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Contributors

Cornelia Baciu, *University of Copenhagen*

Eleanor Brooks, *University of Edinburgh*

Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska, *University of Łódź,*

Kristin Edquist, *Eastern Washington University*

Anna Elomäki, *Tampere University*

Michelle Falkenbach, *Cornell University*

Barbara Gaweda, *Tampere University*

Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll, *Centre for European Youth Policy at the German Youth Institute*

Tomasz Kamiński, *University of Łódź*

Daniela Keilberth*, Centre for European Youth Policy at the German Youth Institute*

Dominika Kunertova, *University of Southern Denmark*

Ian P. McManus, *Marlboro Institute for Liberal Arts and Interdisciplinary Studies, Emerson College*

Frauke Pipart, *University of Louvain and Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique*

Angélica Szucko, *University of Brasília*

Mengia Tschalaer, *City University of New York*

Martin Westlake, College of Europe, Bruges, and *London School of Economics*

Research Article

A Hollow Victory: Understanding the Anti-Immigration Shift of Denmark's Social Democrats

Ian P. McManus and Michelle Falkenbach

Abstract

The Social Democratic victory in the 2019 Danish general election was a surprising and notable event. The election stands out as an important win for Social Democrats as this party family has experienced a significant decline in voter support across Europe in recent decades. At the same time, the election was marked by controversy as Denmark's Social Democrats not only doubled-down on their traditional support for the welfare state but also took a sharp turn to the right on immigration policies. This article analyses the effects of political systems, ideology and polarisation, as well as issue salience and framing on party strategies. These variables help to account for the abrupt policy shift adopted by the Social Democrats in Denmark and why similar anti-immigration platforms were not embraced by Social Democratic parties in other Nordic countries. Further examination of voter survey data suggests that the adoption of stronger anti-immigration policies is likely to be an ineffective strategy for Social Democrats going forward.

Keywords

The success of Denmark's Social Democrats in the 2019 general election stands out as an important victory given that the twenty-first century has seen a significant decline in electoral support for Social Democratic parties across Europe (Downes and Chan 2018). Hypotheses for this downward trend include changes in the economies of advanced capitalist states (Graziano and Hartlapp 2019; Buck 2018) to the transformation of an industry-based economy into a service-based one leaving collectivist policies no longer fit for the age of free trade and automation (Downes and Chan 2018; Benedetto Hix and Mastrorocco 2019) as well as several other social, economic, and political shifts (Toubeau 2017; Rennwald and Pontusson 2019; Karnitschnig 2018; Falkenbach and Greer 2018; Downes and Chan 2018). At the same time, the election was marked by controversy as Denmark's Social Democrats not only doubled-down on their traditional support for the welfare state, thereby going back to their party roots, but also made a sharp turn to the right on immigration. This is surprising considering that the party's platform on the welfare state reflects an underlying ideology of egalitarianism while their current agenda on immigration is based on restricting equality and opportunity to citizens only. These two positions highlight tensions between the liberal ideals of the party and a nationalist insider-outsider divide over who should be counted as a member of society. The article makes an important contribution to the literature by analysing the co-option strategy hypothesis to explain why the Social Democrats adopted an anti-immigrant stance and evaluating whether this policy shift is an effective electoral strategy. Ultimately, we argue that this far-right co-option strategy is out of sync with prospective voter preferences and not a viable strategy for Social Democratic parties in Denmark or across Nordic states seeking to achieve electoral success.

The resurgence of the Social Democratic Party in Denmark raises several key questions which we seek to answer in this article. First, what factors help explain Denmark's Social Democrats' policy shift to the right on immigration? Second, to what degree did this strategy contribute to the party's electoral success? Finally, to what extent is this electoral strategy viable for Social Democrats in Denmark and other Nordic countries going forward? This last question is particularly important as Social Democratic parties across Europe are looking for a blueprint for how to win elections once again. Therefore, the Danish case may establish an important precedent for Social Democratic parties in other countries. However, further analysis is needed to unpack this eventuality.

To establish the answers to the questions outlined above we utilise a most similar systems design (Meckstroth 1975) analysing the Nordic countries of Norway, Sweden and Finland to inform our findings surrounding the case of Denmark. This methodological approach allows us to compare countries that share several striking similarities within the social, political, economic and cultural realms, but produce different outcomes with regards to Social Democratic strategies. The goal of this research is to determine whether Denmark is a unique case or whether a new Social Democratic strategy, which embraces a strong welfare state and more restrictions on migrants, is likely to emerge in the region. As our findings illustrate, the Kingdom of Denmark stands out within the Nordic realm as being the only country where the issue of immigration was so politically salient in recent elections. The salience and framing of immigration as an issue and the vote-seeking behaviours of political parties are the predominant factors that help explain why this is the case.

Despite their recent electoral success, however, we argue that this election was less about a new winning strategy for Social Democrats and more so a failure of the populist radical right (PRR) Danish People's Party. Analysis of the 2019 Danish election reveals that, although the Social Democrats won the election, they received a lower vote share than they had in the previous 2015 election. In fact, the Social Democratic victory is primarily attributed to the collapse of the PRR Danish People's Party whose support dropped from 21.1 per cent in 2015 to only 8.7 per cent in 2019 (European Election Database 2019) and not to significant gains

made by the Social Democratic party itself. The 2015 European migrant crisis was an event that allowed PRR parties to flourish, this was the case in Sweden as well. However, once this subsided these PRR parties were not able to retain their voters. These election results indicate a significant loss for the PRR Danish People's Party rather than a strong victory for the Social Democrats.

This article begins by reviewing the academic literature on party strategies focusing most specifically on party systems, polarisation, issue salience and framing. These party strategies are then applied to the Nordic realm with a specific focus on the Kingdom of Denmark (see Table 1). The article concludes by identifying key takeaway points from the Danish elections, evaluating Social Democratic strategies to co-opt populist radical right (PRR) positions, and providing a broader analysis of electoral strategies for Social Democratic parties in Nordic countries going forward. Ultimately, we provide evidence to suggest that a shift to the right on immigration is not a viable strategy for Social Democrats in Denmark or across Nordic countries going forward as an appeal to far-right voters is likely to yield few additional votes and may potentially undermine support for these parties by alienating their traditional left-leaning voter base.

Table 1: Danish Party Coding   Source: Authors' own

Abbreviation	Danish Name	Ideology	Political Position	2019 Election Position
V	Venstre	Conservative Liberal Agrarianism Economic Liberalism	Center-Right	Leading the opposition 43/179 seats
SD	Socialdemokraterne	Social Democracy Pro Europeanism	Center-Left	In government 48/179 seats
DF	Dansk Folkeparti	Danish nationalism National conservatism Social conservatism Right-wing populism Euroscepticism Anti-Islam	Right-wing to Far Right	In opposition 16/179 seats
SF	Socialistisk Folkeparti	Green politics Popular socialism Democratic socialism Eco-socialism Feminism	Center-Left to Left Wing	Supporting government 14/179 seats
K	Det Konservative Folkeparti	Conservatism Green conservatism Liberal conservatism Soft Euroscepticism	Center-Right	In opposition 12/179 seats
RV	Det Radikale Venstre	Social liberalism Pro-Europeanism	Center to Center-Left	Providing parliamentary support 16/179 seats
NA	Ny Alliance	Liberalism Classical liberalism Right-libertarianism	Center-Right to Right-wing	In opposition 4/179 seats

PARTY STRATEGIES

Rather than serving solely as representatives of constituent social classes and groups, there is a rich literature that views parties as autonomous actors who pursue vote-seeking behaviour (see Strom 1990). Downs (1957), for example, argues that rather than being passive actors within a party system political parties adopt strategies that will maximise their vote share. As a result, parties as rational actors are perceived to be responsive to voters and emphasise the issues seen as more important to their constituents. As voter preferences on different issues change over time, the framing and salience that parties attribute to different issues will shift in response (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen 2003; Bélanger and Meguid 2008). Therefore, understanding public opinion and voter preferences on specific issues is critical for political parties as they develop their electoral plans.

Along with voter preferences, it is important to pay attention to the institutional context in which party competition takes place. Given that political parties are rational vote-seeking actors (Uhlaner 1986), it is clear that leading up to an election they will likely choose a strategy that will help them win votes within their party system. The structure of party systems and the ideological polarisation within parliaments help to shape party electoral strategies. Since parties are in competition with one another for votes, they are expected to position themselves strategically on issues that they believe that they have an electoral advantage. Parties are likely to concentrate on policies that their rivals have less perceived competence and issue ownership (Meyer and Wagner 2013). Parties are also hypothesised to be more likely to change their policy platforms in response to unsatisfactory electoral results (Meyer and Wagner 2013). Weakening support for Social Democratic parties in recent years may, therefore, prompt shifts in policy positions as these actors seek new winning electoral strategies.

Party Systems and Polarisation

The electoral strategies that parties adopt are also expected to be shaped by the institutional context in which they operate. This is critical because although parties pursue rational vote-seeking behaviour, the institutional context in which they find themselves matters in terms of a party's willingness to co-opt, and the party systems degree of permissiveness. In the case of Denmark, the 2019 election results created little incentive for the SD to form a coalition with the radical right Danish People's Party.

Party systems are one of the key explanations in the literature for the presence and influence of radical parties and policies on national politics. Assessing how many parties compete with one another is a frequently used criterion for classifying party systems (Mair 1996; Duverger 1954). A more comprehensive approach places the emphasis not only on the number of parties participating in a given election but also on the ideological distance separating these parties (Sartori 1976). Essentially, as the number of parties increases, we can expect a greater range of party positions along the ideological scale. One of the three party systems that Sartori identifies is 'moderate pluralism' which can be seen in Nordic countries. This type exists when three to five parties are competing in elections and the ideological distances between parties remain small despite the increase in competition. When a third party does come into play, the basic Downsian convergence argument (Grofman 2004) no longer holds as the median is likely no longer the point of equilibrium and thus incentives to take up non-centrist positions arise (Grofman 1985).

Traditionally, electoral rules have been the determining factor in the number of parties a country has. Recently, however, the number of parties within European party systems has been increasing despite electoral rules. Much of this can be attributed to party systems'

fragmentation and the general decline of Social and Christian Democratic parties (Falkenbach and Greer 2018).

In addition to the number of parties in a system and their ideological distance, whether a party system is classified as constrained or unconstrained can make party competition either highly predictable with little to no change in the parties over time or unpredictable with new parties able to gain representation in government (Mair 2002). If we look at Scandinavian mainstream parties, we see that in Sweden, for example, they have managed to exclude their PRR party (SD) from government participation by a broad "cordon sanitaire" (Widfeldt 2020; Backlund 2020). In Denmark, on the other hand, the PRR Danish People's Party (DF) was accepted as a normal party (Heinze 2018), and their strict stance on immigration policies was even adopted. In other words, whether a PRR party and its platform are accommodated or side-lined by mainstream parties is influenced by the normative rules and values of the party system. It becomes apparent within the literature that party systems are decisive for niche party inclusion. When a given party system is less constraining the potential for the development of a broader ideological spectrum increases and with it, the greater likelihood of the formation and influence of radical parties and policies as mainstream parties are more likely to adapt their platforms in response to these actors.

In recent years, many mainstream parties began reacting to the success of PRR parties by taking on PRR positions for example adopting a more anti-immigrant position (van Spanje 2010; Han 2015). Researchers are still debating as to whether PRR parties' success and mainstream parties' adoption of anti-immigrant positions are correlated or whether they are simply an adjunct development (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020). While some research finds that there are electoral opportunities to be had for mainstream centre-right parties emphasising PRR party positions (i.e. immigration) in economically bad times (Downes and Loveless 2018), the general consensus is to leave those positions be, particularly when the niche party is electorally successful (Meijers and Williams 2020). In addition, the literature has found that, particularly for Social Democratic parties, positioning themselves in a more authoritarian/nationalist way following anti-immigration and anti-European positions may prove increasingly electorally harmful (Abou-Chadi and Wagner 2020).

In addition to party system type, the degree of polarisation within a parliament is argued to have an important effect on the influence of radical parties and policies in domestic politics. This is significant as the higher the ideological polarisation the more likely that a party will pursue non-centrist policy positions. How a political party is placed on the ideological scale is determined by the various issues that it decides to address. There are two different ways of understanding a party's relationship to the political issues that it supports: policy position and policy salience. This implies that parties can either make decisions according to the stance that they have on an issue (position) (Petrocik 1996) or how important the issue is to them (salience) (Budge and Farlie 1983). This combination of distance and issue salience can determine the amount of electoral support a new party might receive (Tavits 2008). Many niche parties (the PRR), for example, see a need to differentiate themselves from mainstream parties taking on extreme views, thus distinguishing themselves from centrist parties by emphasising issues that mainstream parties fail to address (Wagner 2012). This failure to emphasise issues deemed important by the electorate is among the most prominent reasons why many mainstream parties are losing the political battle. We, therefore, theorise that as political polarisation increases between political parties the more likely it will be that a mainstream party will adopt non-centrist policy positions. We also expect that the less constrained a party system the greater influence that niche parties such as PRR parties will have on politics and policies.

Issue Salience and Framing

Public opinion on key issues is another consideration for political parties as they develop electoral strategies. It is important then to understand what shapes public opinion and how it should be measured. There is a well-established literature on the influence of media on public opinion and immigration politics in Europe (see Eberl, Meltzer, Heidenreich, Herrero et al. 2018). Public attitudes regarding immigration, it is argued, are shaped by how this issue is presented in the national media (van Klingeren, Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart and de Vreese 2015). Preference and salience are two key dimensions to consider when analysing media's effects on public opinion on policy issues (Hatton 2017). Preference refers to the framing of topics and whether the coverage of issues is largely positive or negative. Salience refers to the amount of time and attention dedicated to a given issue. These dimensions can move independently from one another over time, and both need to be considered when assessing the overall climate of public opinion and policymaking surrounding immigration policies (Hatton 2017). For example, if immigration has low salience policymakers may deviate from public opinion whether positive or negative (Hatton 2017). However, when an issue becomes highly salient it should gain more prominence on the agenda and how it is framed should influence public opinion and politics.

As an issue, such as immigration, gains more visibility, audiences may attribute greater importance to it (McCombs 2005). Subsequently, this can alter public perceptions and attitudes about immigration (Schemer 2012; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Aalberg, Iyengar and Messing 2012). In addition to the visibility of an issue, framing is important because it emphasises specific aspects of an issue thereby promoting a certain way of thinking about it (Entman 1993). Immigrants, for example, are often framed either as victims or as economic, social, or cultural threats (Benson 2013). 'Refugees' and 'asylum seekers', for example, can be viewed as victims or as burdens to the welfare state and thus economic threats (Baker Gabrielatos, KhosraviNik, Krzyżanowski et al. 2008). Research shows that migrants are most often presented as a threat by the media and that frequent exposure to this negative framing can increase anti-immigration sentiment and even affect vote choice (Eberl et al. 2018). Some research suggests that there is a correlation between salience and negative framing of immigration as an issue and an increase in vote support for parties with anti-immigration platforms (Eberl et al. 2018; Dennison and Geddes 2019). In addition to affecting voters, increased issue salience may affect political party behaviour. A study of the United Kingdom, for example, found that when an issue is highly salient, it may force policy responses from both governing and opposition parties (Ford Dmitrieva, Heller, Chentsova-Dutton et al. 2015). This suggests that, along with influencing public opinion, the framing and salience of an issue may directly affect the behaviour of political parties (Facchini, Margalit and Nakata 2016). Taking the initial example of immigration, this implies that the greater the issue salience and the more negative the framing the more likely anti-immigration positions are pursued.

The salience and framing of immigration vary over time, across media outlets, in public discourse, and between countries. Real-world events are also expected to shape the discourse and visibility of issues in the short run (Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2007; Kroon, Kluknavská, Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2016; Eberl et al. 2018). Cases of mass immigration, such as the 2015 European migrant crisis, are expected to increase the visibility of immigration. However, the effects of these events on public opinion have less to do with the real number of immigrants in a country and more to do with the tone of how these issues are presented in the media and political discourse (van Klingeren, Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart and de Vreese 2015). In sum, the visibility and tone of immigration may influence public opinion, voting behaviour, and politics and policymaking. As such, it is important to consider the context of how immigration is presented within a country. Based on the literature, we

hypothesise that the more salient an issue the more likely that a political party will focus on this concern. How the issue is perceived by the public (i.e. how it is framed) will shape the policy choices made by political parties. Negative framing of immigration, for example, may lead parties to pursue more restrictive migration policies.

THE CASE OF DENMARK: SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC HISTORY

Since the end of the Second World War, the Social Democrats have with few exceptions been in government and have thus influenced Danish social development in almost all areas until 1973 when the Social Democrats lost a third of their seats to five new or previously unrepresented parties (Opstrup Wendel 2019). By 1982, the country was led by Denmark's conservative party Venstre and in 1993, a Social Democratic coalition took over again. Between 2001 and 2015, the Social Democrats suffered great losses to the PRR Danish People's Party (DF) (Heinze 2018). However, the party recovered during the 2015 election and became the country's strongest party once again. The question that arises is how did the Danish Social Democrats manage to recover their stronghold?

PARTY STRATEGIES IN NORDIC COUNTRIES

Party Systems and Polarisation in Nordic Countries

Analysing differences in party systems among Scandinavian countries is an important starting point to understand why Denmark's Social Democrats adopted a far more conservative stance on immigration in the 2019 election. Denmark is characterised as having a party system of moderate pluralism similar to other Nordic countries. This implies that pluralism, the amount of diverse and competing centres of power, is limited and the ideological distance between parties is small. What makes this country different in comparison to its Nordic counterparts is that it has a less constrained party system meaning that it is fairly open to new parties entering into the system or government (Mair 2002), unlike for example Sweden, which has a more restrictive party system (Miller and Lishaug 1990).

When taking a closer look at the Danish party system's various parties, the country's acceptance of new parties becomes clear (see Appendix Figure A1). The two most consistently powerful parties, Venstre and the Social Democrats, were founded in the late 1800s having the typical centre-right and centre-left ideological orientation. By the early 1900s, more centrist parties (Social Liberals and the Conservatives) entered into the party system keeping the ideological spectrum rather compact. By the mid-90s, however, the compressed spectrum was breached with the PRR Danish People's Party's entrance who found a niche in opposing immigration and Denmark's membership in the European Union (EU).

Although the party systems in Nordic countries are structured similarly, there are important differences in the allowance or disallowance of PRR parties to participate in government. Like Denmark, Norway and Finland can also be considered as having more of an unconstrained party system. New parties such as the PRR FrP (Progress Party) in Norway and the PRR Finns Party (PS) in Finland, were accepted by mainstream parties (De Lange, 2012), whereas the PRR Social Democrats in Sweden were shut out of negotiations from the beginning (Widfeldt 2020; Backlund 2020).

Typically, PRR parties are known to focus on anti-immigration policies. However, this was not the case in all Nordic countries; in fact, immigration was only politically salient and contentious

in Denmark and Sweden. Although the mainstream parties in Norway accepted the FrP, the political debate was not initially centred around immigration. In fact, the Social Democrats were the first to introduce stricter immigration policies in 1975 so that by the 1990s, all mainstream Norwegian parties moved to the right on immigration. The Finns Party (PS) was not taken seriously until 2009 as they only had a very marginal impact on politics and immigration was a depoliticised issue (Heinze 2018). The party was able to mobilise voters from all mainstream parties but still remained more moderate on the topic of immigration than their Danish and Swedish counterparts (Heinze 2018).

Contrary to Denmark, Norway, and Finland, mainstream parties in Sweden shut the PRR Sweden Democrats (SD) out of politics from the beginning rejecting their positions and rhetoric. They refused coalitions with the SD and were backed by the media. This worked because all of the mainstream parties united and followed suit. While immigration was a major issue in some countries, socioeconomic concerns always stood at the forefront of Swedish elections. In 2018, the SD celebrated their best election results yet achieving 17.7 per cent; this was due however to the increased income inequality perpetuated by conservative policies during 2006-2014 (Dal Bó, Finan, Folke, Persson, et al. 2018) and not immigration.

Immigration, in fact, is not the common denominator amongst PRR parties in Nordic countries. The PRR in Denmark and Norway found their niche in immigration until other parties filled that policy space, resulting in decreased support for the PRR parties due to their lack of credibility in other policies. The Swedish and Finnish PRR, on the other hand, found greater support when they focused on income inequality and other socioeconomic issues rather than on immigration as a key issue.

During the 2019 general elections in Denmark, party positions on immigration changed drastically in comparison to the previous two elections (2011 and 2015). Leading up to the 2011 general election, before the migrant crisis hit Europe, the positions with regards to immigration were such as could be expected. The PRR People's Party expressed the most restrictive policies for immigrants stating: 'No one can benefit from Denmark receiving more foreigners than society can absorb; clear demands are a key element' (Bräuninger, Debus, Benoit and Bernauer 2018). The Social Democrats and the Social Liberal parties, on the other hand, were much more liberal in their vision of immigrants stating that 'there is room for anyone that wants to come' and that the country must 'attract foreigners' (Bräuninger, Debus, Benoit and Bernauer 2018). Venstre took the middle ground supporting a more flexible Immigration Act on the one hand while also stating that those migrants who abuse their residence in the country are no longer welcome (Munkøe 2011).

By 2015, the ideological spectrum with regards to immigration shifted a bit further to the right. However, the PRR was still the strongest anti-immigration party stating that Denmark must secure its borders (studieportalen, n.d.). Venstre began lamenting that there were too many immigrants not working, which cost society much money. The Social Democrats stated in their party programme that 'If you come to Denmark, you must work' whilst simultaneously advocating for the preservation of the 'good, Danish welfare society' (The Danish Social Democratic Party 2015) thereby moving slightly to the right on immigration. The Social Liberal party generally stayed its course advocating for migrants to be able to acquire work faster.

During the 2019 general election campaign, the Social Liberal Party and Venstre no longer mentioned immigration or integration in their party programmes. Although the Danish People's Party kept their anti-immigrant rhetoric, they failed to follow up statements like 'Denmark is not an immigrant country and we will therefore not accept a multi-ethnic transformation of the country' (Danish People's Party 2019) with plausible action points. Surprisingly, the Social Democratic Party, previously inching more towards the centre on this

issue, established a firm anti-immigration policy stance. Statements such as 'Denmark must have control again' and proposals like 'We will introduce a ceiling on how many new non-western foreigners can come to Denmark in one year' or 'We will change our asylum system and create a reception centre outside Europe' (Socialdemokatiet 2019) filled their manifesto. The Social Democrats also took a strong pro-welfare position arguing that taxes must go to welfare and that free and equal access to welfare solutions such as doctor visits, schooling and elderly care must be maintained (Socialdemokatiet 2019).

The results of these three elections can be seen in Table 2 below. In 2011, the common issues important to voters were economic and employment policies reaching 73 per cent and 62 per cent respectively. In comparison, immigration policy was the sixth most important issue during this election and received only 24 per cent. The issues important to the voters and the election results correlated nicely as Venstre, the party known for its classical liberal policies, came out on top. The results of the 2015 general election clearly showed the Social Democratic party as electorally victorious. However, the strong backing for the People's Party prevented the formation of a left-led government. Increased support for the People's Party was predominantly due to their tighter regulations on immigration (Niclas and Bojesen 2015), although all parties moved slightly to the right on this point. The 2019 election showed no clear winners, rather a very distinct loser. The failure of the People's Party to not only take a renewed stance on immigration but also their failure to speak to the issues of welfare, health, and the environment resulted in a loss of over ten per cent compared to 2015.

Table 2. General Election Results Denmark 2011, 2015 and 2019

	2011	2015	2019
	% of votes won	Seats	% of votes won	Seats	% of votes won	Seats
Venstre	26.7% | 47	19.5% | 34	23.4% | 43
Social Democrats	24.9% |44	26.3% | 47	25.9% |48
Danish Peoples Party	12.3% |22	21.1% | 37	8.7% |16
Social Liberal Party	9.5% |17	4.6% | 8	8.6% |16

Source: Deloy (2019)

Although data is limited, there is some evidence to suggest that political polarisation is higher in the Danish party system than in other Nordic states (Arndt 2016). Using a measure of party system polarisation[1], Figure 1 shows that on average there appears to be a greater ideological distance between political parties in the Danish political system. This was particularly evident during the 2015 Danish general election which took place at the height of the European migrant crisis and in the subsequent 2019 election. As such, Danish parties may face higher incentives to adopt non-centrist positions as a means to achieve policy differentiation and issue ownership among voters (Spoon 2009; Grofman 2004, 1985). Under these circumstances, Denmark's Social Democrats may have had incentives to move further to the right on immigration during the 2019 general election in an attempt to differentiate themselves from other political parties and to expand their voting base. Given the lower levels of ideological polarisation in other Nordic countries, political parties' incentives to adopt non-centrist policy positions may be less pronounced.

Figure 1. Party System Polarization
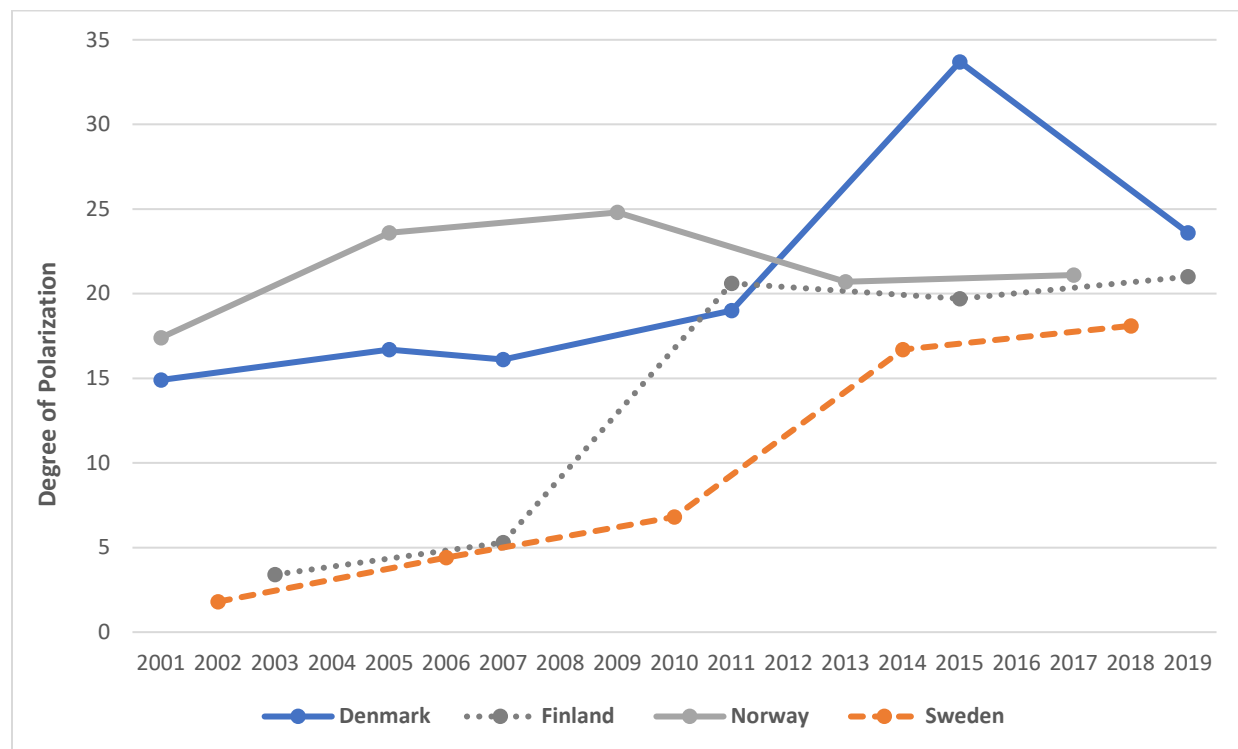
Source: Casal Bértoa (2021)

## Issue Salience and Framing in Nordic Countries

Despite the many similarities between Nordic countries, media coverage of immigration varies considerably between Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Analysis from 1970-2016 reveals that while Swedish newspapers typically frame immigration in a positive light, Danish papers more often present strong negative views about immigration, with the Norwegian press occupying a middle ground position (Hovden and Mjelde 2019).[2] For example, immigrants are most commonly depicted as victims in the Swedish press, while in Denmark they have been more frequently presented as threats (Hovden and Mjelde 2019). Given these differences in media framing across countries, we should expect variations in national attitudes towards immigration. Eurobarometer survey data confirms that the Swedish public has a more favourable view of immigration than the Danish public. At the height of the 2015 European migrant crisis, for example, 70 per cent of Swedish respondents reported positive feelings about the immigration of people from outside of the EU compared to only 27 per cent who had negative feelings (Eurobarometer 2019). For the same time period in Denmark, only 30 per cent reported positive feelings about the immigration of people from outside of the EU, while 62 per cent had negative feelings (Eurobarometer 2019).

Although differences in media framing and public opinion exist across Nordic countries, evidence indicates that immigration has become more salient in national debates and politics across the region in recent years (Hovden and Mjelde 2019). While newspaper coverage of immigration was relatively low in the 1970s and 1980s, it rose sharply in the late 1990s and once again in 2015 (Hovden and Mjelde 2019). These changes corresponded with international events, such as the 2015 European migrant crisis, which led to increases in refugees and migrants into Nordic countries. While media coverage of immigration has

increased, variations in framing highlight key differences in how each country's media treats the issue. For example, the Danish media focuses far more frequently on welfare and integration problems than its Nordic counterparts, indicating a more polarised national debate (Hovden and Mjelde 2019). Overall, there is evidence to suggest a link between media, public opinion, and politics within the Nordic realm especially in recent years (Strömbäck, Ørsten and Aalberg 2008; Hjarvard 2013). Immigration, however, is more frequently presented in a negative light in Denmark compared with Sweden and Norway. This context is important to understanding public opinion and party platforms in Denmark.

In terms of issue salience and Danish public opinion, immigration has not always been the principal concern of citizens. Figure 2 presents Eurobarometer data for Danish citizens on the issues that they believe are the most important facing the country. As we can see, immigration's relative importance has varied over time in response to changing social and economic conditions. For example, in the wake of the Great Recession, immigration decreased in importance among the public as concerns over the economic situation and unemployment became paramount (see Figure 2). As the crisis subsided, the economic situation and unemployment became less prominent issues and concerns about health and social security and immigration grew. During the 2015 European migrant crisis, the Danish public viewed immigration as, by far, the largest problem facing the country with 31 per cent of citizens believing it was the most important issue. Given the weight that the Danish public placed on health, social security and immigration, beginning in 2015, it is less surprising that the Social Democrats emphasised these issues in their 2019 party platform.

Figure 2. Issue Salience in Denmark (2005-2019)
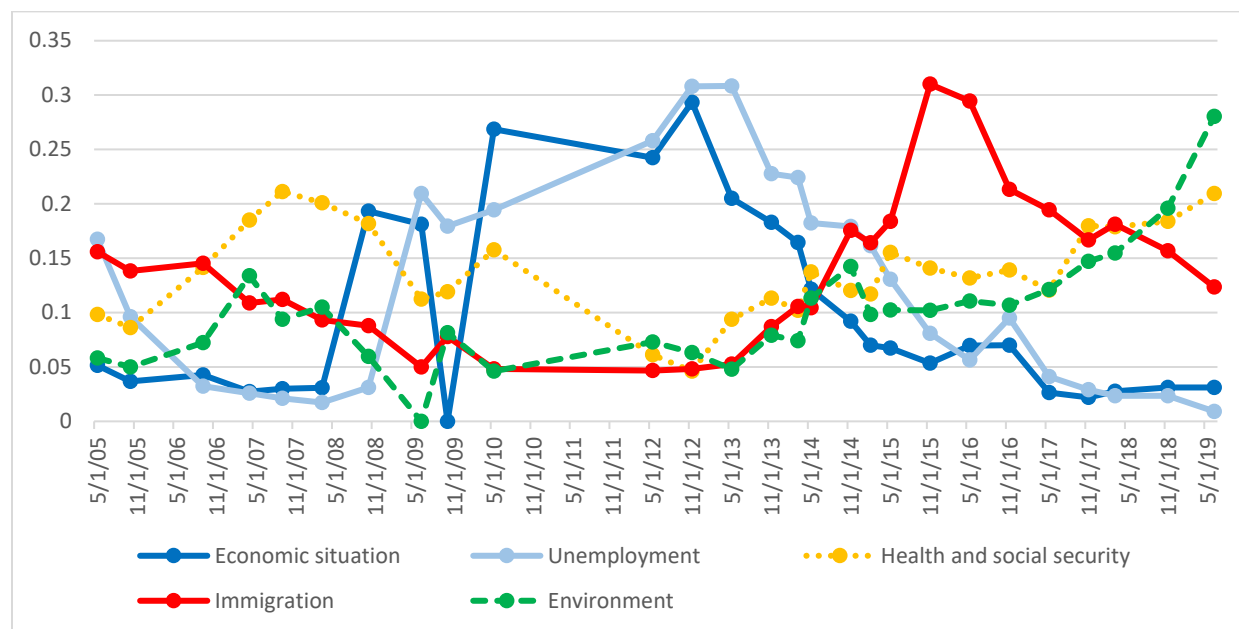
Source: Eurobarometer (2019)

Not only did immigration become a highly salient issue in Denmark but it was also a major concern in Finland, and Sweden during the European migrant crisis. As shown in Figure 3, public opinion regarding immigration followed a similar trend in each country with a notable increase in 2015 and subsequently decreased as the crisis abated. The level of concern, however, varied across countries. Whereas 31 per cent of the Danish public listed immigration

as the main issue facing the country at the height of the migrant crisis, it was 26.9 per cent in Sweden and only 20.4 per cent in Finland.[3] Although the migrant crisis had a similar effect in raising the prominence of immigration, Denmark still stands out in the relative importance that its public placed on this issue.

