that is not a reaction to specific events or grievances. Rather, the radical right is able to capitalise on very poor levels of trust in the British political system, uniting people across the political spectrum (KCL 2021) through an amorphous and fluid set of anti-establishment, anti-status imaginations and narratives whose advocates are able to apply to unrelated events (for example systemic challenges such as Brexit, and spontaneous challenges such as Covid-19) and which are able to appeal to very different demographics than the far-right can. We argue therefore that radical right populists' narratives, strategies and ideologies require much greater prominence in studies of British and wider international politics, as their influence is not in decline but is now arguably inextricable from political discourse. To understand and respond to the growing populist radical right, research must privilege affect theory and the role of emotion and perception as it is the *perception* of social and political inequality and elite oppression – whether "status threat", or "Great Replacement", or "Big Pharma" conspiracy theories – rather than the *reality*, which drives anti-technocratic, populist rhetoric in the contemporary UK.

Our commentary is structured as follows. First, we explore the impact that the Brexit process has had on popular trust in pre-2016 British politics and political structures, with intensifying polarisation between the British population, and additionally between British political institutions (such as Parliament and parties) and a population whose trust in the political establishment has been severely impacted (Sugue 2020). Second, we use reactions to Covid-19 countermeasures to argue that public hostility towards technical expertise is not a one-off emotional reaction, but part of Brexit's legacy in weakening trust between public and professionals. Third, we argue that the radical right is now so influential that, despite being anti-establishment, it has become symbiotic with the centre-right (Bale 2018) and indeed so established in British politics that it will continue to have enduring impact into the future. We conclude by urging greater critical investigation of such groups, ideologies, and narratives, in order to better understand their potential influence upon the post-Brexit, post-Covid UK.

POPULISTS ALL THE WAY DOWN: BREXIT'S ENDURING LEGACY

> We failed to reckon with the fact that Boris Johnson was an exception. It's true that centrism is dead. There's no future in Cameron Conservatism or Blairite Labourism. But when you break the mould and open up the populist box, there's no guarantee it's going to be the left – or left populists – who benefit. (Labour aide cited in Pogrund and Maguire 2020: 228)

Brexit has left many legacies, not least a widespread public contempt for professional politicians, parties and the Westminster system. Four years of parliamentary deadlock over the results of the June 2016 referendum and the subsequent negotiations with the EU, a series of public votes in repeated local, national and European elections, not to mention several parliamentary votes on Theresa May's negotiated Withdrawal Bill, exacerbated the phenomena of '*Brexeternity*', '*Brexhaustion*' and the spectre of a '*Neverendum*'. Brexit debates were not confined to Westminster but seeped into every aspect of British life, transforming a distant constitutional and political debate into a domestic, *quotidian* debate on identity, affect and anxiety. The 2016-2020 debates on Brexit also engendered widespread distrust of politicians who were seen either as out-of-touch, metropolitan elites 'frustrating the will of the people' by blocking the Withdrawal Agreement, or in hectoring the masses by asserting that the vote was wrong and/or demanding new referenda (from a Leaver perspective); or blustering egoists pandering to nationalist rhetoric and imperial nostalgia (O'Toole 2018), pursuing a collectively destructive agenda through mathematical majoritarianism (from a Remainer perspective). The legacy of this is twofold. First, an appeal to popular will on both sides. Leavers elevated the majority results of the 2016 referendum to a semi-sacred status, followed in 2019 by Remainers citing the projected results of a second referendum following "Crossover Day", when sufficient numbers of (presumably pro-Brexit) pensioners had died that the electoral balance would tip in favour of Remain (Kellner 2018). Second, a persisting mistrust of mainstream politicians and a subsequent technocrat-populist battle fought by both sides, between what Salvatore Babones (2018) calls 'the tyranny of experts', and what Catherine Fieschi (2019) terms 'the tyranny of authenticity', as both Leavers and Remainers deployed emotional, affective appeals side by side with statistics and projections supporting their case. While it is not possible to trace the rise of populism to a single root cause it is arguable that one result of Jeremy Corbyn's tenure as Labour leader, the aftermath of Brexit, and Boris Johnson's period as Conservative leader (and as we argue, significantly exacerbated by the 2020-21 Coronavirus Pandemic) is a reframing of British politics not around party affiliations, national identities, or Leave/Remain, but rather around an imagined binary of technical expertise versus non-expert political narratives – populism.

As Frank Stengel (2019) argues, 'populism' is an over-used word with limited consensus on its meaning. British, and indeed global, politics have demonstrated that all too frequently, 'populism' is used as a 'snarl word' by factions across the political spectrum, often as a way of delegitimising opponents. However, for a working definition we adopt Mudde and Kaltwasser's (2015: 18) characterisation of populism as 'a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite"' (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2015: 6. The latter are a convenient foil for populists, in this case presented as three ostensibly allied/overlapping groups conspiring against 'the people': an Anglophobic and technocratic EU (the external threat); an out-of-touch, xenocentric, metropolitan class (the internal threat); and an excessively cautious cadre of economic, constitutional, diplomatic and medical experts narrated as frustrating the will of 'the people' in favour of statistics. The net result of these developments may mean that challenges faced in the UK are familiar drivers for the emergence of populist narratives which borrow from, but transcend, the radical right.

TAKE THE NEXT RIGHT

In response to economic and political developments since the onset of the Global Financial Crisis, and ideational or civilisational rhetoric and anxieties, politics is witnessing a rapid shift towards the right (Mudde 2019). Since 2016, the UK's political atmosphere has polarised into hostile extremes, significantly enhanced by Brexit and exacerbated by Covid-19 countermeasures. The continuation of this toxicity beyond Brexit is highly likely, given the unclear economic and constitutional consequences of leaving. This includes the dominance of various nationalist narratives within the UK and its four nations, what Sivamohan Valluvan (2019) calls Britain's new 'politics of everything' and the framing of all political debates in national and nationalist terms. It also includes the acceleration of mutual mistrust and anxieties in the subsequent economic fallout of Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic. The Prime Minister's approval ratings have oscillated between unprecedented levels of national support in the early stages of the national lockdown, a phenomenon enjoyed by incumbent leaders across the world, to widespread condemnation and civil disobedience in response to delays and failures in containing the outbreak, to unclear and confusing advice and regulations, to accusations of cronyism and hypocrisy. Indeed, the UK government's response to the pandemic and lockdown exemplifies the continued oscillation between technocratic and populist governing styles witnessed during Brexit, with both emotions and emotionless statistics, being deployed by pro- and anti-lockdown advocates. By April 2020, the government's advice that it was 'guided by science' (Grey and MacAskill 2020) in imposing an unprecedented sequence of lockdowns was met with high approval ratings, with the Prime Minister in particular enjoying widespread support for placing objective reality over political expedience. In sharp contrast to widespread public hostility towards expertise in the first half of 2016, the first half of 2020 saw widespread public support for a technopopulist style of governance (see Outhwaite 2021; Domaradski and Radić-Milosavljević 2021; Baldoli and Radaelli 2021 in this special issue), with an elected leader making addresses to the nation and giving daily briefings (with interactive *vox populi* engagements with members of the public), while enacting policies informed and guided by unelected experts. However, by summer 2020 this technocratic popularity had lost much of its public appeal. A 'Cummings Effect' (Fancourt, Steptoe and Wright 2020) of unelected experts violating rules with no consequences presaged a new populist/technocratic divide, namely between supporters of lockdowns and lockdown sceptics/anti-vaccine activists/conspiracy theorists.

In the era of a moribund Labour Party, rising nationalism in Scotland and the Johnson government's increasingly cavalier approach to domestic norms and international law more specifically, the UK's already-volatile political environment is moving away from the political and economic system by which the country has operated since 1945. Key to this are groups and leaders spanning the political spectrum, from the controversial Liberal Democrat policy of 2019 to unilaterally cancel Brexit, to Nigel Farage moving from UKIP to his anti-EU Brexit Party (itself spawning the anti-lockdown Reform Party), to a refocused 'big state/big spend' Conservative Party from 2020 onwards appealing, to borrow Labour's 2017 electoral slogan, to the many not the few, to an alleged 'will of the nation' or *vox populi* in whose name so many politicians are desirous of speaking, over the advice of technical experts. Political and social movements which promote various forms of nationalism, and which advocate either anti-globalist, anti-EU protectionism or anti-neoliberal, pro-socialist nationalisation of the economy, appear polar opposites but are united in a rejection of expert-informed policymaking (Eichengreen 2018: 131-144) and technocracy (particularly from experts born outside the UK and/or EU policymakers). These trends are not merely emerging, but rapidly gaining influence (Norris and Ingleheart 2019: 443-472) and 'mainstreaming' (Stocker 2017; Miller-Idriss 2017) in British politics. Since the resignations of David Cameron and Theresa May, parliamentary politics has seen a shift from traditionally centrist positions to left- or right-wing populism (Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel 2018), with the two united in disdain for expertise. However, the motivations for this cannot be reduced to ideological chicanery or political point scoring, nor can the old binary of Left/Right be used to understand motivations for populist support.

Post-Brexit Britain demonstrates the inefficacy of binary Left/Right understandings to account for populism. For example, in the fortnight after the vote to leave the EU was confirmed, hate crimes rose by 40 per cent (Albornoz, Bradley and Sonderegger 2021). This 'trigger event' contrasts sharply with previous models, such as responses to jihadi Islamist attacks or, most recently, counter-protests at Black Lives Matter demonstrations. Instead, the post-Brexit spike in hate crimes might just as easily be associated with 'celebratory racism' in contrast to more familiar models stressing alleged 'defence' of race, nation or an ill-defined 'culture' (Feldman and Littler 2014). As this implies more broadly, the popularity of the new, populist radical right cannot be explained exclusively through the economic policies of the Old Right nor the racial policies of the Far Right (Eichengreen 2018: 1-14; Eatwell and Goodwin 2018). Instead, a new approach must ask *why* diverse demographics in the UK support populist *Radical* Right solutions while eschewing technocracy (or, perhaps, advocating thrawn versions of technocracy in which conspiracy theories and pseudoscientific hocus-pocus are invoked to justify political action).

Anti-technocratic sentiment is far from exclusive to the UK, and scepticism towards technocratic rule is arguably more visible beyond states rendered 'peripheral' by public hostility towards austerity and financial instability (such as Greece and Italy). However, we argue, the UK is uniquely vulnerable to populism due to the legacy of the Brexit process, itself the legacy of a UK-EU relationship which has historically oscillated between ambivalent and reluctant. Similarly we reject the popular assumption that the rise of radical populism is a homogenous phenomenon, and we further reject interpretations that political phenomena such as Brexit and the emergence of politicians such as Trump, Johnson, Le Pen and Salvini are part of a single phenomenon. We acknowledge that very strong links exist (particularly between the UK and US) and that in the digital age, radical right narratives in different spaces influence each other (see Wodak, KhosraviNik and Mral 2013) but we argue that these are not *a priori* connections – superficially similar conditions do not spawn identical responses. These are not causally related and do not emerge from the same sources. The emergence of 'populism' is instead attributable to varying conditions which are not replicated across countries (Fieschi 2019). While rejecting Anglocentrist approaches, we argue that the UK is indeed unique in this regard as post-Brexit British populism replicates many of the themes of the traditional radical right while transcending rightist appeal (for example, the appeal of Left-populists in the form of Corbynism and widespread anti-technocratic sentiments during the pandemic). Rather than the re-emergence of an old far right populist narrative, the UK is witnessing the emergence of a set of qualitatively new groups and narratives which distinguishes British populism from the far right and conservative old right, and which unites with far-left populism in mutual contempt for political centrism, expert-informed policymaking, and the Westminster model.

BRITAIN'S POPULIST PROBLEM

Populism in the UK is rapidly gaining traction, and while we do not discount economic motivations, it is arguable that a significant causal factor is contempt for the status quo, the legacy of Brexit and a shift to identity as the prime focus of political narratives (Moffitt 2017: 112-122, Lord 2013: 1056-1073). Yet identity politics is not the only preserve of the left. We anticipate that the growth of populist right identity politics will continue to gain traction. This is likely to follow whatever model of Brexit Boris Johnson pursues, the likely fallout of Covid-19 countermeasures, the continuing struggle of opposition parties and continuing nationalist arguments over the existence of the four-member UK. All of these challenges, yet again, will most significantly impact Britain's post-industrial areas and economically precarious populations (Standing 2016: 69-70). These areas are already vulnerable to economic instability (Hope Not Hate 2019) and may be sympathetic to nativist politics (Lubbers and Coenders 2017: 98-118). This is in turn likely to encourage anti-immigrant, Eurosceptic, anti-establishment positions from populists (Goodhart 2017:

231-234; Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley 2017: 175-229), as well as continued rejection of evidence-based policymaking. Accordingly, we anticipate an upward trend of mainstream parties seeking to reclaim voters by adopting populist rhetoric. This necessitates a new understanding of the relationship between radical-right populism and attitudes towards technocracy.

Using the phenomenological distinction elaborated by Alfred Schutz, we argue that fluid party politics are a second-order construct informed by first-order constructs, namely dissatisfaction, contempt and anxiety, which span the political spectrum. These elements are identifiable as motivations for the waxing and waning popularity of charismatic leaders such as Jeremy Corbyn, Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson, but also help to explain the rejection of evidence-based policymaking discernible in different movements. A key observation here is what Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin (2018: 16) term 'relative deprivation':

> a sense that the wider group, whether white Americans or native Britons, is being left behind relative to others in society, while culturally liberal politicians, media and celebrities devote far more attention and status to immigrants, ethnic minorities and other newcomers. (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018: 16)

While this perception may bear little resemblance to reality, that is of less importance in this view than the phenomenological meaning invested, and the speed and ease with which social media and the internet can allow for messages to be shared among like-minded individuals with a shared language (Žižeck 2018, Fukuyama 2018). Online echo chambers, like those cheering President Trump's unwillingness to concede electoral defeat on grounds of fraud (Groshek and Koc-Michalska 2017), help to render this imagination a reality. Pre-existing views, in some cases amounting to a 'foundational myth' (Bottici and Challand 2013: 17-19) for those subscribing to the view, thus informs subsequent political behaviour (Goodhart 2017, Hochschild 2016). Given that 'the idea that national-populist movements can be reduced to simplistic stereotypes is ridiculous' (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018: 3), it is evident that 'misdiagnosing the roots of their support will in the long run make it harder for their opponents to get back into the game' (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018: 3). To better comprehend the role and significance of the new populist right in Britain's future, 'it pays to work out what makes these movements tick' (Wodak 2015).

The challenges posed by British populism are thus Janus-faced. The phenomenon is both particular to Britain insofar as a confluence of unique crises have seized the country: unfamiliar hung parliaments and populist leaders, imperilled by devolution (especially the Scottish conundrum) on one side and Brexit on the other. Yet there are also several transnational trends, of which the most immediate is the pandemic. Here the British government's response has been found wanting, amidst accusations of cronyism and failing to heed scientific advice. Despite more than 100,000 dead at the time of writing this has not impeded the spread of conspiracy theories in Britain, especially online. As stressed above this is far from solely a problem on the right of the political spectrum (mired in internecine civil wars after Corbyn, the British left is equally prone to conspiracist accusations), but on either side, the spread of misinformation ultimately has the effect of placing more conspiracy theories into the mainstream. In this way, populism is fuelled by the very nature of social media and social mistrust.

It is easy to forget that the rise of social media is largely a product of the second decade of the 21st century. While its potentially polarising effects may still be only starting to be grasped, there can be little doubt that avoiding media gatekeepers, such as editors or television producers, has allowed populist politics to flourish on social media, already a subject of academic analysis in peer-reviewed pieces dating to 2017 (see Groshek and Koc-Michalska 2017; Engesser et. al. 2017). While doubtless elevating populism, too much

emphasis on social media as a monocausal explanation risks missing the woods for the trees.

Mudde has identified the recent emergence of 'a fourth wave of postwar far-right politics as the mainstreaming and normalisation of far right actors and ideas' (Accardo 2020). Others have also noted the arrival of this recent phenomena, drawing upon terms such as 'illiberal democracy', 'authoritarian democracy' or the 'near right' (Scopelliti 2020). While invariably country-specific, this mainstreaming of right-wing extremism has been increasingly identified by scholars in recent years, as exemplified in the UK by the notorious 'Breaking Point' poster of 2016 and *The Daily Mail's* 'Enemies of the people' broadside against British judges later that year (Feldman 2020: 243-44). This is likely to leave matters no less confused going forward, whether in terms of how a 'near right' populism may develop, or in respect of how individuals might be seduced or radicalised toward such views. In other words, the key challenge posed by the 'fourth wave of populism' centres on where the line between 'extreme' and 'mainstream' is drawn, and how radicalisation can have both moments of acceleration as well as stasis, or even regression. Despite the waxing and waning of populists' popularity (for example Boris Johnson's approval ratings have peaked and plummeted in consecutive waves), one phenomenon does seem identifiable: in Britain, populism is here to stay.

POPULISM: THE 'NEW NORMAL' FOR BRITAIN?

It is a glib but recognisable claim that since 2014 British politics has moved from cautious, *"small-c"* conservative traditions to a far more affective, emotional, and arguably irrational/arational atmosphere increasingly defined by populists on the right and left (and even centrist populists) attacking the status quo in the name of 'the people'. Since 2014 this has taken multiple forms besides Johnson's rhetoric and style (the SNP claiming to speak for the Scottish people, Corbynites citing the many not the few, anti-vaxxers and lockdown sceptics peddling conspiracies, even doomed projects such as Change UK, the Liberal Democrats' policy of unilaterally cancelling Brexit, and the vocal remains of 'Remain' from 2016). Yet all share the common, classical trope which defines populism: claiming to be the only legitimate *vox populi*. This is a manifestation of what Crouch (2000: 4) terms 'post-democracy', something that is arguably more applicable today than when it was originally coined. Widespread dissatisfaction with parliamentary democracy is clearly visible in British society and politicians. Pre-pandemic, the British Social Attitudes Survey (2019) revealed that Brexit resulted in the lowest levels of public trust in the government since 1980, with two thirds of respondents not trusting the government. This continued into the pandemic era, with an initial surge in public trust in the government rapidly declining in 2020 (UCL 2020). While the success of the vaccine rollout has seen trust levels rise again, the legacy of five years of Brexit debates and lockdown anxieties leave a febrile atmosphere. This is a direct, and perhaps in the long term the most significant, legacy of Brexit: a breakdown of social trust which allows populist narratives to rise.

Arguably the December 2019 general election signalled the long-term victory of populism. Boris Johnson unarguably approximates many tropes of a traditional populist leader. His raft of policy proposals promised to end austerity and invest in the UK outside London, through to proposals ranging from a bridge connecting Northern Ireland to Scotland (ITV 2019), and a suggestion of moving state institutions such as the House of Lords to York (Bush 2020). These proposed measures would bring limited quantifiable economic benefits. However, it is their symbolic significance in assuaging the resentments of a severely polarised population which signal them as hallmarks of a populist campaign and leader. Simultaneously, Jeremy Corbyn equally represented a traditional populist leader in his claims to exclusively represent 'the people' against an imagined shadowy cabal of scheming 'elites'. In this regard the 2019 election was not a watershed representing the triumph of populism over the status quo, but a choice between populism or populism

(Foster 2019). This can be read as a 'lesser-of-two-evils' scenario which presented the choice facing Britain since 2016. Rather than a triumph for populism and right-wing Brexit politics, it was a collective exhaustion, a choice between two Eurosceptic and publicly toxic leaders, and the collapse of whatever remained of centrism (a theme repeated in the May 2021 local elections).

The 2019 General Election was therefore arguably not simply the victory of populism, but an indication that populism is now the only option. The British people still have a choice to support expert-led policymaking and centrist politics, but reject these in favour of populist nationalists, populist conservatives, or populist socialists. The net result is the UK returning to a similar position as in 2016 and with no end in sight: a population polarised between supporters and detractors of unelected experts, and a febrile atmosphere for long-term anti-democratic forces to take root.

One key question is therefore posed: how much does populism matter in the post-Brexit, post-pandemic UK? After five years of Brexit wrangling, public contempt for politicians and expertise is high, including in the aftermath of Covid-19 countermeasures and renewed debates on devolution and the possible breakup of the UK itself, toward a Prime Minister elected to break a longstanding parliamentary deadlock. The political debates caused by unprecedented state countermeasures against coronavirus are a planetary phenomenon and far from unique to the UK, and has dominated UK and EU politics for most of 2020. Yet in the specifically British context it has engendered a continuation of the Brexit debate. As in 2016-2020, politics has been reduced to a single issue, with the dominance of Brexit replaced by the dominance of Covid-19 countermeasures. Two consequences of Brexit and the pandemic are now becoming evident. First is the increasing abandonment of technocratic governance and the solidification of populist appeals (Burleigh 2021: 87-98). Second, and more ominous, is an accelerating growth of rhetoric and movements which, if not radical right, at least qualify as moving from fringe or 'near-right' (Feldman in Bevelander and Wodak 2019), formerly relegated to the margins of politics, to taking prime position. This *habitus* of mistrust, mutual suspicion and contempt for the status quo is not, we argue, an aberration. Instead it is now the nature of British politics and, unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) by any leader other than a populist, it has created fertile ground for another populist surge in response to the next challenge facing a divided, mistrustful and systemically weakened UK.

CONCLUSION

In this commentary we explored accelerating populist attitudes in the UK and problematised scholarship which is incapable of moving beyond traditional explanations founded in theories of prejudice (cultural) and/or economic disgruntlement (material). In an atmosphere of mistrust, populists' flexible narratives on the establishment and technical expertise are extremely malleable, and adaptable to changing and, as with Covid-19, unforeseeable circumstances. This flexible demographic appeal, adaptability to external conditions, transnational appeal and ability to successfully instrumentalise negative emotions by narrating an uncaring or malevolent 'elite' as the source of social problems, means that populism, particularly the radical right, will not continue to present a major challenge far into the post-Brexit, post-Covid future, but has come to be the dominant, and perhaps even the only surviving, aspect of British politics.

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Research Article

(De-)legitimating Differentiated (Dis)integration in the European Union: Between Technocratic and Populist Narratives

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Abstract

Differentiated integration and disintegration are considered key processes of the European project's dynamics. Opt-outs and disintegration pressures are typically associated with laggards or proponents of 'less Europe' who do not wish to integrate further, but prefer to maintain status quo or take a step back. However, differentiation also serves the needs of champions of 'more Europe' who wish to move forward despite lack of unanimous support to do so. Both types of claims are constantly justified and contested as they constitute a deviation from a more traditional and uniform way of 'doing integration' in Europe. This article aims to deal with the differentiation/legitimation nexus in the EU and shed light on the politics of differentiation, while empirically examining legitimating and de-legitimating practices of differentiation as revealed in technocratic and populist narratives produced by major political actors in France, Poland and the United Kingdom. The article highlights flexible and complementary usages of both populist and technocratic narratives that allow to (de-)legitimate differentiation in line with domestic political agendas.

Keywords

European Union; Differentiation; Legitimation; Narrative; Populism; Technocracy

> 'In the spirit of the season … I hope that even Hugh Grant will watch our seasonal offering this year: *Democracy Actually*' (Fox in House of Commons 2019b).

Whereas the pre-Christmas 2019 Westminster vote sealed the United Kingdom's fate outside the European Union (EU), it also made clear that the dual aspiration to make the EU more efficient and democratic was understood quite differently on the opposing shores of the Channel. The EU was long believed to ensure and successfully balance policy output and centralised governance capability on the one hand, and democratic participation on the other, while dealing with heterogeneous preferences by means of differentiation when uniform integration was no longer a viable option. Brexit may be challenging this perception, but in reality it is only one manifestation of the politics of differentiation. National political elites are undergoing a profound transformation, while becoming themselves more differentiated and challenging tenets of the European integration process (Sus and Hadeed 2020). As a result, differentiated (dis)integration is being increasingly politicised and instrumentalised to serve their domestic political agendas.

Analysis of the EU in terms of differentiated as opposed to unitary integration regarding time, space, policy areas and forms of cooperation has attracted considerable scholarly attention, becoming a new buzzword in EU studies. Scholars engage with instances of differentiated integration (DI) in primary/secondary law, internal/external, horizontal/vertical, as well as instrumental/constitutional differentiation (Schimmelfennig and Winzen 2020; Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig 2013). Equally, there is growing research output on differentiated disintegration (DDI), typically though not exclusively, related to Brexit (Schimmelfennig 2018; Gänzle, Leruth and Trondal 2020). However, differentiation is a long-standing phenomenon inherent in the integration process and has been an established practice of the Communities and the Union since their creation (Chopin and Lequesne 2016: 531). Some elements were already integrated into the Rome Treaty, whereas the political idea of 'two-speed Europe' dates back to the 'new approach' proposed in the Tindemans Report (European Communities 1976: 20-21). More discussion was triggered by the accession of the United Kingdom (UK), when the term 'Europe à la carte' was coined (Dahrendorf 1979). The political debate became even more lively in the 1990s, both as a result of post-Maastricht deepening (opt-outs granted to the UK and Denmark) and imminent widening to Central and Eastern Europe.

Differentiation results from both selective integration and disintegration processes. Whereas the former implies that states selectively increase the scope and level of integration, the latter means that geographical extension of rule application in selected areas decreases or cooperation becomes looser and less centralised (Schimmelfennig 2018). Differentiation appears where high interdependence exists, but high degrees of politicisation of some areas of cooperation, especially 'core state competences' (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2014), prevent uniform application of rules among actors with (increasingly) heterogeneous preferences (Leuffen, Rittberger and Schimmelfennig 2013).

Whereas much of the literature focuses on manifestations, types and mechanisms of differentiation in the EU, there is significantly less attention being paid to processes of legitimation of differentiation. Two strands of emerging scholarship should be highlighted here. First, scholars have recently become increasingly interested in conditions under which differentiation is democratically legitimate (Fossum 2019). Second, there is burgeoning literature directing attention to popular legitimacy, for example citizens' attitudes towards DI or, more broadly, the degree to which ordinary citizens believe in international institutions' legitimacy (Leuffen, Müller and Schüssler 2020; Dellmuth and Schlipphak 2020).

Against this background, and following Tallberg and Zürn's (2019) work on legitimation of international organisations, this article adopts a sociopolitical approach to (de-)legitimation practices, strategically pursued by purposeful political actors by means of justification and

contestation claims, empirically observable in official texts and public statements. (De-)legitimation is above all a narrative phenomenon: political actors produce narratives that legitimate or de-legitimate a given institution, in our case: DI and DDI or their specific manifestations. Thus, the principal research objective is to shed light on the politics of differentiation in selected EU member states, while empirically examining production of legitimating and de-legitimating narratives of D(D)I at both polity and policy level. The unit of analysis are claims produced by relevant political parties, both in power and in opposition. Accordingly, the focus is on strategically constructed partisan representations of differentiation rather than on existing institutional arrangements. I hypothesise that it is more likely for political actors to legitimate differentiated integration (DI) with a technocratic narrative and de-legitimate DI with a populist one. Conversely, it is more likely for political actors to legitimate differentiated disintegration (DDI) with a populist narrative and de-legitimate DDI with a technocratic one.

Drawing on existing work (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017; Bertsou and Caramani 2020) I define technocracy in terms of political power transfer to institutions and actors that draw legitimacy from independent technical expertise that aims at maximising long-term welfare of the entire community (government *for* the people), rather than from electoral process (government *by* the people). Populism, on the other hand, is about pursuing and sustaining political power by means of identifying the general will of the people, based on common sense solutions to complex problems, where the 'people', often framed as a homogenous and morally pure imagined community (Anderson 1983) of sorts, were betrayed and deprived of a voice by an evil elite (Weyland 2017; Mudde 2017). Operationalisation of these concepts in terms of narrative structure is outlined in detail in the research design section.

Beyond the introduction, this article consists of two theoretical and two empirical sections, and a conclusion. The theoretical sections provide an outline of (de-)legitimation practices of differentiation and operationalise the structure of technocratic and populist narratives. The empirical sections reveal the principal features of different types of (de)legitimating narratives as produced by relevant political actors in France, Poland and the UK. The conclusion nuances the hypothesis, while highlighting adaptive flexibility of political actors in their usages of complementary technocratic and populist claims aimed at (de-)legitimating differentiated (dis)integration.

(DE-)LEGITIMATING DIFFERENTIATION IN THE EU

'Legitimacy is central for international organizations to make a difference in world politics … [their] long term capacity to deliver is conditioned on their legitimacy in the eyes of governments and citizens' (Tallberg and Zürn 2019: 581). Legitimacy is understood here as an attribute of an institution based on a given audience's belief that the exercise of authority by this entity is justified even when it goes against the audience's narrow self-interest or instrumental cost-benefit calculation (Tallberg, Bäckstrand and Scholte 2018: 9). Legitimacy determines whether a given institution remains relevant to its members and stakeholders as a focal arena for policy coordination and problem-solving. It affects the capacity to develop new rules and norms. For instance, when the EU and its institutions suffer from poor legitimacy among national elites and citizens, it becomes more difficult to secure support from member state governments for ambitious policy solutions. Finally, legitimacy allows to secure internal compliance with institutional norms and rules without recourse to coercion (Lindblom 1977).

Legitimacy is a relational property, determined by beliefs and perceptions of audiences, such as political elites, media, civil society and ordinary citizens, about the appropriate exercise of authority. A sociopolitical approach to legitimacy implies that the process of legitimation is understood as observable empirical phenomenon rather than a normative

concept (Tallberg and Zürn 2019: 583). An important implication of the social embeddedness of legitimacy is the possibility for purposive actors to affect legitimacy beliefs of others. Political actors attempt to shape legitimacy beliefs of various audiences, while strategically engaging in legitimation and de-legitimation practices. The former are processes of justification, where proponents of an institution (here: DI or DDI) seek to cultivate confidence among state and societal actors in its right to rule. Conversely, the latter are processes of contestation, where opponents of an institution aim at undermining beliefs in its rightful authority (Tallberg, Bäckstrand and Scholte 2018: 11-12). Political actors making legitimacy claims constitutes the lifeblood of the politics of legitimation (Reus-Smit 2007).

Establishing, using and countering legitimacy is largely a narrative phenomenon (Steffek 2003; Halliday, Block-Lieb and Carruthers 2010). Analysis of narrative production illuminates the struggle for legitimacy, while revealing actors' strategies for 'more Europe' or 'less Europe'. Opt-outs and disintegration pressures are typically associated with laggards or proponents of 'less Europe' who do not wish to integrate further but prefer to maintain the status quo or take a step back. However, differentiation equally serves the needs of champions of 'more Europe' who wish to move forward despite lack of unanimous support to do so. Both types of claims need to be constantly justified and contested as they constitute a deviation from a more traditional and uniform way of 'doing integration' in Europe as exemplified by the unity of the single market. Drawing on legitimation model elaborated by Jonas Tallberg and Michael Zürn (2019: 590) I assume that purposeful political actors produce strategically-oriented narratives featuring justification claims (legitimation process) and contestation claims (de-legitimation process) referring to institutions of DI and DDI with regard to three dimensions: a) authority; b) procedure; c) performance. These claims are structured by two broader and analytically distinct paradigms related to liberal democratic governance or the way it may become perverted: technocracy and populism.

How do political actors use technocratic and populist narratives to legitimate and de-legitimate DI and DDI in the EU, while pursuing their strategic objectives domestically? The main hypothesis is that technocratic narrative is more likely to be used for legitimation of differentiated integration (DI) and de-legitimation of differentiated disintegration (DDI), whereas populist narrative is more likely to be used for de-legitimation of differentiated integration (DI) and legitimation of differentiated disintegration (DDI).

Table 1. Politics of Differentiation: hypothesis

	Technocratic narrative	Populist narrative
Differentiated integration	Legitimation	De-legitimation
Differentiated disintegration	De-legitimation	Legitimation

The aim here is not to argue that individual political leaders or parties qualify as populists or technocrats based on their narrative production, but rather to highlight flexible and complementary usages of components of both populist and technocratic narratives by various political actors that seek to (de-)legitimate differentiation in line with their preferences and strategic goals. Accordingly, it is assumed that technocratic narratives can be produced by non-technocratic organisations, including political leaders or political parties, whereas populist narratives can be produced by political actors that we would normally refrain from labeling as populists. Moreover, as populism and technocracy are not necessarily mutually exclusive logics (De Blasio and Sorice 2020; Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2021), the (de-)legitimating narratives may possibly reflect their blended claims.

TECHNOCRATIC AND POPULIST NARRATIVE PRODUCTION: RESEARCH DESIGN

Narratives are more than stories. They provide means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present and future of international politics (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle 2017) in order to achieve political objectives, especially in terms of influencing beliefs and thus behaviour of other actors. They constitute a combination of selective historical accounts of what happened and normative visions of a political project that serves the goals of a narrative entrepreneur. In line with the structuralist interpretation of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), it is argued here that narratives consist of identifiable components that can be studied empirically and generalised across space and time (Shanahan, Jones, McBeth and Radaelli 2018: 175).

Analysis of the narrative structure, informed by the NPF, reveals four basic narrative components: setting, characters, plot, and moral of the story (Shanahan, Jones and McBeth 2018: 335-336). The setting is the scene where action takes place over time. It outlines the broader policy context including legal, economic and normative conditions. Characters play different roles, especially those of a hero (an entity that fixes the problem), a villain (an entity that causes the problem) or victim (an entity that is negatively affected by the problem caused by the villain). The plot links the characters and the setting while organising action. Finally, the moral is typically equivalent to a policy solution and may culminate in a call to action (Shanahan, Jones, McBeth and Radaelli 2018: 176). Our setting is constituted by the institutions of differentiated (dis)integration in the EU, whereas characters, plot and moral are organised by conceptual frameworks of technocracy and populism. Importantly, a narrative produced by a given political force may rely on a synthesis of populism and technocracy or technopopulism (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2021), although either populism or technocracy are expected to dominate. Therefore, it seems justified to analytically distinguish these two narrative scripts.

How to recognise a technocratic narrative when we see it? Critically drawing on recent literature (Bertsou and Caramani 2020) I identify four major features of technocratic narrative production. First, it praises the authority of the merit-based knowledge elite: scientists and independent experts. They are heroes that know better and are capable of fixing complex problems for the benefit of citizens who are passive recipients of optimal solutions. Second, the narrative promotes evidence-based approach to policymaking and allocation of resources, while justifying decisions with progress, rationally defined long-term welfare of the society as a whole, as well as with necessity based on objective processes or external constraints, such as markets, global transformations or supranational institutions. It is thus anti-pluralist and anti-political, in the sense of being either critical or negligent of competing sociopolitical interests, thus de-legitimating power struggles between various groups within a society, while effectively annihilating a meaningful policy choice. Third, the technocratic narrative favours procedural leadership where key roles are assigned to independent officials engaged in highly institutionalised and routinised governance practices, who are not bound by short-term responsiveness to electoral concerns. Finally, the plot revolves around performance understood in terms of policy output, growth and efficiency, while neglecting non-output related values.

What is the populist narrative script? Critically drawing on existing literature (Ostiguy 2017; Mudde 2017) I argue that it is characterised by the following four features. First, it constructs an antagonistic relationship between the good people 'from here', whose authentic voice is not heard and true interests are not represented (victims), and the corrupt/cosmopolitan/unresponsive elite that serves powerful/foreign/hostile interests (villains). Heroes are those who fight for giving the voice back to the people. Second, the narrative promotes a common sense approach to policymaking and simplistic solutions, while justifying decisions with the popular will, responding to imagined homogenous preferences of the majority, but neglecting responsiveness to minorities and objective risks. As a result, and similarly to the technocratic narrative, the populist narrative is also monist and de-politicised as it ignores pluralist and conflicting interests. But the latter are

de-legitimated not as irrational, irresponsible or short-sighted, but as special interests or preferences of foreign agents. Third, the populist narrative favours personalist leadership, where decision-makers react swiftly, in a direct, unmediated and procedurally unlimited way, as opposed to remote and bureaucratic institutions that are designed to obstruct the popular will and facilitate unresponsiveness of the elite. Finally, the narrative's plot revolves around performance constructed as greater voice given to the oppressed and unheard majority.

Table 2. Structure of technocratic and populist narratives

Narrative structure	Technocratic narrative	Populist narrative
Characters	Experts and scientists Citizens as passive recipients of optimal solutions designed for their benefit	Corrupt (evil) elite Morally pure people
Guiding principles	Evidence-based long-term societal welfare, progress & pragmatic necessity	Popular will and common sense
Leadership	Procedural	Personalist
Performance	Efficiency	Voice

The empirical analysis is qualitative and based on three national case studies (France, Poland and the UK) featuring speech acts by representatives of political elite from relevant parties in power and in opposition. The cases are not subject to systematic comparison, but rather serve as an illustration of the full spectrum of the differentiation/legitimation nexus. Whereas France, a crucial member of the EU and the eurozone core, is widely regarded as fervent advocate of DI in the form of avant-garde, the UK, a former EU member since 1 February 2020, has long championed DI in the form of numerous opt-outs and more recently DDI, be it in the form of the so-called new settlement or ultimately, protracted exit. Finally, Poland constitutes a puzzling in-between case of an EU member that talks unity yet acts differentiation, while cherishing the principal laggard status, staying outside of the eurozone and various enhanced cooperation formats (Cianciara 2019).

The dataset for the narrative analysis consists of a corpus of articulations made by presidents or prime ministers, ministers of foreign or European affairs, as well as members of parliament (MPs) during parliamentary debates on European policy, where some form of DI or DDI (for example 'enhanced cooperation', 'multi-speed Europe', Brexit, and so on) was mentioned or implied. The dataset includes 53 speech units (see Annex) articulated in the years 2011-2019: 20 (38 per cent) from Poland, 14 (26 per cent) from France and 19 (36 per cent) from the UK. All articulations in French and in Polish were translated into English by the author. The year 2011 is considered a useful starting point as the eurozone crisis reinvigorated the differentiation debate in all the three member states under scrutiny. Differences between national corpuses are mainly due to national context-specific systemic and institutional factors, which necessarily guided data selection. Whereas the French corpus features predominantly longer articulations in the form of presidential and party leader speeches (UMP, Socialist Party, LREM, National Rally), the Polish and British corpuses contain numerous shorter units articulated during parliamentary debates by representatives of governments and political parties: especially Law and Justice and Civic Platform in the Polish case; Conservatives, Labour and Scottish National Party (SNP) in the British case. This empirical material was coded by hand following the technocratic and populist narrative codebooks outlined above (see Table 2). Identification of relevant

elements of the technocratic and populist narrative structure in the corpus was followed by assignment of those elements to legitimating and de-legitimating strategies pursued by political actors both in power and in opposition.

(DE-)LEGITIMATING DIFFERENTIATED (DIS)INTEGRATION: TECHNOCRATIC NARRATIVE PRODUCTION

How do political actors in France, Poland and the UK use the technocratic narrative to legitimate differentiated integration (DI) and de-legitimate differentiated disintegration (DDI)? Unsurprisingly, technocratic legitimation of DI as necessary and efficient tool for desirable progress is especially and consistently evident from the French narrative production across the spectrum of major political forces (republicans, liberals, socialists) represented in parliament. It was also part and parcel of the narrative produced by the British Conservative government at the beginning of the discussed period, before disintegration became the only game in town. Finally, the Polish liberal government led by the Civic Platform, in power until 2015, narrated DI as inevitable reality that Poland had to adapt to, while possibly co-defining scope conditions and working towards eventually reducing differentiation by joining the eurozone integration core.

Stories told by these political actors may vary and underpin highly differential strategic objectives, yet they are all based on discursive commitment to facts, international realities and pragmatic necessities imposed by objective processes and external constraints. The facts, identified by the narrative entrepreneurs seeking to legitimate DI, are the following: 'multi-speed Europe is already here' (Macron 2017); 'Europe already has different facets. Britain is not in the single currency or in the Schengen no-borders agreement … the EU secures more than half of our exports and millions of British jobs' (Cameron in House of Commons 2011); 'I do not invent anything new: this [DI] is the way that made Schengen and single currency possible' (Hollande 2013); 'permanently staying outside the eurozone limits our room for manoeuvre' (Sikorski in Sejm 2013). Pragmatic necessity and inevitability act as fundamental justifications for actors' preferences and actions. In line with the French presidential narrative, the EU will be doomed if specific actions in response to 'global changes and challenges' are not taken and economic and monetary union is not deepened (Macron 2019a; Hollande 2013). DI is legitimate as it is the only logical, functional and viable solution under given circumstances: a single currency 'cannot work' when economic and fiscal systems are diverging, while 'it is impossible' to 'plead for federalism and at the same time for the enlargement of Europe' (Sarkozy 2011). Enlargement is only 'acceptable', when 'the strengthened Union's core allows for more differentiation' (Macron 2017). For the British Conservative government DI has a different facet: as 'a new global race of nations is underway … the EU must be able to act with the speed and flexibility of a network' (Cameron 2013). For Poland's Civic Platform government, 'eurozone consolidation seems unstoppable' (Schetyna in Sejm 2013), and thus Poland, although non-euro member, should be part of the new fiscal pact and the banking union. 'Whether we like it or not' Europe seems more and more divided into circles of integration and 'a new European Union emerges, one that is centred around the eurozone'; thus 'it is in Polish strategic interest to join this integration centre: a geopolitical choice for decades' (Sikorski in Sejm 2013). This articulation summarises the puzzle of the Polish centre-right actors' cautious and conditional legitimation of DI: it serves as justification for euro adoption, driven by strategic and geopolitical, instead of exclusively economic rationale.

The technocratic narrative revolves around policy output, while stressing the need for elaboration of effective toolkit and identifying numerous specific solutions, often in the form of new institutional and procedural arrangements, that are to foster growth and progress for the entire EU. Over 60 policy measures, voiced by the French president since his election in May 2017 in order to reinvigorate Europe, range from creation of the

European border police and European climate bank to collection of carbon tax on EU borders and strengthening independent scientific assessment of food safety and substances hazardous to the environment and health (Macron 2019a; Macron 2017). Whereas these are proposals for the EU27 to adopt, the magnitude of challenges facing the EU is used as justification to move forward as soon as possible: 'those who wish to move faster should not be prevented from doing so' (Le Drian in Assemblée Nationale 2017). 'We need *efficient* tools to fight climate change, unfair competition, lack of political courage that prevents fiscal and social harmonisation' (Auconie in Assemblée Nationale 2017). Adequate policy output in the reformed eurozone cannot be secured by informal cooperation, but requires establishment of an 'appropriate governance structure' (Le Drian in Assemblée Nationale 2017).

The narrative relies on output legitimacy. EU's positive image depends on whether it delivers: on social harmonisation according to the French narrative or on competitiveness according to the British one. Notions such as democratic deficit are absent, although the problem of trust in the European project is recognised. But according to the French presidential narrative, the solution to citizens' limited trust is more independence of experts: 'Europeans wish to be able to trust experts' (Macron 2017). Accordingly, citizens will trust decision-makers more if collective decisions rely on evidence-based solutions proposed by scientists that work independently and transparently, insulated from undue influence exercised by politicians or industry lobbies.

On the other side of the spectrum, how is technocratic narrative used to de-legitimate DDI? Such usages were common in the narrative produced post-referendum by the opponents of 'hard Brexit' - Labour and SNP. Some elements of the technocratic narrative were used by the Polish liberal and left-wing opposition who sought to de-legitimate policies of Law and Justice, in power since 2015, as a highway to 'Polexit'. In the overwhelmingly pro-integrationist Polish society, with 91 per cent in favour of EU membership (CBOS 2020), disintegration, differentiated or not, remains unpopular and thus constitutes a useful tool for the opposition to engage in ruling-party-bashing. Although the mainstream political parties in France favour differentiation in many integration areas, they nevertheless draw red lines as to where it cannot apply.

This de-legitimating technocratic narrative relies on scientific evidence on the one hand, and contestation of (differentiated) disintegration as unrealistic and irresponsible choice on the other. Opposition MPs in the House of Commons used detailed data and scientific analyses to demonstrate the catastrophic effects of (full) exit, while accusing the Conservative government of making ideology-driven decisions unsupported by any reliable evidence. Trading with the EU under WTO rules 'would be a catastrophe for Scotland, threatening up to 80,000 jobs in our country alone' (Blackford in House of Commons 2017). In fact:

> getting the Prime Minister's Brexit done will leave the UK £70 billion worse off than if it had remained in the EU, according to a study by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research … a basic trade agreement will lead to GDP being lower by the equivalent of £1,600 per person compared with EU membership. (Blackford in House of Commons 2019b).

The timeframe set by the government for negotiating a new deal with the EU is utterly unrealistic as 'it took Canada seven years to reach an agreement [with the EU]' (Benn in House of Commons 2019b). Jobs are reduced 'on the basis of ideology' (Blackford in House of Commons 2019b), whereas the government has not provided 'an economic assessment of the single most important decision that we are going to take and the nature of the future relationship … history will record that that was an act of irresponsibility' (Benn House of Commons 2019b). Equally, liberal government in Poland evoked irresponsibility, ignorance of international realities and illusion of an alternative to the EU, in order to de-legitimate European policy orientation of the opposition: 'some are delusional about cherry-picking

or think they may have greater weight and freedom outside of the EU … this is dangerous fantasy' (Sikorski in Sejm 2013). Another (performance-based) strategy was for the liberal opposition to accuse Law and Justice government of total disregard for EU's policy output: 'you think only in terms of national egoism, you do not propose anything to make the Union more effective' (Szłapka in Sejm 2019).

Whereas the French governmental narrative favours progressive differentiation, it clearly delimits what is not negotiable, namely DDI regarding the rule of law. Policy cooperation may be differentiated, but fundamental values cannot be subject to a 'two-speed' or 'à la carte logic' (Macron 2017; Loiseau 2019). Disintegration or 'not being part of the European Union' is not a viable alternative but a 'trap', whereas 'nationalist retrenchment offers nothing' but pure rejection, according to the French president (Macron 2019a). Thus there is no other choice but to 'construct in Europe a coalition for progress that will make it possible to move forward and will not give in to the coalition of … disintegration' (Macron 2019b). This is where technocratic narration gives in to a more confrontational and antagonistic 'us versus them' logic, where heroic forces of growth and progress rise against dark forces of irrationalism and destruction.

The technocratic narrative may dominate justification of DI and contestation of DDI in all the three member states, but this does not exclude selective usages of the populist narrative. Scottish opponents of hard Brexit used the people-elite opposition and the argument of voice to de-legitimate disintegration in a similar way the ruling Conservatives did in order to legitimate it: 'Scotland has voted to remain and, in particular, wants to stay in the single market and the customs union', so the 'UK Government cannot drag Scotland out of the EU before gaining the legislative consent of the Scottish Parliament' (Blackford in House of Commons 2019b; 2017). On the other side of the spectrum, Conservative backbenchers sought to de-legitimate external DDI in favour of full exit, while instrumentalising the notion of the 'people' in line with their preferences: prime minister Theresa May was accused of 'inability to deliver the Brexit that *people* voted for' (Rees-Mogg in House of Commons 2019a), despite the fact that those who voted 'Leave' may have voted with extremely divergent terms of withdrawal in mind. Finally, de-legitimating the idea of biggest integration laggards being able to block DI initiatives as 'heresy' (Macron 2017) seems all but a technocratic argument at first sight. Yet it denotes deviation from the universal doctrine of rational progress coupled with the necessary exclusion, without a possibility of accommodation, of all those who draw attention to input-related instead of output-related values. Such a justification relies on convergence of technocracy and populism (technopopulism), underpinned by the common grammar and similar overarching 'us versus them' logic of exclusion.

(DE-)LEGITIMATING DIFFERENTIATED (DIS)INTEGRATION: POPULIST NARRATIVE PRODUCTION

How do political actors in Poland, France and the UK use the populist narrative to de-legitimate differentiated integration (DI) and legitimate differentiated disintegration (DDI)? Neither populist nor technocratic de-legitimating usages of DI were identified among partisan and governmental actors in France, where DI remains the preferred alternative to the status quo guided by lack of integrationist ambition from some EU members. For a long time, DI was also the only acceptable modus operandi across the political spectrum in the UK, allowing for opt-outs from unwanted cooperation championed by other member states, notably France. Thus DI is useful for justifying both moving forward and standing still. In contrast, the populist narrative has been used in Poland across the political spectrum in order to de-legitimate existing power relations in the EU on the one hand, and to campaign for eurozone accession on the other.

An interesting feature of the populist narrative produced by Poland's Law and Justice party, both when in opposition and in power, is its dual usage of 'evil elite versus good people' opposition. On the one hand, European elites, both from EU institutions and national capitals (Polish liberals and leftists included), are narrated as 'arrogant' and 'self-proclaimed' (Szczerski in Sejm 2013), fearing their voters and 'wearing elegant suits, courting our [EU] partners, no matter how they treat Poles and their traditions' (Gosiewska in Sejm 2019). On the other hand, the elite-people antagonistic relationship is transformed into antagonism of dominant-and-rich powers versus weaker-and-poorer member states, where the former are embodied by the 'Berlin-Paris-Brussels triangle' (Waszczykowski in Sejm 2013) and the latter by Poland governed by Law and Justice - the 'true' elite that puts 'interest of the ordinary citizen first' (Gosiewska in Sejm 2019). Thus the Law and Justice heroes:

> will not allow that the stronger decide for us and control us; we are not going to be a henchman under anybody's leadership … we should look for allies who do not see their future in a federation ruled by the powerful, but in a community of equal states. (Szczerski in Sejm 2013)

Accordingly, the DI, labeled as two- or multi-speed Europe, is de-legitimated as a tool of the powerful few to discipline weaker EU members and thus strengthen inequality within the EU.

Differentiation is at the heart of domestic political usages of European integration in Poland. On the one hand, DI, understood as economic and political consolidation of the eurozone, can be bluntly de-legitimated, as equaling mortal threat of EU disintegration, by the Left seeking to promote swift euro adoption: 'if we do not join the eurozone, we will be completely marginalised' (Gibała in Sejm 2013). On the other hand, DI may be (temporarily) justified by the liberals, provided certain conditions are met. But if these conditions of inclusiveness and informality were not fulfilled, Poland would be deprived of voice: 'there is no greater risk for Poland today than silent division of Europe where nobody pays attention to those outside the eurozone' (Tusk in Sejm 2011). Proponents of DI may be glorifying its efficiency, but voice is equally important: the EU can only become efficient if it has a democratic mandate for action, when both citizens and member states feel that their voice matters in crucial matters (Czaputowicz in Sejm 2019; 2018). Does this mean that the main political forces in Poland would refrain from legitimating DDI? Not necessarily.

How does the populist narrative legitimate DDI? Populist usages were common among the UK Conservative Party and government, especially after the 2015 general elections, as well as among leaders of National Rally in France (a specific case of an anti-EU party that is almost absent from the national parliament, yet repeatedly wins European elections, whereas its leader received 34 per cent of the vote in the second round of the 2017 presidential election). Usages of the populist narrative in Poland are quite puzzling as Law and Justice, in power since 2015, is half-heartedly de-legitimating differentiation, while legitimating one-speed disintegration.

These narrative entrepreneurs focus a lot on the evil Brussels elites who oppress the people. The founding fathers are de-mystified as agents of special economic and foreign interests, whereas the only goal of 'anonymous officials in glass buildings' is 'harmonisation that equals uniformity that equals submission of the people' (Le Pen 2019; 2018). Both morality and output-related competence of EU officials are contested: by organising mass-immigration they make 'the French change their ways, look down, avoid certain streets' (Le Pen 2018), but at the same time they are 'making France and Europe lag behind in global technological wars' (Le Pen 2019). National elites can be equally oppressive: 'for too long, the people of Britain have been denied their say. For too long, powers have been handed to Brussels over their heads. For too long, their voice on Europe has not been heard' (Hammond in House of Commons 2015). Fortunately, here there are the 'true'

heroic elites who stand with their people, declaring: 'I do not love Brussels. I love Britain' (Cameron 2016), and tirelessly working towards a 'peaceful and democratic revolution' (Le Pen 2019). These elites reject the 'German-dominated … bureaucratic, federal, undemocratic Union' (Waszczykowski in Sejm 2013). Revolution is imminent as 'people and our ideas triumph already in Italy, Austria, Poland, Hungary, UK and US' (Le Pen 2018).

This narrative legitimates DDI with popular will, that is one for the whole nation, and with the common sense. Hence it posits that all British people feel that the EU is 'something that is done to them, not for them' (Hammond in House of Commons 2015) and they are all not 'happy with the EU's direction of travel' (Baron in House of Commons 2013). What is needed is a looser 'union of common sense': 'we hear all the time that we cannot do something because we are in the EU', but 'we can't be held hostage to this one referendum that took place a while ago': as 'Union changes, we have the right to decide again' (Szczerski in Sejm 2011). A union of common sense is 'far less bureaucratic and far more competitive'; this means bringing 'Europe back to the people, ensuring that decisions are made as close to them as possible' (Hammond in House of Commons 2015).

Contrary to the technocratic narrative that cherishes policy output, growth and decision-making efficiency, the populist narrative highlights voice as the ultimate indicator of institutional performance. Hence the Alliance of European Nations, Marine Le Pen's 'beautiful European idea' of DDI, is about 'Europe where people are free to decide to cooperate or not to cooperate, free to decide on areas of cooperation, free to leave the cooperation when they want to' (Le Pen 2018). Despite declarations to the contrary, the 'euro-realist community of nations and states' or the 'union of common sense' advocated by Poland's Law and Justice relies on differentiation and implies selective disintegration or 'withdrawing from objectively disadvantageous forms of enhanced cooperation that Poland is already part of', such as Council decision on relocation of asylum seekers, as this decision 'violated the essence of democracy, being taken against the Poles' (Law and Justice 2019).