Interestingly, the 2019 Eurobarometer shows that in Denmark immigration has fallen in significance with the public identifying the environment and health and social security as the two most important issues facing the country. This suggests that the salience of immigration may have been reactive to the external events presented by the migrant crisis. It also shows that while immigration was still a significant topic in the 2019 election it may become a less important issue for voters going forward as reflected in declining public concern on this topic (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Immigration Issue Salience in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden (2005-2019)
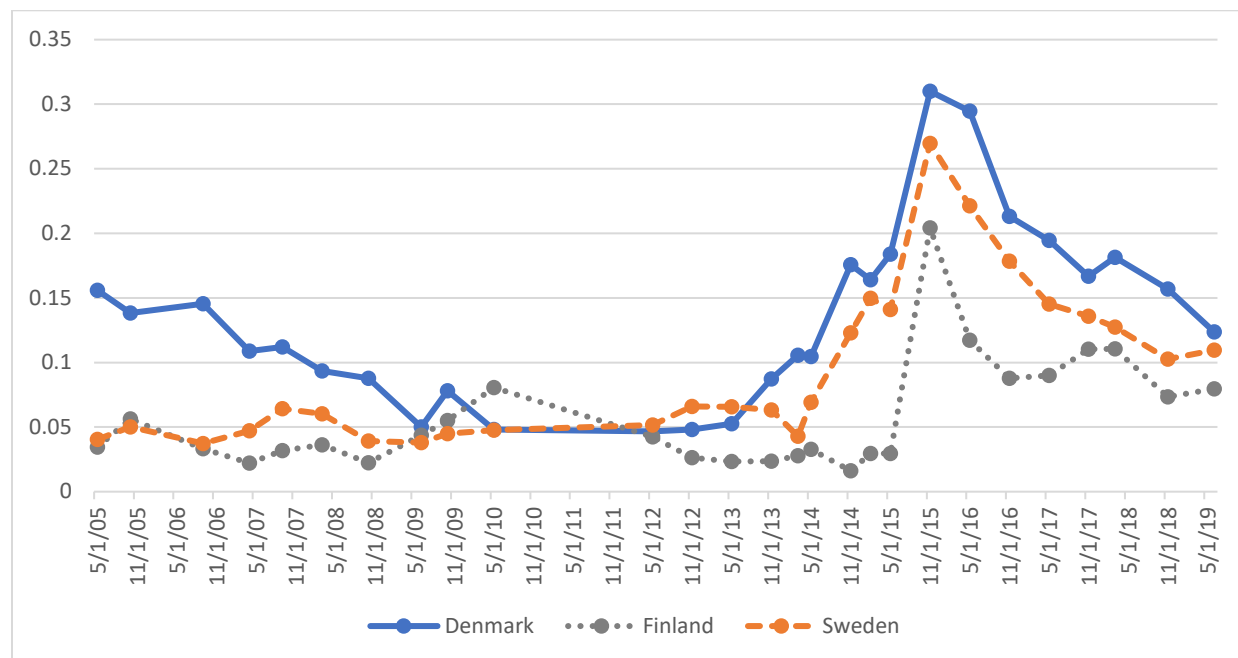
Source: Eurobarometer (2019)

When looking at comparative levels of support for immigrants from non-EU member states in Nordic countries, we can see that public opinion in Denmark is consistently more negative than in Sweden and lower on average than in Finland (see Figure 4).[4] In fact, throughout the European migrant crisis, Swedish support for immigrants from non-EU member states remained positive. By comparison, Danish public opinion declined at the start of the crisis and has remained low. This highlights important differences in public opinion regarding immigration between Denmark and Sweden and corresponds with more negative framing of the issue in the Danish media and political discourse. This is significant because even though immigration increased in salience in both Denmark and Sweden (see Figure 3) the framing of this issue was markedly different with the Swedish public holding more positive views of immigration and the Danish public holding far more negative views (see Figure 4). While the Finnish public held negative views of immigration, on average these views were slightly more positive than those of the Danish public. Importantly, the issue was considerably less salient in Finland than in Denmark (see Figure 4). Overall, we can see that compared to other Nordic states immigration was more salient and negatively framed in Denmark. This helps to explain

the surprising anti-immigration platform that the Danish Social Democrats adopted in the 2019 election. It also helps to account for why this phenomenon happened in Denmark and not in other Nordic states, such as Sweden and Finland, where issue salience was lower, and the issue was framed in a more positive light.

Figure 4. Support for immigrants from non-EU member states (2014-2019)
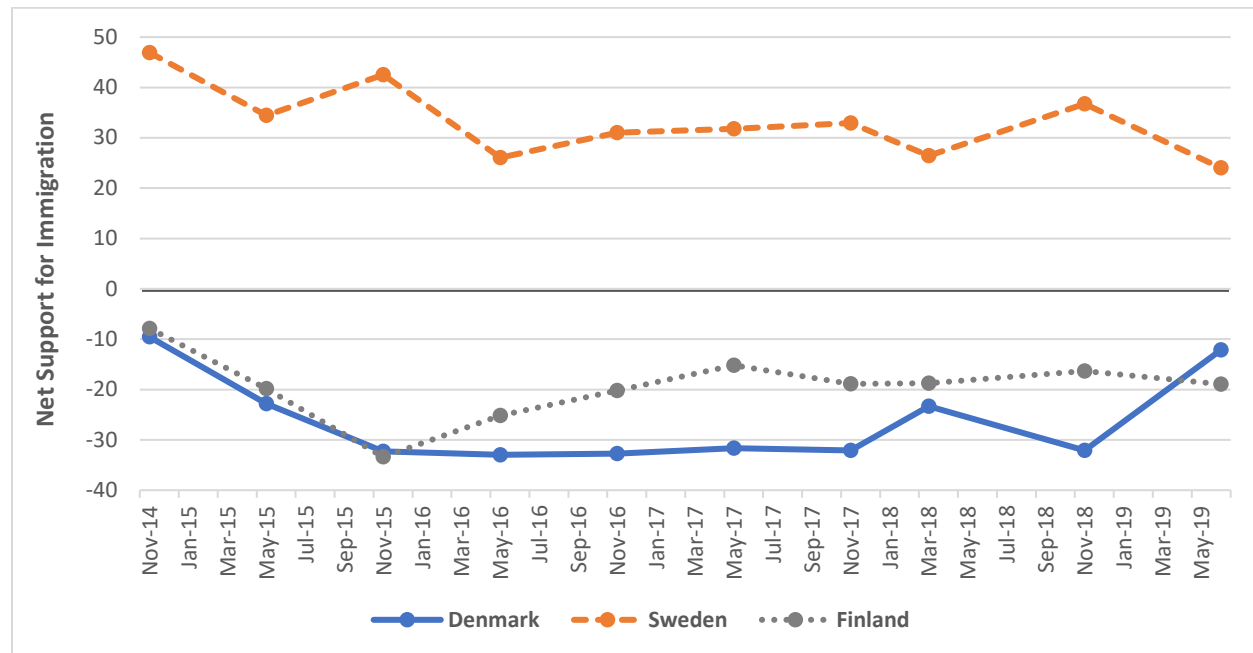
Source: Eurobarometer (2019)

By directing their attention to the issues of migration and welfare the Social Democrats accomplished two important things. First, they stayed true to their traditional values of supporting a strong welfare state. Second, they took up the issue of migration, which only the PRR party DF supported. Realising that immigration and welfare were the key concerns of the Danish citizens, the Social Democrats reorganised their priorities. They presented their electorate with proposals that they hoped spoke to the concerns of the population.

Upon winning the 2019 elections in Denmark, the Social Democratic party caused a media sensation across Europe becoming known as the Social Democratic Party that took a harder stance on immigration and was thus awarded increased electoral support. There are two primary reasons why this simplistic coverage escapes the core of what actually occurred. To begin with, while the Social Democrats ultimately won the elections in Denmark during a time when Social Democratic support across Europe was at its lowest, they did not win because of their tough stance on immigration. In fact, public opinion polls show a shift in voters' priorities from migration in 2015 to healthcare and the environment in 2019 (see Figure 2). Although the Social Democrats moved significantly to the right on immigration, more importantly for the outcome of this election, they managed to find their way back to supporting and promoting Social Democratic core values such as healthcare, pensions and education. In addition, they strengthened their position on environmental policies. The second reason for the Social Democratic success is that the PRR People's Party lost their footing. The party was successful in 2015 because of its anti-migration platform. When public opinion shifted away from the topic of immigration in 2019, the People's Party had nothing else to run on. They decreased their anti-immigration rhetoric, thereby leaving a position open to their right, which the Social

Democrats quickly occupied. They could not competently speak to any of the other issues that increased in salience for the Danish voters.

So, the Social Democrats won the election, but not with sweeping gains. In fact they lost 0.4 per cent of the votes compared to the 2015 election. The losses among other parties, particularly the People's Party, made the success of the Social Democrats more apparent and prominent. Therefore, the story is less about Social Democrats gaining support, and more about the loss of support for the People's Party.

DISCUSSION

Evaluating Social Democratic Strategies to Co-Opt PRR Positions

The 2019 Danish election stands out not only because it received a tremendous amount of media attention, but also because it raised questions about whether a new electoral strategy emphasising strong welfare support coupled with anti-immigration policies had emerged for other Social Democrats across Europe. Based on the previous sections, we have demonstrated that in many regards the election in Denmark was an outlier, implying that their approach is no trend. As we evaluate the case going forward, it will become increasingly clear that it is not the best strategy.

Beyond explaining why Social Democrats in Denmark adopted a strong anti-immigration position, it is important to evaluate this electoral strategy. Along with responding to changing public opinion on issues such as welfare and immigration, the strategic decisions of Denmark's Social Democrats to increase their vote share were informed by shifting political dynamics. Given the PRR Danish People's Party's electoral success in the 2015 national elections, the Social Democrats may have been trying to increase their base of support by appealing to far-right voters in taking a stronger anti-immigration stance. This coupled with pro-welfare policies aimed at their traditional left-leaning supporters could, in theory, expand the voting base of the party. In fact, if successful this strategy could serve as a template for other Social Democratic parties in Europe at a time when many of them are struggling to achieve electoral success. However, evidence of voter preference suggests that this approach may not be electorally viable as a strategy for Social Democratic success because far-right voters are highly unlikely to defect and vote for Social Democratic party alternatives.

To test this explanation, we looked at the 2019 European Election Study (EES) survey data, which asked respondents which party they voted for in their most recent national election and the likelihood that they would ever vote for the Social Democrats.[5] This conveniently allows for a measure of the likelihood of voter party defection in favour of Social Democrats across parties. For example, Social Democratic voters in Denmark represented 17.7 per cent of the total respondent size, and that 92.1 per cent of these voters reported that they would vote Social Democratic in a future election (see Appendix Table A1). By multiplying these two columns, the total potential support that Social Democrats can expect to receive from voters who supported them in the last election represents 16.3 per cent of the overall respondents. By emphasising the issues that matter most to these voters, Social Democrats can expect to receive their largest pool of support.

In contrast, when looking at respondents who voted for the Danish People's Party in the previous election, only 34.5 per cent of them stated that they would vote for the Social Democrats in a future election. Given that this population represented only 16.8 per cent of respondents the total potential support that Social Democrats might expect to receive from this pool of voters is 5.8 per cent of all respondents. This may help to account for the Social

Democrat's decision in the 2019 election to pursue anti-immigration policies with the hopes of gaining support from potential DPP voters. However, while DPP voters represent a possible source of votes for Social Democrats, combined support from other left-leaning party voters (Socialist People's Party, Radical Party and Red-Green Unity List) is 9.3 per cent (see Appendix Table A1). This suggests that while Social Democratic efforts to appeal to far-right DPP voters, for instance by embracing anti-immigration policies, might yield some additional votes, the party might risk isolating a larger potential pool of left-leaning voters.

The EES data analysis for Sweden and Finland shows that far-right voters are an even more unlikely base of support for Social Democrats in these countries. In Sweden, for example, only 9.8 per cent of PRR Sweden Democrat voters said that they would vote for the Social Democrats in a future election representing only 1.7 per cent of total respondents (see Appendix Table A2). By contrast, 55.8 per cent of Green Ecological Voters said that they would defect to the Social Democrats in a future election representing 2.9 per cent of respondents. In Finland, 89 per cent of Left-Wing Alliance voters said they would vote for the Social Democrats in a new election, representing 6.7 per cent of the overall respondents (see Appendix Table A3)[6]. By comparison, only 21.5 per cent of respondents who voted for the PRR True Finns party said that they would vote for the Social Democrats in a future election representing 4.5 per cent of all respondents.

Further evidence from the 2019 EES reveals the policy preferences of Danish respondents who were likely Social Democratic voters (6 or higher on a 10-point scale). Figure 5 shows that although there is a small cohort from this group (13.1 per cent) that favours an extremely restrictive immigration policy, most respondents favoured more moderate immigration policies. This suggests that the strong anti-immigration position that the party adopted in the 2019 election may be out of sync with potential voters. By comparison, there is a clearer consensus among prospective voters on redistributive and environmental policies that Social Democrats could pursue which might yield higher support. Likely Social Democratic voters tended to favour redistribution (see Figure 6) and policies which favoured environmental protection over economic growth (Figure 7). By contrast, extremely restrictive immigration policies are not largely supported by a wide cross-section of likely Social Democratic voters. As noted earlier, the importance of immigration as an issue among the Danish public has decreased whereas welfare and environmental concerns have grown in salience (Figure 2). This further confirms why Danish Social Democrats would be better served to focus on redistributive and environmental policies rather than anti-immigration ones.

Along with examining the distribution of potential Social Democratic voter positions on key issues, we analysed the correlation between these positions and the likelihood of voting for the Social Democrats. To analyse the effects of voter position on support for the Social Democratic party, logistic regressions using individual respondent data from the 2019 European Voter Survey were applied. The main dependent variable of interest for each model was likely Social Democratic voters measured as respondents who scored a 6 or higher on a 10-point scale question that asked whether the respondent would vote for the Social Democrats. The independent variables measured voter positions on redistribution, immigration, and the environment on a 10-point scale. Table 3 presents the logistic regression results and the transformed odds ratios which demonstrate how respondents' positions on redistribution, immigration, and environmental policies correlate with the likelihood of voting Social Democrat.[7]

Figure 5. Potential Social Democratic Voter Position on Immigration (Denmark)
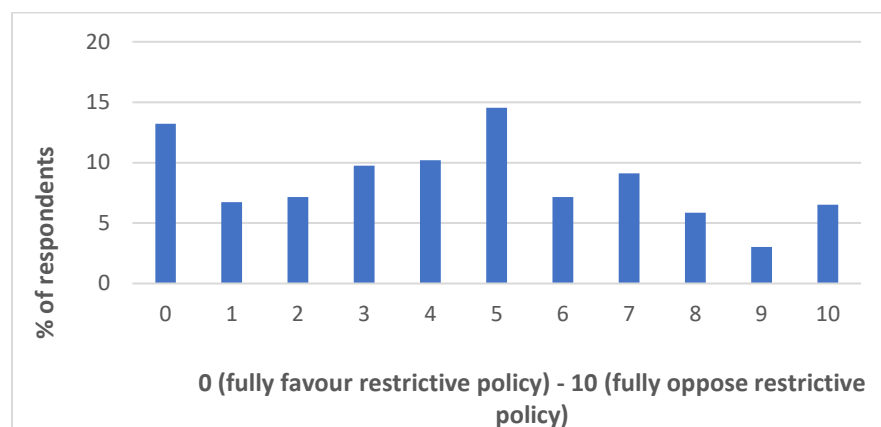
Source: European Voter Study (2019)

Figure 6. Potential Social Democratic Voter Position on Redistribution (Denmark)
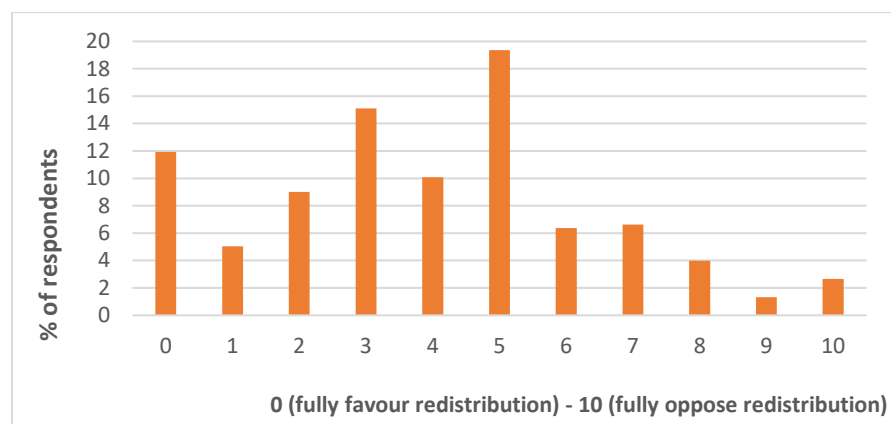
Source: European Voter Study (2019)

Figure 7. Potential Social Democratic Voter Position on the Environment (Denmark)
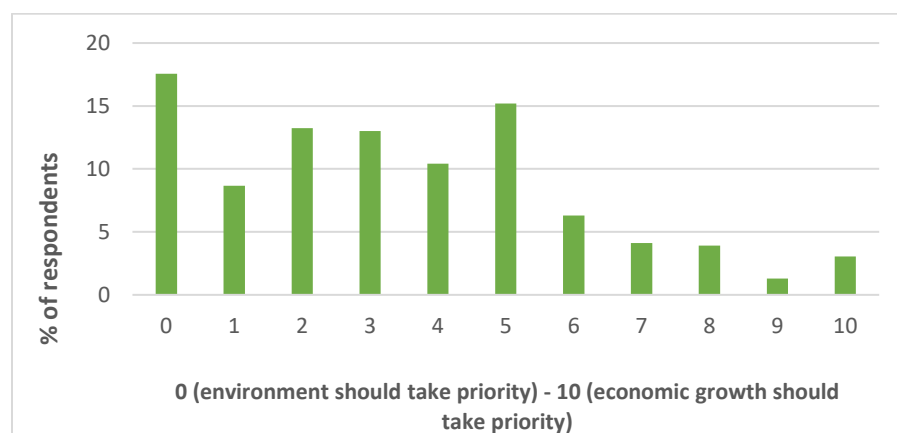
Source: European Voter Study (2019)

Table 3. Social Democratic Support and Voter Policy Position

Variable	Social Democratic Vote Log odds	Social Democratic Vote Odds Ratio
Voter Position on Redistribution		
0 (fully favour redistribution) Reference category		
1	− 0.530703 (0.367002)	0.5881913 (0.2158674)
2	0.0159198 (0.3351978)	1.016047 (0.3405768)
3	0.2864289 (0.3011613)	1.331663 (0.4010454)
4	− 0.3516748 (0.313155)	0.7035089 (0.2203074)
5	− 0.2376408 (0.2729344)	0.7884859 (0.2152049)
6	− 0.768844* (0.3348605)	0.4635486* (0.1552241)
7	− 0.7936419* (0.3249328)	0.4521949* (0.146933)
8	− 0.8088808* (0.3634017)	0.4453562* (0.1618432)
9	− 1.277548* (0.5368028)	0.2787198* (0.1496176)
10 (fully oppose redistribution)	− 1.088971* (0.4543706)	0.3365625* (0.1529241)
Don't know	− 0.5650695 (0.3131329)	0.5683207 (0.1779599)
Voter Position on Immigration		
0 (fully favour restrictive policy) *Reference category*		

Variable	Social Democratic Vote Log odds	Social Democratic Vote Odds Ratio
1	0.4187431 (0.2972249)	1.52005 (0.4517966)
2	0.5547304 (0.2912907)	1.741471 (0.5072744)
3	0.8783434** (0.2795568)	2.406909** (0.6728677)
4	1.294163*** (0.3032924)	3.647941*** (1.106393)
5	0.8024837*** (0.2445193)	2.231075*** (0.5455411)
6	1.130742 *** (0.3273906)	3.097955*** (1.014241)
7	0. 9507186*** (0.2877028)	2.587568*** (0.7444506)
8	0.5488877 (0.3258718)	1.731326 (0.5641904)
9	0.7632623 (0.4335559)	2.145263 (0.9300915)
10 *(fully oppose restrictive policy)*	0.1928194 (0.2888888)	1.212664 (0.350325)
Don't know	1.138038*** (0.3499253)	3.120639*** (1.091991)
Voter Position on the Environment		
0 *(environment should take priority)* Reference category		
1	0.7387436* (0.307337)	2.093304* (0.6433496)
2	0.5481954*	1.730128*

Variable	Social Democratic Vote Log odds	Social Democratic Vote Odds Ratio
	(0.2648563)	(0.4582353)
3	0.3918161	1.479666
	(0.2569953)	(0.3802671)
4	0.510647	1.666369
	(0.277606)	(0.462594)
5	0.0690211	1.071459
	(0.2380415)	(0.2550516)
6	0.0537798	1.055252
	(0.3090513)	(0.3261271)
7	0.2611621	1.298438
	(0.3625116)	(0.4706989)
8	0.387856	1.473818
	(0.3720184)	(0.5482873)
9	0.4486828	1.566248
	(0.5995086)	(0.938979)
10 *(economic growth should take priority)*	0.6996995	2.013148
	(0.4385925)	(0.8829514)
Don't Know	− 0.2790016	0.7565387
	(0.4260063)	(0.3222903)
Constant	− 0.6551995*	0.5193385*
	(0.2576145)	(0.1337891)
N	986	986
t statistics in parentheses, * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001		

Based on this model we can see that respondents who fell on the extreme end of the spectrum and fully opposed redistribution were less likely to vote for the Social Democrats compared with those who fully favoured redistribution. Respondents who opposed redistribution (6 or higher on the scale) were statistically less likely to vote for Social Democrats than those who favour redistribution. For example, the odds that those whose response was a 9 would vote for the Social Democrats was 72.1 per cent lower than those who fully supported redistribution

(0 on the scale). Similarly, the odds that those who answered 10 (fully opposed redistribution) would vote for the Social Democrats was 66.3 per cent lower than those who fully supported redistribution (see Table 3).

Based on the results we can also see how respondent positions on immigration correlates with the likelihood of voting Social Democratic. Here we can see that respondents who answered 3 or higher on the scale (i.e. those who held moderate to liberal positions) were far more likely to vote for Social Democrats than those who favoured fully restrictive immigration policies (0 on the scale). For example, respondents who answered 6 on the scale were nearly 3.1 times more likely to vote for the Social Democrats than those who answered 0 (fully favoured restriction). Interestingly, respondents who answered that they did not know how they felt about this issue were 3.1 times more likely to vote for Social Democrats. This suggests a higher degree of uncertainty among the electorate around this issue compared to redistributive and environmental issues. These findings reinforce our claim that potential Social Democratic voters do not tend to favour extremely restrictive immigration policies suggesting that the party's strategy to embrace anti-immigration policies in the 2019 election was out of sync with voter preferences.

Finally, the findings highlight how respondent positions on the environment correlate with the likelihood of voting Social Democratic. Here we can see that respondents who answered 1 or 2 were more likely to vote for Social Democrats than those who responded that the environment should take absolute priority over the economy (0 on the scale). For example, respondents who answered 1 on the scale were over 2 times more likely to vote for Social Democrats than those who answered 0 (the reference category). This suggests that while Social Democratic voters are less likely to support the position that the environment should take absolute priority over the economy, they still heavily favour environmental protection over economic growth.

Ultimately, the logistic regression model provides further insight into the policy preferences of likely Social Democratic voters. On the issue of redistribution, this pool of voters is likely to favour some degree of redistribution rather than fully oppose such measures (see Table 1). These voters are less likely to favour fully restrictive immigration policies. Finally, these voters tend to favour a high degree of environmental protection. This analysis provides a deeper insight into the preferences of likely Social Democratic voters on key issues which can be used to evaluate how well the party's platform matches supporter preferences.

Overall, this survey data offers some evidence to suggest that far-right party voters are an unlikely base of support for Social Democratic parties in Denmark or other Nordic states. Attempts to appeal to these voters, for example by taking a stronger anti-immigration stance, may prove ineffective while at the same time reducing potential support from voters of other left-leaning parties. This finding is important as it should inform Social Democratic parties on how to evaluate potential strategies for renewed electoral success.

CONCLUSION

Mainstream parties adopting PRR positions in an attempt to achieve electoral success have been widely acknowledged in the literature (Downes and Loveless 2018; Downes, Loveless and Lam 2021; Abou-Chadi and Wagner 2020; Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020). This article argues that the strategy taken by the Danish Social Democrats to win the 2019 election – doubling-down on their traditional support for the welfare state whilst also taking a sharp turn to the right on immigration policies – is not a viable strategy for Social Democratic parties

moving forward. This article makes an original contribution to the literature finding that while the adoption of PRR strategies for centre-right parties might be fruitful Downes and Loveless 2018; Downes, Loveless and Lam 2021), Social Democrats, adopting a similar strategy, are only successful in very few outlier cases. At the same time, the results point out that Social Democrats are better advised to strengthen their traditional support for the welfare state if they want to win elections.

The Danish case offers an important test of PRR co-option strategy hypotheses which have been identified in the literature. Our analysis helps to explain the paradox of the 2019 Danish election, namely why a Social Democratic party made such a radical turn to embrace strong anti-immigration policies. This case received a lot of media attention because it seemed that it might serve as a template for other Social Democratic party success. However, as we argue, this strategy is unlikely to yield positive results for Social Democratic parties in Nordic countries going forward. In fact, we find that the 2019 victory of Denmark's Social Democrats had less to do with the adoption of a new immigration policy platform, and more to do with the collapse of PRR Danish People's Party support amongst voters. This finding is emphasised by the fact that despite gaining control of the government in 2019, the Social Democrats performed worse in this election than in the previous one.

According to the presented data, it becomes apparent that future Social Democrat supporters are not necessarily past supporters of the far-right as PRR parties will frequently blur their positions to appeal to various different categories of voters (Falkenbach and Greer 2018; Afonso 2014). This can be seen nicely in the 2017 German parliamentary election where the Social Democratic SPD lost over five per cent of its voters to other mainstream parties and non-voters, rather than to the PRR, while the PRR AfD won more votes from the Christian Democratic party and non-voters (Mudde 2019). Voters who abandon the Social Democrats do not primarily move to PRR parties, rather they tend to refrain from voting. In addition, the issue of immigration in Denmark, at least during the 2019 election, was less salient, so even if the Social Democrats continue to take a hard line on immigration, its importance with voters is decreasing compared with other issues, notably welfare and the environment. Thus, the idea of focusing a significant amount of attention on immigration is questionable given decreased public concerns, making the Danish Social Democratic strategy in 2019 less viable going forward. Moving to the right on immigration is not a solution for all Social Democratic parties. In fact, this strategy seems poorly suited to other Nordic countries where immigration is less salient and the likelihood of far-right voter defection to Social Democrats appears even less likely. Denmark is a particular case where the PRR People's Party and the centre-right Venstre decided to ease their anti-immigration rhetoric during the 2019 campaign thereby leaving this policy space open for the Social Democrats to cover. In other countries, Austria for example, the PRR party FPÖ always took a hard-line approach against immigration and the centre-right ÖVP followed suit in the 2017 elections leaving no room for the Social Democratic SPÖ.

Overall, while the success of Social Democrats in Denmark and their shift to the right on immigration stands out as a fascinating and controversial case, it remains an outlier among Nordic countries. To fully understand viable strategies for Social Democratic electoral success, future research will need to analyse broader trends across European democracies. This includes assessing how key issues such as welfare, immigration, and the environment are viewed by the public within different national contexts. It is also vital that Social Democratic parties note where their potential base of support lies and what policy preferences these prospective voters have. Variations in party system, party ideology and issue salience and framing are important factors to consider when looking across countries. While many Social Democratic parties are looking for a simple one-size-fits-all solution to once again achieve electoral success, a more careful examination of individual countries is needed.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Ian P. McManus, Emerson College, Marlboro Institute for Liberal Arts and Interdisciplinary Studies, 104 Boylston Street Boston, Ma 02116, United State [ian_mcmanus@emerson.edu]

Michelle Falkenbach, Cornell University Department of Public and Ecosytem Health, Ithaca, NY, United States [mfalkenbach@cornell.edu]

ENDNOTES

[1] Party system polarisation is conceptualised as the greater the overall ideological difference between parties the higher the polarisation within the party system. This is measured using the Party Systems and Governments Observatory's index of polarisation. For more details on how this index is calculated see Casal Bértoa (2021).

[2] While data for Finland is not available in this study, a 2017 report by the Finnish Ministry of the Interior indicates that there has been considerable news media coverage of immigration with both positive and negative sides represented in reporting (2017). However, analysis of Finnish news in 2019 reveals that crime was the topic most associated with immigration in the media indicating a more unfavourable framing of migrants (Finnish Ministry of the Interior 2019).

[3] Although Eurobarometer data is not available for Norway, according to 2017 survey data collected by Statista on the most important national issues facing Norway immigration was the most important issue according to 29 per cent of respondents with healthcare being the second most important issue according to 28 per cent of respondents (Statista 2019).

[4] Although Eurobarometer data is not available for Norway, according to survey data collected by the Norwegian government in 2018, over 70 per cent of respondents agreed that immigrants made a positive contribution to the working life and culture of Norwegian society compared to less than 20 per cent who disagreed (Statistics Norway 2019). Similar data on Norwegian's attitudes on immigration and integration for 2018 found that 40 per cent of respondents agreed that immigration is good for Norway compared to 27 per cent who thought it was bad (Norwegian Integration Barometer 2018). Overall, this suggests a higher degree of support for immigrants among the public in Norway than in Denmark.

[5] Likelihood of voting for the Social Democratic Party is measured on a scale from 0 (not at all probable) to 10 (very probable) in the EES survey. For the purposes of this article, voters who scored a 6 or higher were considered likely to vote Social Democratic.

[6] As Norway is not part of the EU, the data for this country could not be found, however one would suspect that it would be similar to that of its Nordic counterparts.

[7] To address concerns with multicollinearity in the model, a collinearity diagnostics table is included in the appendix (see Table A4). The variance inflation factor values for each of the independent variables are sufficiently low to suggest that multicollinearity is not a problem.

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Research Article

Actor-Networking European Union Mental Health Governance, 1999-2018

Kristin Edquist

Abstract

Over the past three decades, a system of European-Union mental health governance (EUMHG) has emerged that incorporates a wide variety of stakeholders and consists of soft law instruments like Green Papers, Joint Actions, and Frameworks for Action. This paper applies actor-network theory (ANT) to EUMHG as it operated between 1999-2018, to understand its operation and significance. ANT is a process of identifying the moments of 'translation'—the means and processes that integrate disparate actors—into networks. Such moments in EUMHG include the problematisation of mental health, the enrolment of actors and actants in EU-level governance processes, and the use of obligatory passage points through which actors must mediate their actions and views to join a network. This analysis shows that three distinct though sometimes concurrent actor-networks have operated within EUMHG from 1999-2018, distinguishable by their core problematisations of mental ill health and its role in European societies: a public health actor-network, a disease-burden actor network, and a de-institutionalisation and Community Mental Health actor-network. This analysis shows that the Commission of the European Union has acted as actor-network builder in the former and last networks, but not the middle, where international health organisations have played that role. In each network, different actors are the recognized experts. The paper therefore indicates that because mental health and mental ill health have not been stable scientific concepts, a specific 'epistemic community', e.g., of psychiatrists or psychologists, has not held a definitive role in EUMHG. Indeed, it shows that EUMHG has produced varying constellations of actors, actions, and expertise at any given time, and that they may contradict each other's purposes. These findings contribute to scholarly understanding of changes in EU governance from the early 2000s, specifically in terms of the Commission's role as an executive body, its engagement of scientific expertise, and its relations to civil society and international organizations.

Keywords

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, a system of mental health governance has emerged at the European Union level, consisting of soft law instruments such as the Green Paper on Mental Health (2005), the Framework for Mental Health (2008), the Joint Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing (2013-2016), and the European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing (2016-2018). Through these instruments, EU mental health governance (EUMHG) has incorporated policymakers, mental healthcare providers, academic and policy experts, non-governmental organisations, and persons suffering from mental health problems and their families in governance processes across Europe. These processes have encouraged a broad range of activities and projects, such as 'peer support networks' and 'service-user expertise' projects in Utrecht, the Netherlands (Samen Sterk Zonder   Stigma 2018) and in Zagreb, Croatia (Ročić-Petak 2018). Under the auspices of EUMHG, analysts have published research reports, state health ministries have shared policy advice, and mental health professionals have shared insights and strategies across borders and administrative levels.

How can we understand this process? This paper argues that actor-network theory (ANT) offers a useful analytic model. It adopts this approach because ANT's analytical concepts are well suited to understanding patterns of international interaction in knowledge-intensive fields and around crucial concepts (Bueger and Bethke 2014). ANT provides tools that are useful for 'studying the transformation of scientific and political practice occurring in shorter time spans' such as the two-decade life of EU mental health governance. Over the years 1999-2018, crucial concepts such as 'disease-burden' measurement, de-institutionalisation (DI), and Community Mental Health (CMH) have shaped knowledge and practitioners' views of mental (ill) health. Guided by the ANT approach, particularly as developed for international relations by Bueger and Bethke (2014), the paper describes the 'translation' or quality of integration of actors involved, and notes instances where the Commission has attempted to act as network builder, for example by establishing 'obligatory passage points.'

Other approaches to understanding the role of the Commission in EU regulation governance provide interesting insights but cannot capture key elements of EUMHG. Principal-agent, functionalist, and 'orchestrator' models rightly emphasise the informal means through which the Commission exercises (or shares) its authority (Blauberger and Rittberger 2015). Yet, they assume the actors with whom the Commission governs have fixed policy goals. This assumption runs contrary to the analysis of EUMHG, which illustrates that the goals of the actors working with the Commission were shaped and reshaped by the often-changing knowledge about their issue area.

In fact, because ANT defines a network by its knowledge content rather than a presumably fixed identity of the network actors or non-human *actants*, including technologies, my application of it identifies three different mental health actor-networks operating within EUMHG over time. The three different networks are distinguishable by their core problematisations of mental ill health and its role in European societies. Those networks included many of the same actors, including scientists and non-governmental organisations, but the actors played different roles and indeed held different identities because of the different problematisations of mental (ill) health that shaped the networks' translation processes. The paper's application of ANT to EUMHG also finds that the most recent actor-network has been the longest-lived of the three, but its future is highly uncertain given the 2019 non-renewal of EU mental health governance programmes. Indeed, the new technologies and processes that have emerged in mental health care across Europe since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 indicate that while a renewed Community Mental Health network (the last EUMHG actor-network identified in this paper) may have been envisioned, it will look quite different and involve actors and new actants in slightly different problematisations of mental ill health in Europe. If such a new actor-network emerges, the Commission likely would be the network builder as it was in the first three networks. The paper also finds that the way in which mental (ill) health was problematised entailed the emergence of different kinds of actors as mental health experts.

This analysis reveals that the Commission of the European Union engaged in network-building activities throughout the twenty-year period. It also illustrates how the translation process of the Commission's network-building around specific concepts of mental (ill) health also constructed specific actors as experts and created European Agencies or technologies as obligatory passage points. Thus, like the 'orchestration' view of the Commission's role, this paper emphasises the mutual dependence between the Commission and the non-state actors with which it works in governance processes (Abbott, Genschel, Snidal and Zangl 2015; Blauberger and Rittberger 2015). An ANT approach, like the orchestration approach, is able to capture the non-hierarchical, mutually dependent and necessarily cooperative relationship between the network-builder (in our case, the Commission) and other network actors. Yet while the orchestration framework presumes that actors in a network hold corresponding goals (Blauberger and Rittberger 2015: 369), ANT does not presume that the network builder has preconceived goals. Instead, goals are constructed through the process of translation—the key dynamic within a network.

ANALYTIC APPROACH: ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY AND TRANSLATION MOMENTS

This paper proposes adopting actor-network theory (ANT) as an approach to understand European Union mental health governance processes, and specifically the Commission's role in them. ANT provides useful analytical tools for examining how scientific and political practice transform over shorter time spans (Bueger and Bethke 2014) as in the life of EU mental health governance. ANT is a 'heterogeneous conglomerate of studies' and thus 'should not be understood as an established 'research programme', 'paradigm' or 'theory'', but instead as 'a toolkit for telling interesting stories about, and interfering in, those relations' (Bueger and Bethke 2014: 35, citing Law 2009: 147). This paper applies ANT in this spirit. Resembling the application of ANT by Bueger and Bethke (2014), this paper highlights the ways in which EU mental health governance contributed to transnational knowledge politics and policy across Europe, and to the legitimisation and perpetuation of specific concepts in the policy area of mental health.

ANT is useful in this analysis because a quick glance at EUMHG over time reveals that mental health and mental ill health have not been stable concepts, and thus the potential of a specific 'epistemic community', e.g., of psychiatrists or psychologists, has not held a definitive role to play. In addition, the EU's legal authorities in the issue area have only recently been etched in EU law and Commission creativity. Thus, an epistemic community approach would gloss over important actor- networks being built via EU actions and would miss the key roles played not only by the scientists enrolled in the networks, but the network-building done by the Commission and the importance of technologies, such as databases, in enrolling more actors into the networks. The broader social relations could not come into relief as clearly. As Bueger and Bethke (2014: 33) observe, 'it is weak in showing how the relevant knowledge and its respective communities are actually formed'.

ANT also is useful because it ties knowledge to non-human *actants*. While this paper cannot specify with great detail the ways in which technologies enrolled actors into EUMHG networks, its use of ANT does allow us to identify the role those technologies play and their relations to other actors in the networks. Given the incorporation of technologies into mental healthcare provision (Oudshoorn 2011), including their increasing uptake during the pandemic, this element of ANT will prove even more useful in future analysis of EUMHG, to the extent it persists.

Finally, the ANT approach is useful for its non-linear conception of capacities and abilities in networks: unlike rationalist conceptualisations of actors' capacities, an ANT approach can illustrate how erstwhile incapacitated actors, such as sufferers of mental ill health, can be empowered and even rendered expert through their enrolment in an EU mental health actor-network. As Higgins and Kitto (2004: 1402) observe, rationalist approaches may assume that some actors 'have the capacities to think and act as ostensibly "active" agents, but how this occurs is a matter of empirical investigation' that rationalist approaches only assume. By

contrast, ANT encourages such investigation— something that is, I argue, decidedly necessary for understanding the dynamics of EUMHG over time.

Accordingly, this paper's investigation focuses on ANT processes of 'translation,' or the definition of actors' roles and identities in a network. It applies ANT to the brief history of EU mental health governance by reading the history as a process of *translation*. Translation is 'a general process (…) during which the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited' (Callon 1986: 203). The insight that actors' identities are not fixed but are shaped by participation on networks is an important distinction between ANT and other network theories, which assume actors' identities are stable (Bueger and Bethke 2014, p. 39). Translation gives the network its order and form and its actors' specific identities and roles: 'translation is what makes the activity of governing possible; it enables loose and flexible linkages to be established ``between those who are separated spatially and temporally, and between events in spheres that remain formally distinct and autonomous"' (Higgins and Kitto 2004: 1403, citing Rose 1999).

The paper traces the emergence of EUMHG over time with an eye to specific 'moments' in the translation process, including *problematisation*, *enrolment*, and attempts at establishing *obligatory passage points*. Problematisation occurs when an actor or group defines an issue as problematic, determines a set of actors and establishes their identities 'in such a way as to establish themselves as an obligatory passage point' (Callon 1986: 204). Enrolment is the process of defining a set of interrelated roles and rules of engagement for network participants, and their acceptance of those roles and rules (Callon 1986: 211; Higgins and Kitto 2004); enrolment gives the network order and form (Bueger and Bethke 2014). Finally, the paper identifies attempts to identify moments of establishing obligatory passage points in EUMHG. Obligatory passage points are groups, processes, or institutions 'that others must pass through to meet their own interests as well as the interests of the network builder' (Higgins and Kitto 2004: 1406). Such passage points therefore involve attempts to define and homogenise the meaning of core concepts that shape a network (Bueger and Bethke 2014) or repeated attempts to demonstrate to relevant actors that they must pass through that point to meet their interests (Callon 1986: 205). Translation is not always a neat and linear process: 'Translation work is often an ongoing struggle in which some actors enrol, others resist, and counterstrategies and -compromises are made, leading to more fragile textures and less orderly webs' (Bueger and Bethke 2014: 40).

ANT's analytical concepts are well suited to understanding patterns of international interaction in knowledge-intensive fields and around crucial concepts (Bueger and Bethke 2014). Mental health is one such issue area. Scientific discourses have contributed to ideas of mental health and mental illness in Europe for over 150 years (see for example studies of the French, Italian, and UK cases by Babini 2014; Coldefy and Curtis 2010; Jones 2000; Jones 2001; Ventriglio 2016). Over this time, psychiatry has emerged as a distinct scientific discipline, first advancing a *psychosocial* model of mental pathology (especially severe mental illness) that 'emphasised factors such as parental and intrapsychic influences'; it then turned to the current *biopsychosocial* model that emphasises the 'interplay between biological and psychosocial factors' (Drake, Green, Mueser and Goldman 2003: 428). It is therefore not surprising to see shifts in EUMHG networks that reflect shifts in scientific debates about mental health.

To trace the history of EUMHG with an eye to moments of problematisation, enrolment, and the establishment of obligatory passage points, the paper uses methods of discourse analysis and participant observation. These methods enable examination of micro-level interactions within policy processes. While these methods are not necessarily 'the natural choices' for applying ANT, the spirit of ANT as a 'toolbox' encourages analysis that enriches and 'betray[s]' conventional methodological choices (Bueger and Bethke 2014: 41, citing Mol 2010: 247). Indeed, a key point of ANT is that micro-level interactions can be simultaneously part of global-level policy: the global/local binary becomes analytically unnecessary (Bozorgmehr 2010).

While ANT's analytical concepts are well suited to understanding patterns of international interaction in knowledge-intensive fields and around crucial concepts (Bueger and Bethke 2014), ANT has nonetheless been relatively rarely used in studies of EU governance. It has been used to explain the rise and fall of policy concepts such as the 'failed state' (Bueger and Bethke 2014) and has been highlighted as an approach that captures the observed relations between otherwise local and global actors while also avoiding the positive normative connotations of 'global health' analysis. (Bozorgmehr 2010). ANT also has been applied to global public health policy for several decades, where it has highlighted how 'ideas, technologies, or institutions (…) emerge and become stable parts of public life' (Szlezák 2012: 5).

THE COMMISSION: EU MENTAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE NETWORK-BUILDER

In promoting European level mental health governance, the Commission continually has linked its work to EU law. The Commission has adopted this technique other policy areas, including health policy, over time (Greer 2008: 223-224). By the late 1990s, the Commission was citing Article 152 of the Treaty of the European Community to advance mental health as a concern. The Article stipulated that 'a high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities' (Commission of the European Communities 2005: 5). This language enabled the Commission to emphasise 'the importance of mental health for general health and well-being' in a 199 Framework paper (Lahtinen, Lehtinen, Riikonen and Ahonen 1999: 6).

Indeed, by the late 1990s the Commission was advancing mental health as an EU-level concern. For example, an April 1998 Commission communication said mental health should be 'taken into account in the future Community action in the field of public health', and cited 'new health threats, the increasing pressures on health systems, the enlargement of the Community and the new provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam' as motivations for its recommendations (Commission of the European Union 1998).[1] The Council passed a mental health resolution the following year (Council resolution of 18 November 1999 on the promotion of mental health, OJ C 86, 24.3.2000, p. 1).

PROBLEMATISATION PHASE I: 'NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH' AND 'DISEASE BURDEN'

As these events were occurring in the late 1990s, the Commission contributed to the problematisation of mental health via its management of EU-level project grants. In this process, it began to establish itself as an *obligatory passage point* for network participation – a move that is well within Commission powers on a regular basis, because it is allowed and enabled by the institutional structures of the EU. For example, the Commission granted EU Community Action Funds (for health promotion, information, education, and training) to a joint project of the Finnish government and the European Network on Mental Health Policy (ENMHPO), a pan-European non- governmental organisation (NGO). The project advanced the issue of mental health through a high- level (EU Presidency) European Conference on Promotion of Mental Health and Social Inclusion, in Tampere, Finland, in October 1999 (Finland held the EU Presidency during the last half of 1999). The project also produced a report by the Finnish Ministry of Health and ENMHPO entitled, 'Public Health Approach on Mental Health in Europe.' This report echoed Commission discourse by stating, 'mental health must be regarded as an indivisible part of public health' (Lahtinen, Lehtinen, Riikonen and Ahonen 1999). This Conference can be considered moments of enrolment – of conference participants – and of the creation of experts in EUMHG's first actor-network, the public health actor-network (see Table 1).

Commission network-building centred on different discourses, or problematisations, of mental (ill) health and governance. The Commission began its mental health activities by taking up the concept of 'no health without mental health' (WHO 1999: 9) This

problematisation emerged during the joint World Health Organization/European Commission meeting, '[b]alancing mental health promotion and mental health care' held in Brussels from 22 to 24 April 1999. World Health Organization documents trace this phrase back to the WHO original Director-General, Dr. Brock Chisholm, who 'shepherded the notion that mental and physical health were intimately linked' (Kolappa, Henderson and Kishore 2013), but the phrase was used officially in this 1999 conference report. The phrase was later adopted at the 2005 WHO Ministerial Conference (WHO 2005).

The problematisation did not fundamentally alter the emerging EUMHG network: there is little contradiction between concepts of mental health as a public health problem and mental health as a requisite element of general health. Until 2011, the Commission maintained the public- health/no health without mental health views. But health experts at the World Bank also had taken up another discourse by 1999. This was the 'disease burden' concept.

Disease-burden epidemiology is a policy approach developed at the World Bank in the 1970s that promoted measurements and monitoring techniques as a means of managing mental health (Wahlberg and Rose 2015). Disease-burden discourse encourages quantifying 'the experience of living with mental disease' and in terms of monetary individual, familial, and societal costs of mental disorders, with a special emphasis on depression (Wahlberg and Rose 2015: 78-81). It involves new techniques of measurement, including the quality-adjusted life year (QALY) which encourages policy-makers to ask, 'how much health do I get in return for a given intervention or treatment?' and the disability-adjusted life year (DALY), which prioritises diseases according to return on investment (Wahlberg and Rose 2015: 73) The Commission's 1999 paper appears to have been early to adopt disease-burden discourse on mental health. The WHO did not adopt it until its 2001 paper, 'Mental health: New understanding, new hope' (Wahlberg and Rose, 2015).

Disease-burden discourse thus seems to entail a very different problematisation of mental (ill) health than no health without mental health. Nonetheless, all three concepts – no health without mental health, mental health as a public health issue, and disease burden—appeared in the 1999 Finnish-ENMHPO report. In addition to linking mental health to public health and to general health, it also argued that 'Mental health problems (…) add significantly to general health expenditure and contribute to disability, mortality, loss of economic productivity, poverty and low quality of life…. [They] impose a heavy burden not only on the individuals but on society as a whole.' (Lavikainen, Lahtinen and Lehtinen 2000: 17) Indeed, the report observes that '[e]ight of the ten leading causes of the global burden of disease are related to mental health. Depression alone accounts for 5% of the total years of life lived with a disability in Europe.' (Lavikainen, Lahtinen and Lehtinen 2000: 17). We can therefore say that in 1999, the EUMHG actor-network had not yet stabilised the identities of its enrolees, actors, or actants: the only salient technologies (actants) – DALYS and QALYS—contributed only to the disease-burden problematisation of mental ill health, and not to the public-health or 'no health without mental health' problematisations.

The 'no health without mental health' problematisation did not survive long, perhaps because it lacked any technologies to which it could be linked. By contrast, the other two problematisations—community mental health and disease burden—survived throughout the history of EUMHG, though the latter was not as robust. Thus, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, EU mental health governance included two separate problematisations and thus actor-networks: a European public health network that viewed mental health as a general and public health problem, and a global disease-burden network that viewed mental health as a cost burden on societies. The two networks are different in that they engage different actors and technologies, though there is some overlap (see Table 1).

Table 1: European-Level Actor-Networks in the Area of Mental Health, Ca. 1999-2005

ACTOR-NETWORK PROBLEMATISATION (APPROX. YEARS)	PUBLIC HEALTH ACTOR-NETWORK (1998-2005)	DISEASE BURDEN ACTOR-NETWORK (1998-2018)
PROBLEMATISATION/ KEY CONCEPTS	No health without mental health	Disease burden' epidemiology
	Mental health as part of public health 'enable the Community to meet its key responsibility to contribute towards a high level of health protection' improving health information tackling health determinants.	Mental health problems as 'heavy and increasing burden that contributes high costs to our societies'
NETWORK BUILDER	European Commission	World Bank, WHO, (European Commission?)
ENROLLEES	EU member states as responsible members	Mental health clinics (submitting data to network-builders or obligatory passage pts.
	NGOs (reporters of data) Experts: Health administrators at (sub-) state level	Experts: States as risk-managers Epidemiologists Demographers Health administrators at state level (as risk management professionals)
OBLIGATORY PASSAGE POINTS:	WHO, EU Public Health Executive Agency (later called Chafea)	WHO, World Bank, European Commission?

We can discern some important distinctions between these actor-networks (see Table 1). NGOs arguably have little role to play in the disease-burden actor-network as they are not the official entities that would have access or the authority to interpret state-level disease data necessary for epidemiologists to produce data for QALYs or DALYs calculations. Additionally, the scientific expertise needed for the two actor-networks is quite different: the public health actor- network would require sociological or public health authorities' knowledge of European-level and state-level institutional settings, while the disease burden actor-network would involve actuarial work of calculating population numbers and disease likelihood. An important observation for our analysis is that the European Commission has a much smaller role to play in the disease-burden actor-network, because the network largely already has been built via World Bank and WHO initiatives. Any possible Commission expertise in the area of epidemiology was likely not going to be as relevant as its more immediate expertise in European Union institutional dynamics. Given this last challenge, it is perhaps not surprising that even though a 'global movement' on mental health may have emerged around the question of disease burden (Wahlberg and Rose 2015), EUMHG as networked by the Commission largely has taken a different form that involves a broader array of actors, under the problematisation of community mental health.

PHASE II: DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION AND COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

The Commission's 2005 Green Paper on Mental Health is a significant event in the history of EUMHG, because it problematised mental (ill) health in yet a different way and thus enrolled different actors. Although the Green Paper still referred to the disease burden question and highlighted the rights of EU citizens as reasons for pursuing mental health governance at European level, its central focus shifted to questions of de-institutionalisation and pursuing community mental health in member states. This new problematisation therefore represented different roles for some participants such as state governments and NGOs, a de-emphasis on some kinds of expertise and therefore experts (such as epidemiologists). It also arguably put the Commission firmly in the role of network builder, whereas the Commission's network-building role was less well-defined in the public mental health network, where it was secondary to state-level authorities, as well as in the disease-burden network, where the World Bank held a more prominent role. In this sense, the Green Paper was an attempt to establish a new actor-network of EUMHG. I label this actor-network the CMH network (see Table 2).

The CMH problematisation emerged within psychiatry in the 1950s and 1960s amid a push for the de-institutionalisation (DI) of care. At this time, the rise of new pharmaceutical treatments, including psychotropic drugs, made it possible to treat people's mental ill health outside the hospital setting, and public and psychiatric opinions about appropriate forms of treatment shifted (Fioritti 2018). These medicines therefore constitute actors – or in ANT terminology, non-human *actants* within the network. Post-war anti-institutional views in the US reflected DI and inspired federal legislation in the US in 1963 which was supposed to subsidise the construction of community mental health centres (CMHCs). CMHCs were viewed as the antithesis of the hospital and were intended as the 'cornerstone' of CMH. The vision was that symptoms would be identified early, treatment would be preventive, and care by centres would be integrated and continuous. CMH and its institutions therefore represented a radical change in mental healthcare that 'would render traditional mental hospitals obsolete' (Grob 1995: 52). In the US, this reality never materialised because federal funding was cut and the CMH model was not fully implemented. Meanwhile, in Italy in the 1970s, DI became a social and political movement to 'reformulate relations between individuals and the society, balancing power relationships in favour of the vulnerable subject' (Fioritti 2018: 4).

The CMH concept itself has shifted in meaning over time, from a focus on symptom control (in the 1970s), to rehabilitation (1980s), to recovery (1990s) (Drake, Green, Mueser and Goldman 2003). The recent theme of recovery is related to larger trends in medicine that focus on 'patient-centred care' and shared decision-making (Drake, Green, Mueser and Goldman 2003: 429, citing Edwards and Elwyn 2001). As a 2018 Position Paper funded within the third EU Health Programme observes, 'the recovery movement and its associated principles have become central to mental health practice and policy in most Western settings. Traditional conceptualisations of clinical recovery, specifically symptom remission and a return to pre-morbid levels of functioning, are now typically complemented by an emphasis on personal recovery' (Killaspy, McPherson, Samele, Keet and Caldas de Almeida 2018: 13). The most recent studies on Community Mental Health emphasises both recovery and 'resilience' (Harper and Speed 2012) though EU problematisation does not often refer to resilience.

The 2005 Green Paper problematised mental ill health as a public concern that needed response via Community Mental Health. According to the Paper, CMH 'signals a change of paradigm, in line with human rights. But with a move away from institutional care, there is (…) a need to develop proactive community services and to ensure that money follows the patient' (Commission of the European Communities 2005: 10). The Paper argued that EUMHG was necessary for the EU to promote social inclusion and protect the rights of people suffering from mental ill health (Commission of the European Communities 2005: 9, 10). EUMHG would focus on promoting CMH and the rights of persons with mental ill health; at the EU level, assistance would come by mapping member states' legal frameworks on human

rights and defining 'rights, obligations, and structures' (Commission of the European Communities 2005: 11).

Thus, the Paper envisioned a broad network that would enrol different actors, or the same actors in different roles/identities, than the disease-burden problematisation. These included participants from 'health and non-health policy sectors and stakeholders whose decisions impact on the mental health of the population' as well as patient organisations and civil society (Commission of the European Communities 2005: 5). Non-state actors engaged in community mental health were identified as experts—in contrast to the disease-burden network, whose experts were state and World Bank analysts. State health administrators would play different roles, encouraging community mental health systems rather than (or in addition to) calculating risk. The 2005 paper encouraged a broad focus on prevention, stigma-reduction, and public education on mental ill health (Wahlbeck 2011).

Subsequent initiatives by the Commission maintained the CMH problematisation and enrolled more actors in the CMH actor-network. But by 2008, the anticipated EU strategy on mental health did not appear, and the Commission shifted focus from broad public mental health to specific mental disorders (Wahlbeck 2011). Instead of a strategy, its 2008 EU-level conference launched a Pact for Mental Health and Well-Being that identified five priority areas for EU action: promotion of mental health in schools, promoting action against depression and suicide and implementation of e- health approaches, and developing community-based and socially inclusive mental health care for people with severe mental disorders. The Pact did not emphasise that '[t]here is no health without mental health' and as Wahlbeck (2011) observes, its focus on specific mental disorders abandoned the public health problematisation of mental ill health as a concern for everyone.

While the focus on specific mental disorders was new, the Pact nonetheless (re-)built the CMH model, for example by encouraging 'health services which are well integrated in the society', as well as 'active inclusion of people with mental health problems in society, including improvement of their access to appropriate employment, training and educational opportunities' (WHO Europe 2008). The Pact was careful to recognise the pre-eminence of member state law relative to EU legal instruments regarding mental health, but it made a case for EU leadership in mental health and positioned the EU as the central institution in a network that 'brings together European institutions, member states, stakeholders from relevant sectors, including people at risk of exclusion for mental health reasons, and the research community' in a 'longer-term process of exchange, cooperation and coordination on key challenges' (WHO Europe 2008: 6).

By shifting away from a public health in problematisation to a CMH problematisation that linked EUMHG to states' mental healthcare systems, the CMH network may have undermined EUMHG legitimacy in the eyes of member states (Wahlbeck 2011). It is true that such network activity requires engagement of NGOs and sub-state mental healthcare providers and renders national-level health administrators' roles and identities as equal to those of NGOs: they are both experts. Moreover, caregivers and local stakeholders such as family members and community care administrators, not Ministers of Health, are natural enrolees in the network.

The Commission maintained its network-builder role in this CMH actor-network via standard EU policy tools such as the 2013 Joint Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing (signed by 25 EU member states plus Norway), and the European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing (2016-2018). The Joint Action included the same five focus areas identified in the 2008 Pact, and both the Joint Action and the Framework for Action maintained the CMH problematisation of mental (ill) health. The obligatory passage points within these networks included the requests for project proposals released and reviewed by the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea). Chafea's roles included fielding recommendations for the Joint Action from member states, commissioning tenders for projects, and releasing calls for expression of interest by experts whom it then screens for membership in EU expert panels and other proceedings.

While space does not allow a full discussion of Chafea's many roles or powers, the ANT concept of obligatory passage point succeeds in capturing the potentially powerful and somewhat obscure nature of Chafea and other such agencies operating within EU governance. Aside from Chafea, a specific and particularly interesting obligatory passage point was the EU Compass for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing. EU Compass was established with the 2013 Joint Action. It was a 'web-based mechanism used to collect, exchange and analyse information on policy and stakeholder activities in mental health' that also communicated information on the European Framework for Action on Mental Health and Well-Being. Thus, it was a tool to 'monitor the mental health and wellbeing policies and activities' within participant states and the EU generally (European Commission, DG Health and Food Safety 2019). The technology of EU Compass was therefore obligatory in the sense that any NGO or state organisation with a project on mental health would want to enlist in the technology so that their programmes and projects, and the 'best practices' and insights gleaned from them, could be shared with interested parties of all sorts. The act of sharing on the EU Compass became a means of enrolling or being enrolled in the network.

A related technique, EU Compass Forums, also served as obligatory passage points. The Forums were a series of 'multi-sectoral awareness raising workshops with a focus on investing in Europe's mental capital' in every member state. They communicated Joint Action priorities to member states and included three annual transnational conferences (EU Compass Consortium 2018). The Forums therefore brought together health ministries at EU member states, trans- European and state-level medical and psychiatric organisations like the European Psychiatric Association, the European Union of Medical Specialists, and the Federal Chamber of Psychotherapists in Germany, as well as non-governmental organisations like the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, among many others. Similar to the EU Compass technology, the Forums provided incentives and rewards for multiple actors at all levels of government, and in many different areas of European society, to enrol in EUMHG.

The CMH actor-network did include some of the same actors enrolled in the public health actor-network, but their roles were different: in the public health actor-network, for example, NGOs largely provide data for the purpose of providing improved public health services, such as emergency response services; in the CMH actor-network, NGOs and other local-level institutions and actors represented the driving force of political change, in a more 'bottom-up' political dynamic (see Table 2). An advantage of an ANT approach is that it highlights how different actors become experts— namely, by dint of the way in which an issue-area is problematised. ANT reveals how a small-scale mental health clinic in Denmark, or a peer-support advocacy programme in Croatia, can hold an 'expert' role in the community mental health actor-network, just as an analyst the World Bank might do in the disease-burden network. Under an ANT lens, expertise depends on the ways in which the issue is problematised.

Table 2: European-Level Actor-Networks in the Area of Mental Health, ca. 1998-2018

ACTOR-NETWORK PROBLEMATISATION (APPROX. YEARS)	PUBLIC HEALTH ACTOR-NETWORK (1998-2005)	DISEASE BURDEN ACTOR-NETWORK (1998-2018)	DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION & COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH ACTOR-NETWORK (2008-2018)
PROBLEMATISATION/ KEY CONCEPTS	No health without mental health Mental health as part of public health 'enable the Community to meet its key responsibility to contribute towards a	Disease burden epidemiology Mental health problems as 'heavy and increasing burden that contributes high costs to our societies'	**De-institutionalisation Community Mental Health** awareness of the…destructive and dehumanizing effects of heavy institutional interventions and a continuous effort to minimise them', develop proactive community services and (…) ensure that money follows the patient'.

ACTOR-NETWORK PROBLEMATISATION (APPROX. YEARS)	PUBLIC HEALTH ACTOR-NETWORK (1998-2005)	DISEASE BURDEN ACTOR-NETWORK (1998-2018)	DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION & COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTHACTOR-NETWORK (2008-2018)
	high level of health protection' improving health information tackling health determinants.		
NETWORK BUILDER	European Commission	World Bank, WHO, (European Commission?)	European Commission
ENROLLEES	EU member states as responsible members NGOs (reporters of data)	Demographers, mental health clinics (submitting data to network builders or obligatory passage points)	EU member states as DI managers
	Experts: Public Health administrators	Experts: Health administrators at state level (as risk management professionals)	Experts: NGOs, Care providers Clients/patients/survivors/families

Of course, while the CMH actor-network enjoyed relative stability of actor identities and roles during the years 2008-2018 (after the public health problematisation was largely abandoned), there were tensions within it. The tensions emerge in part between the different professional or scientific backgrounds of participants. For example, at the Third EU Compass Forum, a member of the European Psychiatrists' Organisation observed pointedly that 'community psychiatry' is different from 'community mental health care', while the President of the European Alliance against Depression resisted discussing mental health in general and emphasised, '[i]t risks stigmatisation to put all these disorders in the same basket'. As another Forum participant explained, these comments rubbed some participants the wrong way, because they emphasise (a psychiatrist's concern with) mental disorder and treatment, rather than wellbeing and recovery (Third EU Compass Forum on Mental Health and Well-Being 2018).

The 'paradox' of the CMH model – that the movement to deinstitutionalise has contributed to the need for other resources of mental healthcare (Grob 1995: 53)—also put pressure on the CMH network. EU member states exhibit a broad variety of mixes of deinstitutionalisation and CMH institutions (Killaspy, McPherson, Samele, Keet and Caldas de Almeida 2018). But they were also feeling pressure to cut resources. In the face of post-2008 financial crisis, the post-2010 European debt crisis, and subsequent austerity measures, many member states' budgets were stretched thin. Even the vaunted Italian CMH system, often held as a model of CMH implementation, was experiencing such pressures by 2018. As Fioritti (2018: 1) observes, '[m]ental health care services have been asked to do much more, in terms of care to a larger population with very diversified needs, but with [far fewer] resources, due to the financial consequences of the economic crisis.'

Yet the CMH actor-network was able to accommodate these tensions, though disagreement over the concept of recovery persisted until the end of (this first iteration of) the CMH network. As a 2018 Position Paper funded within the third EU Health Programme observed,

'due to the complex and multidimensional nature of [the recovery] concept, implementing practice guidelines to reflect the underlying philosophy, and designing appropriate empirical investigations into their effectiveness have been challenging' (Killaspy, McPherson, Samele, Keet and Caldas de Almeida 2018: 13). In other words, it was not clear which actors were experts and which techniques were the preferred techniques for measuring recovery. This tension might be seen as a failure of the Commission in its network-building role.

The Commission dropped its community mental health problematisation and failed to renew funding for Joint Actions in its 2019 budget proposal. In the meantime, mental health has been problematised in different ways in the European Union. During the early twenty-first century, there have been shifts in mental health research agendas that de-emphasise the study of psychosocial phenomena and instead support study of the brain, including neuroimaging, genetics, pharmacological mechanisms, molecular biology, and other neuroscience studies (Drake, Green, Mueser and Goldman 2003: 428). In 2019, the Commission seemed poised to emphasise 'innovation', which it largely understood in technological rather than psycho-social terms, and thus a turn to neuroscientific problematisations of mental health seemed likely. But in 2020, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the recognition of its mental-health effects appear to have spurred interest in several different problematisations. In the European Parliament, a November 2020 webinar on mental health (Ciucci 2020) engaged in a disease-burden epidemiology problematisation. But across Europe in 2020 and 2021, dramatic shifts in forms of community care especially towards online care appear to have renewed the CMH problematisation and the Commission seems to be attempting to (re-)build the CMH network: its proposed 2021 Joint Action on Mental Health would involve 21 member states in efforts to 'implement a community-based mental health system reform and a best practice aiming to prevent suicide' (Kyriakides 2021).

CONCLUSION

This paper has advanced the argument that an actor-network analysis of European Union mental health governance (EUMHG) can shed light on various elements of the short history of this policy. It finds that from 1999-2018, three actor networks of mental health governance emerged at the EU level, each of which incorporated policymakers, mental health care providers, research scientists, non-governmental organisations, and patients and families across Europe in processes of mental health governance. The three actor-networks exhibited different problematisations of mental ill health, and thus different actors, actants, and obligatory passage points: 1) a mental health as public health network that was built by the Commission of the European Union but soon fell by the wayside, 2) a disease-burden network that adopted technologies from World Health Organization research, and 3) a Community Mental Health (CMH) network. This last network was built by the Commission beginning in 2005, and in 2008 it shed many vestiges of the first network's public health problematisation. Via two separate obligatory passage points – CHAFEA and EU COMPASS – this network enrolled a broad range of actors into the network. In each of these networks, the Commission assumed the role of network-builder, though this role seemed most appropriate for it in the CMH network, where it could rely on its extensive connections with member state policy makers, non-governmental organisations, and other community/societal actors, to shape their thinking about mental (ill) health.

This analysis illustrates how the Commission's role as network-builder in two of the networks enabled it to determine expertise – who is 'authorised to speak' on the issue of mental (ill) health (Bueger and Bethke 2014: 31). The analysis also illustrates how other approaches to EU-level policy-making can over-emphasise institutional relations and thereby neglect the knowledge relations that are central to policy areas of all sorts including mental health. The paper therefore contributes to larger discussions about the relationship of the Commission to (knowledge) elites, and to theorising about the role of the Commission. Specifically, the foregoing analysis illustrates that when policy areas are problematised as dynamic science-society problems, the Commission is well-positioned to play the role of network-builder, and

despite some evidence of low participation in obligatory passage points such as the databases or best-practice tools built by the Commission (including EU Compass Forum) (Killaspy, McPherson, Samele, Keet and Caldas de Almeida 2018), the Commission can in fact play the network-builder role in EU-level governance. In this way, the Commission plays a key role in determining who or what 'counts' as (actors or actants in the position of) obligatory passage points. That is, the Commission helps determine what counts as expertise in different policy areas, including the technologies (e.g., databases like the EU Compass) people, machines, and specific choices of data that comprise them. While this paper has not expressly connected to literature on experts and expertise, its approach can contribute to it.

For example, this research can spur more-detailed analyses of specific workings of actor-networks, such as the mental health networks, in specific locations within Europe. Armed with this approach, we can examine a particular EU-sponsored community mental health project in Utrecht or Zagreb and trace its translation processes such as the enrolment of new families, clients, or patients in the network's particular understanding of community mental health and find that survivors of mental ill health fill the role of peer-support advocates— and expert role. Actor-network analysis also enables us to situate these networks in relation to global scientific debate on mental health, mental ill health, and stigma. Indeed, the ANT approach allows us to examine EU mental health projects in terms of their interaction with globally or regionally circulating technologies, medicines, and concepts of care; the unique characteristics of different project locales; the network-participation process; and the social dynamics that emerge when these are combined. (Jolivet and Heiskanen, 2010) And of course, this approach can be performed in other EU governance areas as well.

In light of the foregoing analysis, it seems likely that the anticipated 2021 Joint Action on Mental Health will take up some elements of the community mental health actor-network that was built from 2008-2018. But the new technologies developed in mental health care provision during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as telepsychiatry and e-Mental Healthcare, along with delayed visits and increased reporting of mental ill health in new reporting mechanisms at regional or state health offices, will reshape the network in new ways. It seems likely that community mental health may be redefined to include electronic connectivity as a key actant, its presence perceived as beneficial and its absence as detrimental to mental health in Europe. ANT analysis will allow us to understand how such new technologies that have reshaped social relations worldwide have also become part of our understandings of and relations to mental health in Europe. Such findings will deepen our abilities to understand how science and expertise are shaped by and help shape mental health and other policy areas at the EU level.

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AUTHOR DETAILS

Kristin Edquist, Eastern Washington University, Department of Political Science and Public Policy, 526 5th Street, Cheyney, Washington, WA 99004 USA, [kedquist@ewu.edu].

ENDNOTES

[1] The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997; entered into force 1999) amended significantly the Maastricht European Community Treaty by inserting a Social Chapter to authorise legislation in the field of employment

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Research Article

Paradiplomacy and its Impact on EU Foreign Policy

Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska and Tomasz Kamiński

Abstract

Cities and regions play an increasingly vital role in international relations, even co-shaping their countries' foreign policy. This phenomenon, usually called 'paradiplomacy', means that cities and regions develop links with foreign actors, both state and non-state. In this way, they contribute to the 'pluralisation' of diplomacy and are changing the shape of contemporary relations on the global stage. This process is also happening with regard to the international activities undertaken by the European Union (EU); yet the paradiplomacy trend is also only partially realised at the EU level. In this context, this article aims to conceptualise the impact that the paradiplomacy of European sub-state actors has on EU foreign policy. So far, it has not been adequately recognised in the academic literature as a potential factor influencing EU foreign affairs. In addition, the article analyses how cities and regions can influence the development of EU foreign policy and how the Union can use this potential for international activity on the part of local actors. The article has two parts. In the first part, we present three ways cities and regions can influence EU foreign policy. By giving specific examples, we show that cities and regions are already using their authority to: i) lobby and create networking communities, ii) use formal powers, and iii) apply direct actions. In the second part, we set out the opportunities and challenges that arise from the paradiplomatic activities of sub-state actors. To elucidate the issues, we consider the case of contemporary relations between the EU and China, which are becoming more intense at local government level but which are not used by Brussels to pursue EU interests.

Keywords

EU foreign policy; Paradiplomacy; Cities; Regions; Sub-state relations

The 21st century is a time of a significant power shift involving the visible rise of regions and cities as political, economic and social actors, which actively shape the global stage (Tavares 2016). Today some European regions and cities have larger economies than some European Union (EU) member states, for example Paris versus Malta (Statista 2021). Many of these significant cities and regions have wide networks of international contacts and hold positions that enable local leaders to co-shape international policy development on, for example, climate change and migration.

The role of sub-state entities in Europe, particularly regions, has grown over time (Marks, Hooghe and Schakel 2010). Today, central governments and the EU must increasingly accommodate sub-state actors throughout the policy cycle, from policy initiation to decision-making and implementation (Tatham 2018; Pazos-Vidal 2020; Abels and Hogenauer 2020). The decentralisation of some nation states' competencies following their centralisation at the EU level is perceived as the main driver of this trend. An effect of this trend is that it increases policy overlap, especially in areas such as the environment, transport, agriculture, fisheries, regional economic development and spatial planning (Panara and De Becker 2010). To avoid disempowerment, regions have to 'Europeanise' their administration and begin interacting directly with EU institutions (Tatham 2016).

Simultaneously, regions and cities develop links with foreign actors, both state and non-state. This phenomenon is usually called 'paradiplomacy' (Tavares 2016; Kuznetsov 2015), however, some scholars use the term 'constituent diplomacy' (Michelmann and Soldatos 1990) or 'multi-layered diplomacy' (Holmes 2020; Hocking 1993). In the case of cities' foreign affairs, the term 'city diplomacy' has been popularised (Oosterlynck, Beeckmans, Bassens, Derudder et al. 2018; Barber 2014; Acuto 2013). Paradiplomacy is part of a much broader process of 'pluralisation' of diplomacy in which diplomatic practices, institutions and discourses are no longer limited to traditional international diplomacy because of the redistribution of power in the world (Cornago 2013).