Is it all about populist narrative or can we also detect usages of a technocratic narrative for justification of (differentiated) disintegration? As agreement on political centralisation of the eurozone governance proved impossible, a way out of the irresponsible monetary integration that disrespected basic economies realities was, according to Poland's Law and Justice, to take a step back and return to EU roots, the four fundamental freedoms (Waszczykowski in Sejm 2016; Waszczykowski in Sejm 2013). But this idea involves uniform rather than differentiated disintegration as all eurozone members would be expected to withdraw and thus protect European unity at a lower integration level: the single market instead of the monetary union. A similar logic guides the tentative of renegotiating the energy-climate package to secure interests of the Polish industry allegedly undermined by the ideologically driven and unrealistic climate policies. Whereas the ideal solution for Law and Justice would be to dismantle the policy at the European level (uniform disintegration), the second-best scenario is a situation where 'Poland will be reaching climate neutrality at its own pace', while being 'released from the [2050] climate-neutrality obligation' (differentiation) (Morawiecki in Gov.pl 2019).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to address the differentiation/legitimation nexus in the EU and shed light on the politics of differentiation, while empirically examining production of legitimating and de-legitimating narratives of differentiated integration (DI) and differentiated disintegration (DDI) by political actors in France, Poland and the UK. To this end a sociopolitical approach was adopted, highlighting (de-)legitimation practices, strategically pursued by purposeful actors making justification and contestation claims. It was argued that DI was more likely to be legitimated with a technocratic narrative, whereas DDI was more likely to be legitimated with a populist narrative. Conversely, de-legitimation

of DI is more likely to be pursued by means of a populist narrative, whereas de-legitimation of DDI by means of a technocratic narrative.

The empirical analysis largely confirmed that DI is predominantly legitimated by means of a technocratic narrative, whereas DDI is mainly legitimated with a populist narrative. This is well illustrated by the case of the French political arena, where three subsequent presidents representing three distinct political forces (UMP, socialists, LREM) used a similar technocratic narrative to legitimate progressive DI, while populist narrative was being used by a radical right party leader to legitimate DDI and de-legitimate all mainstream political forces. However, elements of (techno-)populist narrative were also present, especially in president Macron's articulations. Meanwhile, the British Conservative Party has undergone an evolution, whereby they used a largely technocratic narrative to legitimate regressive DI at the beginning of the period under scrutiny and adopted a populist narrative to legitimate DDI or even full exit after the 2015 general election that led to the 2016 Leave vote. This in turn has led the opposition to use a technocratic counter-narrative to legitimate existing forms of DI or a 'soft' version of DDI, while seeking to de-legitimate the Conservative government. Poland constitutes the most puzzling case, where D(D)I is de-legitimated by all major political forces, flexibly and simultaneously exploiting both technocratic and populist narratives. Whereas Civic Platform used a technocratic narrative to voice limited and conditional justification for DI in the short term and a mixture of technocratic and populist narratives do de-legitimate their main political opponent, Law and Justice used a populist narrative to de-legitimate all forms of progressive DI and a mixture of populist and technocratic narratives to legitimate uniform disintegration understood as achieving unity at a lower level of integration: the single market, or regressive DI as a second-best scenario.

In line with the objectives of the special issue, this analysis confirmed that political actors introduce a degree of flexibility to their narrative production, while complementing technocratic narratives with populist ones and vice versa. Claims are imitated and blended with the single objective of strengthening one's own legitimacy. Thus proponents of less Europe may also use technocratic narratives, whereas proponents of more Europe may rely on populist narrative elements. Importantly, both types of narratives are anti-pluralist and exclusionary. To be against rationally defined policy is to be against what is right (Caramani 2020: 8), to be a heretic in the words of the French president Emmanuel Macron. To question the voice of the mythical 'people', as expressed in an electoral act or opinion poll, is to commit a mortal sin and side with the evil according to the British and Polish governments. Both proponents of more Europe and less Europe de-legitimate societal conflicts of interests, while accusing their critics of 'dividing the nation/society'; both wish their version of the 'whole' (rational or popular/national) to dominate. Thus differentiated (dis)integration no longer seems to be about functional policy solutions to be negotiated among legitimate partners at the European level. Instead it has become a weapon in confrontational and largely insubstantial domestic struggles over who has the right to define what is right.

AUTHOR DETAILS

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APPENDIX

Research dataset: corpus of speech units

Name	Political Party	Function	Country	Type of articulation	Year
Auconie, S.	UDI	MP	FR	National Assembly debate	2017
Baron, J.	Conservative Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2013
Benn, H.	Labour Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Benn, H.	Labour Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2015
Blackford, I.	SNP	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2017
Blackford, I.	SNP	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Bourlanges, J.-L.	Democratic Movement	MP	FR	National Assembly debate	2017
Cameron, D.	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	UK	House of Commons debate	2011
Cameron, D.	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	UK	Prime Minister's address	2013
Cameron, D.	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	UK	Press statement	2016
Cash,W.	Conservative Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2017
Corbyn, J.	Labour Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Czaputowicz, J.	Law and Justice	MFA	PL	Sejm debate	2018
Czaputowicz, J.	Law and Justice	MFA	PL	Sejm debate	2019
Donaldson, J.	DUP	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Fox, L.	Conservative Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Gibała, Ł.	Civic Platform	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2013
Gosiewska, M.	Law and Justice	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2019
Gosiewska, M.	Law and Justice	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2016
Hammond, P.	Conservative Party	MFA	UK	House of Commons debate	2015
Hollande, F.	Socialist Party	President	FR	Speech at the EP	2013
Johnson, B.	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Karamanli, M.	Socialist Party	MP	FR	National Assembly debate	2017
Le Drian, J.-Y.	-	MFA	FR	National Assembly debate	2017

Name	Political Party	Function	Country	Type of articulation	Year
Le Pen, M.	National Rally	MP	FR	Political rally speech	2018
Le Pen, M.	National Rally	MP	FR	Political rally speech	2019
Loiseau, N.	LREM	MFA	FR	Press statement	2019
Lucas, C.	Green Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Macron, E.	LREM	President	FR	Presidential address	2017
Macron, E.	LREM	President	FR	Presidential address	2019
Macron, E.	LREM	President	FR	Press statement	2019
Macron, E.	LREM	President	FR	Press conference	2019
May, T.	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	UK	House of Commons debate	2017
Melenchon J.-L.	France Unbowed	MP	FR	National Assembly debate	2017
Miller, L.	Democratic Left	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2011
Miller, M.	Conservative Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Morawiecki, M.	Law and Justice	Prime Minister	PL	Press statement	2019
Rees-Mogg, J.	Conservative Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2019
Rifkind, M.	Conservative Party	MP	UK	House of Commons debate	2011
Sarkozy, N.	UMP	President	FR	University debate	2011
Schetyna, G.	Civic Platform	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2013
Schetyna, G.	Civic Platform	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2016
Sikorski, R.	Civic Platform	MFA	PL	Sejm debate	2013
Sikorski, R.	Civic Platform	MFA	PL	Sejm debate	2012
Szczerski, K.	Law and Justice	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2013
Szczerski, K.	Law and Justice	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2011
Szczerski, K.	Law and Justice	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2012
Szłapka, A.	Civic Coalition	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2019
Trzaskowski, R.	Civic Platform	MEP	PL	Press article	2011
Trzaskowski, R.	Civic Platform	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2018
Tusk, D.	Civic Platform	Prime Minister	PL	Sejm debate	2011
Waszczykowski, W.	Law and Justice	MP	PL	Sejm debate	2013
Waszczykowski, W.	Law and Justice	MFA	PL	Sejm debate	2016

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Research Article

‘People like that cannot be trusted’: Populist and Technocratic Political Styles, Legitimacy, and Distrust in the Context of Brexit Negotiations

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Abstract

Debates in and over the European Union (EU) are increasingly characterised as being based in arguments that are either 'populist' or 'technocratic'. As systems of communication, this article argues, populism and technocracy possess dramatically different logics of argumentation, modes of communication and meaning-making, distinct narratives, with appeals to distinct sources of legitimacy. As such, actors adopting either political style construct their identity in a way that seeks to legitimise its own political action, while in turn delegitimising that of its opponents. This results in an atmosphere of distrust between actors using these different communication styles, making any form of negotiation or cooperation between them exceedingly difficult. In the context of the Brexit negotiations, which this article uses as a case study, the UK Government has adopted a populist style characterised by narratives of taking back control, legitimised by the will of the people, communicating often in a 'low' political style and using a narrative of crisis and threat. In comparison, the EU has adopted a technocratic style characterised by narratives of technical policy making and the need for rationality, legitimised through the laws, rules and processes by which it is governed, communicating in a 'high' political style while using a narrative of stability and continuity. These radically different views of the world have resulted in an increasing of tensions and distrust by the parties to Brexit negotiations that were already heightened by a sense of 'betrayal' over Brexit.

Keywords

Brexit; Populism; Technocracy; Trust; Communication

> "Be careful, if you want to build a long-term relationship based on trust, you must respect past agreements" (Barnier, as cited in Nicholson 2021)
>
> "We have taken back control of our laws and our destiny. We have taken back control of every jot and tittle of our regulation" (Johnson, as cited in Woodcock 2020)

Debates in and over the European Union (EU) are increasingly characterised as being based in arguments that are either 'populist' or 'technocratic'. As systems of communication, this article argues, populism and technocracy possess dramatically different logics of argumentation, modes of communication and meaning-making, distinct narratives, with appeals to distinct sources of legitimacy. As such, actors adopting either political style construct their identity in a way that seeks to legitimise its own political action, while in turn delegitimising that of its opponents. This results in an atmosphere of distrust between actors using these different communication styles, making any form of negotiation or cooperation between them exceedingly difficult. However, how do these radically different approaches interact when sitting across an international negotiation table? In the context of the Brexit negotiations, which this article uses as a case study, the UK Government has adopted a populist style characterised by narratives of taking back control, legitimised by the will of the people, often communicating in an emotive and impassioned style and using a narrative of crisis, rupture and threat. In comparison, the EU has adopted a technocratic style characterised by narratives of technical policy making and the need for rationality, legitimised through the laws, rules and processes by which it is governed, communicating in a reasoned and dispassionate style while using a narrative of reasonableness, stability and continuity. What did this mean for Brexit negotiations and their outcomes? These radically different views of the world have resulted in an increasing of tensions and mistrust by the parties to Brexit negotiations that were already heightened by a sense of 'betrayal' over Brexit. It is important to state that this is not an intention to label individual or institutional actors as 'populist' or 'technocratic', but instead is focused on discourse, and the ways in which populist and technocratic styles impact upon relations between negotiating actors.

The article proposes to explore the interaction between the UK's populist discourse and the EU's technocratic one, namely by focusing on the tensions and feelings of mistrust characterising statements, through analysis of key speeches and policy documents produced in the context of three distinct historical phases in the development of Brexit discourse: 1) The referendum proposal and campaign; 2) The negotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement and of the Political Declaration under Prime Minister Theresa May; and 3) The renegotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement under Prime Minister Boris Johnson and subsequent negotiation of the future UK-EU relationship. From a methodological perspective, the authors focused on 24 key speeches and policy documents, in particular those evaluating negotiation rounds, characterising descriptions of negotiation positions, and commenting on the other side of the negotiation tables' strategies and stances. The data was collected from the institutional repositories of the UK Government and of the European Commission, and studied through discourse analysis in order to understand how language was used to create and communicate perceptions of trust and mistrust in the social context of Brexit. The original contribution of this article is in bringing in the added dimension of trust as it relates to understandings of the relations between 'populist' and 'technocratic' actors. While there has been considerable discussion of the role of populism in contemporary political upheaval, and the polarisation of debates concerning 'populism' and 'technocracy', this article seeks to further explore how the way in which populist and technocratic modes of communication foster and reinforce mutual mistrust between these types of actor. In doing so, it focuses in particular not only on their discursive mode, but also in the ways in which they source their legitimacy and view the roles of law, policy and process, so as to demonstrate how diametrically opposed beliefs concerning these institutions shapes their mistrust of the other actor. Contributing to the existing literature, it presents the argument that populism and technocracy are not inherent characteristics

of an actor, but instead ways of relating with other actors that can highlight differences in values and perceptions that make cooperation highly difficult to achieve.

This article will begin by expanding upon the notion of trust in the context of relations between the UK and EU, using the notion of 'particularised trust' to demonstrate the impact of a perception of differing values, experiences and world views in creating in-groups and out-groups, that serve to create distrust between 'people like me, and people like them'. It will place this in the context of the decision by the UK to leave the EU, before discussing populist and technocratic political styles in the second section, identifying the distinctive nature of these styles, their different sources of legitimacy, and the impact that this has on trust in interactions between 'populist' and 'technocratic' discursive actors. The final section covers the three distinct phases of the Brexit negotiations, starting with the UK referendum debate, the negotiations for a Withdrawal Agreement under Theresa May and the renegotiation of the Northern Ireland Protocol and negotiations for a future trade agreement under Boris Johnson, in order to demonstrate how radically different communication styles and sources of legitimacy created heightened perceptions of distrust on both sides, making compromise incredibly difficult in the context of a proposed debate. In doing so, this article contributes to this special issue by demonstrating that questions of legitimacy and trust are inherently interrelated, and that the 'us vs them' mentality that populist and technocratic political styles engender results in the desires and objectives of each group being difficult to effectively reconcile.

TRUST, COMMUNITY AND THE 'BETRAYAL' OF BREXIT

Trust allows us to make decisions about cooperation with others in situations of vulnerability and uncertainty (Larson 1997:19). In the absence of trust, considerable time, effort and labour would be invested in continually checking whether another is complying with their obligations, honouring their commitments, or indeed, deciding whether to form an agreement that would result in commitments being made in the first place. While trust may not be the only route to cooperation, it nevertheless works as an effective basis for agreements or cooperation, without continual need for oversight, verification and renegotiation (Uslaner 2002:2). Yet when we decide to trust another, we open ourselves to the risk that our trust is misplaced – the debt owed is not repaid, the secret told in confidence is spread, the trust violated. For this reason, trust needs to be based upon something, whether it be a belief in mutually beneficial outcomes, or understandings of the way that 'the world works'. We are conditioned to trust those that share that understanding, that way of thinking, or the values that we consider important. We are therefore likely to mistrust (or at least trust less) those that we believe do not share those understandings, ways of thinking, or values.

According to Uslaner (2002:4–5), we can conceptualise this as 'particularised trust' in comparison to 'generalised trust'. Particularised and generalised trust can be considered as 'social conceptions of trust' (Rathbun 2018:690). These forms of trust are based upon general beliefs concerning the way people act. Hoffman refers to this as a fiduciary form of trust that the other party will 'do what is right', based on shared meaning and interpretation (2002:375). Generalised trust is broader and more open, particularised trust closed and more cautious. The former is based in a belief that most, if not all, are trustworthy and likely to honour their obligations. Generalised trust facilitates cooperation with those about which one has little information, allowing for the establishment of new relationships in situations of uncertainty (Rathbun 2011:29). Generalised trust therefore extends beyond those you know, and to 'out groups', bridging gaps between communities or states, whereas in the absence of generalised trust, individuals limit their interactions to individuals they have information about, or prior experience (strategic trust), or alternatively, cooperate only with those considered part of their 'in-group'. This latter form

of trust is particularised in nature; 'it is a belief that people "like me" can be trusted' (Smith 2010:463).

It may start to become apparent to the reader why in the context of Brexit, the 'default' would be low trust between the EU and UK. Actors within a relationship characterised by particularised trust will expect other members of that group to 'do what is right' and honour their obligations. By leaving the EU, the UK moves itself from the position of member of the in group to a member of the out group – a non-EU state. Such a move can be perceived as a rejection of the beliefs, norms and values of that group, and a rejection of the idea of a common identity. Indeed, when writing about the referendum, academics have referred to the decision as being a rejection of globalisation (Pettifor 2017), openness (Wilson 2017) and 'liberal' values such as free movement (Calhoun 2016). The then-European Council President Donald Tusk gave an indication of this perception in his speech immediately after the referendum result was announced (Tusk 2016a), shortly followed by a joint statement by the Presidents of the European Council, of the European Parliament, and of the Council of the European Union reiterated this belief in collective identity of EU Member States, with an implicit recognition that the UK had rejected it, and moved from being part of the in-group to a member of the out-group (Tusk et al. 2016).

Collective identity, and particularised trust, are the result of continued interactions that promote cooperation, 'predicted upon a belief that others have a particular character, that they are inherently trustworthy' (Rathbun 2009:355). A rejection of that collective identity, no matter how it is expressed, can be seen as a 'betrayal' by the community that feels that its values have been rejected, engendering distrust in that actor. However, this article proposes that distrust of this nature can be exacerbated when communication between those two groups or actors reinforce the differences between them, with radically different values, narratives of events and sources of legitimacy for their actions being conveyed through their exchanges. The more polarised these positions and values, the more that compromise between those groups becomes difficult to achieve, and indeed, attempts at compromise can be considered by more radical actors within each group as a form of 'betrayal' (Palonen 2009; Mason 2015). As the next section of this article will discuss, there are few conflicts as polarised as that between populism and technocracy.

POPULISM AND TECHNOCRACY AS DISTINCT POLITICAL STYLES WITH DIVERGENT SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY

While Mudde (2004) defines populism as a thin-centred ideology (drawing from Freeden 1998), which 'considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite"' (Mudde 2004:543), Aslanidis argues that we should focus on populism as discourse (2016:96). The approach to populism as being discursive rather than ideological is associated with the work of Laclau (2007), in which the world is discursively divided between the powerful and the people. Asladinis' proposal relies on the empirical observations of populist politicians as lacking ideological coherence and depth as a collective group. In fact, the list of populist leaders is ideologically so diverse that populism risks becoming an empty signifier. This view does not imply that populists' discourses and actions are not based on an underlying ideology, but rather that populism cannot be equated with that ideology. This author argues that it more useful to conceptualise populism as an 'anti-elite discourse in the name of the sovereign People' (Aslanidis 2016:97). Our article is written from this perspective, considering populism to be a form of political communication, rather than as an ideological position.

Populism as a political style of communication (see Norris & Inglehart 2019) has particular features, that shall be expanded upon in the subsequent analysis as applied to the UK Government in its dealings with the EU. These features Include appeals to 'the People

versus the Elite', a performative style of 'bad manners', and a narrative of crisis, breakdown and/or threat (Moffitt 2017:41–45). In order to be operationalised for use in this article, Moffitt's conceptualisation of populism as a political style thus becomes highly pertinent. While the first feature is relatively self-evident, the second two are somewhat less so. By 'bad manners', Moffitt categorises this feature as being a disregard for what is considered appropriate in contemporary politics, and a 'coarsening' of rhetoric (2017:44). Ostiguy (2009) considers this as 'low appeal' politics (on an axis of low-to-high), that transcends the traditional left-right divide, to cover the socio-cultural and political-cultural dimensions, with high socio-cultural presentation including manner of dress, being 'well-mannered' and a tendency to use rationalist or ethically oriented discourse.

In comparison, low socio-cultural presentation also includes a different way of dressing, a less polished and more 'folksy' way of talking with the use of slang, and course or even offensive language. To this understanding, we add the dimension of 'passionate' communication style, in which arguments are emotively conveyed. Finally, the characteristic of an impetus of crisis and/or threat, Taggart claims that this is both the ostensible impetus for populism, as well as a performance intended to also induce crisis (2000). This crisis could range from the perceived breakdown of law and order; to 'overwhelming' levels of immigration; financial crisis; or threats to national security from foreign powers or domestic terrorism, often exacerbated by the action or inaction of an 'out of touch elite' (Gerodimos 2015; Moffitt 2015; Stanley & Cześnik 2019).

Technocracy, as compared to populism, is a subject less studied. Generally understood as 'rule by experts', one definition of technocracy comes from Burris, who states that it constitutes 'a synthetic type of organisational control […incorporating] technical control, bureaucracy, and professionalism' (1993:2). Technocracy as a means of governing society was a concept developed by the US sociologist Veblen, who considered in light of the upheavals of the First World War that engineers were better suited to running society than politicians or the markets (2001:34). Technocratic mentality, according to Radaelli, considers that rational analysis and knowledge produces efficient solutions that should be accepted by those with good will, while being sceptical of political conflict as being beneficial to deliberation (1999:25); 'the technocrat believes that social and political conflict is often, at best, misguided, and, at worst, contrived' (Putnam 1977:386).

Whereas technocratic governance is sometimes categorised as apolitical, or depoliticised (see for example Gardels 2012), this is not the case – technocracy constitutes politics by different means, rather than the absence of politics. Instead, technocracy emphasises decision-making in the absence of ideology (at least in the eyes of the technocrat), in which 'there is no room for ideological debate' when considering how policy problems may be addressed (Gunnell 1982:404). Technocracy could therefore be defined as a system in which considers that the problems in society are problems of policy, in which knowledge dictates the 'correct' solution, and that contestation or disagreement are the result of error (Bickerton & Accetti 2018:139). According to Bryld, then, a technocratic discourse centres on 'technical and instrumental solutions to problems', which emphasises effectiveness and efficiency (2000:701). In its method of communication, technocratic discourse also constitutes a political style, albeit one which appears diametrically opposed to that of populist political style. Returning to Moffitt's characterisation, if populist political style is based on a logic of 'People versus the Elite', using bad manners and a narrative of breakdown or crisis, then technocratic political style is based on a logic of rationality and appeal to expertise, a performative style of 'good manners', and a narrative of continuity, stability and progress (2017:46). The European Commission is a body that typifies the technocratic governance style, based in a 'policy and process' understanding of its role as guarantor of the EU legal order (Radaelli 1999; Majone 2014). It places emphasis upon expert-led processes of policy formulation in responses to technical problems, rather than considering its proposals in any way the result of a particular political ideology. Indeed, the Commission views itself as a 'depoliticised' body (Schmidt 2020), solely acting to

provide technical solutions to policy problems. The style the Commission adopts, therefore, reflects the technocratic leanings of its institutional self-identity.

On the first characteristic, technocratic style eschews considerations of 'ideological or moralistic criteria, preferring to debate *policy* [authors' emphasis] in practical, "pragmatic" terms' (Putnam 1977:385), based in presentations of evidence (often in the form of figures) and relying on the use of experts to identify cost-benefit, risk and feasibility (Jasanoff 1990; Boswell 2009). In contrast to populism, where the discursive frame is that of politics, and the role of people in democracy, the technocratic frame is that of policy, and the role of experts in solving problems/providing solutions. With an emphasis on the importance of legal obligations, adherence to process and following the rules, 'good manners' in the context of a technocratic body is characterised by a 'high appeal' mode of communication, emphasising compliance with the accepted norms, favouring a 'formal, impersonal, legalistic, institutionally mediated models of authority' and polished delivery (Ostiguy 2009:8–9). For this reason, we add the characteristic here of 'dispassionate' argumentation, in which information is conveyed in a linguistically 'neutral' but jargon-laden format. Finally, the narrative of stability and progress is one in which the pursuit of effective and efficient solutions to public policy problems ensures the avoidance of significant shocks or stagnation, whether in the form of financial instability, political upheaval (or gridlock), or ineffective response to natural disaster. By engaging in rational, technical planning, shocks to the system can be prevented or mitigated by 'elite-led gradualism' (Wallace & Smith 1995:140), allowing for a general expansion of the public good. As will be demonstrated in the remainder of this section, however, these very different discursive frames rely upon very different sources and origins of legitimacy, which in turn impacts upon trust between actors using these distinct political styles.

Table 1: Key characteristics of populist and technocratic political styles

	Populist political style	Technocratic political style
Logic of argumentation	'Of and for the people'	'Rational problem solving'
Manner of communication	'Low appeal' style, 'folksy', impassioned and emotive language	'High appeal' style, technical, disimpassioned and unemotive language
Central narrative and discursive framing	Crisis, rupture, threat	Stability, continuity, progress

Populist and technocratic political styles appeal to very different sources of legitimacy. Indeed, the source of legitimacy and subsequent legitimator of the narratives pursued within each discursive frame is inherently linked to the discursive logics previously identified. To put it another way, in arguing for radical change in the name of the 'People', populist discursive framing legitimates its actions through appeals to the 'Sovereign will of the People' (Mény & Surel 2002), a framing that results in strongly 'conflictual' discourse (Nai 2018). Limitations upon the exercise of this will, as in the context of liberal democracy and the protection of (for example) minority or human rights, 'checks and balances' upon the exercise of power, and authority being invested in law, are considered as affronts to this democratic will, and therefore illegitimate and in need of challenge or even abolition (Abts & Rummens 2007; Krämer 2017; de Vreese et al. 2018). In comparison, in arguing for continuity, stability and progress, technocratic discursive framing legitimates its actions through appeals to rationality and expertise, with decisions being taken by experts rather than being left subject to the whims of politicians or the public (Patel 2020:131). In this respect, technocratic legitimacy is based in a strongly anti-populist understanding of governance. Within this discursive frame, technocratic governance seeks to depoliticise issues and take them out of public contestation over problems and solutions 'as a way of

ensuring better government *for* the people without significant effects on government *by* and *of* the people' (Schmidt 2020:69 original emphasis). The legitimacy in technocratic discourses is in its throughput and output, as opposed to its input (Schmidt 2013), in strict obeyance of laws, processes and procedures determining the legitimacy of its decision-making processes, actions and policies (Shapiro 2005), and with scientific objectivity and political impartiality justifying the outcomes achieved (McKenna & Graham 2000).

This appears to place technocratic political style in direct opposition to populist political style in a way that makes trust between actors employing these distinct means of communicating difficult to achieve – the legitimacy of populism comes from the people, and therefore any institutional rules or procedures curtailing their wishes are illegitimate. In contrast, the legitimacy of technocracy comes from its compliance with rules, procedures and checks and balances, as well as its efficient outcomes, rendering attempts to circumvent these rules and procedures as illegitimate. In the context of Brexit negotiations, not only are the framing of issues in populist and technocratic discourses diametrically opposed, but so too are the sources of legitimacy upon which their arguments are based. If in discursive interactions between actors employing populist and technocratic political styles there is a mutual questioning of legitimacy, there is scant room for *trust* between those actors.

Table 2: Sources of legitimacy and illegitimacy in populist and technocratic political styles

	Populist political style	Technocratic political style
Source of legitimacy	The people, and thus 'input democracy'	Rational and effective decision making, and thus 'through and output legitimacy'
Perception of illegitimacy	Checks and balances on popular/sovereign will; laws, rules or procedures that 'subvert' will of the people	Demagoguery, flouting of laws, rules or procedures
Role of law	To give effect to the will of the majority	To provide structures, certainty and coherence insulated from political interference

As the next section of this article will demonstrate, the highly conflictual nature of the Brexit negotiations over UK withdrawal from the EU can exemplify how the very different political styles of the UK Government and the European Commission result in a strong atmosphere of mistrust, in which apparently mutually incompatible perceptions of legitimacy and illegitimacy make productive negotiation exceedingly difficult.

DISCURSIVE FRAMINGS OF BREXIT IN THE CONTEXT OF EU-UK NEGOTIATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON TRUST

The story of Brexit negotiations are one of increasing mistrust and disintegrating relations between the EU and UK, captured expertly by Desmet and Stourton in their account of the behind the scenes discussions amongst various EU officials including Barnier and Verhofstadt, which reframes the understanding of the UK by the EU; once seen as an awkward yet imposing member, it was now seen as an internally riven, fractious and even incompetent one (see Stourton & Desmet 2019:1–9). We can identify three distinct historical phases in the development of these discourses: 1) The referendum proposal and campaign; 2) The negotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement and of the Political Declaration under Prime Minister Theresa May; and 3) The renegotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement under Prime Minister Boris Johnson and negotiation of the future UK-EU relationship. By

analysing key speeches in each phase, we are able to identify the adoption of distinct political styles by the UK and EU negotiators, which are characterised by appeals to very different incompatible sources of legitimacy, with indications of growing distrust between each set of actors that becomes particularly prominent under the Johnson government.

Phase 1: Announcing a Referendum and the Campaign

Pro-EU and Eurosceptic discourses have been present in British politics since the creation of the European Economic Community itself, although their visibility among the general public and impact on decision-making has varied greatly over the years (O'Toole 2019). Although populism had already emerged in the UK's political landscape with parties such as the British National Party (BNP) and the UK Independence Party (UKIP), their discourse of discontent was yet to make an entrance into mainstream parties' debates (Baker & Schnapper 2015). As the 2015 General elections approached however, their message was clearly based on an elite versus the people approach and characterised by the usage of emotional and spoken language that became increasingly mainstream (for an excellent account see O'Toole 2019). Although the 2015 electoral results were not encouraging for either party, and their popularity would soon decline, their ideas had by then taken a strong foothold and were now being picked up by members of the mainstream parties. Due to concerns about maintaining Conservative Party cohesion (and the ever-present threat of UKIP potentially splitting the right-wing vote), David Cameron announced that there would be a referendum on EU membership should he win a majority at the next election. Cameron argued in favour of membership of the European Union, but notably, several high-profile members of the Conservative Party did not, and campaigned to leave the EU using a populist political style in communicating it, as evidenced below. This is particularly visible in the rhetoric of the different organisations taking part in the Leave Campaign and, in particular, in the discourse of members of the Conservative Party, such as Michael Gove and Boris Johnson, who presented themselves as outsiders to the political establishment as the leadership of Vote Leave.

The Leave Campaign further developed the BNP and UKIP's populist discourse by dwelling deeper into existing grievances against what would come to be known as 'enemies of the people', including British elites, European institutions, and immigrants, and by constructing itself as the revolutionary answer to perceived oppression and betrayal (Clarke & Newman 2017; Farage 2016). These numerous grievances, which were often articulated in very emotional terms, included a sense of being 'left behind' by a neoliberal elite detached from the interests of the rest of the population (McGowan 2017; O'Toole 2019). Boris Johnson's campaign speech in June 2016 illustrates this point well, declaring that it was a myth and delusion to give democratic control to a 'over-centralising, over-regulating, job-destroying machine' and that it was time to take back control (2016). This speech is representative of a populist political style – its logic of argumentation is based in representing the people against an uncontrolled elite, using emotive language that can be argued as representing 'bad manners' in politics through its references to the 'over-regulating job-destroying machine', and presents a narrative of threat and crisis.

In terms of source of legitimacy, the speech indicates a clear appeal to the people and speaking in favour of them and democracy, while indicating the *illegitimacy* of the EU and the threat it poses to freedom and democracy, in both its tendency to centralise and regulate. The reference to myth and delusion seeks to reinforce the idea that the EU is misguided or outright dishonest, indicating a mistrust of the project and the actors behind it. The Leave Campaign was very successful at pushing this populist discourse with the taking back control of decision-making, in particular of borders, migration, and the economy, being at the heart of the pre-referendum public debates (BBC 2016; Hobolt 2016). Its success was also visible in topics that had until then received more limited attention in the context of the referendum campaign, such as internal security (Carrapico, Niehuss & Berthélémy 2018), which also started to be presented in a populist style.

After Vote Leave's success in securing a Leave result, Cameron announced that he would not carry out the rest of his term, and submitted his resignation as Prime Minister, with an internal election for a 'Brexit Prime Minister' to follow. Johnson's reaction to the referendum result, again, possesses the characteristics of populist style indicated in Table 1, referring to the referendum being 'about the people, it's about the right of the people of this country to settle their own destiny, it's about the very principles of our democracy […] believe we now have a glorious opportunity. We can pass our laws and set our taxes entirely according to the needs of the UK economy' (Johnson, as quoted in Staufenberg 2016). In comparison, European Commission President Juncker's reaction to the referendum, while emotive, was clearly delivered in a technocratic political style. While regretting the decision of the UK to leave, Juncker nevertheless stated in response to the referendum result that a careful and thoughtful approach to Brexit should be taken, based on transparency, certainty and no informal negotiations, indicating that negotiations would take place upon the basis of carefully drafted rules and mandates (Juncker 2016). Here it is possible to see the developing EU approach in a technocratic political style, with the use of a logic of argumentation of rational problem solving, and a narrative of ensuring stability and continuity. Legitimacy is found in rules, procedures and transparencies, and a certain illegitimacy is placed upon those who may wish to negotiate absent those rules, or without due transparency.

Phase 2: Negotiating Withdrawal Under Theresa May

Upon winning the Conservative leadership election in July 2016, Theresa May felt, despite having previously supported the UK remaining in the EU (yet being noticeably absent during the campaign), that the way forward required accepting the referendum result and following the will of the people. Within the rationale of the newly elected Government, this meant pursuing the populist path developed throughout phase 1 (May 2016b). May's communications regarding Brexit and negotiations with the EU, particularly her October 2016 speech at the Conservative Party Conference, can be categorised as populist style under Table 1, sourcing legitimacy from the people, and declaring as illegitimate elites that sought to subvert their will. Referring to Britain's Quiet Revolution, May said that the Brexit vote was a vote by the people against a European Union that represented an elite-driven project rather than a democratic one, concluding that the UK was leaving to become 'once more, a full and sovereign country' (May 2016a). Donald Tusk, then President of the European Council, responded in a speech made later that October, setting the mood for the negotiations to come. Deeply critical in his speech of the 'populists and isolationists' who sought to undermine the EU and its values, Tusk stated that Brexit negotiations would be dictated by the mandate provided to the negotiators, and based in the Treaty, adhering 'unconditionally to the Treaty rules and fundamental values' (Tusk 2016b). Adopting a high political style, sourcing legitimacy in rules and procedures, Tusk both reinforced the logic of rationality in the EU's technocratic approach, as well as criticising the lack of rationality in the approach adopted by the UK: 'In fact, the words uttered by one of the leading campaigners for Brexit and proponents of the "cake philosophy" was pure illusion' (Tusk 2016b). These very contrasting approaches, the UK presenting a narrative of change and revolution on behalf of the people, and the EU a narrative of continuity *despite* crisis, adherence to rules and the irrationality of the UK's position fostered an environment of inherent mistrust that could be seen in public discussions of the negotiations between the EU and UK on the UK's withdrawal that began in 2017.

With May having appointed David Davis, Secretary of State for Exiting the EU as her lead negotiator, and the EU appointing Michel Barnier, former Commissioner for Internal Market and Services, as its Chief Negotiator, two very different political styles continued to be evident. By the third round of negotiations on the Withdrawal Agreement, which would dictate the terms of the UK's exit from the EU, clear dividing lines had opened between the two parties on issues such as financial settlement, the border with Ireland, and citizens' rights. Barnier's speech again demonstrated characteristics of technocratic political style as detailed in Table 1, with references to mandates, laws and expertise, legitimation

sourced through rules and process and a logic of rational problem solving. Yet, it indicated that there was a growing feeling of distrust, providing examples of the UK Government appearing to go back on commitments supposedly made (2017b).

Similarly, Davis also indicated that there was a lack of trust in the Commission on the side of the UK, which he felt was more concerned with policy and process than the wishes of the British public (2017). Distrust and recrimination became evident outside of these speeches; then Secretary of State for International Trade Liam Fox stated that the UK would not be 'blackmailed' by the EU, while Barnier was reported as having stated it appeared clear that the UK did not feel legally obliged to honour its obligations (Barker & Wright 2017). Theresa May's Florence Speech in September 2017 appeared to be an attempt to allay this mistrust, speaking of continued cooperation and friendship, albeit using the 'of the people' logic of argumentation with frequent references to the UK as a sovereign nation (May 2017). While this intimation of friendship and renewed resolve was received positively by Barnier, who after the fifth round of negotiations stated that the speech gave some momentum to negotiations, divisions still remained and Barnier reiterated that 'trust is needed between us if this future relationship is to be solid, ambitious and long-lasting' (Barnier 2017a).

David Davis resigned his position in July 2018. In signs that the fragile coalition in the Conservative Party was beginning to fail, Davis claimed that this was due to his refusal to accept the terms of the negotiations with the EU. May had sought agreement at Chequers for a plan that would allow for EU market access in exchange for accepting the EU's laws under a 'common rulebook' for areas such as the environment, state aid and employment protections. According to Davis, this was 'certainly not returning control of our laws in any real sense' (Davis 2018). This resulted in turn in increased distrust *within* the UK Government (Dunlop et al. 2020), as well as on the part of the EU, that considered that this inability to agree a position was a sign of the inherent irrationality of the UK position (Payne 2018). Dominic Raab subsequently took over negotiations and Davis' position. While appearing to support the Chequers plan, Raab struck a more conflictual tone than Davis regarding the EU, stating explicitly that the government was preparing for a 'no-deal' exit in the event that the EU was not cooperative (2018b).

The relationship became even worse in September 2018 when it was revealed that the UK, in defiance of the negotiation mandate imposed by Brussels, had sent letters to the 27 Member States asking for 'side negotiations' in the event of no deal with Barnier. For the EU, this represented an attempt to flout its processes and procedures, striking at its legitimacy. For the UK, it was an attempt to circumvent rules and processes it considered as acting contrary to the will of the British people. The increasing brinkmanship and hard negotiating style of the UK, which repeatedly threatened to walk away served to create a further divide between the UK and EU (Martill & Staiger 2020), whose logic of argumentation and technocratic political style sought consensus. As Barnier was reported to have told Raab upon discovery of these letters, 'if there is no deal, there is no trust' (Boffey & Sabbagh 2018).

While an agreement was finally reached between EU and UK negotiators in November 2018, it resulted in Raab's resignation. Barnier gave a positive speech providing significant technical detail, and praising the work of his team for their methodical and objective approach (Barnier 2018), while May, in comparison, referred to the 'difficult choices' that had to be made, which required acceding to the EU's requirements on issues such as the Irish backstop (May 2018). Raab considered what was agreed to be a betrayal of the British people, stating in his resignation speech that 'no democratic nation ever signed up to be bound by such an extensive regime, imposed externally without any democratic control over the laws to be applied' (Raab 2018a). Barnier responded that 'I never had any intention of taking revenge on or humiliating the UK […] I simply intended to deliver on the sovereign vote of the UK to leave the EU. I may regret it, but we are delivering it' (Barnier as cited in Stourton & Desmet 2019:356). The EU's position was that the Brexit

process should not undermine the EU as whole, including in terms of its rules and laws. At this point, May was put in a very difficult position – the heated, populist discourse used during her leadership election and the beginning of negotiations had established a legitimacy in the will of the people, with a narrative of rupture and threat, with references to the decision to leave where 'no deal is better than a bad deal'. By appearing to accept the approach and discourse of the EU through its use of rules, processes and formalities, and placing those above the will of the people to 'take back control', May found that her own legitimacy as the representative of that will was contested. Multiple attempts to have the Withdrawal Agreement ratified by Parliament failed. On 7 June 2019, May resigned as the leader of the Conservative Party, announcing a new leadership election, stating 'It is, and will always remain, a matter of deep regret to me that I have not been able to deliver Brexit. It will be for my successor to seek a way forward that honours the result of the referendum' (May 2019).

Phase 3: Renegotiating Withdrawal Under Boris Johnson, and the Future Relationship

The final to be considered is that taking place under Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has adopted a much stronger populist political style in his handling of Brexit negotiations. In his first speech upon being elected leader on 23 July 2018, Johnson promised to deliver Brexit and unify the country, using elements of 'low appeal' political style in his communication, stating 'I say to all the doubters, dude, we are going to energise the country. We are going to get Brexit done on October 31st, we are going to take advantage of all the opportunities it is going to bring in' (Johnson 2019a). Johnson immediately sought to remove the Irish backstop, arguing in a letter to Donald Tusk that it was 'anti-democratic and inconsistent with the sovereignty of the UK as a state' (Johnson 2019b), again sourcing the legitimacy of his argumentation in the concept of sovereignty, with references to democracy. For Johnson, the backstop was a political issue, related to sovereignty and control; for the EU, the backstop was a policy issue, relating to the integrity of the rules and principles of the internal market. The response of the European Commission was to note that an agreement had already been constituted on this issue, and that the UK had not provided any 'legally operational solution' that would prevent a hard border (as reported in Fleming 2019). A Commission spokeswoman reiterated that no legally operational solution had been provided, and that Johnson's request did not propose a valid alternative to the backstop (Fox 2019), indicating the EU's adherence to a formalistic policy and process approach.

Nevertheless, further negotiations between the UK and EU were agreed, and after a number of technical meetings, a revision to the Protocol on Northern Ireland was concluded in October 2019 with Barnier releasing a technical yet supportive statement on the conclusion of negotiations (2019). Johnson stated in Parliament after the successful revision of the Protocol that this honoured the referendum result and left the UK free to 'to make our own laws, to determine our own future, to believe in ourselves once again' (Johnson 2019c), although Garner notes that the Commission managed to secure continued Court of Justice of the European Union oversight (2019). However, a successful ratification of the Agreement was only secured in January 2020 after a failed attempt, new election and a newly secured majority in the Commons. The period following this ratification has been wrought by uncertainty and unforeseen crisis – the rapid spread of COVID-19 throughout the globe, with the requirements of 'lock-down' it entailed resulted in significant reductions in the time that could be spent on negotiating the future trade relationship between the EU and UK. However, negotiations are fraught, and the potential for a trade agreement being concluded before the end of the transition period seems unlikely. The key issue is trust, or rather, the lack of trust felt by the Commission in the British Government and Boris Johnson. In February, before the outbreak, Johnson announced that in pursuing a free trade agreement with the EU, he would not be bound by its rules, but would instead maintain higher standards than the EU without the need to be compelled by law (Johnson as quoted in Schofield 2020).

Such a statement serves to underscore the incompatibility between the populist and technocratic styles of politics, which serve to engender mistrust between parties working within each respective discursive frame. Within the technocratic frame that has its legitimacy in laws, procedures and technical details, statements by an actor that these laws are unnecessary lack legitimacy and leave what is seen as the certainty provided by rational evidence and decision making to the conflictual and uncertain world of politics. That this is the perception of Barnier in his position representing the Commission is evident from his statement at the end of the April 2020 negotiation rounds, when he stated that the UK did not appear to be taking negotiations seriously, hinting at a lack of rationality on the part of the Johnson government (Barnier 2020). Furthermore, Barnier expressed concerns that Johnson appeared to be stepping back from commitments made on Northern Ireland, commenting 'a new partnership can only be built on trust. And this requires that already agreed commitments are applied correctly' (2020). Similarly, the EU's insistence on rules, policies and procedure, rather than leaving the technical details to be worked out so that a larger political ideal can be realised fosters mistrust on the part of the Johnson government, which bases its legitimacy on 'getting Brexit done' in the name of the British people.

In such a conflict, in which the logics of argumentation, styles of communication, narratives and sources of legitimacy and illegitimacy are so diametrically opposed, it would appear to be a logical result that mistrust would be central to any discussions between such polarised actors. This only appears to have been confirmed by the political fall-out of the UK Government's attempts to renege on aspects of the Withdrawal Agreement Protocol on Northern Ireland through its presentation of a UK Internal Market Bill, which Brandon Lewis the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland admitted 'breaches international law in a specific and limited way' (Barnard 2020). The European Commission's response to this has been unequivocal – to willingly breach an international agreement by attempting to pass legislation in conflict with that agreement has a significant impact on trust between the parties. Commission President von der Leyen stated that while she believed a deal may still be possible, 'the ball is in the field of the UK to restore trust' (Fleming & Brunsden 2020), but with the passage of the Bill through the House of Commons and moving to be considered in the House of Lords, the Commission President announced that 'this draft Bill is – by its very nature – a breach of the obligation of good faith'(von der Leyen 2020). Subsequently, the Commission announced the initiation of formal legal proceedings against the UK, which were only halted when the offending section was removed from the legislation. This relationship of mutual mistrust and animosity has remained however, punctuated most recently by the UK's unilateral decision to extend the 'grace period' for goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, a decision described by Commission Vice-President Šefčovič as a 'very negative surprise', and which would result in infringement proceedings (PA Media 2021). According to Simon Coveney, 'a unilateral announcement is deeply unhelpful to building [a] relationship of trust and partnership' (Coveney, as cited in McHugh 2021).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When negotiating a future relationship, trust is essential. However, when that relationship is the result of a rupture and substantial change or ending to an existing relationship, negotiations are likely to be characterised by *distrust*. Effective communication in such circumstances becomes key to effective cooperation and compromise. Unfortunately, as in the case of the EU-UK Brexit negotiations, the radically divergent communication styles of populist and technocratic political styles adds to a sense of distrust between the parties, as opposing narratives, world views, sources of legitimacy and sources of illegitimacy becomes sticking points that lead to doubts regarding the integrity, legitimacy and honesty of 'the other side'. Brexit negotiations have been typified by a UK that sees laws,

procedures and discussion of technical policy detail as being a means of subverting the will of the British people, leading to public questioning of the intentions of the EU.

In comparison, the EU has characterised the approach of the UK of ignoring or even attempting to circumvent laws and procedures, while eschewing discussion of policy in favour of vague political rhetoric as demonstrating irrationality and a lack of seriousness in negotiation. When immersed in the logics of argumentation of populist and technocratic political styles, these accusations or intimations serve to reinforce a perception that 'the other side' is both illegitimate and questioning the legitimacy of 'your side'. Given that Brexit began with conditions of distrust, this polarisation has further reinforced those feelings of distrust, making negotiations and thus, future relations, much more difficult. Returning to the key themes of this special issue, choice of political style comes with its own internal logics of argumentation and rhetoric that serve to limit the sources of legitimacy and illegitimacy within that narrative frame – when considering interactions between populist and technocratic political styles, which find their sources of legitimacy in opposing understandings of legitimacy in politics and legitimacy in process, then distrust is perhaps not so surprising.

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Research Article

The EU as a Choice: Populist and Technocratic Narratives of the EU in the Brexit Referendum Campaign

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Abstract

The article investigates the main populist and technocratic narratives employed in the campaign in the run-up to the 2016 British EU referendum. Based on a qualitative dataset comprising 40 selected speeches, interviews and other public interventions by prominent Leave and Remain protagonists and adopting the general orientation of the Discourse Historical Approach in Critical Discourse Analysis, the paper discusses how the language of the Remain and Leave camps bore signs of both populist and technocratic discourses. The key argument developed in this article is that while, at the most general level, the populist rhetoric was discursively appropriated by the Leave campaign (with the key narratives of the EU as a failure, EU as an oppressor and of anti-establishment fury) and the technocratic rhetoric by the Remain campaign (with the key narratives of the EU as a tool, the single market benefits and the withdrawal economic effects), the Remain side displayed a lower degree of narrative consistency.

Keywords

Populism; Technocracy; Narratives; Brexit; Referendum; Campaign; Critical Discourse Analysis

The article investigates populist and technocratic narratives employed in the campaign in the run-up to the British European Union (EU) referendum held in June 2016. As already well-documented (Zappettini, 2019a; Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2019; Bennett 2019b), the referendum campaign was based on the simplistic binary logic of in versus out, integration versus sovereignty, control versus freedom, and continuity versus rupture. I argue that the referendum was partly built also on an ostensible *populism-versus-technocracy* binary, albeit not in a clear-cut fashion. The key argument developed in this article is that the language of the Remain and Leave camps bore signs of both populist and technocratic discourses. At the most general level, populist rhetoric was discursively appropriated by the Leave campaign (with the key narratives of the EU as a failure, of the EU as an oppressor and of anti-establishment fury) and technocratic rhetoric was discursively appropriated by the Remain campaign (with the key narratives of the EU as a tool, of the single market benefits and of the withdrawal economic effects). Therein, the Remain side displayed a lower degree of narrative consistency. Indeed, unlike the Leave rhetoric which suggests a relatively consistent character of discursive identity towards the EU in terms of the presence of populist narratives and non-existence of technocratic ones, the Remain campaign's communicative behaviour took on features of both technocratic and populist discourses. As a result, it was more ambiguous and, arguably, less clear.

To begin, I will outline the four-fold rationale behind this research endeavour and elucidate why I deal with 1) populism and technocracy, 2) narratives, 3) narratives of the EU specifically, and 4) the Brexit referendum campaign. Starting with the first one, populism and technocracy have increasingly been narrated as 'the two organising poles of politics in contemporary Western democracies' (Bickerton and Accetti 2017: 186). In fact, they are often recognised as the new cleavage around which the contemporary political life is being restructured (Friedman 2019; Bickerton and Accetti 2017). Both the politics of technocracy and the politics of populism present alternative forms of political representation to party government (Kurki 2011: 216), challenging the fundamental features of party democracy as such (Bickerton and Accetti 2017: 186-187). As explained more fully below, this article's understanding of populism and technocracy centres around communication and language.

Why we pay attention to narratives? In the words of Spencer and Oppermann (2020: 666), it is 'the struggle over narratives which is a defining feature of democratic politics'. Narratives are crucial in politics and international relations as they are means of making sense of the social world around us, with a substantial body of evidence attesting to their power (for example Mintrom and O'Connor 2020; Hagström and Gustafsson 2019). The importance of narratives in governance goes down to their performativity and ability to 'make problems amenable to human action via public decisions (or non-decisions)' (Baldoli and Radaelli 2019: 6), with a crucial feature of theirs being how they can 'condition the thoughts and actions of broader populations' (Mintrom and O'Connor 2020: 2).

Why focus on the narratives of the EU? The EU is an issue on which it is possible to treat populism, across its different configurations and different key actors, as a single brand, as most of recent populist parties across Europe are, albeit to differing degrees, Eurosceptic (see Baldoli and Radaelli 2019). At the same time, the EU is commonly perceived as a technocratic organisation *par excellence*, having the status of an entity which has 'perhaps more than any other faced accusations on account of the role of technocratic functions and expertise in its workings' (Kurki 2011: 212). Following de Vreese, Esser, Aalberg, Reinemann et al. (2018) who take the same approach to populism (see also Rooduijn 2014; Moffitt 2016; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Aslanidis 2016), the focus in this paper will be on the contribution of populist and technocratic discourses to construct the EU, and 'the communicative styles that systematically co-occur with it' (de Vreese et al. 2018: 465).

Finally, why is it worthwhile to study the intriguing issue of populist and technocratic discourses in the context of the United Kingdom (UK) referendum campaign? As a critical juncture in the European integration process, in which 'different historical and contingent

discursive nexuses and trajectories have been at play' (Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2019: 381), Brexit makes for a captivating case study, for many reasons, but three in particular. First, it is an unprecedented process that marks a turning point in European politics and is widely acknowledged as one of the EU's most serious crises (see Nugent 2018; Caporaso 2018). Second, I align myself with understanding Brexit as having emerged 'at the intersection of different path-dependent discursive trajectories which have accumulated "forces, antagonisms and contradictions"' (Clarke and Newman 2017: 102 in Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2019: 382) and involved '(re)articulation of social, political and cultural narratives' along various logics (Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2019: 383). At this time of crisis, understanding the ways in which politicians and their populist and technocratic discourses function is therefore more important than ever. Third, the politics of technocracy and populism curiously came together in the 2016 EU referendum, with Brexit widely interpreted as evidence of both the rise of populism all over Europe and beyond (Ford and Goodwin 2017), and as 'the leading edge of an ongoing anti-expert revolution' (Fuller 2017: 575).

Against this background, the central research question that this article addresses is: What kind of populist and technocratic discourses of the EU were at work during the Brexit referendum campaign? Adopting the general orientation of the Discourse Historical Approach in Critical Discourse Analysis, the inquiry identifies the main populist and technocratic narratives that fuelled the referendum campaign. Through this focus, this research also illuminates the commonalities and differences in the discourse of the Leave and Remain campaigns, against the backdrop of a technocratic-populist debate.

The contribution has two interrelated aims. First, it adds to the extant scholarship on the relationship between technocracy and populism (Caramani 2017; Bickerton and Accetti 2017). Nevertheless, this enquiry differs from the extant literature by explicitly taking a communication-centred perspective. Second, this study contributes to an ever-growing body of research seeking to document the discourses of/in Brexit (Zappettini 2019a, 2019b; Zappavigna 2019; Krzyżanowski 2019; Kopf 2019; Koller, Kopf and Miglbauer 2019; Buckledee 2018). Yet, whilst populist discourses in Brexit have been often commented on (Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2019; Spencer and Oppermann 2020; Ruzza and Pejovic 2019; Demata 2019; Browning 2018), not much has been written on technocratic discourses in Brexit. It is in this sense that the article helps fill an important research gap.

The article proceeds as follows. It begins by situating the enquiry into the wider context of populist and technocratic narratives in political discourse. The next section unpacks the data and puts forward the methodological approach. The subsequent part is then devoted to the empirical analysis, mapping key technocratic and populist narratives in the Remain and Leave referendum campaigns. The concluding section summarises the key argument and contextualises the empirical findings.

POPULIST AND TECHNOCRATIC NARRATIVES IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The intention of this article is in line with the ever-growing interest in the role of discourses of European integration. As much of the recent scholarship demonstrates, these policymaking discourses may play a powerful role 'in determining the trajectory of policy change and, as such, should be treated as objects of enquiry in their own right' (Hay and Smith 2005: 135). Theoretically, the study is based upon the social constructivist paradigm and its relation to discourse. Social constructivism accentuates the fundamental role of language in creating reality, considering it a primary means through which the social world is constructed (Mutigl 2002: 49; Gralewski 2011: 161). As Schäffner (1996:201) observes, any political action is 'prepared, accompanied, controlled and influenced by language'. The study is thus based on the governing assumption that member states' approach to the EU

is not derived only from material factors, but is also a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by ideological factors, including intersubjective meanings, norms, discourses and discursive power that involves knowledge, ideas, culture, ideology and language (Hopf 1998; Adler 1997). As such, constructivist approaches are 'crucial for an understanding of Member States' European policy and the future development of European governance' (Diez 2001: 6).

Turning to populist and technocratic discourses of the EU, populism and technocracy are in essence articulated here as communication phenomena that can be operationalised by the use of characteristic content features and presentational style elements (see de Vreese et al. 2018). Based on this, I argue that the Remain discourse was dominated (but, as discussed further below, not monopolised) by the technocratic narratives and the Leave one by the populist narratives.