Early studies on the involvement of subnational governments in foreign policy date back to the 1970s, but the development of more concerted research in the field began in the 1980s when Duchacek published *The International Dimensions of Self-government* (1984). In this first period of research (1970-80s), paradiplomacy was mainly analysed in studies on federal systems and states. Scholars focused on changes at the domestic level that pushed regions to have a more active international presence. In the 1990s, research in the field took off with numerous studies published that considered paradiplomacy from many different angles. For example, border studies tried to understand the general picture of transborder political, economic and cultural relations (for example Kolossov 2005). Scholarship on the nation-state focused attention on regions in search of autonomy which use paradiplomacy as an instrument for building an international presence and legitimacy for their independence claims (for example Cornago 2018; Aldecoa and Keating 2013). Later, in the 2000s, environmental perspectives further broadened research agendas and academic discourses regarding paradiplomacy (for example Happaerts, Brande and Bruyninckx 2010).

In European studies on paradiplomacy, the concept of multilevel governance (for example Piattoni 2009) became a major theoretical focus, and European integration was a key driver of the increase in foreign engagement activities on the part of regional authorities. By contrast, interestingly, empirical studies on the paradiplomacy of European regions (Blatter, Kreutzer, Rentl and Thiele 2008) concentrated on intra-European activities and not on the relations with third countries.

Nevertheless, paradiplomacy conducted by European subnational entities on their own, with a view of promoting their interests, has recently created an additional European foreign policy level. The concept of multilevel governance (MLG), widely used by scholars to explain the European policymaking process, can also be applied to EU foreign policy; and not only as a two-level game, as proposed by Smith (2004), but rather as a three-

level system with subnational actors often weakly constrained by national governments and almost entirely autonomous from EU institutions. The applicability of the MLG approach varies depending on the given issue within foreign policy. However, in most cases, the role of subnational actors remains marginal in EU policymaking which is dominated by EU member states and EU institutions. Politicians and diplomats who make decisions on EU foreign policy issues tend to limit the role of regions and cities to that of interest groups, one of many that lobby on EU foreign policy. In our understanding, however, in many cases, cities and regions are actors rather than only lobbyists; they are drivers of rationalisation in EU foreign policy and/or one of the "corrosive forces" that undermine the cohesion of EU foreign policy and the EU's institutional capacity to address external developments (Müller, Pomorska and Tonra 2021).

In this context, the article aims to conceptualise the impact that the paradiplomacy of European regions and cities has on EU foreign policy, and also to propose a new functional taxonomy of sub-state entities mobilisation in the international arena based on the (un)intended consequences of their direct actions in foreign affairs. So far, their activities have not been adequately recognised in the academic literature as a potential factor that may have an impact on EU foreign affairs, defined broadly as all external policies of the EU, such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) but also trade, development, investment, or any other policies with a foreign component.

To fill this research gap, we examine the influence of sub-state actions on EU foreign policy. Our approach considers two perspectives. The first focuses on how sub-state actors exert informal and formal influence over EU affairs. The second concentrates on the possible methods of employing the paradiplomatic activities of cities and regions within European foreign policy to realise the latter's goals more effectively (Kamiński 2019a).

Thus, this research answers two questions:

- How may sub-state actors affect the EU foreign policy?
- What are the opportunities and threats of paradiplomacy, and how may the EU accommodate this challenge?

The article is structured as follows. In the first part, we present ways in which sub-state actors can influence European foreign policy. Our research shows that this is possible through three mechanisms: lobbying in the international arena; using formal power; and taking direct political actions. In the second part, using the case of EU-China relations, we look at paradiplomacy as a challenge for the EU that creates both opportunities and challenges. This section emphasises that the EU foreign policy's subnational layer may be a source of European strength, bringing additional policy rationalisation and/or enabling EU foreign policy goals. At the same time, however, paradiplomacy can also cause political problems. The famous case of vetoing the EU trade agreement with Canada by the regional parliament in Belgium serves as the best example of what may happen in future contracts with a much more 'controversial' partner (Paquin 2021).

The article is written on the basis of in-depth literature research, surveys conducted among European regions and cities (2017-2021), interviews with European Commission officials, and representatives of national foreign ministries and sub-state authorities.

HOW MAY SUB-STATE ACTIVITIES AFFECT EU FOREIGN POLICY?

The influence of regions and cities on EU foreign policy is a result of the rise of regional authority in Europe and the logical consequence of regions' empowerment (Tatham 2018). Comparative studies have shown that, since the 1950s, Europe has experienced 'an era of

regionalisation', with reforms in many different countries resulting in greater regional authority (Marks, Hooghe and Schakel 2010). Sub-state actors have gained autonomous decision-making competencies in various policy areas and have become politically relevant actors within their constituencies.

Paradoxically, international relations scholars often ignore sub-state actors, and instead consider nation-states as the default unit of research analysis. Critics have called this approach a form of 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Jeffery and Wincott 2010) that has led political scientists to overlook the role of sub-state governments. The bulk of literature on paradiplomacy (Tavares 2016; Michelmann and Soldatos 1990; Kuznetsov 2015; Duchacek 1984) has been developed to counteract this assumption.

Academic literature on the EU foreign policy has been largely reticent on the sub-state dimension, focusing only on the intra-European context of that issue. Meanwhile, empirically regions are playing an increasingly important role on the international stage. Considering the findings of authors researching multilevel governance (Tatham, 2015; Pazos-Vidal, 2020), regions and cities exert their influence in several different ways. Tatham (2018) indicates that sub-state actors can influence, in particular, the EU through use of three tools: lobbying, formal powers, or veto rights[1]. Our research confirms Tatham's framework by applying it to foreign policy analysis, and supplementing with analysis of direct actions undertaken by regions and cities.

Lobbying and Networking

Firstly, sub-state actors may *lobby* and create *networking groups* through 'intra-state' channels (inside their parent state) or 'extra-state' channels (directly at the EU level). Domestically lobbying depends on the shape of the political system in the particular member state, but the usual targets are chambers of parliament as well as governmental agencies. Often, subnational units organise themselves in the form of networks (such as the Association of Polish Cities or the Association of Netherlands Municipalities) in order to make their voice stronger.

Supranationally, regions and cities often act through staff based in dedicated representative offices in Brussels, through activities in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) or transnational networks of subnational governments. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) set up in 1951 serves as a good example. The CEMR is the oldest European association of local and regional governments, it acts as an umbrella organisation for national associations of local and regional governments from 41 European countries.

Some transnational networks of local governments focus specifically on climate policy and sustainable development (for example C40 or ICLEI). The aim of these networks is to increase the visibility of cities on the global stage and their role in climate governance (Haupt and Coppola 2019). Such political mobilisation allows cities to articulate their interests and to avoid becoming mere implementers of decisions taken elsewhere.

The political mobilisation of sub-state entities through lobbying can directly impact aspects of EU foreign policy. For example, the EU's success in climate talks depends not only on member states' positions but also on subnational actors that influence those talks autonomously. Leading European cities often set more ambitious climate goals than the EU and its member states, becoming leaders with an aspiration to attract followers and set the tone in polycentric climate governance (Wurzel, Liefferink and Torney, 2019; Kern 2019).

A recent example of city mobilisation on climate policy was the evident in the city of Amsterdam's embrace of the prominent concept of the 'doughnut economy' (Raworth

2017), which emphasises the unsustainability of endless GDP growth; the concept was adapted by city authorities in Amsterdam and then promoted by the C40 group (C40 2020). The EU, which sees recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to intensify efforts to mitigate climate change and promote global sustainable development, could usefully consider closer cooperation with transnational networks because they could facilitate the transfer of European ideas to developing countries by reaching local communities. It is worth noting that the potential value of local authorities in the promotion of EU sustainability goals was recognised in the European Commission's (2013) strategy paper 'Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes', though the findings of this paper regarding the need for a green recovery would require an updated and more specific strategy (Arnez and Kamiński 2020).

Formal Power

Secondly, the local authorities can use *formal powers* via the EU institutions or exercise their *veto rights*. In the EU's institutional framework, regional authorities' power is sometimes perceived as limited to the inclusion of regional parliaments via the so-called early warning system for subsidiary control in the EU (Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2020) and the consultative role of the CoR. Tatham (2018) noted that sub-state actors try to increase their official power on EU issues, not only through CoR, but also through inclusion in domestic EU policy-shaping processes in their parent states and through the right to veto certain international treaties, which some regions possess.

Treaty revisions have expanded the role of the CoR over time and added other areas over which this institution has a direct influence on European legislation (Hönnige and Panke 2016). From the Treaty of Maastricht to the Treaty of Lisbon, the role of the CoR in the European institutional setup has been steadily growing. Now the Commission and European Parliament must consult sub-state authorities as early as possible in the legislative process in specific thematic areas. The CoR can question European institutions and call for a second consultation in case of substantial modification of the initial legislative proposal. All this boosts the role of the CoR as the official representative body of subnational authorities (Tatham 2018).

Although it is not widely recognised, many areas that require consultation with CoR are relevant for foreign affairs. For instance, European legislation on the environment, energy, transport or consumer health and safety (among others) greatly impacts other countries, giving the EU unilateral power to regulate global markets. This phenomenon of 'the Brussel Effect' has been recently brilliantly analysed by Anu Bradford (2020). Bradford persuasively claims that regulatory power is a useful tool for the global policies of the EU. The future of the EU's external regulatory power will be partially dependent on the positions of substate authorities engaged in the CoR.

The formal domestic rights of subnational actors on EU issues and their engagement in the national level's decision-making process will have a similar impact. In some states, those rights are legally or even constitutionally guaranteed, which means that their decisions can be binding on national governments. These subnational units, therefore, have assured access to important Commission and Council working groups and essential documents (Tatham 2018).

The most effective type of this formal influence is the *veto right* that some European regions have at the domestic level, affecting the EU policymaking process even in high-political issues such as international trade deals. According to EU law, when trade treaties are limited to issues under the EU's competence, the national and regional parliaments are excluded from the process. By contrast, when an agreement is declared as 'mixed', meaning it covers areas of shared responsibility between the EU and its member states, ratification on the national level is required. In some countries, this means that regional

parliaments (seven in Belgium) or upper chambers, which include strong regional representations (Italian, Spanish, Austrian or German upper chambers), need to consent to sign the agreement. This gives these sub-national entities, in fact, the right to veto the whole treaty.

A spectacular example of the use of this possibility was the case of Wallonia's government holding back the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between the EU and Canada (CETA). In 2016 the government of this Belgian region voted in favour of preventing the national Belgian government from gaining full powers to sign the CETA. Wallonia's withholding of consent provoked a major political crisis in Europe (Magnette 2016). Probably for the first time in its history, regional authorities conducted direct negotiations with the foreign minister of trade (Chrystia Freeland, Canadian Minister for International Trade) in the presence of the European Commission's chief negotiator, Mauro Pettriccione. Martin Schultz, the President of the European Parliament, was also involved in talks, which shows that small Wallonia had the focused attention of the Brussel's establishment (Paquin 2021). After several days of tense negotiations, a 12-page compromise was reached. This did not require a reopening of the CETA agreement, but all parties had to agree that CETA should be accompanied by a legally binding interpretative instrument that clarified certain parts of the document.

An agreement was approved in an extraordinary plenary session of the Walloon region's parliament, thus enabling Belgium to sign it. The earlier revolt had, however, shown that even a small region of 3.6 million inhabitants (0.7 per cent of the EU population) could torpedo the long-term agenda of international cooperation.

A few years after these events, it is clear that the European Commission has had a continuing strategy of ignoring Wallonia's demands. The regional government has alerted the Commission and expressed its grievances long before the negotiations' *finale*. According to Paul Magnette, Prime Minister of Wallonia, the Commission's response to critical comments came after one year and only 23 days before the summit with Canada. By this time it was too late to address regions' concerns about CETA, and Wallonian authorities decided to risk a significant international crisis rather than giving up under political pressure (Paquin 2021). This case shows clearly that substate actors can play an essential role in trade negotiations. They should be included in the process as respected stakeholders and ignored under no circumstances.

Legal rights, described above, however, are unevenly distributed across EU regions. Tatham (2011) proposed a multi-dimensional index of the formal domestic rights of regions on EU issues. According to his study, for a group of 304 regions in EU-27, the index ranged from 0 to 8 but returned a median of 0 and a mean of 1.8. It turned out that over 60 per cent of regions had no formal rights, and only a quarter of regions scored between 3.5 (Finnish Aland Islands) and the maximum of 8 (Belgian regions). The German *Länder* also scored high (7.5), followed by the Italian and Austrian regions (7.5 and 6.5). On the other hand, it is worth noticing that even if numerically few, these regions with relatively high formal rights on EU issues represent over 40 per cent of the EU's population (Tatham 2018).

Considering that international trade and investment agreements are becoming increasingly complex and tend to cover many areas of shared competencies in the EU, one can assume that these regions' legal rights will continue to complicate the process of international negotiations. In the coming time, the EU will therefore have to accommodate its sub-state actors, being responsive to their views earlier and to a greater extent than in the case of CETA.

Direct Actions

Thirdly, completing the two ways mentioned above in which sub-state actors may affect EU foreign policy, we can add another element: *direct actions*. These actions may be undertaken completely autonomously, based on local or regional authorities' decisions, or initiated by the central government, or by the EU itself. In other words, sub-state actors may act either according to their own agenda or as instruments of European foreign policy.

Parkes (2020) indicated a comparable explanation illustrating examples of cooperation between European cities and selected countries of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. He specified that in the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhoods, EU cities are practicing diplomacy along three strands: as players, as places, and as percolators. Building on this, we created an alternative categorisation pointing to cities' roles in taking up direct activities in the international arena. However, we also find additional roles that local governments can fulfil. According to our research, cities and regions can act as: 'trouble-makers', 'contributors', 'deal brokers', or 'antennas'.

Referring to the first of these roles, the 'trouble-makers', we may present several examples. The first comes from the city of Milan. After retreating under Chinese pressure from plans to give the Dalai Lama honorary citizenship in 2012 (Alpert 2012), the authorities of this Italian city decided to do so four years later. This action provoked a strong reaction from the Chinese government condemning Milan (Barry 2016). Later, Milan's decision resurfaced during talks between the European Commission and China on the 'EU-China Tourism Year 2018' initiative; as a result the Italian city had to be excluded from the list of places officially engaged in this venture[2].

A similar case, but without repercussions at the European level, occurred in 2017, when the German city of Weimar awarded a human rights prize to Ilham Tohti, an Uyghur dissident. China protested to Berlin through diplomatic channels[3], and later the city of Weimar was attacked by hackers who deleted all news about the award from local news websites (China Change 2017).

These two cases demonstrate that subnational government's autonomous political actions can have unintended consequences for EU foreign policy. The local decisions of Italian or German cities resonated on the diplomatic level, notwithstanding the fact that European diplomats had not been engaged in taking them. The cities of Milan and Weimar thus became, from an EU perspective, 'trouble-makers'.

Considering the second possible role, cities may also act as 'contributors' to European foreign policy goals. This is evident in the operating mechanisms of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Through the ENP EU is an external catalyst for change in 16 of its Eastern and Southern neighbours (Cianciara 2020). Subnational authorities play a crucial role in the implementation phase of the ENP, contributing to the programme objectives (Oikonomou 2018). Local and regional authorities from both EU and neighbouring countries have the opportunity to actively participate in the ENP through institutions provided by the CoR. The CoR has created two major institutional forums for political dialogue in ENP frames: the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Easter Partnership (CORLEAP) and the Assembly of Local and Regional elected Representatives from the EU and its Mediterranean partners (ARLEM).

There is evidence that cooperation within CORLEAP and ARLEM works well. European regions and cities develop subnational cooperation and thereby bring partner countries closer to the EU, foster internal reforms and support capacity building at the local and regional level. For instance, in Ukraine, local EU authorities since 2015 have helped redraw administrative boundaries and facilitated a cautious decentralisation of power. European diplomats see this decentralisation and defusing of territorial tensions as a measure to, for

example, protect minorities by granting them language rights and/or proper access to healthcare, thus increasing democratisation tendencies (Committee of the Regions n.d.).

The engagement of subnational actors in the ENP shows how cities and regions can act as 'contributors' to European foreign policy. Motivated by the will to cooperate or to mobilise for the financial gains that come from participation in EU-funded cross-border projects (Oikonomou 2018), cities and regions increasingly serve as a European foreign policy tool.

European regions' engagement in the international development cooperation might serve as another example of contribution to the European foreign policy. Around 70 European regions have institutional structures for development cooperation, supporting various purposes in the sustainable development agenda (Reinsberg and Dellepiane 2021). Sustainable development is a core principle of the Treaty on European Union and a priority objective for the Union's external policies. Subnational aid strategies formulated in the sustainable development context directly support European policy goals.

Thirdly, cites may also play as 'deal brokers'. The example of paradiplomatic relations with Libya in recent years illustrates this role. Since the defeat of the loyalist forces in 2011, Libya has been divided between numerous rival armed forces linked to various regions, cities and tribes, while the government in Tripoli has been too weak to rule the country effectively. Throughout the years, EU diplomats have sought cooperation opportunities at the highest level, involving representatives of the United Nations (Parkes 2020) with little effect. Meanwhile, European cities, acting via the CoR, have developed close political and, gradually more, beneficial relationships with Libyan cities. European cities have, for example, invited feuding officials from major Libyan cities to Brussels, thus animating the reconciliation process and fostered cooperation between them.

Since January 2016, CoR, through the 'Nicosia Initiative', has been mobilising partnerships for Libya's local authorities by matching Libyan cities' requests with offers of expertise from EU cities and regions. The purpose of the initiative is to improve ordinary Libyans' lives by helping municipalities provide better services in areas ranging from primary health care to waste management (Committee of the Regions 2019). Implemented through city diplomacy, the Nicosia Initiative has been a bottom-up contribution to the stabilisation of Libya, which is vital for the EU's security. In this case, European cities acted both as 'contributors' and as 'deal-brokers'. This form of activity of local authorities is unusual but not unique. The Chinese province of Yunnan played a similar role in mediation between feuding warlords from Myanmar (Mierzejewski 2021).

Finally, cities can play the role of 'antennas', collecting information from the local level. Regional authorities are sometimes more sensitive to their foreign partners' needs and have ears open to political ideas that EU diplomats cannot hear. The case of Belarus is a good example illustrating this process. Since 2017 the EU's project 'Strengthening the Covenant of Mayors Movement in Belarus' has been realised, enabling close cooperation between EU cities' and Belarusian cities' mayors. These cities' representatives hold training events and conferences to expand their knowledge about energy efficiency or adaptation to climate change. This eco-partnership provides consultations to the cities on their sustainable development and climate action plans. As Belarusian mayors are often also at the forefront of public services' digitalisation, they observe the social moods. Therefore, the nationwide protests in Belarus, during which demonstrators demanded President Alexander Lukashenko's resignation, come as no surprise to them. Moreover, Belarusian local leaders also informed the mayors of EU cities as part of the Covenant of Mayors (European Council 2020) on that issue. If the knowledge and experience of city authorities were used, the EU would probably be better prepared for the outbreak of many months of strikes and would not be as rattled in its decisions regarding the Minsk regime.

The example of cooperation with local actors in Belarus shows that representatives of European cities and regions may serve as a sort of 'antennas' that receive social and

political signals sent from cities outside the EU. Parkes (2020) notes that because they are aware of mistakes and problems in the European backyard, they are better able to see similar challenges in other parts of the world. The EU needs proper communication channels with subnational actors to receive and decode signals from 'antennas' to use them for foreign policymaking.

WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF PARADIPLOMACY?

The subnational relations of individual regions and cities, evident in recent decades, show that paradiplomacy can constitute a significant challenge for the foreign policy pursued by the European Union and its member states. This challenge can be understood in both positive and negative ways.

Opportunities

Paradiplomacy may be seen as an opportunity to develop the EU's international relations for several reasons. Firstly, it may bring additional rationalisation to the decision-making process, thus influencing the state and international policies. According to Kuznetsov (2015), rationalisation of national foreign policies reflects the principle of subsidiarity, which means that the central government should delegate to the subnational level all tasks that can be effectively performed at that lower level. Indeed, multilevel international relations are much better thought out and conceptualised because they tend to be controlled on several levels, thoroughly studied, and credited, while considering the requests and demands of citizens, thus fulfilling the need for subsidiarity of European policy.

Secondly, paradiplomacy may create an alternative political communication channel with foreign partners, reaching out to non-state actors in third countries. With the spread of paradiplomacy and the growing awareness of the opportunities available to cities and regions, it is clear that in recent years representatives of European cities have acted as 'antennas', sensitive to social needs, including outside the EU.

Thirdly, paradiplomacy may encourage the implementation of some EU policy goals. As part of its foreign policy, the EU may use cities and regions to implement its foreign policy strategies. Subnational actors can even be better equipped in this regard than nation states or the EU, as they are closer to citizens and sense their problems, struggles and needs.

An excellent example of using the varied opportunities of paradiplomacy is the relations between the EU and China. Today EU-China relations take place on several levels (EU and China, member states and China, regions and cities of the EU and Chinese provinces and cities), but it is evident that the potential of sub-state China-EU relations has been growing in recent years, although it is often not realised in Brussels. Chinese data showed that in 2015 there were already 525 partnerships between European and Chinese cities/regions (中国国际友好城市总表 (1973～2015) 2020). Our studies on European regions (Kamiński, 2019a) and recently conducted (September 2020-June 2021) survey among 743 European cities confirmed that partnerships with China on the subnational level are now quite common but the awareness of their existence at the EU level is low, notwithstanding that these partnerships could be applied politically, economically and socially. A great example to use could be the document entitled 'Elements for a new EU strategy on China' from 2016, which, however, almost completely ignores the possibility of using paradiplomatic relations (European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy 2016).

The basis for EU-China relations is predominantly economic cooperation. Both actors are crucial partners in terms of economic exchange, and in December 2020 they concluded the

negotiations for a 'Comprehensive Agreement on Investment' (CAI) (European Commission 2020). Nevertheless, their close cooperation in trade is often connected with other aspects of collaboration. For instance, the exchange of experiences regarding urbanisation processes or environmental protection and academic exchange. These relations mostly focus on pragmatic cooperation in low-political areas, where cities and regions may play a vital role. Issues such as the organisation of urban transport, waste management or tourism promotion are common for all cities and regions globally and enable the exchange of experiences, even despite the problems in relations at the highest political level. Promoting and maintaining relations at the sub-state level may be a perfect solution in times of difficult political relations.

In the EU-China relationship, sub-state activities can be an important instrument in creating norms and principles that are vital from the European perspective, such as human and labour rights or environmental standards (Fulda 2019). Therefore, the EU could use cities and regions as 'transmission belts' to promote its values, which would also mean applying foreign policy tools in cooperation with local and regional authorities.

Nevertheless, the 2016 'Elements for a new EU strategy on China' (European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2016), as mentioned, does not stress the importance of sub-national actors' activities to achieve EU's goals in the international arena; this is a remarkable omission. Still, the EU could use the three above mentioned opportunities arising from paradiplomacy in all four areas described in the strategy, namely:

1. Peace and security: as the EU aspire to promote a more open, sustainable and inclusive growth model in China, contacts on the sub-state level could enable the direct transfer of knowledge and best practices where they are needed, to local communities. In bypassing highly politicised dialogues on the state level, cities and regions could offer more channels for influencing Chinese society (Montesano 2019) and would often be independent of the turbulence between the political leaders.

2. Prosperity: while the EU aims to attract 'productive Chinese investment in Europe', the regional authorities could play a crucial role in negotiating Foreign Direct Investments deals. In fact, great Chinese investments are often accompanied by political agreements between local or regional authorities. Even establishing train connections that facilitate and promote bilateral trade are politicised and engage regional authorities on both sides (Kamiński 2019b; Bartosiewicz and Szterlik 2019). Local governments' knowledge and experience positively contribute to a more conscious use of opportunities for bilateral cooperation.

3. Academic cooperation: because the EU wants to strengthen cooperation with China on research and innovation, the universities already collaborate closely with regions in their activities with the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC). As a result, the EU's science diplomacy should acknowledge sub-state authorities as important stakeholders and partners (Ciesielska-Klikowska 2020). Using the vast knowledge (i.e. language, knowledge of the political system, law or economic specificity) that scholars from local academic centres have would undoubtedly increase the awareness of mutual needs and opportunities and constitute an additional strengthening of the rationalisation in the decision-making process.

4. People-to-people links: since the EU hopes to strengthen interpersonal contacts by attracting more Chinese students and tourists, the development of sub-national links could create a network necessary to implement this policy goal (Zhu, Cai and François 2017). Importantly, cultural and educational exchange, as well as tourism promotion, are on the list of priorities in regions' relations with Chinese partners. This should lay a good foundation for closer cooperation with China, just as the

community of interest between the EU and sub-state actors is also quite evident in this regard.

The sub-state level would be appropriate for tackling many important problems presented in the 'Elements for a new EU strategy on China' and could play a crucial role in reaching some EU objectives. Moreover, interconnections between regions and cities could create new channels of political communication with China. Even today, it is possible to imagine the foundation of a mechanism that would enable the exchange of information between cities/regions and the EU on subnational cooperation with the PRC. As our research demonstrates, so far, no such possibility has been introduced. Furthermore, virtually none of the EU's member states, even less the EU itself, conducts activities monitoring the form and advancing sub-state activities. As shown in the table below, most surveyed cities point out that they do not coordinate their mutual collaboration with any institution. These findings have already been indicated by the EU diplomats themselves - the awareness of the need to create a coordination mechanism, therefore, exists[4].

Table 1. Does your city coordinate policy towards Chinese partners with other institutions? (scale from 0 – not at all, to 4 – fully coordinated)

Coordination with:	Number of cities answering: Not at all (0)	The number of all responses (from 0 to 4):	Average score
European Union	133	190	1,51
National Government	100	195	2,04

Source: own calculation based on a survey conducted (September 2020 - May 2021) by authors among officials responsible for foreign relations from all 743 cities in the EU, with a population above 50,000 citizens. We received back 392 surveys (53% response rate), 213 from cities that cooperate with Chinese partners.

This example shows a considerable gap that could be filled relatively quickly, bringing benefits to local governments and the entire European Community. Hypothetically, cities and regions could erode the monopoly of the EU and national member state government in respect to the implementation of international policy – yet they could also complement it perfectly. For this to happen, the EU would need to offer mayors' space to experiment and grant them some freedom of action and trust in the political steps. After all, the authorities of cities and regions are the politicians closest to voters and who best sense social and political emotions which are often difficult to perceive in distant Brussels. Thus, cities and regions' paradiplomacy may be an attractive alternative to the somewhat programmatic activities of the European Council. However, the EU should not give up its ability to monitor and support these sub-state relations. Some signal for an upcoming change may already be seen in the provisions introduced in the resolution of the European Parliament on the adoption of the new text of the EU-China strategy from September 2021. The resolution highlights the importance of coordination of the EU policy with regional and local actors that develop and maintain links with China (European Parliament 2021).

Threats

On the other hand, it should be remembered that paradiplomatic actions of cities and regions may also bring some negative aspects. Primarily, the creation of multi-tier EU diplomacy means its increased complexity and simultaneous weakening - without enhanced coordination, as mentioned above, coherence in foreign policy actions. Consequently, if cities and regions soon become essential in the international arena, it may mean there is a need to involve them as additional players or even rivals. This would make the execution of foreign policy even more comprehensive, much more labour-intensive, and time-consuming. As the example of Wallonia blocking the CETA deal shows, trade

agreements with other countries would also have to be agreed with the regions. The newest Comprehensive Agreement on Investment agreement between the EU and China, the provisions of which will now be ratified in member states, could be torpedoed by regional authorities. Thus, individual regions or cities may weaken the EU's cohesion, extend the decision-making process, or block decisions.

Secondly, it is not difficult to imagine that the third countries will try to use the interests of individual regions or cities in the future to shape the policies implemented by the EU. China is already doing this at the level of nation states. In June 2017, a coalition of EU member states which have close investment relations with China (Greece, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Malta and Sweden) sought to prevent the introduction of stricter EU controls on foreign direct investment in Europe. In the same month, Greece prevented developing a common EU position on human rights violations in China (Müller, 2018).

This possibility of lobbying for particular actions can also be used at the level of local authorities. China and other third countries may influence local elections or put political pressure on local leaders. Third countries may use politicians favourable to them to shape international relations conducted by a given region or city. Examples of such pro-China politicians can be seen, for example, in Hungary and the Czech Republic (Karásková et al. 2018). Considering that the costs of running an election campaign are quite high on the scale of individual politicians (Petithomme 2012), one can imagine that third countries (even though their state-owned or dependent companies) will support politicians by subsidising their campaigns or affecting municipally-owned enterprises to lobby for a specific candidate (Bergh, Erlingsson, Gustafsson and Wittberg 2019).

Thirdly, which is related to the above, cities and regions can also unintentionally become agents of foreign interests. Therefore, they should be aware of possible threats from their foreign partners, which would allow them to react appropriately and thus contribute to increasing state security (Emmott 2017). In particular, those cities that intensively seek foreign investors must be aware that they may become a natural target of hostile actions, the aim of which may be to deliberately destabilise the political situation in a given city or region (for example by announcing an investment and creating jobs or abandoning the idea unexpectedly). With the increase in globalisation and international interactions, this form of political mistreatment may become more prominent, although it is still a relatively poorly described topic in the relevant literature.

Fourthly, it can also be assumed that international cooperation of regions may become an axis of contention in relations within national states or even the entire EU. Already mentioned examples of Milan or Weimar show that autonomous actions may bring unintended consequences for the EU. A more recent example comes from Prague, where liberal mayor Zdenek Hrib withdrew the city from a sister cities agreement that explicitly recognised the 'one China policy', under which the PRC claims sovereignty over Taiwan. It provoked a major political crisis in the Czech Republic's relations with China (Kowalski 2020).

One can also imagine a situation whereby anti-European forces came to power in the region and oppose EU integration concepts. Alternatively, pro-European self-governments may become an alternative to anti-EU central authorities. An increasingly evident example of this is the relationship between the EU, Poland and Hungary, where the level of tension has been very high recently. Simultaneously, the centre-liberal mayors of Warsaw and Budapest, who represent a political vision utterly different from the right-wing national authorities, lobby in Europe for solutions that they believe are beneficial (Reuters 2020). Therefore, city or regional authorities can drive European cooperation, despite the Eurosceptical approach of central authorities.

Taking account of all the arguments so far discussed, the following matrix of tools, related opportunities and threats can be presented:

Table 2. Opportunities and threats for EU foreign policy resulted from paradiplomatic activities of regions and cities

Channel of influence	Chances	Threats
Lobbing and networking	Facilitation of the transfer of European ideas to other (i.e. developing) countries by reaching local communities.	Becoming agents of foreign interests - regions/cities becoming targets of third states to weaken the EU's cohesion.
	Rationalisation of the decision-making process in EU foreign policy.	
Formal powers	The better conceptualisation of EU foreign policy and enlargement of "the Brussels Effect".	Accommodation of regional interests results in a more complex decision-making process.
		Becoming agents of foreign interests - regions/cities extending the decision-making process or even blocking decisions.
Direct actions	Creation of an alternative political channel of communication with foreign partners - important, especially in the case of the deterioration of relations at the highest level.	Autonomous actions bringing unintended consequences for the EU.
	Contribution to the implementation of EU foreign policy goals.	
	Enabling access to knowledge and information from the grassroots level (use of local authorities' experiences).	

Source: own elaboration

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding the points and examples shown above, it should be stated that, despite the many changes and opportunities that paradiplomacy may bring to the EU, the community is not well prepared for the challenge posed by the growing role of regions and cities. Today, there is neither adequate understanding of this topic in the structures of the EU nor recognition of the international connections of cities and regions, making it difficult for these to be used instrumentally to solve EU foreign policy problems.

The failure to use paradiplomacy as a multi-dimensional tool in the implementation of foreign policy by the EU is due to several factors:

   i.   There is a lack of officials who are familiar with the subject of paradiplomacy and/or with time available to devote to stimulating cooperation between European and non-European regions.

   ii. There is no information exchange system on foreign cooperation of individual cities and regions and no formal possibilities of coordinating activities with regions; moreover, there is a lack of formal or informal political mechanisms for the EU to use paradiplomacy.

iii. Regardless of the functioning of the Committee of the Regions and two institutional cooperation forums (CORLEAP and ARLEM), international cooperation between local governments/cities/regions still depends, primarily, on the policies pursued by individual nation-states. Hence, regional relations are left to the competence of state authorities and political systems of individual EU member states responsible for (potentially) animating them.

The possibilities of paradiplomacy only to a small extent may be considered a mistake and a research opportunity. Analysing cases around the world, including the most visible ones (i.e., Wallonia, Libya, Belarus or China), it is evident that subregional contacts may cause (intentionally or not) serious problems but also be a great alternative to relations at the interstate level and can constitute a new communication channel, also in the event of a crisis within the EU itself. Already today, relations between regions and cities influence the shaping of states and the EU's foreign policy through formal and informal channels, via lobbying, formal influence and direct actions undertaken with or without the agreement of the governments of EU member states or EU institutions. The potential utility of sub-state actors is therefore rarely used because it is often unrealised. In order to change the present situation, it would be necessary to mobilise available resources and, at least, monitor the activities of regions and cities.

Although nation-states and international organisations are crucial actors on the global stage, cities and regions are starting to play an increasingly important role. There is evidently some tension between the idea of globalisation versus regionalisation, which emphasises the growing importance of paradiplomacy. This being so, sub-state relations could be the hidden capacity of the EU for its international actions, *if* steps were taken to foster and utilise them.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Joanna Ciesielska-Klikowska, Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Łódź, Składowa 43, 90-127 Łódź, Poland [joanna.ciesielska@uni.lodz.pl]

Tomasz Kamiński, Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Łódź, Składowa 43, 90-127 Łódź, Poland [tkaminski@uni.lodz.pl]

ENDNOTES

[1] Tatham (2018) concentrates on regions only; however, in our opinion, some of methods described (for example lobbying) apply to cities as well.

[2] Interview with European External Action Service officer, 2017.

[3] Interview with German diplomat, 2019.

[4] Interview with the European Commission official from DG REGIO, 2017; Interview with European External Action Service officer, 2017; Interview with the European Commission official from DG ENER, 2018.

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Research Article

European Union health policy after the pandemic: an opportunity to tackle health inequalities?

Eleanor Brooks

Abstract

COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the health inequalities across and between European Union member states. It has also raised the profile of EU health policy and the highlighted the value of European cooperation in health. Early failures to respond adequately, coupled with this increased salience, have given rise to a series of initiatives designed to strengthen and expand the EU's role in health. This presents an opportunity to address the imbalances in the EU's institutional and legal structure which prevent it from addressing health inequalities more effectively. Drawing on changes underway in the public health, internal market and fiscal governance elements of EU health policy, this paper explores the potential for the post-pandemic EU health policy framework to better support the reduction of health inequalities.

Keywords

Health inequalities in the European Union (EU) exist both across and between member states. Across individual member states, the gap in life expectancy between people with the highest and lowest levels of education is, on average, seven years for men and three years for women (OECD and EU 2020: 115). Older people report the greatest proportion of unmet medical need in Croatia and Greece; unmet needs are more commonly experienced by younger people in Denmark (European Commission 2019: 32). Problems in ensuring access to the health system for rural and peripheral communities are reported by more than half of countries (European Commission 2019: 36). Between member states, health inequalities are equally stark. Preventable mortality in Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania is more than twice the EU average and, in Bulgaria and Cyprus, '…a sizable group of the population are still excluded from [universal healthcare] coverage' (European Commission 2019: 16; 32). The proportion of total health spending devoted to preventive healthcare – a crucial component of action to tackle health inequalities – varies from more than four per cent in Italy to one per cent in Slovakia (European Commission 2019: 17).

Mapping the links between these (pre-existing and long term) inequalities and inequalities in the manifestation of COVID-19 is difficult. A broad review of national COVID-19 experiences reveals some counterintuitive and chance results. Member states considered weak in terms of pandemic preparedness did unexpectedly well in the initial months of the crisis – Hungary, Czechia and Bulgaria being good cases in point (Löblova, Rone and Borbáth 2021). Others with comparatively strong health systems were victims of timing, experiencing early outbreaks that pre-dated much of the emerging scientific knowledge of the disease and, therefore, suffering more acutely (see Peralta-Santos, Saboga-Nunes and Magalhães (2021) on the cases of Italy and Spain, for instance). Nevertheless, it is clear from the wider picture that COVID-19 has affected those worst off the most, reflecting and exacerbating existing health inequalities (Bambra et al. 2020; Marmot and Allen 2020).

In addition to reducing individual wellbeing and economic productivity, health inequalities undermine core EU values such as equality, non-discrimination, solidarity and justice (EuroHealthNet 2019). Yet, the EU's capacity to directly address these inequalities is limited. This is largely because they are driven by long term disparities in access to the social determinants of health (SDoH). These include the health system but are mostly found outside of it and concern education, income, housing, access to the natural environment and other features of the circumstances in which we grow, live, work and age (CSDH 2008). Though its extensive market and fiscal powers mean that it shapes much of the wider health environment within its member states, the EU's explicit health powers are narrow and do not cover the SDoH; the distribution of early-childhood care, education, housing, and employment are the responsibility of national governments. Consequently, much of the EU action that affects health inequalities is either indirect, unintentional, or designed without an explicit health objective.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the increased attention to the EU's role in health that has followed it, present an opportunity to address this challenge and push health inequalities up the EU agenda. Change is underway in some of the governance frameworks that structure the EU's influence over the SDoH, with the potential to increase the EU's ability to proactively and coherently address health inequalities. Since early 2020, the EU has created a new Health Programme with an unprecedented budget, offered a reinterpretation of the scope of public health as an EU concern, and adopted a recovery package with the potential to support long term structural reform. These developments are in their early stages but will change the way in which the EU shapes – both directly and indirectly – national health policies and the health of Europeans. This paper explores the implications of this evolving health policy framework for health inequalities. It first introduces a framework for understanding health inequalities and their determinants, and outlines the mechanisms by which the EU influences these determinants. It then describes the changes underway in the aftermath of COVID-19, including the EU4Health Programme, the European Health Union initiative, the Commission's reinterpretation of the public health derogation under EU law, and the Next Generation EU (NGEU)

recovery package. Within these, it identifies opportunities and potential avenues through which the EU might better tackle inequalities in health. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the future of health (inequalities) policy in the EU.

HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND EU HEALTH POLICY

Health is experienced on a social gradient. Rates of all-cause mortality are higher in more deprived areas than in less deprived areas, a pattern now being replicated for mortality resulting from COVID-19 (Marmot and Allen 2020). For those at the lower end of this gradient, COVID-19 is being experienced as a *syndemic* – 'a co-occurring, synergistic pandemic that interacts with and exacerbates their existing [chronic diseases] and social conditions' (Bambra et al. 2020: 965). Individuals at the lower end of the social gradient are more likely to suffer from clinical risk factors associated with COVID-19, such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma and obesity. These risk factors arise from a lack of access to the SDoH – i.e. to an adequate level of income, quality education, quality housing, green spaces and healthcare services. Moreover, the direct risk posed by being a key worker or living in densely populated housing, for instance, falls disproportionately on disadvantaged groups. In sum, the burden of COVID-19 and its negative effects are being exacerbated by the interaction and accumulation of existing inequalities (Bambra et al. 2020). What is causing these inequalities and what can EU health policy do about it? Forster, Kentikelenis and Bambra (2020) identify three major determinants of health inequalities in Europe: access to universal healthcare (UHC), economic policy that supports healthy work, job security and income stability, and wider policies that increase access to the SDoH and promote social equality. Whilst EU law and policy influences each of these determinants, the extent to which such influence is significant, intentional and coherent varies considerably, as does the extent to which each is recognised as a part of, or even relevant to, health policy.

The EU's formal health mandate – that with which it can explicitly and directly act to improve health – is limited. Member states have successfully utilised the treaties to curtail EU action on health and have done so by drawing a distinction between *public health*, on the one hand, and *healthcare*, on the other. Article 168 TFEU gives the EU some exclusive powers in the area of public health. These include a mandate to regulate the safety of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and blood, tissues and organs. By contrast, its powers in the field of healthcare – referring to the treatment of individuals and the organisation of the health system, rather than the health of the population as a whole – are explicitly curtailed by Article 168(7) TFEU. This careful protection of national prerogatives in healthcare means that, for example, whilst the EU is the sole regulator of the safety of medicines, it has no direct role in decisions about how medicines are purchased, allocated or distributed within a system of UHC. Indeed, though the EU encourages and supports the development of UHC systems, it does so via predominantly soft policy mechanisms, since healthcare provision is a national responsibility.

Whilst it has been fairly easy for member states to curtail the EU's direct powers in health, limiting its indirect impact on health has proven near impossible. Most of the SDoH are found far beyond the health system and, consequently, the EU policies acknowledged to have the greatest impact upon health fall outside of the scope of Article 168 TFEU's restrictions (Greer et al. 2019: 117). These include those that seek to improve health via regulation of the environment, health and safety at work, and consumer protection, as well as those that do not seek to influence health at all, but do so indirectly. The latter are found in agriculture, trade, competition, internal market, non-discrimination, employment and a host of other policy domains, where EU powers are often strong. Whilst policies on environment, health and safety at work and consumer protection are generally recognised as part of EU health policy and have an explicit health objective, the latter are not. The EU is formally required to take the health impact of such policies into account, but health actors are not centrally involved in

their development. Moreover, some of these powers enable the EU to directly challenge national health policies. The internal market mandate provides that, where a national policy presents a barrier to the free movement of goods or services, it can be struck down by the Court of Justice of the EU, with potentially damaging effects upon health (the challenge to Minimum Unit Pricing policies for alcohol are a good example of this risk; see Alemanno 2016; Bartlett 2016).

An area that is far removed from public health but is – perhaps unexpectedly – increasingly understood as 'part of' health policy is the EU's extensive economic and fiscal governance framework. The EU adopted a complex structure for the surveillance of member states' budgets, expenditure and economic policy in the aftermath of the economic crisis that engulfed the continent in the late 2000s. Since health is a large and expensive item in national budgets, it is logically included in this framework, which is implemented via a policy coordination cycle known as the European Semester. The result is that the EU has unprecedented influence over national spending on health, and other sectors/services relevant to health inequalities (Baeten and Vanhercke 2017). Early Semester cycles treated health as an expense, within a broad austerity agenda, but subsequent experience indicates that this framing has been undermined, primarily by health interests (Greer and Brooks 2021). Though its recommendations remain non-binding for most member states and its consideration of health remains secondary, the European Semester is now one of the most important health policy levers that the EU possesses.

In sum, the formal health powers assigned to the EU in the treaties do not tell us much about the reality of how health policy has developed or how the EU influences health inequalities (de Ruijter 2019). As alluded to in the preceding paragraphs, it is more useful to understand EU health policy as having three faces (Greer 2014): one comprised of direct and explicit public health policy, a second based on the EU's market-making and regulatory competences, and a third rooted in the fiscal governance framework. These three faces give the EU a patchwork of direct and indirect influence over the SDoH, and thus over health inequalities within and between its member states.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19: CHANGES IN EU HEALTH POLICY

The EU's performance in the first weeks and months of the crisis was as could be expected, given the uneven set of policy competences described in the previous section. An initial period of panic and uncertainty saw governments look inwards, closing borders, guarding supplies and eschewing coordination (not to mention solidarity) with EU partners. This soon subsided, as the necessity of collective action became clear, allowing the EU to play a greater role (Brooks, de Ruijter and Greer 2021). In some instances, this revealed significant weaknesses in the EU's capacities. The civil protection and health emergencies systems, for example, offered as much as their mandates and resources allowed, but this was shown to be insufficient in the face of a crisis on the scale of COVID-19. A common medical stockpile did not exist, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) struggled against a curtailed mandate that precludes its involvement in risk management, and the mechanism for joint procurement of medicines failed to deliver timely results (de Ruijter et al. 2021; Pacces and Weimar 2020). By contrast, in other areas, the added value of collective action was starkly apparent. The EU marshalled significant funds, both in the short term – via initiatives like the European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) – and in the longer term – via the NGEU recovery plan. In the months which have followed, successful measures have been gradually institutionalised, whilst failings have prompted new initiatives to strengthen the EU's health competence. The result is a marked increase in health integration (Brooks and Geyer 2020). The following sections use the three faces framework to present the changes in EU health policy that have taken place in the aftermath of COVID-19, and their potential implications for health inequalities.

Changes in the First Face of Health Policy: The EU4Health Programme and the European Health Union

The first face of EU health policy has traditionally been rooted in its Health Programme, which was first established in 2003. This was due to lose its dedicated funding stream and instead be absorbed into a wider European Social Fund within the new EU budget for 2021. However, the pandemic highlighted both the necessity of coordinated action and the risks associated with inequalities between health systems. In May 2020, the Commission reversed its pre-COVID decision to disband the Health Programme and, when presenting its revised multi-annual financial framework for the 2021-2027 period, included within it a new programme, called EU4Health. Most significantly EU4Health has a budget of €5.3 billion, more than 10 times as much as the previous programme. While much of EU4Health's work will focus on crisis response and communicable diseases, the regulation stipulates that a minimum of 20 per cent of the funds must be reserved for health promotion and disease prevention activities (European Union 2021), and the work programme foresees action to strengthen health systems, improve access to healthcare and strengthen the data infrastructure to support better policy-making (European Commission 2021a).

EU4Health contributes to the wider European Health Union (EHU) initiative. The EHU was announced by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the European Union address in September 2020. The full extent of its goals is, as yet, unclear but the initial package of legislative proposals seeks to strengthen the EU's role in health. They reinforce the mandate of the ECDC, extend the remit of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and reform the EU health security framework. The EHU also links to a revision of the EU civil protection mechanism, and is supported by a new EU Pharmaceutical Strategy, Vaccine Strategy and the EU4Health Programme. More recently, it has been supplemented by a new Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), designed to prevent, detect and respond to health emergencies (European Commission 2021b). In sum, EU4Health and the EHU mark a significant, integrative step forward in EU health policy.

The EU's formal health powers remain unchanged in the post-COVID period, but its competences are being expanded via secondary legislation, for instance in the strengthening of the mandates for the ECDC and the EMA. Moreover, the scope and ambition of its work on health has increased considerably, and health inequalities are identified as a key theme with the new initiatives. The EU4Health Regulation commits the EU to reducing health inequalities as both a general and a specific objective of the programme (European Union 2021: Article 3; Article 4). The Pharmaceutical Strategy targets access to medicines and the ECDC's strengthened capacity for data collection may help to support better mapping of inequalities across Europe. Successful utilisation of these tools to address inequalities will require linking with other frameworks – such as the European Semester, the structural funds and the European Pillar of Social Rights (see below) – and the political will to act upon the EU's commitment to a preventative, rather than a curative, model of health (EuroHealthNet 2021). Moreover, the implications of the EHU for health inequalities remain unclear. For the moment, it seems primarily to be framed as a European health *security* union; further 'building blocks' – specifically targeting health promotion and disease prevention activities – would need to look quite different from those adopted to date, in order to create a more holistic public health union.

Changes in the Second Face of Health Policy: Reinterpreting the Public Health Derogation

The second face of EU health policy is found where health meets the market; it concerns the free movement of health goods (such as pharmaceuticals, laboratory equipment, personal protective equipment), health services and health professionals. This free movement came under immediate pressure during the COVID-19 crisis and the EU's early response focused on challenging national decisions to close borders, restrict exports and stockpile critical supplies. Some of these were overturned more quickly than others but, fairly soon, the EU was working towards common policy on

travel restrictions, contact tracing apps and the free movement of critical goods via green lanes, among other issues (Greer, de Ruijter and Brooks 2021). Simultaneously, it adopted a new Pharmaceutical Strategy to address weaknesses in the pharmaceutical market and supply chain, and a Vaccine Strategy to boost capacity for COVID-19 vaccine production. It introduced temporary relaxation in the frameworks on state aid and anti-trust law, which ensure a 'level playing field' in the internal market, to allow governments to support national businesses, employers and sectors (Biondi and Stefan 2020). It also postponed the introduction into force of the new medical devices regulation, giving device manufacturers space to focus on the production of urgently needed equipment and treatments (Greer et al. 2022).

The EU's powers as regulator of the market are exclusive and comprehensive; as such, major change is not foreseen here. However, within its efforts to restore the internal market, the Commission published a Communication in which it quietly laid the groundwork for a potential shift in the meaning of public health within EU law. Since the creation of the internal market, member states have enjoyed a health-related derogation to the principle of free movement. Now embodied in Article 36 TFEU, this derogation provides that a barrier to free movement – for example, a ban on the importation or exportation of a particular good – may be permitted under EU law where it can be shown necessary to protect public health. Historically, this provision has been interpreted as referring to *national* public health; i.e. a member state needs only to demonstrate that the measure is necessary and proportionate to protecting the health of its own population. However, in a March 2020 Communication responding to the growing number of national export restrictions on essential medical supplies to fight COVID-19, the Commission re-interpreted the public health exception. Whilst acknowledging member states' right to adopt trade restrictions where necessary to protect public health, the Communication suggests that the legality of restrictions adopted will be judged according to their impact upon 'the objective of protecting the health of people living in Europe' (European Commission 2020: annex II, note 2). This approach shifts the understanding of proportionality to require justification with reference to the health of the EU population as a whole, and not just the population of the relevant country. More fundamentally, '…it turns the internal market face on its head, by assuming that health is the objective and the market exists as an instrument to ensure health, rather than the traditional, reverse understanding of health as ancillary to the market' (Brooks, Rozenblum, Greer and de Ruijter 2022).

The reinterpreted derogation has yet to be tested. A Commission statement in this context is remarkable but has no legal effect until put before a court. However, the Commission used its reinterpretation to deem bans on the export of medical supplies needed to fight COVID-19 disproportionate, and successfully persuaded national leaders of this, removing barriers which would have greatly exacerbated inequalities in national responses to the pandemic. More fundamentally, tackling health inequalities requires a firm commitment to solidarity, and the Commission's reinterpretation frames public health squarely as a collective, European issue, rather than as an exclusive concern of the nation state (de Ruijter et al. 2020).

Changes in the Third Face of Health Policy: The Next Generation EU Recovery Plan

Arguably the most significant EU policy changes to have taken place in response to COVID-19 are those affecting fiscal governance, and thus the third face of EU health policy. A core pillar of the EU's response has been the mobilisation of funds; first to assist governments in their short-term responses, by re-purposing existing and unspent funds, and suspending EU-imposed limits on national expenditure, and second to support long term recovery. Short-term efforts have supported the SURE initiative, targeted at preserving employment, and an expansion of the European Solidarity Fund, to cover health emergencies. By far the more substantial response, however, has been the adoption of the renegotiated MFF and the NGEU recovery package.

NGEU provides €750 billion of additional funding to support recovery from the pandemic and mitigation of its economic impact. Its largest component is the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), a fund to support reforms and investment in member states. Of the €672.5 billion available to national governments under the RRF, €360 billion is to be issued as loans and €312.5 billion will be issued as grants. The remaining €83.1 billion of the NGEU package is made up of various 'top-up' funds, designed to supplement specific EU programmes and priorities, such as rural development, transitions under the European Green Deal and civil protection. REACT-EU (Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe), for instance, tops-up the allocation for cohesion under the MFF and makes the structural funds envelope the largest single-policy grant instrument in the EU budget.

There are several important implications of these changes for health inequalities in Europe. Firstly, it has been crucial that, throughout the development of the EU's fiscal response to the pandemic, the mistakes made in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the late 2000s were not repeated. Rather than framing EU support as contingent upon the implementation of an austerity agenda at national level, the RRF has been set up to provide loans and grants with minimal conditionality. Whilst it does not mutualise the debt of member states, it takes an unprecedented step in issuing common European debt and giving the Commission a central role in its distribution. As such, it is more likely to avoid the damage that was done by cutting public services and health expenditure in the early 2010s (Karanikolos et al. 2013; Quaglio et al. 2013), and instead embodies a sense of solidarity that was lacking during the last crisis (Greer, de Ruijter and Brooks 2021). A second important element of the fiscal policy changes is the increased budget allocation for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). The ESIF is the only direct fiscal policy tool that the EU has and, though funds are not ringfenced, in recent years there has been increased emphasis on its utilisation to support investment in health systems and address inequalities (Greer et al. 2022). ESIF funding for the 2021 to 2027 period is a little over €350 billion overall, with only a proportion of this being spent on health projects. This is small, relative to the objectives that it seeks to achieve – to support economic development and reduce inequality between regions – but any increase, coupled with more purposeful utilisation to improve health, should be seen as a positive development.

A third, and final, implication of the new fiscal policy structure concerns its potential to induce long term structural reforms that support a reduction in health inequalities. The RRF has a dual aim. It seeks to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, but to do so in a way which accelerates transition towards a green and digital economy. To this end, the Commission has sought to guide and steer the use of the funds from the outset. It has identified seven flagship areas for investment: clean technology and renewables, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, broadband services, digitalisation of public administration, data cloud and sustainable processor capacities, and education and training for digital skills. In addition to serving these priorities, national plans (outlining how a country will spend its portion of the funds) must demonstrate that a minimum of 37% of planned spending is dedicated to climate investments and reforms, and no less than 20% is earmarked to foster the digital transition. Finally, proposed spending plans should address the four dimensions – environmental sustainability, productivity, fairness and macroeconomic stability – outlined in the 2021 Annual Sustainable Growth Survey. In essence, the RRF seeks to bring the EU's priorities together under one programme for structural reform. A full analysis of whether these priorities, and the actions taken in pursuit of them, contribute to a reduction in health inequalities is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the RRF offers an unprecedented resource, aimed not only at economic growth and productivity, but also at sustainability, resilience and inclusion.

EU HEALTH POLICY IN THE POST-COVID ERA: AN OPPORTUNITY TO TACKLE HEALTH INEQUALITIES?

The EU's constitutional asymmetry – the imbalance in powers granted to the Union which favours economic and market integration over action to address social challenges – is more stark and more inhibiting to the fight against health inequalities than any other element of EU health policy (Greer et

al. 2019: 116). The SDoH are numerous, disparate and often beyond the EU's fragmented health mandate. There are two routes to addressing this impasse: one is fundamental treaty change; the other is an increase in the policy space available for tackling inequalities, under the current treaties, and accompanying political will to utilise this. Treaty change does not seem likely in the immediate future and is anyway argued by some to be unnecessary, given the potential health applications of competences that the EU already possesses (Guy 2020; Purnhagen et al. 2020). The changes to EU health policy that are underway in the aftermath of COVID-19, however, might yet constitute an increase in policy space. Within the 'core' of EU health policy, existing competences are being strengthened and expanded, and the scope and reach of EU health policy is being extended, with support from a greatly increased health budget. A free movement derogation reinterpreted to understand public health as a European, rather than a national, concern would strengthen the foundation of solidarity needed to tackle health inequalities, as well as rebalancing the relationship between market objectives and public health. The RRF marks an unprecedented step towards more solidaristic fiscal policy and the NGEU priorities contain more space for health investments and reforms than any previous EU instrument. Within all of these frameworks, access to healthcare, the importance of disease prevention and health promotion, and the fight against health inequalities are clearly identified as key themes. Moreover, beyond 'health policy proper', instruments like the Just Transition Fund, the Digital Europe initiative and the ESIF all present opportunities to address the SDoH and reduce health inequalities.

Uncertainties and challenges remain. It is not clear whether the EHU will be elaborated as something more than a new health security framework, or whether the European Semester will prove effective enough to drive long term structural reform at national level, given the range of priorities it is now responsible for implementing. To give another very specific example of an area where there is much more to be done, the EU's approach to trade negotiations continues to fall short of promises to protect governments' capacity to regulate for health protection, equity and access to care (Koivusalo, Heinonen and Tynkkynen 2021). A genuinely holistic approach to the SDoH is some way off but the post-COVID health policy landscape offers new opportunities in the fight against health inequalities.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Eleanor Brooks, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom [Eleanor.brooks@ed.ac.uk]

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Research Article

Glass Cliff and Brexit: Theresa May's legacy as Prime Minister

Angélica Szucko

Abstract

Following the 2016 British referendum, Theresa May was officially appointed as Prime Minister. She was classed as a weak PM, and her legacy was considered as a huge failure on Brexit negotiations. Yet, few analyses focus on how she became a PM in such a challenging moment for UK-EU relations. This article explores the paths that lead May to this position, based on the glass cliff literature. Then, May's brinkmanship strategy on Brexit is analysed in light of Complex Adaptive Systems' approach to crises. We apply the Containers, Differences and Exchanges (CDE) model to understand May's response to the Brexit vote. Finally, the concept of 'male glass cushion' will be introduced to explain May's replacement by Boris Johnson. This work joins efforts to employ perspectives from other subject areas, such as public administration and psychology, to understand women in leadership roles and to contribute to the study of gender in politics.

Keywords

INTRODUCTION

On 24 June 2016, following the outcome of the UK referendum on membership of the EU, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron (2016), resigned saying that a Brexit negotiation with the European Union would need to begin under a new Premiership. According to him, the country needed a fresh leadership to take the UK out of the EU. Although Cameron was the Prime Minister responsible for calling the in/out referendum, he stepped down at a crucial moment of the Brexit process, increasing uncertainty around the country.

It was expected that a political figure linked to the Leave campaign would be chosen as the new PM; however, the Conservative Party's internal selection process returned the former Home Secretary from Cameron's administration, Theresa May. Upon official appointment to the post, she adopted a narrative of 'hard' Brexit. During her term, she had the difficult task to negotiate UK withdrawal from the EU. Despite her efforts, May failed three times to approve a deal agreed with the EU in the British Parliament. Her defeats increased political polarisation within her party, leading her government to an unbearable situation. After her resignation, she was classed as a weak PM, and her legacy was considered as a huge failure in Brexit negotiations (Rohrich 2019; Prince 2020). Yet, few analyses focus on how she became a Prime Minister in such a challenging moment for the UK-EU relations.

This article explores the paths that led Theresa May to this position, based on the glass cliff literature, and investigates how she reacted to the Brexit crisis in this context. In order to meet these objectives, the paper is divided into three sections. Firstly, I introduce the debate around the glass ceiling and the glass cliff concepts. Secondly, I discuss Theresa May's appointment as Prime Minister in such a precarious situation, as an example of a glass cliff trend. Then, I analyse May's profile and positions as PM on Brexit as well as her brinkmanship strategy in light of the Complex Adaptive Systems' approach to crises. By applying the Containers, Differences, and Exchanges (CDE) model, elaborated by Glenda Eoyang (2001), I seek to understand Theresa May's response to the Brexit vote. I argue that May's tough approach aimed to demonstrate her compromise with a particular interpretation of the popular vote and to prove her leadership and authority in a difficult moment for the country's relation with the EU. Finally, the ideas of 'male glass cushion' and 'saviour effect' are used to explain the Conservative Party's election to replace Theresa May and, subsequently, Boris Johnson's appointment. This work joins efforts to employ perspectives from other areas, such as public administration and psychology, to understand women in leadership roles and to bring light to the study of gender in politics.

What's Glass Cliff? Previous Research and Theories

The term glass cliff, referring to risky and precarious leadership positions occupied by women, was first coined by Michelle Ryan and Alex Haslam from the University of Exeter, in 2005, by extending the glass ceiling metaphor. According to them, the latter 'is often used to describe the invisible barrier that women face as they attempt to climb the corporate ladder' (Ryan and Haslam 2006: 3). In contrast, men seem to benefit from a glass elevator helping them to reach high-directive positions more easily. This phenomenon is related to implicit theories of gender stereotypes and leadership, such as 'Think Manager – Think Male', which associates leaders desirable characteristics with men, such as being emotionally stable, self-reliant, competitive, and ambitious (Ryan and Haslam 2007; Bruckmüller and Branscombe 2010).

In line with this theory, if management positions are seen to be inherently masculine, then, even if men and women hold the same technical qualifications, male candidates will appear to be more suitable than their female counterparts. However, the paradox lies in

the evidence that women leaders who held the above-mentioned 'masculine' leadership traits are often evaluated less favorably than men. For example, if a male manager acts assertively, he would be perceived as a good leader, whereas if a female manager behaves just the same way, she would be considered unacceptably 'pushy' or 'bossy' (Ryan and Haslam 2007). Thus, women are often in a lose-lose situation, because, on the one hand, if they hold the women's stereotypical characteristics, they would not be suitable for top leading positions; on the other hand, if they present male stereotypical traits, they would be negatively assessed.

Ryan and Haslam use the glass metaphor to draw attention to the invisible barriers encountered by women in their professional careers. For them, besides confronting glass ceiling obstacles and not having access to a glass elevator in their professional careers, women are also more likely to be placed in glass cliff situations (Ryan and Haslam 2005). By the glass cliff metaphor, women (and other minorities) are more likely to achieve leadership positions in precarious conditions, usually associated with an increased risk of failure, and to be blamed for negative results already set in motion before their appointment (Ryan and Haslam 2006, 2005; Bruckmüller and Branscombe 2010; Kulich and Ryan 2017).

One of the explanations for this phenomenon suggests that, due to the lack of opportunities for career progression, women are more inclined to accept risky leadership positions for fear of not having any other offers. By contrast, men feel more comfortable declining such precarious positions. Another more benevolent – but also stereotyped – theory claims that women may have appropriate skills to deal with crises ('Think Crises – Think Female'), such as being creative, understanding, helpful, and cheerful (Ryan and Haslam 2007; Bruckmüller and Branscombe 2010). So, the theory sees women as better able to motivate teams in crisis situations. Indeed, glass cliff explanations are composed of a complex mix of social, cultural, and psychological processes intertwined.

Bruckmüller and Branscombe (2010), for example, investigated how organisational structures also contribute to maintaining these gender stereotypes when choosing a new leader. Since during crises the stereotypical 'Think Manager – Think Male' does not fit anymore, being replaced by the 'Think Crisis – Think Female', women are more often appointed to precarious leadership positions than men, finding themselves in a glass cliff situation. According to the authors, there is a double irony in this phenomenon. When women finally achieve a top leadership position: (1) it is not because they are seen to merit it, but mostly because men no longer fit on it; and (2) when it occurs, there are fewer spoils of the leadership to enjoy (Bruckmüller and Branscombe 2010).

Although many authors have focused mostly on business management cases, the glass cliff phenomenon was also identified in law, where women are more assigned to less lucrative or more dubious cases than are men, and in politics, where women are often selected to run for less winnable seats than men (Ryan and Haslam 2005, 2006; Ryan, Haslam and Kulich 2010). In the United Kingdom, for example, the first female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, faced some glass cliff situations at the beginning of her political career (Ryan and Haslam 2004, 2005). As per Ryan and Haslam (2005:88):

Thatcher's first brush with politics was to run as a Conservative candidate (twice) in a strong, safe Labour seat, losing both attempts. She was made Education Minister in the early 1970s when student radicalism was at its peak, facing student riots and strong criticism. Lastly, in 1979 she became Prime Minister at a time when Britain was facing rampant unemployment and economic recession.

Margaret Thatcher managed to overcome those glass cliff situations and became the UK's first female Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, as well as the first woman to lead a major Western democracy (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 2021). However, she did not

advocate for women's interests during her Premiership, neither encourage other women to power positions (Pilcher 1995). Indeed, she used to dismiss the significance of her gender: 'I don't notice that I'm a woman. I regard myself as "Prime Minister"' (Daily Mirror 1980 apud Wilson and Irwin 2015). She adopted a tough stance, being dubbed as the 'Iron Lady', and formed her first cabinet only with men. Thatcher was also portrayed as a woman with many male leadership traits (Wilson and Irwin 2015), such as strength and ambition. Her quick and successful military response in the Falklands War in 1982 forged her profile as a strong leader to her country (Wall, 2008). Besides many other difficulties she faced in the following years, Margaret Thatcher is broadly known for her relentless profile (Pilcher 1995; Wall, 2008).

Even though Lady Thatcher was able to surpass many glass cliff obstacles during her political career, she can be considered an exceptional case. An archival study of the 2005 UK general election showed that Conservative female candidates were still chosen to run for harder seats instead of their male counterparts, demanding, on average, the swing of more than 26% of the vote to win (Ryan, Haslam and Kulich 2010). This finding suggests a glass cliff situation in which Conservative women's poor performance was more related to the seat winnability than to their own political capacities. The Labour Party, on the contrary, by applying a gender equity policy, not only regarding the number of candidates, but the winnability of the seats for which they are running, did not present results consistent with glass cliff (Ryan, Haslam and Kulich 2010).

Despite some initiatives from the Conservative Party to increase female representation in the UK Parliament, such as the mentoring group Women2Win, created in 2005 with the support of the then-MP Theresa May (Prince 2020), the glass cliff trend persists. In the 2019 UK general elections, the Conservative Party registered the highest number of female candidates in the history of the party; however, they were twice as likely to be selected to run for unwinnable seats than for safe seats (Molloy 2020). Also, as the last glass ceiling index published by The Economist shows, there is still a long way to go toward gender equity in the United Kingdom. Only one-third of Parliamentary seats are held by women (The Economist 2021).

The glass cliff phenomenon is not restricted to UK politics. As Jalalzai's analysis of female prime ministers and presidents between 1960 and 2007 demonstrates, women took office predominantly in unstable periods, such as political transitions, sudden removal, resignation, or death of the previous head of government, and in political structures with limited power (Jalalzai 2008). Also, a significant number of them had family ties with important male political figures in their country, being seen as their heiresses. Additionally, studies on glass cliff show that choosing a woman for a leading position in times of crisis functions as a statement of a visible break from the previous, usually male, leadership (Kulich and Ryan 2017).

To sum up, glass cliff is not about gender *per se*, but about how gendered stereotypes operate in specific contexts. Glass cliff can take different forms because it relies on a complex interaction of three main factors: (1) the type of crisis; (2) the motivations by which a woman was appointed as leader; and (3) the resources available to her to deal with the situation (Kulich and Ryan 2017: 19). Of course, studies into the glass cliff phenomenon each have their own limitations, and not all women in leading posts face glass cliff situations; yet, in general, these studies shed light on how gender stereotypes function as an 'invisible' barrier to women access to top leadership positions. Theresa May's appointment as Prime Minister after the 2016 British referendum will be investigated in the next sections as an example of a glass cliff situation, highlighting the type of crisis faced, the motivations for her selection, and the resources and limitations she had in this position.

How Theresa May Became Prime Minister? The Challenging Brexit Crisis

After David Cameron's resignation, an internal election process in the Conservative Party was triggered to replace him. Although it was expected that one of the high-profile Leave campaigners would take the lead in this crucial moment, a dramatic twist happened even before the nomination was closed. The former mayor of London, Boris Johnson – who was one of the main faces of the Leave campaign - withdrew his candidature fearing a defeat after Michael Gove, who also campaigned for Brexit, announced he was running for the position (Allen 2018). In total, five candidates put themselves forward for the race. While three of them were Leavers: Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary; Liam Fox, the former Defence Secretary; and Andrea Leadsom, the Energy Minister; two had campaigned for Remain: Stephen Crabb, the Work and Pensions Secretary; and Theresa May, the Home Secretary (Allen 2018; House of Commons Library 2019a).

On 5 July 2016, at the first election round, May was already a clear frontrunner with over half of the vote, followed by Leadsom in second, and Gove in third. Fox came last and was, then, eliminated, while Crabb withdrew from the contest (House of Commons Library 2019a).

Table 1: First round of Conservative Party elections, on 5 July 2016

Candidate	Votes	%
Theresa May	165	50.2%
Andrea Leadsom	66	20.0%
Michael Gove	48	14.6%
Stephen Crabb	34	10.3%
Liam Fox	16	4.9%

Source: elaborated by the author, based on House of Commons Library, 2019a

Since the first ballot, both women, Theresa May and Andrea Leadsom, seem to be favourites to the Prime Minister post. One could ask if it is just a coincidence or not. The results of the first round may suggest a glass cliff trend, as a possible female rise to the UK high political position would take place in such a precarious situation, when the country and their own party were divided between Leavers and Remainers, and no clear plan for Brexit was outlined.

Then, in the second ballot, May achieved around 60 percent of the vote cast, whereas Leadsom remained in second, obtaining slightly more support than in the previous round. Gove, in contrast, lost ground and was eliminated (House of Commons Library 2019a).

Table 2: Second round of Conservative Party elections, on 7 July 2016

Candidate	Votes	%
Theresa May	199	60.5%
Andrea Leadsom	84	25.5%
Michael Gove	46	14.0%

Source: elaborated by the author, based on House of Commons Library, 2019a

Considering these results, Aida Hozić and Jacqui True (2017) highlighted the paradox between male dominance in the referendum campaigns – around 85 percent of press space and 70 percent of television coverage to Nigel Farage and four Conservative leaders, including Cameron and Johnson – and women's rise in the Brexit political crisis after the popular vote. According to them, women just became more visible and engaged actors in Brexit, as potentially PMs, to 'clean-up' the mess left by their male counterparts, particularly David Cameron, and to outline a plan for the UK withdrawal from the EU (Hozić and True 2017). To some extent, this bias may reflect a broader glass cliff situation, in which women are assigned to precarious leadership positions with a high risk of failure for events already set in motion before their appointment.

The final race between the two female candidates took a new twist on 11 July 2016, when Andrea Leadsom suddenly withdrew her candidature after a contentious statement about motherhood in an interview to the Times (Allen 2018). She said that she would be a good Prime Minister because being a mother gave her a real and tangible stake in the future of the United Kingdom (The Guardian 2016). Andrea Leadsom's appeal to her motherhood, even unconsciously, highlights a common stereotype applied to women when running for political positions that they would take care of their constituency as if they were their children. It also reinforces the female stereotyped characteristics to deal with crises, such as being helpful and understanding. As Theresa May does not have children, Leadsom's declaration was seen as a sensitive issue.

Thus, on 13 July 2016, May was officially announced as the new UK Prime Minister. According to Nicholas Allen (2018), three factors could explain May's appointment: (1) parliamentary arithmetic, since the majority of the Conservative MP's had supported remaining in the EU and would prefer a Remainer as PM (although Crabb, another Remainer, came only in fourth); (2) May's successful campaign as the unity candidate, as she promptly recognized the referendum outcome, despite her low-profile support for the EU membership; and (3) May's reputation as a 'safe pair of hands', in such turbulent times, due to her longevity in public service, particularly as Home Secretary since 2010. Allen (2018) does not make any reference to the glass cliff idea, however, as he classifies May as a 'safe pair of hands', one could inquire if the gender stereotypical theory 'Think Crisis – Think Female' applies to this case, since she would be considered reliable to face the difficult Brexit crisis.