This article aligns itself with the view of Kurki (2011) who contends that technocracy should be analysed not as a distinct form of government, but rather as 'a set of discursive ideals within formally "democratic" (or indeed authoritarian) forms of government'. Hence, technocratic discourse is defined here as 'a discursive set of ideals for governance, which emphasise the virtues of depoliticisation, harmonisation, rationalisation and objectification of policymaking and evaluation, and which promotes the role of technical experts in policy-making over substantively "political" or "democratic" public actors' (Kurki 2011: 216). Depoliticisation refers to the tendency to advocate technical solutions to political problems, as opposed to political solutions. In other words, technocratic discourse prioritises rational and efficient decision-making/policy implementation over normative value-based one (Kurki 2011: 215). Moreover, technocratic modes of thoughts also 'move political and social decisions to the realm of administrative control defined in technical terms and seeks to use instrumental technical criteria to measure political substance or meaning' (Kurki 2011: 215). Emphasis is therefore put on rational solutions, efficiency and constant monitoring of cost-effectiveness of policy solutions (McKenna and Graham 2000; Kurki 2011: 215). As such, it accentuates positivist, objective knowledge by unelected experts that is deemed essential to decision-making, in a belief that the public and political decision-makers should be fed the right knowledge (Salvador 1992; Kurki 2011: 215). Moreover, in line with the ideal of social harmony, technocrats are rather reluctant to deal with the conflictual interests and/or conflictual aspects in policy areas (Kurki 2011: 215).

Moving onto the populist discourse, I ascribe here to the definition of populism as a 'discursive manifestation of a thin-centred ideology that is not only focused on the underlying "set of basic assumptions about the world" but in particular on "the language that unwittingly expresses them" (Hawkins, Riding and Mudde 2012: 3, in de Vreese et al. 2018: 425). Populist discourses, at their most basic level, provide a 'distinctive, empirically identifiable vision or conception of the EU – what it is and what ought to be' (Baldoli and Radaelli 2019:5) with several core constitutive attributes. One of the key characteristics concern the practice of pitting the people against the elite in a polarising 'us versus them' dichotomy. Besides, populists' legitimacy rests on claims that this political position represents the will of the people. Another pattern usually associated with the populist discourse is the outsider position in a sense of positioning oneself as being outside the system as well as the notion of an outsider threat. Finally, popular resistance to the transfer of national decision-making powers to supranational organisations also belongs to key collective signifiers of populism, as identified in the literature (Moffitt 2016; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; de Vreese et al. 2018; Aslanidis 2016).

DATA AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Due to space constraints and the need to strike a balance between breadth and depth of analysis, the dataset comprises 40 selected speeches, interviews and other public

interventions by prominent Leave and Remain protagonists (20 speeches per campaign; nine representatives per campaign). Tables 1 and 2 summarise the key features of the corpus. All the contributions deal with the EU and/or the UK-EU relationship and have been selected on a number of criteria, including the title of the speech, its subject outlined in the introductory sentences, the occasion on which it was delivered, and the nature of the intended audience. Importantly, not only voices affiliated with the official campaigns were included in the corpus but also those outside of it. For instance, Nigel Farage was not affiliated with the official Vote Leave campaign but belonged to the most visible pro-Brexit campaigners, so he is included in the Leave corpus too. The timespan of the analysis covers the period of five months in the run-up to the referendum.

Table 1. Remain campaign corpus

Date	Name	Political affiliation	Role	Context
3/2	David Cameron	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	Speech on EU reform
26/2	Natalie Bennett	Green Party	Leader of the Green Party	Speech at party conference
29/2	Nicola Sturgeon	SNP	First Minister of Scotland	Speech on staying in the EU
10/3	David Cameron	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	Speech at Vauxhall
14/4	Jeremy Corbyn	Labour Party	Leader of the Labour Party	Speech on the EU
18/4	George Osborne	Conservative Party	Chancellor of the Exchequer	Article for The Times
25/4	Theresa May	Conservative Party	Home Secretary	Speech on Brexit
9/5	David Cameron	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	Speech on the UK's strength and security in the EU
11/5	Tim Farron	Liberal Democrats	Leader of Liberal Democrats	Speech on the EU
16/5	George Osborne	Conservative Party	Chancellor of the Exchequer	Concluding Statement on IMF Article IV
16/5	George Osborne	Conservative Party	Chancellor of the Exchequer	Speech at Ryanair
23/5	David Cameron	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	Speech at B&Q headquarters in Eastleigh
23/5	George Osborne	Conservative Party	Chancellor of the Exchequer	Speech on Treasury's analysis on economic impact of Brexit
24/5	David Cameron	Conservative Party	Prime Minister	Speech at easyJet headquarters
9/6	Tim Farron	Liberal Democrats	Leader of Liberal Democrats	Speech on the EU
16/6	Jeremy Corbyn	Labour Party	Leader of the Labour Party	Speech in South Yorkshire
21/6	Jeremy Corbyn	Labour Party	Leader of the Labour Party	Speech in the People's History Museum

Date	Name	Political affiliation	Role	Context
22/6	Will Straw	Labour Party	Executive Director of Britain Stronger in Europe	Interview for Evening Standard
22/6	Ruth Davidson	Conservative Party	Leader of the Scottish Conservative Party	BBC's live Great Debate
22/6	Tim Farron	Liberal Democrats	Leader of Liberal Democrats	Interview for Prospect Magazine

Table 2. Leave campaign corpus

Date	Name	Political affiliation	Role	Context
22/1	Dominic Cummings	-	Director of Vote Leave	Interview for the Economist
20/2	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Secretary of State for Justice, Lord High Chancellor	Statement of reasons for backing the Leave campaign
9/3	Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Mayor of London (until 9/5)	Speech at the headquarters of the Vote Leave campaign
13/4	Gisela Stuart	Labour Party	Chair of Vote Leave	Speech on the risks of staying in the EU
19/4	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Secretary of State for Justice, Lord High Chancellor	Speech for Vote Leave
19/4	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Secretary of State for Justice, Lord High Chancellor	Essay for BBC 4 Today programme
23/4	Ian Duncan Smith	Conservative Party	Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (until 3/2016)	Article for the Daily Mail
29/4	Nigel Farage	UKIP	Leader of UKIP; MEP	Speech in Westminster
10/5	Ian Duncan Smith	Conservative Party	Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (until 3/2016)	Speech on the EU as a force for social injustice
15/5	Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Mayor of London (until 9/5)	Article for The Telegraph
26/5	Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Mayor of London (until 9/5)	Statement on immigration statistics
2/6	Liam Fox	Conservative Party	Member of Parliament	Speech at Vote Leave
6/6	Boris Johnson	Conservative Party	Mayor of London (until 9/5)	Speech on democracy for Vote Leave
6/6	Gisela Stuart	Labour Party	Chair of Vote Leave	Speech on immigration
6/6	John Longworth	-	Chairman of Leave Means Leave	Speech on economy for Vote Leave

Date	Name	Political affiliation	Role	Context
6/6	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Secretary of State for Justice, Lord High Chancellor	Speech for Vote Leave
6/6	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	Secretary of State for Justice, Lord High Chancellor	Speech on security for Vote Leave
8/6	Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Civil Liberties	Interview for Sky News
8/6	Dominic Raab	Conservative Party	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Civil Liberties	Speech on controlled immigration
21/6	Nigel Farage	UKIP	Leader of UKIP; MEP	Article for the Express

In an attempt to detect and interpret key macro-conversational practices against the background of the populist versus technocratic debate, the article adopts the general orientation of the Discourse Historical Approach in Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak 2011; Reisigl and Wodak 2015, 2001; Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Guided by Krzyżanowski (2010), the analysis entails the thematic analysis which zeroes in on the embedded, easily identifiable dominant narratives that characterise campaigns' imaginings of the EU and form the structure of the Leave and Remain discourses but is also interested in related linguistic features. The definition of a narrative employed in this article follows that of Kreuter, Green, Cappella, Slater et al. (2007: 222) as 'a representation of connected events and characters that has an identifiable structure, is bounded in space and time, and contains implicit or explicit messages about the topic being addressed'. In line with the common approach, the topics were defined by means of indicative analysis, via 'decoding the meaning of text passages – usually taking place via several thorough readings – and then ordering them into lists of key themes and sub-themes' (Krzyżanowski 2010: 81), with the focus being on discourse, and not text, topics. Such an approach enabled concentration on the use of populist and technocratic narratives and specific representations of the EU as premises for framing argumentative schemes (see Fairclough and Fairclough 2012).

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

As Fairclough and Wodak's (1997) understanding of discourse underlines the context, so basic discursive characteristics, both in terms of the content and style, of the Remain and Leave campaigns are analysed first. Starting with the Remain campaign, Remainers frequently communicated within the formalised, sophisticated jargon-filled discourse, so-called high speech as opposed to the low speech favoured by Leave campaigners, relying mostly on data, facts and figures (Buckledee 2018). It is essentially this kind of technical knowledge that served as the base of power in their technocratic line of arguing (see Fisher 1987). The main emphasis was on instrumental knowledge with a large number of very specific examples. In the Remain discourse, it was the experts with specialised knowledge that were to serve as a key reference point in public policy decision-making and implementation (Buckledee 2018). Relatedly, throughout the campaign, Remain protagonists presented themselves as knowledgeable, putting themselves in sharp contrast to Leave supporters who were 'unable to set out a clear, comprehensive plan for our future outside the EU' (Cameron 2016d) and whose campaign was 'based on lies' (Farron 2016a; see also Davidson 2016) and 'short on facts' (Bennett 2016). As mapped out below, the focus in their discourse was on rather unemotional, technical and future economic advantages of the EU membership which was in line with the typical technocratic exercise

devoid of 'irrational' or unreasonable passions and emotions (see Hensmans and van Bommel 2020: 373).

By contrast, the Leavers' communicative style was less formal and plainer, foregrounding a simple and easily understandable, rather than complex, story (Spencer and Oppermann 2020: 667). As others have highlighted (see Spencer and Oppermann 2020; Demata 2019; Buckledee 2018), speakers for the Leave campaign routinely employed a highly emotional language. Invoking a sense of unified national identity vis-à-vis the EU, the UK was systematically presented as a distant outgroup, antithetical to the European integration and constructed in opposition to the EU by means of the othering concept (see Spiering 2015; Malmborg and Stråth 2002; Daddow 2015). Indeed, through the exclusionary rhetoric of othering, the Leave side explicitly constructed the difference between the UK and the EU, reinforcing the centrality of British national narratives set in opposition to the European integration. By means of various intertexts, the EU was habitually depicted as a monolith, alien body outside the UK with a governance and institutional framework that was politically and economically incompatible with the UK, or outright in direct contrast with it (see Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2019: 383). Equally important, the very (and only) solution to the problem that the Leave campaign offered, to withdraw the UK from the EU, was well in line with the tendency of populists to suggest solutions that are 'not fully-fledged programs, but rather aspirations that evoke desirable future' (Baldoli and Radaelli 2019: 12).

Key Narratives of the EU Employed in the Remain Campaign

The systematic analysis uncovered three semantic macro-propositions related to the discursive construction of the EU: 1) narrative of the EU as a tool, 2) narrative of the single market benefits, and 3) narrative of the withdrawal economic effects and all of them can be classified as technocratic. At the same time, a key discursive construct, narrative of the will of the people, which traditionally fall within the populist discourse, was also identified in the Remain corpus.

Technocratic Narrative of the EU as a Tool

A central macro-narrative identified in the Remain corpus is that of the EU as a tool. With the key topic here being that of *taking advantage*, it was especially interest-based and instrumental arguments that played a central role in the campaign's justification of the EU membership. The Remain campaigners explicitly marketed the EU as a tool that 'helps us achieve the things we want' (Cameron 2016d; see also Sturgeon 2016). The Remain side exploited this topic in a bid to send the message the UK was profiting from, or even exploiting, the EU, as in 'Taking advantage of the single market is one of the ways this country has made itself great' (Cameron 2016).

The type of knowledge that the Remainers highlighted within this narrative was positivistic in nature, with the EU membership deemed instrumental for a variety of other ends, particularly economic prosperity (especially Cameron 2016b), internal and external security (especially Cameron 2016d) and stronger voice on the international stage (especially Cameron 2016d). Furthermore, Remain discourse occasionally foregrounded more normatively engaging arguments for the EU as tool, for example by promoting the EU as a powerful tool to guarantee social rights and protect workers across Europe (for example Corbyn 2016c).

Curiously enough, the Remain campaign simultaneously downplayed the importance of this tool, effectively equating the EU membership to country's memberships in other international organisations. For example:

> our membership of the EU is one of the tools – just one - which we use, as we do our membership of NATO, or the Commonwealth, or the Five Power Defence Agreement with Australia, New Zealand and our allies in South East

> Asia, to amplify British power and to enhance our influence in the world. (Cameron 2016d)

Technocratic Narrative of the Single Market Benefits

Intimately related to the previous macro-proposition is the narrative of the single market benefits, built around the topic of *profit.* With this macro-area functioning to highlight the advantages that the UK and its people could reap by voting to stay, the EU was discursively portrayed in an inclusive way. Drawing on the neoliberal market logic and virtually equating the EU with the single market, this discursive construction was characterised by the positive potential of the UK-EU relationship and a discursive code that perceived the EU as a reliable and stable business partner with complementary business interests. The campaign's notion of the UK-EU relationship was founded on the principle of mutually beneficial, constructive economic cooperation based on the comparative advantages of both entities (see Brusenbauch Meislová 2018).

Alongside this, the imagery employed here evokes a picture of a capable actor, albeit by no means perfect, as evidenced by frequent use of comparatives in the Remain corpus that signal the implicit critique of the EU (Demata 2019: 131), with a large number of specific positive (and neutral) evaluations of the single market. For example: '[the single market supports] 140,000 jobs in the car industry; supporting an extra 300,000 jobs; and generating £12 billion a year for our economy' (Cameron 2016b; see also Cameron 2016c; May 2016; Osborne 2016). Here the strong reliance on data and figures is obvious as well as the emphasis on factuality, almost as an inevitability requiring no choice.

Heavily drawing on experts and their specialised technical expertise, the narrative of the single market benefits accentuated instrumental, technical knowledge and evidence-based (scientific even) approach to the EU membership, putting into foreground the authority of the merit-based knowledge elite. As summed up by Ruth Davidson (2016): 'I would vote for the experts every day of the week and twice on a Sunday' (see also Osborne 2016).

Technocratic Narrative of the Withdrawal Economic Effects

Another macro-proposition is that of the withdrawal economic effects. The key topic here was the *downfall* which functioned to convey an image of disastrous economic/market repercussions of Brexit. This narrative served to distinctly show that leaving the EU would be a 'disaster for the British economy' (Osborne 2016c), would entail the inevitable downfall of the UK (which is, essentially, 'a trading nation' [Cameron 2016e]) and have 'profound consequences on our economy' (Osborne 2016a), inevitably making the UK 'permanently poorer' (Osborne 2016). This overarching scheme was reproduced in more concrete arguments in several distinct areas, including Brexit impact on economic success, or rather lack thereof, specific industries and international trade relations.

Indeed, overwhelmingly legitimising the UK's membership in the EU through the economic output, it was the economic dimension that was a key collocate with Brexit implications in the Remain corpus. In line with the typical feature of technocratic discourse, and also with the archetypal British preference for the EU doing business in contrast to the EU doing politics (Wodak 2016: 19), Remain campaigners clearly prioritised economistic (rationalistic) aspects of the UK's membership in the EU. Their eagerness to acknowledge that cooperation between the UK and the EU was driven mainly by economic considerations is suitably illustrated by the following excerpts: 'Nothing is more important than the strength of our economy' (Cameron 2016d) and 'There is nothing more positive than having a stronger economy supporting jobs and opportunities' (Davidson 2016).

Moreover, the case for staying in the EU was justified by rationally defined, objective long-term welfare of the British society. For example: 'the long-term impact of leaving would be a cost to every household equivalent to £4,300' (Cameron 2016c; see also Osborne 2016b). Significantly, Remainers made references to Brexit's economic impact mainly in

negatively connotated words, such as 'loss' (Cameron 2016b; May 2016), 'uncertainty' (Farron 2016a, 2016b; Osborne 2016a) or 'damaging' (Cameron 2016b; Osborne 2016b).

Within this narrative, Remain campaigners also constructively and reproductively employed arguments which reinforced the authority of a technical elite in providing evidence, as in 'Every major financial institution – from the Treasury and the Bank of England to the IMF, the OECD and the World Bank – not to mention just about every credible economist in the country, thinks leaving Europe will hurt Britain's economy' (Farron 2016a). Moreover, the provided information was constantly framed as 'detailed and rigorous' (Osborne 2016b).

Populist Narrative of the Will of the People

Simultaneously, however, the Remain discourse was also interspersed by recurring elements of populist discourse, with the Remain side addressing similar constructs as Leavers, especially 'the people'. In particular, it was the claims to stand up for the people's concerns that were worded according to a populist vocabulary. With this discourse topic interwoven into the fabric of the Remain camp, the Remain rhetoric echoed the same populist ideas entertained by the Leavers about the legitimising character of the referendum, spotlighting the belief that the people should have a direct, non-mediated say in the country's destiny and understanding the referendum on EU membership as the expression of the *volonté générale* of the people (Corbyn 2016a; see also Mudde, 2004: 543). The people, the 'obstinately practical, rigorously down to earth, natural debunkers' (Cameron 2016d), were discursively constructed as a unitary, monolithic entity with no internal divisions (see Taggart 2000: 92). Out of the prominent Remainers, the most articulate (re)productions of populist discourses were to be found in Jeremy Corbyn's rhetoric (Corbyn 2016a; 2016b, 2016c; see also Demata 2019). Apart from that, it was also David Cameron (2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d; 2016e) who foregrounded populist stylisation of political messaging in his discursive portrayal of the EU, using several rhetorical devices that signified (re)connecting with the people and redistributing power to them (Alexandre-Collier, 2016: 119; see also Smith 2020).

Key Narratives of the EU Employed in the Leave Campaign

The analysis revealed three dominant semantic macro-areas related to the discursive construction of the EU in the Leave corpus: 1) narrative of the EU as a failure, 2) narrative of the EU as an oppressor, and 3) the narrative of anti-establishment fury, and all of them qualify as populist. At the same time, despite including some elements of technocratic discourse too, the Leave campaign produced no comprehensive narratives that would fall within the technocratic discourse.

Populist Narrative of the EU as a Failure

The narrative of the EU as a failure served to cast the EU, and the UK's membership in the EU, *ex negativo* as an inevitable failure. The key topic here was *dysfunctionality* with the EU systematically depicted as a dysfunctional, erroneous, problematic entity, almost exclusively standing for something negative (or even outright dangerous and menacing). For example: 'It [the EU] is extraordinarily opaque, extraordinarily slow, extraordinarily bureaucratic, extraordinarily wasteful' (Cummings 2016). To convey this image of the EU's inadequate interventions, and thus create a sense of ongoing crisis, which is an ideological core of populism (Demata 2019: 130), the EU was for the Leave side a 'disaster zone' (Farage 2016b) and a 'failed project'(Farage 2016b; Johnson 2016b) that is haunted by multiple crises which are 'utterly out of control' and cause 'human misery on a shocking scale' (Farage 2016b).

No less important, to cast the EU into the context of an absolute, multi-policy crisis and assign it the role of a calamitous disaster, this macro argumentative scheme touched not only on the failures of individual policies (for example Gove 2016e), but also on the general

trajectory of the European integration (for example Stuart 2016a) and its quality (for example Raab 2016b; Gove 2016d). Interestingly, this imagery was linguistically expressed via a realisation of several constitutive metaphors, out of which the metaphor of hell particularly stands out (the EU is 'hell bent on further, deeper centralisation' [Farage 2016b]), as it moves these imaginings into a highly suggestive domain.

Populist Narrative of the EU as an Oppressor

This narrative functioned to convey the image of the EU as something that has usurped power from the UK and jeopardised the power of the people as such. Central to this construction was the topic of *subjugation.* In substantive terms, this discursive construct was driven by a major effort to paint a picture of the EU as an oppressor that is constantly blamed for having trapped the UK and the 'common citizens' in a system that eroded their sovereignty and compromised their 'independence' (Johnson 2016b). The EU 'tramples over the rule of law' (Gove 2016b) and effectively 'holds the country back in every area' (Gove 2016a). The Leave campaign backgrounded the idea that the EU, which 'makes the majority of British laws', has deprived the UK of the right of self-determination, made it surrender 'fundamental sovereignty', stopped it 'acting in our own national interest', and forced it 'to be represented by unelected old men in Brussels' (Farage 2016b). Not only did the EU make the UK and its people 'a hostage' (Gove 2016c) and entirely incapable, it was also abusing the UK's generosity (Johnson 2016c). Significantly, this narrative was permeated by more emotionally charged expressions than others.

The main discursive thrust of this macro-area was the repeated emphasis on the EU's undemocratic nature, with EU institutions continuously denounced as 'unaccountable' (Gove 2016a, 2016e, 2016d) and the EU as a whole as an 'anti-competitive and undemocratic club' (Raab 2016b) or, alternatively, 'Brussels club' (Duncan Smith 2016b). In this context, mocking, quasi-anecdotal language was often used, for instance 'showing a mule-like refusal to listen to democratic concerns' (Stuart 2016a), with the witty negative evaluations working to augment the sense of affiliation among interactants (see Zappavigna 2019: 64). Symptomatic were also various parallels drawn between the EU and the 'ancient régime' (Johnson 2016b), specifically Austria-Hungary under the Habsburgs', the 'collapsing Soviet system', 'the Russian Empire under Nicholas the Second', or 'Rome under its later Emperors or the Ottoman Empire in its final years' (Gove 2016c). All of these served to intentionally discredit it and convey the image of an impotent, collapsing oppressive regime.

Another notable element in this context is the outsider position strategically invoked by the Leave campaign to strengthen ingroup cohesiveness and raise a sense of belonging. The UK was continually portrayed as an outsider who was 'powerless' (Fox 2016) and 'so uninfluential inside the EU' (Duncan Smith 2016a) that it only ever got 'short shrift' (Raab 2016b).

In tandem with this, staying in the flawed EU was almost uniformly discussed in terms of a doomsday scenario as 'a real danger' (Gove 2016c). To avoid this, the only proposed solution was to leave the EU. Accordingly, the Leave side aligned itself with a discursive code that unequivocally framed Brexit and its effects on the UK in a positive light in a bid to sell it as a way to regain British independence (see Farage 2016b). This strategy was linguistically realised via the means of ostentatious self-affirming proclamations, attributing the post-Brexit future with positive adjectives such as 'prosperous' (Duncan Smith 2016b; Johnson 2016b) and 'better' (Gove 2016c) and conveying that Brexit was going to be a sheer triumph.

Populist Narrative of Anti-Establishment Fury

Inextricably linked to the previous macro argumentative scheme was the narrative of the anti-establishment fury. The Leave's arguments were reasserted and articulated through

a discursive contingency based on the polarising people-versus-elite dichotomy. This was functionalised via anti-establishment sentiments, with the campaign's communicative behaviour pitting the distinct ingroup of 'the people' against the distinct out-group of the EU elite which was excluded from the 'true people'. As can be expected, a prominent topic within this macro-area is that of anti-establishment *revolt* against the technocratic, detached, corrupt and non-elected elites, embodied especially by the Commission, the European Central Bank and the Court of Justice of the European Union.

In the Leavers' view, the EU's leadership came to epitomise an image of a technocratic elite, detached from the concerns of the ordinary public. Very often, the EU elite, the people's enemy, was conceived as a homogeneous entity in which political and financial establishment merged (Gove 2016a; see also Demata 2019: 130). Through close analysis of the context, it becomes clear that most often the referential range included the 'EU/EU's bureaucrats', with the attributive qualifications ascribed to this genericised group mostly being 'wealthy' (for example Farage 2016b), 'super-rich' (for example Johnson 2016a), 'powerful' (for example Jonhson 2016a), 'remote' (for example Farage 2016b), 'big' (for example Gove 2016a) and 'unelected' (for example Gove 2016a). Not infrequently, the Leave campaigners also used ridicule and mockery with an ironic undertone in conjunction with the EU elite, as in 'Brussels army of bureaucrats' (Duncan Smith 2016a) or 'bureaucratic follies' (Gove 2016a).

What figures prominently in this narrative is the topic of the *nation-state predominance* as the main tool for the protection of national interests, the defence of which Leave campaigners ostentatiously prioritised (for example Farage 2016b; Gove 2016c; see also Maccaferri 2019). Detectable here were also the values of national self-determination, national sovereignty and popular sovereignty against what Leavers routinely referred to as the 'Brussels club'.

Yet, in Leave discourse, the end bearer of the idea of national sovereignty was 'the people'. Importantly, uses of the notion 'people' (both with and without the definite article) both served a key purpose of establishing the people-versus-elite dichotomy. This imagining was functionalised by the portrait of the people as a homogeneous national entity assaulted by the EU elites (the villains) in a number of ways. With the campaign claiming to give the voice (back) to the people, the British as a whole represented the demos/the common people who have been always upright, courageous and virtuous, but, in parallel, unrepresented and unheard.

In true populist fashion, speakers of the Leave campaign gave agency to the virtuous, moral people who were constructed as underdogs with no power in their hands and whom they encouraged to stand up to fight for a better world against powerful adversaries (see Stanley 2008: 102-106). In doing so, they self-cast themselves as courageous and determined agents who solely understood the will of the people in its entirety and the evil done by the EU and were willing to defend the ideals of democracy and freedom against the EU. Accordingly, the anti-elitist logic rested on the promise of emancipation of the 'people' from over-institutionalised and too-rational political practices of the EU (see Laclau 2005), with this macro argumentative scheme driven by the construction of the referendum as an essential means to empower the ordinary people, as an act which was 'fundamentally about who we are as a nation' (Farage 2016b).

Technocratic Narrative(s)

Finally, Leave communicative behaviour was also interspersed by elements of technocratic discourse, but these were limited and can only be found in speeches of Boris Johnson (2016b, 2016d) and Michael Gove (2016c, 2016e). Indeed, in some cases, also Leave protagonists were calling upon experts, as in 'Ronald Noble, the former head of Interpol, called the EU open borders policy a "real and present danger" that 'abets terrorists' (Raab

2016b), and using facts and figures, as in 'net migration from the EU was 184,000 alone' (Raab 2016b).

At the same time, the technocratic tendencies of the Remain discourse were routinely criticised and ridiculed by the Leave supporters. This was related, but not means limited, to the field of economic forecasting which Leavers often condemned as 'phoney forecasts' (Duncan Smith 2016b), in an effort to challenge the status of experts and cast doubt on their reliability. The following example provides a useful illustration of such disapprobation tactics and is indicative of the 'broader societal shift towards a post-truth/post-factual discourse' (Kopf 2019: 163):

Treasury civil servants cooked up numbers for what will happen to our incomes after gazing into their crystal balls and trying to guess what the world is going to look like in 14 years' time. In reality, they have enough trouble working out what will happen 14 weeks ahead. (Duncan Smith 2016b)

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

To contribute to the strategic use of narratives by political actors, this article has demonstrated that the discursive perspective is a promising avenue for advancing research on populism and technocracy. To identify the populist and technocratic discursive trajectories at play during the British 2016 referendum campaign, it has understood populism and technocracy as features of political communication and interpreted populist/technocratic rhetoric as the combination of interrelated discursive dimensions involving both form (style) and content (proposition). Having mapped populist and technocratic representations which specifically supported the Leave/Remain claims, it became clear that each camp legitimised its vision and interpretation of the EU, and the related policy choices it proposed, through different narratives and linguistic devices as well as various combinations thereof.

Yet, it would be over-simplification to frame the referendum campaign as an easy will-versus-reason debate. The picture that emerges from the analysis of populist and technocratic narratives of the EU is complex, varied and multi-layered. As has been shown, the discourse in the debate combined technocratic and populist elements in a way that reflected the actors' strategic language use and Europe has, once again and probably not for the last time, proved to be a 'discursive battleground' (Diez 2001).

The analysis points to a number of structural similarities between Leave and Remain discourses. The discourses of the two campaigns were not irreducibly opposed to each other but often mirrored themselves in several ways. For instance, both were based on a unitary, unmediated, non-pluralist vision of the British society's general interests. Both sides also made use, albeit in an often differentiated manner, of two intertwined discursive strategies of positive self-presentation, reinforcing positive qualities of the self, and accusation/discrimination, highlighting negatives of the others. Indeed, to strengthen the imaginings of a new and better post-referendum UK, strong, positive self-presentation of the current UK were repeatedly emphasised, with both sides talking in proud, collective terms about the UK (see Brusenbauch Meislová 2019: 683). What the campaigns also shared was a recurrent accent on the specific and unique character of British and Britishness, the country's privileged position and its exceptional status.

At the same time, however, both camps differed, not least when it came to the employment of populist and technocratic narratives. The analysis showed how radically the campaign narratives differed in their structure, function, and procedures for verification and how different elements of populist and technocratic discourses were endowed with pragmatic meaning. The interpretivist account of the Remain discourse suggests that its communicative behaviour in the referendum campaign did not conform to one particular

style and displayed a lower degree of narrative consistency. Most discursive constructs foregrounded by the Remain campaign can qualify as technocratic, with the main ones being the narrative of the EU as a tool, the narrative of the single market benefits and the narrative of the withdrawal economic effects. Its rhetoric was primarily driven by rational arguments about the costs and benefits of the EU membership. In a bid to rationalise, objectify and depoliticise the UK's membership in the EU, the main focus was on unemotional, technical and present and future economic advantages of the EU membership that the UK could reap. Showcasing signs of instrumental reductionism, the solutions offered by the Remain campaigners were discursively portrayed as pragmatic and mature. Yet, alongside the dominant technocratic narratives, the Remain rhetoric also bore signs of discursive patterns that are usually associated with populist discourses, especially people-centrism in a sense of emphasising the sovereignty of the people, advocating for the people and capturing the will of the people, and legitimising the nature of the referendum.

In comparison, the critical-analytic exploration of typical macro-conversational practices of the Leave discourse, and the examples presented, suggest a better narrative management and a relatively consistent character of the campaign's discursive identity towards the EU in terms of the employment of populist tropes (with the central ones being the narrative of the EU as a failure, the narrative of the EU as an oppressor and the narrative of the anti-establishment fury) and non-existence of technocratic ones. Leave campaigners' pre-referendum communicative style also included a tendency towards value-based rhetoric in a sense of value aims and value-related forms of argumentation, and verbal means of persuasion. Furthermore, the general tone of the Leave discourse was more normative in nature. Overall, the Leave campaign was more consistent in its employment of narratives than the Remain one.

These findings come with several caveats. They are limited in a sense that the presence of populist narratives in the Remain campaign is being based largely (albeit not solely) on Jeremy Corbyn who has been a life-long Eurosceptic, widely criticised for his inability/refusal to have an authentic, identifiable position on the UK's membership of the EU. On the other hand, he did argue for a Remain vote, was officially a Remainer and a prominent political figure, and as such needs to be studied as a firm part of the Remain camp (see Demata 2019; Bennett 2019a). Yet, the next step in my research is systematic exploration of populist discourse in an even more representative Remain sample, comprising a larger number of political figures and speeches. In addition, the exact nature of interactions between populist and technocratic narratives also requires further research.

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Research Article

Foundations of Regulatory Choice: Precaution, Innovation…and Nonviolence?

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Abstract

Two foundations of regulatory choice, precaution and innovation, co-exist in the political system of the European Union (EU). At the conceptual level the two foundations are complementary, and are both endorsed by the EU institutions, albeit in different ways and with different legal status. In the real-life of EU policymaking processes, however, precaution and innovation often become the terrain of polarised views anchored to technocratic or populist positions that erode trust in EU governance. We propose a way forward to this state of play. Instead of seeing the two foundations as opposite, we explore their dyadic relationship. We show that a conversation between the two is possible via an original reformulation of precaution and innovation. The reconciliation of precaution and innovation, we argue, is effective only in a context of social trust about the reconciled definitions. We propose the analytical and normative framework of nonviolence as seal of social trust. Nonviolence can assist the EU and its citizens in the path towards innovation that is socially responsible, future-proof and accountable. It can enhance precaution as internalised commitment of decision-makers as well as scientific and social communities.

Keywords

European Union; Innovation; Nonviolence; Precaution; Regulation; Scientific Research

In the post-pandemic scenario, foundations of regulatory choice under conditions of uncertainty require a renewed social trust. Ideological polarisation around the foundational principles of regulation is not only detrimental to sound policymaking, but also to social trust in governance and institutions. This is the starting point that motivates our article: how can we foster innovation in the post-pandemic recovery strategy, whilst at the same time exercising precaution in the face of radical uncertainty? This is not just a choice between principles, no matter how that choice might be. The confrontation between precaution and innovation can lead to ideological positions on risk regulation identified with populist and technocratic dystopias of European Union (EU) governance. To see how this may happen, we start with the foundations and then move to the possible, although we shall argue by all means not inevitable, connections with populism and technocracy.

Regulation often includes a delicate balancing act between positive and negative effects in a context of uncertainty. Policymakers face the choice of allowing behaviour (such as commercialising a new product) where the costs ultimately outweigh the benefits (false negative) or prohibiting something where the benefits would ultimately outweigh the costs (false positive). The precautionary principle intervenes in these cases by stating that, under conditions of incomplete knowledge and scientific incompleteness, regulators should stick to high levels of protection and give priority to concerns for the possible negative effects on the environment and health. This principle is Treaty-based and as such has an important role in EU public policy. If anything, this role has been magnified by the Covid-19 pandemic. As foundation of regulatory choice, precaution is more likely to accept false positives than false negatives (Majone 2002).

Over the last ten years or so, innovation as foundation of regulatory choice has emerged in the context of a major effort of the EU institutions to support growth and, today, the post-pandemic recovery and resiliency plan, and more generally the ambitions of the European Commission to drive the European economies and societies towards sustainable innovation and an ecological transition (Commission 2019b; Commission 2019a).

There are at least two different ways to frame innovation as foundational regulatory principle. One is to argue that all proposals have to pass a robust evidence-based test on their short-term and dynamic effects on innovation. Another is to re-think the role of regulation more broadly, as lever for innovation. Thus, regulations should be flexible and allow experimentations that support innovation (European Commission 2016; Council of the EU 2020) encouraging the EU to adopt sandboxes and experimentation clauses. In both formulations, innovation as policy foundation for regulation would lead regulators to avoid false positives as much as possible. The implications are therefore the opposite of those of precaution.

Since both precaution and innovation do not play out in vacuum, but in the political system of the EU, the two principles can be edited, translated and adopted by political ideologies. In its populist adaptation, precaution resonates with the fear of abandoning identities and traditional ways of life, distrust in vaccines and science, and the ordinary people's frustration with choices made exclusively on the basis of technical reason (Majone 2011). Instead, the necessity to promote innovation in a context of uncertainty, and therefore accepting that not all innovations will invariably produce net benefits, resonates with the fear of supposedly blind faith in science and progress typical of technocracy.

Although the formulation in terms of false positives and false negatives is somewhat aseptic, the appropriation of the two principles by political ideologies is incendiary. The scene for a clash between populism and technocracy is set. There are several elements of this scene that, as we shall explain below, have to be detailed and qualified. But the central conceptual argument in this article is that there is a way to accommodate precaution and innovation by considering nonviolence. Admittedly, this is not the most obvious choice, hence we will invest time in showing what nonviolence brings to this debate. Basically, we will argue that nonviolence leads to a reformulation of the two foundations of regulatory

choice that is less adversarial and less likely to become hostage to the populism-versus-technocracy confrontation.

We make the following claims in support of the central argument. First, we argue that the relationship between precaution and innovation is dyadic. Since the EU needs both, it is worth exploring the relationship between the two rather than the conditions under which one foundation of regulatory choice annuls the other. Second, this relationship is grounded on evidence. This does not mean supporting the technocratic rhetoric of 'evidence-based policy' unconditionally. Instead, it means pointing to evidence-informed and value-balanced decisions in directing precaution and innovation towards a politically and socially acceptable reformulation. Third, once reformulated with the aid of nonviolence, precaution and innovation achieve complementarity.

Indeed, we will argue that the social element to seal the reconciliation between the two principles is nonviolence. Although nonviolence is a topic often left to philosophers, divinity studies and scholars of social movements, it also has regulatory qualities. These qualities, we submit, add to the credibility and social resilience of the reconciliation we are looking for. Nonviolence implies self-regulatory principles, moderation, and consideration of the consequences of our actions for 'the other' - other living beings, the future generations and life on the planet. It induces scientists to think harder and deeper about the implications of disruptive innovation. It delivers on precaution in policy choice as well as fostering the capacity of societies to resist unjust regulations. In the end, we argue. nonviolence regulates the dyadic relationship between precaution and innovation, adding original qualities to each foundation.

We still have to motivate the choice of casting our argument and claims in the language of 'regulation'. First, it is exactly in the field of regulation, more precisely risk regulation, that the relationship between precaution and regulation has been mostly discussed (Wiener, Rogers, Hammitt and Sand 2011; Vogel 2012). Second, the EU has been characterised as a 'regulatory state' (Majone 1996) and an international public administration (Trondal, 2016) with specialisation on regulation (European Risk Forum 2019). We adopt 'regulation' not in the legal sense of secondary legislation but as policy type (different from distributive, redistributive, constitutional types of policy) that defines the characteristics of a policymaking process and its politics (Majone 1996).

In terms of organisation of the article, we first present the coordinates of precaution and innovation as manifested in the positions of the EU institutions and think tanks. Next, we connect the two foundations to the main topics that motivate the special issue, showing the pathway from regulatory principles to political ideologies. In the following sections we present our constructive proposal to go beyond the juxtaposition between precaution and innovation, enter nonviolence and show the implications of our choice. We conclude by re-connecting our findings to the themes of the special issue.

THE PILLARS OF HERCULES

The EU's 'regulatory state' can play an important role in bringing about the paradigmatic change to the sustainable, green, digital EU that, according to the official deliberations of EU institutions, should emerge from the post-pandemic recovery. And yet, how exactly can innovation and precaution be articulated in specific regulatory policy choices is a question that has led to tension, exemplified by emergency politics (White 2020) as well as thick, often irreducible political conflict, stalemate, and escalation of trade controversies (Tosun 2013; Majone 2000; Daviter 2018).

But where do precaution and innovation sit exactly in the legal and policy framework of the EU? Here some references to Treaties and official documents help. Precaution is enshrined (yet not defined) in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European

Union (TFEU) of 2013. This Treaty article refers to the environment, but its use has been expanded to public health, safety and even financial regulation.[1] The 2000 EC Guidelines state that the precautionary principle:

applies where scientific evidence is insufficient, inconclusive or uncertain and preliminary scientific evaluation indicates that there are reasonable grounds for concern that the potentially dangerous effects on the environment, human, animal or plant health may be inconsistent with the high level of protection chosen for the Community. (European Commission 2000: 1)

In order to decide which kind of regulatory measure to take, for example a moratorium on the exploitation of a given technological innovation in food or medical research, decision-makers must meet the requirements of being proportional, non-discriminatory, consistent with comparable measures already in place. Their decision must be anchored to an examination of benefits and costs of action and inaction. Further, this decision ought to be subject to review, and must carry out responsibility for producing future scientific evidence (European Commission 2000: 3).

The EU defined precaution in the year 2000. Instead, the innovation principle is the new kid on the block in terms of foundations of regulatory choice. The innovation principle was firstly developed by a pro-business think tank, the European Risk Forum (ERF 2011) with the aim of anchoring regulatory choice to the paradigm of evidence-based policy, dynamic efficiency and growth. The principle is defined by ERF (2015:3) as: 'whenever the EU's institutions consider regulatory proposals, the impact on innovation should be fully assessed and addressed'.

Thus, the ERF points to a specific stage of the EU policy process where the principle should be deployed. This is the stage of policy formulation. In the EU, policy formulation is a prerogative of the European Commission, which adopts impact assessment as single template to appraise a large number of economic, social and environmental impacts of different stakeholders and the environment. In a strong formulation, one could even argue that when the principle applies, the regulatory options considered in impact assessment should do no harm to innovation. Or, if harm is done, this should be justified by higher, demonstrable, social benefits.

In the last few years, the innovation principle has made progress in the EU institutions. It was officially discussed and endorsed by the Council of Competitiveness Ministers (Council of the EU 2016) and embraced by the 2019 Finnish Presidency high-level conference on innovation (Taffoni 2020). On 27 February 2020 the Competitiveness Council adopted Conclusions endorsing the innovation principle (reiterating the 2016 EU Council Conclusion), calling on the Commission to further determine its use (Council of the EU 2020).

Although the European Commission is not unconditionally persuaded by the innovation principle (Taffoni 2020), it has been open to a softer formulation of innovation as political priority. In *Better Regulations for Innovation-Driven Investment* (European Commission 2016) the Commission describes how flexible rules can encourage innovation – the 'regulation as driver of innovation' perspective mentioned above. Always within the Commission, its in-house think tank, the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC) (2016), developed the connection between regulation and innovation in a note on *Towards an Innovation Principle Endorsed by Better Regulation*. For the EPSC the innovation principle is 'a positive obligation to facilitate innovation' (European Political Strategy Centre 2016: 7). This stronger claim, the EPSC observes, is anchored to an understanding of innovation as legal principle.

The innovation principle presupposes the political decision to embrace innovation as fundamental litmus test for the analysis of policy options. As we said, it gets close to a principle of 'do no significant harm to innovation'. This may well be the case, but why

innovation and not gender, human rights or other principles? Why focusing on one dimension without considering the balance between EU values that define the societal, environmental and consumer dimensions of EU policy (Garnett, Van Calster and Reins 2018: 10-11)?

Precaution can then deliver balance in regulatory thinking. There is no space in this article to rehearse the story of the principle, its possible interpretations (Gollier and Treich 2003) and the controversial applications to EU regulation (Alemanno 2007). In an effort to gain on clarity, the EU institutions have sought to reduce ambivalence by enshrining regulatory foundations in the legal framework of the EU. This was already done for precaution. Following the EPSC, the same could be done for innovation. In the end, no matter how much clarity can be provided by legal definitions, the EU would erect two rigid bastions defining the perimeter of EU regulation. Rigid limits exist to limit discovery and progress, not to encourage them. A bit like the two gigantic rocks (the pillars of Hercules) faced by Ulysses in Gibraltar in the version narrated by Dante, Inferno, XXVI. In the Divine Comedy, Ulysses urges his fellow travellers to sail past the pillars to gain knowledge.

PRECAUTION VERSUS INNOVATION: POPULISM VERSUS TECHNOCRACY?

In real-world EU politics, precaution and innovation are pitched one against the other. The evidence on policy controversies shows that the political usage of the precautionary principle leads to ideological and legal battles that dent the reputation of the EU as political system where values are balanced and evidence is taken into proper consideration (Tosun 2013; Majone 2000; Garnett, Van Calster and Reins 2018).

Indeed, the key problem is the political usage of regulatory principles, not something inherently anti-empirical in either precaution or innovation. After all, as we have seen, it is a question of judging false positives and false negatives. Yet the EU is a spectacularly inefficient arena for these ideological battles, with the added contradiction that the battles are fought 'in the name of evidence-based policy', as shown by the case of biotech regulation narrated by Falk Daviter (2018). When the Council, in 2016, endorsed the innovation principle adding (in a footnote) 'The Council recalls the Precautionary Principle' without further elaboration, it did not do much to solve the contradictions and entanglement of the foundations of regulatory choice. Ambivalence thrives in controversies about seemingly scientific arguments (Bogner and Torgersen 2018), such as legal cases in which the precautionary principle has been used to prevent the import of food products (Millstone, van Zwanenberg, Marris, Levidow, et al. 2004) or a general camouflage of political struggles behind the polysemic veil of cost-benefit analysis and impact assessment (Fischer 1990).

This political struggle leads to non-logical consequences because means and ends are completely disconnected. Concerning the precautionary principle, we find occasions in which new evidence showing safety of a new process or technique are not considered, for example the 2018 European Court of Justice decision on Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (Callaway 2018). At the same time, this juxtaposition contributes to further develop an adversarial legalistic EU regulatory style (Kelemen 2006), as shown by the cases of glyphosate, bisphenol A and endocrine disrupters.

How do these policy controversies fuel the battleground between populism and technocracy on science? This tension ties in with the themes of this special issue: distrust in elected politicians and the conflict between regulatory choices grounded in reason or in the 'will of the people' (Weale 2018). Distrust in science of the type voiced by populist narratives may connect with an approach to ecological issues that considers all major innovations like William Blake's 'dark satanic mills', as well as a lack of appreciation of the difference between hazard and risk. Populism, in the sense of listening to the 'will of the people' as interpreted by the charismatic party leader, is a narrative leading to EU dis-

integration and a political ideology that contrasts with democracy (Weale 2018). We are aware of the debate on the meaning of both populism, as ideology (Mudde 2014), discursive frame (Laclau 2005), style of rhetoric (Norris and Inglehart 2019), or a political strategy (Weyland 2017), and technocracy (see Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2021). Whatever definition we choose, both terms refer to a particular disposition or posture towards policymaking under condition of risk.

The link between precaution-innovation and populism-technocracy is nothing new (see Majone 2011, 2002). Indeed, policy controversies on risk decisions fall on a terrain already prone to public scepticism (Gaskell, Allum, Wagner, Kronberger, et al. 2004; Gaskell, Stares, Allansdottir, Allum, et al. 2010), along with fear of choices made by unaccountable experts and non-elected regulators (Dunlop and Radaelli 2020). This builds up on what is already a clear 'risk aversion of regulators' (Majone 2002:412), leading to the danger of a populist refusal to compare costs and expected benefits in the presence of health risks.

On the innovation side, fear of public hostile reactions often leads institutions to an even more technocratic mode of governance (Papadopoulos 2013), choosing to shed their decisions behind emergency politics mantras of necessity and exceptional circumstances (White 2020). For what concerns the EU, its priority to make regulation more flexible and innovation-friendly may lead Brussels to repeat some of Washington's misunderstandings and misapplications. With reference to the US experience, Christie Ford (2017: 122) recalls propositions about regulation for innovation that are innocuous in theory but not in practice. In practice, she continues, the naïve approach 'allowed itself, sometimes, to be limited to a *technocratic conversation* that could be exploited in practice by political figures who neither appreciated nor valued its deep structure' (Ford 2017: 122, our emphasis).

The public is left to either bluntly trust (rare) or distrust even more experts, EU bureaucrats and politicians, arguably preparing the ground for techno-populism (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2021) and ideas such as proposing a housewife with three kids, instead of a 'economics professor', as minister of finance, because of the former 'better grasp of financial issues' due to her knowledge of family's finance (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2018: 140). This environment is far from optimal for the smooth, socially responsible development of science carried out in lively scientific communities. Indeed, the prospect is to carry out research and explore its technological implications in a climate of legal disputes, public anger and continuous political exploitation of scientific work for partial or party interest, bringing further divisions to the communities themselves.

And here we are today with the regulatory responses to Covid-19 (Alemanno 2020) and their balancing acts between public health and the economy, and between using regulation for innovation (Taffoni 2020) or adopting a more precautionary approach to deliver on sustainability. The dilemma is how to foster responsible innovation whilst at the same time exercising precaution (Ford 2017; Von Schomberg and Hankins, 2019). The EU regulatory state is not just a technical entity – its political properties include extensive delegation to non-elected decision-makers in a web of multi-level regulatory executive order (Trondal 2010). Yet, technocracy, that is leaving the balancing act between innovation and precaution to the experts, is a shortcut that is not politically viable (Dunlop and Radaelli 2020).

Thus, the question is: how to foster innovation in the post-pandemic recovery strategy, whilst at the same time exercising precaution in the face of radical uncertainty, without falling into populism or technocracy? Here we offer a vision of reconciliation between precaution and innovation. Contradictions, ambivalence and polysemic confrontations about precaution and innovation are ubiquitous in political life. We are not saying that they will disappear because of what we propose. Actually, we argue in a way we should accept confrontations but in a less ideological conversation between precaution and innovation. The point is to move the pendulum from confrontation to conversation. To achieve that, we must explore the dyadic relationship between the two foundations. At the core of this

relationship lies evidence, and therefore our work of reconstruction and reformulation will start from this concept.

BRINGING PRECAUTION AND INNOVATION BACK TO EVIDENCE

We set out to explore whether a dyadic relationship exists. Recall that, as adjective, dyadic describes interaction between two terms, not their opposition. For us, dyadic refers to the content and quality of this connection. Evidence, we argue in this section, is a central property of this relationship.

This is no surprise. In fact, already in the 2000 Communication of the European Commission (as well as regulation 178/2002 article 6 on the European Food Safety Authority) the principle of precaution is anchored to a set of evidence-based and science-based requirements that are compatible with innovation. The EPSC note adds that precaution is 'of particular importance for innovation, because especially at an early stage of a new technique or approach, the possibility of risk often cannot be ruled out' (European Political Strategy Centre, 2016: 3).

Logically, there has to be at least a minimum of empirical evidence leading to the conclusion 'we do not know enough' and opt for precaution. Now enter the jurisprudence of the World Trade Organization: regulators cannot simply go for unqualified precaution, otherwise the precautionary principle is equivalent to protectionism and consequently sanctioned (Majone 2000). Precaution should be used with qualifications. These qualifications are balancing acts where precaution is in active conversation with other foundations of regulatory choice. Innovation, as shown above, is emerging as one of these foundations. Conversely, if we were to argue that precaution and innovation are incompatible, we would conclude that the regulatory foundations of EU public policy contain a formidable paradox, such as 'follow this rule but also the negation of that rule'. There ought to be some degree of coherence in how the EU designs its regulations. Consequently, it is the connection between the two principles that deserves our attention.

But how exactly can the two principles come together? We do not have the general answer to this question. Yet we can at least explore the implications of a reformulation of the principles. The history of policy controversies in the EU shows that precaution is used politically to regulate, ban, limit, and prohibit. It is the weapon of those who say 'no'.

How about changing the conceptual angle, and draw on precaution in novel ways, and see when it is precautionary not to ban? This opens up the peripheral vision to some other notions of precaution, attenuating its totemic value of 'saying no'. Here is one example. Precaution suggests saying 'yes' instead of prohibiting or limiting scientific research. To move precaution to the other side, towards 'no', there has to be evidence. A reformulated precautionary principle can therefore state a new default condition, that is, that *the EU should not limit or prohibit scientific research unless there is evidence showing that the costs to humans and the environment outweigh the benefits of freedom of research*. Evidence becomes the 'quality test' in this reformulation. 'No' is possible only if sufficient evidence is produced.

On the basis of our reformulation research on embryos, assisted reproduction, psychedelics and genetic editing of plants should not be prohibited or limited. Another limitation is about time. Over time, the precautionary decision can be reversed, should evidence about costs become more compelling. Further, our reformulation is not an algorithm. Although we presented it in terms of utilitarian benefit-cost analysis, advocacy actors and discourse coalitions will always argue that there is or there is not sufficient 'evidence', and even contest the notion of what evidence is and is not. Our reformulation aims to handle contradictions and polysemy (see Cino-Pagliarello Forthcoming on the diffusion of polysemic ideas in the EU), not to eliminate politics.

We build symmetry between our argument for precaution with an original proposition about innovation. The innovation principle, as we said, is not a test like the others. It has been pushed forward by the business community to prioritise innovation. The possible recognition in the Treaties (and in any case its possible legal usages) means that its proponents see innovation as foundational to regulatory choice. Here again we can change the default condition and reduce the rigidity of this principle with the following proposition: *The EU should prioritise the do no significant harm to innovation in the impact assessment of regulatory proposals only when there is evidence that the benefits of doing so outweigh the cost to humans and the environment.* Again, innovation as foundation follows the precautionary foundation. It highlights the importance of evidence in defining the dyadic relationship. Anchored in evidence, innovation can be *in conversation with* instead of *in opposition to* precaution.

Going back to the themes presented in the introduction to this special issue, the two reformulations make it less likely that populists and technocrats deploy principles as weapons. The dyadic relationship exists because both foundations of regulatory choice are brought within the dimension of evidence. They leave room for values by making the balancing act more transparent, without any false hope of eradicating different legitimate visions of risk. Precaution and innovation are no longer free-floating political demands. Instead, they are taken in front of the tribunal of evidence and given a fair hearing before a decision pro or against a regulatory intervention is made.

There is an important caveat. These reformulations of precaution and innovation cannot work alone, as free-standing justifications. Social certification is necessary to seal the reconciliation. As shown in previous studies on risk and scientific knowledge (Wynne 1992), scientific knowledge is an activity which does not simply require more and more evidence. It also includes a process of reflexive learning about nature and human limitations (Wynne 1992: 115). Thus, science and innovation cannot prosper in a society without a serious reflection on personal responsibility, social commitments and conventions. Social certification relates to the legitimacy that undergirds our re-formulations of the default conditions for precaution and innovation.

To put it bluntly, it is fine to balance and connect precaution and innovation: but why should citizens buy into that? What are the terms of this social contract? Imagine offering renewed trust to scientific research and easing the trade-offs between innovation and precaution, re-configuring them as dyad: what do citizens get back in exchange?

In the past, the answer to this question seemed simple: education. Governments have tried to educate the public about innovation and science by following the so-called deficit model (Ziman 1991; Sturgis and Allum 2004) in which the lack of trust in science is attributed to ignorance. Today, we know that scientific education, teaching statistics and economics to journalists and other approaches have their very valuable role to play. But the reasons behind lack of trust, affecting at different level EU member states during the current pandemic (Aksoy, Eichengreen and Saka 2020), are much deeper than ignorance, and the paternalism implicit in the deficit model can only make things worse.

At the same time, the answer cannot be reduced to deontological codes or a problem of ethics and principles of 'transference' of scientific evidence into policymaking, even though the latter is valuable, for example the Brussels Declaration (Euroscientist 2017). Perhaps in the EU, like in the USA, people have lost faith in expertise (Nichols 2017). Or perhaps not given the Covid-19 pandemic has witnessed many calls for more recognition of scientific findings when taking decisions about risk. Be that as it may, it cannot be a question of faith as mentioning faith in a discussion about evidence, expertise and science is an oxymoron.