Indeed, Brexit represents one of the most challenging moments in British politics, and, following the referendum results, the two major male Conservative political figures in the UK walked away. First, David Cameron, who was directly responsible for calling the in/out referendum and campaigned for remaining in the EU, and Boris Johnson, one of the main Leave supporters (McGregor 2016). As pointed out in the article 'Congratulations, Theresa May. Now mind that glass cliff©, written by Jena McGregor (2016) and published at The Washington Post, 'it's quite possible, even though Cameron called the referendum which created the current turmoil, that May will be remembered for it'.

Moreover, Theresa May had to cope with a divided Conservative Party and had to try to reconcile both Leavers' and Remainers' interests under her government. The political, economic, and practical obstacles of delivering the UK withdrawal from the EU would overwhelm the new Prime Minister's administration no matter who is in charge. Also, as there was no defined path to carry Brexit on after the referendum, May had to establish what leaving the EU really meant for the UK. When she launched her campaign to become the new UK PM, May declared 'Brexit means Brexit', but this was only a vague and generic statement recognising the referendum outcome without any real plan on it.

According to Theresa May's (2016) statement:

The campaign was fought, the vote was held, turnout was high, and the public gave their verdict. There must be no attempts to remain inside the EU, no attempts to rejoin it through the back door, and no second referendum.

Another trouble May had to face during her premiership was the mistaken decision to call a general election in June 2017, when she lost her parliamentary majority and had to form a confidence and supply arrangement with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) from Northern Ireland in order to govern. Even though the Conservative Party increased their vote share by 5.5 percent, the party lost thirteen seats in Parliament (House of Commons Library 2019b). Besides her defeat, May's leadership was not directly contested. No one was actually willing to replace her at that time.

Additionally, due to the UK general elections, negotiations on withdrawing from the EU were delayed. However, the two-year deadline clock was ticking since 29 March 2017, when May triggered Article 50. To some extent, the minority government, and its dependence on DUP reduced UK bargaining power in negotiations with the EU constraining May's position since an arrangement to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland was one of the most sensitive topics of the Brexit negotiations. Furthermore, even among the Conservative Party, there were significant disagreements over what would be the best strategy for the Government, and the Prime Minister did not have broad support from her backbenchers.

Almost a year after the referendum, the withdrawal negotiations began officially on 19 June 2017. According to Felix Biermann and Stefan Jagdhuber (2021), May had to deal with irreconcilable demands from the British and the Europeans in a very politicised Brexit negotiation. Then, she was forced to play parallel and overlapping nested games, in which an actor plays simultaneously in interrelated and multiple arenas (Tsebelis 1990 apud Biermann and Jagdhuber 2021). Nested games occur in contexts of politicisation and contestation, when governments are continuously under pressure and need to regularly re-negotiate both in the domestic and international arenas, unlike the classic two-level games. By analysing the Brexit negotiations as nested games, Biermann and Jagdhuber (2021) conclude that May faced opposition both from the EU, at the regional level, and from the Brexiteers, domestically.

Theresa May endured an increasingly challenging Brexit context during her Premiership and she had not enough broad internal support, to overcome the crisis. In an interview with Vox in 2018, Michelle Ryan, one of the original researchers on glass cliff, stated that 'whatever one's feelings on Brexit, the situation is a difficult one to navigate, and her leadership popularity is suffering as a result' (Stewart 2018). Thus, all three main conditions to glass cliff, mentioned in the previous section, were met: (1) a major crisis, like Brexit; (2) May's appointment as Prime Minister while other men walked away; and (3) very scarce resources to deal with the situation.

How To Deal With The Brexit Crisis? Theresa May's Brinkmanship Strategy

Crises can be seen as 'turning points' because they represent a rupture of, or a detour from, the usual course of events (Lehmann 2011). In this vein, the outcome of the 2016 British referendum symbolises an unprecedented crisis in the European integration process, as, for the first time, a Member State decided to withdraw from the bloc (Nolte and Weiffen 2020). Brexit brought a sudden break to the UK-EU traditional relationship based on an internal differentiated integration pattern (Szucko, 2020). Until the referendum, the UK and the EU were able to overcome divergent interests within the regional bloc by granting, in some cases, derogations to the communitarian legislation.

In the article 'Crisis foreign policy as a process of self-organization', Kai Enno Lehmann (2011) applies the Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) approach and the CDE model to understand governments' reactions in times of crisis. By using the 9/11 terrorist attack in the US as an example, the author demonstrates how a traditional and linear response from the US Government was inadequate to deal with the complexity of the international relations system. Linear responses tend to be simplistic, centralized, and focused only on some parts of the problem, disregarding a wide range of effects. The UK government stance following the 2016 referendum was guided by a linear perspective to deal with a complex issue, that is, the reformulation of the country's relationship with the EU. The same logic of CAS combined with the CDE model can be applied in the UK case to analyse British approaches to the Brexit negotiations.

CAS are characterized as non-linear systems, in which the recursive endogeneity of feedback loops operates (Geyer 2003; Kavalski 2007, 2015; Orsini et al. 2019). CAS opposed the Newtonian linear logic of cause and effect, predictability, and scientific reductionism (Lehmann 2012). Also, complex systems have adaptive agents that trigger emerging patterns of self-organisation, alternating between old trends and new dynamics. For this reason, the rationality and predictability of the system's responses are limited. The relationship between the UK and the EU, which culminates in the Brexit process, is an example of the complex interactions in the international system whose analysis is not restricted to traditional scientific reductionism.

The CDE model, elaborated by Glenda Eoyang (2001), identifies three fundamental conditions for self-organising Complex Adaptive Systems: (1) containers; (2) significant differences; and (3) transforming exchanges. The interaction between these three conditions shapes the self-organising patterns that emerge from the nonlinear systems (Eoyang 2001; Lehmann 2011).

Table 3: Conditions for self-organisation

Conditions	Definition
Containers	Ties that bound and hold the system together
Significant Differences	Distinctions among the agents in the system
Transforming Exchanges	Transactions and connections between and among the agents

Source: elaborated by the author, based on Eoyang, 2001; Eoyang and Yellowthunder, 2005

While containers restrict the agents of the system, they also allow new relationships and structures to be formed between them (Eoyang 2001: 34).Then, significant differences establish possibilities of tension and change within the system. In addition to potential changes, differences also shape emergent patterns in the system via exchanges (Eoyang and Yellowthunder 2005: 6). Those transforming exchanges enable the agents' adaptation and self-organising processes. Based on these three conditions, Eoyang and Yellowthunder (2005) proposed a model to analyse the emergence of self-organisation processes in three degrees: high, medium, and low or no constraint, as table 4 shows. CAS are those presenting medium constraints for self-organisation.

Table 4: Implications of CDE model

Conditions for self-organisation	High constraint	Medium constraint	Low or no constraint
Container	Small and few	Many and entangled	Large and many
Difference	Few	Many, some significant	Innumerable
Exchange	Tight, clear	Loose, ambiguous	Arbitrary, meaningless
Emergent behaviour	Predictable pattern, rigid structure, clear cause and effect, tight coupling	Emergent patterns, emergent structure, non-linear cause and effect, loose coupling	No patterns, random, no cause and effect, uncoupling

Source: Eoyang and Yellowthunder, 2005: 9

The CDE model is applied in this article to understand May's management of the Brexit crisis. Following the 2016 referendum, which was not legally binding, Theresa May undoubtedly accepted the Leave outcome (May 2016). As pointed out by Allen (2018), one of the most important characteristics of May's response to the referendum was her immediate and unambiguous acceptance of its result. At that time, there was no clear Brexit strategy outlined. Her vagueness, before triggering the official withdrawal procedure contained in Article 50, was fundamental to give time to her government to explore Brexit options and prepare for negotiations (May 2016; Allen 2018). However, May (2016) asserted, in her candidature launch statement, the referendum interpretation that there was 'clearly no mandate for a deal that involves accepting the free movement of people', limiting her scope for action in the future.

In her speech on 17 January 2017, while presenting the government's twelve guiding objectives for the negotiations with the EU, Theresa May spoke up for a hard Brexit strategy (May 2017; McGowan 2018). This option sought to provide a direct response to the main issues of immigration and the economy raised by the Leave side during the referendum campaign. The hard Brexit option advocated the UK exit both from the EU Single Market, seeking to halt the free movement of people to the country, and from the Customs Union, longing for an independent trade policy to sign free trade agreements with third countries (Menon and Fowler 2016; Schnapper 2020).

The lack of consensus around what Brexit meant and the high politicisation of the issue both in the Conservative Party and in wider British society led to May's own interpretation of the referendum results and the definition of the UK 'red lines'. The hard Brexit approach was mainly controlled by the Prime Minister in an attempt to set a plan for the withdrawal negotiations. As per Lehmann (2011), there is a recurring belief from policy-makers that any response to a crisis demands or could be better handled via the centralization of decision-making authority, particularly in the executive body. At that time, there was no real parliamentary or public debate neither about the alternatives for leaving the EU nor about the future of the relationship. And the Prime Minister rejected the possibility of an open dialogue regarding the UK strategy on Brexit negotiations. As per Theresa May (2017):

That is why I have said before – and will continue to say – that every stray word and every hyped-up media report is going to make it harder for us to get the right deal for Britain. (…) So, however frustrating some people find it, the government will not be pressured into saying more than I believe it is in our national interest to say. Because it is not my job to fill column inches with daily updates, but to get the right deal for Britain. And that is what I intend to do.

By applying the CDE model, we argue that the attempt to control the Brexit process through centralisation in May's cabinet gave limited scope for the expression of the 'significant differences' between various agents of the system, particularly within the UK. In addition, the setting of the UK 'red lines' in negotiations with the other EU Member States and the British Government's steady fighting stance reduced the chances of 'transforming exchanges'. Table 5 sums up the application of the CDE model to this case.

Table 5: CDE model applied to May's response to the Brexit referendum

Containers	UK decision to withdraw from the EU – hard Brexit option Centralization of the Brexit negotiations under the PM Theresa May
Differences	Few – suppressed by government hard Brexit option Limited scope for alternative exit models
Exchanges	Negotiations with the EU – UK "red lines" Fighting stance
Emerging behaviour	Incoherent – disorder

Source: elaborated by the author

The linear and centralized strategy of high constraint adopted by May's Government ended up hiding the existence of other elements that intervene in the organisation of the UK-EU complex system as a whole. Thus, we observed an emerging behaviour characterised by disorder and chaos, instead of adaptive actions. Despite the attempt to control and simplify the Brexit negotiation process, the discussions were, indeed, embedded in political passions and entangled with bounded rationality and a willingness for a technocratic approach (Figueira and Martill 2020) on both sides, not just from the UK. Also, May had to deal with parallel and overlapping nested games during the negotiations, which increased the pressure on her government, and she ended up failing to reconcile EU and Brexiteers demands (Biermann and Jagdhuber 2021).

Moreover, several factors disregarded by the British government during the negotiations created additional pressures on the reorganisation of the UK-EU relationship, such as the demand for a new Scottish independence referendum; the Northern Ireland border issue; the 2017 UK general elections; the foundation of two new groups in the British political system (the then Brexit Party and Change UK); the role of Parliament in approving the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by Theresa May; among others. Those factors reinforced the 'significant differences' between the various agents from the British side involved in the Brexit process who were not directly taken into account.

The centralisation of PM's approach resulted in constant tensions both within her cabinet, culminating with the resignation of two Brexit secretaries – David Davis, on 8 July 2018, and Dominic Raab, on 15 November 2018 –, and with the UK Parliament, which rejected three times the deal negotiated by Theresa May (Schnapper 2020). It is worth mentioning that both Brexit secretaries worked as male glass cliff pushers by undermining May's leadership as they resigned due to disagreements with the PM and just after she released, respectively, the Chequers Proposal and the Withdrawal Agreement (WA) negotiated with the EU. To some extent, their resignations challenged May's Brexit choices weakening her Premiership.

In the end, despite her brinkmanship strategy, May did not receive the approval for the WA. Brinkmanship means to force a highly dangerous situation until its imminence to

obtain a result that is advantageous to you. In the case of Brexit, the Prime Minister initially declined the possibility of extending the UK withdrawal deadline, scheduled to 29 March 2019, keeping the 'no deal' option on the table, in order to force British MPs to approve the WA negotiated with the EU. By employing this strategy, May disregarded other feasible scenarios to the Brexit path, such as a new referendum, general elections, or, even, the unilateral revocation of Article 50.

In spite of May's defeats in the Parliament, the difference of votes decreased in each new round: 230 in the first, on 15 January 2019; 149 in the second, on 12 March 2019; and 58 in the third, on 29 March 2019 (UK Parliament 2019). This change in the voting patterns corresponded to the Conservative MPs swing since the other parties remained substantially against the agreement. Thus, to some extent, the brinkmanship strategy had an effect of reducing internal opposition in the subsequent votes; and, more than that, it engendered a debate within the House of Commons about other alternatives for the reorganisation of the UK-EU relationship.

On 13 March 2019, after the second refusal of May's deal, and less than two weeks before the UK's departure deadline from the EU, British MPs voted against a 'no deal' exit by 321 to 278. Although this vote had just a symbolic political value, since it would have no legal effect on the EU and the possibility of a crash-out on 29 March 2019 would remain if no agreement was approved, it was followed by the approval (412 to 202), in the next day, of the deadline extension for leaving the European Union (UK Parliament 2019).

In addition, the House of Commons held two indicative votes on alternative options for the Brexit process, although unable to achieve a majority in any of them. Indicative votes refer to non-binding parliamentary consultations that aim to test the Parliament's predisposition towards different propositions on a specific topic. On 27 March 2019, eight selected proposals were subjected to vote: (1) Customs Union (271 noes – 265 ayes); (2) Second referendum (295 – 268); (3) Labour's alternative plan (307 – 237); (4) Common Market 2.0 (283 – 189); (5) Revoke Article 50 to avoid no deal (293 – 184); (6) No deal (400 – 160); (7) Contingent preferential agreements (422 – 139); (8) European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and European Economic Area (EEA) (377 – 64). On 1 April 2019, four of them were again put to vote: (1) Customs Union (276 noes – 273 ayes); (2) Second referendum (292 – 280); (3) Common Market 2.0 (282 – 261); and (4) Parliamentary supremacy (292 – 191) (UK Parliament 2019).

Holding these votes when the official deadline for leaving the EU was about to expire demonstrates the interference of a relevant actor, the House of Commons, in an attempt to reroute the previous linear and centralized approach of Theresa May's government. The different alternatives presented by UK MPs highlight the complexity of the Brexit process in redefining the UK-EU relationship, as well as the need to include other actors in this debate.

Discussions in the UK Parliament have further sharpened the divisions between and within parties, particularly for the Conservative Party. Indeed, the more Eurosceptic wing of the party, the European Research Group - whose many members officially took part in the Vote Leave campaign - contributed to May's downfall, by dismissing her efforts in the negotiations with the EU and pushing for a harder Brexit, and played an important role on Boris Johnson appointment (The Economist, 2018). Trapped in an increasingly tough position, Theresa May requested to the EU two deadline extensions for the UK withdrawal, and, in early April, she offered cross-party talks to the opposition leader, Jeremy Corbyn, to try to find a way forward on Brexit. By doing that, she upset her cabinet and most of the Conservatives, leading her government to an unbearable situation. At that moment, it was no longer possible to cope with the pressure from the

'significant differences' among the actors of the system regarding the reorganisation of the future UK-EU relationship.

Cross-party talks failed to produce concrete results, fostering further disorder and instability in the United Kingdom, as well as undermining May's government (Schnapper 2020). The Prime Minister resigned on 24 May 2019, just after the European Parliament elections, in which the UK participated since the country had not yet left the bloc. Theresa May remained in office until 24 July 2019, when her replacement by Boris Johnson became official.

This section of the article argues that Brexit worked as a crisis that broke up the previous self-organising pattern of the UK-EU relation based on internal differentiated integration. In charge of carrying the UK withdrawal from the EU, May's linear and centralised response to the referendum outcome was characterised by the hard Brexit option and provided limited scope for alternative paths. Furthermore, the adoption of 'red lines' and a combative stance prevented the emergence of more adaptive actions. This example shows the inefficiency of simple and linear solutions to complex issues. Theresa May's government strategy, based on brinkmanship as a way of dealing with a domestic and regional environment of high politicisation, coupled with the EU punishment posture, aiming to discourage other Eurosceptic movements in the EU Member States, made it almost impossible to overcome the 'significant differences' via 'transformative exchanges' to build a more adaptive solution for the negotiations.

This paper does not aim to investigate the Johnson administration; however, it is worth mentioning that the Conservative internal election process to replace Theresa May was characterised by a return to male dominance. Both women running for the PM post, Andrea Leadsom and Esther McVey, as well as Mark Harper, were eliminated in the first ballot, as candidates needed at least 17 votes to proceed to the next round.

Table 6: First round of Conservative Party elections, on 13 June 2019

Candidate	Votes	%
Boris Johnson	114	36.4%
Jeremy Hunt	43	13.7%
Michael Gove	37	11.8%
Dominic Raab	27	8.6%
Sajid Javid	23	7.3%
Matt Hancock	20	6.4%
Rory Stewart	19	6.1%
Andrea Leadsom	11	3.5%
Mark Harper	10	3.2%
Esther McVey	9	2.9%

Source: elaborated by the author, based on House of Commons Library, 2019a

These results may be indicative of the 'saviour effect', when a woman or other minorities perceived to have failed are pushed out of a leadership position and replaced, usually, by a white man – majority group – to mark a return to the *status quo* (Rohrich 2019; Ryan et al. 2016; Stewart 2018; Kulich and Ryan 2017). There is also another glass metaphor

that could be applied in this case: 'men glass cushion'. It means that after a woman's failure, it easier for men to step in because they would have more support from their in-group to cushion their fall if they failed.

Thus, women and ethnic minorities are not only more likely to be appointed to high risk positions, but they are more likely than white men to get negative evaluations and they are given less time to prove themselves, which lays out a more stressful and risky context for these groups. (…) Taken together, these observations suggest that women on a glass cliff are likely exposed to higher risks to fail and to higher psychological strain not simply because it is more difficult to manage a crisis, but because the conditions in which they are asked to work are not comparable to those of men. (Kulich and Ryan 2017: 17-18)

Additionally, the precariousness of glass cliff situations is not only related to potential risks of failure, but it can also increase the incidence of a career trauma (Ryan et al. 2016). Besides being characterized as a weak Prime Minister, Theresa May will probably be remembered by many as the PM who failed on Brexit negotiations, unable to deliver UK withdrawal from the EU.

Boris Johnson, on the contrary, who also pushed through a brinksmanship strategy on Brexit negotiations, was able to approve the deal he renegotiated with the EU after getting a majority of the UK Parliament in the general elections he called for 12 December 2019. Although the main lines of the Withdrawal Agreement had not changed compared to May's version, he had more internal support to get the text approved. On 20 December 2019, the House of Commons passed Johnson's Withdrawal Agreement by 358 to 254 (UK Parliament 2019).

As mentioned in the first section of this article, a glass cliff situation comprises a complex interaction between (1) the type of crisis faced; (2) the paths that led to a woman's appointment to a leadership position; and, particularly, (3) the resources given to her to deal with this crisis (Kulich and Ryan 2017). Brexit is considered a major and unprecedented crisis both for the United Kingdom and for the European Union. And Theresa May's nomination as Prime Minister, at the time when both David Cameron and Boris Johnson stepped away, highlights a glass cliff trend, in which a highly risky position is offered to a woman while men feel more comfortable with declining it. Also, to some extent, May was blamed for negative results which were already set in motion before she took office, since any Prime Minister would have to cope with a divided country and nested games on negotiations. Finally, during her administration, May had limited capabilities and scope for action. May's lack of resources was fundamental for her defeat three times in the UK Parliament when she submitted the deal negotiated with the EU for approval.

In contrast, Boris Johnson benefited from May's downfall to present himself as someone who would 'get Brexit done' (Johnson, 2019), recalling the 'saviour effect'. He also capitalised on the Brexit fatigue both from the UK Parliament and society three years after the referendum. In addition, he had the support from his backbenchers as a 'glass cushion' if he failed to deliver a deal and if UK-EU negotiations ended up in a crash-out. Although this article does not explore Johnson's administration in detail, these comparisons based on the glass cliff literature shed light on important aspects usually ignored when assessing Theresa May's performance as Prime Minister.

CONCLUSION

An old university friend of Theresa May said that, since her Oxford days, she wanted to be Britain's first female Prime Minister (Weaver 2016). Although Margaret Thatcher's election may have put a damper on her dreams, it also made it more feasible for women to achieve top leadership positions. However, as pointed out by Allen (2018: 105-106), 'in becoming prime minister, May achieved her lifelong ambition but her prize resembled a poisoned chalice'.

This article aimed to discuss Theresa May's appointment as PM and her strategy on Brexit negotiations showing evidence on glass cliff. Indeed, May was assigned to a precarious leadership position with a high risk of failure in such a challenging moment of the UK-EU relation. The country and even her party were divided on the matter, and there was no clear plan to guide the Brexit process. By acknowledging it, I do not want to exempt Theresa May's mismanagement choices, but to take these poor leadership conditions into account when evaluating her government.

The CAS approach and the CDE model helped to analyse how the interpretation of the referendum outcome and the Brexit approach to withdrawal negotiations under Theresa May's administration bounded their alternatives. The UK strategy based on linearity and centralization as well as the adoption of a fighting stance limited their scope for negotiation and hinder more adaptive actions. The increasing pressures culminated with her resignation in May 2019 following three defeats of her deal in the UK Parliament, two Brexit deadline extensions, and one European Parliament election.

Even though Brexit was the most important issue of her administration, May should not be remembered only for it. By Rosa Prince (2020), 'Theresa May's other legacy' was being a champion of women in politics. As mentioned before, May was a co-founder of the Program Women2Win, a Conservative initiative to boost female political careers and increase representation in parliament. In her last Question Time as PM, May stated: 'I'm sure that amongst the women in this House today, there is a future prime minister, maybe more than one' (Prince 2020). Albeit she was not a strong advocate for gender equality at the beginning of her career as MP in 1997, she was gradually becoming more interested and supportive of gender policies. However, she was criticized, mainly by her Labour rivals, for not doing enough for women during her administration and for her low-feminist profile. Unfortunately, this more positive May's legacy was overshadowed by the Brexit crisis. As Prince (2020) underlines, 'May found herself held hostage by her own daily fight for survival, unable to set the agenda, her time almost entirely consumed by Brexit'.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Angélica S. Szucko, Institute of International Relations, University of Brasília, Campus Universitário Darcy Ribeiro, Asa Norte, Brasília, DF 70904-970 – Brazil. [angelicaszucko@gmail.com]

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Research Article

Achieving Ambitious Positions in Multilateral Negotiations: How does the European Union influence the Negotiation Outcomes?

Frauke Pipart

Abstract

This paper explains the influence of the European Union (EU) in multilateral negotiations. Focusing on the Basel Convention, this paper studies two issues negotiated at the Conference of the Parties 2019. Comparing two cases, it provides explanations for the EU's high influence in the negotiations on the management of plastic waste and its low influence in the negotiations on low Persistent Organic Pollutant (POP) content values. Using process-tracing, the paper maps the EU's diplomatic activities from the EU's initial position to the outcome of the negotiations. Two separate causal mechanisms outline the differences between the cases of high and low EU influence. Data is collected through interviews, observations and official documents. The paper shows that in the plastic waste negotiations, the EU engaged more strongly in diplomatic activities as it defended a high-ambition, high-flexible position. In that case, the EU was highly influencing the negotiations. However, the EU defended a low-ambition, inflexible position on low POP content values, downscaled its diplomatic activities and did not manage to influence the outcome.

Keywords

The European Union (EU) is a major actor actively engaged in the negotiations on chemicals and waste governance, including the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Biedenkopf 2015, 2018). In the context of international chemicals and waste negotiations, the EU is often described as leading by example (Torney, Biedenkopf & Adelle 2018), or as having a leadership role (Delreux 2018). It promotes ambitious positions at the international level which 'are backed up by comprehensive and pioneering domestic chemicals policy' (Biedenkopf 2018: 191). The EU is active in the Basel Convention to advocate ambitious environmental policies and participates in the development of new policy solutions (Biedenkopf 2018). In international environmental negotiations, the EU is usually described as an influential actor, seeking compromises (Groen 2018).

In this paper, I compare the negotiations surrounding two issues negotiated under the Basel Convention at the 2019 Conference of the Parties (COP). First, the EU influenced the outcome of the negotiations when it pushed for high-ambition policies related to the management of plastic waste. The goal was to adopt a new agreement on the sound management of hazardous plastic waste under the Basel Convention. In this case, the EU influenced the outcome of the negotiations by showing a flexible position and convincing other parties to agree on a high-ambition outcome. Second, the EU did not influence the outcome of the negotiations when it favoured low-ambition policies aimed at setting new low Persistent Organic Pollutant (POP) content values in the general technical guidelines. POPs 'are chemical substances that persist in the environment […] and pose a risk of causing adverse effects to human health and the environment' (Secretariat of the Basel Convention 2011). In this case, the EU had a low influence on the outcome of the negotiations, due to its low-ambition, inflexible position.

The starting point of this paper is the observation that the EU has been uninfluential when pushing for an unambitious, inflexible position, but influential when advocating for an ambitious, flexible position. Both cases present puzzling observations as they contradict the basic assumption of bargaining theory that unambitious positions are easier to achieve in the context of international negotiations than ambitious positions (Meunier 2000). In seeking to understand why this occurred, I illuminate the process between the initial position of the EU and the outcome of the negotiations. Through process-tracing, I address the following question: *How does the EU's ambition and flexibility affect the EU's influence on the Basel COP outcomes?* Data has been collected through interviews, observations at the COP, primary documents as well as reports of the conference. The paper shows that in the plastic waste negotiations, the EU engaged more strongly in diplomatic activities as it defended a high-ambition, high-flexible position. In that case, the EU was highly influencing the negotiations. However, the EU defended a low-ambition, inflexible position on the low POP content values, downscaled its diplomatic activities and did not manage to influence the outcome.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 discusses the conceptual framework and explains how process-tracing was applied. Section 3 presents the case of high EU influence and section 4 discusses the case of low EU influence. Section 5 compares the cases and concludes the paper.

TRACING THE EU'S DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES

Conceptual Framework

This paper explores the EU's influence in the negotiations at the Basel COP as a function of its ambition and flexibility. When tracing the negotiation process, ambition and flexibility are the causes and influence is the outcome of the causal chain. Influence is defined as the extent to which the EU has an impact on the outcome of international negotiations (Chaban, Elgström & Knodt 2019; Groen, Niemann & Oberthür 2012; Van Schaik 2013).

Contrary to similar concepts such as effectiveness and goal achievement, influence describes the actual impact an actor has on the outcome of the international negotiations. Hence, the EU is considered to have a high level of influence, if it achieves its goals and contributes to achieving this outcome. I assess influence by comparing the initial position of the EU with the decision adopted at the end of the negotiations and by asking participants of the negotiations to what extent the EU was responsible for achieving this outcome.

Ambition is defined as the extent to which the EU prefers a negotiation outcome that leads to a high level of environmental protection. The EU's ambition is measured by comparing its initial position, as presented at the start of the negotiations at the COP, with the position of other parties. The party that is the furthest away from the status quo is the most ambitious one. The EU's flexibility determines if the EU is able to adapt its position during negotiations (Druckman & Mitchell 1995). Flexibility is needed to resolve differences, find compromises and change the position of different actors (Druckman & Mitchell 1995). If actors are inflexible, they are less likely to be influential, considering they create an asymmetrical situation in which 'one side capitulates to the other' (Druckman & Mitchell 1995: 13). A high flexibility of the EU can increase its changes of being influential, as international negotiations make it necessary to make at least some concessions in order to reach a compromise agreement (Van Schaik & Schunz 2012).

The EU's ambition and flexibility trigger a causal mechanism, leading to the EU's engagement in diplomatic activity. Diplomatic activities are the actions employed by the EU to promote its positions and to reach out to other parties during the negotiations at the COP. I have identified potential diplomatic activities through observations and interviews. The most formal diplomatic activities happen in official meetings, i.e. in plenaries and contact groups. In plenary, actors express their position and, if controversies occur, parties decide to open a contact group. In contact groups, text proposals are negotiated and technical discussions take place. In addition, co-chairs organise friends-of-the-chairs or drafting groups to bring together the parties with the most controversial positions. Moreover, actors engage in informal consultations by contacting other parties throughout the negotiations in order to convince allies and opponents of their position. Making concessions to other parties is another diplomatic activity and often necessary for achieving an agreement. An actor can propose a compromise in form of a written text or an oral intervention. Diplomatic activity thus refers to a broad range of actions an actor can engage in at the COP in order to achieve a specific negotiation outcome.

Actors are more likely to be diplomatically active when their ambition is high, as ambitious positions are more difficult to achieve (Meunier 2000; Romanyshyn 2018). Oberthür and Groen (2018) have pointed out that the EU will adapt its negotiation strategy and diplomatic activity to its position in the international context. In order to achieve high-ambition goals, the EU needs to be very active in the negotiations (Groen 2018). The ambition of the EU's position requires the EU to adjust its diplomatic activity, if it hopes to be influential. Only when the EU's level of ambition and its diplomatic activity are well aligned, it is able to have a high influence in international environmental negotiations (Groen 2018).

Moreover the EU will engage in different diplomatic activities, depending on its flexibility. The EU negotiators usually receive a mandate to negotiate, which can either have the form of a well-coordinated position or a Council decision (Corthaut & Van Eeckhoutte 2012). The more flexible the EU is, the easier it will be to make concession to other parties or propose compromise in form of textual changes. In addition, with a flexible position, the EU is expected to engage in more diplomatic meetings, such as bilateral or plurilateral discussions, because it can discuss specific textual changes that could unlock a deal. If the EU is inflexible, it will primarily focus on convincing others of its position and hence, needs to engage to a lesser extent in diplomatic activity. Therefore, I expect that the EU's level

of ambition and flexibility will trigger a different process as both the extent of the EU's activities as well as the activities used to negotiate will differ.

Process-Tracing and Scope Conditions

Through theory-testing process-tracing, I will uncover the reasons for the EU's high influence in one and its low influence in another case. Process-tracing aims at illuminating causal mechanisms from the cause to the outcome through detailed empirical analysis (Beach & Pedersen 2019). Theory-testing process-tracing requires conceptualising a causal mechanism based on existing theory before applying the mechanism to the empirical material (Beach & Pedersen 2019). Through observations, I have identified the cause and the outcome in the two 2019 Basel COP cases. The EU presenting its initial position with a specific level of ambition and flexibility is the starting point, i.e. the cause. The EU's level of influence on the final decision adopted by the same COP is the endpoint, i.e. the outcome. In one case, the EU is highly ambitious, highly flexible and has a high level of influence. It deals with the management of plastic waste. In the other case, the EU has a low ambition, is inflexible and has a low level of influence. This case deals with the low POP content values within the general technical guidelines of the Basel Convention. As cause and outcome differ, it is necessary to establish two separate causal mechanisms for the cases.

Process-tracing also requires describing the context under which the mechanism is expected to function. Context is defined 'as the relevant aspects of a setting […] in which a set of initial conditions leads (probabilistically) to an outcome […] via a specified causal mechanism' (Falleti & Lynch 2009: 1152). It is merely necessary to identify the relevant aspects of the context needed for the mechanism to be valid (Falleti & Lynch 2009). These relevant aspects are called scope conditions (Beach & Pedersen 2019). Theory gives guidance to identify the scope conditions relevant 'above and beyond the input variables directly included' (Falleti & Lynch 2009: 1153) in the causal mechanism. Scope conditions are enablers of the causal mechanism. Hence this mechanism only holds true if all scope conditions are present.

For both causal mechanisms, I identify two external scope conditions. First, decision-making rules are important. Under consensus rules, individual countries act as veto players and thus, unambitious interests are strengthened (Oberthür & Groen 2018; Tsebelis 2002). In such settings, an ambitious actor possesses less bargaining power than an unambitious actor (Bäckstrand & Elgström 2013). The Basel Convention allows amending the Convention by a three-fourths majority vote, but it states that 'the Parties shall make every effort to reach agreement on any proposed amendment to this Convention by consensus' (Secretariat of the Basel Convention 2018). The consensus-based institutional norm strengthens the position of unambitious parties.

Second, the international preference constellation is an external scope condition because international negotiations include many other actors besides the EU. Only if preferences are initially diverging, parties will engage in discussions outside of plenary. 'The distribution of the policy preferences of the EU and of its negotiating opponent relative to the status quo determines distinct negotiating situations' (Meunier 2000: 112). Thereby, extreme positions are less likely to be successful than moderate positions (Oberthür & Rabitz 2014). Dee (2013) argues that the international preference constellation is important in as much as the ability of an actor to persuade others is limited if the actor's ambition is far away from its partners.

Table 1 Cause and scope conditions

	Cause		Scope conditions	
	Ambition	Flexibility	Decision-making rules	International preference constellation
High influence of the EU: Management of plastic waste	High	High	Consensus-based	Divergence in positions
Low influence of the EU: Low POP content values	Low	Low	Consensus-based	Divergence in positions

In both mechanisms, the two scope conditions are similar. They are helpful to uncover in which settings the causal mechanisms are expected to work. In the case of high EU influence, I will track how the EU's high-ambition, high-flexible position led to its high level of influence on the negotiation outcome. In the case of low EU influence, I explain how the EU's low-ambition, inflexible position at the start of the negotiations led to its low level of influence on the outcome. To trace those processes, I triangulate several sources. First, I conducted interviews with contact group co-chairs, reporters from the Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB), as well as EU and member state (MS) representatives. An EU representative is any official of a European institution. To guarantee anonymity, I only distinguish between EU and MS representatives as well as non-EU actors (co-chairs and ENB reporters). I conducted nine qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Two interviewees were involved in the negotiations of both cases. Second, I attended the 2019 COP, which allowed for detailed observations of the official negotiations in plenary and contact groups. Third, I analysed primary documents such as the initial proposal for a COP decision and the decisions adopted by the COP. Fourth, I used reports of the ENB, which provide a balanced assessment of the negotiations.

Process-tracing requires establishing two causal chains: one for the case of high EU influence and one for the case of low EU influence. The causal mechanisms are based on the theoretical framework and further outlined for each case separately.

HIGH EU INFLUENCE: NEGOTIATING PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

Theoretical Causal Mechanism

I explain the high influence of the EU on the final decision adopted by the COP, which is the outcome of the causal chain. The cause is the EU presenting a position with a high level of ambition and a high degree of flexibility. It is identified through the position expressed by the EU in the first plenary meeting, its Council decision, its conference room paper (CRP), as well as interviews with EU and MS negotiators. I expect the high-ambition, high-flexible EU position to trigger the mechanism leading to a high level of influence on the outcome. This mechanism is expected to hold true under the conditions that decision-making is consensus-based and that there is a diverging international preference constellation.