We suggest nonviolence as social certification seal of the reconciliation we presented above. The construction of shared responsibility and social trust, the special issue

introduction reminds us, calls for new pathways to legitimise EU policy by bridging the 'gulf between 'populist' and 'technocratic' systems of knowledge production' (Foster, Grzymski and Brusenbauch Meislová 2021).

NONVIOLENCE AS SOCIAL CERTIFICATION SEAL

There is no space here to rehearse the concept of nonviolence and its history (Mantena 2012; Jahanbegloo 2014; Baldoli 2019). We take nonviolence as a framework of action that includes both a set of techniques and a normative perspective that emerges when the desire to harm is eradicated (see Baldoli and Radaelli 2019 on the application of this definition to the EU). In a nutshell, our argument is that with nonviolence responsibility is not left in the hands of parties, ministers or 'the bureaucrats of the Commission' (not even left only in the hands of the Members of the European Parliament). Instead, responsibility for the consequences of actions (including EU regulations) is shared by scientific communities, individual scientists and citizens. The system is accountable and regulated by social, not legal, norms. Nonviolence provides the brake and gas pedals, reducing the legitimacy deficit of EU policy by considering jointly precaution and innovation.

What is nonviolence to do with science and innovation? To begin with, Gandhian nonviolence has an anti-deterministic position on science and technology: 'the technological process is inherently a social process that is integrated into political, social and economic contexts' (Ninan 2009: 186). Science and technology are not autonomous and pre-designed systems of knowledge. When science is not integrated in society, the result is economic exploitation and social disintegration (Ninan 2009: 187). Thus, Gandhi's problem was *yantraväd* (indiscriminate mechanisation), but, crucially, not industry. The problem for him was not to fall into economic modes of production and trade which undermined human dignity. Innovation has qualities that score high in terms of dignity and better life, especially if we consider both technological and social innovation (Edquist 2017).

Let us now unpack nonviolence into techniques and normative pathways. In its most basic form, nonviolence refers to a set of techniques of action short of violence, from boycott to marches, from vigils to the establishment of parallel institutions. This set constitutes a basic accountability platform for encounters, dialogues and evidence-based contestation between citizens and scientists. Nonviolence contains techniques which can be used by citizens in order to express dissent without falling into violence (Sharp 1973; Nepstad 2015; Ackerman and Kruegler 1994). These techniques are already adopted to overthrow dictators (Popovic 2015; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), fighting corruption (Beyerle 2014), designing national defence (Sharp and Jenkins 1990; Burrowes 1996) and defending human rights (Zunes 2000).

If anchored to nonviolence, contestation (even extreme) of evidence should not be perceived as threat by the scientific community. We can envisage a pluralistic EU where constellations of actors debate issues such as 'my numbers are better than yours'; 'we can use different instruments or policies to achieve the same result'; 'your assessment does not consider the benefits arising to future generations'; and 'where does your belief that this regulation will work come from?'. Given that the EU has limited democratic legitimacy, this pluralistic dialogue should perform better than any top-down attempt to 'educate' 27 different national cultures from above.

There are many examples of nonviolent techniques used to intervene on scientific research when some divisive/contrasted aspects emerge. They range from campaigns against nuclear testing and animal testing to specific studies on how to react to research and distribution of electroshock weapons, which ceased to be ways to reduce violence and become weapons to hurt (Martin and Wright 2003).

Yet, nonviolent techniques can also be adopted by scientific communities and individual scientists. The absence of EU bans on scientific research, as described in our reformulation of the precautionary principle, bestows a good deal of personal responsibility on scientists, including the duty to take risks. Such freedom may both unleash the potential of science as a tool of resistance (Crandall 2019), and encourage a scientist to become a civil disobedient. This is the first step towards bringing out the reflective capacity of scientists, as they too are also parents, citizens and children (Wilsdon and Willis 2004).

Nonviolent techniques to dissent have already been discussed both for global emergencies, such as the Covid-19 pandemic (Baldoli and Radaelli Forthcoming), climate change (Lemons and Brown 2011: 91), and for the day-to-day work of engineers (Schlossberger 1995; Boisjoly 1995). In extreme cases, a scientist may feel a duty even to become whistle-blower, or to risk his life testing on himself/herself a gene therapy, lacking the approval of the Food and Drug Administration, as it happened in the USA to the microbiologist Brian Hanley. We did not find similar episodes for the EU, although there are episodes of civil disobedience to EU law in the name of freedom of scientific research: in 2019 Marco Cappato (former MEP) and Marco Perduca (former Italian MP) disobeyed in public against EU limits to genetic plant editing and asked to be prosecuted (Science for Democracy 2019).

IMPURE PRAXIS TOWARDS FREEDOM AND PLURALITY

A limitation, though, exists. The empowerment of civil society with effective techniques to disobey and disrupt would not automatically lead to a better and more resilient EU. Our scenario may produce an even more divided EU, pushing to the extreme the clash between innovation and precaution. Divisions in society may bring back violence at a certain point, leading to the destruction of public experiments of GMOs in Europe (Kuntz 2012) or the questionable tactics of the Animal Liberation Front. The reason being that, in this scenario, the different actors are empowered to say 'no', without any focus on the constructive programme to navigate innovation. Neither social trust nor policy legitimacy would emerge.

For this reason, we propose a further step into nonviolence as normative framework, which offers such a constructive programme. Normatively, nonviolence is a relational approach, a mode of human togetherness. This mode of human interaction centres on an opportunity that all human beings have: people have the power to withdraw consent (Atack 2012) and to move from a condition of passivity, fear, anger, contempt, to a condition of love and courage (Nagler 2014: 47-49).

The rejection of passivity and the stress on personal responsibility are grounded in an original understanding of the human condition, and in particular the acknowledgment that human (and also non-human) life is interrelated. Humans are united by their fragilities, which means by pain, constitutive fallibility, and ineluctable death (Baldoli 2020:472). The perception of a link between people's suffering, along with the acknowledgment of human finitude, creates a condition of 'unity in fragility', which is the base for a new relationship between the actors of society, for a new praxis.

Unity in fragility is obviously reminiscent of what we experienced during the acute stages of the Covid-19 pandemic (Baldoli and Radaelli Forthcoming). More pertinently perhaps, it is an appropriate concept to frame the relationship between science and sustainability as well as for an EU where crisis management has become the new normal. Besides, in the EU the balance between unity and diversity is central, given the heterogeneity of cultures, national traditions, and approaches to science.

The acknowledgment of unity in fragility opens a practical opportunity for the different players involved. When a person recognises the connection and interdependence with the

others, she can decide to deepen it. She can choose an act of openness. She can choose to prioritise shared needs and aims over personal gains in a power-relation framework. This choice creates (factually, in real life) a different reality, which transcends the material bounds. It produces value and enhances both personal responsibility and social trust.

Let us now look at an implication of unity in fragility. Anytime a social actor (be it a scientist, a citizen, a firm, or a decision-maker) does not exploit the practical opportunity to face together human fragility, there is closure. The opportunity to create and live a better reality is lost. Grievances, mistakes and pain increase. Nonviolent scholars claim that violence begets violence. This is the case of destruction of crops or corporate irresponsibility; scientists hiding or even cheating on their research and data, or simply withdrawing from public discussion on the basis of a supposedly superior truth; or certain communities of scientists discouraging or limiting the articulation and representation of certain discourses (Azoulay, Fons-Rosen and Graff Zivin 2015).

Another implication points to praxis, a practical framework towards a change of reality (Mantena 2012). Indeed, praxis is the moment in which theory and practice are generated, and not something that follows them. In other words, praxis is the endless effort of the creation of values and of better practices. This matches the very endeavour and motivation of science, while at the same time it has potential for the legitimacy of the relationship between scientific modes of knowledge production and the citizens.

This praxis is and will always be *impure*, because nonviolence as praxis acknowledges, and actually proceeds from, human fallibility. Yet, imperfection should not discourage us. Nonviolence offers a framework to move forward, towards what Gandhi would call *swaraj* and *sarvodaya* (Gandhi 1997) and Aldo Capitini *liberazione* (liberation) and *apertura* (openness) (Baldoli 2019). Hannah Arendt (1998) called these two qualities of praxis freedom and plurality. Freedom is neither mere freedom to choose, nor a reduction to a life of pleasure; it is exactly the opposite of reducing human action into a passive follower of necessity (Bernstein 1977: 146). An action is free when it has the 'capacity to start something new' (d'Entrèves 1994: 66), when it is an interruption and a development of both the biological necessity embedded within natural life, as well as of the historical necessity. Within nonviolence, freedom is both self-restraint and practice to enhance personal responsibility.

Nevertheless, freedom cannot be achieved without plurality, without the others. We are not the exclusive masters of our actions. It is only through the other's sight and judgment that our action becomes a meaningful activity, overcoming the automatism of the natural process. This is equal to a recognition of both the possibility and need for human beings to understand each other, a crucial recognition in a hyper-diverse system like the EU. This 'quality' of praxis is cultivated by nonviolence through both actions of openness towards the others (made of forgiveness, reconciliation, avoidance of humiliation) and new practices of empowerment of everybody (both participation and inclusion).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Nonviolent techniques to withdraw consent, non-cooperate and persuade others in society are the first step. Their potential is to generate EU legitimate practices to express disagreement without the destruction of the social fabric. Civil disobedience provides a powerful way to protect all the actors involved (citizens, scientists, the scientific community, and even institutions and businesses) from harassment or influence of powerful private interests (Landman and Glantz 2009), governments and other institutions, fostering transparency and openness.

The second step arises out of the *normative* framework. Unity in fragility fosters self-restraint and personal responsibility of scientific research and the process of innovation.

Freedom is widened: from freedom from external interference in the scientific mode of knowledge production to freedom to take charge of social and political implications of a choice. There are already examples around the world of different forms in which actors take this responsibility, from scientists[2] to citizens,[3] from politicians to business[4]. By fostering practices of openness to the other and the enhancement of the power of everyone, nonviolence adds legitimacy, social trust and accountability via engagement and dialogue. The opportunity to create legitimacy exists in the early stages of policymaking, for example by widening the peripheral vision of regulatory impact assessments (Bice 2020). Upstream engagement includes commitment to transparency, access, open data, and hybrid forums (Callon Lascoumes and Barthe 2009).

The result of the development of this praxis of freedom and plurality is the blossoming of social trust within and among communities. Indeed, businesses, scientists, communities of science and citizens use their properties, wealth, ideas, talents for the service of society. They become *trustees*, at the service of society. This makes the conventional, advocacy-driven versions of the precautionary and innovation principles redundant and oppressive.

At the same time, this praxis represents fertile ground for the further development and diffusion of evidence-informed practices, our condition for the reformulation of the precautionary and innovation principles. The normative framework we presented calls for a new relation between science and society where decisions are created by balancing values and utilising a rich evidentiary base. Interestingly, this combination of robust evidence and balanced values is the trajectory suggested by a recent report of the European Academies (SAPEA 2019).

We are conscious of our limitations. We have presented a vision and corroborated it with examples and illustrations. In the post-pandemic stage, there is demand for science and societal interest for new visions, but we have not tested our framework against surveys of scientists, business or interest groups. Our vision will require further research on different mechanisms of accountability as well as on the role of EU institutions in such a bottom-up scenario. With these limitations, we have suggested a way forward: in our re-formulation, the principle of precaution protects innovation and the principle of innovation protects against fear and distrust. The challenge ahead is not to convene a new EU-wide intergovernmental conference to carry out the work. The challenge for citizens, individual scientists, the scientific communities, policymakers and (why not?) those who fund frontier research (König 2015) is to work together and to reinterpret current practices of precaution and innovation in a novel praxis. The Covid-19 crisis is already showing cases in which innovation is led by the empowerment and encounter of the different societal actors, such as the creation of apps to trace the virus and citizen science experiments to gain a better understanding of it.[5] The challenge ahead is to gather and improve such socially robust experiments and practices of responsible innovation to deal with new crises and emergencies without falling into technocratic temptations and populist anger.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The TFEU states that 'Union policy on the environment shall aim at a high level of protection taking into account the diversity of situations in the various regions of the Union. It shall be based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay'.

[2] Helen Caldicott is a physicist and writer working on nuclear and environmental crisis and advocating for citizens involvement and actions. See: http://www.helencaldicott.com/about/. Another example is Piero Giorgi, a biologist and neuroscientist who works on the cultural reasons for violence, as well as on the links between science and nonviolence (Giorgi 2009; 2001).

[3] One example is citizen science, which has been adopted in fields such as biology, geography, and epidemiology. On the conception of citizen science as resistance see Kullenberg (2015).

[4] There is currently a lack of debates on the meaning of nonviolence for business, but on the economy broadly defined see Cante and Torres (2019) and Schumacher (1993).

[5] See for instance the different projects on Covid-19 at https://www.citizenscience.org/covid-19/ as well as the Coronareport at https://www.spotteron.net/projekte/coronareport-app.

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Research Article

Mad Marx? Rethinking Emotions, Euroscepticism and Nationalism in the Populist Left

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Abstract

Much attention has been devoted to how right-wing populists in Europe challenge the consensus on the benefits of European integration, but left-wing resistance to the EU is less discussed. Existing analyses tend to distinguish between three constructions of political community: a postnational EU, the populist right invoking national sovereignty, and the populist left invoking popular sovereignty. However, empirical analyses struggle to find consensus on how left populists relate to the EU, and if they invoke claims to national or popular sovereignty. This article argues that this empirical impasse stems from that populism and Euroscepticism are performative categories and not simply analytical tools, and serve to produce exclusion. There are two dichotomies in this exclusionary frame: emotional populists/rational EU, and the postnational EU/nationalist populists. Through an analysis of Podemos in Spain and the UK Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, I show how the lines between the postnational EU, the national sovereign, and the popular sovereign are frailer than previously thought. The article concludes that these categories are less analytically astute than they are politically motivated, and analyses of the populist left in Europe must consider the performative dimension of its key terms.

Keywords

Populism; Euroscepticism; Nationalism; Emotions; Podemos; UK Labour Party

Populism is often seen as a threat to European democracies, repeated by policymakers, commentators, and academics alike. Populists are said to disturb the modern way of doing politics, which focusses on reasoned debate and consensual approaches. These are two of the main pillars of the European collaboration, following the Habermasian ideal of communicative action. Conversely, populism relies on propaganda, demagoguery, and manipulation of the masses. They are often seen as staunch Eurosceptics, who are drastically against the postnational constellation of the European Union (EU). This discussion has been most prominent with regards to right-wing populists, and the European establishment has watched with horror how a period of relative political stability has been exchanged for a clear challenge to European integration from the right. Nevertheless, populism is by no means only a right-wing phenomenon. Over the past decade, a distinct form of European left-wing populism has emerged, at times taking inspiration from its South American counterparts. Parties such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, La France Insoumise in France, have all contributed to a renegotiation of what left-wing politics means in Europe today.

These parties and movements have been labelled with similar terms as their right-wing counterparts, which is often a gross simplification. There are distinct differences between right- and left-wing populists, but also similarities in the type of rhetoric surrounding member states' relationship with the EU. In this area, left-wing populists are often very critical of European integration, but are basing their critique upon how the EU has failed to protect Europe socially, and put economic integration and prosperity ahead of people's lives and livelihoods. They also accuse the EU of being a depoliticised institution which makes decisions without involvement of its citizens, but they support European integration in some form (van Elsas, Hakhverdian and van der Brug 2016). It is thus often argued that there is a strong divide between the technocratic EU and the political and antagonistic populist left (Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012). As such, the literature on populism tends to reinforce three distinct ideas of political community: one based on a postnational European identity, which is the main ethos of the EU; one based on national sovereignty, which is the preferred community of the populist right; and one based on popular sovereignty, which is the mantra of the populist left, and should be seen as different from the ethnic and xenophobic versions of right-wing national sovereignty.

This article argues that this divide is much more spurious than imagined, especially when discussing left-wing populism. Empirically, there is no consensus in the literature on whether left-wing populists ascribe to one version of political community or the other. This article will demonstrate how left-wing populist parties are in many ways rearticulating a particular 'European' way of life, which is not directly at odds with how European democracy in the EU is conducted. Whilst being sceptical of the EU, left-wing populist parties are less sceptical of what it means to be European, and rely on a particular vision of how politics should be enacted. Often, the solution lies in promoting popular sovereignty to strengthen democracy. At the same time, many left-wing populists also place a strong emphasis on national sovereignty, in defence of a national working class. As such, when discussing populism and Euroscepticism on the left, it is important to further qualify what these concepts mean. The strong dichotomies contribute to a simplified understanding which omits how left-wing parties are sometimes more European than they are left-wing. Ultimately, this article will argue that the current readings of left populism and Euroscepticism and the inability to neatly categorise these movements and parties stem from the distinct *performative* character of the terms populism and Euroscepticism. In other words, the terms are not simply used as analytical tools, but have a political purpose of delineating the outsiders of European politics. Left-wing populist movements are in fact much closer to the European political ideal than some would like to admit.

The article will begin with an overview of how left-wing populism and Euroscepticism are currently conceptualised in the literature and identify how there are strong debates on their main idea of political community. In the second part, the article will argue that only by looking at the performative function of these terms – how they create an inside and an

outside of the political mainstream – can we begin to understand the muddled empirical picture of the populist left in Europe. The article shows that this performative aspect of the terms left populism and Euroscepticism functions through two dichotomies: the difference between the emotional populists and the rational EU, and between the nationalist populists and the postnational EU. By demonstrating that left-wing populist parties exhibit clear characteristics of what we would term 'rational' or 'postnational' (and vice versa), the article contends that these distinctions are not simply analytical, but performative, and cannot be seen as neutral markers of political phenomena.

POPULISM ON THE LEFT

There are many disagreements around the definitions of populism, but a few core assumptions are relevant to the discussion of left-wing populism. This article does not agree with the literature which sees populism as a threat to democracy, where the liberal world order is posited against a dangerous and authoritarian populist wave (Müller 2016; Mounk 2018). Another perspective revolves around whether populism can be seen as an ideology, what Mudde refers to as a 'thin' ideology which must be carried by a host such as conservatism or socialism (Mudde 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012). Mudde's perspective has become the mainstream of populism studies, as his minimal definition of populism makes it easy to operationalise an otherwise rather slippery concept. This does not mean that there are no other challenging perspectives put forward. For instance, there is strong support for a perspective which would rather identify populism not necessarily as a strong political identity or ideology, but as a political style, or a rhetorical modus operandi (Ostiguy 2017; Moffitt 2016). This enables a perspective which sees populism as a form of politics which can be enacted by anyone, not simply actors which we would traditionally label as populist.

In addition, there is a growing field of discursive or critical populism studies, which follows the political thought of Argentinian Ernesto Laclau. From his seminal work *On Populist Reason* (Laclau 2005), it can be concluded that populism is neither a specific ideology nor a political style, but rather a political logic. This perspective sees populism as an articulation of different demands emerging in society which are subsumed under one central 'empty signifier' which can be a political leader, a slogan, or party (Laclau 2006, 2005) Importantly, this identity-making is never fixed and is always rearticulated, and populist identities are therefore always potentially present in politics, and can emerge as challengers to the hegemonic order. Populism is not simply a rhetorical device to be attached to other, 'real' ideologies, but a way of doing politics which potentially exists everywhere, and the antagonistic relation between the people and the elite, supposedly particular to populism, is a core assumption of all politics (Mouffe 2018).

These differences in perspectives also have consequences for how specifically left populism is conceptualised, and there is ample divergence within the field on whether to treat populisms left and right as two sides of the same coin, or whether they are drastically different. Again, Mudde is one of the authorities on how to conceptualise left- and right-wing populism, and he has, together with Rovira Kaltwasser, developed a conceptual framework which divides populism into an exclusionary right-wing form, and an inclusionary left-wing counterpart (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012). This argument is largely based on a comparison between the European populist right and the South American populist left, and Mudde and Kaltwasser conclude that left-wing populist would rather refer to a more inclusive idea of 'the People', which can and should be contrasted to the right-wing, xenophobic idea of 'the Nation', which indicates a hostility to migrants and foreigners. This perspective has become very popular, and is used widely when analysing different varieties of populism in the European context (van Elsas, Hakhverdian and van der Brug 2016; Plaza-Colodro, Gómez-Reino and Marcos-Marne, 2018; March 2017). There is also literature which argues that left-wing populists are heavily concerned

with economic issues, rather than cultural politics (Keith 2017; Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro 2018; Plaza-Colodro, Gómez-Reino and Marcos-Marne 2018).

The Muddian perspective, however, has been challenged by critical populism studies, which argues that the differences between left- and right-wing populism are more complex, and that there is a strong normative argument surrounding the debate on populism. What is omitted is the democratic potential of populism, and in particular populisms of the left. In this interpretation, populism is a political identity which seeks to challenge the status quo and return power to 'the People'. Importantly, however, this is not done with reference to a People confined within a Nation, but one which sees the People as not related to birthplace or bloodlines. Instead, left-populism is a 'discursive construction resulting from "chains of equivalence" between heterogenous demands whose unity is secured by the identification with a radical democratic conception of citizenship and a common opposition to the oligarchy' (Mouffe 2018: 80). In this sense, there is no core disagreement between the Muddian perspective on exclusion/inclusion and the perspective put forward by critical populism studies. They do agree that left- and right-wing populism are distinct and cannot be equated. Nevertheless, there are important differences which are relevant to this article. If following Laclau's work and accepting that all politics is to some degree populist, one cannot envision political ideologies as separate from populism, as Mudde proposes with his distinction between 'thin' and 'thick' ideologies (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019: 8).

EUROSCEPTICISM ON THE LEFT

The difference between right- and left-wing populism becomes even more muddled when addressing European integration. When investigating the relationship between Euroscepticism and populism, it is often assumed that the two are closely related, even though Euroscepticism is influenced by the position on the political spectrum (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008). It is often argued that Euroscepticism is located at the extremes (Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; De Vries and Edwards 2009) and that populist parties are likely to be more radical (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017). This has resulted in a viewpoint that populist parties are more likely to be Eurosceptic than mainstream or centrist parties (Plaza-Colodro, Gómez-Reino and Marcos-Marne 2018; Gómez-Reino, Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro 2018: 347).

This said, the connection between Euroscepticism and populism on the left is not identical to that on the right. Much research on this nexus has taken a distinctly Northern European perspective, where right-wing populist parties have typically been more dominant than their left-wing counterparts. As such, recent literature on left-wing populism and Euroscepticism is a welcome addition to the field, which also nuances the idea of this relationship (Rooduijn 2018; Plaza-Colodro, Gómez-Reino and Marcos-Marne 2018; Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro 2018; Della Porta, Kouki and Fernandez 2017; Damiani and Viviani 2019). It is widely assumed that the left-wing resistance to the EU stems from a mostly economic perspective (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017). The EU is seen as a neoliberal vehicle which has made market competition its main motto, something which is strongly disputed on the left (Kagarlitsky 2017; Bailey 2019). The narrative is strongly related to the 2008 financial crisis and the following austerity policies implemented in much of Southern Europe, which is to blame for subsequent decline of living standards and a loss of faith in democratic institutions (Lapavitsas 2019; Kagarlitsky 2017). Left-wing populist parties in Southern Europe are more likely to be opposed to relinquishing economic sovereignty, which is seen as a key component of a fair and equal society for its people (Plaza-Colodro, Gómez-Reino and Marcos-Marne 2018; Damiani and Viviani 2019). This focus on economic sovereignty instead of necessarily national sovereignty is seen as a distinct difference from right-wing populism, where the resistance to the EU would emerge from a culturalist perspective, and a conviction that other

European countries, and other countries in general, pose a threat towards the welfare of the domestic population.

Nevertheless, there are traces of protecting the national population also within the populist left. Some researchers would argue that the commitment to nationalism is more a commonality than a difference between populisms left and right (Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012), whereas others would maintain that left-wing populists are not concerned with national sovereignty, but with popular sovereignty (Gerbaudo and Screti 2017; Damiani and Viviani 2019). When discussing left-wing positions towards Brexit, for instance, this is seen as stemming from a careful balance of protecting the domestic working population, whilst at the same time resisting neoliberal Europe and remaining in solidarity with the working class in other countries. What has been referred to as constructive ambiguity (Bailey 2019), indicates the at times contradictory position taken by the United Kingdom (UK) Labour Party in relation to European integration, where the party tries to distance itself from the nationalist right, whilst at the same time expressing Eurosceptic sentiments.

The issue of nationalism and Euroscepticism in the European populist left is not subject to scholarly agreement. The evidence on how left-wing populist parties relate to European integration is highly varied across time and space, and does not necessarily fit into how we have traditionally defined Euroscepticism (Keith 2017). This empirical impasse is the core focus of this article, and in the sections below I will argue that the explanation for this lies in the strong will to separate the populist left (or right) from the European mainstream.

LEFT POPULISM VERSUS TECHNOCRACY: A SPURIOUS DIVIDE?

Instead of looking at definitional problems or trying to categorise varieties of populism, analysis must engage with how the terms populism and Euroscepticism are *performing* a certain political practice which benefits from creating an inside and an outside of political actors. By reinforcing the divide between the three main forms of political community – postnationalism, national sovereignty, and popular sovereignty – the field reaches an empirical stalemate since left-wing populists do not neatly align with either of these categories.

What does it mean to look at populism as a performative category? There is a tendency within populism studies to focus on what is commonly referred to as the measuring problem, but this aim has often been criticised for focussing on 'degreeism' (Pappas 2019). These strands of research try to define populism as either a nominal or ordinal category, in other words, *whether or not* an actor/speech/ideology is populist, or *to what extent* can we say that this actor/speech/ideology is populist (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017). However, this can also lead to problems in defining populism against non-populism, where mainstream actors can, in fact, exhibit very high degrees of populist rhetoric (Pauwels 2011; March 2017: 287). Others have pointed out that using populism as an ordinal category is the most useful approach, since this allows us to place actors on a scale, comparable to the left-right spectrum (Ostiguy 2017).

What becomes absent in the discussion is how the term populism itself carries normative value and is not an analytical concept devoid of political ideology. This has been researched in the emerging literature on anti-populism, where it is argued that many of the current studies on populism are implicitly or explicitly seeing populism as a threat to democracy (Stavrakakis 2014; Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, Kioupkiolis, Nikisianis et al. 2018). This misses the democratic potential of left-wing populism, which, according to these scholars, has an inclusionary and egalitarian mission. There is also important literature seeing populism as a signifier. This signifier can be used for political purposes, and populism as a term has become a way for the established political elite to label other actors as

unwanted elements (Glynos and Mondon 2019; Dean and Maiguashca 2020). Discourses on populism are thus of equal import to the phenomenon itself (Degano & Sicurella 2019; De Cleen, Glynos and Mondon 2018). In other words, populism is not only a nominal or ordinal category, but a *performative* category, which is in and of itself highly political (Eklundh 2020).

What does populism as a category perform? The need to erect strong barriers between the newcomers to European politics and the old guard is not done in a value vacuum. Underlying the wish to label populists and Eurosceptics as outsiders lies an unwillingness to see how these actors are in many senses more similar to the political mainstream than many would like to admit. In fact, these dichotomies are not as strong as first thought, and by softening the barriers between the political inside and outside, we can demonstrate how populists and Eurosceptics are, in fact, central to the European order. Two dichotomies in particular are central to mark populists and Eurosceptics as outsiders: The emotional populists–rational EU, and the nationalist populists–postnational EU. The first dichotomy argues that populists and Eurosceptics are highly emotional and antagonistic, in contrast to the rational EU which is based on consensual decision-making practices. The second dichotomy relates to the national-postnational divide, where current research has struggled to place left-wing populism into extant categories. Are they nationalist and oppositional to the EU in a different, and perhaps better, way than the populist right? I argue that the focus on popular sovereignty seen within the European populist left is not principally at odds with the European project as an articulation of a People tied to a specific territory. Ultimately, this strengthens the idea of citizenship as a community of birth. Engaging with the cases of left-wing populism and Euroscepticism in Spain and the UK, the following sections will outline how these dichotomies are difficult to uphold empirically.

Emotional Populists: Rational EU?

One of the key distinctions often made between populists and non-populists is the emotional character of the former (Müller 2016). In the growing literature on emotions and populism, populist actors are branded as more emotional than their mainstream counterparts, and there is an implicit assumption that there is a clear division between the rational mainstream and the emotional populist (Skonieczny 2018; Breeze 2019). There is also research which tries to determine what kind of emotions that populists are employing to increase their electoral support (Wirz 2018; Salmela and von Scheve 2017). Norris and Inglehart are convinced that populists are in direct opposition to liberal democracy, which must, for all means and purposes, be based on rational decision-making (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Also in Mudde's ideational approach we can see how populism, when labelled as a thin ideology, is considered to be less sophisticated and lacks intellectual refinement (Mudde 2004), which can be seen as another expression of how populists are less rational than the mainstream. Also, within the more critical sections of populism studies does it become evident that populism is indeed not entirely based on rational thought. For instance, Ostiguy is convinced that populism signifies the 'low' against the mainstream 'high', when populists are labelled as 'coarse' and 'uninhibited' against the 'well-behaved', 'proper' and 'refined' politics of the mainstream (Ostiguy 2017: 80). Moffitt has also supported this distinction, when arguing that populism has a 'tabloid style', and that it is often associated with bad manners (Moffitt 2016). This should be seen in opposition to establishment politicians, who are more often displaying 'rigidness, rationality, composure, and the use of technocratic language' (Moffitt 2016: 43).

This becomes particularly accentuated when analysing populist attitudes towards the EU. The difference in the *ways* of doing politics is seen as acutely steep, where the European project is seen to be based on a Habermasian idea of consensus-making which is at its core incompatible with the populist emotional response. As Habermas (1996, 1984) has argued, decision-making must take place between rational political subjects who recognise one another as such. This recognition is what will ultimately enable consensus; if political subjects can evaluate the validity of one another's truth claims, there will be a possibility

to identify the common good for the community. Consensus can only be built between rational subjects, and if subjects are more emotional than rational, then consensus will not be possible, since the common good cannot be identified. The emotional – rational dichotomy is thus also central to the division between a consensual EU and antagonistic populists. Not only are populists disturbing the consensual process, but it is also inherently impossible to include them since they do not possess what are thought to be necessary characteristics of valid political subjects: capacity of rational thought and reasoned debate.

This article argues that the emotional-rational dichotomy between the emotional populists and the rational EU demands further analysis. First, there are many instances of rational deliberation in the populist left. Many contemporary left-wing populists parties are strongly connected to social movements, and Labour and Podemos are no exception. In Spain, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, a vast array of movements against austerity proliferated throughout the country (Flesher Fominaya 2015a, 2015b; Della Porta 2015; Della Porta, Fernández, Kouki and Mosca 2017). Many would like to argue that this was the starting point for the Podemos, and that the party is simply an elongation of the claims made by the social movements (Iglesias 2015). It is important to note how the horizontal movements of our time are not simply 'mad mobs', but often construct claims through processes of deliberation and discussion which are similar to the Habermasian ideal. In Podemos, there have been strong attempts to make the party available for the members, where deliberation is accessible to all. For instance, Podemos only has one type of member, who all have full voting rights (Iglesias, Errejón, Monedero, Bescansa, et al. 2014: 4), thus eliminating the distinction between active and passive members. There is also no membership fee. In addition, Podemos' political programmes are constructed through an online process within the membership, Plaza Podemos, where members can propose and deliberate on policies. Plaza Podemos is seen as 'a space for debate and deliberation where, among all of us, we decide on things that matter to us and where we together create ideas, projects and proposals that will be fundamental pieces of political change' (Iglesias et al. 2014: 3). Members can also do this through a system of 'circles', a local-level community where proposals are discussed. These practices are strongly indicating that Podemos are following a logic of deliberation which is technically no different to deliberative practices in European institutions (Borge Bravo and Santamarina Sáez 2016; Ardanuy Pizarro and Labuske 2015).

The British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn has also exhibited similar patterns. It has been claimed that Corbynism signified a clear attempt to reconnect with grassroots' movements in the UK in order to revitalise the party (Maiguashca and Dean 2019; Bailey 2019). As Corbyn himself has argued, 'We are a social movement and we will only win the next general election because we are that movement of people all around the country who want to see a different world and do things very differently' (BBC 2016). Whilst the UK did not experience a strong anti-austerity movement directly after the 2008 financial crisis, the country has nevertheless endured a prolonged period of austerity politics, which has given rise to a range of initiatives from civil society, such as housing activism, pro-immigration protests, environmental protests, and feminist movements (Bailey 2019). One of the key actors for the left is the rise of Momentum, which is primarily concerned with electing a Labour government faithful to leftist values. Growing the membership and involving the membership to a higher degree was one of Corbyn's main aims, and which also bears witness to an increased focus on deliberation (Maiguashca and Dean 2019: 150). As such, to say that left-wing populist parties are at direct odds with the deliberative, consensus-based practices so often hailed by European technocrats is difficult to support empirically. Rather, it is clear that left-wing populists and their commitment to social movements are based on the same ideals of defining the common good through rational deliberation, and that this is a necessary component for any democratic politics.

It is, nonetheless, often claimed that left-wing populists are based on a cult of personality. The problem with this narrative is that it tends to tie instances of vertical party structures and strong leadership to an emotional or irrational element of left populism. In reality, the

vertical structures and the focus on clear and strong leadership are strategic decisions made by left populists in order to gain electoral power. This, I argue, is by no means a process which defies rational behaviour, but which is deeply steeped in a European model of political representation, used liberally by parties throughout the continent. Many would like to argue that the focus on Pablo Iglesias or Jeremy Corbyn is but a mere demagogical device intended to manipulate the masses, and at first glance this can seem accurate. Podemos has since its foundation in 2014 been strongly tied to its leader, even printing his picture on the ballot for the 2014 European Parliament elections in Spain. The argument for this was that Podemos needed to create a space for representation for the previously unrepresented (Chironi and Fittipaldi 2017; Barberá González and Martín del Fresno 2019). In the words of Pablo Iglesias, for Podemos 'the task, then, was to aggregate the new demands generated by the crisis around a mediatic leadership, capable of dichotomizing the political space' (Iglesias 2015: 14). Moreover, he argued that it was paramount to construct a popular identity around a leader:

> This populace … was not "representable" within the traditional left- right categories of the political space. In the context of high dissatisfaction with the elites, our objective of identifying a new "we" that included the TV nation initially came together around the signifier "Pablo Iglesias". (Iglesias 2015: 17)

As such, whilst social movements matter and can create support for individual causes, real political change comes from taking part in institutions (Errejón and Mouffe 2016). Iglesias himself was to be the carrier of this new representative reality, and even though people would not necessarily care about politics, or identify themselves along the left-right spectrum, they would know the 'guy with the ponytail' from his appearances on television. Podemos have from the start been clear about that their political project is about taking power, it is about taking a place in the institutions that make political decisions.

This reasoning has also been seen in the British Labour Party under Corbyn. Even though, as described above, the party has made a clear effort to connect with grassroots movements and broaden and involve the membership, there are clear instances of where the leadership in and of itself becomes the articulating signifier for the whole movement (McTernan 2016; Blakey 2016). There are diverging opinions on whether Corbyn himself supported the focus on his own persona as leader, but the fact remains that both Momentum and the party itself are, like Podemos, interested in taking power and taking a place in extant institutions: 'Momentum wants to see a more democratic Labour Party with the policies and collective will to build a more democratic, equal and decent society in government' (Schneider 2015). There are also strong traces of the vertical structures of the trade unions within Corbynism, which supports clear hierarchical and representative orders (Wainwright 2018; Maiguashca and Dean 2019: 148). In addition, the practice of focusing on large rallies and the omnipresent chant of 'oh, Jeremy Corbyn', indicates a strong investment in Corbyn as the representative leader (Worth 2020). For some, this has not been sufficient to label Labour under Corbyn as populist (Worth 2020; March 2017; Maiguashca and Dean 2019), which further complicates the picture, but again supports the idea that the definitions of populism are highly performative and not simply designed for analytical clarity.

In sum, when looking at the so-called movement parties of the populist left, it is often difficult to establish whether they are clearly horizontal or vertical, or emotional or rational. They are therefore often referred to as hybrid parties or movement parties, owing to the mixed empirical picture (Della Porta et al. 2017; Chironi and Fittipaldi 2017). This inability to neatly align left-populism along predetermined categories stems from an inability to see how the definition of populism, and its distinction between the emotional and the rational, has a clearly performative character. In other words, the main effect of this distinction is not analytical clarity, but creating an outside and inside of the political mainstream, when, in fact, left-populism is clearly part and parcel of what European party politics stand for.

National Populists–Postnational EU?

The second dichotomy between populists and the mainstream is the assumption that populists are nationalist, and the EU is postnational. Left-wing populists are said to be more focussed on popular rather than national sovereignty, which should, according to their supporters, create a deep rift between the nationalism of right-wing populism and the concerns for the domestic working class of the populist left. There are, however, problematising factors also in this dichotomy. Left Euroscepticism has, similarly to left-wing populism, become a performative category which is trying to focus on the differences between the populist, Eurosceptic left and the EU, rather than seeing the similarities in their modus operandi.

This dichotomy is well-established in the literature, and Rovira Kaltwasser has even claimed that the main opposition to right-wing populism does not come from left-wing populists, but what can be termed the cosmopolitan elite (Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). It has been argued that right- and left-wing populists both see the nation-state as the primary arena for politics (Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012). Similarly, left radical parties in Europe are generally seen as sceptical to the neoliberal project of the EU (Keith 2017). There is an increased acceptance that left-wing and right-wing populists are not identical when invoking the concept of sovereignty, and that they are based on two different sets of political community. Based on a distinction between sovereignty based on an *ethnos* or a *demos*, scholars argue that the main subject of right-wing populism is the *ethnos*: a collectivity connected to culture, ethnicity, or race (Akkerman 2003: 15). In contrast, the main subject of left populism is the *demos*, the people who are included in a political community based on a notion of citizenship (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017). It is by no means denied that the articulation of the People can often be done within the limits of the Nation, but left populism also opens a space for a People which is not based on blood lines (Stavrakakis, Andreadis and Katsambekis 2017; Custodi 2020) and a left return to the nation state is rather a critique of capitalism and neoliberalism (Charalambous 2013). There is a clear aim to theoretically oppose the right-wing monopoly of the term sovereignty and to reclaim popular sovereignty for the left. This has been done extensively by scholars who believe that the way forward for left-populism is to create a national popular, often inspired by a Gramscian notion of how to create a successful counter-hegemony (Mouffe 2018; Gerbaudo 2017).

However, the lines between national sovereignty, popular sovereignty, and European postnationalism are not as clear as often claimed. In contrast to much of the literature on left populism and Euroscepticism, this article contends that popular/national sovereignty and European liberal democracy have developed in tandem and cannot be easily separated. Most of all, there is a tendency not to discuss how European political actors left, right, and centre are all reliant upon an idea of sovereignty which is based on difference. Both popular and national sovereignty are historically designed to delimit the inside of politics to the outside of politics, a pattern still visible today.

Drawing on scholarship on the genealogy of sovereignty, it can be argued that the national and popular versions are not conceptually distinct, but part and parcel of a European identity project which relies on an articulation of a People which is tied to a particular territory. The creation of a sovereign People which has the power in a modern state is always done through a *racialised* conception of that People (Meister 2009: 120). Drawing on Foucault's idea of 'race war' (Foucault 2003), it can be argued that there is no state sovereignty without the creation of racialised difference, whether that difference is based on cultural or biological ideas of race: 'Race in this sense is the "hidden" element in the nation that makes its people 'equal' and enables national to produce a "fictitious entity", a "populism", that substitutes in a postfeudal world for the rule of family aristocracy (Meister 2009: 121).

Western conceptions of democracy, in other words, does not rely on a strong sense of equality, but on difference (Rancière 1999). The People are never constituted through an aggregative or deliberative process as is so often claimed in democratic theory, but based on exclusionary forces which count some over others. Mann (2012) has taken this argument further and contends that democracies always host a potentiality for genocide; the very fact that the People should be purified from groups who do not share the 'foundational values' of the political community can result in everything from political disagreement to ethnic cleansing. Importantly, this difference is gradational and not substantial. This dark side of democracy is essential to understanding the problematic facets of popular sovereignty, which is nothing but a 'dominion by a people over land as a permanent defence against racialised persecution' (Meister 2009: 133).

The narrative that left-wing populism is different from its right-wing counterpart and also distinct from postnational constellations rests upon the distinction between national and popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty, however, is often deeply influenced by the problematic foundations of European political thought even though it is thought to represent a beacon of equality and popular power. In *The Racial Contract* (1999), Mills exposes how Western democracies, are built upon an idea of the People as carrying certain characteristics. These characteristics are by no means happenstance and form part of a wider pattern of how European countries have designed a political system in order to favour some people over others, preferably to be implemented worldwide. The very famous scholars which we hold in high regard for having developed our modern ideas on popular sovereignty were, in fact, often the strongest defenders of slavery and of racial discrimination. Popular sovereignty is thus still riddled with its historical ties with class, racial and gender discrimination.

The problem of inclusion into and exclusion from the popular sovereign is to a high degree centred on the reason – emotion dichotomy, as described above, but must also be connected to how reason is often highly racialised. Even if left-wing populists do not outright refer to a 'white' *demos*, popular sovereignty in Europe has historically been associated with characteristics reserved for whites. The strong focus on rationality in the European populist left indicates an acceptance of the rules of the game, a game which is designed upon exclusionary principles. Mills and Eze (Mills 2017 1999; Eze 1997, 1995) argue that racial hierarchies are still centre stage when discussing democracy and political subjectivity, and that much of this stems from an overreliance of rationality in democratic theory. Rationality was often seen by the contractualists as the defining feature of the civilised Man, reserved for the white population. Modern-day democratic theory would never argue that rationality is reserved for whites, but this is nonetheless what the practice has ended up reinforcing. Democratic theory anchored in rational thought, it is claimed, is a raceless enterprise; rationality can be bestowed on any human being. Nonetheless, as so eloquently argued by Toni Morrison, there are times when claiming racelessness is itself a racial act (Morrison 1992: 46). In other words, to argue that popular sovereignty can be separated from national sovereignty, and that a left-wing populist sovereignty is not influenced by the concept's historical heritage is a slightly more problematic stance than admitted. Similarly, Balibar has argued that:

> The idea of a popular sovereignty (collective decision-making, representation of the interests of the mass of citizens, and control of the rules by the ruled), that could be dissociated by its statist forms remain enigmatic, if not inconceivable. Its genealogy is masked more than it is illuminated by the current opposition between national sovereignty and the "postnational constellation". (Balibar 2004: 134)

Some may argue that even though national and popular sovereignty are historically tied together, surely the EU is a project which refutes national boundaries and thus overcomes the sovereign problem? However, Balibar argues that the racialised difference which underlies the concept of national and popular sovereignty is not limited to nationalism, but

rather an 'excess of nationalism'. 'There actually is a racist 'internationalism' or 'supranationalism' which tends to idealise timeless transhistorical communities such as the 'Indo-Europeans', 'the West', 'Judeo-Christian civilisation' and therefore communities which are at the same time both closed and open' (Balibar 1989: 59).

As such, there is no guarantee that a postnational project like the EU would not suffer from the same racialised articulation of the connection between a certain People and a certain territory. Such articulations in fact become blatantly obvious in EU communication in 'protecting the European way of life', where the People of Europe are tied to both a specific place, and particular cultural habits, or in the fierce protection of Europe's borders. The sovereignty of the People of Europe is constructed upon a fictitious identity which creates a clear demarcation between what is thought to be the rightful ruler of this place, and any potential illegitimate challengers to this dominance. This type of racialised identity formation is identical in the rhetoric of the EU to the populist incarnations throughout the continent.

As such, the boundaries between the postnational EU and the nationalist populists become increasingly blurred. There is a denial within the mainstream to recognise their racist and exclusionary practice, and this is something which is seen as belonging to the 'political extremes' such as populists. However, racism does not only surface as direct speech, but can also be identified as practices of the state, security policies, or simply arguments around 'cultural' habits, where people want to 'stick with their own' (Wade 2015). It is also increasingly evident that racist practices form part and parcel of the political mainstream, whilst defending the 'rights of the People' or freedom of expression (Mondon & Winter 2020).

How does the difficulty in separating the three forms of political community,– a postnational EU, a national sovereign, and a popular sovereign – present itself in analyses of left-wing populism? In Podemos and the UK Labour Party under Corbyn the lines are increasingly challenging to separate, which explains the difficulty for scholars to pinpoint them as supporting one or the other. It is obvious that popular sovereignty is an important concept (Gerbaudo and Screti 2017; Damiani and Viviani 2019). Podemos has made it their mission to call for a renegotiation of democracy where the People are better represented, and where unelected bureaucrats in the EU should not have the power to make decisions which so clearly affect the lives and livelihood of ordinary Spaniards (Iglesias 2015; Iglesias, Montero, Monedero, et al. 2017). At the same time, the notion of the Fatherland (*patria*), has become increasingly important for Podemos, and invokes patriotism and Spain as a nation to construct a political community:

> We have a democratic, not a nationalist, idea of the fatherland, which identifies the fatherland as the people. We are trying to illustrate how those who are using the word national are also, at the same time, selling our national sovereignty for cheap. We are therefore trying to restore our economic and political sovereignty, a necessary action to restore the country and the interests of the majority. (Errejón in Marco 2015)

Similarly, Custodi argues that Podemos invokes a particular notion of the Fatherland which is based on welfare policies, popular mobilisation and pluralism (Custodi 2020). Whilst there are certainly differences between the rhetoric of the populist left and populist right, any articulation of a specific People tied to a specific territory reinforces an idea that attributes citizenship to a community of birth.

In addition, when analysing the most commonly used words in all of Podemos Facebook communication 2014-2017, it was found that *España* (Spain), was consistently in the top five words used (Eklundh 2019: 224). Podemos has justified this focus on Spain the nation as a core function of political community by saying that the nation-state is still the main area where politics is enacted, and that democracy must be achieved by involving the

citizens of Spain. Whilst their rhetoric says nothing about blood lines, there is an implicit assumption that the nation as political community will provide the quickest route to more democratic decision-making (Agustín 2020: 107). At the same time, Podemos are by no means advocating for a Spanish exit from the EU. As such, there is a simultaneous belief in the European project, further demonstrating how the distinctions between popular sovereignty, national sovereignty, and a postnational Europe are losing their edges.

In the UK Labour Party under Corbyn, a similar disintegration of these limits can be discerned. Analysts and scholars alike disagree on Corbynism's stance towards the EU, and dispute whether Corbyn is a staunch nationalist or a supporter of international solidarity. This analytical stalemate, I argue, stems from the blurred lines between postnationalism, national sovereignty, and popular sovereignty. If the underlying common assumptions of these analytical distinctions is not discussed, in this case the racialisation of a People tied to a specific territory, analysis will inevitably struggle to make a strong empirical case.

The literature on Labour under Corbyn does not identify strong support for the view that Corbyn should be seen as populist, and argues that he did not invoke the necessary signifiers of populism, such as the People, popular sovereignty, or anti-elitism (Maiguashca & Dean 2019; March 2017). Nevertheless, some argue that Corbynism is the development of a 'national-popular' following the Gramscian tradition. A national-popular seeks to challenge the hegemonic order in and create a counter-hegemonic narrative. Importantly, the national-popular should be constructed from below, through popular movements, and 'provide a basis for national-popular consciousness *within* current countries as a means to counter neoliberalism' (Worth 2020: 91, author's emphasis). This framework comes as a critique of the anti-globalisation movement, and argues that to be truly effective, national politics is the main front of struggle (Gerbaudo 2017). The strong emphasis on the connection with social movements and civil society within Corbynism would, according to Worth (2000), indicate a nascent national-popular construction within the Labour Party.

The discussion becomes even more accentuated with regards to Brexit. Within the Labour Party under Corbyn, there were several factions, some of who supported Brexit (or so-called Lexit), and some who were ardently pro-Remain (Bailey 2019). The Lexit faction were much concerned with the neoliberal stance of the EU, and argued that only an exit from the union could deliver true left-wing policies for the UK (Worth 2017). This was supported by the Bennite tradition of Euroscepticism, which assumed that the working class in the North of England would be against freedom of movement for EU workers (Diamond 2018). Even though Labour under Corbyn did in the end endorse freedom of movement, this was, and still is, a hotly debated topic. Corbyn argued in January 2017 that 'Labour is not wedded to freedom of movement for EU citizens as a point of principle, but I don't want that to be misinterpreted, nor do we rule it out' (as quoted in Lucas 2017). Other key figures of the left, such as union leader Len McCluskey has argued that Britain needs to put the brakes on the 'influx of cheap labour', echoing historical resistance to foreign workers and warning that not doing so would incur the dissent of the white working class (Bloodworth 2019). This indicates a clear racialisation of the political community. On the other hand, some factions of the Labour movement, such as Momentum or Another Europe is Possible, struggle with the traditionally Eurosceptic left, and do not want to be equated with reactionary forms of nationalism or xenophobia. As such, Corbynism should be seen as 'an attempt, in part, to galvanise these grassroots initiatives within a political movement that is decidedly uncertain with regards to the Brexit question' (Bailey 2019: 265).

The lines between popular sovereignty, national sovereignty, and support for a postnational EU are indistinct also in the British Left. This inability to neatly place Corbynism into either of these categories stems from an unwillingness to recognise the historical contingency between them. In the current European context, can we ever invoke popular sovereignty without retorting to nationalism, and can we say that being pro-

European means being truly anti-racist? This article answers both questions in the negative. The popular sovereign is historically and presently articulated within a nationalist framework which takes difference as its starting point, and is always racialised. The EU, and support for the European way of life, is by no means freed from these distinctions, and also relies upon core assumptions of what it means to be European. European democracy is constructed around difference, not equality, which is endemic to parties on the left, right and centre.

CONCLUSION

This article began with the observation that there is little agreement on which form of political community that is preferred by the European populist left. Do they invoke national or popular forms of sovereignty, and are they all staunchly against the EU? I have argued that the underlying reason to the difficultly in assigning left populism in Europe to one or the other stems from that these categories are not particularly distinct in the first place, and often more performative than analytical.

The practices of left-wing European populist parties today are not as alien as some would like us to think. They represent an acceptance of the current party system and its institutions, the roads to power, and the democratic foundations underpinning most European political systems. This acceptance does not tend towards the emotional or irrational, but a crude utilitarian perspective of how to gain and remain in power. Underlying much of contemporary left-wing thought is a preference for the European ideal of rationality, which can be seen in the strong focus on deliberative discussions and the efficient vertical party hierarchy. This has been a core practice throughout the 20th century, building on Lenin's insights into labour organisation (Lenin 1901), and trumpeted by the most coveted 'new' theorists of left-wing politics (Hardt and Negri 2012). This dichotomy between rational and emotional thus has a performative character which serves to preserve a certain idea of what 'proper' decision-making should look like. The terms populist and Eurosceptic are therefore not encapsulating how left-wing populist parties in Europe are highly European and are not rejecting the core assumptions of European politics.

In addition, the commitment to popular sovereignty from the left is does not indicate that these actors are very different from the European political mainstream, or that they are disjoint from invocations of national sovereignty. Left-wing populists embrace the core assumptions and practice of European democracy in their conceptualisation of the *demos*, which is still reliant on exclusionary ideas of national belonging and the capacity to rationality. In this sense, the term Euroscepticism becomes performative; it functions to label some actors as outsiders, when, in fact, similar ideologies and practices are present on the inside. As has been seen with the term populism, the two are working to perform differences where there are very few. I therefore propose a new reading of the terms populism and Euroscepticism. Instead of seeing them as analytical markers of the exception to Europe, they should be thought of as performative markers of the European core. To be a nationalist is not to be Eurosceptic, and to be populist is not very different to the European mainstream, but rather a natural conclusion of the European wish to distinguish between the worthy citizens and the threatening outsiders.

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Research Article

Technocracy and the Tragedy of EU Governance

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Abstract

In a historical perspective, technocracy, emphasising bureaucratic and technical expertise in political, social and economic areas, is a double edge sword: on the one side, it guaranteed the condition for international cooperation post-WW II, providing as an ostensibly ideologically neutral basis the condition for cooperation and governance in a politically bitter international climate. On the other hand, it indicates the tragedy of increasing delegitimization of EU governance, causing the alienation of political willing from the people that is (mis-)used by populists present-day and their slogan 'back to the people'. Technocracy is theoretically symbolised through the functionalism of EU integration, politically manifest in the redefinition of democracy as expertocracy and from "input"- to "output"-orientation, and academically manifest in the mainstream of EU studies that (still) seem to operate in the legacies of functionalist/neo-functionalist epistemological commitments. The tragedy of EU politics therefore appears to be that it is trapped in a technocratic, and thus a democratically distorted (because disconnect from popular willing as one the irreducible pillars of democratic governance) understanding of governance that, however and at the same time, has been historically the condition of the possibility of cooperation. The following paper is thus an attempt to understand alienation and (populist) opposition to the EU integration processes as systemic and mutually conditioning phenomena, deeply entrenched in the structure of the EU and of EU studies themselves, and develops the argument that the epistemological commitments of neo-functionalism need finally to be overcome to bring back in democratic agency in EU politics.1

Keywords:

Regional Integration; Functionalism; Legitimacy; Effectivity; Democratic Triangle

The subtitle of this Special Issue, *Revisiting the legitimization of European politics*, suggests that there is a problem with European Union (EU) legitimacy. And indeed, not only the longstanding academic argument about the institutional democracy deficit (amongst others, Follesdal/Hix 2006; Abels 2009), but also more recent phenomena such as the pan-European rise of populism (amongst other, see Weyland 1999; Uceñ 2007; Taggart 2004) puts the EU's legitimacy in question. I argue here that the sentiment as it manifests in populism, namely the emotion to be left unheard and neglected, is due to the early and continuous emphasis of the EU and of EU studies on technocratic governance and functionalism. This finds its maybe most prominent example in Fritz Scharpf's (re-)definition of democracy as output-oriented rather than input-oriented form of governance (Scharpf 1999; 1997). Then, democracy becomes disconnected from the people, and democratic will formation is focused on the effectivity rather than on the constitution of governance. This understanding does not remain unpunished. Thus, current legitimacy problems are caused by, and deeply entrenched in, mainstream EU studies themselves since some 50 years and their positive interplay with EU policy making.[2]

To be clear: Populism is an undemocratic and inappropriate conclusion of the sentiment of "being unheard and neglected", no doubt, however, there is a critical potential in populism that makes us aware of the conditions of the rise of those sentiments. To put it differently: the EU suffers from its beginning until present-day from a depoliticised understanding of integration – that finds its manifestation in functionalist theories and their never-ending and never-fulfilled, but also politically never-explicated or -deliberated hope of the spill over from economic to political questions, with which the people could identify; an understanding that, however, was the *condition* for cooperation and integration in the 1950s in the first place. In the European societies that recovered from WW II *political* cooperation would have been impossible. Functional integration and technocracy seemed the only way forward as politically neutral (what Ernst Haas called 'accommodation on the basis of the minimum common denominator'; 1963: 8), however, at the cost of democratic political will formation due to the hypostatization of technocratic, elitist governance.

The following paper is divided into three steps: In the *first section*, I will illustrate the continuous commitment of the majority of EU studies to the epistemological assumptions of neo-functionalism. Even if there are new and so-called 'post-positivist' theory attempts, they remain caught in the legacy of functionalist epistemologies. In the *second step* I will argue that these epistemological commitments result in a concept of democratic government that disfigures the traditional understanding of representative democracy. This is best exemplified in the work of Fritz Scharpf. In the *third step*, following Nadia Urbinati (2019, 2014), I will develop the idea of a democratic triangle as a *regulative* idea that normatively prescribes democracy as the balance of political will formation, political morality, and governance. The hypostatization of technocratic governance in the EU unbalances and distorts this triangle, resulting in a follow-up distortion and unbalancing through populism and its overemphasis on political willing. In the *Conclusions* I will draw the lesson from these discussions, namely first, that the EU has to balance the democratic triangle at a quick pace by dismantling its elitist and technocratic approach to governance. This implies the (re-)integration of those populist voices that doubt its legitimacy through developing and strengthening all kinds of EU-ropean civil society engagements and will formation processes bottom-up. It is hoped for that through such (re-)integration they will lose their populist distortive character and turn their populist claims into moderate and balanced politics. This also implies the consequent punishing and sectioning of those governments that conduct overtly anti-democratic politics (such as Poland or Hungary). It is to be preferred to develop a democratic union, even if smaller, then to follow the logic of a politically undefined, economically-reasoned spill-over into democratically indifferent enlargement(s).

NEO-FUNCTIONALIST COMMITMENTS IN EU STUDIES

A short survey of citation indexes and the number of references demonstrates the growth of EU governance studies over the last two decades as well as the commitment of their mainstream to the epistemological commitments of neo-functionalism (based on own research into citation indexes via googlescholar metrixes and Web of Science (h-index);[3] see also Kohler-Koch/Rittberger 2006). There may be variations, reformulations, and remodelling of single variables and parameters, declared as new theories (such as 'policy-dismantling', 'policy learning', 'policy change', 'Democratic Policy Design', 'Multiple Streams' approaches[4]) but the *epistemological* commitments as formulated by Haas some sixty years ago seem still intact and create epistemological legacies from which the mainstream of EU studies did not seem to have itself emancipated (see Haas 1961; this ironically corresponds with Phillipe Schmitter's assessment of all these 'new' approaches as 'neo-neo-functionalism(s); see Schmitter 2002).

It seems important here to briefly reflect upon one differentiation implied in my argument. The argument is based upon a difference between *ontological* and *epistemological* commitments of a theory, a differentiation without which our understanding, discussion, and development of theory is incomplete and perfunctory. While there are certainly significant ontological reformulations, critiques, and detachments from functionalism and neo-functionalism, I argue that in epistemological terms the understanding and construction of theory and the resulting kind of knowledge (about the EU) remain within functionalist/neo-functionalist legacies. This can best be shown looking at the widely read and influential paper by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks from 2009. This paper is called 'A *post-functional* Theory of European Integration' (italics by the author) and the authors certainly dissociate themselves from functionalist/neo-functionalist *ontological* commitments, amongst others by de-emphasising the relevance of economic interests and emphasising the need to look at identities and by their description of a post-functionalist research programme. However, they remain *epistemologically* within said legacies as demonstrated by the definition of the purpose of theory, by the use of causality for their explanations, and by reference to the assessing yardstick for policy processes of effectivity. The observation of an ontological detachment, but epistemological persistence is likewise observable in the important contributions of Vivien Schmidt (e.g., 2006) and Giandomenico Majone (e.g., 2005) that are widely regarded,[5] but as I argue groundlessly so or at least only half-heartedly, as moves away from and overcoming the functionalist/neo-functionalist legacies in EU studies.

The epistemological legacy of functionalism and neo-functionalism[6] in EU studies can be further revealed by a brief comparison of early epistemological commitments in Haas and some examples from current EU policy studies. In a seminal paper for EU policy studies, Ernst Haas embeds his argument in three epistemological assumptions (1961 [also 1963]). First, he insists on the conceptualisation and subsequent study of political and societal actors as 'causative' (1963: 8). This is, actors would politically enact effects that can be analysed according to causality. This is not further discussed but rather assumed as self-evident. Haas goes on to understand and describe social and political processes as based on 'rational perceptions' and enacted by self-interested actors (1963: 15). A friendly interpreter of Haas, Philippe Schmitter, explicates the idea of self-interest as the maximization of economic benefits (Schmitter 2016). This translates later, as we will see, into the idea of the political action as cost-benefit-calculation. A third epistemological assumption in Haas, however, contests any teleological assumptions and understands itself as non-teleological (1963: 15). However, this statement is ambivalent because a differentiation needs to be made that is, however, not made by Haas, namely between goal orientation as a wilful, deliberate and deliberated process or as a natural process. Put differently, politics as political agency or mere execution of a natural process. Obviously, Haas rejects the latter, but because he makes no differentiation between a political telos as deliberate and deliberated process and teleology as the assumption of a (quasi-)natural process, he seems to pour out the child with the bath water since he likewise rejects wilful

agency towards a deliberate and *deliberated* goal. Instead, he degrades political agency and introduces the idea of a functional spill over from economic to, at some future point, political spheres and themes. This is especially prominent in Haas's and Schmitter's definition of 'spill over'. Hass writes that spill over is 'the degree of functional specificity of the economic task … causally related to the intensity of integration. The more specific the task, the more likely important progress toward political community' (Haas 1963: 12) while 'functional contexts are [and remain] autonomous' (13; see also Schmitter 2002: 3).

Hand-in hand with these understandings of spill over goes a neglect of political agency because the subject of politics is, and should not even be, humans, but institutional processes that are seen as functional outcomes due to a particular set of assumptions on how politics would operate. Politics as the institutional and functional outcome of how we should view politics. This can be called an imperialism of categories (by Hoeber-Rudoph 2005) as well as an example of the reification problem (Dewey 1920, 1931; James 1920). The neglect of agency in EU policy studies is seeded here. And Schmitter notes that actors should only in 'exceptional circumstances' be expected to have a say and to agree (2016: 2). This is manifest also in neo-functionalism's reluctance and rejection of the discourse about '"la finalité politique"' (2016: 6) as requested in 2000 by the then German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. His stipulation of such a political discourse appears in retrospective as a sensible attempt to take back democratic, civil society's control of the means and goals of European integration.

The discussed epistemological commitments and their consequences (especially of devaluing political agency) can be found in current policy studies, focusing on the EU and elsewhere. The idea of modelling political analysis according to the ideas of causality and rational agency is ubiquitous and an apparent adage in mainstream policy studies. One of the most influential authors in the field of policy studies with immense influence on EU studies, Paul Sabatier, describes guidelines for theorising and analysing policy processes. He writes that they must be 'be clear enough to be proven wrong', that concepts should be as 'abstract as possible', that one would need to 'develop a coherent model of the individual', that one would need to 'work on internal consistencies and interconnections', and finally, that one would need to 'think causal processes' (Sabatier 1999: 266; see for example also see for example Cairney/Heikka 2014; Sabatier 1991; Weible 2014; Zahariadis 2014).

Sabatier mentions causality explicitly while he talks here about rationality as a 'coherent model of the individual'. According to this understanding a rational actor calculates his/her political decisions and actions primarily according to costs and benefits. This has widespread leverage in policy studies as the broadly received writings of Andrew Jordan, Michael W. Bauer, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, and Christoph Knill demonstrate. They write: 'Our main point, though, is that in seeking to explicate the selection and use of strategies, analysts should specify which costs and benefits are at issue, and who in practice they (are expected to) fall upon' (Jordan, Bauer, Green-Pedersen 2013: 797; also Bauer/Knill 2012). The most naïve statements in this direction come from Knill in his Introduction to public policy studies. He and his co-author Jale Tosun equate causal explanation and cost-benefit calculations with the mere *description* of reality. Especially casual statements would be generalizable descriptions (see Knill/Tosun 2012: e.g., 7, 37, 66, 70).[7]

I call these statements by Knill and Tosun *naïve* because they make those statements as if they were uncontested and undisputed. However, as everybody knows, there are century-long philosophical discussions about those and related perceptions. If one tries to bring those philosophical discussions down to one message, that is certainly that "reality" cannot be simply 'represented' and 'described' but that there are all kinds of constructions, preconceptions, intellectual legacies, mediations, projections, etc. into play that forbid any kind of straightforwardness in regards these things. On the other side, one may ask

"what's the point of discussing these things over and over again", make a choice, and carry on.[8] This is a position to be accepted (even if I personally think, this is lazy) *as long as* the conditions of own theorizing and their limitations are acknowledged, explained, and accounted for. Since this is, however, not the case here, I call respective statements naïve.

DISFIGURATIONS OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY: LEGITIMACY THROUGH EFFECTIVITY

The wideranging commitments in EU policy and policy studies to the epistemological paradigms of functionalism (i.e., to causality, rationalism, and the idea of a spill over from economic to political issues) are leading to the reification problem as alluded to above: That is, political "reality" (or better: what is perceived as such according to these epistemological commitments) is subordinated precisely to these epistemological commitments and their assumptions. And yes, this is redundant. Put differently: "reality" is merely what these epistemological commitments make us, allow us to, see. Political "reality" depends upon preselected epistemological choices[9] and their assumptions. Consequently, political agency is, too, subordinated and dependent upon the functions (pre-)determined by rationalism, and the idea of a spill over. "Reality" is sacrificed to the primacy of assumptions and reality degenerates into a test field of hypotheses.[10] Politically, this leads to an understanding of democracy in the EU as procedural outcome of such processes, resulting in the uncoupling of democracy from people's will formation and political agency (popular sovereignty) but rather viewing democratic legitimacy as the effectiveness of governance through expertocracy.[11] Scharpf's highly influential redefinition of democracy in the EU is most indicative of this. It is tragic and self-defeating because it reproduces and affirms the birth deficit of the lack of democratic government and popular legitimacy of the EU.

In several of his writings, Scharpf reiterates his re-conceptualisation of democracy. I refer here to and may paraphrase the argument of his 1999 German book *Regieren in Europa* as this is the original version of the English version *Governing in Europe.* Scharpf here distinguishes two forms of democratic government: one that would be input-oriented as popular sovereignty – which he describes as rule *through* the people – and one that would be output-oriented as effectivity – which he describes as rule *for* the people (1999: 12). According to the second model, i.e., according to output-oriented effectivity, political decisions would then be democratically legitimate if and because they promote the general well-being in society (1999: 16). It is thus not (anymore) the legitimacy of decision makers through elections or of the governing process as bound back to the popular will as it manifested in mandating the government. And Scharpf sees no reason why government in the EU could not be based upon output-oriented procedures, thus accepting that government is disconnected from popular will and traditional democratic legitimacy. Indeed, and ironically and indeed self-defeating for the EU, he argues (and admits), EU politics should not even be constituted by popular sovereignty because every attempt to do so would nothing but reveal the democracy deficit of the EU. This deficit, however, would be genuine and not solvable (1999: 168). Who takes over are institutions and expert committees that are driven by the functionalities of spill over processes (as by Schmitter 2002, 2016 discussed above). By overemphasising effectivity, i.e., overlooking or actively dismissing the "means" which create "ends", and the intense political debates which go on in this phase, inevitably leaves people feeling detached from, and not part of, the political process. Thus, the ends, even if beneficial, acquire an aura of apathy or even resentment (as the rise of Euroscepticism, populism, and secessionism shows) precisely because the electorates rightly feel that they were not consulted in the creation of those ends. It may appear too strong an argument to state that Scharpf would attempt to redefine democracy, that his redefinition would advocate for the disconnection of politics and government processes from society and political action, and that he would not argue generally against the need for input legitimacy in democratic processes, but there can be no doubt that he

sees a *sufficient* degree of democratic legitimacy if the political process were based upon output effectivity only.

THE DEMOCRATIC TRIANGLE: WILL FORMATION, POLITICAL MORALITY, AND GOVERNMENT

In my attempt to sort out the neo-(neo-)functionalist disfiguration of democracy, drawing upon well-established aspects of democracy theory historically and present-day, three fundamental elements of conceptualizing democracy as a regulative idea become important. Besides the first element of the will of the people (or *popular sovereignty*), there is, second, a particular kind of *political moralism*. Democracy can also claim to stand for a third element, namely, that of *prudent political governance* which, on the basis of established political institutions, competently deals with the plurality of different interests and opinions together with the rational political competition between them. I propose then that democracy is about constructively interrelating the three elements of political willing, governance, and political morality. *Legitimacy through effectivity* then indicates a crisis of democracy and a distortion of this interrelation as it hypothesises the institututional governance process.

These three elements of *political willing*, *governance*, and *political morality* are classical topoi of democratic theory (and developed here following the discussions of Nadia Urbinati 2014, 2019), even if their respective significance differs among liberal, republican, and realist understandings.[12] I suggest, however, that it is the conceptual integration and reframing of these topoi into the concept of democracy *as a triangular tensional constellation of (im)balance* that provides a (normative, or regulative) framework for assessing and rectifying the functionalist distortion of a democratic government process in the EU, finally to recapture legitimacy of EU politics and to infuse EU policy studies with the normative element that they lack.

THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE

Technocratic governance is a hypostatization of one of the core components of modern democracy, namely a hypostasis of governance. While governance processes are a defining feature of democratic politics, it is but *one* among a number of such fundamental defining features. The logic of technocratic governance, however, exclusively follows and radicalizes this one element of politics, neglecting the fact that in democratic discourses political government is embedded in a more complex constellation. Technocratic governance cuts off government processes and isolates them from their constitutive relations to other major components of the political process. In contrast, the democratic triangle and its normative implications can be described as follows: Democratic discourses and processes in modern societies form a triangular constellation that consists of, and should constantly (re)balance, the three major elements of democratic politics, namely political will formation, fundamental principles of political morality, and governance. These three elements together form a fully developed and well-balanced democratic discourse and practice.

Within this triangular constellation, the element of *governance* refers to the dimension of democratic politics forming and applying the means and capacities that are necessary to realize successfully any kind of political project. These capacities include various forms of knowledge, ranging from factual information and technical expertise to the ability to understand the functioning of political processes and to assess which projects and aims can be realistically 'willed' and which costs and side-effects their realization implies. They also include the management of resources, functioning institutions enabling effective decision-making, and more generally institutionalized forms of applicable power ("*pouvoir*

constitué"; or power in the Weberian sense of the term) as they are primarily generated in, and provided by, the major representative institutions of the professional political system in a modern democracy. Governance in this sense still implies political professionalism. In complex modern societies, governance is connected to the major role of functional elites and professional representatives in democratic politics. It is therefore also in principle connected with the functional necessities that come along with issues and questions of state stability and security.[13] Generally speaking, the element of 'governance' reflects the fact that political processes are, too, about realizing projects, regulating processes, solving problems, controlling side-effects, and actively organizing decisions, moderating the conflicts between different political interests. However, this is only *one* corner of the democratic triangle.

Another key corner stone of democracy is *political willing* and will formation that represent the fundamental idea of popular sovereignty. It emphasizes the fact that any political process, if it is democratic, is a project of collective self-determination in which it is the people, or the 'demos', that determines the basic rules of social life and the general shape of the society. As for this first element, the democratic discourse is a process in which this 'will', together with the demos as the willing political subject, are constantly formed. It is nonetheless an indispensable element of democratic politics that substantially exceeds the status of a mere functional aggregate of different interests, opinions, and social forces. It articulates itself directly in the processes of elections and referenda and indirectly in the various institutions of civil society, in civic associations, and other forms of political participation. These forms of participation are also the source of political 'power', insofar as power is, for democracy, an essentially bottom-up phenomenon: the "*pouvoir constituent*" within a political society or power, following Hannah Arendt, as denoting the fundamental capacity of citizens to act together.[14] Generally speaking, the element of willing represents the idea that democratic politics is about collectively asking the question of what we want politically, in which society we want to live, and that in principle every citizen at least potentially contributes to answers.

Finally, *political morality* refers to the fundamental moral principles and duties every democratic community *must* comply with because they are inscribed in the very logic of democratic politics itself. Institutionally, the power of these principles and duties is most clearly represented and articulated in the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. This third element reflects, in other words, liberal democracy's critique of the Rousseauesque understanding of people's sovereignty as infallible. Even in the case of 'a small and perspicuous, more or less homogenous community integrated through shared cultural traditions', the sole reference to the sovereign will of the people cannot guarantee that this 'normatively construed common will can, without repression, be mediated with the free choice of individuals' (Habermas 1997: 102). From today's perspective, this insight, which was successively gained during the history of ideas on the rule of law and limited government, sounds like a commonplace. In its complete practical significance, this insight was, however, not fully developed much earlier than during the 18th century, and it was strongly reaffirmed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with the experiences that the freedom of individuals and their 'right to have rights' must be upheld and protected not only against the misuse of the power of governments, but also against the powers of society and public opinion when turned tyrannical (amongst others, Arendt 1976: 267 ff.). Political morality rests ultimately on the idea that a certain set of principles cannot be violated by democratic politics without abolishing democracy, or at least a core constitutive element of democracy, itself.

THE RELATIONAL FEATURES OF THE DEMOCRATIC TRIANGLE

The above three components constitute the triangular logic of a fully developed democratic discourse and of democratic practice. In order to clarify *in which sense* these elements

form an integrated constellation, it is important to consider more closely how exactly they relate to each other: the following *relational* features of the democratic triangle are crucial in this respect. Its components are to be understood as 'integrated', but also as 'irreducible' elements.[15] Regarding their meaning, they are always discursively contestable and contested elements: which is partly due to the fact that they are related to each other as 'complementary' and at the same time as competing elements. Taking together these relational features, highlights the significance of a *balance* as the most fundamental condition of open and vivid, well-functioning, and legitimate democratic politics. *The idea of balance is the one relational feature in which the various normative implications of the conceptual re-framing of democracy come together*. The normative implications of political willing, political governance, and political morality coincide in the center of the triangular constellation of democratic politics. In other words, the democratic triangle suggests a peculiar *art of political balancing* as the major ethics and practice of democratic politics. This democratic triangle is illustrated in Graph 1 below.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The technocratic and elitist 'no-alternative' "*Politik des Sachzwangs"* (politics of necessity) of Angela Merkel during the Euro-crisis illustrates the overemphasis on governance. Based on the assumption of an ever-growing complexity of political problems and constellations, political elitism sets too much emphasis on the demands and claims of political professionalism. The resulting hypostatized logic of governance tends to denounce any democratic claims for participatory decisions or moral considerations as illusionary while claiming absolute priority for the demands of effective political management of allegedly mainly technical problems. The exclusive focus on a comitology of experts (as with the European Commission) against political morality and popular will formation is just another example of the governance-hypostatisation of legitimacy through effectivity.

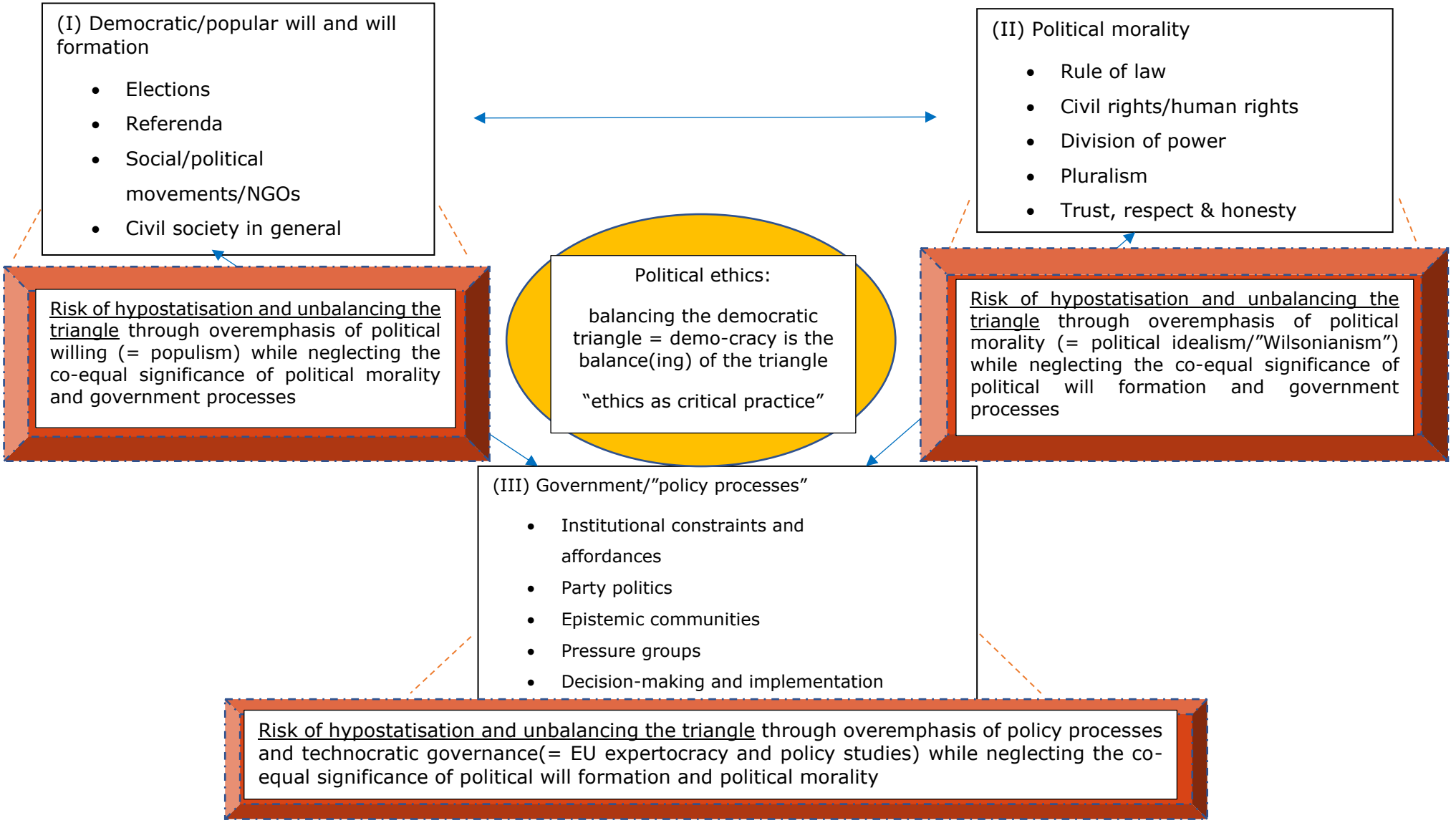
I want to summarise my arguments: The democratic triangle suggests that any distortion of the balance between its three elements is preceded by the distortion of one of the other elements, thus by preceding imbalances. Consequently, the populist challenge that currently rocks the EU and questions its legitimacy appears as a result of and reaction against a preceding imbalance, namely through technocratic hypostatization as fundamentally and ambivalently entrenched in the fate of the EU*. Democratically legitimate politics is therefore the art of balancing the triangle.* This is classically described as 'good government' in number 62 of the *Federalist Papers.* Here, James Madison argues that a 'good government' above all implies two things: 'first, fidelity to the object of government' and 'secondly, a knowledge of the means by which that object can be best attained' (Madison et al.: 1987: 366). Read against the background of the conceptual framework of this paper, this sentence provides a succinct description of political governance in a well-balanced democratic discourse. It at the same time highlights the two major reasons—namely a lack of fidelity and a lack of capacity—why the element of governance has for long been a source of distortion and imbalance in EU as well as in many Western democracies. The post-1957 functionalist ideology of the European Economic Community was never transcended politically into a fully elaborated democratic discourse The emergence of populism constitutes in part a response to the growing lack of the acknowledgment and manifestation of popular will that now, while, too, hypostatizing one element, namely that of political willing, unbalances the triangle itself. Populism is a direct answer to the wilful neglect by technocratic governance of democratic will formation and political morality.

The most important requirement for achieving democratic politics and to fight populism, however, is less to do with *one* element in the democratic triangle or another than with the *art of actively balancing all three elements* so that they remain, whatever the political challenges and threats, co-constituting. Keeping the constitutive relation among the three

elements *in play* is what *prudence* or *political ethics* as critical practice is about. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* and in *Politics* Aristotle defines "prudence" (*phronesis*) as the most important political virtue (Aristotle 1984a: VI.5, VI.13; 1984b, III.4). In his language, the prudent political animal avoids excess, is necessarily self-restrained in the plurality of the *polis,* and seeks the lesser violence for the city as a whole. In our terms, prudence entails keeping the elements of democracy (political will, governance, and political morality) in (self-restraining) relation to each other so that the will of the people acquires both institutional form and constant reshaping in response to its own plurality, the imperatives of governance, and external realities. *The overall art of mediation among the three elements* is a meta-act of political ethics that can be performed by diverse actors within the democratic polity: not only officers of the state and leaders in the various dimensions of civil society, but also by citizens in general performing their participatory role in the prudent awareness of the complex triangular constitution of democratic politics in the EU (and elsewhere).

This raises finally the question "Who is a balancing actor?" This is a whole new discussion that can only be sketched out here. In principle, there are three groups of actors who seem to have primary responsibility for balancing the forces of the democratic triangle. First, there is every person as a citizen who as member of the civil society is responsible for the commonwealth he or she is living in. In Aristotelian language, the polis is only as good as its citizens. This is a about moderation, temper, reflectivity, honesty, and integrity of the individual who decides, acts upon, and disseminates politically those values, i.e., has developed individually these values as personal characteristics and carries them into the public sphere. Second, the question raised points to aspects of political leadership, finally to elected politicians in general. This group has a particular responsibility for the democratic common good as they are supposed to be devoted fulltime as professionals to policy making. In this position, they need to be guided by an understanding of politics that provides orientation and guidance in the everyday business of decision making. This is precisely *not* to have a political agenda but rather to possess a reflective compass that provides a framework for decisions. *The democratic triangle is such a framework*. And finally, the question of who is a/the balancing actor points to theories of EU (and in the wider picture also regional integration) and of policy analysis. As I hope to have shown and argued, a certain epistemological understanding and analysis of politics results in a particular policy. The world that is acted upon and acted upon in *certain* way, is framed and constructed beforehand. We do not need to be Foucauldian to suspect that the world is framed and constructed in such a way that it can be acted upon according to preceding interests (the power-knowledge nexus; this is also the message from Nietzsche's analysis of morality), but a constricted understanding, framing, and analysis of politics leads to one-sided and hypostatized, thus distorted politics. And there is no doubt, and even their representatives would agree, that the functionalist epistemological commitments of causality, of the rational actor model, and of spill over effects is a narrow and distorting analysis.[16] So why this choice for precisely those epistemological commitments that knowingly distort? I argue here that it is time to fundamentally rethink and change the understanding and analysis of politics in EU studies and policy. What is needed is new theories of policy analysis that take seriously *all three* elements of democratic politics as the democratic triangle outlines them. What can give more reasons for critical questions to theory (and their neglect of questions of popular sovereignty and respective legitimacy à la functionalism/neo-functionalism/neo-neo-functionalisms) than a political legitimacy crisis that populism harshly and grotesquely points towards?

Graph 1. The democratic triangle (I-III) and distortions of democracy through technocracy and populism ("the paper at one glance" …)



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ENDNOTES

[1] I am grateful to the critical remarks by the reviewers that helped me to bring out a more differentiated and more pronounced argument. Even if I do not agree with some of their comments – some of which appeared more on the defensive rather then the discursive side – I found the engagement with those comments still helpful to accentuate my argument.

[2] For this interplay, see Boswell 2008 who illustrates this looking into the example of migration politics.

[3] Due to this approach, publications have been identified, selected, reviewed here according to their *impact* (that is not identical or interchangeable with any other, likewise important criteria, such as theoretical innovation, methodological rigor, or conceptual depth and thoroughness).

[4] Amongst others, Jordan, Bauer, Green-Pedersen 2013; Bauer/Knill 2012; Bennett/Howlett 1992; Rose 1993; Capano 2009; Schneider/Ingram/Deleon 2014; Saurugger, 2013.

[5] I want to thank one of the reviewers to represent this view and thus do make we aware of the need to mention the differentiation of and within theory between every theory's ontological and epistemological commitments. I have no space here to elaborate on this important distinction further, but see for further discussion importantly Lévinas 1989, 1996; Hartmann 1953, 2019. I want to add here that Majone is probably furthest away from functionalist/neo-functionalist ontology in that he refers strongest among mainstream EU studies to political thought and tries to identify the analogy of European governance processes to historic patterns. This would also be the initial steps to constitute a new epistemological step for EU studies in which he, however, does not reflect.

[6] For helpful discussions on the difference and reformulation, see Majone 2005; Schmidt 2006.

[7] The textbook by Christoph Knill and Jane Tosun is not – as one the reviewer criticised – a 'seemingly random' book on policy studies but seems indeed to be quite influential and widely received and thus an appropriate and representative selection for critical discussion. The reviewer's critique also remarked that this book would not be on EU studies but on policy studies in general. I do not think so as it is very unlikely that Knill would make one set of epistemological commitments here, and another one there. And indeed, we find the same epistemological commitments in his single- and co-authored publications on the EU.

[8] Knill indeed emphasises the importance to make a theoretical choice elsewhere, but also misses out on explaining the conditions and limitations of his choice, but represents it as THE choice to be taken; see Knill/Bauer 2012.

[9] That theory is perceived as a more or less arbitrary choice and selection of certain assumptions that are then applied and tested is suggested by Bauer/Knill 2012.

[10] The epistemological commitments discussed are surprising, do many policy scholars still observe the muddiness, non-linearity, uncertainty, and inadvertency of policy processes

(e.g., Sharkansky 2002; Weible 2014; Wilson 1989; Zahariadis 2014). The question thus arises how do get, and how to make, causal statements from and on a non-causal world? How is this possible so that these statements are still meaningful statements on the object? This seems impossible is there a disconnect between ontological observations on an object (thus on the characteristics of an object) and the knowledge claims made on and in relation to these objects (thus the epistemology of and in relation to these objects). This is like nailing the famous putting to the wall; everyone who has ever tried this, knows that it does not work.

[11] See also Schmitter 2016: 4: 'Neo-functionalism assigns a major role to experts, both those in the TRO and those in the respective national bureaucracies. They are presumed to be anxious to expand their role in policy-making and, therefore, to introduce new initiatives when the opportunity arises (usually as a result of crisis, see below Supposition I.8). They are also supposed to be wary of "premature" politicization and, therefore, to internalize emerging conflicts and resolve them without including outsiders, especially those with a wider political agenda. Experts are presumed to form something approximating an "epistemic community" based on a high level of agreement concerning the nature of the problem and the means for resolving it. Moreover, this shared scientific paradigm is also supposed to be predisposed to favor an increase in intervention by public authority, in this case, by the TRO.'; also Knill/Jale 2012: 229 and 239, who make positive reference to Haas' concept of expert government and technocratic governance.

[12] In the following I will sparsely use references; these are well discussed and organised in Urbinati 2014, 2019. I may point to these writings for references to democracy theory.

[13] See Bernard Williams' characterization of the various implications of the 'first political question' (2005: 3 ff.).

[14] See Joseph Emanuel Sieyes's classical definition of the differentiation between the *pouvoir constituant* and the *pouvoir constitue* in his essay 'What is the Third Estate?' (2003); for Hannah Arendt's understanding of power, see Arendt 1970.

[15] According to Jürgen Habermas, we may say that all three are 'co-original' insofar as each, as a political element, assumes the others as equally necessary elements of political process (see Habermas's concept of '*Gleichursprünglichkeit*' [1997: 104]). None of them can be subsumed as a mere sub-item or treated as a subordinate concomitant or contextual condition of one of the others, or as a secondary 'application problem' of one of the others as the more fundamental principle of politics. This irreducibility implies that there is no clear priority or, to use a phrase coined by John Rawls, no clear lexical order among the triangle's three components. See Rawls 1971: 40 ff.

[16] Selection and distortion in functionalist theories is best (because blatantly) explicated (and embraced) in Waltz 1990.

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Research Article

Euroscepticism between Populism and Technocracy: The Case of Italian Lega and Movimento 5 Stelle

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Abstract

This paper analyses the digital communication of Italian parties Lega and Movimento 5 Stelle during their campaigns for the European Parliament elections (January-May 2019). We focus on the Italian case as it is representative of a generalised shift in European public discourse towards an overt delegitimation of the European project and its re-imagination. In the Italian case, Lega and Movimento 5 Stelle, which were in a Government coalition for fourteen months, have been instrumental in Italy's shift from a strong Europhile country to one of the most Eurosceptic. However, while Lega has definitely aligned itself with a strong right-wing populist agenda, Movimento 5 Stelle has promoted a populist technocratic vision of democracy. Our analysis shows that the articulation of Eurosceptic discourses from both parties by and large reflects the two stances above with Lega's messages (primarily produced by its leader Matteo Salvini) characterised by a 'hyperled' style of communication and stronger nativist elements (for example the appeal to an ethno-centric and 'sovereign' idea of Italy) than those of Movimento 5 Stelle, which instead relied on a 'horizontal' communicative style. However, our data also shows that the delegitimation of Europe in both parties occur along a similar domestication of European affairs into the national political agenda and the call for a reformed Europe along nationalistic logics which both parties claimed to champion.

Keywords

Euroscepticism; Populism; Technocracy; Italy; European Elections; Political Communication

Support for the EU in Italian public opinion has plummeted in the last decade (and even further in the Covid-19 crisis) to around 30 per cent, one of the lowest rates among the EU27 (Eurobarometer 2019; Demos 2018). The transformation of the Italian public opinion from largely Euro-enthusiastic to being increasingly critical towards the European Union (EU) has been a complex phenomenon. While several EU crises have contributed, on the one hand, to a substantive Europeanisation of the Italian political debate, on the other they have shifted the discourse from a 'permissive consensus' model (Ferrera 2003) to one based on the logics of 'emergency' and technocracy that have enabled some political actors to capitalise on forms of Eurocriticism for political gain (Castelli Gattinara and Froio 2014).

Italy's experience is representative of an increasing EU-wide disillusion/disaffection with the European project as well as of a generalised shift in public discourse towards its overt delegitimation and its re-imagination along *sovereignist* and populist logics (Zappettini and Krzyzanowski 2019; Zappettini 2020; Zappettini and Bennett, 2022). EU-rope has been increasingly mobilised by self-claimed 'anti-politics' parties such as *Lega* and *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S) which have embodied distinct forms of *populist* and *technocratic* Euroscepticism rooted in very different ideological and historical roots. Crucially, the performance of such discourses has combined and compounded to sustain a critical juncture as M5S and *Lega* entered a Government alliance (from June 2018 to September 2019) during which the 'European question' was often at the centre of Italian domestic politics. In particular, the 2019 European elections campaigns in Italy saw the culmination of a series of financial and migration 'crises' that had often pitted Italian and EU institutions against each other and that were indeed one of the reasons for public opinion shifting towards 'alternative' parties such as M5S and *Lega* in the 2018 Italian general elections (Baldini and Giglioli 2018). Although the Italian context may be regarded as *sui generis* due to specific contingencies (migration and economic crisis and the critical juncture of Lega and M5S entering a coalition government), the merit of focusing on the Italian case lies in the contextual examination of Eurosceptic discursive shifts, performed via nativist and technocratic populism, at a larger European level where we have seen similar trajectories for example in France and Germany (with *Front Nationale* and *AfD* respectively) as well as in Spain (where the emergence of *Podemos* shares many traits with that of M5S, see Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2018). In this sense, this study contributes to the large academic debate on populism and Euroscepticism (for example Pirro, Taggart and van Kessel 2018; Mudde 2007) and the resurgence of right-wing populism as a Europe-wide phenomenon (Wodak 2015; Pelinka 2013). More specifically, our findings corroborate existing work on the domestication of EU politics and the mobilisation of Eurosceptic narratives (for example Trenz and de Wilde 2009; Caiani and Guerra 2017) from the specific viewpoint of the Italian case.

This article focuses on how *Lega* and M5S have discursively enacted their Euroscepticism from *distinct nativist and technocratic populist stances* by examining their mediatised communication in the specific context of the 2019 European elections campaign. Our approach to the analysis of Euroscepticism, populism and technocracy is primarily one of *mediated discursive performance* (Ekström, Patrona and Thornborrow 2018). Concurring with Trenz and de Wilde (2009), we believe that to make sense of Euroscepticism one needs firstly to understand how Eurosceptic narratives are mobilised, framed and amplified in the public sphere by political actors and media alike and how propositional and stylistic elements combine to construct meanings contextually (Ekström, Patrona and Thornborrow 2018) within the affordances enabled by new media (KhosraviNik 2017; Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Baldwin-Philippi 2018).

Our study addresses the question: *how has Euroscepticism been performed and with what differences (if any) by Lega and M5S?* which we operationalise as follows: The first section unpacks conceptualisations of Euroscepticism, populism/technocracy, and digital media politics, offering a selected overview of the relevant academic literature. The second section provides a historical contextualisation of the rise of *Lega* and M5S as driving actors of a

major change in Italy's public attitudes towards the EU. The third section introduces the dataset that we subsequently analyse in the fourth section and conclusions are drawn.

EUROSCEPTICISM AS ANTI-POLITICS DISCURSIVE PERFORMANCE: POPULIST AND TECHNOCRATIC STANCES

In line with Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008a) we interpret Euroscepticism as a spectrum of stances *vis-à-vis* the EU dynamics of integration. Eurosceptic discourses can thus be articulated to different degrees along the soft/hard continuum with, at one end, 'contingent or qualified opposition' (Taggart 1998: 366), supporting for example a stronger intergovernmental rather than a supranational approach to European integration, and at the other end, a principled resistance to any pursue of the European project (see Caiani and Guerra 2017). As it is 'largely dependent on domestic contextual factors' (Taggart 2006), Euroscepticism has also been seen as instrumental in the emergence of new political formations, especially protest movements, as they try to differentiate themselves from the more established parties (Taggart 2006). The last decade's dramatic increase in popularity of many peripheral and populist parties all over Europe has indeed occurred, albeit not exclusively, through the mobilisation of Eurosceptic agendas and on the back of responses to the Eurozone crisis that have exacerbated specific cleavages on the European question. So, while Euroscepticism and populism can be treated (conceptually at least) as distinct phenomena, the two have often co-emerged and worked in tandem (Mondon and Winter 2020), especially since populist and Eurosceptic voters' attitudes often coincide (Rooduijn and van Kessel 2019). Of course, one limitation to this argument is how one defines populism. We refer to populism as a signifier that denotes particular aspects of social and political reality and that derives its meaning(s) and normative inflections from the context within which its discourses are performed (de Cleen, Glynos and Mondon 2018). Our contention therefore is that a strong correlation between Eurosceptic and populist sentiment can be asserted insofar as the political/discursive mobilisation of EU-rope enables the performance of reactionary, destabilising, anti-elite and anti-establishment narratives (Trenz and de Wilde 2009; Rosanvallon 2008; Laclau 2005; Canovan 2005).

In the last two decades populist anti-politics emerging on the back of different European crises has taken different discursive forms which are partly contingent on individual domestic factors. Largely speaking, on the one hand, we have seen reactionary programmes consolidating around *nativist* and *sovereignist* projects in the far-right tradition of strong leadership and 'law and order' agendas (for example Fidesz in Hungary and PiS in Poland). This phenomenon has been widely scrutinised (Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2017; Mudde 2019; Froio and Ganesh 2019; Forchtner 2020). On the other hand, we have seen the rise of what Mair (2002) calls 'procedural populism' against the backdrop of a general decline of West European traditional mass parties understood as intermediaries between the citizens and public policies. In this sense, technocracy can be seen as a form of populism that, while rejecting traditional left/right ideologies and relying on narrative of de-politicisation and distrust of party systems, emphasises unmediated and partyless representation based on procedures, efficiency, meritocracy and transparency (for example Caramani 2017; Buštíková and Guasti 2019; Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2018). Although ideologically distinct from nativist populism, 'technocratic populism' (Drápalová and Wegrich 2020) retains key populist core elements which recombines rhetorically with other discourses. Typical claims of 'techno populists' will involve: anti-party politics as an end to the 'corrupt' system; the adoption of efficient and 'apolitical' management strategies and technologies; and the detachment of the executive leader (Drápalová and Wegrich 2020). In contrast to the right leaning populism that recognises a strong leader and conceptualises of the people primarily in nativist forms, technocratic populism focuses on economic and political definitions of popular sovereignty (Mény and Surel 2000) and derives its legitimacy from

expertise and knowledge in problem solving as well as claims of direct (i.e. politically unmediated) representation of citizens (Fischer 2009).

Trading on the definitions provided above, both Lega and M5S largely fit the characterisation of populist parties with the former relying primarily on nativist instantiations of populism and the latter on a technocratic populist vision of society. In turn, as mentioned, both Lega's and M5S's populist narratives have been mobilised in Eurosceptic terms. For such narratives to be made salient in the public sphere, a dynamic and multi-actor process of communication is obviously necessary. As pointed out by Trenz and de Wilde (2009), Caiani and Guerra (2017) and Zappettini (2021), one could hardly underestimate the role played by the media in the formation of public opinion and in the reverberation and amplification of Eurosceptic narratives in public discourses. As political communication has increasingly digitalised, public platforms such as social media have been appropriated by political actors at both top-down and bottom-up levels to either promote (or challenge) specific messages/ideologies (Chadwick 2013; Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Stromback et al. 2016). At the same time, social media have been deployed as a strategic tool by political actors not only in the contingencies of specific campaigns but also to manage their own public identities/personas (Krzyzanowski and Tucker 2018). In this sense, the mediatised reorientation of political communication around new political actors or political personalities acquires also ideological significance. Within this context digital media with their capacity to interact with systems of news, information, and government are capable of stimulating growth in 'ideological entrepreneurship' as well as affecting how people identify with political discourses and ideologies (Finlayson 2020).

Our approach to the analysis of Euroscepticism and populism is thus primarily one of *mediated discursive performance* (Ekström, Patrona and Thornborrow 2018). We interpret Eurosceptic/populist communication as the combination of interrelated discursive dimensions involving both *form (style)* and *content (proposition)* (see Moffitt and Tormey 2014; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; de Vreese, Esser, Aalberg, Reinemann et al. 2018; Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Block and Negrine 2017). What defines a Eurosceptic/populist discourse could thus be pinned down to the interplay of a number of propositional and stylistic elements including: an ever present appeal to *the people*; rhetorical, emotional, identitarian constructions ('us versus them'); abrasive, impolite, colloquial/trivial, 'politically incorrect' vocabulary; and so on. Not all of these features need to be present in a politician's communication for their discourse to perform a Eurosceptic stance. As pointed out by Ekström, Patrona and Thornborrow (2018) rather than an association of form and content established *a priori*, we see the two dimensions emerging in mediated and contextualised performances whereby specific semiotic resources (shaped, in turn, by specific media affordances enabled by specific technologies) are being mobilised by political actors as meaning-making devices designed to attune with the target audience. For example, for a member of the public to be able to identify with a particular message and to positively perceive the speaker as 'saying like it is' not only must linguistic/discursive repertoires be shared between the two but the resemioticisation and reproduction of a proposition/discourse must be enabled by some mediated interaction (for example 'likes' on social media). Similarly, the *topicalisation* of discourses must be seen as driven by contingent communicative purposes. In this sense the discursive arena emerging around European elections is particularly interesting as public opinion tends to see elections for the European Parliament (EP) as 'second order' elections (Reif and Schmitt 1997) and often, rather than focusing on European issues, such electoral campaign tend to be instrumentally mobilised by national parties to recontextualise domestic issues and to channel 'protest' votes (Marks and Steenbergen 2004).

A HISTORY OF LEGA AND M5S'S EUROSCEPTIC AND POPULIST DISCOURSES

Lega

Founded in 1991 through the merging of several separatist movements in Northern Italy, over the past decades *Lega Nord*[1] has established itself as one of the most successful parties in Europe (McDonnell, 2006) and, to date, is the oldest group in the Italian Parliament having been one of the major political players in the collapse of the so-called First Republic and a regular member of the Centre-Right coalitions during the Berlusconi era (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2010).

Now consistently aligned with a (far) right populist ideology, *Lega*'s discourse has conveniently adapted to identify and construct new political enemies and allies. Building on strong regionalist a separatist ideologies (Newth 2018; Cedroni 2007), the early *Lega*'s discourse under the leadership of his founder Umberto Bossi capitalised on mobilising much public sentiment around the 'Northern question': the growing economic and social gap between a wealthy North and a much less developed South. This discourse involved a strong (and racist, see Spektorowski 2003) antagonisation between *Padania* (*Lega*'s mythical 'homeland' of Northern Italy, see Newth 2019) and *il meridione*, typically reified as Southern 'lazy' immigrants (to the north of the country). The slogan *Roma Ladrona* ('thieving Rome'), a metonymical reference to the Italian government and more generally to the supposedly unequal taxation system that would favour backward Southern regions at the expense of the industrious Northern economy, embodies this juxtaposition. Throughout this early phase, the party's stance on Europe was articulated through a precarious discursive balance between portrayals of Padania with a European vocation, if only in economic terms, and equally stymied by the EU institutions in its federalist ambitions (Huysseune 2010). Until 1990s the party shared a pro-European platform with all the other Italian political groups. However, after 1998 and well before Matteo Salvini was elected *Lega*'s leader in December 2013, the party underwent a radical ideological turn, embracing an explicit anti-European stance which paved the way for further radicalisation under Salvini's leadership (Vampa 2017). As under the new leader *Lega*'s propaganda focused on attracting votes from Southern Italy, the discourse zeroed in on a new set of 'enemies' encapsulated by *EU-rope*, namely the banking system and the Euro currency, *clandestini* (illegal immigrants), and general liberal/progressive values such as LGBT rights often perceived as associated with/pushed by the EU. In short, in Salvini's populist narrativisation, Brussels substituted Rome as the antagonist of *Lega*'s interests, and nationalism became the new regionalism as the party turned to 'nativist' claims (Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone 2018).

This discursive shift coincided with the end of Berlusconi's government in 2011 and the construction of the grand coalition supporting the technocratic government of Mario Monti (November 2011-December 2012) that many voters saw as the EU's technocratic ruling *by proxy* and of which *Lega* became the main opposition party in Parliament by championing a new populist and sovereignist agenda. In this sense Euroscepticism helped shift *Lega*'s discourse from a narrative of regionally focused interests and the delegitimation of the Italian state (as incompatible in its North/South divide) to one of nationalist propaganda (Bulli and Tronconi 2011) that would often represent Italy at loggerheads with the EU and strategically allied with other far-right/nationalist European parties (for example Marine Le Pen's *Front National*, Dutch *PVV* and recently Viktor Orbán's *Fidez*).

It is especially since *Lega* came into office in 2018, and in the context of a series of European financial and migration 'crises', that Salvini's discourses consolidated right-wing, ethnocentric and Eurosceptic positions around the promotion of 'Italians/Italy first'[2] and the safeguard of Italy's borders, mobilising much public frustration and resentment against Brussels, advocating, for example, welfare policies that would protect 'national culture' and reject foreigners *per se* (Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone 2018) in a battle over cultural identity (Ganesh and Froio 2020). *Lega*'s emphatic defense of Italian identity escalated into

the policy of *'porti chiusi'* when, in his office as Minister of the Interior in 2019, Salvini prevented NGO ships rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean from docking into Italian ports.

Salvini's role therefore has been instrumental in transforming *Lega* from a fringe, regionally-based party to a coalition member in Italy's previous Government and the largest party in the 2019 EP election. Salvini's personalisation of politics and his rise as a 'digital leader' has occurred through an active digital mediatisation of his own political persona on social media including Twitter where he has over one million followers (this has also been supported by the instrumental work of a digital propaganda apparatus known as *La Bestia*). The campaign for the EP election was no exception as it was part of a highly mediatised strategic communication plan, running over social media platforms (the manifesto itself was an 18-minute video message streamed on Facebook).

M5S

Explicitly embracing the label of a movement and rejecting that of a political party, M5S was officially created in 2009 under the leadership of Italian comedian Beppe Grillo. Gaining much popularity in public opinion, especially during the years of opposition to the Berlusconi's final government and paradoxically in reaction to Monti's technocratic government, by 2019 M5S had become the most important political force in the Italian Parliament (Baldini and Giglioli 2019). While there is much agreement on M5S's innovative appropriation of the internet, as the first mainstream party operating exclusively online (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2014), its ideological profile has been much more debated and difficult to define.

M5S's anti-corruption and anti-establishment discourses have been differently seen as both right-wing and left-wing examples of populism. To some, M5S is following in the steps of previous anti-political movements such as the Northern League (Corbetta and Gualmini 2013; Albertazzi and McDonnel 2015). Others who refer to Laclau's theorisation of populism see M5S as a potential emancipatory force capable of re-inserting 'the people' into political action (Gerbaudo and Screti 2017). The M5S has thus quite a unique history and place within the Italian political system. While, in many respects the M5S is rooted in an aspirational *technocratic* form of governance (Bertsou and Caramani 2020) which emphasises technical expertise from 'ordinary' citizens, as opposed to 'professional' politicians, selected by a 'neutral' and meritocratic process, its discourses also feature some obvious forms of traditional populism (for example reference to *la casta* to indicate the ruling class, see Musso and Maccaferri 2018; Franzosi, Marone and Salvati 2015; Biorcio and Natale 2013). The nature of M5S's populism is therefore embedded in its critique of the Italian political system as ruled by elites and in the need of restoring the exercise of democracy into the hands of citizens/people, whom *la casta* have deprived of their sovereignty, through direct and deliberative democracy by taking advantage of new technology and the internet (Musso and Maccaferri 2018). The idealisation of the citizen-empowering potential of the Internet that would result in effective solutions to the 'problem' of politics is, as Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti (2018: 140) put it, 'the most evidently 'technocratic' aspect of the Movement's ideology'. Developed around the exponential growth of the internet as a space of 'unmediated communication', the role of the internet has often been mobilised in M5S's discourse to promote the idea of citizenship as widespread 'communities of practice' where everyone can be an expert and exercise specific *techné* (Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2018).

In many respects, such approach to direct democracy and political renewal has driven M5S's stances on EU-rope towards more 'strategic that ideological' forms of Euroscepticism (Franzosi, Marone and Salvati 2015). M5S topped the 2013 Italian elections on the back of an electoral manifesto that, while making no specific reference to Europe and focusing instead on local or national issues and the promotion of bottom-up policy processes, saw Beppe Grillo's delegitimising in his blog what he regarded as the EU corrupted and bureaucratic elites that 'had betrayed the European dream'. Significantly Grillo made clear

his support for a referendum to revert to Lira and to leave the Eurozone (Musso and Maccaferri 2018: 15). Such endorsement was formalised in the manifesto for the 2014 European elections in which the M5S would be the second largest party and which would subsequently see it joining Nigel Farage's Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy EP group. While M5S's has formally reverted its positions on Europe under the leadership of G. Di Maio by committing to reforming 'Europe from inside', its Eurosceptic vein remains, and it is primarily driven by domestic socioeconomic utilitarianism which interprets EU issues in terms of their repercussions and consequences for Italian citizens. To some extent, M5S's Eurosceptic discourse is a sort of 'indirect' or perhaps 'reluctant nativism', in which the criticism of the EU constitutes a 'scaled' up replication of the electorally successful condemnation of the Italian political system at an upper level.

Another implication of M5S's ideological approach to 'direct democracy' has been its communication strategy which has primarily relied on the movement's and Grillo's own blogs as they are seen as 'alternative' to mainstream media. Grillo's social media accounts have been used exclusively to repost entries on his blog while the M5S's Twitter and Facebook accounts have been primarily (but not exclusively) been used to repost entries from the blog. Not only is M5S's social media presence less prominent than *Lega*'s but it has also been more 'diffused' across key party figures in contrast to Salvini's hyperleadership style (Gerbaudo, 2018). While Grillo remains a pivotal figure in M5S communication, different M5S leaders have been communicating key messages through different channels at different times and through different voices. For example, entries on the official blog feature a variety of authorship in a communicative style that is meant to reflect M5S's self-perception as a horizontally structured movement rather than a traditional vertically organised political party. Furthermore, alongside Grillo, who remains a pivotal figure in M5S communication, different leaders/spokespersons, such as DeMaio and DiBattista, have been instrumental in reverberating and in some cases also counter posing Grillo's message.

With specific relation with the 2019 European election campaign, the M5S saw a reasonable posting activity on their Twitter account (@Mov5Stelle), albeit with limited engagement on European themes, while the official party's blog and that of Grillo's showed a higher engagement. The Twitter account of Luigi De Maio showed virtually no post related with the campaign topics while Di Battista's Facebook account, although only engaging sporadically with European themes, was notably polemically intense when it did so.