The causal mechanism, consisting of different diplomatic activities, unfolds in three steps. In the first step, I expect that the *EU engages in official meetings, informal groups and informal consultations with other parties*. The cause of the mechanism, i.e. the EU presenting a high-ambition, high-flexible position, enabled by diverging positions of other parties, is expected to trigger the EU's engagement in many negotiation forums. A high

ambition and a high flexibility will make it necessary to engage strongly in meetings, in order to convince others of the EU's position. The second step of the causal mechanism is that the *EU makes small concessions close to its initial position*. By engaging in different negotiation forums, the EU can understand and monitor the positions of other parties, which should trigger the EU to make concessions. This should be enabled by the diverging international preference constellation, forcing the EU to adapt in order to achieve a compromise. Making concessions is only possible, because the initial cause of the mechanism was the high-ambition, high-flexible position. The third step of the causal mechanism is that the *EU proposes a compromise close to its initial position*. Making concessions is expected to trigger the proposition of a compromise. This step is enabled by the consensus-based regime, as the EU cannot achieve its goals without all parties agreeing to the proposal. The EU's compromise proposal, if accepted by the other parties, is expected to lead to *the EU's high influence on the outcome of the negotiations*. This causal mechanism is outlined in table 2.

Empirical Application

This first case deals with the negotiations on a new agreement on the management of plastic waste. No prior agreement existed on this matter under the Basel Convention, leading to lengthy discussions at the COP. The initial proposal to amend the annexes II, VIII and IX of the Basel Convention was proposed by Norway with the goal to ensure the sound management of plastic waste. Hazardous waste should be subject to the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure, but the trade of 'non-hazardous, unsorted, mixed, and other plastic waste' should remain allowed (Templeton, Allan, Kantai & de Andrade 2019). The EU supported this proposal with some additional amendments.

The EU's position was more ambitious than the initial proposal by Norway. Like Norway, the EU desired an entry in the annexes II, VIII and IX of the Basel Convention. Yet, the EU favoured allowing only the export of non-mixed plastic materials destined for recycling without prior informed consent. Prior to the COP, the EU adopted a decision in the Council, thereby publicly communicating its intention to support the proposal by Norway. An EU representative argued that this unusual measure was taken because 'this amendment in Basel would have a legal binding effect or a legal effect in EU law' (interview 9).

The EU was flexible in the negotiations because even an outcome with a lower ambition than the EU's position would still have been better than no agreement. As the EU's position was relatively far away from the status-quo, many possible compromise solutions located in between the EU's position and the status-quo seemed acceptable to the EU. In addition, the EU had adopted a Council decision which left a relatively large room of manoeuvre to the negotiators (Council 2019). The Council decision broadly formulated the EU's position and allowed for refinement of this position during on-site coordination meetings. This allowed the EU negotiators to continue negotiating internally to discuss potential compromise solutions with the EU member states.

Scope Conditions

Before analysing how the EU's ambition and flexibility triggered the causal mechanism, it is important to understand the context of the negotiations. Thereby, two scope conditions enable the causal mechanism: the decision-making rules and the international preference constellation. First, the Basel Convention is a consensus-based regime, because parties only rely on voting as an option of last resort. Second, there was a large divergence in the international preference constellation. Argentina and Brazil did not support amending annex II, but only annexes VIII and IX to the Convention. Argentina introduced its proposal in a CRP, arguing that amending annex II could create barriers to the recycling of plastic waste (Templeton et al. 2019). Brazil even stated that 'parties should consider intersessional work and deferral of this decision' (Templeton et al. 2019). Thus, Argentina and Brazil had the least ambitious positions. The African Group largely supported the

proposal by Norway. China argued that all plastic waste should be subject to the PIC procedure and thereby had the most ambitious position. Norway and Japan, who had co-sponsored the proposal, wanted to have an outcome no matter what, as long as something was added to annex II. One EU representative (interview 9) even said that Norway and Japan 'didn't really care about the content'.

Table 2 Process-tracing model: High EU influence

	Cause	Causal mechanism			Outcome
		→ 1 →	2 →	3 →	→
	EU presenting a high-ambition, high flexible position	EU engages in: - Official meetings - Informal groups - Informal consultations with other parties	EU making small concessions close to its initial position	EU proposes a compromise close to its initial position	High EU influence on the outcome
Scope conditions	Consensus-based regime Divergence of positions				
Empirical manifestations	Written or oral expression of position	Engagement in plenary, contact and drafting groups and in informal consultations	Discussions in EU coordination meeting	Written or oral expression of possible solutions	Low difference between EU position and COP outcome
Observables	Observation, interviews, Council decision	Interviews, observations, CRP, draft submissions	Interviews	Interviews, observations, submission to the contact group	Interviews, COP decision

Causal Mechanism

The EU presenting a high-ambition, high-flexible position triggered the causal mechanism leading to the EU's high influence. The first step was enabled by the diverging international preferences, as this made it necessary for the *EU to engage* in all possible negotiation forums. *The EU engaged in official discussions*, i.e. in plenary and contact groups. In plenary, the EU presented its amendments to the proposal through a CRP, with the aim to clarify the scope and extent of its ambition (Templeton et al. 2019). One important discussion in the contact group started on day one, namely, what should be considered as mixed plastic waste. Many countries argued that to them, it sounded like in the EU's proposal, a bottle with a cap, would constitute two types of plastic. Thus, it would be mixed plastic waste. This was an important issue, as during the course of negotiations 'everybody was so obsessed with bottles' (MS representative, interview 5). Some believed that, following the EU's proposal, the bottle and the cap would need to be separated before the waste is traded. All countries agreed that this should be avoided and even the EU argued that the bottle and the cap are one waste. This was mostly a wording issue and the EU proposed to rework the text. As in addition to the EU, also Argentina had introduced a CRP and the initial proposal was by Norway, a discussion arose on which basis the negotiations should start. Norway supported the EU's proposal, yet a few countries wanted to negotiate based on the Norwegian or Argentinian draft. A member state representative argued that this was due to some unclear wordings in the Norwegian proposal. Thus, some countries thought there was 'more leeway in terms of not restricting the transportation of plastic waste as much' (interview 7). The EU's proposal was not entirely clear to many parties and seemed overly strict for some as well. Mainly, because of the unclear meaning of 'mixed plastic waste' (interview 7). Nevertheless, negotiations started based on the EU's proposal, which was a substantial success for the EU.

In addition, the *EU engaged in informal groups*, i.e. the drafting group established by the co-chairs. This was necessary as a result of the divergent, complex positions of the parties. The discussion focused on more technical issues and specific formulations. Initially, the parties needed to discuss 'at least five proposals and the starting point again was the main difficult thing' (EU representative, interview 9). The EU managed to convince other parties to start negotiations based on the EU's proposal. To adopt a decision at the 2019 COP, countries needed to come up with a compromise proposal during the last meeting of that group.

Moreover, the *EU engaged in consultations with other parties*. It participated in the like-minded group, established by Norway, with countries that favoured a similar outcome. According to one EU representative, the goal was 'to align our position, as much as we could, and [to try] to get a consistent message across' (interview 9). This helped generating support for the EU's position. The EU drafted text proposals as agreed among the like-minded countries. The EU's text proposals were generally well respected and genuinely appreciated from those having fewer resources. In addition, the EU met in many bilateral meetings for example with African countries, China and Argentina. As Argentina had a different opinion on the issue, the EU conducted many bilateral meetings with the Argentinian delegation. The main diverging interest was the inclusion of mixtures of plastic waste in annex II. Early bilateral meetings helped the EU to grasp the Argentinian position and to adapt its strategy accordingly.

The EU's engagement in all negotiation forums triggered the second step of the causal mechanism: the *EU making small concessions close to its initial position*. This was enabled by the diverging preferences, which did not allow the EU to impose its position and caused by the EU's flexibility, making it possible to adapt. The EU coordinated with its member states by establishing an EU internal expert group with interested representatives from all EU member states. A representative from an EU member state argued that the presence of many experts on plastics helped to 'look into the proposals quickly, put together information and to have new proposals ready for the negotiators' (interview 4). In addition,

this group helped to create confidence and trust in the EU negotiators. As only two representatives negotiated on behalf of the EU in the small drafting group, this ensured that member states backed up changes in the EU's position. One EU representative (interview 9) argued that the more member states are involved, the more they see that the new proposal is based on teamwork, and thus the more likely they are to support a compromise. The internal expert group also discussed if the EU would try finding a consensus solution, thereby deviating from its initial position, or if they would adhere to the 'quite strict position and then, there would be no consensus likely' (EU representative, interview 9). Ultimately, the EU agreed to be flexible and adapt the position.

The EU making small concessions triggered the third step of the causal mechanism. Having adapted its position caused the *EU to propose a compromise close to its initial position*. With only some adaptions by the drafting and contact group, the EU proposed an acceptable compromise to all parties at the last day of the COP. A member state representative argued that the compromise was acceptable to the EU because during negotiations it received new information (interview 5). The EU agreed that three specific polymers could be exported together when destined for recycling, as it understood that this mixture has a positive market value. Therefore, the EU agreed to make an exception to its approach that only non-mixed plastic materials should be allowed for exportation without the PIC procedure (Council 2019).

Outcome: The EU's High Influence

Ultimately, the EU strongly influenced the adopted decision. Although, the final decision allows to export some mixed plastic waste without PIC, the EU was satisfied with the decision as the outcome was close to what the EU initially demanded. The EU had a high influence and was described by one non-EU actor as being 'extremely active [and not] willing to let go of certain things' (interview 1).

The empirical observables have confirmed the causal mechanism linking the EU presenting a high-ambition, high-flexible position with its high level of influence on the negotiation outcome. The EU's high-ambition, high-flexible position triggered the EU's strong engagement in diverse diplomatic activities. Through this mechanism, the EU managed to achieve a high-ambition outcome. Throughout the negotiations, the EU was participating in all discussions, made concessions and proposed compromise solutions. By playing a strong role in drafting the final text, the EU ensured that its position was well represented. The numerous EU proposals were used as the basis of the negotiations, which helped the EU to increase its influence.

LOW EU INFLUENCE: NEGOTIATING LOW POP CONTENT VALUES

Theoretical Causal Mechanism

I explain the *low influence of the EU on the final decision* adopted by the COP related to the discussion on low POP content values. Its cause is the *EU presenting a low-ambition, inflexible position*, as expressed by the EU in the first plenary meeting. The causal mechanism for the case of low EU influence is expected to consist of two steps. Two scope conditions define the context: the consensus-based regime and the diverse international preference constellation.

In the first step of the mechanism, I expect that the *EU has downscaled its diplomatic engagement in official meetings, informal groups and informal consultations with other parties*. To achieve a low-ambition, inflexible position, a few diplomatic activities are typically sufficient because the position is close to the status quo. In addition, with an inflexible position the EU does not have much to offer and its key activities are focused on trying to convince others of its position, not on negotiating a compromise. However, due

to the divergent international preferences, the EU still needs to engage with the other parties to ensure that no decision is adopted against its will. The constellation of preferences of all negotiating parties is, therefore, an enabling factor of the mechanism. The second step is expected to be that the *EU refuses to make significant concessions*. Monitoring the positions of other parties through diplomatic activities, constrained by the inflexible position, is expected to trigger the EU's refusal of any compromise. This should then lead to the *low influence of the EU on the negotiation outcome*. Table 3 outlines this causal mechanism.

Empirical Application

The case of low EU influence deals with the discussion on low POP content values within the general technical guidelines. The aim of the values is to ensure that the POP content of waste 'is destroyed or irreversibly transformed so that they do not exhibit the characteristics of POPs' (Basel Convention 2019). Thereby, the values establish a threshold for waste containing POPs and every waste with POP levels above the value is considered to be POP waste (International Pollutants Elimination Network, 2017). Hence, it is subject to rigorous criteria for its disposal. At the COP, a controversial discussion arose around the values for two POP combinations: a commercial decabromodiphenyl ether (decaBDE) and short-chain chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs).

The EU had the most unambitious position on both low POP content values under discussion. It proposed the value of 1000mg/kg for decaBDE and 10.000 mg/kg for SCCPs. Those values reflect the previously established values at EU level. The EU's ambition is considered low because it favoured the highest values compared to all other parties. The higher the value, the easier it is to export waste including POPs, which are dangerous for the environment. Even with a low ambition, the EU was eager see values adopted, as for both POPs under discussion, no previous value had been established by the Basel Convention.

In addition, the EU was inflexible. As its position was unambitious, only a few compromise solutions were better for the EU than the status-quo. The EU had recently established new low POP content values at the European level. The negotiations among the 28 member states had been difficult, meaning that the position could not be adapted at the COP (MS representative, interview 4).

Scope Conditions

To understand the empirical application of the causal mechanism, I will first outline the context under which the mechanism is expected to function. The mechanism is enabled by two scope conditions. First, negotiations occurred under a consensus-based regime. Second, the positions of other parties were diverging. Whereas many countries favoured adopting values, there were some differences. The African Group presented the most ambitious position and was the biggest opponent of the EU. It favoured lower values by proposing the value of 50 mg/kg for decaBDE and 100 mg/kg for SCCPs. The African Group argued that it was critical to adopt reasonable values to demonstrate that the international community tries to move forward. A few parties proposed the value of 500 mg/kg for decaBDE as a compromise. Yet, the primary discussion arose between the EU and the African Group, with no country openly supporting the EU's position.

Table 3 Process-tracing model: Low EU influence

	Cause	Causal mechanism		Outcome
		1	2	
	EU presenting a low-ambition, inflexible position	EU downscales its engagement in: - Official meetings - Informal groups - Informal consultations	EU refusing to make significant concessions	Low EU influence on the final decision
Scope conditions	Consensus-based regime Divergence in positions			
Empirical manifestations	Written or oral expression of position	Engagement in plenary, contact and drafting groups an in informal consultations	No proposition for compromise	High difference between EU position and COP outcome
Observables	Observation, interviews	Interviews, observations	Interviews	Interviews, COP decision

Causal Mechanism

The EU presenting an unambitious, inflexible position triggered the causal mechanism. First, it caused the *EU to downscale its engagement* in all forums. Engaging in negotiations was necessary because of the diverging international preference constellation. In addition, as negotiations are consensus-based, the EU could not rely on its voting power in order to achieve agreement. The EU *downscaled its engagement in official discussions* as the only real opponent was the African Group and the EU's activities were mainly oriented towards defending its position. An EU representative argued that the EU did not expect the mobilisation of the African countries in such a strong way and that it missed signals before the conference indicating this problem (interview 6). In a study, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) warned African and Asian countries that they would face problems with POPs in children toys and argued that lower POP content values would provide a solution (interview 6). The EU did address neither this study nor the comments made by IPEN at the COP. However, according to an EU representative, this study was 'first assessed and then dismissed [..] by the lack of scientific quality' (interview 6) by the EU and the small-intersessional working group. As negotiators in the EU are trained not to undermine anyone personally, nobody dismissed the statement by IPEN. IPEN's intervention however left many under the impression that scientific facts existed, which would prove that the high values proposed by the EU were not necessary (interview 6). This strengthened the position of the African Group. In addition, differences occurred on the interpretation of the effect of low POP content values. On the one hand, the African Group and several NGOs shared the view that illegal trade and waste in the environment of developing countries were fundamental problems, which could be addressed through regulating the low POP content values. On the other hand, the EU argued that it would rather be a problem of enforcement. The EU was ill-prepared for a detailed, technical discussion and one EU representative (interview 6) argued that they did not expect a technical, but rather a political debate on the item. Thus, by engaging in the official discussions, the EU made three mistakes: it underestimated the African Group, was insufficiently prepared for the technical discussion and did not engage sufficiently to convince others of its position.

In addition, the *EU downscaled its engagement in informal groups*, i.e. in the friends-of-the-chairs group, which included the ten most interested countries. Neither the EU, nor the African Group were willing to agree on a compromise because of their inflexible positions. One member state representative had the impression that the African Group 'were not in a mood to negotiate' (interview 4). The friends-of-the-chairs group did not produce any solution.

Moreover, the *EU downscaled its engagement in consultations with other parties*. Negotiations were especially challenging with the African Group because according to one EU representative, their position was based rather on feelings than on explicit scientific knowledge (interview 6). African countries believed that the developed countries should control the values before exporting anything to African countries. They did not argue that they would be able to control the values themselves (MS representative, interview 5). The EU understood that a compromise was unlikely and focused its few bilateral meetings on trying to convince other parties of its position.

Downscaling its engagement in all forums caused the second step of the causal mechanism: the *EU refusing to make significant concessions*. This step was primarily caused by the EU's inflexibility. Even though, the EU understood during the negotiations that no agreement could be found, it did not settle for the proposed medium value of 500mg/kg for decaBDE. Contrary to what other countries said, the value was not based on a scientific report published by the EU (EU representative, interview 6). A member state representative explained that there would be no existing standards, which could detect such low values (interview 4) and 'the values [the African countries] proposed [were] absolutely unrealistic' (interview 6). The EU demonstrated its willingness to accept several

values for one POP, but others refused this compromise, arguing that it was insufficient to address the problems raised by the African Group. The only alternative was to keep the values in brackets. A member state representative explained that many EU officials believed that the practical difference between several values adopted or bracketed text was low (interview 5). Ultimately, the EU negotiators did not invest further resources and because of the diverging interests, had no choice but to accept the bracketed text.

Outcome of the Mechanism: The EU's Low Influence

The EU's refusal to compromise further, combined with the diverging preferences, led to the low level of EU influence on the outcome. The adopted COP decision included the low POP content values for both POPs in bracketed text, meaning no agreement was reached. The Basel Convention does provide the possibility to adopt several values for one POP. However, even this compromise was unreached. An EU representative argued that it was 'the worst possible result' (interview 6) as 'no decision here means that you are open to any kind of waste unless you do yourself the same process [of setting low POP content values] nationally' (interview 6). In the end, the African group 'got more what they wanted than probably [the] EU, because no common value was established' (interview 4). Yet, also the African Group was not satisfied with what was achieved and did not have a high influence on the outcome either. As the EU put forward an unambitious, inflexible position, it barely had any influence on the outcome of the negotiations. The low-ambition, inflexible position triggered a causal mechanism in which the EU downscaled its diplomatic activities and did not propose an acceptable compromise. As the activities were insufficient for obtaining an agreement with the other parties, the EU needed to accept its least favoured outcome.

The observations confirm the causal mechanism that links the EU presenting a low-ambition, inflexible position with its low level of influence. The EU's low-ambition and inflexible position led to a reduced engagement in diplomatic activities. Through that mechanism, the EU was incapable of achieving its goals. The EU had a low influence in the negotiations on low POP content values because it was incapable of changing the position of other parties and of reaching a compromise decision.

CONCLUSION

This paper started with the observation that the EU was uninfluential when pushing for an unambitious, inflexible position, but influential with an ambitious, flexible position in the negotiations at the Basel COP 2019. To trace the negotiation process, I conceptualised two causal mechanisms focusing on the EU's diplomatic activities, such as engaging in groups, speaking with other parties, making concessions or drafting text. The findings show that the EU achieved high levels of influence with a high-ambition, high-flexible position. Moreover, when the EU's ambition was low and its position inflexible, it was incapable of influencing the outcome. The different levels of ambition and flexibility caused a different engagement in the EU's diplomatic activity, ultimately leading to different outcomes. These observations lead to a more nuanced understanding of bargaining theory, showing that not only the EU's ambition, but also its flexibility is a crucial factor for its influence. Only knowing the level of ambition is insufficient to understand the EU's influence in international environmental negotiations.

In both cases, two scope conditions enabled the causal mechanisms: the consensus-based regime and the diverging preferences. In the plastic waste case, the EU's high level of ambition and high degree of flexibility led the EU to negotiate in all forums, to make concessions and to propose an acceptable compromise. In the POP case, the EU's low-ambition, inflexible position led to the EU downscaling its engagement in all negotiation forums and to no significant concessions. Hence, the EU did not propose an acceptable

compromise to the other parties. As a consequence, the EU had a high level of influence in the plastic case, but a low level of influence in the POP case.

Theory-testing process-tracing allowed studying rich empirical material and demonstrated how the EU's ambition, flexibility and influence are related, by highlighting the role of diplomatic activities. This leads to the conclusion that negotiations at COPs matter and that outcomes are not predetermined by parties' positions at the start of the negotiations. The EU's position will trigger a different level of diplomatic activity depending on its ambition and flexibility. If the causal mechanism does not break down due to external reasons, a high-ambition, high-flexible position leads to a high EU influence.

Possible alternative explanations might attribute a more significant role to the EU's interests and priorities in the negotiations. The plastic waste case was of high priority for the EU as it adopted a Council decision. In that manner, it might have invested more into its activities. In addition, the EU produced some strategic errors in the POP case, which potentially had an effect on its low level of influence. The EU negotiators were ill-prepared for a detailed, technical discussion on the low POP content values. However, I want to point out that whereas the paper focuses on the EU's role in the negotiations, it does not want to argue that the EU was the single determining factor for the acceptance or refusal of a final compromise. Other parties probably had additional reasons for deciding if they wanted to agree to a proposed solution, such as their own interests and priorities. Yet, the two cases highlight which EU internal factors can cause or hinder the EU's influence. The expectation is that the EU can achieve an equal level of influence when it defends a similar high-ambition, high-flexible position, under the condition that external circumstances are comparable to the plastic case.

Further research might want to investigate the alternative explanations for the EU's influence. The international preference constellation is a factor that could not be explored in detail in this paper, due to the particular focus on the EU. Nonetheless, the preferences of other actors can provide new insights into both the study of the EU and the broader international relations literature. Thereby, both EU internal and external factors seem to provide potential for deeper analysis. Moreover, studies applying the mechanisms outside of the Basel Convention would allow to test if the mechanism holds in other international environmental negotiations and under which conditions the mechanism might break down.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Frauke Pipart, Institut de sciences politiques Louvain-Europe (ISPOLE), University of Louvain (UCLouvain), and Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS), Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, Place Montesquieu 1, SPLE bte L2.08.07 B-1348-Louvain-la-Neuve [frauke.pipart@uclouvain.be].

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APPENDIX

List of Interviews

(1) Interview with non-EU actor, 20 May 2019

(2) Interview with non-EU actor, 07 June 2019

(3) Interview with non-EU actor, 11 June 2019

(4) Interview with member state representative, 13 June 2019

(5) Interview with member state representative, 14 June 2019

(6) Interview with EU representative, 19 June 2019

(7) Interview with member state representative, 19 June 2019

(8) Interview with non-EU actor, 03 July 2019

(9) Interview with EU representative, 05 July 2019

Research Article

Queer Necropolitics: Experiences of LGBTQI+ Asylum Claimants During Covid-19 in the UK

Mengia Tschalaer

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Abstract

This article discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic has the potential to exacerbate inequalities and social isolation through the analytical lens of Mbembe's necropolitics. To this end, the article examines the UK Government approach to providing LGBTQI+ asylum claimants' access to safe accommodation and health service. The analysis shows that the Home Office's policies around housing and health during the Covid- 19 pandemic is closely linked to 'hostile environment' policies - amplifying housing and food precarity, isolation, exposure to violence, economic insecurity as well as physical and mental health problems for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants. The claim is made that there is a lack of intersectionality in the governmental approach to refugees and Covid-19 which creates a support gap for particularly LGBTQI+ asylum claimants. The data used for the writing of this article is based on 14 semi-structured interviews conducted between August 2020 and April 2021 with social/charity workers, asylum claimants and refugees affiliated with NGO help organisations in Glasgow, Birmingham, Cardiff, Brighton, Belfast, and London.

Keywords

Every week is covid for asylum seekers where they have to worry about food, housing and safety.

Support services manager, NGO, London

INTRODUCTION: QUEER ASYLUM AND COVID-19

"There are six strange men asleep in the small, cold room with him. Each on blue plastic mats on the floor. One mutters to himself. Another snores like an irregular chainsaw. A third has night terrors that wake everyone up. Even without the sounds, Mosi cannot sleep. Sometimes there's so little fresh air in the cramped space that he feels like he can't breathe. And if he does breathe, will it bring Covid into his lungs? Then there's the fact that he can't be sure that the men who work there won't pull him out at any moment and torture him. It's happened to him before. Although that was in his own country. And this is the UK." [2]

The above excerpt is the striking introduction to a blog published by Bristol Refugee Rights – an NGO that works toward upholding and championing the human rights of asylum claimants and refugees – in January 2021 which describes the experience of Mosi, a gay asylum claimant, at the Penally refugee camp in Tenby, West Wales. The Penally refugee camp houses only men and, like Mosi, many of them experience the resurfacing of trauma that is re-triggered from experiences of imprisonment, torture, and war. At Penally, there is no social, psychological, health or legal support available and there is a lack of entertainment or stimulation. The Penally refugee camp was repeatedly in the news due to its poor food quality[3] and unsuitable living conditions[4]. In a written statement, Jane Hutt, Deputy Minister and Deputy Whip of the Welsh Cabinet to the Welsh Government, raised concerns about the unsuitability of the camp as an accommodation for asylum seekers and laments the lack of solid Covid-19 measures that allows for social distancing, proper hygiene and access to health services.[5] While this type of accommodation is terrible for all asylum claimants who are held in indefinite detention by the Home Office, as a gay man, Mosi has additional fears of being outed and marginalised, and potentially physically harmed by fellow inmates and staff members, at the camp on the count of his sexual orientation. Then there are fears about contracting Covid-19. Indeed, UK Government statistics reveal that people from Black and ethnic groups (BAME[6]) who live in precarious accommodation arrangements who are more likely to be diagnosed with Covid-19.[7]

Using the analytical lens of necropolitics, this article discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic has the potential to exacerbate inequalities and social isolation for lesbian, gay, bi- and trans-sexual, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) asylum claimants who are currently living in hotels, former military camps, and privately managed accommodations. While there has been some progress in recent years to ensure that the legal decision-making process in the UK is sensitive to the needs of claimants, outside the decision-making process, social policies, and practices on what is often termed 'integration' are less targeted and differ across and within the nations of the UK (Dustin 2018). For example, the Home Office Guide to Living in Asylum Accommodation (2019) fails to mention sexual orientation or gender identity, despite LGBTQI+ persons having been singled out as a particularly vulnerable group by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in 2018 (Bolt 2018). In the UK, and within the EU, LGBTQI+ asylum claimants kept in cramped low-quality accommodations and detention facilities, tend to live in constant fear of emotional abuse and sexual violence due

to trans/homophobia on the part of staff and other asylum claimants. This creates feelings of isolation and depression and risks re-traumatisation through being forced to remain in the closet, breaking the legal protections offered by the Equality Act 2010) (Tschalaer 2020b; Pullen and Tschalaer 2021). Indeed, as I will show below, there is a wide-spread fear of reporting anti-LGBT hate crime, violence, and harassment, which can lead to LGBTQI+ asylum claimants leaving Home Office assigned accommodation and becoming homeless. And even if reported, victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in accommodation are often not relocated, further contributing to their homelessness. The Covid-19 pandemic further heightens the precarity of queer bodies on the move in terms of access to safe housing, health support, and extreme isolation and mental health challenges. In this sense, the omission of including the experiences and needs of non- heteronormative people in asylum and immigration policies and legislations in general and during Covid- 19 pandemic in particular reveals the UK's failure to adequately respond to the protection needs of the most marginalised, laying bare the way 'protection-worthiness' is approached against the background of Covid-19.

The questions that animate the writing of this article are; To what extent are theHome Office's policies around housing and health during the Covid-19 pandemic closely linked to 'hostile environment' policies? How does the lack of intersectionality in policy in the UK's Covid-19 measures and legislations render LGBTQI+ persons seeking asylum vulnerable to homelessness, mental health problems, and gender-based and sexual violence? And more boldly, I ask how the management of the Covid-19 pandemic by the UK Government reveals systemic forms of racism and xenophobia that contribute to the disregard of the lack of protection measures – that could potentially be fatal– for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants in the sense of Mbembe's 'necropolitics' or "necropower".

COVID-19 AND QUEER NECROPOLITICS

This article comes at a time where the co-presence of life and threat of death manifests the cleavages between citizens and non-citizens, heteronormative and non-heteronormative subjects, and ultimately the spatial, moral, and political placement of humanised and de-humanised bodies in terms of necropolitics. Mbembe (2003, 2019) theorises necropolitics – or necropower – as the way the sovereign state "establishes a biological caesura between the ones and the others" (2003: 17) within a biopolitical frame. This is by means of wars but also by the various ways in which "weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating *death-worlds*" (2019: 92). In this sense, Mbembe's necropolitics seeks to capture the power dynamics that underlie political decision making and strategies on questions concerning who gets to live and who must die – or who must live and who is let die within these death worlds. Mbembe further envisages these *death-worlds* as unique forms of social existence "in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead"* (2019: 92)*.* Such conceptualisations that seek to capture the governmentality of life and death is of great relevance to a discussion on social disparities in the context of Covid-19.

Newly emerging research on the global response to Covid-19 draws on Mbembe's concept of 'necropolitics' and 'necropower' to draw attention to the geopolitics of the fatal implications the pandemic engendered since March 2020 (Otieno Sumba 2021; Sandset 2021, Lee 2020). For Christopher Lee, Covid-19 is not solely a medical or epidemiological crisis, but a crisis of

governance (Lee 2020). The rapid way sovereign states closed borders, enacted measures of social distancing, closed businesses, and managed communities etc. is a massive testament to the power of sovereignty. Clear distinctions were and still are made between citizens and non-citizens in terms of cross-border mobility and access to medical care. As Lee explains, the question of who gets to live and who gets to die is dependent on the goodwill of governments, medical staff, and support services within a system driven by global capitalism.

In the same breath, the question of which populations globally should live becomes palatable with the rapid distribution of vaccines in the Global North and the slow vaccination process in countries of the Global South – particularly on the African continent and parts of the Caribbean. For instance, as of February 2022, 73% of people residing in the UK and 65% of residents in the United States are fully vaccinated. This is as compared with 0.1% in Burundi, 3% in Tanzania, and 0.7% in Haiti.[8] Lee states that Mbembe's framework of necropolitics is thus useful for thinking through the political dimension of the global response to Covid-19 and the capacity of states to "dictate over life and death in a de facto way" against the background of Western neoliberalism and imperialism.

Aggie Hirst and Chris Rossdale (2021) in a short intervention describe how the 'pathological politics of Covid-19' have traced the contours of and further exacerbate global poverty, health inequalities, and racial hierarchies, and deep-rooted structural forms of violence. Tony Sandset (2021: 1412) in his study of race, class, and slow death during Covid-19 in the UK, links the deepening of structural forms of racialised violence in the context of Covid-19 to the disproportional distribution of vulnerabilities towards the risk of infection, death, and economic impoverishment globally. Sandset connects the dots between slow violence, Covid-19, and death and argues that this constellation is a result of state of acceptance in the sense of compliancy. For Sandset, like necropolitics, slow violence tends to be 'chronic' and subtle on the surface and most likely comes to the fore in abrupt and dramatic political crisis such as Covid-19. The acceptance of suffering and pain that is often rendered out of sight for those who profit from and are directly implicit in reproducing systems of slow violence – consciously or not – contributes to the creation of Mbembe's *death-worlds.* From there*,* access to legal protection and medical care risks being limited. It is exactly the acceptance and compliancy of such form of necropolitics which, according to Sandset (2021: 1416), underpin tacitly racialised laws and policies addressing the current Covid-19 pandemic, and that particularly impact racialised minorities of lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or who live in legal precarity.

This very recent work on necropolitics and Covid-19, however, does not take into consideration how gender identity and sexuality contribute to such forms of slow violence in the sense of necropolitics. As queer scholars such as Haritaworn, Kuntsman, Posocco, or Aizura in their work on queer necropolitics point out, the most vulnerable non-heteronormative are non-gender-conform bodies that includes LGBTQI+ people who live in legal precarity, are often subject to institutional abandonment and tend to be racialised as other to the nation or whiteness (Haritaworn et. al. 2014; Aizura 2014). Such forms of racial othering of trans and non-conform bodies has been theorised by Morgan Bassichis and Dean Spade (2014, 194) in the context of queer liberalisms in the US (and elsewhere in the Global North) – where the state expands the rights and protection frameworks in favor of (white) LGBTQI+ people – are grounded in systemic structures of anti-blackness and (settler) colonialism. Jasbir Puar (2018) in her reading of Mbembe's necropolitics locates such structural forms of violence against non-heteronormative and gender non-conform bodies within space and time. In so doing, Puar argues that queer non-heteronormative bodies occupy

a highly ambivalent place where the queer body is in a state of constant dying and becoming through self-annihilation. This article makes these connections between queer necropolitics, Covid-19, and queer asylum against the background of the UK's hostile environment policies.

COVID-19 AND QUEER ASYLUM

Research on Covid-19 and migration in the UK and elsewhere reveals that persons on the move are particularly impacted by the pandemic and are more likely to suffer from the disease and develop mental health problems including suicidal thoughts.[9] In most host countries in the Global North, asylum claimants face administrative, financial, legal, and language barriers to access the health system as well as a lack of knowledge/recognition of their eligibility for access to medical services, or sometimes the part of GPs themselves (Jozaghi and Dahya 2020; Kluge et. al. 2020; Orcutt et. al. 2020; Salman et. al 2020; Mukumbang et. al. 2020; Mukumbang 2020; Bhopal 2020). In the UK, a Covid-19 inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration found people claiming asylum as one of the groups at highest risk of heath complications and social isolation.[10] However, these studies do not disaggregate the experiences of LGBTIQ+ claimants with Covid-19. So far, discussions on how the pandemic affects LGBTQI+ asylum claimants in queer migration scholarship are few (Reid and Ritholtz 2020). Instead, queer migration scholarship predominantly focuses on the legal marginalisation of queer legal subjects within heteronormative asylum regimes (i.e. Giametta 2017; Luibhéid 2008; Rehaag 2008; Ritholtz and Buxton 2021; Shakhsari 2014; Tschalaer 2021, 2020a) with only a few studies highlighting the social dimension of their marginalisation (Wimark 2019, 2020; Held 2021).

Studies that focus on queer experiences with Covid-19 do exist. For instance, Austin and Anderson (2020) in the context of the US discuss how the closure of LGBTQI+ leisure spaces such as bars and clubs as well as the cancellation of PRIDE for many means the loss of community and intrapersonal bonds (2020: 4). Against this background, Anderson and Austin draw our attention to the queer experiences of isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic where LGBTQI+ persons often find themselves cut off their community. Despite the increase of online services, studies show that during the pandemic, LGBTQI+ persons are facing an increase in domestic violence, housing precarity and poverty and they often lack equitable access to digital technology and adequate access to health care and psychological support. The latter is especially relevant for trans persons and people living with HIV (Salerno et. al. 2020; Puras et. al. 2020; Ahmed et. al. 2020). While the UK Government has recognised that the call to "stay home and save lives" potentially endangers some vulnerable groups, particularly victims of domestic violence, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has called on all countries to take targeted actions to protect LGBT people amid the pandemic - the heightened marginalisation of LGBTQI+ asylum seekers during the pandemic has been overlooked. LGBTQI+ persons on the move experience Covid-19 and its ensuing government responses both as asylum claimants/refugees *and* queer persons.

In what follows, I will draw on the experiences of LGBTQI+ asylum claimants with the UK's Covid-19 lockdown measures to firstly discuss the way extant 'hostile environment' policies in the UK create inequalities regarding housing and health along lines of race, gender, sexuality, and immigration status. From there, I take a closer look at the individual experiences of LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees to show how the supposedly neutral Covid-19 regulations in the UK do not 'protect' everyone equally but risks exacerbating already

existing inequalities along lines of race, citizenship, gender, sexuality, and class. But allow me a few words about the research methodology first.