DATASET AND ANALYSIS

For our analysis we initially compiled a corpus of data by scraping different communicative channels (for example social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and the two parties' official websites) between 1 January 2019 and 26 May 2019 as this timeframe effectively represents the most intense campaign period. The nature of multichannel digital communication is such that in most cases messages tend to be cross posted across different platforms performing reciprocal hyperlink functions. For example, most of Salvini's tweets represent 'soundbite headlines' hyperlinking to radio and TV interviews, press releases or speeches that are also distributed on *Lega*'s and Salvini's Facebook pages. Similarly, Grillo's tweets exclusively link to his blog. For consistency, we therefore focused on Twitter where we conducted an advanced search using the equivalent Italian terms for the keywords: EU, European Union, European elections, Brussels, Euro, Europe(ean) for all tweets posted during the timeframe by the accounts indicated in Table 1. In addition, we scraped:

- entries (N=35) on the official M5S's blog (https://www.ilblogdellestelle.it) filtered by same keywords as above;
- a set of entries on an aggregation page (https://www.leganord.org/eventi/europee-2019) dedicated to promotional material released by Lega for the 2019 European elections (including leaflets, videos and re-posting some of Salvini's Tweets and Facebook posts).

Table 1. Details of Twitter data analysed.

Account	Twitter Handle	Tweets retrieved
Matteo Salvini	@matteosalvinimi	N=158
Lega Salvini premier	@LegaSalvini	N=38
M5S	@mov5stelle	N=79
Beppe Grillo	@beppe_grillo	N=31

Our analysis was concerned with both the *topicalisation* of messages on specific platforms (how for example they were made 'newsworthy' in a tweet) and with the *articulation* of discourses in the text, speech and/or images they linked to. Our analysis was therefore guided by a Critical Discourse Studies *multilevel approach* (see Zappettini 2019) aimed at identifying: a) key discursive frames and themes; b) argumentation strategies (for example de/legitimation) and c) modes of realisation, enactment and discursive performance that would qualify as Eurosceptic and populist in virtue of the discussion of such concepts outlined above. All extracts presented in this article have been translated by the authors from the original posts in Italian.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The key discursive themes emerged from our analysis are summarised in Table 2. Overall, our findings point to both Lega and M5S's discourses aiming at an overarching delegitimisation a*nd reimagin*ation of *the EU project*. While Lega's responses primarily relied on *nativist performances of populism*, M5S's Euroscepticism rested on *technocratic forms of populism* as we discuss in detail below.

Table 2. Lega/Salvini and M5S/spokespersons' key discursive themes.

Lega and Salvini's key discursive themes	M5S and its spokespersons' key discursive themes
Delegitimation of the EU multicultural and federalist projects primarily predicated on: · Arguments of loss of cultural identity · Economic and sovereignty discourses · *victimisation* of Italy (representations of Italy as 'controlled by Brussels' and losing out in the European 'zero-sum game')	*Delegitimation* of the EU federalist project and EU institutions primarily predicated on: · Anti-politics and anti-elite discourses · Representations of 'bad capitalism' and 'hegemony of banks' · *victimisation* of Italian citizens
Promotion of nationalist and ethnocentric responses ('Italians first') to the current economic, political and cultural 'crises', for example by calling for: · reverting to a 'Europe of peoples' (emphasising Lega's alliances with other Eurosceptic/ far-right parties) · reverting to an EU intergovernmental set up with new power symmetries	Scaling up M5S's 'technocratic' domestic approach to a European level, for example by calling for: · the abolition of Strasbourg Parliament and, more generally, against the privileges of the EU 'caste' · bottom-up approaches/direct democracy (for example European referendum) relying on new technologies to voice European citizens neglected by the EU's bureaucratic model
Representations of Lega as a *capable* actor vis-à-vis other national and European actors Reclaiming *Italy's centrality* inside/outside the EU project	Representations of M5S as a *capable* actor vis-à-vis other national and European actors Reclaiming *Italy's centrality* inside/outside the EU project

Lega and Salvini's Nativist Populism

Lega's and Salvini's overarching discursive frames revolved around the re-imagination of the EU-ropean status quo, its dismantling and reformation in nativist and sovereignist terms. Rather than a rejection of the European project *tout court, Lega*'s Euroscepticism was therefore aimed at normalising the party's stances on immigration, the economy and conservative social values while reclaiming distinct remits of governance and identities for Italy and Europe. Within this framing, different discursive logics were identified.

The Victimisation of Italy

The *victimisation* of Italy as politically and economically dependent from and vexed by the EU power was a frequent theme in Salvini's discourse and was primarily achieved through representations of the country as 'controlled by Brussels' and losing out in the European 'zero-sum game' and on antagonistic representations of Italy versus the EU and some member states. In some cases, such *arguments of power asymmetries* were predicated on the EU's bureaucracy and single market rules: 'Lowering corporation tax is the only way to let companies breath. Europe must let us work' (Twitter 20 May 2019) and 'our farmers and

fisherman [are] SLAUGHTERED BY EUROPEAN RULES' (Twitter 18 May 2019) while is some other cases the discourse portrayed Italy as ostracised by a Franco-German alliance: 'Enough begging the French and the Germans. We are ITALY' (Twitter 20 May 2019).

In this respect, Lega's discourse often rhetorically appealed to economic nationalism as a way to address Italy's perceived disadvantaged status: 'I WANT HUGE TRICOLORS ON MADE IN ITALY PRODUCTS! Eating and drinking Italian is good for your health and our jobs, let's defend our products tooth and nail and let those in Brussels eat their RUBBISH!' (Twitter 25 May 2019). Standing up to Brussels was also argued from a political perspective around the question of remits of power: 'In Europe they have understood that today in Italy there is a GOVERNMENT, not a branch of theirs. And we won't go begging anymore. In the elections on May 26, Italy will RISE AGAIN!' (Salvini's Facebook post, 18 March 2019).

The 'Question' of Cultural Identity and Europe of Peoples

Representations of a *cultural identity crisis* and the *construction of moral panic* around the alleged loss of identity were also quite conspicuous themes in our Salvini/*Lega* dataset and they clearly tie into previous exclusionary and xenophobic discourses as well as being driven by the contingent political debate over migrants arriving in Italy from the Mediterranean. For example, several Tweets and posts appeal to stop the invasion of *barconi* (dinghies, boats) and reject '4B Europe' (referring to a mix of enemies via the alliteration *burocrati, buonisti, banchieri and barconi*: bureaucrats, goodies, bankers and boats). Salvini often appealed to an ethnocentric and Christian-rooted idealisation of Europe resentfully noting how Europe's departure from its 'traditional' values had been paving the way for the Islamisation of the West. Tweeting on the eve of election day, Salvini invoked the *trope of Islamic invasion* to warn: 'We don't want to end up like Sweden, this is not integration! NO TO EURABIA' (see similar messages in electoral posters 'STOP invasion' and in @LegaSalvini, 12 May 2019 'Let's save Europe or our children will be living in an Islamic country'). In various instances of communication Salvini raised the question of reclaiming 'traditional' identities variously qualified as European/Italian/Christian, blaming European institutions for not 'PROTECTING identity, history, tradition and rights [from] Islamic extremism and fanaticism' (Twitter 8 April 2019) and for not defending Europe's own borders (Twitter 10 January 2019; see also videos posted on Lega's aggregation page). In a similar fashion, *Lega*/Salvini's campaign blamed the EU for pushing liberal values at the expense of traditional ones attacking for example the EU's Commission 'mad' support for Roma's entitlement to council housing (Twitter 15 May 2019) or advocating a reverse of current regulations that have displaced the central role of families with children in favour of LGBT rights (Tg2 and Twitter 10 January 2019).

Reclaiming Italy's Centrality

In response to the above economic, political and cultural 'crises' *Lega* and Salvini delegitimised EU federal ideas as 'crazy' and advocated instead a reformed 'Europe of the peoples' (see Zappettini, 2020) in which Italy would join like-minded partners and 'take back' a prominent role in a 'different' Europe. *Lega* communication was thus aimed on the one hand at highlighting strategic alliances with other nationalist parties such as the Polish *PiS; Danks Folkeparti* and *Front National* and on the other hand at pushing the propaganda of Italy 'rising again' (*l'Italia rialza la testa*). Reclaiming a centrality for Italy within such 'different Europe of the peoples' was a recurrent campaign message which often drew from imaginaries of an Italian 'glorious past'. Therefore while *Lega*'s Euroscepticism clearly rejects transnational and progressive elements of the European project it still relies on its intergovernmental and zero-sum set up to be able to reclaim a centrality for Italy through a nostalgic longing for a 'golden age' which in many respects is reminiscent of similar discourses of 'greatness' and 'clout' typically invoked by nativists: 'Italy is the engine of the European Renaissance. If Europe regains its original vision … it will be safe' (Interview with RTL 10 January 2019); 'Italy matters again in Europe' (Twitter, Rai Povera Patria 25 January

2019); 'Europe is … Leonardo Da Vinci, it's us. On 26th May let's go and take Europe back' (Twitter 18 May 2019).

Lega as an Agent of Change

Most of these Eurosceptic discourses therefore seem to be enacted from an ambivalent insider/outsider position. Unlike for example the Leave campaign in Brexit, here Italy's 'greatness' is claimed back *inside* rather than *outside* Europe, albeit through an 'alternative' imaginary in which Salvini portrays himself as a reformist of Europe by advocating a leading role for Italy ('we're taking common sense to Europe'). In this respect our interpretation is that *Lega*/Salvini's messages were to a large extent driven by the political convenience of legitimising *Lega* on the domestic political stage as a capable and firm actor vis-à-vis other national and European actors, thus not only reclaiming Italy's cultural, political and economic centrality but also himself and his party as agents of change at a wider level: 'On 26th May with the vote of many Italians we will have the mandate to CHANGE Europe too, after Italy' (Twitter 28 January 2019); 'Some say Italy needs "more Europe". I think "more Italy" is needed in Europe. I want to defend my country and Italian interests' (Twitter 20 May 2019; La Quarta Repubblica).

'Common Sense' Style

Salvini's and *Lega*'s communication relied conspicuously on the overarching *'Buonsenso in Europa'* ('common sense in Europe') slogan which was multimodally reproduced in videos, TV and radio adverts and other promotional material. For example, all radio/TV campaign adverts scripts begin with the simplistic incipit 'common sense mode ON' before advertising specific policies or claiming specific achievements. As discussed above, the slogan was also invoked to advocate a 'different' Europe reformed along *Lega*'s domestic political agenda. Through the *'buonsenso'* trope Salvini was also able to present himself as both determined and reasonable. His communication appeared thus aimed at a dual construction of himself as a strong or hyper leader (a patriotic defender of right-wing values who was often addressed as *captain* in public comments and encouraged to 'carry on' and 'not to give up') but also an approachable people's man, or 'one of us'. This enactment occurred for example through the use of selfies, by sharing some elements of private life, for example posts on daily meals and food preferences; through certain lexical choices such as addressing the audience as *amici* (friends), greeting them with *bacioni* (big kisses) and other colloquial expressions or practices (for example capitalisation for shouting). Salvini's Euroscepticism appeared mainly performed through, on the one hand, a calculated balance of drumming up nativist themes and claims of standing up for Italians to (non-Italian) 'enemies', what Bracciale and Martella (2017) refer to as the 'Champion of the people' role performance, and on the other hand the rhetoric of moderation (*buonsenso*), every day familiarity and mundanity, or the 'man on the street' (Bracciale and Martella, 2017). For example, during rally held in Milan on 18 May 2019 with other European nationalist parties leaders, Salvini, wearing a rosary and invoking the Virgin Mary, was asked by a journalist whether any extremists were attending. He reassured his interviewer that the crowd was rather made up of 'mothers, fathers and disabled' claiming: 'we are extremists of common sense' (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cF3Pez4OK0). With some audience, the *buonsenso* trope might have helped toning down the contradictions of *Lega*'s Euroscepticism that while accusing the EU institutions of not acknowledging identities seems to overlook the different value that Salvini places on different identities through the exclusionary ideology of 'Italians first'.

M5S Technocratic Populism

Although compared to Lega and Salvini, the 2019 European elections campaign played a relatively marginal role in M5S's official communication and that of its spokespersons, our analysis suggests that the party overall performed styles of populism and Euroscepticism

which share several elements of similarity with, but also partly differentiate from, Salvini's/*Lega*'s discourses.

Anti-politics and Anti-(EU) Elites

While, similar to *Lega*/Salvini, the need for reforming EU-rope in more nation-centric terms was a theme frequently adopted by M5S, such arguments did not necessarily appeal to the 'Europe of peoples' trope and were realised in a communicative style that, unlike that of Salvini's was less centred on 'hyperleadership' and personalities. However, while explicit nativist/ sovereigntist discourses (such as *Lega*'s antagonisation of Italians and migrants) were absent in our dataset, populist themes were clearly underlying M5S discursive framing of European institutions, with typical 'elite vs ordinary people' and 'EU = waste of money' arguments as exemplified by the following: 'President Junker earns more than 27K euros per month. Mogherini 25,845,35, vice-Presidents 25,852,26 while all the other commissioners 22,852,26 euros per month: an insult [lit. slap in the face] for the over 100 million poor people in Europe' (Twitter 17 January 2019).

Anti-political and anti-elite arguments were mainly predicated on representation of empowered citizens. M5S often rhetorically called for 'more power to the citizens and less to the bureaucrats' (Il blog delle stelle 4 June 2019) and on policies proposing to abolish the 'privileges' of the EU 'caste' which effectively replicated at a European level the party's very same stances adopted in the domestic political context. These discourses included: the abolition of the Strasbourg parliament, the reduction of the total number of MEPs ('cutting parliamentarians') and of MEPS' costs ('cutting parliamentarian's salaries') and MEPs' vitalizi/life-long pensions: 'Thanks to M5S the EU Parliament is cutting pensions: now it's time to cut the privileges' (Il blog delle stelle 26 April 2019).

In keeping with the anti-corruption theme, M5S EP2019 campaign called for the introduction of a law preventing corrupt candidates running for Parliament: 'EU manifesto of M5S: Euro-ASBO and clean Parliament' (Il blog delle stelle 22 April 2019). The 'domestication of Euro politics' here is achieved via the invocation of *clean*, a reference to the judicial investigation into political corruption *Mani Pulite*/Clean hands trials held in Italy in the early 1990s', and to '*daspo*' (a ban similar to English ASBO which in Italy applies to violent football supporters).

Scaling up Technocracy to a European Level and Claiming Italy's Centrality

In a few cases, M5S arguments appealed to general ideals of social justice and to the vision of a more equal, pan-European rather than a strictly nationalist conceptualisation of society, for example by advocating the introduction of a European minimum wage and the application of stringent environmental policies. These proposals were often characterised as *lotta* (struggle/fight) or *battaglia* (battle), and *bene comune* (common good) thus resonating with a Left-wing vocabulary. In this sense, while in Salvini's/*Lega*'s discourses one can recognise an exclusionary dimension of populism (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013), M5S discourse was more oriented towards a 'technocratic' inclusionary understanding of the people/citizens. Nonetheless, a number of instances suggest a less benevolent stance towards the EU through arguments that, while still appealing to the ideal of social justice, also relied on the ambivalent characterisation of citizens, whom M5S claimed to fight for, as Italian/European (often incompatibly so). In a few cases arguments of social justice drew from the anti-elitist *trope of waste of money* to support the idea that citizens (inferable in a larger sense) are losing out in the European democratic system: 'The first reform that Europe needs is social justice. There can't be first and second class citizens. There exist too many privileges and waste, that must be erased to give resources back to citizens' (Twitter 9 January 2019).

More frequently however M5S messages portrayed the party as a national paladin capable of defending Italian interests in Europe '[we are] going to Europe to negotiate the rights of the Italians' (Il Blog delle Stelle 21 April 2019). In many respects our analysis found that M5S's messages echoed closely *Lega*'s reformist and nationalist themes (albeit void of

xenophobic elements) pivoting on reclaiming a centrality for Italy through a re-imagined Europe: 'we must save Europe from itself' (Blog delle stelle 19 June 2019); 'In Europe to truly matter again' (Blog delle stelle 20 June 2019).

This ambivalent message about the interplay of European and national remits of solidarity and exclusion, akin to the historical discursive trends of the far-Right parties in France or Italy (Lorimer 2020), characterised M5S discursive performance throughout the whole electoral campaign. In most cases, therefore the discourse appeared driven by both *narratives of continuity* with the EU in which Europe and Italy were constructed as compatible entities and by *narratives of rupture* portraying Italy and Europe in a zero-sum logic in a manner closer to the Salvini/*Lega* discourse: 'If we don't fight, we go back to the past. And we can no longer afford a Europe that slaughters Italian citizens as it has done so far' (Twitter 10 April 2019).

Communicative Style: Changing Europe from the Inside/Outside

Linguistically, both narratives of continuity and rupture also relied on spatial and temporal metaphors of Europe (McEntee-Atalianis and Zappettini 2014) in which, for example, Italy was represented on the one hand at the *core/centre* of such European space with M5S performing a leading role ('change Europe from the inside', Twitter 11 February 2019, and 'take Europe into the future', Twitter 10 April 2019) while, on the other, Italy was perceived as coming from the 'periphery' to change Europe's current economic policy ('move into Europe', Twitter 23 April 2019). Similarly to *Lega*, M5S's Eurosceptical discourses seemed therefore enacted from an European insider/outsider position (see above) but, unlike Salvini/*Lega* discourse where the victimisation of Italy revolved around a renewed nationalistic pride, M5S predicated the defence of Italy through a supposed unbiased/technical argument: Italy demands 'respect' because it is a net-contributor of EU funds (Il Blog delle Stelle 6 April 2019). Indeed some key themes of M5S European campaign appealed to the notion of Italy being marginalised by the EU and the need to reclaim what the party sees as the country's dignified and leading role. This discourse is clearly inferable for example from an article on M5S's blog titled 'The crazy plan of EU hawks: to cut European funds to who doesn't accept austerity' (Il Blog delle stelle 6 February 2019) which is illustrated by a vivid vignette of a giant foot about to step over Italy and crush it. In this respect, our interpretation is that M5S discourse, albeit more nuanced or perhaps 'reluctant', features a form of Euroscepticism that is conceptually similar to Salvini's/*Lega*'s positions and that like *Lega*/Salvini's discourses discussed above (and arguably in virtue of their alliance in government) saw M5S calling for reforming Europe along ambivalent national and European logics. The key discursive driver of *change*, encapsulated in the *#ContinuareXcambiare* and *#cambiamolainsieme* (Let's change it [Europe] together) slogans, reflected both such national and European dimensions. Overall, these discourses sought to represent M5S as the main actor of policy changes/proposals initiated at a national level and then 'scaled up' to a European level:

Cutting down on waste is not just a symbolic gesture, but a concrete action to free resources that can be utilised to improve the citizens' quality of life. We are doing it in Italy and we will do it in #Europe as well. (Twitter 11 February 2019).

It is within through this discursive framing that M5S portrays itself as a new non-political 'technocratic' force but also as, for instance, 'the most productive' party in the Europen Parliament (Il Blog delle stelle 20 May 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis has focused on the discursive enactments of Euroscepticism in Lega and M5S communication during their campaigns for 2019 EP elections. We examined the Italian case primarily for the rapid escalation of Eurosceptic discourses fueled by the two parties in the last few years but also as these two political actors represent interesting variants of nativist and technocratic populism performed through 'hyperled' and 'horizontal' styles of communication. At the wider European level, the rationale for our study is provided by the representativeness of Italy as a country were such populist patterns have been mobilised along Eurosceptic trajectories.

Our analysis has suggested that Lega and M5S shared several discursive themes, in particular the antagonisation between Italy and EU actors of which Euroscepticism was a 'logical' discursive by-product. Along this framing, Salvini/Lega's Euroscepticism was performed conspicuously through ethno-centric and 'sovereign' ideas of Italy, and its *renaissance*, and in reaction to scenarios of a pan-European cultural identity crisis brought about by migration and liberal values typically associated with the EU. By contrast M5S's discourse was predicated on a 'post-modern' antagonisation between the elites of 'traditional' political systems (*the caste*) and people/citizens whereby M5S effectively replicated at an European level the same 'anti-politics' and technocratic discourses that have characterised its domestic policies, especially the galvanising argument of neglected (Italian) citizens' rights (although, interestingly, questions of representations and democratic deficit, which often dominate European elections, were notably absent). In a similar vein, although along a different *us versus them* cleavage, Lega's campaign drummed up historical anti-migration and 'law and order' themes by projecting them onto the European 'issue of migration' to advocate its 'Italians first' propaganda through strategies of 'moral panics'. Our analysis has therefore suggested that while both parties' Eurosceptic stances were performed through calls for a reformed Europe, which both parties claimed to champion through their policies, they were driven by domestic political convenience and imagined along strict national logics. While Lega and M5S often depicted themselves as renovating forces in/for Europe, such claims were often realised through ambivalent representations of themselves as European insiders/outsiders and, in the case of M5S, of Italian and European citizenships that left the 'European question' unanswered. Moreover, MS5's discourse showed a mixed use of technocratic, populist and social themes. Whilst on the one hand it criticised the EU for its inefficiency and organisational structure from a business or managerial perspective, on the other hand it often drew from themes of social justice and national/European solidarity.

These seemingly conflictual discourses reflect in fact the ambiguous and inherently contradictory nature of technocratic populism. In the Italian case such discourses arguably co-emerged for political convenience and were subject to the fleeting dimension of the Lega/M5S coalition. In general terms, our study points to Euroscepticism as a complex phenomenon that relies, inter alia, on different discursive performances. The Italian case has shown how distinct nativist and technocratic forms of populism have co-emerged and evolved along parallel discursive trajectories while, at the same time, being performed from separate stances and being not only politically domesticated but also seized for re-imaginative projects of Europe. The specific history and contingencies of the Italian case including the context of production of the discourse analysed (for example social media and the EP campaign) as well as the usual limitations of interpretive studies (for example no empirical insights on audience reception) do not allow us to generalise our findings but we invite responses and 'notes comparison' in the spirit of enhancing the academic debate on the legitimisation of EU-ropean integration.

Although it is beyond the scope of our analysis, we will conclude with some speculative discussion of the larger dynamics at play and future prospects for different forms of Euroscepticism. The mobilisation of Eurosceptic sentiment in Italian public opinion has clearly

continued to gain some traction since May 2019. Far from settling the question of the relationship between Italy and Europe, the promotion of a technocratic resolution of the European crisis, albeit with very different models, forced Italian populist parties to reopen such question and to make important ideological and political choices. As in the case of Brexit, the European elections campaign was never about Europe but rather about a nation 'reckoning with itself' (O'Toole, 2019). For a while, rather than existing in an oppositional relation, both populist nativist and technocratic discourses coexisted, combined and compounded on the Italian stage to sustain a critical juncture in which Euroscepticism instrumentally served 'anti-politics' parties. However, at the 2019 Italian elections for the EP, the first populist coalition government in Western Europe had its first important electoral test. The enduring disputes between government allies M5S and League for Salvini Premier ultimately would lead to the collapse of the first Giuseppe Conte Cabinet and only two months after the EP elections to the formation of a new coalition executive, this time between the M5S and the Democratic Party. To a certain extent, the discursive performance of both populist forces in the European campaign predicted this outcome. In a way, the return of Lega to the opposition and the institutionalisation of the M5S within the new 'red-yellow' coalition confirm the historical Italian tendency to politically and ideologically 'read' the EU exclusively from a national perspective.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The original official party name was *Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania* (Northern League for the Independence of Padania). During the 2018 general election, the party rebranded itself as *Lega*, an umbrella which includes sister organisations *Lega per Salvini Premier* and *Noi con Salvini*. As from 3/8/2020 Lega per Salvini Premier has superseded all others denominations. For convenience, our paper refers to Lega.

[2] Compared to other parties, Lega voters are those who most identify with 'being Italian' and the least with Europe (Demos survey, December 2018).

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Research Article

Technocracy Revisited: The Polish Security Dispositif and Ukrainian Migration to Poland

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Abstract

The article investigates the reaction of the Polish technocratic security dispositif to the arrival of Ukrainian migrants in Poland between 2014-2020. It contributes to the studies on securitisation and on technocracy by proposing to re-conceptualise research on the security practices towards migration, drawing upon the notions of a security dispositif and regime of practices. It is exemplified by migration from Ukraine to Poland. The paper distinguishes three regimes of practices within Polish migration control: state ignorance, technocratic governance and neighbourhood. Contrary to most securitisation practices on migration to the European Union from the South, there have been very few populist 'speech acts' by Polish political agents that would have positioned the migration from Ukraine as an existential threat. The article concludes that the Polish security dispositif mainly mobilised state ignorance as a resource in governing migration, since neither new legal nor institutional practices were adopted to address the increased arrivals of Ukrainians. Simultaneously, this was accompanied by an internal logic of technocratic governance and its ubiquitous strategic tendency to widen surveillance and control capacities towards foreigners. The article also highlights the role of local identity and the politics of memory in governing Ukrainian migration to Poland.

Keywords

Dispositif; Technocracy; Securitisation; Migration; Poland; Ukraine

This article investigates the reaction of the Polish technocratic security *dispositif*, defined as an assemblage of discursive and non-discursive practices of security, to the arrival of Ukrainian migrants to Poland in 2014-2020. This represented one of the largest short-term inward mobility globally (OECD 2019), with the Polish-Ukrainian border being one of the longest land borders of the Schengen area. The number of new arrivals since 2014 is estimated at more than one million, which situated Poland at first place in the EU in issuing new residence permits to the non-European Union (EU) citizens (Brunarska 2020). The movement of Ukrainians to Poland has two main causes: the war in eastern Ukraine since 2014 (Sakwa 2015; Kushnir 2017; Katchanovski 2016) and the decline of the Ukrainian economy and associated dramatic fall in living standards (Jaroszewicz 2018). Despite its exceptional scale and relation to military security, this migration has not yet been analysed from an EU context within critical security studies, particularly with regards to securitisation theory. Instead, there has been a general focus on populist discourse by political actors about migration to the EU from Africa and the Middle East and on related security tools.

The article uncovers a specific populism-technocracy paradox, taking the migration from Ukraine to Poland as a case study. Populism generally challenges technocratic governance by characterising it as a rule by unelected experts indifferent to the will of the people, and connecting them with the interests of a narrow elite (Müller 2016; Bickerton and Invernizzi Accetti 2017). However, many instances of securitisation of migration in the EU have already shown that the public's positive response to securitisation, and inherently populist speech acts related to migration, has served to increase the legitimacy of the security agenda (Skleparis 2016). In the case of Ukrainian migration to Poland, little connection has been made between the reactions of the public and the technocratic conduct of the securitisation. Hence, this article adds important empirical evidence that securitisation can take place within routine technocratic practices without populist legitimisation of political speech acts. It also challenges the view that securitising and othering migration is always driving the populist agenda in the EU. Therefore, there may not necessarily be an inevitable link between technocracy and populism within the securitisation of migration.

As there have been very few populist speech acts by Polish political actors which would have positioned migration from Ukraine as an existential threat, this article's main argument is that a generalised technocratic approach in the Polish migration control system has led to the very specific securitisation of Ukrainian migrants. This is studied in detail via the analysis of 'regimes of practices' (Balzacq 2019: 339), represented by three distinctive 'mentalities of government' (Dean 2010). The mentalities distinguished in the case of migration from Ukraine to Poland are: state ignorance, technocratic governance and the vernacular understating of the Polish-Ukrainian neighbourhood. All three of these have been employed by the state bureaucracy in a strategic, yet often unintentional way. This has resulted in placing migrants in a status of 'semi-compliance', a kind of 'grey zone' in which they needed to combine both legal and unlawful elements of their position within Polish society. Framed in this manner, the article contributes to further conceptualisation of studies on securitisation of migration and on technocracy in different political and social contexts.

The first section of this paper sets out the theoretical approaches, including the key terms for the research: *dispositif,* securitisation and the regime of practices. This is followed by presentation of the methods employed in the analysis. The research results are based on two types of empirical data. The first derives from critical content analysis of the selected political and legal documents pertaining to migration and security governance in Poland since 2014. The second is provided by semi-structured in-depth expert interviews. In the next part, the context of populism, technocracy and the securitisation of migration is explored. This is aimed at uncovering the populism-technocracy paradox underlying the case of Ukrainian migration to Poland, where securitisation is anchored in routine technocratic practices but populist legitimisation of political speech acts is absent. This is followed by an overview of Ukrainian migration to Poland, providing the necessary background for the analysis, in particular the ambiguous stance of the Polish state towards admitting migrants from Ukraine. In the next section, the empirical results are discussed, specifically the regimes of security practices

towards Ukrainian migration to Poland, which caused the securitisation of Ukrainian migrants in Poland. First regime of practices: state ignorance is rooted in the failure of the Polish state to produce new types of knowledge and build new state capacities related to migration from Ukraine. The second regime: technocratic governance, is based on the ubiquitous strategic tendency of the modern state to widen surveillance and control capacities, particularly at its borders. The third one is anchored in the specific understanding of identity, history and the current relations between Poland and Ukraine.

The final section presents the conclusions, in particular the consequences of the emergence of a complex assemblage of securitising policies and instruments. In doing this, it re-examines the concept of technocracy, conventionally understood as drawing on the specialised knowledge of experts and providing rational solutions for the general public. It shows how the assemblage of practices within Poland's security *dispositif* has resulted in many protracted administrative procedures for Ukrainian migrants. This has served to keep Ukrainian migrants in a prevailing status of legal 'semi-compliance', thereby exposing them to the arbitrariness of Polish institutions and maintaining an atmosphere of 'unease' (Bigo 2002).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Dispositif and Securitisation

The *dispositif* is understood widely as a strategic response of a state apparatus to urgent need, while securitisation refers to a specific mode of action by the political and security actors within the *dispositif*. In this analysis, then 'the *dispositif* opens the way for the analysis of the human and non-human engagements in securitization processes' (Balzacq 2019: 340).

The main analytical focus of this study is on Poland's security *dispositif,* which is understood as discursive and non-discursive practices in the broadly conceived security-migration realm, or more specifically as the intersection of security technologies, border surveillance instruments and migration management (Koca 2020; Ceyhan 2008). Drawing on Michel Foucault (1980, 1978) the security *dispositif* in this article is defined as the 'heterogeneous' relationship between public discourses, regulatory decisions, laws and administrative measures practiced by political and security agents, various levels of administration, different kinds of institutions and numerous professionals or experts in many sectors of the Polish state. Poland's security *dispositif*, following Foucault's definition, also embraces 'scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions, the said and the unsaid' (Foucault 1980). This includes the discussion of the role of historical discourses, the politics of memory and the function of identity in constituting security practices. Hence, Poland's security *dispositif* should not merely be considered as a single migration policy, but a specific mode of governing migration within the security perspective, with a wide range of various agents, subjects and institutions (Walters 2012: 31).

The notion of *dispositif* forms the overall approach in this paper for two reasons. Firstly, to distance the following analysis from 'objectivised' definitions of security and instead to regard the security practices as a result of relations between power, knowledge and subjectivity (Wichum 2013). In other words, the security *dispositif* defines what might be perceived as security in a particular socio-historical context. Secondly, the notion of *dispositif* is important, as it focuses on the heterogenous practices, often scarcely visible, that may be unintentionally linked to each other and bring unexpected results.

Poland's security *dispositif* responds, among its other goals, to an urgent need to accommodate a large circulation of people across its eastern border, which also happens to be the external Schengen border. It is in line with Foucault's understanding of the overall goal of the security *dispositif*, which is always about 'organising circulation, eliminating its dangers, making a division between good and bad circulation, and maximising the good

circulation by eliminating the bad' (Foucault 2007: 18). This, in turn, corresponds to Poland's strategic objective of maintaining geopolitical and economic security and stability, particularly following the outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine. Hence, in the context of the Ukrainian migration, the *dispositif* in itself has an extraordinary and strategic character. As Foucault indicates, a given strategic goal of power could trigger some unintentional processes, and hence creates new social conditions. As confirmed by the findings of this article, this was the case for many Ukrainian migrants. Hence, this study's objective is to trace multiple elements connected by the strategic goal of accommodating a large circulation of people through Poland's eastern borders by those in authority at the time of increasing Ukrainian migration, and to expose how this issue was problematised by different agents of power.

The second main theoretical background of this article is securitisation theory, particularly understating securitisation via the 'analytics of government' lenses. It helps to study how different security practices operate within the *dispositif* and evolve over time (Balzacq 2019, 2011). Unlike the founders of securitisation theory (Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde 1998), who argued that security is an 'utterance', and the notion of security itself is circled around discursive practises that require acceptance by the audience, 'the analytics of government' offers a broader ability to analyse the specific conditions under which particular practices emerge, exist and evolve. Limiting securitisation to language means that security acquires content only through representations of danger and threat, not through the technocratic practices of governance. Hence, the 'analytics of government' ensures that securitisation theory also considers 'regimes of practices', which are constituted by specific types of 'mentalities of government', with both discursive and non-discursive ways of knowing.

This article therefore applies a wider definition of securitisation. It is conceptualised as an intersubjective strategic process that includes the context, audience and the role of both speaker and the listener. In particular, securitisation is understood as an:

> articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts … are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications … by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customised policy must be undertaken immediately. (Balzacq 2011:3)

The application of this definition facilitates the study of different ways of security-based mobilisation, not only the speech act. Moreover, in their later works, Balzacq et al. (2016) do not emphasise the exceptionality as a necessary condition of securitisation. Instead, they suggest there is a relation between politics and security that re-defines one another in a constant discussion of *how* migration should be 'governed' in a modern liberal state, and to what extent it is constructed as a security threat. This assumption also leads to a redefinition of the role of the audience. In a more routinised securitisation the wider audience does not necessarily need to accept the securitisation itself. In those cases, securitisation could occur through its acceptance within narrow circles of the political elite and security professionals. In some cases, therefore, the audience does not play any role at all and the occurrence of securitisation act should instead be proven by the existence of security practices (Floyd 2016).

Security Practices and the Regime of Practices

Security practices are various activities 'that convey the idea to those who observe them, directly or indirectly, that the issue they are tackling is a security threat' (Léonard 2010: 237) and they are preceded by securitisation process. Security practices are understood in the article as specific forms of 'acting, intervening and directing' (Balzacq, Rozicka, Leonard 2016) migration control within a 'regime of practices'. According to Dean (2010: 33) a regime of practices consists of four elements: characteristic forms of visibility, distinctive ways of thinking and questioning, specific ways of acting and distinctive ways of forming subjects. As will be argued later, there is no single regime of practices. There may be several of them depending on the specific ways of thinking and application of policy instruments.

Regime of practices are brought into existence by mentalities of government (Dean 2010), or ways in which 'political authorities and those who contest that authority, pose the question: How should we govern? What should be governed? Why do we need to govern?' (Walters and Haarh 2005: 6). Ultimately, the state policies' instruments and techniques are embedded in these mentalities. They also manifest in 'definite vocabularies and procedures for the production of truth' (Balzacq 2019: 339). Moreover, one can see how security professionals think and act about security by looking at their discipline, special expertise or practical work (Huysmans 2006). Securitisation studies advocate that in order to expose security practices a researcher should focus on studying the context in which security professionals operate. Specifically, the way security professionals understand the world, their professional tasks, and their place in the power structure is crucial for understanding security practices. In this article, the term 'security professionals' denotes experts and bureaucrats, clerks in migration offices, border guards and officers and others. It is also important to note that, following many previous practices in Poland and elsewhere, according to the administrative logic of the state, migration is conveniently linked to security concerns. Hence, many subjects dealing with migration fall into the broad security realm, even if they were not originally designed to deal with security, at least formally. With reference to Bigo (2014, 2002), this article assumes that security professionals are key securitising actors, meaning that they define, interpret and reproduce the security practices.

In summary, the theoretical foundations chosen in this article enable the uncovering of how security practices towards Ukrainian migrants have been operating in the wider context of governance in Poland since 2014. Following Balzacq (2019, 2016), this article applies 'the analytics of government' as a methodological device to examine how 'regimes of practices' are formed, what makes them durable, and how they evolve over time and how specific instruments and policies are anchored in 'mentalities of government'. This shifts the focus of securitisation theory towards researching the techniques and instruments of government, rather than merely in terms of 'speech acts'. Therefore, it positions the article within a more practice-oriented approach to securitisation, which could overcome the problem of audience acceptance in the linguistic approach to securitisation.

Research Methods

The notion of *dispositif* is also applied in the design of an empirical study into investigating Polish migration control strategies, revealing whether security practices towards Ukrainian migrants have been constituted 'in an unintended manner, through changing connections between seemingly unconnected elements' (Aradau et al. 2014: 64). The main rationale for choosing this notion was that it brought coherence of the analysis in the case of the heterogeneity of research sources (Bonditti 2012). Hence, the notion of *dispositif* could be regarded as a methodological tool in the empirical studies in which the strict categorisation of research corpus cannot be conducted, as is the case for this article.

The research corpus for the following research is formed by data pertaining to 'security-migration nexus', with particular emphasis on data related to the operationalisation of security practices. In general, the data for analysing the *dispositif* consists of 'reports, doctrines, laws and officials' statements' (Bonditti 2012: 103). The data were collected through analysis of available legislation (both at the level of laws and bylaws) pertaining to foreigners, which were adopted or exiting in Poland in 2014-2020. Another important source for the analysis was the reports by NGOs dealing with the protection of human rights, migration policy and parliamentary interpellations. In some cases, the security practices revealed in the interviews were further researched and verified by critical content analysis. Following Foucault (1980, 1978), the study of the *dispositif* rests on examining the empirical data indicating *the condition of possibilities* and mentalities of specific 'regimes of practices'. In other words, applying the *dispositif* the article aims at looking at what can be said and what can be practised at the given time within the heterogeneous network of discursive and non-discursive practices.

The article is informed by two major research methods by which the research design was operationalised: critical content analysis of political and legal documents, and semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) with migration and security experts, lawyers and civil activists dealing with Ukrainian migration.

Critical content analysis (Krippendorff 2018, Johnson et al. 2017) was used as a method for analysing the research corpus of the secondary data. This flexible technique allowed analysis to be performed on various types of written text and those belonging to different categories of sources, including legal documents, NGO reports or grey literature. It is particularly important in the presented case, since the majority of the security practices are not widely publicised, and so the research data cannot be obtained by conventional discourse analysis. The critical content analysis has also been chosen due to its theory-driven and reflexive nature, which 'demands more than the simple application of surface-level understandings of a theoretical frame' (Utt and Short 2018: 3). Instead, as implemented in this research, this method is framed in the critical analysis of broader social processes and history at the micro-level of specific individuals or institutional interactions (Johnson et al. 2017). Critical content analysis puts power relations in social practices at the centre and seeks out inequalities (Johnson et al. 2017). The article follows this approach by contrasting the perspective of the strategic security documents with the way migrants experience these practices.

The critical content analysis was supplemented by analysis of expert interviews (a detailed list is provided in the online appendix). Between February and October 2020, 16 IDIs were conducted with experts: officials, NGO experts, academics, and practitioners in migration and internal security, either face-to-face or remotely. The main selection criterion was the experts' relation and involvement in the migration control. This refers to experts' awareness of discourse, security practices or other artefacts connected with the strategic goal of accommodating a large circulation of Ukrainian migrants through Poland's eastern borders. The interviews were recorded (or notes taken where participants did not want to be recorded), pseudo-anonymised, transcribed and coded (a list of codes is provided in the online appendix). Finally, the empirical results were analysed towards potential similarities and linkages, in order to obtain generalisations about the type and specific character of security practices 'mentalities'. The article identified three distinctive regimes of practices brought into existence by mentalities of government towards Ukrainian migrants, by searching for their *condition of possibilities*.

CONTEXT

Populism, Technocracy and the Securitisation of Migration

Increased population mobility and migration are among the chief issues in the political arena in the EU member states. They frequently arouse vehement political and public reactions which are often politically affiliated with the populist agenda (Sobis et al. 2016; Borriello and Brack 2019). Among others, the Schengen border regime became a subject of the unprecedented securitisation of migration (Vaughan-Williams 2015; Huysmans 2006; Bourbeau 2011; Bigo 2002; *contra* see Boswell 2007). In most securitisation practices on migration to the EU from the South, particularly since 2015, many scholars clearly identified harsh speech acts by the political actors, both in the EU generally (Lucarelli 2019; Beck 2017) and also in Poland (Jaskułowski 2019; Klaus 2020). In a clearly populist manner, these speech acts were portraying the 'southern' migration as a threat to Eropean or national identity or social coherence, or as an explicit danger to security, either criminal or terrorist.

Security agencies within member states, and likewise Frontex itself (Neal 2009; Léonard 2010), reacted in a technocratic manner to the mostly populist expectations of the general public 'to do something' about increased 'unwanted' migration (Wojczewski 2020; Wodak 2003). This populist expectation formed part of a much larger 'politics of fear' (Wodak 2015) and 'enemy politics' (Ruzza 2018), dominating politics within the EU since at least the early

2000s, in which migrants were scapegoated, became objects of many forms of social and political exclusions, discriminatory discourses and, above all, enhanced and biased security practices in several EU countries (Parkin 2013). The Schengen system of border and migration management has always been subject to technocratic governance (Huysmans 2006), in which the field of security professionals gradually internalised the populist conflation of migration and security threat (Lazaridis and Skleparis 2016). As the anti-migration agenda became firmly established in the EU's mainstream politics (Toscano 2015; Lutz 2019; Lazaridis and Konsta 2015; Lazaridis and Tsagkroni 2015; Hayes and Dudek 2020), this created even more pressure for security and migration agencies to cope 'more effectively' with the increased number of non-EU individuals crossing Schengen borders.

Originally, technocracy served as a form of governance driven by 'depoliticisation, harmonisation, rationalisation and objectification of policymaking and evaluation, and which promotes the role of technical experts in policy-making' (Kurki 2011: 216). Technocrats themselves could therefore be defined as 'people who transform discourses of expert knowledge into discourses of social policy … They are makers of politics' (McKenna and Graham 2000: 225). However, many instances of securitisation of migration in the EU have already shown that the public's positive response to securitisation, and inherently populist speech acts related to migration, helped to increase the legitimacy of security professionals (Skleparis 2016). The public's reactions predominantly paved the way to new securitisation practices towards migrants in some EU member states (Nagy 2016; Lamour 2019; Colombo 2018).

As observed in 2015, a fierce populist reaction to the so-called migration crisis legitimised further strengthening of technocratic governance of migration and borders, aiming at 'more effective' protection and surveillance of the EU's external borders (de Genova 2017; Carr 2015). It might therefore be concluded that the public's expectations of 'something being done' about migration are based on trust in security professionals' technocratic expertise. Security professionals enjoy the privileged position of being trusted by the public, while concurrently not being held politically accountable by the same public (Bigo 2002). Hence, security expertise represents the most classified form of technocracy. However, it is often driven by incitement of fear in the general public by the populist agenda and not necessarily in response to 'depoliticization, harmonisation, rationalisation and objectification of policymaking' (Kurki 2011: 216).

The case presented in this article for the reaction of the Polish security *dispositif* to recent arrival of immigrants from Ukraine serves the opposite case to most studies on migration to the EU. In that case it appears that there is not much connection between the reactions of the public (including populist ones) and the technocratic conduct of the security and migration agencies. At the same time, Poland employed the populist agenda in the 2015 so-called EU 'migration crisis' when refusing to accept asylum seekers under the EU relocation programme, and this resulted in the extension of overall surveillance and control capacities towards foreigners, which indirectly affected the Ukrainian citizens.

Ukrainian Migration to Poland: Overview

The extraordinary character of contemporary migration in Poland is based on two facts. First, the Ukrainian migration to Poland after 2014 was unusual in two ways: the overall number of people involved (Poland became a prime destination for foreign seasonal, short-term labourers at the global level (OECD 2019)) and its relation to the native population given Poland was previously one of the most homogenous nations within the EU. Moreover, it is primarily a mono-national phenomenon with Ukrainian citizens constituting the overwhelming majority of incoming foreigners (Brunarska 2020). This phenomenon is sometimes called the 'Ukrainisation' of labour migration to Poland (Górny and Kindler 2016). After 2014, increased migration originated predominantly from the outbreak of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine and the related economic recession in Ukraine, accompanied by growing labour shortages in Poland. For many Ukrainian migrants, Poland became a destination country for short-term labour migration, with low travel costs, the possibility of maintaining family ties

in Ukraine, pre-existing extensive migration networks in Poland and, last but not least, the similarity of the language (Górny and Kindler 2016; Drbohlav and Jaroszewicz 2016; Brunarska 2020). Moreover, this post-2014 movement of people followed in the wake of many years of small-scale trade migration that had boomed in the 1990s (Wallace et al. 1997), and was essentially a 'local mobility' based on a system of circular migration (Brunarska et al. 2016).

The Polish migration system is often characterised as 'liberal', since as a rule it is easy for a Ukrainian migrant to enter Poland and obtain a short-term labour permit (Górny et al. 2018; Brunarska 2020). This contrasts with the labour migration practices of other EU countries, which tend to limit the entry opportunities for non-EU economic migrants. However, it is much more difficult for migrants to obtain a residence permit and legalise their stay in Poland outside the labour migration realm. The 2020 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) concluded that migrants in Poland are restricted in their opportunities to gain access to the healthcare and education systems, and 'face greater insecurity in their path to settle as permanent migrants' (MIPEX 2020).

It can be argued that the excessive economisation of Ukrainian migration forms the main pattern of both migration policy and public discourse in Poland (Klaus 2020). While a detailed analysis of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this article, the main features of the economisation approach are the prominent position of employers in the power relations and their direct access to decision-makers, and the conviction that migration should be governed by free market principles, so that migration is viewed as an abstract entity, such as money or goods (Horvath 2014). Ukrainian migrants have been supplementing the local workforce in many sectors of the Polish economy, including construction, agriculture, temporary services. Ukrainian migration contributes as much as 0.7-0.8 per cent of annual Polish GDP growth (National Bank of Poland 2020).

Surprisingly, considering its scale and economic significance for Poland, Ukrainian migration has not attracted much political attention in Poland, at least from the mainstream political parties. One exception to this observation is of paramount importance. In 2016, Poland's Prime Minister, Beata Szydło, argued in the European Parliament that Poland had accepted around one million 'refugees' from Ukraine (Chapman 2016). This was quickly dismissed as inaccurate, as most Ukrainians coming to Poland qualified as labour migrants, and as a ruse for Poland to oppose arguments for accepting refugees in the EU discussions on the relocation programme. However, it may be argued that this statement exposed the Polish government's approach to Ukrainian migrants, as it was based on a dual discursive strategy. Firstly, to acknowledge they were war victims while, in fact, no channels for humanitarian or refugee migration from Ukraine were open, and secondly, as Ukrainians tend to be regarded as close in cultural terms, to accept them in large numbers, unlike 'southern migrants' deemed culturally alien and thus unwelcome. Much harsher discourse could be observed from the far right or populistic parties, which directly accused Ukrainian migrants of being a 'threat' to Polish identity and the economy (Kresy.pl 2016).

REGIMES OF SECURITY PRACTICES

Based on analysis of empirical findings, this article distinguishes the three distinctive regimes of security practices targeting Ukrainian migrants in Poland with specific mentalities of government. Hence, the analysis searched for ways of thinking and acting within Poland's security *dispositif* defining: how should Ukrainian migration be governed, what aspect of migration should be governed and why it should be governed? Answering these questions exposed three mentalities of government embedded in many instruments, techniques, vocabularies and procedures existing in Poland migration control policies. The first regime of security practices is embedded in the mentality of state ignorance (Boswel and Badenhoop 2020), understood as an 'acknowledged discrepancy' between what is known and what might reasonably have been expected to be known by the state authorities. The second one,

technocratic governance, builds around the generalised 'suspicious' attitude towards migration that underpins, but is not limited to, the governance of Schengen area. It is combined with the internalised logic of profiling foreigners, risk assessment and other forms of selective anticipatory surveillance. The third regime rests on multiple factors related to the neighbourhood between Poland and Ukraine. This includes Polish security professionals' sense of an 'European' identity, revival of a historical conflict, the historical and cultural closeness between Poland and Ukraine, as well as many co-existing pre-judgments about Ukrainians, portraying them as Poland's *Other* (Zarycki 2014; Folis 2012).

The overwhelming majority of policy instruments accommodating in practice the movement of Ukrainians into Poland had actually been created for other purposes. As a rule, on a formal level the Polish migration policy does not provide for citizenship-based distinction or preferential treatment regarding access to the legal right to stay or work. The exception to this rule is the simplified labour migration scheme that is restricted to citizens from the Eastern Partnership countries. Despite this, the short-term labour migration instruments have in fact been used by and directed towards Ukrainian citizens (Vankova 2020). Therefore, when studying the security practices, the research focused on tracing multiple elements interlinked by the strategic goal of accommodating the Ukrainian migration.

State Ignorance: Protracted Admission Procedures, Personal Identification Number (PESEL)

Over the last two decades many EU states have expanded a 'matrix of control tools comprising a set of exclusionary discourses, laws, institutions, technologies and practices' as a sophisticated toolkit of 'migration governance' (Carrera and Hernanz 2015). In contrast, the Polish security apparatus lacked instruments for effectively managing a large number of Ukrainian migrant arrivals. As some interviewees stated, it is legitimate to say that the Polish political elite and security professionals had knowledge of the exceptional character of the Ukrainian migration (Interview 1 and 16). Consequently, in the period 2014-2020 the Polish security apparatus might reasonably have been expected to react to the largest arrival of migrants since the end of the Second World War by producing new types of security knowledge about them and the relevant policy instruments to accommodate this arrival. In early 2014, Poland adopted 'contingency plans' related to the possible 'mass inflow of foreigners due to invasion, war or ethnic conflicts' within the national crisis management plan (The Governmental Centre for Security of Poland 2014). However, the plans were never implemented (Adamczyk 2014). In fact, neither new institutional nor procedural instruments were adopted to address the extraordinary character of the new migration situation after 2014. This contributes to what is termed in this article as state ignorance.

This state ignorance mainly resulted in protracted administrative procedures for the admission of migrants, the vast majority of whom were Ukrainian nationals. As reported by Poland's Supreme Audit Office (2019), if in 2014 it took 64 days on average to legalise a foreigner's temporary stay in Poland, then by 2018 this had increased to 206 days. Many malpractices were indicated, such as increased formal requirements for obtaining a residence permit and long queues in the offices as Ukrainian migrants could not register online beforehand and were obliged to show up in person. Most of the employment centres and regional offices for foreigners responsible for issuing residence permits lacked guidelines for foreigners. The rules were not formalised and officials failed to inform users properly (Supreme Audit Office 2019). At the same time, the labour inspection service, the main institution for detecting informal employment and abuses of foreigners' labour rights, was underfinanced and understaffed. It was therefore unable to properly monitor the provisions of legal contracts, social insurance and decent working conditions by Polish employers hiring Ukrainians (Piotrowski 2019, Górny et al. 2018). All of this meant that Ukrainian migrants risked uncertainty about their legal status, or, as one interviewee described it, being exposed to the 'permanent ordeal' of confronting the administration (Interview 11).

Interviews indicated a complex array of possible reasons for state ignorance in this area, from the lack of political interest, favouring the employers' position over that of migrants, to

structural factors like the inefficiency of Polish bureaucracy (Interview 4, 9 and 10). Nevertheless, the empirical evidence does not show whether the observed ignorance involved downplaying the scale or importance of the Ukrainian migration ('denial' strategy of handling ignorance) or conceding its own ineptitude in addressing it ('resignation' strategy of handling ignorance) (Boswell and Badenhoop 2020: 4).

A specific example of state ignorance practice that was adopted by both the state apparatus and the migrants themselves is the procedure for obtaining a personal identification number (PESEL). The Act on the Population Register (both its 1974 and 2010 versions) states that foreigners are entitled to obtain the PESEL only when registering their stay at a permanent or temporary address in Poland or enrolling into the social insurance system (Sejm RP 2010, 1974). The 1974 Act specified a long list of cases where a foreigner could acquire a PESEL, while the 2010 Act shortened this list. Nevertheless, many institutions still require a PESEL from foreigners since it makes their work easier. Among other things, this relates to tax administration, social security, health care and employment, all of which are crucial components of the legalisation of stays in Poland for foreigners (Interview 14). Also, what indicates the importance of PESEL is that foreigners are released from the requirement to obtain individual tax identification number (NIP) if they possess PESEL. As interviews and existing analysis (Ośrodek Badań nad Migracjami 2015; Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej 2015) suggest, many Ukrainian migrants need to find workarounds when they cannot obtain a PESEL, for instance, by obtaining a driving license or seeking advice from lawyers. They do not recognise when and under which circumstances they may obtain a PESEL, although they intuitively comprehend its value (Interview 14). This represents the case of state ignorance, as it could have been legitimately expected that the state apparatus was aware of this problem and that it should be able to create instruments to deal with it. The discrepancy might exacerbate in the future since foreigners, including Ukrainian migrants, are eligible for free COVID-19 vaccination upon presentation of the PESEL number.

Technocratic Governance: Anti-Terror Law, Authorisation, Schengen Socialisation

Technocratic governance stems from the EU 'internal security' rationale of expanding control at the EU external border and inside the EU with many techniques of anticipatory surveillance related to non-EU citizens. A prime example of this type of securitisation towards Ukrainian migration is given by the security practices related to the anti-terror measures, passed by the Polish Sejm back in 2016. The 'Law on Anti-Terror Measures and Changes to Other Laws' (Sejm RP 2016a) was not simply directed at specific types of migrants, but referred to all foreigners in general. This law happened to be in line with the general spirit of 'the politics of fear' and 'enemy politics' towards migrants, which peaked in 2016 when the Polish government refrained from contributing to the EU's relocation programme (Mica et al. 2021; Jaskułowski 2019). The main declared purpose of the Law was to enhance and to specify the 'coordination system of anti-terror activities' (Sejm RP 2016b). This resulted in widening the control and surveillance functions of the various security agencies.

The new law changed the range of surveillance instruments that can be legally used in relation to foreigners. In the case of suspicion of involvement in a terrorist activity, the security agencies may undertake operational and investigative activities against a foreigner without a court order for a period of three months (Sejm RP 2016a: article 9). In practice, the surveillance may be extended further (Klaus 2020). This formulation was criticised by human rights organisations and the Ombudsman, emphasising the disproportionality of the measures adopted and the foreigners' loss of the right to a fair trial (Gazeta Prawna 2016; Fundacja Panoptykon 2016; Fundacja ePaństwo 2016). No publicly available data indicates whether these measures have ever been applied against Ukrainian citizens. One interviewee suggested, however, that the adoption of the anti-terror law made some Ukrainian migrants apply for Polish citizenship, fearing that having migrant status would expose them to a permanent risk of arbitrariness and securitisation (Interview 13).

The other technocratic governance practice discussed is the practice of authorisation. It is built upon the logic of 'internal security', whereby security professionals are mobilised to

tackle all sorts of uncertainties, and on the assumption that foreigners are distinct in being *Others* (Bigo 2014). Authorisation is a security check designed to deal with foreigners applying for different types of residence permit or citizenship. It appears it is not a clearly defined procedure, which opens the door to potential arbitrariness. According to the 'Act on Foreigners', security agencies are obliged to check whether the arrival, stay, obtaining of residence permits or citizenship by an individual foreigner may be a threat to national defence, national security or public order. This can be considered as too broadly defined. In August 2020, a group of Polish parliamentarians questioned the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration about the detailed premises of checks and the gradation of threat level (Falej et al. 2020). In response, the Ministry admitted that the term 'threat to national security' is not defined in law. It is, nonetheless, present in existing jurisprudence indicating that 'a threat to security protection and public order may consist of all the conduct of a foreigner and his/her behaviour that conflicts with the legal order in Poland' (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2020). However, authorisation also has an anticipatory character and is not just a formal checking of foreigners' criminal records. The police, the border guards or other agencies may visit the residence or workplace of foreigners to determine potential risks to national security. Moreover, the reasons behind a negative judgement on authorisation are confidential, so that a foreigner does not have access to them and consequently has no effective right to appeal against the decision (Interview 12). This represents one of the starkest examples of how securitisation practices contribute to continuous uncertainty over migrants' social and legal status.

Lastly, security practices in technocratic governance regime rely on the socialisation of Polish migration governance and security professionals within the Schengen rationale. Central to this are the technologies of control checks, profiling, surveillance and IT measures against 'illegal migration'. The Schengen rationale played a fundamental role in forming both the legislation and practices of Polish migration governance, dating from the mid-1990s up until Poland's full accession to the Schengen area in 2007. In particular, the adoption of the EU *acquis* dominated the area of border and migration management, while mostly ignoring the social needs and integration of labour migration (Weinar 2006). The Schengen technocratic approach to dealing with migrants is widespread among security professionals, who, in this manner, are conforming to the internalised disposition to prove their 'European credentials'. Looking from this perspective, it is no surprise that Poland had been ardently soliciting for a possibility to host FRONTEX headquarters. The domination of the Schengen technocratic rationale directly affects Ukrainian migrants, as indicated by interviewees. The Schengen Information System (SIS) became an intrinsic part of their migration experiences, with the prevailing fear of being listed in the SIS, and consequently being barred from entering the Schengen territory. This may undermine their migration plans and raise their individual calculation of uncertainty and risks related to cross-border mobility. It is also linked with detailed controls at the border, which result in long waiting hours and a profound feeling of injustice and discrimination, which is experienced by Ukrainian migrants in contrast to the position of EU travellers (Jaroszewicz and Mrozek 2020). Application of Schengen logic also resulted in a high number of refusals of entry to foreigners on the Polish-Ukrainian border and it is widely accepted by security professionals as a price that needs to be paid for the protection of the EU's eastern border. In turn, as pointed out in one interview, the Polish border guards are in general highly esteemed by their EU counterparts for their controlling capacities (Interview 8).

Neighbourhood: Identity, History and Border

The neighbourhood mentality of government and related regime of security practices is part of a larger and more abstract cultural and political background, with national and ethnic identity as the focal point. As this regime is more of an ideational form, it is difficult to distinguish tangible practices or legal regulations. In the case under discussion, the practices of security professionals are immersed in the neighbourhood mentality of government through continuous professional training and being part of the audience within the public discourse. In the Polish case, the impact of the neighbourhood mentality is particularly

magnified by the active politics of memory and the way it resonates socially. However, this impact is also inherently inconsistent.

The large-scale Ukrainian migration to Poland after 2014 coincided with the return of the historical dispute between Poland and Ukraine over the Volhynia mass killings of 1944 (Szeptycki 2016, Motyka 2020, 2018). The hardened position of the Polish government co-existed with the nationalist turn in Ukraine. The latter is manifested by the current glorification of the Ukrainian insurgent army, accused by the Polish side of ethnic cleansing during WWII. This occurred in tandem with the national mobilisation of Ukrainians against the Russian aggression from 2014 onwards (Motyka 2020). The return of the historical dispute led to a protracted diplomatic crisis between the two countries in 2015-2019 (Interview 3).

The available research indicates that Polish public opinion primarily associates Ukrainians with the historical dispute over the Volhynia legacy (Troszczyński 2016). At the same time, the two societies differ in their collective interpretations over the common history and they are reluctant to acknowledge guilt on their own side (Stryjek et al. 2018). The historical dispute became a subject in everyday discussions between Poles and Ukrainians, but sometimes it also incited insults or discriminatory acts towards Ukrainian migrants (Interview 7). Since this dispute has been a prevalent topic in Polish public discourse, security professionals draw on it within the neighbourhood mentality of government.

The neighbourhood mentality manifests itself in two contradictory ways: in the feeling of cultural and political proximity between Poland and Ukraine, particularly in terms of shared negative attitudes towards Russian imperialism, but also in Polish preconceptions of Ukrainians, with many attendant stereotypes and prejudices (Zarycki 2014; Folis 2012). For a long time, Poland and Ukraine were part of a single state, once cooperating or being in conflict. However, in both cases the notion of the neighbourhood was an important part of both the state building and nation building process. The common relationship also served as an important reference point in the disputes with Russia or in the Europeanisation process (Szeptycki 2016; Snyder 2003). This formed the Polish-Ukrainian neighbourhood from two contrasting processes: political, historical and economic proximity in some aspects and simultaneous conflicting attitudes in others. Another important factor is the multi-ethnic pre-WWII past of Poland, which resulted in a blurring of boundaries between *Us* and *Others*, between Poles and Ukrainians, depending on the vernacular context of the particular identity dimension (Prizel 1998). As a result, the figure of the Ukrainian in the Polish historical and social public discourse plays the role of *the Other* in the Polish identity-building process, while in the economic and cultural dimensions it occupies the role of 'most accepted foreigner'.

The contradictory effects of the neighbourhood mentality's impact on the security practices might be best illustrated by the case of Polish-Ukrainian border management. The Polish accession to the EU and Schengen area turned the Polish-Ukrainian border into a site of both restricted conditional open mobility for some and selective enclosure for the rest. It was part of the larger process of the 're-bordering' of the EU (Folis 2012: 11), which represented the inherent contradiction of the Schengen area: internal 'de-bordering' and external 'hard bordering' against outsiders seeking to take advantage of the *four freedoms* of the EU. In the 1990s, openness of the border was accompanied by a sense of neighbourhood partnership and many efforts at historical reconciliation by those involved in small-scale local trade (often smuggling) and cross-border encounters (Wallace et al. 1997). However, the establishment of the Polish-Ukrainian border as an external border of the Schengen area allowed Poles, in their aspirations and self-image, to elevate their political and cultural subjectivity as 'fully European', while Ukrainians were downgraded as 'Eastern Europeans' and outsiders to the EU (Folis 2012). On one hand, they were 'conveying their civilizational aptitude and competence in ⟨European standards⟩' (Folis 2012: 92). This was embodied in the way they wanted to prove their ability to combat illegal migration threatening the territory of the EU and thereby elevate Poles' European credentials in the view of EU institutions. On the other

hand, they needed to ensure the flow of local trade and relatively open access to the Polish labour market by Ukrainian workers. As Folis (2012: 92) concluded:

> the daily work of rebordering entails … keeping at bay immigrants thought to be headed via Poland for Western Europe, and who might otherwise be "suspicious," while continually admitting a steady flow of those believed to bound just for Poland.

Schengen re-bordering created novel challenges for cross-border mobility, which were quickly accommodated by identifying new loopholes in the system of border control. Hence, many Ukrainians needed to adjust, subvert and resist the Schengen border regime to meet their local, mostly economic, needs by mentally and physically 'stretching the border' (Szytniewski et al. 2020: 13).

As a result of the inconsistent character of Polish-Ukrainian border governance, combined with the very high number of border crossings that strained the capacities of border infrastructure, border malpractices became a practical example for security professionals in the period of increased migration from 2014. This was also part of a dual process of combining Schengen logic with the local understanding of neighbourhood in which borders' security professionals performed security practices. Many reports of the border crossings showed the difficult experience Ukrainians faced when entering Poland and consequently the Schengen area. Among the listed constraints are ambiguity of the procedures and sequence of crossing the border and micro-inequalities, such as border guards' patronising treatment of Ukrainian migrants (Konieczna-Sałamatin et al. 2012: 25-62; Jaroszewicz and Mrozek 2020). As indicated in interviews, many Ukrainian migrants are addressed at the border by the informal form of 'you' instead of 'Mr.' or 'Mrs', which according to Polish norms of address is disrespectful when used to strangers or non-intimates. Ukrainian migrants are often directly or indirectly challenged over their standpoint on the Polish-Ukrainian historical disputes (Interview 7).

CONCLUSIONS

The reaction of the Polish technocratic security *dispositif* to post-2014 Ukrainian migration manifested itself in the emergence of a complex assemblage of regimes of security practices, with the predominant pattern of state ignorance linked with technocratic governance. In this manner, this article revisits the concept of technocracy, conventionally understood as drawing on the specialised knowledge of experts and providing rational solutions for the public. In Poland's context, the article also exposes the role of national identity, based on the opposition of the local versus European and political versus economic identity.

The article proposes a novel theoretical approach by supplementing the securitisation studies with a different approach to technocracy, the notion of state ignorance and the conceptualisation of the impact of national identity on security practices. Therefore, to better understand the wider context of the Polish security reaction to Ukrainian migration, the research design was structured by the Foucauldian notion of *dispositif*.

On an empirical level, the article argues that in reaction to a rapid increase in arrivals of Ukrainian migrants Poland mainly mobilised its state ignorance capacities, since neither legal nor institutional practices were adopted to address the emergency. The consequent lack of preparedness of the administration in coping with migrants, tied to bureaucratic inertia and routine, has paved the way for the prolonged admission procedures and generalised feeling of 'unease' on the side of migrants. Framed this way, state ignorance has also become a vital element of securitisation process. The phenomenon of technocratic governance was observed inter alia in the adopted anti-terror measures, the practice of authorisation and the logic of 'Schengen' border management. It also appears to have contributed to state arbitrariness and migrants' positioning within legal ambiguities and the 'politics of fear'. However, it was

the most abstract neighbourhood mentality that exposed paradoxes of the framing and implementation of security practices. If both the Schengen rationale and the politics of memory entailed 'hard' bordering of Ukrainians as 'others', then the local understating of neighbourhood identity and history, most visible in the political, economic and cultural dimensions, entailed the 'soft' bordering. The main consequence of such an assemblage of security practices immersed in three mentalities lay in leaving migrants in a status of 'semi-compliance' status, in which they needed to consolidate their legal status with irregular position.

The reaction of the Polish security *dispositif* to recent migration from Ukraine serves the opposite case to the strong reliance on technocracy legitimatised by populism in Western European countries. It appears that in the case of Poland, there is little connection between the public and technocratic security professionals. Considering its unprecedented and exceptional scale, there have been very few populist speech acts by Polish political agents that would have positioned Ukrainian migration as an existential threat. Moreover, no new specific policy instruments or other forms of improvement in state capacities, which might have addressed the new migration's dynamics, have been implemented since 2014. Ultimately, securitisation may take place without the related discursive acts, while the routine practical work and expertise, alongside state ignorance and immobilisation of state resources, may play a vital role in securitising certain issues. As such, this case contributes to revisiting the very concept of technocracy. It forms part of a larger technocratic model of governance, but it need not be dependent on the incitement of fear in the general public and does not necessarily lead to harmonisation or rationalisation of the security practices.

Future research may better conceptualise the links between the three identified regimes of security practices and their impact on the perspective of individual migrants. In particular, further studies are required to analyse to how state ignorance can be defined as part of the securitisation process, and to track the context in which 'new' security practices are created and in which 'old' ones are being reappropriated and reconceptualised.

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Interview 1: Scholar specialising in migration, Warsaw, February 2020

Interview 2: Scholar specialising in migration, Warsaw, March 2020

Interview 3: Journalist dealing with Polish-Ukrainian relations, Lublin, March 2020

Interview 4: Lawyer specialising in migration, Warsaw, April 2020

Interview 5: Scholar specialising in ethnic relations, Warsaw, April 2020

Interview 6: Expert specialising in educational migration, Warsaw, April 2020

Interview 7: Civil society activist, Lublin, May 2020

Interview 8: Scholar specialising in EU migration policy, Warsaw, June 2020

Interview 9: Scholar specialising in EU migration policy, Warsaw, June 2020

Interview 10: Scholar specialising in migration, Warsaw, June 2020

Interview 11: Scholar specialising in migration, Warsaw, June 2020

Interview 12: Personal data protection expert, Warsaw, July 2020

Interview 13: Civil society activist, Warsaw, July 2020

Interview 14: Lawyer specialising in migration, Warsaw, October 2020

Interview 15: Civil society activist, Warsaw, July 2020

Interview 16: Migration governance professional, Warsaw, August 2020

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF CODES APPLIED FOR ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS’ Three regimes of security practices:

‘State ignorance’:

- Purposeful ignorance
- Downplaying the importance of migration Immobilisation of state capacities Inefficiency of state bureaucracy Absence of new instruments and tools non-transparent practises
- Protracted admission procedures Permanent ordeal
- Feeling of “unease”

‘Technocratic governance’:

- Exceptionality
- Risk assessment and profiling Culture of secrecy Disproportionality of measures Arbitrariness
- Human rights concerns Institution of authorisation Schengen rationale

'Neighbourhood':

- National Identity
- Politics of memory
- Historical dispute
- Cultural and political proximity
- Local understanding of security
- National stereotypes and prejudices Non-homogeneous dividing line
- Hard' and 'soft' bordering Europeanisation
- Border malpractices and micro-inequalities

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Research Article

Between Populism and Technocracy: How National Executives in Bulgaria and Serbia Manipulate EU Rule of Law Conditionality?

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Abstract

This article explores how national executives in Serbia and Bulgaria address European Union (EU) rule of law conditionality by framing it within the populism/technocracy dichotomy. The rule of law remains one of the main problems of EU relations with the two countries. While acknowledging the nuances of pre- and post-enlargement Europeanisation, this article explores the technocratic and populist narratives exploited by the national executives in their interactions with the EU and their domestic public. Rather than positioning the current executives unequivocally either as populist or technocratic, we argue that the political elites act strategically in using both populist and technocratic techniques towards their publics when explaining interaction with the EU. We explore the extent this type of executive behaviour is determined by the countries' formally different status. While we look for the levels of possible similarity and distinction in the two cases/countries stemming from their different EU membership status, our findings confirm the existence of strategic defensive populist and technocratic techniques applied towards the EU and the national public in both countries The aim of this strategy is to mitigate the impact of the EU rule of law pressure and to secure the persistence of the existing rule of law shortcomings within the process of European integration. Interestingly, our research did not identify substantial impact of the formally different status towards the EU of the two countries.

Keywords

Populism; Technocracy; Rule of Law; EU; Europeanization; Bulgaria; Serbia

As the European integration progressed over the years, as an 'unsatisfactory metonymic synecdoche' (Foster and Grzymski 2019: 5), it encompassed many policy fields outside its initial narrow economic framework. This development contributed to the influx of politics into the EU integration process previously imagined and developed mostly as technocratic. Controversiality of European Union (EU) issues and decision-making (i.e. politicisation) went up, and new actors, those beyond governmental representatives and Brussels-based technocrats, started to be interested and involved in the integration process (Schmitter 1969: 166). Because the controversiality has become a limiting factor for the national executives, famously referred to as 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks 2009:5), they have started using different techniques and strategies to depoliticise EU issues within their domestic arenas and translate them favourably to their domestic publics. Opposition parties and movements have been using the EU issues to reach the voters and fill-in the political space left empty by the mainstream, usually pro-EU parties (Van Der Eijk and Franklin 2004; Marks 2004; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2004). It has become commonplace in EU politics literature to call these opposing, Eurosceptic parties and movements 'populist'. However, others acknowledge that there are cases of political parties where populism and Euroscepticism are not simultaneously present (Pirro and Taggart 2018).

Although the research on populism in Europe is proliferating, we find that the main focus goes to the widely defined 'populists' beyond the ruling pro-EU elites. In the context of Bulgaria and Serbia we have identified the existence of populist inclinations of the pro-EU governing, mainstream or centrist parties and their leaders, shaping the interactions with the EU. Hence, their "populism" is not anti-liberal, but fits into the accepted norms of policymaking in the EU. We want to enrich this field by exploring the populist inclinations of the "pro-EU" ruling elites, formally involved in the integration process.

Secondly, we note that populism is not the only strategy that the executives use when they position themselves regarding the EU integration issues. When there is a need to depoliticise the potentially conflictual issue (Radić-Milosavljević 2016) or to acquire sources of additional legitimisation (Domaradzki 2019a: 228), the executives' resort to other techniques, such as technocratic explanation. This populism/technocracy dichotomy works in the executives' handling of EU issues is an under-researched topic, and this is the gap that our paper aims to fulfil. Finally, we want to examine whether this strategic political behaviour is influenced by the countries' formal position in the EU integration process.

Thus, we study and compare the hypothesised behaviour in an EU Member State, namely Bulgaria, and in Serbia as an EU candidate country to examine whether our observations on executives' handling of EU issues are valid in different formal legal and political contexts. Hence, we question the extent to which the formal Europeanisation pressure has an impact on the identified strategies, re-examining the argument of the 'leverage model' of democracy promotion that the EU's ability to impose political practice is at its peak when the membership perspective is at stake (Freyburg, Lavanex, Schimmelfennig, Skripka, et al. 2015: 1, 12, 18-20).

In both countries, we find cases of 'mainstream populism', i.e. populism in governing, centrists parties, and their representatives in the executive bodies. We compare the two countries in the different stages of the EU integration process but within the context of the rule of law conditionality that both countries have to comply with – Bulgaria within the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) and Serbia within its EU accession process.

The rule of law conditionality is a common area of concern, at the same time highly prioritised by the EU, and politically sensitive and misgoverned in both countries observed. For this reason, we expected the rule of law area to be an adequate playground for populism although potentially less favourable to technocratic styles. Nevertheless, in both countries, the executives have never contested the need for reforms. Usually, they would

give their support to adopting the relevant norms, claimed the necessity and success of domestic harmonisation with EU law, and they would show an exceptional understanding of the democratising effects that these norms would bring. They would praise the work and advice from experts. Nevertheless, the implementation, if at all, remains mostly formal, and the populist technique would be used to circumvent the critique.

The usual assumption about populist narratives towards the EU would be to expect the confrontation with the external power that makes the national political elites take the unpopular moves and be blamed for the difficult and costly reforms. By analysing more profoundly the behaviour of the executives in Serbia and Bulgaria, we claim that the nature of this populism is pragmatic, that the EU has been exploited in defensive way, as a shield against popular discontent, and that it leaves room for other political styles and strategies, such as technocratic ones. Both populist and technocratic techniques have the purpose of supplying the national executives with additional legitimation and securing the endurance of power. In other words, the two countries' executives are examples of the strategic use of populist and technocratic discourses on the EU (Lynggaard 2012:93).

The first part of the paper identifies behaviours that we recognise as either populist or technocratic. We then combine descriptive approach and a qualitative content analysis to explore their presence in the executive's communication of the EU-related rule of law reforms and how two countries' executives handle the EU rule of law conditionality. Finally, we use the concluding part of the paper to compare the two countries and synthesise our findings, thus verifying the claims raised in the introductory part.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

While embedding our research in the category of populism and technocracy, we are obliged to define the meanings of these two essential terms. Populism is a term that made an enormous career. What is more, despite the numerous attempts to define and clarify what populism means, it lives its own life in the hands of scholars, journalists, and politicians. In this article, we will not aim to provide another definition or to explain the term again. Instead, we need to frame its meaning in our research and political context.

While acknowledging the key conceptualisation of the term as a 'pure people' versus 'corrupt elite' and as a 'thin ideology' (Mudde 2017: 6) in this paper, we will not deliberate on the nature of populism from a theoretical perspective (Laclau 1977, Arditi 2007, Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008). As Ionescu and Gellner (1969) recognise, populism is elusive and protean in the sense that it can take different forms and is rather flexible depending on the surrounding context (Gidron and Boniatovski 2013: 3). In its essence, the mentioned surrounding context concerns the political culture (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017: 62). Furthermore, populism will also be dependent on the player that reaches for it.

In its contemporary form, the term has also significantly framed the political discourse within the western literature with an accent on the contestation of liberal democracy (Stanley 2017; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007). Notwithstanding the term's extensive usage, we will largely remain on the verge of the terminological discussions. Instead, in the context of our research, we see populism as a political strategy, and we will explore its application by the incumbent political leaders in Serbia and Bulgaria. Thus, we will not explore populist strategy in the quest for power, which we call 'offensive populism'. Instead, we will pursue the exploitation of populist narrative as a 'defensive populism' strategy of powerholders to endure.

The subject of our research will be the narratives of the incumbent political elites, namely the heads of the executives, and the object of our research are the narratives of the two political leaders' Boyko Borisov and Aleksander Vucic. We explore the ways of 'telling the

story' about the EU in their respective countries, i.e., how they present it, how they 'translate' the issue to their domestic publics and how they portray themselves vis á vis the EU integration.

To explore this, we decided not to use quantitative, statistical content analysis, counting how many times a particular word appears in the text since this would strip our research of the important context in which these speeches were given. Instead we applied a qualitative study of how national executives speak about the EU-inspired rule of law reforms. In other words, we wanted to understand how they perceive the problem of the EU-inspired rule of law reforms through how they speak about it. For this reason, we applied a qualitative analysis of their statements by analysing the interviews, opening/inauguration speeches, and other statements found in electronic media in the observed period. (Андреев [Andreev] 2007: 13) We compared our findings with the populist and technocratic benchmarks set in advance in order to recognise/identify them in the executive leaders' speeches.

The collection of materials followed a strict timeframe. In Bulgaria's case, we started our analysis with the inception of the CVM, and in Serbia, with the opening of accession negotiations as these events represent the formal commencement of the current rule of law conditionality. Due to the unexpected pandemic-related constraints, we limited our research to the available online sources, which, if not complete, provide tangible, if not complete, basis. Despite the extensive research and the number of relevant speeches and interviews, we acknowledge that the lack of comprehensive archive and library research allows us to raise only careful hypotheses that can serve as hints for a more in-depth exploration that will confirm or reject our observations.

For the sake of our research, we have extracted a list of political behaviours identified in the literature as populist. They have become the benchmarks for our analysis. Hence the applied toolbox will contain the following characteristic features of populism:

- an important aspect of the populist arsenal is the invoking of the sense of belonging to the people. Margaret Canovan describes three different senses that populists use: unified or 'united people', 'our people', and 'ordinary' or 'common people' (Canovan 1999: 5). For our purpose, the appeal to common or ordinary people is the most suitable one as we argue that the executives in both countries usually present themselves as speaking in the name of the 'pure people' or 'the simple people' against the privileged economic, political and intellectual elites and others that allegedly support them (media, think-tanks or NGOs).
- Use of emotions of alertness, fear, uncertainty and negativity regarding the so-called 'elite'. Although we talk about defensive populism, we are aware that in our context, emotions of fear, uncertainty, and negativity can be used against the European Union and its institutions and can serve as a catalyst of political capital. The same feelings can also be applied to foster a saviour's image solely able to resolve complicated or contradictory EU demands and harsh reforms. Additionally, negativity towards the elites is often used to dismiss the political opponents who criticise the non-implementation of the EU-inspired reforms.

- Oversimplifications to explain the world evoking a sense of uncertainty and unclarity, as well as a conscious evoking of the feeling of anxiety.
- Populism is also often associated with the 'moralisation' of the political debate and the re-politicisation of disregarded groups and issues (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013: 118). Populism has a specific 'mood' (Canovan 1999: 6) of heightened emotions that are typically connected with one charismatic leader.
- Demagogy – people are told what they want to hear. (Krasteva 2013)
- Disregard for mediating institutions (Krasteva 2013)
- Finally, the deliberate discrepancy between promise and reality, posture, and capacity provided by the explored elites can also be labelled as populist. (Ditchev 2013)

This framework does not exhaust the list of possible behaviours that we expect to find out. Instead, we will use it as a benchmark towards which we can juxtapose our findings and measure the presence of 'defensive populist' and technocratic techniques in the political strategies of the Bulgarian and Serbian political leaders and their entourages.

The second term, technocracy, is a form of governance discussed and advocated for as early as in classical thinkers such as Francis Bacon, Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte (Radaelli 1999: 14-15). It denominated a depoliticised, alternative mode of governing society by knowledge and rational thinking. The idea of technocratic governance is rooted in the belief that technocrats or experts with specific knowledge can manage governance more efficiently than elected politicians, especially in complex times. Nowadays, the government made exclusively of experts is not what is typically advocated. However, technocracy rather means governing with the help of experts, for example through the expert committees, think-tanks, independent agencies, or task forces (Radaelli 1999: 24). Appointing technocratic or non-partisan ministers in governments is also a common form of infusing technocracy or expertise into the governing process (Pinto, Cotta and de Almeida 2018).

Amid visible politicisation of the current EU integration process, its highly complex and regulatory nature is still the contributing factor for maintaining and grasping technocratic narratives as legitimising factors when domestic policy reforms are necessary. We find these both in the EU member states and in the candidate countries.

Although with the same goal of providing additional sources of legitimacy, populist and technocratic narratives have different appeals. The first one is persuasive, based on non-verifiable general claims and half-truths. The second claim is deliberative, reasonable, based on facts and evidence. Thus, populism and technocracy have different legitimation claims. For the former, these lay in the 'will of the people' and assertion it 'returns power to the people' or 'speak for *the people'* (italics in the original, Canovan 1999: 4). The latter bases its legitimacy on effectiveness and expert knowledge, which is supposed to be particularly suitable for regulatory or highly technical policy fields. Both populist and technocratic narratives and governing methods have a common source: they respond or feed on the deep mistrust in the political elites and their ability to provide for the common good.

Without going into the normative flaws of both populist and technocratic legitimacy claims, we aim to explore whether they play a part in the executives' behaviour in the context of European integration processes in the two countries. As a highly demanding process in

terms of the scope and complexity of the reforms it presupposes, the EU integration should represent a favourable condition for establishing a whole system of experts and bureaucracy capable of managing the reforms rationally and efficiently. This system is supposedly so self-evident, as are the EU-inspired reforms themselves, which usually are never questioned. This reckoning of a broad consensus on the necessity or inevitability of European integration should supposedly justify and enable the 'politics of expertise' (Radaelli 1999) and avoid politics of potentially conflicting values in the society.

Our research focuses on the executive's narratives and methods, leaving aside the populism in opposition parties and movements, which is undoubtedly present. The reason is that we consider the governing parties (i.e. those present in the executive structures) the most significant players in the countries relations with the EU and the primary 'transmission belt', modelling the domestic public discourse on European integration and shaping the EU perspective on the events at the national level.

The environment in which we will search for a defensive populist and technocratic political strategy is related to two countries, which are in distinct formal relations with the EU. However, regardless of this formal difference, the two countries are subject to the EU rule of law conditionality. Bulgaria is an EU member state since 2007. Nevertheless, it remained under the special CVM devised for the first time when this country, together with Romania, joined the EU. Despite the strong criticism towards the CVM (Gateva 2013; Domaradzki 2019a; Dimitrov, Haralampiev, Stoychev, Toneva-Metodieva 2014), it aimed to exert additional post-enlargement pressure on the Bulgarian authorities to improve the rule of law. After 12 years and nineteen reports, in the fall of 2019, based on the European Commission's recommendation, the Bulgarian authorities claimed that the mechanism is over.

Falling into the EU candidate countries category, Serbia is under the rule of law scrutiny as part of its EU accession process. The EU has been setting the rule of law conditionality in several documents related to the accession negotiations with Serbia, such as the EU's Negotiating Framework and its Common Position for the negotiating chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom, and Security). The EU has been regularly evaluating Serbia's progress in many policy fields, but the rule of law has been marked as one of the key areas of concern. In addition to annually issued reports regarding the overall negotiating package, the European Commission has been notifying the Council on Serbia's progress in areas covered by Chapters 23 and 24 by way of issuing specific bi-annual non-papers on these two chapters.

Both countries are subject to measuring democratic governance by the Freedom House through the 'Nations in Transit' reports, done in 29 countries (2020). The two countries fall into different categories (Bulgaria being a 'semi-consolidated democracy'; Serbia a 'Transitional or Hybrid Regime'), with slightly different democracy scores. However, the two countries' situations are not very distinct regarding the two indicators of our particular interest (namely, the judicial framework and independence, and corruption). Both countries suffer from widespread corruption and selective justice, a slow judiciary that struggles for its independence and suffers from governmental pressures.

Both Serbian and Bulgarian executives come from parties that are using populist styles. We are cautious not to call them 'populist parties' because they are not exclusively populist, although populism is a substantial part of their profile (Stojiljkovic and Spasojevic 2018; Смилов 2019; Андреев [Andreev] 2007). As we shall see, they are using other methods and styles to reach out to voters and acquire legitimacy.

CONCEPTUALISING POPULISM AND TECHNOCRACY IN SERBIA AND BULGARIA

Sketches of the Contemporary Populism in Bulgaria

Virtually the whole Bulgarian political spectrum can be classified within a theoretical populist framework. (Raycheva and Peycheva 2017: 75; Андреев [Andreev] 2007: 16) The evolution of the Bulgarian political system over the last thirty years was initiated by the mushrooming of political parties after the collapse of communism and the metamorphosis of the Bulgarian Communist Party (renamed as Bulgarian Socialist Party – BSP) to the principles of political pluralism. During the first decade the political landscape was dominated by the competition between the BSP and the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) with the crucial role of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms that tipped the balance and determined the nature of the parliamentarian majority. The protracted transformation and the economic crisis of 1996 led to a substantial shift in Bulgarian politics. The 1997 Kostov government took decisive steps towards the EU and NATO and introduced the currency board, thus framing the Bulgarian political consensus. The return of the former Tsar, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, as Prime Minister in 2001 marked the beginning of populist waves that substantially reorganised Bulgarian politics (Смилов [Smilov] 2019: 108-127).

An attempt to spot the characteristics of Bulgarian populism is a risky endeavour. The 'master-passions' of Bulgarian populism focus on the 'recognition by the world', the broken territorial dreams, and the love-hate relations with Russia (Ditchev 2013). This account must be supplied by such arguments as the discrepancy between economic expectations and reality, between political expectations and concrete policies and so on, as well as the presence of contradictory evaluations of the transition to democratic society and market economy (Raycheva and Peycheva 2017: 72-73). Notably, populist arguments have also incorporated the membership in NATO and the EU to take advantage of the disappointed enlargement expectations. No political party is resistant to the use of populist rhetoric (Raycheva and Peycheva 2017: 75).

Already over a decade ago, Boyko Borisov and his party Citizens for European Future of Bulgaria (GERB) was identified as a part of a 'populist waves' (Zankina n.d. 5; Смилов [Smilov] 2019: 116-121; Smilov 2008: 18-19; Andreev 2009) and as a 'soft populist party' (Zankina n.d.; Smilov 2008). Boyko Borisov's is identified as "populist by ideology and a style of behavior". Hence, GERB relies on the cornerstone populist assumption of the existence of homogeneous and antagonistic groups (pure nation vs corrupted elites) and the individual charisma of its leader as a solution to unresolvable issues (Андреев [Andreev] 2007:6). The second label "populism as democracy" positions Borisov's party as adjusting its model of representative democracy to optimise the short-term interests of the movement and its leader. It is also open to new members regardless of their qualities or ideological affiliations (Андреев [Andreev] 2007: 15).

Importantly, our conceptualisation of the GERB's populism is not purely theoretical. GERB's emanation, Boyko Borisov is recognised as a particular type of 'eclectic populist' making references to the common people, yet also tending to discredit opponents (Raycheva and Peteva 2017: 77; Malinov 2008). Borisov is also "experimentalist" in the sense that he often declares, only subsequently to withdraw political initiatives, as soon as they fail obtaining popular support. Borisov also often positions himself as an arbiter between his own ministers and the people, not hesitating to play the role of an accurate and independent mirror of the public mood (Смилов [Smilov] 2019: 118-119). At the same time Borisov is pro-EU and pro-democracy exploiting the disillusionment with the elites and the transition and enjoy much greater electoral success. GERB's populist nature stems from the fact that the party does not have a main political ideology, and populism is the core of their political identity (Cholova and De Waele 2014: 60). Hence, Borisov is considered as a political leader that applies populist strategies (Смилов [Smilov] 2019: 118-119).

The party's track record matched sufficiently to include GERB among the populist parties in the 2018 Populism in Europe report (Boros, Freitas, Laki and Stetter 2018).

Main Features of Contemporary Populism in Serbia

Contemporary Serbian populism falls on the fertile ground of the citizens' disillusionment and their significant mistrust in politicians and democratic institutions and a weak democratic culture and tradition. This undemocratic culture materialises in the widespread citizens' belief that an undemocratic government is sometimes better than the democratic one and that the Serbian society is not mature enough for democracy (Stojiljkovic and Spasojevic 2018). Empirical research done in 2017 shows that around 70 per cent of citizens agree with the statement that 'the majority of politicians care only for those rich and powerful' (Lutovac 2017: 56). The same research finds around 65 per cent of citizens who, in various degrees, do not agree with the statement that 'the majority of politicians can be trusted' (Lutovac 2017: 56), and 41 per cent of those who see politics as 'a struggle between good and evil' (Lutovac 2017: 58).

Populism, found mainly (but not exclusively) with Serbia's current ruling party, is characterised by its appeal to the broadest possible public (or 'the common people'), its ideological vagueness, its confrontation with the elitism in the name of the people, frequent resorting to demagogy and protest politics, reliance on a strong and charismatic leader, and constant generating of pseudo-crises (Mikucka-Wójtowicz 2019).

The vital part of the ruling party's populism is a confrontation that spread widely to society. Every critique directed towards the ruling party almost always provokes an overreaction by the President and other party members. The conflict goes so far that the ruling party itself organised protests against the opposition political forces (Radio Slobodna Evropa 2020; Danas 2020a, 2019a). The government finds the enemies in all sorts of its critics, but most often in the opposition parties' leaders, frequently labelled as thieves and 'tycoons', in other words, wealthy elites not representing the ordinary people. These opposition leaders are often marked as old or previously governing elites who ruined Serbia (Vlada Republike Srbije 2014) and should be replaced with new (actual) political leaders who will rebuild Serbia from scratch. Serbia's rare independent media and non-governmental organisations are often targeted as 'American' television and 'paid by foreign or Soros money', implying that they act as foreign-influenced agents. Sometimes even intellectuals are receiving assaults. Academics are easily picked as enemies of the regime because of their criticism towards government and the understanding that supporters of the governing Serbian Progressive party (*Srpska napredna stranka – SNS*) party are mainly among those with elementary education or lower and those older than 65 (Colovic and Ivo 2018: 43; Danas 2019b).

Compared to the populism existent during the 1990s and earlier, contemporary populism is not based on the confrontation with the foreign actors. Generally, most of the relevant parties are declaratively pro-EU oriented (Stojiljkovic and Spasojevic 2018: 111) and in favour of international cooperation. Nevertheless, the EU integration issues have been systematically depoliticised in Serbia (Radić-Milosavljević 2016), especially since Serbia's southern province of Kosovo declared independence in 2008 and the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina became one of the crucial conditions or a 'key priority' in Serbia's EU accession process (European Commission and HR of the EU for FASP 2013).

In Serbia, the governing SNS was founded by several high party officials breaking away from the nationalist, right-wing, anti-EU Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka – SRS*) in 2008. Thus, one of its aims of distancing from this heavy political burden was to be fulfilled by taking a pro-EU stance. The party looked for external recognition by the EU and its member states to prevent being marked as a party that will bring Serbia 'back to the nineties' (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2018: 115). One of the incentives has been to

look for external support from its fellow party family on the European level, the European Peoples Party. Their representatives indeed showed their political support on many occasions, especially around the elections in Serbia (Radić-Milosavljević 2017: 266). Thus, the SNS showed and used its newly found 'Europeanness' as an 'electoral tactics to come to power, secure political future, and obtain "European legitimacy"' (Stojic 2018: 78). Authors who researched the ideological positioning of parties in Serbia and their stance towards the EU find that both before and after winning the executive positions, the Serbian Progressive Party used both Europeanist and populist strategies. SNS took a catch-all character (Stojiljković and Spasojević 2018: 116, 119) with weak or vague ideological profiling, which taken together with its Europeanness it is classified as 'Soft Euroenthusiastic' or 'populist Euroenthusiasm' (Stojic 2018: 62, 71-72, 80-82).

As part of the Serbian Progressive Party's Europeanist posture and its desire to present itself as belonging to the club of modern European progressives, came the appointment of the first woman Prime Minister, at the same time openly lesbian. In addition to improving the Western perception of Serbia and its state of human rights protection, political analysts consider Ana Brnabic to be chosen only to figure as a prime minister. The real power would lay in the hands of the President Aleksandar Vucic (Surk 2017; Karabeg 2018; Bojic 2017a, 2017b), at the same time being the president of the party.

Nevertheless, official narratives used to justify Brnabic's appointment, first as a minister for public administration and local self-government (2016) and later as the Prime minister (2017), were technocratic (Dedovic 2017). As an expert with no previous history in party life or politics, she was supposed to work on Serbia's modernisation and necessary reforms, bringing the country closer to the EU. In the meantime, however, Brnabic has become a member of the Serbian Progressive Party. In our analysis of her statements, we find that she embraced more populist narratives over time, thus lining-up with President Vucic, whom she has a habit of calling 'boss' (Danas 2020b). Thus, in the next part, we analyse mainly Vucic's statements as the two executives often converge by using the same or similar explanatory patterns.

Acknowledging the presence and the specific context of populism in the two countries, we now move to explore whether and how the two countries' political leaders are applying populist and technocratic strategies in the context of the EU relations.

BORISOV AND VUCIC'S DEFENSIVE POPULIST AND TECHNOCRATIC STRATEGIES

Borisov's Defensive Populist and Technocratic Techniques of Dodging the EU-Inspired Rule of Law Reforms

The rule of law remained as one of the unfinished pre-accession aspects of Bulgaria's membership in the EU. The need for further rule of law reforms forced the EU to impose, for the first time in its history, a post-accession CVM towards Bulgaria (and Romania) in 2007. For Bulgaria six benchmarks were set up aiming to improve the independence of the judicial system, the fight against corruption and defeat the organised crime. Their purpose was to exert post-accession pressure and provide information and guidance on the necessary rule of law reforms in the country. The peculiar corruption experience of the Triple coalition of BSP, DPS and NDSV, led to the emergence of Boyko Borisov's GERB as the main contestant of the dominant political status quo. Since 2009, Borisov have dominated the Bulgarian political landscape with three governments. His power was interrupted three times by short-lived "technical governments" and once (2013-2014) by the government of Plamen Oresharski, hence making Borisov the dominant politician of the last decade.

The analysis of the available speeches, statements and comments of Boyko Borisov provide us with two vectors of analysis. The first one traces the evolution of this populist strategy, whereas the second highlights its content.

Borisov embraced the 'fight against corruption' narrative months before becoming a Prime Minister for the first time in 2009 (БНТ1 [BNT1] 2009). In the context of the unprecedented freeze of EU funds during the Stanishev government, less than two years after joining the EU, Borisov coined his image as the right person to defeat corruption, while stating that 'only the political ruling party has the power to fight corruption' (БНТ1 [BNT1] 2009). During his Premiership early years, he reacted to the reports as friendly recommendations and immediately provided ad hoc solutions instructing other branches of power and institutions (btvновините [btvnovinite] 2011).

With time, this position was expanded to incorporate Borisov's image of the inner guy who knows and keeps a hand on Brussels' developments. This image is not only directed towards the Bulgarian public but is also explored within the EU. This image was reinforced throughout the years to the extent that the EU representatives started associating the fight against corruption with Borisov's next governments (European Commission 2015: 2). Even during the recent protests against Borisov since 2020, leading EU politicians explicitly supported Borisov as the fighter against corruption (EPPgroup.eu 2020). On the other hand, for the Bulgarian public opinion, Borisov become the insider who translates the Bulgarian reality to the EU leaders and shapes the EU's politics.

In terms of content, Borisov's defensive strategy consists of application of general language, simplification and trivialisation of sensitive issues, exploitation of the EU's political correctness and casting of magic spells.

Borisov himself rarely refers explicitly to the judicial reform. Instead, when discussing problems related to the EU post-accession conditionality, defined as a demand for reforms according to the European Commission's six benchmarks in 2007, he rarely talks in detail about the particular benchmarks. Instead, Borisov adopted a general language framed within the rule of law narration, which he often uses to steer the discussion around the problems and escape the awkward detailed questions. The generalisation of the questions within the rule of law framework places him in a position from which he highlights particular actions, even if not related to the asked questions, as examples of progress in the rule of law. This tactic of ignoring uneasy questions that are subsequently silenced and delegitimised was also noticed on a more general governmental level (Иванова [Ivanova] 2020).

Simultaneously, Borisov skilfully simplifies and trivialises CVM related issues. Borisov never goes into the technical details of the particular benchmarks. Instead, the rule of law aspect from his perspective is brought down to fighting corruption and smuggling. He uses the formal division of powers to push the ball on the judiciary related questions to the relevant judiciary bodies. Once the question of rule of law is narrowed to fight against corruption and smuggling, Borisov highlights the relevant institutions' tangible successes like the Customs Agency, the National Income Agency, the Organized Crime Unit, the National Agency of National Security, or the Police (Нова [Nova] 2019, Правен свят [Praven sviat] 2016).

Another specific aspect of Borisov's defensive populist tactic is the continuous blurring of the terms 'me' and 'the state'. This tactic allows him to take personal credit for any successes and to shift the accusations for failures towards relevant institutions swiftly. (Новините 2016) Even more importantly, Borisov's *'L'État c'est moi'* approach allows him to act as the state firefighter (which he was, indeed), "extinguishing" problems as soon as they reach him, as was the case with the corruption in the Territorial Expert Doctor's Commission's (TELK) (Redmedia 2018).

Borisov's rhetoric is replete with demagogic anti-corruption slogans. At a 2016 party meeting, Borisov claimed that 'if anyone is caught in corruption there will be no mercy' (Дневник [Dnevnik] 2016) that was repeated by virtually all media in the country. In 2017, he exhorted to 'Fight against corruption' (Иванова [Ivanova] 2017), and in 2018, he defined corruption as a 'scourge that has to be crashed every day and, on every level' (Plovdivski novini 2018). Borisov's words 'not only the broom will play, but we will also wipe with the rag' (ClubZ 2016) epitomise most accurately this alleged determination.

Borisov's declaratory readiness for reforms is also encapsulated in 'the political will'. However, having in mind the Bulgarian progress with the six benchmarks, it becomes apparent that the 'political will' translates simply to pro-reform rhetoric consistently repeated by Borisov in Brussels with his EU interlocutors. While the CVM reports criticism is usually downplayed, Borisov did not hesitate to invite EU experts 'to bring the fight against corruption to an end' (Иванова [Ivanova] 2016). His technocratic tactic relies also on the "outsourcing" of technical or difficult aspects to the relevant representatives of his government under the guise of division of competences.

Borisov's arguments also cast magic spells when comparisons between Bulgaria and Romania appear. His simplistic argumentation relies on the speculation that more Romanian ministers steal, and therefore they are being caught (Новините [Novinite] 2016). However, the 2016 Juncker's suggestion that the CVM for Romania can be waived earlier than for Bulgaria, prompted Borisov to promise that 'for six months we will catch up with the Romanians', while not forgetting to add that in any other dimension, Bulgaria does better than its northern neighbour (Дневник [Dnevnik] 2016a).

Borisov's rhetoric on the rule of law is further supported by the inconsistence of the CVM itself. The diplomatic language used in the reports, the "friendly reminders" rather than sound demands and changing priorities, were used by Borisov as an explanation of positive developments in the fight against corruption. For example, in 2012, when the fifth report on Bulgaria was issued, and the EC decided to abandon the interim reports, in order to give more time and recognise tangible changes (European Commission 2014: 2), Borisov used this fact as an example of increased trust towards Bulgaria (Тошева, Николов, Стоянов [Tosheva, Nikolov and Stoyanov] 2012). Even when the CVM reports touched upon technical aspects, Borisov's tactic was to highlight the positive aspects and discount the critique.

Simultaneously, the CVM was influenced by the European Commission's growing concern over the rule of law in Hungary since 2010 and Poland since 2015. The awareness that the lack of a general mechanism for the rule of law monitoring weakens its arguments, the Commission decided to move towards a more consistent approach. For that reason, questions related to the rule of law were introduced to the theoretically accenting on the economy – European Semester. Remarkably, the Borisov's government completely disregarded the 2020 European Semester report's critical content on Bulgaria's rule of law situation (Иванова [Ivanova] 2020). The side effect of the further elaboration on an all-EU rule of law mechanism was the need to extinguish the CVM mechanism, to incorporate it in the new tools, exemplified by the EU rule of law scoreboard. Hence, Borisov never referred to the impact of the EU reforms on the CVM mechanism but concentrated solely on the fact that the EU wants to close the CVM for Bulgaria (Иванова [Ivanova] 2020). However, Borisov's claims could not have been possible without Jean Claude Juncker's political dance. Juncker repeatedly supported Borisov's narrative and allowed Borisov to claim the ultimate success for the closure of the CVM. However, he left the Council and the European Parliament to make the ultimate decision, which did not happen yet (Дневник [Dnevnik] 2020). Hence, today Borisov claims that the CVM is over, whereas this claim relies solely on the 2019 EC recommendation.

The EU-Inspired Rule of Law Reform in Serbia: Between Expert and Populist Techniques

In Serbia, we start our analysis with the beginning of 2014 and the official opening of EU accession negotiations. From this date till now, Serbia has had three parliamentary elections (in 2014, 2016 and 2020) and one presidential in 2017. Nevertheless, the governing coalition has not changed considerably, so we find the 'executives' mainly in the Serbian Progressive Party, providing for the presidents, prime ministers and vice-prime minister.

Remarkably, the very start of the accession negotiations, although hailed as a 'historic day' for Serbia and the EU by the then prime minister Ivica Dacic and deputy prime minister Aleksandar Vucic (Trivic 2014), did not attract too much of the media attention in Serbia (Rakovac 2014). We assume that the reason for this depoliticisation tactic by the executives and media in Serbia might be that the EU integration resonated negatively in a considerable part of public opinion by being associated with demanding political conditions (like Kosovo recognition) and even 'blackmails' (EIO 2013; MEI 2019). As a case in point, one empirical research found the persistent percentage of survey respondents (29 per cent both in 2011 and 2017) who think that the 'highest cost that Serbia should pay in order to reintegrate Kosovo is to give up the EU membership' (IPSOS Public Affairs 2017: 39).

Another critical aspect of the accession process, the rule of law conditionality, has remained in the shadow of the 'Kosovo issue' as a key priority, even though the EU adopted its new approach ('fundamentals first'), introduced previously in the accession process with Montenegro. The approach sets the *Judiciary and Fundamental Rights* (no. 23) and the *Justice, freedom and security* (no. 24) negotiating chapters on top of the negotiating agenda (Conference on the Accession, 2014).

The executives' posture towards the rule of law reforms has been one of the declarative acceptance of reforms' necessity. Even the requirement to change the Serbian constitution regarding 'ensuring independence and accountability of the judiciary' (Commission 2014: 25) came almost naturally. Serbia's executives, alike Borisov, either generally acknowledged the rule of law package elements or avoided dealing with the issue, like the candidate prime minister Brnabic did in her exposé in 2017 (Vlada Republike Srbije 2017). In his presidential inauguration speech in 2017, Vucic admitted that the judiciary's reform might be the most needed but certainly not the only one (Predsednik Republike Srbije 2017). In April 2014, when Vucic became the prime minister, in his speech presenting the new government programme, he talked about the inevitability of justice reform and the subsequent analysis of the relevant constitutional provisions but, on this occasion, never mentioned the requirement for the constitutional amendments nor the EU in this particular context. Overall, he embraced the EU accession process and even proclaimed 2018 as the year of the possible closure of all negotiating chapters.

Nevertheless, he framed his speech about the overall reforms in quite a defensive populist manner by tackling the national pride emotions and promising his own and his government's significant sacrifices and tireless work. He called on the members of the Parliament to do the same by saying that they are going to be 'eating, sleeping, and washing in this Chamber – but by July 15, the people of Serbia and the whole world will know that we are ready to do everything to fulfil what we promise' (Vlada Republike Srbije 2014). He concluded while speaking about Serbia's foreign relations that 'everybody should know that Serbia will not be anybody's property nor anybody's colony' (Vlada Republike Srbije 2014). This exposé was only one of many examples of the populist narratives that Vucic has been using.

The use of demagogy by the executives, or the habit of saying what people want to hear, has been widespread when communicating the EU issues to their publics. On several

occasions, right after acknowledging the necessity of the rule of law reforms, acting prime ministers and the President were eager to declare that the reforms Serbia is implementing are pursued because of the citizens, or the Serbian people, and not because of the EU or because 'we have an idolatry approach towards the EU' (Vlada Republike Srbije 2016: 10; Predsednik Republike Srbije 2017; Kovacevic 2018). This stance was consistent with the public opinion's feelings about the EU conditionality we mentioned earlier and the position that the reforms should be pursued even if the EU did not ask for it (EIO 2013; MEI 2019).

Besides, the narrative about Serbia's 'ownership' of the rule of law reforms that are being implemented independently from the EU conditionality served to avoid criticism for the unsatisfactory pace of the reforms expressed often in the Commission's annual reports and non-papers and the experts' and civil society's public complaints. A discrepancy between what is promised and presented in the executives' speeches and what has been done is noticeable. Vucic already announced two dates (2018 and 2019), until which Serbia will do everything in its power to be ready for the membership (Vlada Republike Srbije 2016, 2014). The usual rhetoric in the executives' public speeches has been the claim that the date of accession will not depend on Serbia (as Serbia is doing everything to be ready) but on the will of the EU (RTV 2019; Predsednik Republike Srbije 2019; Dijalog 2017) implying the EU's arbitrariness in the process.

However, the Commission's reports and the simple reading of the (unaccomplished) planned reforms in Serbia's action plans for chapters 23 and 24 reveal that in 2020 the job is far from finished. In the Commission's annual reports and its bi-annual non-papers on Chapters 23 and 24, there have been repeatedly found evaluations that Serbia has 'some level of preparation', 'made limited progress' or that some issues in the rule of law field are 'of serious concern' (for example, European Commission 2019, 2018). In its last non-paper in June 2020, the EC finds that there are 'serious delays' in many key areas such as 'judicial independence, the fight against corruption, media freedom, the domestic handling of war crimes, and the fight against organised crime' (European Commission 2020).

Another element of the defensive populist tactic for casting off the critics for the lack of progress in the rule of law area has been to answer the questions by pointing to a different direction and accentuating alleged successes in other fields, such as economy or good neighbourly relations (Predsednik Republike Srbije 2019). When pushed to answer directly, the confrontational tactics would step in. It has been reflected in Vucic's attempt to discredit or blame those who ask the questions by discrediting their right to critique or 'revealing' their malevolence (Predsednik Republike Srbije 2019).

Regarding the Commission's progress reports, the executives have been using them to prove their excellent work, claiming that 'our report is way better in all spheres than any other' (Ebart 2016), or 'one of the best evaluated in the region' (Vlada Republike Srbije 2016). On several occasions, both Vucic and Brnabic used the opportunity to accentuate positive feedbacks in some areas while avoiding the reports' accompanying critics. When this was not possible, they would discredit the reports' objections as 'political remarks', in other words, not very objective ones (Politika 2018).

Hand in hand with this defensive populist tactic went the technocratic style. The drafting of the Action Plans for negotiating chapters 23 and 24 revolved around the expert missions and technical support from the World Bank and the European Commission and consultations with the national and foreign experts and stakeholders (Republic of Serbia 2020, 2016; MUP 2020). The process of judiciary reform in Serbia, especially the required constitutional reform and the judicial reform strategies, started and developed in a technocratic manner with the relevant authorities' apparent intention to depoliticise the matter. The Ministry of Justice's officials praised experts' help and acknowledged the need for reform as part of Serbia's EU accession process (Tanjug 2016a, 2015, 2014). Serbian government has used the Venice Commission's opinions, working under the auspices of

the Council of Europe (CoE), as the indicator of the judiciary reforms' success, particularly of the constitutional amendments that should have brought them (Boljevic 2020). Nevertheless, the mixed messages about the proposed amendments to the Serbian Constitution coming from this body and the other relevant CoE's body, the Consultative Council of European Judges, made a confusion that served the Serbian government to proclaim the success of the proposed reforms. Serbian Minister of Justice claimed that the Venice Commission's Opinion was positive and that the objections were directed only towards the text's translation errors. This claim was refuted by the experts and media in Serbia when the Opinion was finally published several days later, revealing more substantial objections towards the proposed constitutional amendments than previously presented by the Minister (Pescanik 2018; Istinomer 2018).

Eventually, the process of constitutional reform that should have brought to the independent and efficient judiciary has stalled with the holding of the elections in 2020 and as several civil society representatives and experts left the consultations dissatisfied with the Ministry of Justice's proposals and the overall leading of the process (European Western Balkans 2020). Although Serbia's action plan for Chapter 23 originally stipulated 2017 as the year in which constitutional amendments were to be finalised, the process is still not over.

Anticorruption has been a prominent issue in the executives' tactic, especially Vucic's. Here the mix of technocratic and defensive populist narratives is also visible. Vucic's statements praising the quality of adopted anti-corruption laws and the experts' role in their drafting (for example the Law on Whistleblower Protection) exemplify this trend. (Tanjug 2016b). However, he has also been using the anti-corruption narrative to confront political opponents by labelling them as tycoons and claiming to 'bring justice back into the people's hands' (Politika 2019). Promised judiciary reforms and the fight against corruption went hand in hand with the Executives' frequent public commenting of the ongoing trials and investigations, proceeding before the ICTY, and even announcing arrests in media. This habit of public commenting has been noticed and condemned in the European Commission's reports on Serbia's accession progress (European Commission 2018a: 14, 18, 2014a: 40).

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the different formal position towards the EU and the substantial differences in terms of dominant political topics in the internal discourses during the analysed periods, we were able to identify the use of defensive populist and technocratic techniques in both cases. The persistence in their application allows us to identify them as defensive populist strategy and technocratic strategy.

The defensive populist strategy embraces our populist benchmarks. Vucic, much more than Borisov, uses the image of a defender of people's/Serbian interests and highlights autonomous decision-making. Borisov embraced the opaque role of an 'EU insider' representing the interests of his fellow citizens. Borisov and Vucic's demagogy is translated to the propaganda of success that disregards critique and extrapolates even the most meagre and delicate EU words of encouragement and approval. It also aims to diffuse potential popular pressure for reforms.

Both leaders play with emotions. Vucic tickles the feelings of national pride and Borisov is the translator of the EU reality. However, the most similar element of their defensive populist strategies is the trivialisation and simplification of the complex questions of the rule of law reforms brought down to the question of fight against corruption.

The two leaders also skilfully apply technocratic tactics. In their interactions with the EU and in the process of introducing the new strategies, laws, and measures harmonising

them with the EU norms and standards, government officials use technocratic techniques either to depoliticise or to justify the often-hard reforms. This tactic is best visible in the endless adoption of strategies and action plans, which, even if implemented, have a reverse effect. The two cases show that national leaders skilfully use the need for reforms to strengthen their grasp on power further.

Hence, we claim that convincing signs of defensive populist and technocratic strategy exist and aim to accommodate the EU pressure for the internal rule of law reforms and the potential national resistance. The endurance of these practices in longer time spans also validates our hypothesis that it is applied strategically towards both the national public and the EU. By identifying the pre-, and the post-accession rule of law challenges in Serbia and Bulgaria and similar defensive populist and technocratic strategies to assuage the rule of law reforms applied by the respective heads of the executive branches, we conclude that the strategies are not dependent on the formal relationship towards the EU.

What is common for both countries, is not their formal status but substantial position of a country affected by the Europeanisation and the EU's rule of law conditionality regime. However, the persistence of the national executives' mishandling of the rule of law is largely enabled (although not caused) by the EU's inability to sanction countries' non-implementation or non-adherence to the rule of law norms both in the EU Member States and the candidate countries. In Serbia's case, the stalled enlargement process has additionally corroded the conditionality credibility.

The rule of law has become a pebble in the shoe for Bulgarian and Serbian executives alike. In a similar vein Bulgarian and Serbian authorities skilfully manipulate the relevant EU reports as a part of a tactic to downplay and mitigate their potential impact. The reports' selective and subjective interpretation is locked between the narratives of technical granularity and selective exaggeration of sentences with positive context. In both countries, we identify a similar strategy of customisation (Jańczak 2014) aiming to adjust the EU rule of law expectations into the national reality without the introduction of substantial changes (Domaradzki 2019b). Hence, instead of the different formal position towards the EU, it is the actual credibility of conditionality that matters (Freyburg et al. 2015: 18-20) when it comes to the rule of law reforms success.

Another similarity in the executives' tactic concerns the trivialisation of the rule of law and its easy application against present and imaginary political opponents. The conscious narrowing of the rule of law debate to the fight against corruption leaves most of the larger rule of law context, concerning the necessary independence, accountability, transparency, and effectiveness of the judiciary reforms outside the national political debate. The two leaders apply the tactic of capturing successes and rejecting uneasy questions through their discrediting as either malevolent, insignificant, or straight forward hostile. Their aim is not to give answers but to dominate the debate and undermine the question's logic. The application of populist strategy also provides for a less visible, but not less important undermining of the rule of law at national level.

Paradoxically, under the guise of rule of law reforms, the two leaders introduce changes that dismantle existing constitutional and legal provisions. These actions trigger little or no protests since the demand is explained with the will of the people. Hence, securing the ongoing concentration of power and state capture.

Finally, the vagueness and inconsistency of the EU reports and political correctness are frequently used by Vucic and Borisov as a fig leaf for shallow changes and twisted interpretation that ultimately further tightens the control over the judiciary. This defensive populist rhetoric formula spins the vicious circle of endless contradiction between the rule of law reality and its trivialised public perception.

Among the differences between the two countries, we have acknowledged that each analysed political leader has his style, dependent on the internal political discourse. As

long as Borisov portrays himself as the 'Brussels insider' that takes care of the Bulgarian interests, Vucic plays on the sensitive and unresolved fundamental issues of territorial integrity and nationalist undertones. What unites them is their image as defenders of state interests and the state's conscious personification with themselves. Hence, we argue that the national political elites can use populist and technocratic narratives to secure their grasp on power and at the same time to mitigate the external EU rule of law conditional pressure.

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Research Article

Can Citizen Science Increase Trust in Research? A Case Study of Delineating Polish Metropolitan Areas

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Abstract

We assess the relationship between citizens' participation in scientific research and public trust in research results within social sciences. We conduct an online citizen science quasi-experiment concerning the delineation of metropolitan areas of Poland's two major cities. It consists of two stages. In stage one, participants in one region are exposed to citizen science and directly involved in delineating the boundaries of their local metropolitan area. In stage two, we add another region in which participants are not involved in the research process. In both regions we ask the participants to evaluate the level of their trust in the presented maps of respective metropolitan areas: based on citizen science in one region and historical data regression analysis in the other region. Our contribution to the literature lies in two areas. First, we demonstrate how citizen science can be used in urban studies to delineate boundaries of urban and metropolitan areas exhibiting strong functional connections. Second, we show that the participation of local residents in the research process increases public trust in the study results compared to non-participatory 'traditional academic' research. These results confirm that citizen science programs deserve to be strongly supported by European institutions as a possible means to resolving the credibility crisis of science, research and evidence-based policies.

Keywords

Citizen Science; Social Trust; Trust in Science; Urban Studies; City Boundaries

Public trust in science, or 'the trust that society places in scientific research' (Resnik 2011: 4), has become a key expression in science policy and ethics in recent decades. This growing importance of elucidating the forms and conditions of public trust in science must be considered in the context of a steady and substantial decline in trust in governance across the world, including some European Union (EU) Member States and the EU itself, over the past decade.[1] As noted by Resnik (2011), trust in governance is indeed closely related to trust in science as our 'knowledge societies' are characterised by investment in knowledge as a commons and a public good, which crucially informs policymaking processes and political action (Hess, Ostrom and McCombs 2008; European Commission 2016, 2007). Several reports from worldwide national and supra-national institutions have insisted on the need to overcome science's current 'credibility crisis' (Carrier 2017) and promote a form of public trust towards scientists and/or scientific results (for example Ruiz Bravo 2007; National Academies of Sciences and Medicine 2015; European Commission 2010; Committee on Science, Engineering and Public Policy 2009). However, despite this consensus on the importance of public trust in science for liberal democracies, it is still a challenge to precisely define what kind of public trust in science we want to promote and to identify the social and institutional conditions which could ground it.

Trust in science is determined in a complex manner. First, it depends certainly, but still in an unclear way, on the level of understanding citizens have of scientific assertions (Miller 2004; Allum, Sturgis, Tabourazi and Brunton-Smith 2008). Second, it depends on the diverse expectations of the public respect towards scientific research, which in turn depends on individual interests and social position (Grasswick 2010). Finally, the level and nature of trust are determined by ones' general 'attitude' towards science, which is driven by subjective values, ideologies or psychological states (Rutjens, Heine, Sutton and van Harreveld 2018).

The social and institutional conditions promoting both the credibility and trustworthiness of scientists and scientific results are still strongly debated. In this context, the 'opening-up' of science is increasingly considered as a way to positively influence public trust relationship towards science (Rutjens et al. 2018; Irzik and Kurtulmus 2019; Carrier 2017). This opening-up may take the form of greater involvement of lay citizens in the process of knowledge-making and the production of expertise. Such inclusiveness in scientific research is increasingly valued by scientific institutions, as shown by numerous commissioned reports (for example Office of Science and Technology Policy 2019; European Commission 2016a, 2013) and growing financial support for *citizen science*. The general concept of *citizen science* refers to a large diversity of forms of participation for citizens who are not professional scientists (individual citizens, NGOs, groups of patients, and so on) in the production of scientific knowledge (Eitzel, Cappadonna, Santos-Lang, Duerr, et al. 2017; Cooper and Lewenstein 2016). Citizen science is expected to contribute to scientific knowledge as well as improve public understanding of science (Bonney, Phillips, Ballard and Enck 2016) and let citizens gain policy influence (Van Brussel and Huyse 2019).

As our brief review of literature shows, there seems to be a consensus on the positive impact of citizen science on public trust. However, arguments to date have been based largely on theoretical grounds rather than empirical evidence. We fill this knowledge gap by empirically assessing the relationship between citizens' participation in a scientific research process and public trust in research results in the context of social sciences - urban studies, in particular. The key research question addressed in this article is whether the participation of laypersons or citizen scientists in the research process increases the trust that the public places in the social science research results. We conducted an online citizen science quasi-experiment, concerning the delineation of metropolitan areas of Poland's two major cities. Our quasi-experiment consisted of two phases in which participants were recruited using social media. Our contribution to the literature lies in two areas. First, we demonstrate how citizen science can be used to delineate the boundaries of metropolitan areas. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to explicitly do

this. Although this article focuses on metropolitan areas defined as clusters of towns and villages surrounding major (core) cities and exhibiting strong functional links with the core, the same approach could be followed to delineate boundaries of other urban or regional entities in human geography. Second, we conduct a quasi-experiment aimed at determining whether the participation of local residents in the research process increases public trust in the results compared to the results of non-participatory 'traditional academic' research. Our results confirm that participation of lay citizens in citizen science projects increases their trust in subsequent results.

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. First, we briefly discuss the conceptual framework and literature on public trust in science. We then present the details of our research design and the quasi-experiment. The following two sections present our results. We finally discuss our empirical insights in the perspective of a renewal of the relations between citizens and experts in the contemporaneous context, as characterised by a growing opposition between technocratic and populist discourses.

PUBLIC TRUST IN SCIENCE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL, POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS

Modern societies are often referred to as 'knowledge societies' as they give a central place in social innovation and design of public policy to scientific knowledge. However, basing social bargaining, policymaking and political decisions on scientific knowledge is not without problems as science-based approaches bring a considerable degree of risk and uncertainty. This is particularly true in social sciences where research designs, interpretation of results, and their implications, are extremely difficult to decouple from researchers' pre-existing values and institutional bias. Knowledge should be assisted and supplemented by an in-depth, and comprehensive analysis of what makes evidence useful and usable to policy (Cartwright and Hardie 2012). The social acceptance of scientific knowledge is one of the conditions of this utility. Yet, a central determinant of its social acceptability is the nature and level of trust that society places in scientific research, namely public trust in science. The challenge here is to build a level of public trust that would be robust, informed, and critical (Resnik 2011).

More formally, Irzik and Kurtulmus (2019) define a notion of 'warranted trust' in the following way: an individual (*M*) has a *warranted trust* in a (group of) scientists (*S*) as a provider of information (*P*) if:

> '(1) *S* believes that *P* and honestly (that is, truthfully, accurately, and wholly) communicates it to *M* either directly or indirectly, (2) *M* takes the fact that *S* believes and has communicated that *P* to be a (strong but defeasible) reason to believe that *P*, (3) *P* is the output of reliable scientific research carried out by *S*, and (4) *M* relies on *S* because she has good reasons to believe that *P* is the output of such research and that *S* has communicated *P* honestly'. (Irzik and Kurtulmus 2019: 1149-1150)

In other words, trusting *S* as the provider of *P* implies that *M* has good reasons to believe that *P* is reliable, and that *S* is honest.

The issue is thus: which first-order reasons must the public possess, in order to believe that *P* is the result of reliable research, and that *S* is honest? The difficulty here lies in the epistemic asymmetries between the scientific experts and laypersons. In general, the public is not in a position to understand or evaluate first-order reasons for deciding whether a particular piece of research is reliable. Consequently, it has been defended that the general public should use 'second-order criteria' such as the perceived hierarchy of competence, the absence of conflicts of interests or the state of scientific consensus (Anderson 2011).

The perceptions of first- and second-order reasons to trust science are influenced by various types of determinants. First, some epistemological determinants have been shown to play a role in building public (dis)-trust in science. Let us consider the distinction between publicly-funded research and research sponsored by the private sector. Public research is often considered as being more honest because of the relatively lower rate of conflicts of interests (Ziman 2003) and, effectively, is perceived as more trustworthy. (Critchley 2008; Critchley, Nicol and Otlowski 2015). This is in line with the results of the European Commission's survey which found that 58 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that *'one can no longer trust scientists to tell the truth about controversial issues because they depend more and more on money from industry'* (European Commission 2010: 19). Another epistemological determinant is linked to the confrontation of expertise and counter-expertise in the public space, which is sometimes referred to as the 'expert dilemma' (Grunwald 2003; Carrier 2017). This is often evident in complex debates where the multi-dimensionality of a problem at stake induces disagreements within scientific communities about the way the problem should be addressed (for example the case of GMO in Biddle 2018). Any general knowledge or understanding of science is also intensively discussed as a determinant of the attitude towards science, and in particular, public trust (Miller 2004). However, it is still not clear how public understanding of science influences trust. Allum et al. (2008: 35) found only 'a small positive correlation between general attitudes towards science and general knowledge of scientific facts'. Arguments have also been made that greater science literacy and education go hand in hand with more polarised attitudes on politically controversial science topics (Drummond and Fischhoff 2017). Moreover, attitudes towards specific problems are mediated by an intricate mix of scientific literacy, political ideology, morality, and religious values. The interplay of these elements appears to be especially conspicuous in the attitudes towards climate change (Hornsey and Fielding 2017), theories of evolution (Nadelson and Hardy 2015) and vaccines (Sarathchandra, Navin, Largent and McCright 2018).

This points towards the political and psychological determinants of public trust in science. An important area of research looks at the rejection of science as 'the dismissal of well-established scientific results for reasons that are not scientifically grounded' (Lewandowsky, Gignac and Obernauer 2013: 623; Lewandowsky, Cook, and Lloyd 2018). This phenomenon is also referred to as *rejection of consensus*, indicating the extent to which people identify scientific consensus and assert beliefs that contradict their own perceptions of consensus. Pasek (2018a, 2018b) shows that, in the American context, the degree of rejection of consensus depends on religiosity and partisanship. Also in the American context, Hornsey and Fielding (2017) propose a general framework of 'attitude roots' which drive the motivation to reject science. They distinguish six political and psychological determinants: worldviews, conspiratorial ideation, vested interests, personal identity expression, social identity needs, and fears and phobias. These political and psychological determinants are highly cultural and depend on the national context.

The multiplicity of determinants of public trust in science points to the role played by the institutional features of scientific knowledge production. A growing number of authors call for the opening-up of science as a way to reinforce both the credibility and the trustworthiness of scientists' propositions (Rutjens et al. 2018; Carrier 2017). Public engagement with science is considered as one of the key mechanisms for addressing the crisis of public trust Aitken, Cunningham-Burley and Pagliari 2016). However, the forms that this public engagement should take and their influence on public trust in science remain to be elucidated. In that context, the role of citizen science is debated (Van Brussel and Huyse 2019). As noted by Eleta, Galdon Clavell, Righi and Balestrini (2019: 1), the 'potential [for citizen science] to … counteract mistrust and scepticism about scientific evidence' remains a 'promise' that is still to be fulfilled. First of all, a reliable empirical assessment of how public engagement in scientific research influences the nature and level of trust the public place in scientific results is needed, a research gap that the current article aims to fill. Given the complexity of trust relationships, this influence might depend

on the research area and on social and cultural contexts in which public engagement is included.

In this article, we consider the case of public participation in urban studies. Citizen participation in geography mostly takes the form of what Sui, Elwood and Goodchild (2012) call geo-crowdsourcing. This kind of citizen science relies on the voluntary geographical information model first described by Goodchild (2007), where citizens play the role of 'sensors' reporting geographical data, mostly in a passive way. In contrast, our quasi-experimental citizen science project introduces a larger affective and cognitive investment from citizens who are actively involved in the identification and application of relevant criteria, to delineate urban functional areas. Our study thus aims to answer the following question: to what extent does active citizen participation in urban geography research influence the trust they place in scientific results ? We anticipate that this study will help to better grasp the role that citizen science may play in building a justified epistemic trust in science and scientists.

EMPIRICAL STUDY DESIGN

We conduct a two-stage quasi-experiment. In the first stage, the city and region of Łódź serve as the 'treatment region' where residents receive the 'treatment' of participation in a citizen science project aimed at delineating the boundaries of the metropolitan area. Although our study is not the first to use the participatory approach to the delineation of urban areas, we are the first to explicitly base our work on citizen science methods. Involving local residents in the delineation process is an appealing prospect as it allows us to tap into local knowledge – who better knows a city, town or village but people who live and work there every day. Thus, we expect citizens' practical knowledge of the terrain, transport and social connections and experience of services offered by local authorities, public institutions and businesses to be far superior to that of distant researchers.

In stage two, we introduce the city and region of Kraków as the 'control region' where residents did not participate in any delineation exercise. In both regions, we conduct an online survey in which we present results of the delineation research along with basic information about methods used. In Łódź, this is the citizen science project and the resulting map of the Łódź metropolitan area. In Kraków, this is a purely desk-based, academic-led delineation study utilising historical data from national statistical service and econometric regression methods, along with the resulting map. In the survey, we asked questions to ascertain levels of trust in the two sets of results. Subsequently, we compared the survey results from the two regions to determine whether involving citizens in the research process could have an impact on public trust in, and public perception of, research results.[2]

THE TALE OF TWO CITIES

We deployed our quasi-experiment in Kraków and Łódź (and their outskirts) which are, respectively, the second and third Polish cities in terms of population size. Our geographic unit of analysis is 'gmina' – the principal (lowest) unit of the administrative division of Poland. We ran a Facebook campaign aimed at recruiting participants living within 35 km radius from the centre of either core city. In each stage, participants were invited to contribute to the study over three weeks' periods: stage one in Łódź ran from 8 to 29 July 2020, and stage two ran both in Łódź and Kraków between 19 August and 9 September 2020. Table 1 compares key characteristics of the two cities, the study's geographic coverage area and the demographic profile of recruited study participants.

Table 1: Key characteristics of the study's geographic coverage area

	General population				Study participants		
	Łódź		Kraków		Łódź		Kraków
	City	Within 35 km	City	Within 35 km	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 2
Population (thousands) / participants	680	1,169	779	1,527	174	164	158
average age (years)	45.5	44.1	42.6	41.1	34.8	31.6	26.25
working age (%)	56.4	57.6	59.1	60	71.6	62	82
pre-working age (below 18, %)	15.1	16.1	17.2	18.7	13.6	23	15.3
retirement age (%)	28.5	26.3	23.7	21.3	14.8	15	2.7
female (%)	54.4	53.5	53.3	52	43.6	32.5	14.6
tertiary education[a] (%)	23.5	19.9	33.7	24.35	48.5	30.1	36.3
secondary education[a] (%)	39.9	37.3	38.4	34.6	40.4	47.2	44.6
Facebook: potential reach[b] (thousand users)		770		930			

Unless specified otherwise, the data is for 2019 and taken from Statistics Poland BDL (https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/start). [a] National Census 2011. [b] According to Facebook, the potential number of users that could be reached within 35 km of the city core, aged 16 and above.

At the city level, Kraków is larger in terms of population size and geographical area. When we look at the population characteristics, Kraków's inhabitants appear younger, with a slightly lower average age, a larger share of people of working age and significantly fewer of retirement age. A feature that sets the two cities apart is the educational structure: a third of Krakovians have a university degree, compared to less than a quarter in Łódź. Going beyond the city limits, our 'catchment areas', i.e. clusters of *gminas* located within 35 km of the core city centres, have populations of approximately 1.2 and 1.5 million inhabitants for Łódź and Kraków, respectively. The bottom row of Table 1 shows the potential reach of our Facebook campaign (that is, an estimated number of Facebook users based on Facebook's own calculations who lived within the catchment areas and were 16 or more years of age at the campaign's onset). Consistent with the larger number of inhabitants in Kraków and its vicinity, it is not surprising that its potential reach is 160,000 users larger than that of Łódź.

The last three columns of Table 1 present the basic demographic characteristics of our study's participants. Despite Łódź's smaller population size and Facebook's potential reach, our project attracted a moderately larger number of participants in Łódź than in Kraków. In the former, we had 174 and 164 participants at stages one and two, respectively, whereas stage two in Kraków attracted 158 participants. When we consider stage two only, the difference of six respondents between the two cities appears negligible and does not pose problems for the validity of the comparative analysis presented in the remainder of this article. Overall, it is clear that the study's participants do not form a statistically representative sample of the general population. The most striking differences are in age and gender. The study participants' average age is much lower than observed within the cities and catchment areas' populations. Females constitute over 50 per cent of all residents but they are significantly underrepresented, especially in stage two of our study.

Only one in three participants were female in Łódź. This number drops even further in Kraków where only one in seven were female. Other differences appear less striking although still significant. For example, more participants possessed a higher degree compared to the general populations. The difference is particularly conspicuous in stage one in Łódź where nearly half of the participants were university graduates, more than twice the share observed within the general population.

Citizen science projects do not usually require participants to form a group that is statistically representative of the general population. This has not been our intention either and should not undermine the results of our citizen science project in stage one of the study. However, the lack of statistical representativeness must be borne in mind when interpreting the results pertaining to the trust in research results in stage two and attempting to generalise them to a wider population.

RESULTS

In stage one, we consider empirical results from the citizen science project conducted around the city of Łódź. The main objectives of this exercise were to expose the local public to the research process and construct a map of the Łódź metropolitan area, based on citizen scientists' contributions. To ensure that answers to the delineation questions presented in Table A1 of the online appendix were reliable, and supported by a cognitive process, we provided participants with an explanation of the aims of the delineation study as well as a relevant definition of a metropolitan area.

Citizen scientists appear to agree that the practicalities of everyday life are the most important links forming the metropolitan area. An overwhelming majority of participants indicated access to public transportation and share of residents commuting to the core city as important criteria. What is worth noticing is that administrative decisions of central government are on the opposite end of the spectrum: 83 per cent of participants found them unimportant. Some respondents were keen to contribute additional factors. The most frequent ones were inhabitants' identifying themselves as Łodzians, the existence of strong emotional and historical ties to the core city, degree of urbanisation, enhanced cooperation and common ventures of *gminas*' authorities with the city of Łódź.

Following our analysis of citizen scientists' contributions, we drew a map of the Łódź metropolitan area based on citizens' responses to two key questions. First, whether in their opinion and experience the *gmina* in which they lived, worked, and attended school or university, belonged to the 'metropolitan area'. *Gminas* which were identified as such by at least 50 per cent of participants are selected as potential components of our citizen science map. Figure 1 shows that such *gminas* tend to cluster around the city of Łódź. Second, we asked them how far the metropolitan area spreads away from the centre of Łódź. The responses to this question were fairly consistent as citizen scientists indicated 30 km as the relevant radius (mean answer 30.48 km, median 30 km). Figure 2 displays the citizen science map of the metropolitan area (panel a.) and compares it to the delineation results obtained using econometric estimation methods (panel b.)[3].

Figure 1: Geographic extent of responses and share of respondents declaring that gminas belong to the metropolitan area

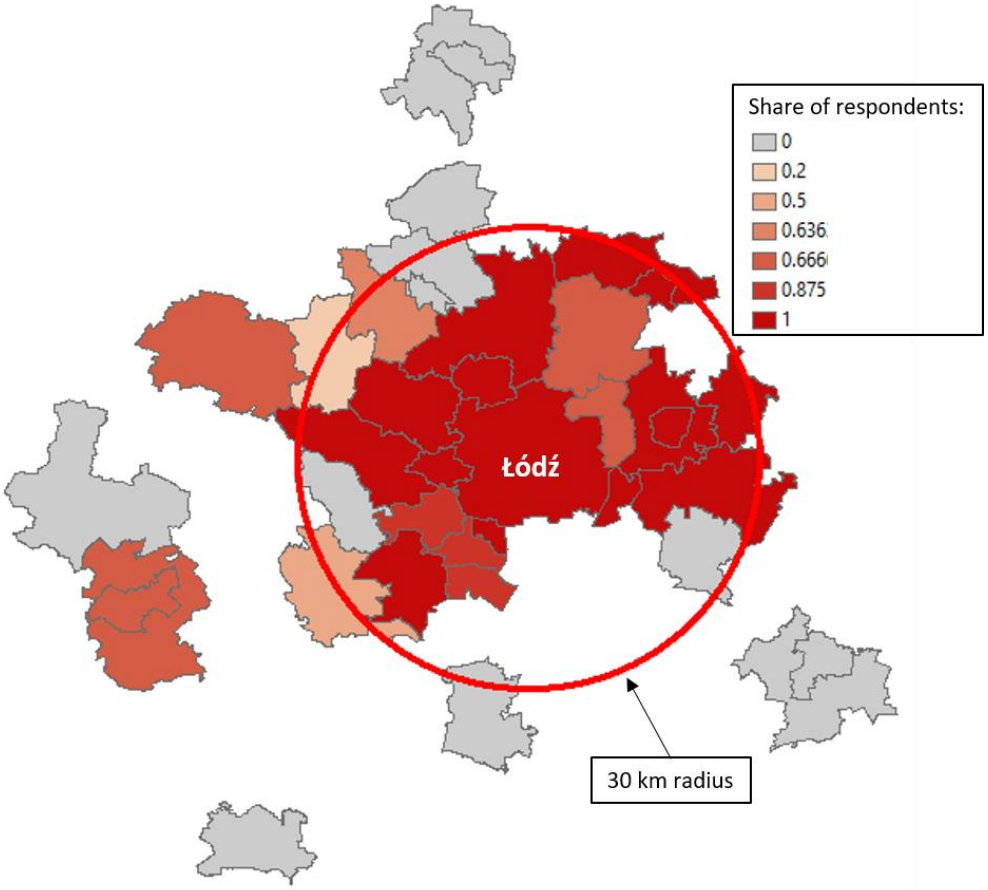
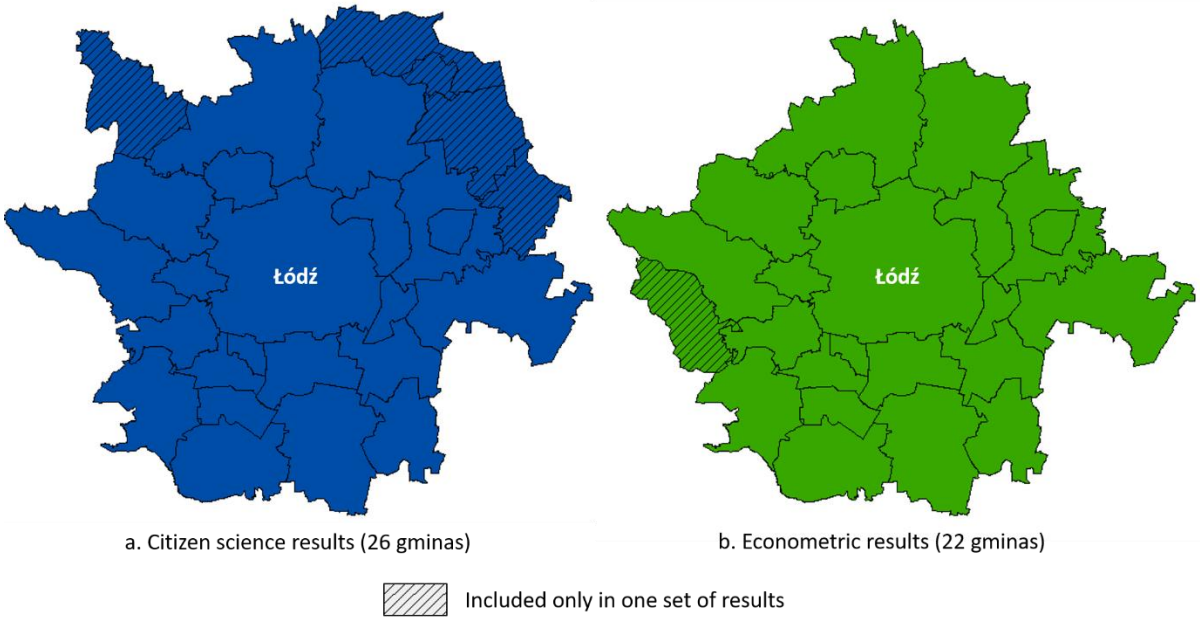


Figure 2: Maps of the Łódź metropolitan area used in stage two



The results of the delineation exercise presented in panel a. of Figure 2 are based on the contributions of a limited number of citizen scientists, and almost certainly could be improved by, for example, involving more participants or developing cognitively more advanced ways of engagement. Nonetheless, the primary aim of this study is not to develop a citizen science project which is epistemically robust, but to test whether involving laypersons in scientific research affects the trust that the public places in the results of scientific research. In this context, the presence of cognitive engagement from citizens is the most important determinant of the robustness of our study.

Stage two of our quasi-experiment aimed at comparing the levels of laypersons' trust in research results. To evaluate the influence of citizen participation on that trust, we developed an online survey (see Table A2 in the online appendix for the list of questions) which was promoted via Facebook among inhabitants of our treatment and control regions, and asked them to evaluate their trust in and perceived reliability of the presented research results in the form of a map of the relevant metropolitan area.

In both regions, the respondents were provided with basic information on the research process, with an emphasis on whether it involved the direct participation of citizen scientists or was purely academic research performed without laypersons' involvement. In the treatment region, Łódź, where the population was exposed to the citizen science project, respondents were shown the results of the delineation exercise conducted in stage one of the current study (panel a. of Figure 2). In the control region, Kraków, respondents were asked to evaluate the trustworthiness and reliability of the results of, previously mentioned, purely econometric and desk-based research delineating the metropolitan area of Kraków conducted by Gawrońska-Nowak, Lis and Zadorozhna (Forthcoming, see Figure B1 in the online appendix). Additionally in final questions, respondents in the Łódź region were also shown the map of the city's metropolitan area based on (Gawrońska-Nowak, Lis and Zadorozhna Forthcoming) as shown in panel b. of Figure 2 and provided with the background information. Consequently, they were asked to indicate which map, citizen-science or econometric based, provided a better representation of the actual Łódź metropolitan area and the results of which study were more trustworthy. The results are presented in Table 2. In addition, we test whether the differences in the levels of trust between Łódź and Kraków are statistically significant (Table C1 in the online appendix shows the relevant test results).

Our main observation is that people in the region of Łódź find citizen science results more reliable, and more trustworthy, than people in the region of Kraków, concerning econometric results (the differences are statistically significant at the 5 per cent and 1 per cent significance levels, respectively). When we delve deeper, we notice that the differences in trust levels come mostly from individuals with either secondary or primary education who are more likely to trust the citizen science results (the differences between Łódź and Kraków within these groups are statistically significant at the 5 per cent and 10 per cent significance levels). There is no statistically significant difference in trust between the two-city regions among people with tertiary education. When we consider the age groups, young and middle-aged people (aged 16 to 49) tend to trust the citizen science results more than the econometric results (statistical significance at 5 per cent). Unfortunately, women are rather underrepresented in the survey, especially when we look at Kraków. Therefore, we are unable to draw reliable conclusions on the relationship between gender characteristics and trust in our research results. Given that in both cities females represent 50 per cent of the population, understanding why they appear less likely to participate in research projects like ours is an attractive avenue for future research.

For brevity we do not describe in detail the remaining figures shown in Table 2, as they are self-explanatory. Overall, our survey results lead us to conclude that participation in citizen science projects has the potential to increase public trust in research outcomes. This is a positive finding as it illustrates that higher trust in research results should help to increase the overall trust that people place in science and scientists, which is crucial for

the sustained development of modern knowledge-based societies in which levels of mistrust are the focus of frequent media attention. There is still the question of whether citizen science increases trust only among individuals directly involved in the participatory research process (in our case, those who participated in phase one in Łódź), or whether knowledge that laypersons participated in the research can increase the level of trust among the general population. Our results suggest that the latter might be the case. Around 80 per cent of respondents in phase two in Łódź did not participate in phase one, and within that group the level of trust appears higher than among those who had taken part in phase one. Thus, we have no reason to believe that the beneficial impact of social science on trust is limited only to individuals directly involved in the research.

There are a few caveats to consider. First, the underrepresentation of women requires further investigations, and deserves special attention if the research community is to ensure the efficacy of citizen science projects in the future. Second, it remains an open question as to what could encourage people without tertiary (higher) education to be less sceptical or less neutral about citizen science projects, in order to transform them into supporters and promoters of that approach. Third, there is no guarantee that lay citizens living in the Polish metropolitan areas exhibit a universal pattern of behaviour that could be generalised to other places and societies. Neither can we cannot assume the opposite, and this requires further research.

Table 2: Trust in research results and their reliability

	Map is a good representation				Results can be trusted				Łódź only: citizen science vs. econometric study			
	Kraków		Łódź		Kraków		Łódź		Better map		More trustworthy	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	CSP	Econ.	CSP	Econ.
Overall sample	76%	24%	87%	13%	79%	21%	92%	8%	40%	35%	47%	30%
Participated in stage one[a]			84%	16%			84%	16%	42%	24%	61%	18%
In employment	76%	24%	90%	10%	79%	21%	88%	12%	36%	36%	49%	29%
In education	81%	19%	87%	13%	83%	17%	94%	6%	38%	36%	40%	34%
Retired	100%	0%	88%	13%	86%	14%	95%	5%	35%	27%	62%	19%
Education level												
Tertiary education	74%	26%	84%	16%	79%	21%	86%	14%	41%	24%	43%	22%
Secondary education	76%	24%	88%	12%	81%	19%	93%	7%	38%	40%	49%	34%
Below secondary	79%	21%	90%	10%	72%	28%	96%	4%	41%	38%	49%	32%
Female	95%	5%	89%	11%	96%	4%	89%	11%	40%	28%	47%	26%
Male	73%	27%	87%	13%	77%	23%	93%	7%	40%	37%	47%	32%
Age (years)												
16 - 29	77%	23%	86%	14%	81%	19%	92%	8%	36%	39%	40%	36%

	Map is a good representation				Results can be trusted				Łódź only: citizen science vs. econometric study			
	Kraków		Łódź		Kraków		Łódź		Better map		More trustworthy	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	CSP	Econ.	CSP	Econ.
30 - 49	67%	33%	100%	0%	73%	27%	100%	0%	50%	29%	57%	21%
50 - 64	67%	33%	93%	7%	71%	29%	86%	14%	35%	29%	65%	18%
65 and more	89%	11%	84%	16%	80%	20%	89%	11%	50%	23%	58%	19%

[a] 20.1% of respondents declared participation in stage one citizen science project.

DISCUSSION

This contribution pursued two distinct aims: developing new participatory methods to delineate metropolitan areas; and testing wether the use of this method influences public trust in scientific results and expertise. Before discussing our results, let us make some brief methodological remarks. First, we focused on trust placed in scientific results by citizens; this affective dimension cannot be directly related to the trustworthiness of the method used to produce our delineation results. In particular, the objective reliability of the method we propose should be assessed, notably by focusing more thorouthgly on the statistical significance of the population sample used to produce delimitation result. Second, we mostly tested here the trust placed in scientific results by citizen who were already engaged in our participatory research. It would be of interest to extend our work by also taking into account citizens who did not take part in the research. Concerning these two points, there is clearly room for futher research which would apply our delineation methods to other metropolitan areas.

In our fragmented and polarised societies, one of the dividing lines between technocracy and populism appears to surround what source(s) of knowledge and information are more trusted: expert knowledge or the 'true people voice', claimed to be represented by populists. The literature suggests that citizen science may provide an opportunity to break this polarisation by democratising science, exposing laypersons to the rigorous and methodological reasoning of scientists, informing them of research motivations, aims and drivers, and therefore increasing public trust in evidence-based knowledge and policies. Thus, by strengthening the fabric of knowledge-based societies, citizen science has the potential to help to mitigate the risks of populism. By showing that participation in our delineation study increases trust in the research results, especially among people without tertiary education, we demonstrate that citizen science is able to deliver on that promise. Our results suggest that participation in research is not merely beneficial because it increases epistemic trust in science, but also because it positively influences the most emotional drivers of trust.

Indeed, the advantage that citizen science has over the traditional top-down technocratic approach, both in research and policymaking, is that it is not afraid to treat laypersons as equal to experts, which triggers human passions and feelings such as confidence, trust and loyalty (Barbalet 1996). In our case study, citizen scientists consisting of the inhabitants of the Łódz region frequently identified themselves as 'Łodzians', even if formally they did not live within the city limits. They were showing and proving the existence of strong emotional and historical ties to the core city, and their involvement in the citizen science project was largely motivated by their emotional bond with the city. By contrast, in the philosophy of science literature, we find an increasing discontent over the sharp separation of emotions from science:

> Science can proceed only when emotions are excluded. This conventional view is widely held but false; indeed, practically meaningless. On the contrary: the issues must be: Which emotions? and how do they specifically relate to the activities at hand?' (Barbalet 2002: 132)

The clash between technocrats and populists is largely about human and societal emotions. Technocrats lose this clash essentially because of their inability to engage with human emotions.

Promoting laypersons' engagement in citizen science,which is characterised by cognitive, affective, social, behavioural and motivational dimensions, seems to be a real opportunity to break the populists' monopoly on the management of human and societal emotions. Nevertheless, effective implementation of citizen science projects requires some conditions to be met. Some of these are quite prosaic and practical (for example lack of funding or lack of training), but others seem to be more complex, ethical, methodological and theoretical concerns about whether citizen science can live up to standards of good scientific practice. After all, citizen science must also be 'good science' which conforms to

rigorous epistemological standards that high-quality research must meet. Even though some of these concerns are highly relevant, none of these concerns provides a compelling reason to challenge the overall need of the existence and development of citizen science in principle.

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ENDNOTES

[1]Survey data are consistent in showing that citizens express less trust in parliaments and political parties as well as politicians and experts (see the Edelman Trust Barometer, https://www.edelman.com/trustbarometer).

[2] For brevity, we do not present the detailed results and methods of the econometric analysis as they are not the focus of the current article. Detailed information on the econometric analysis can be found in Gawrońska-Nowak, Lis and Zadorozhna (2021) or obtained from the authors. The whole quasi-experiment procedure that we designed was inspired by a field experiment methodology developed by Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer in their Nobel Prize-winning works (see Duflo, Kremer and Robinson 2008; Banerjee and Duflo 2009).

[3] The econometric analysis was performed jointly for five Polish cities with population of 500,000 inhabitants or more using threshold regression and spatial threshold regression models with the number of commuters to the core city as the dependent variable. A detailed explanation of the analysis can be found in wrońska-Nowak, Lis and Zadorozhna (2021).

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APPENDIX A. SURVEY DESIGN

Table A1. Stage One: Delineation survey questions

Questions
All participants
In which gmina or city do you live?
According to you, is the gmina you live in a part of the Łódź metropolitan area?
Do you work?
What city or gmina do you work in?
Do you go to school or study?
In which city or gmina do you attend school / university?
Participants not living in the city of Łódź
How often you visit Łódź for the following reasons: Work / Shopping / Visiting family or friends / Doctor / Entertainment and culture / Recreation
Is it easy to get to Łódź from your gmina by public transport?
Participants living in the city of Łódź
For each of the following, select the appropriate answer:
My workplace is located in Łódź / outside Łódź
My school or university is located in Łódź / outside Łódź
My immediate family lives in Łódź / outside Łódź
If your workplace or school is outside Łódź, do you think their location belongs to the Łódź metropolitan area?
Please indicate how often you visit the suburban areas for the following reasons: Work / Shopping / Visiting family or friends / Doctor / Entertainment and culture / Recreation
Do you think it is easy to get from Łódź to suburban areas by public transport?
All participants
According to your knowledge, how many kilometers from the Łódź city centre does the Łódź metropolitan area spread?
What factors determine whether a town belongs to the agglomeration area of Łódź? Indicate their importance: Good access to public transport / Decision of the government in Warsaw / Number of residents commuting to Łódz to work or school / Number of residents who travel to Łódź for shopping / Number of residents who travel to Łódź to see a doctor / Visits for cultural and entertainment purposes.
Do you think any more criteria should be added to the list from the previous question?
What other criteria or factors deciding whether a gmina belongs to the metropolitan area of Łódź would you add to the previous list?

Provide specific names of locations, landmarks that, according to your knowledge, mark the border of the Łódź metropolitan area.
Do you have a driving license?
Do you own a car?
How old are you?
Are you a woman / man / don't want to say?
What is your education?
1.General informations: age, education level, genre, employment, 'gminas' (administrative subdivision) of residence, driving licence
2.In your opinion, does the local area where you live belong to the Lodz metropolitan area ?
3. Indicate how often do you travel to Lodz (from Lodz to neighbouring gminas) for work/shopping/visiting family and friends/doctor visit/entertainment and culture/sport and active time (scale: never/once or several times a year/several times a month/several times a week/every day)
4.Is it easy to reach Łódź (from suburban areas) by public transport (scale: very difficult/difficult/easy/very easy/I do not know) ?
5.What factors determine whether an area belongs to Lodz metropolitan area (see table 2 for the criteria which are proposed) ?
6. Would you add another criteria ?

Table A2. Stage Two: Survey questions

	Question	Asked in	
		Łódź	Kraków
1	Did you take part in the first stage of our study "Is Łódź also yours?" in July?	x	
2	In which gmina or city do you live?	x	x
	Respndents are shown a map description as in Figure 2 panel a for Łódź and Figure B1 in Appendix B for Kraków		
3	In your opinion, is the gmina you live in correctly "incorporated into" or "excluded from" the Łódź/Kraków metropolitan area on the map above?	x	x
4	Do you think that the above map shows the shape and extent of the Łódź/Kraków metopolitan area well?	x	x
5	Should any gminas be added to the above area? If so, list which ones.	x	x
6	Should any communes be excluded from the above-mentioned area? If so, list which ones.	x	x
7	Do you think the above results can be trusted?	x	x
	Respondents from Łódź area are shown the econometric results and brief description		
8	In your opinion, the results of which research better present the area of the Łódź metropolitan area?	x	
9	In your opinion, which research results are more reliable?	x	
	Demographics: questions on age, education, gender, employment status	x	x

APPENDIX B. METROPOLITAN AREAS: CONSTITUENT GMINAS

Łódź metropolitan area according to the citizen science project in stage one, see panel a of:

Aleksandrów Łódzki, Andrespol, Brójce, Brzeziny, Czarnocin, Dłutów, Dmosin, Dobroń, Głowno, Koluszki, Konstantynów Łódzki, Ksawerów, Łódź, Lutomiersk, Nowosolna, Pabianice, Parzęczew, Rogów, Stryków, Tuszyn, Zgierz.

Łódź metropolitan area according to Gawrońska-Nowak, Lis and Zadorozhna (2021), see panel b of:

Aleksandrów Łódzki, Andrespol, Brójce, Brzeziny, Czarnocin, Dłutów, Dobroń, Koluszki, Konstantynów Łódzki, Ksawerów, Łódź, Lutomiersk, Nowosolna, Pabianice, Rzgów, Stryków, Tuszyn, Wodzierady, Zgierz.

Kraków metropolitan area according to wrońska-Nowak, Lis and Zadorozhna (2021):

Biskupice, Czernichów, Dobczyce, Gdów, Igołomia-Wawrzeńczyce, Iwanowice, Kłaj, Kocmyrzów-Luborzyca, Koniusza, Kraków, Liszki, Michałowice, Mogilany, Myślenice, Niepołomice, Siepraw, Skała, Skawina, Słomniki, Świątniki Górne, Wieliczka, Wielka Wieś, Zabierzów, Zielonki.

Figure B1. Kraków metropolitan area according to the econometric analysis (24 gminas)

APPENDIX C. DIFFERENCES IN TRUST LEVELS

Table C1. Statistical significance of differences in trust levels between Łódź and Kraków

	Indicating trust in research results			Uncorrected chi-square	Design-based F	df	p-value	
	Łódź	Kraków	Diff.					
General sample	92%	79%	13%	8.37	8.31	277	0.0043	***
In employment	88%	79%	9%	1.49	1.46	148	0.2284	
In education	94%	83%	11%	4.84	4.77	177	0.0302	**
Retired	95%	86%	9%	0.59	0.53	24	0.4751	
Education level								
Tertiary education	86%	79%	7%	0.758	0.74	91	0.3921	
Secondary education	93%	81%	12%	3.89	3.83	127	0.05	**
Below secondary	96%	72%	24%	4.79	4.6	50	0.0368	**
			0%					
Female	89%	96%	-7%	0.83	0.79	57	0.3765	
Male	93%	77%	16%	8.92	8.82	212	0.0033	***
Age (years)								
16 - 29	92%	81%	11%	4.9	4.84	191	0.0289	**
30 - 49	100%	73%	27%	3.34	4.86	34	0.0344	**
50 - 64	86%	71%	14%	0.62	0.55	19	0.4679	
65 and more	89%	80%	9%	0.4945	0.4558	27	0.5053	

Diff. - difference between trust levels in Łódź and Kraków. df - degrees of freedom. Difference is statistically significantly different from zero at *** 1%, ** 5% significance level.

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Book Review

Transregional Europe

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Abstract

The book explores the transregional dimension of both the conception of European spatial planning as well as the activity and praxis of transnational collaboration in Europe. A particular emphasis is put on the EU's 'macro-regions' which have been developed since 2009 in an attempt for forge functional collaboration across large-scale territories above the nation-states and going beyond mere cross-border cooperation.

Keywords

Trans-regional; European Spatial Planning; EU Macro-regions; EU Macro-regional Strategies; Territorial; Discursive Institutionalism

"Do Europeans actually feel European?" This is a question that has regularly been put forward in Eurobarometer surveys and policy reports; it has also featured prominently as a research question in scholarly literature seeking to measure the depth and breadth of identity amongst citizens in Europe. What has been missing thus far, however, is an account of how much Europeans have begun to feel themselves attached to broader geographical concepts that transcend national borders and could be likened to North American ideas of 'the Mid-West', the 'West Coast' or 'Cascadia'. Have Europeans of the Baltic, the Danubian or the Atlantic areas developed any comparable sense of belonging and identity *vis-à-vis* these 'macro-regions'? Such questions are at the centre of *Transregional Europe,* William Outhwaite's theoretically well-informed and short book which nonetheless provides an in-depth account of what transregional Europe entails.

The first chapter paves the scholarly ground by dissecting the 'mental maps' that have emerged in both the European elite and European peoples. As the chapter demonstrates, the sociological literature on the idea of 'imagined communities' is as abundantly rich as that which is concerned with the role of regions in Europe. Outhwaite provides a succinct analysis of how, over recent decades, European spatial planners have sought to inform and construct a new regionalism in Europe. Most recently this has taken the form of so-called macro-regions, new planning tools that rescale territorial spaces, such as the Danube region, cut across EU/non-EU binaries and include both public and private sector stakeholders. Although these planning tools seem primarily aimed at building a new governance architecture to address transregional policy challenges (such as river navigation, pollution and economic development) they are also underpinned by the ambition of both tangible and intangible Europeanization. By drawing on new regionalism thinking , particularly discursive institutionalism (Vivian Schmidt, 2008) and by focusing on the interplay of ideas and discourse that underpin policy processes, the author seeks to trace the stickiness of historical and cultural characteristics that inform the contemporary EU's macro-regional efforts. Based on the theoretical context and frameworks in chapter one, in the three subsequent chapters, the author provides a detailed history, explanation and analysis of macro-regional planning policies that the EU introduced after 2009.

Chapters 2 to 4 provide the reader with some thorough background on the development of 'regional conceptualizations' in Europe. In doing so, Outhwaite traces the history of broad regional conceptions in Europe, the author argues that there is a dual determinism that derives from the political philosophy of Charles de Montesquieu[1] who believed (1) that regions are geographically determined by climate and (2) that future developments are, by and large, historically determined. Outhwaite then provides concise analyses of long-standing conceptualizations such as 'Central Europe', 'the Balkans', 'Norden' and 'the Mediterranean'. Following this, the author traces the origins of conceptions of a 'united Europe' as they can be found in the writings of Victor Hugo, Henri de Saint-Simon[2] and other renowned proponents of pan-European thinking. From here, the author moves to discuss the constituent features of European regions based in natural, linguistic and religious demarcations. By doing this, the author discloses the pre-political dimension of European regionalism; it becomes clear through this discussion just how different the conceptualisations of macro-regions are – Outhwaite identified nine biogeographic regions in the contemporary EU based on a characteristic blend of vegetation, climate and topography. Interestingly, with the exception of the Alpine region, none of these nine macro-regions align with the macro-regional planning that the EU introduced in 2009. Notably, the four EU macro-regional strategies – for the Baltic Sea Region (2009), the Danube Region (2011), the Adriatic-Ionian Region (2014) and the Alpine Region Strategy (2015) – have been endorsed to date and each are at different stages of implementation. Areas of cooperation in the current macro-regional strategies range from navigation, climate change, biodiversity and infrastructure to economic development, education, tourism and civil security.

Chapter 5 centres on macro-regions and macro-regional planning. While some macro-regions identified are addressed in contemporary EU macro-regional strategies – for example the Strategy for the Baltic Sea region – others have instead been discussed within the existing set of discursive strategies – for example the sea-basin-based North Sea and Atlantic strategies. Macro-regional strategies were first introduced on the EU stage in the aftermath of the EU's Eastern enlargement of 2004/2007 and were intended as an initiative to consolidate old and new Member States of the Baltic Sea region as a group inside the EU. In some of the academic literature, macro-regional strategies are discussed as a response to pan-European documents such as the Lisbon, Gothenburg and Europe 2020 strategies, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and other European territorial cooperation activities. Cross-border and interregional cooperation in general, and INTERREG programmes (an important funding source for fostering territorial cooperation projects in the EU) in particular, are widely seen as a precursor the large scale macro-regional cooperation arrangements at the supra-national scale. In a nutshell, macro-regional strategies are conceived as integrated frameworks for cooperation to address common and functional challenges in the specific territories they define. The strategies aim to coordinate the development of policy goals in an international context while, at the same time, supplying a governance structure to support implementation. In contrast to the contractual frameworks evident in existing international conventions which are most often focused on environmental goals (e.g., the Alpine Convention or the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River), these macro-regional strategies are more ambitious; at least , they are on paper.

As Outhwaite succinctly argues, macro-regional strategies are also discursive strategies, employed by EU institutions to challenge the continuous preponderance of the nation state. Following Simona Piattoni's work on multi-level governance (2010), the author identifies this approach as deeply grounded in discursive institutionalism, an approach aimed at rescaling governance through narratives and discourse. Another feature of this strategy becomes manifest in the dominant narrative deployed by the European Commission which maintains the so-called "three no's'", whereby, no new EU legislation, no new EU institutions, and no new EU budget should be used to provide direct or immediate support to EU macro-regional strategies, at least for now. It is only through the ongoing negotiations for the 2021-27 EU budget that macro-regional strategies are permitted to receive extra funding through the European Structural and Investment Funds rather than solely through various INTERREG initiatives as has been the case up to now. The strong variation in the achievements of the four macro-regions is partly due to their different timeframes of development, however, *Transregional Europe* argues that the more important causes of variation are differentiation in geopolitical context, organisational landscape, administrative capacity and policy priorities.

In Chapter 6 the analysis progresses to consider the competing models of regionalism at the margins of the European continent. A first focus of the discussion is the Russia-inspired Eurasian Economic Union that mimics the EU institutionally but has a different set of goals and is driven by the logic of intergovernmentalism with Russia as *primus inter pares*. A second analytical focus is devoted to various Chinese initiatives included in the so-called 'Belt and Road Initiative' that began in 2013. Contrasting these two regionalisms, the discussion notes that whereas Russia's approach is characterised by statism, China's is purely functional and, Outhwaite argues, completely detached from territorial aspects. To conclude the book, Chapter 7 discusses the role of migration and tourism, which has grown substantially as part of European integration and proposes this to be a supplementary way in which macro-regional conceptions have become increasingly relevant for contemporary Europeans.

One of the central arguments of Outhwaite's book is that trans-regional conceptions and transregional integration have essentially taken two forms: one derives from explicit planning at a policy and operational level; the other is more spontaneous and can have unintended consequences. While many of the early EU cross-border initiatives were

supported by local communities in a bottom-up fashion, post-2009 macro-regional strategies are best described as a mixture of closely intertwined top-down *and* bottom-up policy processes with the latter characterizing those initiatives that cannot rely on an existing fabric of transregional policy practices. Although the author admits that symbolism characterises much of EU planning, Outhwaite remains optimistic about the potential of EU macro-regions. Overall, this book offers a very dense, theoretically rich and interdisciplinary *tour d'horizon* of the emergence of transregional Europe which is likely to become even more relevant in light of the growing importance of subnational authorities in Europe, including the post-Brexit United Kingdom, in maintaining and furthering "transregional Europe".

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

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ENDNOTES

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