METHODOLOGY: LISTENING AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STORYTELLING

The data discussed in this article has been gathered as part of the British Academy-funded research project entitled: 'Understanding LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer) Refugees' and Asylum Seekers' Support Needs through Listening to Autobiographical Storytelling' which took place between April 2020 and July 2021.[11] The goal of using the methodology of listening and autobiographical storytelling is to 'invite' research participants to share 'their' story and experiences as they are bound up in emotions and feelings as well as in the messiness of everyday life (Finnegan 1997; Pullen 2012). Such methodological approach is based on the premise that narratives and emotions are messy, and that the communication of experiences is often tangled up in mechanisms of personal safeguarding and mental health protection (Habermas 2018). The research team - whose members identify as cis-gendered, and who are racialised as white and hold citizenship status in the UK - recognises that this research requires a great deal of reflexivity to avoid racial and cultural stereotyping as well as to minimise risks for re-traumatisation – particularly for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees. This methodological approach is thus grounded in the understanding that the researchers are not immune to reproducing the same fallacies around vulnerability, mental health, stability, and isolation. Consequently, the research team is particularly sensitive to recognise the way Covid-19 policies and politics further isolate LGBTQI+ asylum claimants while privileging the health protection of UK citizens in the sense of queer necropolitics as theorised above, potentially affecting the power dynamics between researchers and research participants. This project's research methodology builds on previous work on representation, sexuality, migration, and asylum by the project's principal investigator, Christopher Pullen, and I (Pullen 2018, 2016, 2020; Tschalaer 2021, 2020a)

In the context of the research project, 14 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with social/charity workers, asylum claimants, and refugees affiliated with NGO help organisations in Glasgow, Birmingham, Cardiff, Brighton, Belfast, and London. The interviews with NGO representatives offered an opportunity for the interviewees to express concerns but also good practices in their support work with LGBTQ+ asylum claimants. The interviews conducted with LGBTQI+ asylum claimants were intended to create room for expressing concerns and needs around accommodation, access to social and legal support based on the everyday life experiences. All interviews have been carried out via Zoom and the interview transcripts have been anonymised for the purpose of analysis unless the interviewee stated otherwise in the participant agreement form.[12] The data used for the writing of this article further derives from discourse analysis of legislations, policies, and media reporting on Covid-19, immigration, and asylum in the UK.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created several challenges for the implementation of the project which was conceived before the pandemic. Firstly, many LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees have suffered from restricted opportunities for communication due to the lack of access to WIFI technology or financial resources to buy phone credit. Secondly, lock-down restrictions have compounded isolation and mental health issues and have deprived all concerned of actual face-to-face encounters that help produce strong trust and social ties. In face of these challenges, this article highlights the various experiences with Covid- 19

regulations from a perspective of LGBTQI+ asylum claimants, refugee and/or service providers with the aim to contribute to critical policy making around asylum and immigration in the UK through autobiographical storytelling. The researchers further collaborated with local community-based charities, NGOs, and refugee agencies which directly work with LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees. These organisations have increasingly recorded asylum seeker and refugee experiences, both for the purposes of service development and to underpin lobbying and advocacy on behalf of their clients. But these small organisations tend to be overlooked by the charity sector and are not easily accessible to policymakers. Based on the conversations had with these organisations at several meetings and a workshop between

January and July 2021, Christopher Pullen and I devised a response to the Women and Equality Committee call for evidence into Equality and the UK asylum process (Pullen and Tschalaer 2021). Our evidence, published on the UK Parliament Committees website in November 2021, contributes to our attempt to include the experiences voiced by these smaller organisations in advocacy and policy regarding the relationship between asylum, hostile environment, sexuality/gender identity and Covid-19. In what follows, I will elaborate on how hostile environment policies shape LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees' experiences with Covid-19 particularly in terms of housing, mental and physical health, and governmental techniques of isolation.

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT: HOME OFFICE POLICY ON HOUSING AND COVID-19

The LGBTQI+ asylum claimants that participated in this research expressed their anxiety about homelessness, destitution, lack of access to health services, and unsafe housing. These concerns are by no means unique to LGBTQI+ persons but apply to most asylum claimants in the UK and are a direct result of a set of 'rather diffuse' hostile environment policies enacted by the UK Government in 2012. When Theresa May introduced the hostile environment policy to the Home Office stating that "[T]he aim is to create, here in Britain, a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants", she reaffirmed long-standing racialised policies geared towards deepening the distinction between those who "who must live or who is let die" as in the words of Mbembe (2019: 92). In essence, Therese May's political course was intended to prevent especially immigrants and ethnic minorities do not take advantage of the country's resources regarding health, housing, and education (Osifo 2020; Griffiths and Yeo 2021). The result of such necropolitical policies as rooted in "forms of racial othering" (Bassichis and Spade 2014: 194) is that persons with precarious immigration status are more prone to health complications, homelessness, destitution, and violence. This situation is further aggravated by the turn of the UK's asylum policy post-Brexit, which foresees the automatic rejection of those people who are reaching the UK other than through the UNHCR resettlement program and includes proposals such as housing people in reception and detention centres overseas while their asylum claim is processed.[13] As a mental health advocate at a LGBTQI+ support organisation says; "While the hostile environment affects everyone and needs to be turned around into a culture of believing, it affects LGBTQI+ persons in a very specific way".

A gay man from Bangladesh, who has fled the country due to threats by members of the Islamic party and who applied for asylum in the UK based on his sexuality, describes his experience with the 'hostile environment' as follows:[14]

> "When I came to the UK, I was saved from the Islamic party. But then I faced different problems. I didn't know anyone in the UK and did not have an accommodation or money for food. I stayed outside and slept in the park – no food, no electricity, no gas, no heating, you know…For a long long time I was homeless…"

The lack of safe housing for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants has been a recurrent topic in all interviews with asylum claimants and support practitioners alike. A gay minister at a Methodist church and volunteer at the LGBTQI+ support help group Birmingham, expresses his deep concern about many of his 'clients' who "do not have guaranteed accommodation between claiming asylum and their screening interview in Croydon. And even after the screening interview people are not necessarily provided with accommodation. So, a lot of LGBTQI+ asylum seekers sleep rough and/or become sex workers until someone picks them up", he says.[15] Similarly, a support service manager at a London-based NGO laments that quite a few of the LGBTQI+ asylum claimants he works with are homeless and do not have enough food. Others are housed in camps run by local councils – such as the above-mentioned Penally military camp in Wales – or privatised accommodations which include run-down houses and hotels.[16] The Home Office uses a dispersal system to distribute asylum seekers across England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland and so the type and quality of accommodation varies greatly.

Furthermore, a gay refugee from sub-Saharan Africa and elected representative of a Glasgow-based LGBTQI+ support group, remembers a gay friend telling him how LGBTQI+ asylum claimants find themselves in cramped rooms with strangers and where they are afraid of being outed while, at the same time, being cut off LGBTQI+ support, health and legal services.[17] Such accounts reflect the views of the UK Refugee Council[18], the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford[19], and the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee[20], which all establish that the often overcrowded and unsanitary accommodations provided by private contractors, in mostly rural areas with very little privacy access to community, legal and financial support systems, contribute to extreme forms of isolation. On 24 February 2021, the Home Office Committee questioned Priti Patel and Matthew Rycroft regarding the suitability of barracks for housing people seeking asylum particularly during Covid-19, but the Home Office refused to take end such practices.[21] Such policies that intentionally "move" racialised bodies to precarious spaces where their safety and thus survival is jeopardised, once more illustrates the faceted way in which structural forms of violence rooted in systems of Western imperialism and colonialism surface in the context of asylum and migration. While the lack of accommodation and sanitary standard and access to healthy food in asylum accommodation in the UK has been widely publicised in the media, policy makers and politicians seem to practice what Sandset (2021) has termed "chronic forms of slow violence" that tend to be normalised within mainstream political discourse. Such "chronic forms of slow violence" affects LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees in a particular way during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Indeed, the disparities and pockets of extreme marginalisation created by the UK Government's longstanding policy of accommodation dispersal and detention further risk being exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. On 23 March 2020, the UK entered the first national lockdown due to the rapidly spreading virus. The lockdown rules, imposed by public health legislation with separate regulations made by the UK government for England and by the governments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, required everyone to stay at home. People were only allowed to leave the house with a 'reasonable excuse' such as to shop necessities, to provide care, to exercise or to work and meeting with other people from outside the household was prohibited. All restaurants, pubs, and bars were closed. For most LGBTQI+

individuals seeking asylum that were interviewed for this research, these 'stay at home' and 'social distancing' legislations meant to be pushed into extreme isolation while living in tight living and sleeping arrangements in military camps, hotels, or poorly maintained private accommodations provided by G4S where, in some cases, up to 20 people are cramped into four rooms[22]. In addition, all legal and social services as well as community gatherings and events were moved online which are, for many, difficult to access due to the lack of WIFI access, availability of computers and smart phones, and limited phone credit. As many asylum claimants struggle to access support services online, the loss of face-to-face interaction for LGBTQI+ often means the loss of a community/family.[23] In addition, with the closure of bars, clubs, and pubs – often the only space where LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees feels safe and where they feel they 'belong', further heightens feelings of loneliness and isolation.

For instance, a gay man from sub-Saharan Africa who arrived in the UK in April 2019, says that his life came to a sudden halt in March 2020 when lockdown was announced. While he had established contact with a LGBTQI+ help group in London previously and travelled there regularly to create a social support network, he found himself confined to his room with all his social contacts cut. He says that "[T]he lockdown has been one of the most difficult things in my life. I try as much as I can to communicate with people but most LGBTQI+ organisations have their offices closed. I can't reach them… I feel very lonely and it had a huge effect on my mental health. This pandemic has had a very negative impact on my life".[24] For the gay asylum claimant from Bangladesh, the stay-at-home legislations had a severe impact on his mental health in that he lost opportunities to connect with other LGBTQI+ people and to distract him from the traumatic experiences he went through as a gay man in Bangladesh and as a homeless person in England. "When I stay at home without going out my brain is getting busy thinking too much…Before the pandemic I used to go out every week or every two weeks in [city in England] and I visited the office of [NGO] to meet with people and get support. Now, I write emails, but I can't see people face-to-face. This affects my mental health – I can't sleep and I am losing my hair…. I am depressed….suicidal…."[25]

NGOs have voiced concern about the potentially lethal impact of stay-at-home messages for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers who, living in cramped accommodation centres, as they were already increasingly subjected to violence and marginalisation even before the pandemic. They tend to be cut off from the social networks that other members of their diaspora can access, and do not have a safe place where they can find the support they need. As a result of the lockdown and social distancing measures to combat Covid-19, LGBTQI+ persons have additionally become more vulnerable to gender-based and sexual violence. A report published by the London-based LGBTQI+ support group Stonewall in May 2020 states that between April 2019 and May 2020, LGBTQI+ people – and particularly those of colour – were more likely to experience poor mental health, difficulties in accessing healthcare, and to be affected by increases in domestic violence and homelessness, discrimination, and unemployment. The report mentions that more than half of LGBTQI+ persons have experienced depression and that twelve percent of trans people have attempted to take their life. More than four out of five LGBTQI+ youth have self-harmed. These numbers show the negative impact of the pandemic on an already concerning situation that has now increased since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the lockdown measures and Covid-19 virus risks further restricting access to health support for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees.[26] Rainbow Migration Director Laila Zadeh points out that Covid-19 legislations combined with 'hostile environment' policies compound poverty and increase mental physical health issues and violence. Zadeh writes that "[T]he UK's official 'Hostile Environment' to immigrants has made people afraid of

accessing essential services. You can't overturn such fears overnight. This is particularly worrying in a pandemic, where lack of healthcare has serious public health implications."

As such, the accounts of LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees above and the concerns voiced by various service providers highlight the way in which Hostile Environment policies in combination with Covid-19 laws contribute to the creation of Mbembe's *death worlds* where the restricted access to health, legal and social support for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants and refugees results in the increased likelihood for them to slide into extreme poverty, homelessness, depression, and isolation. In other words, the 'necropwer' of the hostile environment and Covid-19 once again starkly highlights the capacity of states to "dictate over life and death" against the background of Western neoliberalism and imperialism (Sandset 2021: 1416). There is thus a need to grapple with the racialised and sexualised dimension of the politics around Covid-19 within a global context where the 'necropower' of immigration and refugee politics, laws, and policies is on the rise.

THE LACK OF INTERSECTIONAL POLICY IN UK'S COVID-19 MEASURES AND LEGISLATIONS

The current course of the UK immigration system – geared toward de-humanising people racialised as non-white who reach the shores of the United Kingdom in search for protection from violence, poverty, and war and conflict – also applies to the rather selective way the UK extends protection from Covid-19. While the UK Government and the Home Office might not openly exclude LGBTQI+ people and asylum claimants/refugees in the context of Covid-19 legislations and regulations, poor living conditions combined with the mistrust these groups hold vis-à-vis the healthcare system in the UK – which is not immune to racism, trans- and homophobia – risks to prevent them from seeking treatment when sick and potentially accessing vaccines. Dane (Rainbow Migration) makes a point that LGBTQI+ people who are currently awaiting their asylum decisions do not necessarily have access to the health care system because there is often a lack of information on how to access the health care system and register with a GP, combined with language barriers. In addition, since the 'hostile environment' policies allow the NHS and the Department of Health and Social Care to share data with the Home Office (Griffiths and Yeo 2021: 8) many asylum claimants decide not to see a health practitioner while their cases are ongoing because they fear being deported. Not being registered with a general health practitioner (GP), essentially means, that one is not registered for receiving the Covid-19 vaccination.[27] For LGBTQI+ asylum claimants, the constant fear of either getting sick and/or deported, in combination with the ubiquitous presence of homo- and transphobia as well as racism, contributes to mental health challenges including PTSD, depression, trauma, and addiction (Danisi et.al. 2021).[28] Trans sex workers and LGBTQI+ persons living with HIV were found to be reluctant to access the healthcare system during Covid-19 due to fear of stigmatisation (Agarwal-Jans 2020). So, the intertwined nature of 'hostile environment' policies and Covid-19 legislations show that access to housing, food, employment, healthcare and social networks and support is structured along lines of immigration status, race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.

In this sense, the question of who deserves protection from the Covid-19 virus and under what circumstances, as currently approached by the UK Government and the Home Office, reveals the uneasy tribulation of those deemed less worthy of protection. Indeed, the very personal experiences as discussed above exemplify Mbembe's *necropolitics* as so succinctly encapsulated in the following quotation: "Sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power

and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" (Mbembe 2003: 11). In the context of the UK's 'hostile environment' the core of such community is heteronormative, white, Anglican, and a citizen. Such an imaginary of community tends to exclude persons with precarious immigration status and non-heteronormative and BAME people. To this end, the individual narratives discussed earlier that stress the inert feeling of not being seen as fully human and thus worthless, resonate with Michel Foucault's notion of biopower. In his book *La Volonté du Savoir* (1976), Foucault makes a point that the body has become a site of political struggle where life itself, rather than the right to life, becomes a political subject. The right to life, health, happiness, and the procurement of our very basic needs – while enshrined in law – become subject to control by means of new technologies of sovereign power (1976: 222). Indeed, the way the 'hostile environment' structures the implementation of Covid-19 regulations throughout the UK, constitutes an uncomfortable reminder that the state's responses to the virus are inextricably tied up in technologies of bio power and strategies of necropolitics. In this sense, UK Government and Home Office responses to Covid-19 clearly reveals that although the pandemic affects everyone it does not affect everyone in the same way. Rather, political strategies of queer necropolitcs negatively affect + health and safety of LGBTQI+ people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION – SOME POLICY SUGGESTIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic reveals the 'necropower' inherent in the UK asylum system – as well as more generally within the Common European Asylum System (Otieno Sumba 2021; Sandset 2021, Lee 2020) – which often fails to protect people in need. While the UK government recognises that the call to "stay home and safe lives" potentially puts at risk of vulnerable groups – particularly victims of domestic violence[29] – and increases isolation, persons seeking asylum find themselves in increasingly cramped accommodations with less access to community and legal services and with increased instances of violence and trauma. As discussed in this paper, a particular vulnerable group within the category of asylum seekers in the UK are lesbian, gay, bi- and transsexual, gender non-binary, and intersex people seeking asylum who often experience loneliness and abuse in reception and accommodation camps due to homo/trans-phobia. The continuing pandemic substantially worsens the social isolation they had already been facing. Indeed, remaining in stasis in inadequate living conditions, especially in shared bedrooms[30], where they cannot even be alone, feel secure, and deal with their trauma, causes many LGBTQI+ refugees to feel depressed, and, in some cases, suicidal. My analysis shows that the Home Office's policies around housing and health during the Covid-19 pandemic is closely linked to 'hostile environment' policies - amplifying housing and food precarity, isolation, exposure to violence, economic insecurity, as well as physical and mental health problems for LGBTQI+ asylum claimants.

Starting from the premise that society needs to make sure to include its most marginalised and vulnerable members in any wider policy measures, I would like to stress the particular needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) asylum during the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK. Based on the data discussed above, I suggest the following measures to be taken into consideration when implementing Covid-19 regulations regarding LGBTQI+ asylum claimants. Firstly, the system of immigration detention must be abolished and refugee camps and privatised and hotel accommodation must be closely monitored to ensure safety and health standards for all refugees. However, in the short term, it is essential that LGBTQI+ persons are assigned single rooms in reception and accommodation camps, or assigned safe

LGBTQI+ housing, to minimise risks of violence and stigmatisation and taking into consideration their health.

Secondly, all asylum accommodations should have free high quality internet provision that allow for LGBTQI+ persons to stay in touch with their counsellors, LGBTQI+ community organisations, and friends to tackle extreme isolation and prevent re-traumatisation. Thirdly, specific efforts should be made to ensure accessible health care for all during a health crisis – regardless of residence status – and to minimise stigmatisation and discrimination for LGBTQI+ persons. Healthcare that is particularly relevant to LGBTQI+ people should not be de-prioritised during a pandemic.

And lastly, LGBTQI+ refugee groups and networks need to receive compressive funding support that is appropriate to the workload that essential for offering help and support services. It must be ensured that LGBTQI+ persons have access to these services to minimise risks of re-traumatisation, depression, self- harm and substance abuse.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Mengia Tschalaer, Assistant Professor of Anthropology,John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, 524 West 59th Street, New York, NY, 10019 [mengiahong@gmail.com , mhongtschalaer@jjay.cuny.edu]

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Research Article

Pathways to the EU: an Analysis of German EU Youth Policy Coordination

Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll and Daniella Keilberth

Abstract

In the light of domestic coordination processes in federal states, this article deals with the interplay of domestic governmental and non-governmental actors in the development of a German position for negotiations in the EU youth policy field. The qualitative single-case study is embedded in the evaluation of the German implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018). It focusses on the roles, mutual perceptions, conflicts, and resulting action strategies of the different actors involved in the domestic coordination processes. In doing so, the article adds to the debate on Europeanisation and domestic coordination processes in federalist states by facilitating an understanding of the extent to which differ- ing framework conditions of a specific policy field at the domestic and EU-Level can influ- ence domestic policy coordination and its bottom-up processes.

The analysis reveals a discrepancy between the intentions of the actors to work together based on a multi-level governance approach, and a reality in which the Federal Ministry assumes a gatekeeper function. The problems following this discrepancy can be explained on the one hand by different perceptions and expectations the actors have towards the coordination process and on the other hand by a lack of a youth policy culture of debate. The article shows how these problems lead to different action strategies by the domestic actors and the use of different pathways to bring their interests to the EU level. Simultaneously, the findings show that these different strategies of action can successfully lead to a stronger German position, provided these pathways are used in a coordinated manner. The analysis shows that a domestic coordination process involving both governmental and non-governmental actors from different levels working together on an equal footing by using a multi-level governance approach, can only function in federal policy cooperation processes when the actors focus on content-related discussions rather than formal forms of cooperation.

Keywords

European Union (EU) policy coordination in federal states is a complex and multi-actor process. The constellation of federal and sub-national actors, each with their own interests, but who can only speak with one voice in negotiations at the European level, results in a complex interplay of actors and their policy positions. Such domestic coordination processes have been extensively researched. In particular, research has been done on the procedural differences between centrally organised and federal states (e.g. Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000) and on the role of individual organisational units (e.g. Kassim et al. 2001). Research on domestic policy coordination in federal states has also focused on the coordination process with regard to federal and sub-national governmental actors, as well as to their effectiveness (e.g. Sepos 2005).

Much less is known about the role of non-governmental stakeholders within this process. Within the framework of a 'bottom-up Europeanisation' perspective (Börzel and Panke 2016, 116–19) on European integration, this article analyses the interplay between governmental and non-governmental actors as stakeholders in the domestic coordination process of EU Youth Policy in a federal state. Our research interest is the roles, mutual perceptions, conflicts as well as action strategies of involved actors that arise through this interplay. In the present article, we take a closer look at EU youth policy coordination in Germany and in particular Germany's implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018.

Although it has been somewhat neglected in EU studies, EU youth policy has developed significantly over the past twenty years (Williamson, Fras, and Lavchyan 2021, 67ff.). It is governed by the open method of coordination and one of its major characteristics is its reliance on and close cooperation with youth organisations and other civil society organisations. Such cooperation is also a characteristic of German youth politics. Youth policy coordination and cooperation between the Federal Government, the Länder, local authorities and non-statutory youth organisations is regulated by law. These principles of federalism and subsidiarity are supported by a multi-level governance approach with regard to the German implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (Baumbast, Hofmann-van de Poll, and Rink 2015). It follows that in the youth policy field, a complex multi-actor coordination process with vertical and horizontal coordination elements is in place.

A closer look at policy coordination within individual policy fields can provide us with more in depth information on policy coordination processes in general. We argue that the framework conditions of a policy field influence the complexity of such processes. Against this background, our research findings point to the fact that a domestic coordination process involving both governmental and non-governmental actors from different levels, working together on an equal footing by using a multi-level governance approach, can only function in federal policy cooperation processes when the actors focus on content-related discussions rather than formal forms of cooperation.

To lay out our argument, we build on the theoretical foundations of domestic coordination processes in the context of Europeanisation. After outlining the framework of youth policy in the EU and in Germany, we discuss domestic coordination of EU youth policy in Germany. We do so by analysing two problems that were identified by actors involved in the coordination process. The first problem is that of different perceptions and expectations towards the coordination process. The second problem concerns the lack of a culture of debate when it comes to the coordination of German EU youth policy. Finally, in our conclusion we point out the implications of our research findings for the understanding of domestic coordination processes in federal states such as Germany. However, before we lay out our arguments and conclusions, we first discuss the theoretical foundations our research relies on.

EUROPEANISATION AND DOMESTIC COORDINATION PROCESSES

Europeanisation is understood as a bipartite process in which the integration of European policies into member states' policy (top-down processes) and the integration of domestic impulses into EU policies (bottom-up processes) are interrelated (Börzel 2005, 62; Wallace 2005, 39). The interaction between this "shaping and taking" is a relatively new field of Europeanisation research (Börzel and Panke 2016, 119). The EU influences member states' policy, directly through regulations and directives, and indirectly through resolutions, im pulses, and programmes. Member states are active shapers of EU policies, processes, and institutions, exerting influence on the possibilities and character of European policy-making. They play a central role in the EU decision-making process, determining the point of entry to the various phases of the political processes within the EU and consequently being involved in the setting of agendas, negotiations, subsequent decision-making and, ultimately, the implementation of any given policy (Saurugger 2009, 123). The quality and speed of European decision- and policy-making is influenced both by how EU policies are coordinated and processed domestically and by which individual styles and strategies member states pursue in "uploading" their impulses and interests. Consequently, when it comes to EU policies, domestic decision-making and coordination processes are of central importance for a comprehensive understanding of Europeanisation (Kassim 2000, 257).

As a result of these Europeanisation processes, governments coordinate their actions at and between at least two levels, i.e. the domestic and the European. Providing feedback regarding actions on the one level to the other level is also of central importance. Each of these levels places its own demands on the government with regard to their political structures and dynamics. This interplay is further complicated in federal states, where European policy may be a competence of the federal government, but the content-related competences are at regional or even municipal level. Consequently, there are a multitude of actors and interest groups at both levels who interact at and between the levels, introducing their own concerns and demands. In addition, both European and domestic politics impose certain rules on the actors within the framework of existing political structures (Kassim 2005, 290, 2001, 1). Member states have to observe EU rules and regulations and these will have a direct impact on their domestic coordination processes as these frame the roles domestic actors have in the EU, favouring certain domestic actors over others (Kassim 2000, 254).

These requirements can pose major challenges to member states and their domestic actors. On the one hand, member state governments need to ensure that they react to EU proposals with a unified and coherent national voice in order to effectively incorporate and defend national interests in the EU arena (Sepos 2005, 170). On the other hand, these requirements and structures also offer new opportunities at the EU level for national governments, domestic interest groups and regional authorities. Member state governments can seek allies to support their preferences, form coalitions or blocking minorities and influence the outcome of decisions in the Council. In this way, they can achieve goals that they could not have achieved individually (Kassim 2005, 288; 290, 2001, 17; Wallace 2005, 38f.). Domestic interest groups can use the multi-level structure of the EU to gain access to key decision-makers and resources and "channel" their interests into the EU (Ladrech 2005, 322). In federal states, other governmental actors like the offices of the regional authorities of federal states also contribute to new information flows. As they facilitate the establishment of strategic relationships with European partners, these offices can be used to pursue common policy goals (Moore 2006, 198f.; Wallace 2005, 34).

Domestic coordination of EU policies is thus influenced by the framework conditions and guidelines at the European and domestic level. Depending on the policy field, these framework conditions can differ and lead to a more or less complex domestic coordination process. In federal states, the different distribution of competences between

federal, regional and municipal levels could make coordination even more complex. In this respect, the German youth policy coordination process can provide more detailed insights in actor's perceptions and policy coordination. However, before introducing the politics of German youth policy and German coordination processes of EU youth policy, we first present our research design.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This research uses a qualitative case study approach to analyse how domestic coordination of a soft law policy field, governed by the open method of coordination, takes place in a federal state.

We used document analysis and qualitative semi-structured interviews to trace the pathways, roles and action strategies used by the actors involved in the process of agreeing on an official national position to be presented to the EU. The aim of our research was to examine the general coordination process during the period of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany (2010-2018) – or what the actors remember about it and their perceptions of it. This time frame was chosen because it represents a new type of cooperation between German actors regarding EU youth policy (Baumbast, Hofmann-van de Poll, and Rink 2015). The focus was on the coordination process in general rather than on the contents of the policies or the coordination process of individual EU Council conclusions or resolutions.

Political topics and relevant actors in this period were identified based on existing data material on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany. The identified actors reflected the perceptions at the political level of the Federal Government and the Länder and also those of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).They were interviewed in two rounds. A first series of interviews took place in 2017 and was comprised of seven qualitative, semi-structured telephone interviews with federal, Länder and NGO actors involved in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany. At the time of the interviews, the interviewees were involved in the implementation process to varying degrees (very involved in the process, with a minor role in the process, not directly involved in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy but actively involved in European youth policy, active in a parallel process in Germany promoting independent youth policy). Through the diverse selection of interviewees, it was possible to get a multifaceted picture of the coordination process in Germany.

The second round of qualitative, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews took place in Brussels in 2018 with five people who work for German and European institutions and organisations that address youth policy issues. The first set of interviews had identified these institutions and organisations as important coordinating actors in Brussels. One interviewee was a representative of one of the EU institutions, while the others worked in Brussels for the Federal Government, the Länder, and German NGOs. Actors at the municipal level and their representatives, the national associations of local authorities, had not been mentioned by the interviewees in the first round and so their organisations were not included in the second round of interviews. The aim of this second series of interviews was to add the perspective of German actors in Brussels to the coordination process that could be traced from the first interviews.

By combining the interview results of the first and second rounds, it was possible to reconstruct the process of agreeing on an official German position, to identify alternative pathways to bring German interests in EU youth policy negotiations, and to analyse perceptions and expectations towards a German coordination process. Furthermore, it was possible to ascertain how the different actors interacted in the process. The interviewees were asked about the course of the coordination process, and to evaluate its successes and challenges.

The interviews were fully transcribed and subsequently anonymised. Analysis was based on the method of content-analysis proposed by Mayring (2015), using MaxQDA® to process the data. The first step in this process was to open code the data generated in the interviews to determine the first units of analysis (cf.Mayring 2015, 61ff.). Subsequently, the coded sections of text were paraphrased. Based on the code allocation and the paraphrasing of the coded analysis units, an inductive category system was developed along three main categories: the role of each actor, the networks that had emerged between actors, and the structural, actor-related and content-related challenges with regard to the establishment of a national position that were encountered by the actors. Subsequently, it was analysed how the results of the individual categories were connected and which elementary problems could be derived from this for the entire coordination process (ibid., 71ff.).

This research contributes to the study of domestic coordination processes in federal states, their course, conditions, problems and successes, under the framework of different policy fields. The results of the study help to clarify the relationship between state and non-state actors in these very coordination processes. Germany, as a federal state, was chosen as a case study because it extended the existing principle of subsidiarity in the field of imple-menting European youth policy to include a multi-level governance approach (Baumbast, Hofmann-van de Poll, and Rink 2015). With this approach, non-state actors claim to be more involved in national processes of bottom-up Europeanisation.

YOUTH POLICY IN THE EU AND GERMANY

Youth policy is a part of social policy and focusses on policies directed towards the transition between childhood and adulthood, i.e. the youth phase of life (c.f. Chevalier 2019; Wallace and Bendit 2009). On the one hand, it deals with the needs, rights and obligations of young people arising from this phase of life, and on the other hand with the tasks and structures of state and non-state actors arising from this phase of life. With different welfare state notions and institutional arrangements underlying youth policy in European states (Wallace and Bendit 2009), the continuous development of an EU youth policy since 2001 is remarkable. Although traditionally a marginal policy field in which very little research has been done, it did gain momentum recently when more attention was drawn to the economic and democratic importance of young people as the "future of Europe" (Leyen 2021). EU youth policy is governed by the open method of coordination and has developed around consecutive frameworks of youth policy cooperation, set out in the EU Youth Strategy (Council of the European Union 2009, 2018). One of the characteristics of the EU youth policy field is its close cooperation with civil society, especially youth organisations and young people. Non-governmental organisations like the European Youth Forum are important partners in policy development. The role of youth organisations and sub-national levels in policy formulation and implementation was particularly stressed in the EU Youth Strategy 2010- 2018, where it is stated that young people and youth organisations should be involved in policy making, implementation and follow-up. Furthermore, cooperation with local and regional authorities should be strengthened (Council of the European Union 2009, 5). Prior to negotiation in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) and policy adoption in the Council of EU Youth Ministers, EU youth policy negotiations took place in the Youth Working Party. During the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018, negotiations varied from Council conclusions on youth work, non-formal education, and training and mobility, and a resolution on the new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, to regulations on the Erasmus+ programme, and the European Solidarity Corps.

In Germany, youth politics is based on the principle of subsidiarity, according to which a higher level of government may only take on tasks if a lower level is unable to do so on its own. Whereas European policy is the responsibility of the Federal Government, in

cooperation with the Länder (§23 Basic Law), youth policy, and more specifically youth welfare services, are the responsibility of the Federal Government, the Länder, municipalities and non-statutory youth welfare organisations. Their respective tasks and responsibilities are written down in the Child and Youth Welfare Act of 1990. Besides youth welfare services, youth policy also includes parts of other policies, such as education and employment policy. This means that both vertical, horizontal and cross-sectoral coordination is a prerequisite. Horizontal coordination is based on departmental responsibility ("Ressortprinzip") of the individual federal ministries to define European policy (Derlien 2000; Hegele 2016; Beichelt 2007). In the case of EU Youth Policy, jurisdiction lies with the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ). Vertical coordination points towards the involvement of regional entities, i.e. the Länder, in coordinating processes (Moore and Eppler 2008; see Derlien 2000; Hegele 2016), whereas cross-sectoral coordination refers to policy coordination between actors of different policy areas (Hofmann-van de Poll 2017).

As the ministry with the broadest jurisdiction, the BMFSFJ has a defined role in the process of taking a German position in the EU negotiations. It draws up the domestic position based on the coordination process between these levels and passes this position, otherwise known as an instruction, on to the German Permanent Representation in Brussels. The Permanent Representation takes the instruction into the EU negotiations. These negotiations take place in Working Groups before the documents are finalised in COREPER and adopted by the Council of the EU. (1762_35[1]; 1586/1_7; see Huber 2002: 177-178). In addition to these regulations and defined roles, there are other options of promoting a position in the EU. For example, Länder, non-statutory child and youth services providers and youth organisations are able to promote their interests by exchanging their ideas and opinions with European actors in Brussels. In addition to the official path through a domestic position, actors use alternative pathways of exerting influence and voicing their positions.

Prior to the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018, an institutionalised cooperation of German EU youth policy affairs remained within the strict boundaries of subsidiarity and the jurisdictions of each level (Baumbast, Hofmann-van de Poll, and Rink 2015). But with the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018, the Federal Government and the Länder opted for a new way of cooperation. A multi-level governance approach was introduced to complement the principle of subsidiarity. This was an institutionalised, content-related cooperation between different actors and levels. Instead of individual actors making autonomous decisions regarding EU youth policy, based on the scope of their authority and responsibilities, the aim of the governance model was that the actors should coordinate among themselves, working together and consulting with each other as and when necessary. In order to organise such a governance model, a joint working group between the youth ministries of the Federal Government and the Länder (Federal-Länder-Working Group) coordinated the implementation. An Advisory Board, consisting of representatives from the municipalities and civil society (i.e. from nontatutory child and youth services providers, youth organisations and academia) advised the Federal Ministry on the implementation. Both committees, set up within the context of the EU Youth Strategy implementation process in Germany, were consequently the first institutionalised forms of cooperation between the federal levels in Germany for the purpose of coordination and participatory consultations on European youth policy (Baumbast, Hofmann-van de Poll, and Rink 2015). With the end of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018, the two committees were dissolved and (partly) integrated into committees on national youth policy.

Instead of implementing all eight fields of action of the EU Youth Strategy (Council of the European Union 2009), three priorities were set in Germany: participation, non-formal education and transitions (Baumbast, Hofmann-van de Poll, and Rink 2015). These three topics formed the basis for the impulses that were to be brought from Germany to the European level. At the same time, cross-thematic discussions and impulses were set for

the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes (European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2013; European Commission 2017), as well as the development of a new EU youth strategy (Council of the European Union 2018).

DOMESTIC COORDINATION OF EU YOUTH POLICY IN GERMANY

Against this background, the domestic coordination of EU policies in Germany follows specific rules and regulations, which focus on cooperation between the Federal Government and the Länder. This cooperation is regulated in the Act on Cooperation between the Federation and the Länder in European Union Affairs (German Bundestag 1993). This focus on cooperation between the Federal Government and the Länder, and to a certain extent also NGOs, was the primary focus of the interviewees when asked about cooperation mechanisms. This is interesting, as based on the description of the coordination process above, one would expect the Permanent Representation to play a role in the youth policy coordination process as well. However, the interviewees ascribe to it an executive role as an extended arm of the BMFSFJ and hardly perceive the Permanent Representation as an independent actor (1586_7; 1823_56). This could be due to the fact that the Permanent Representation did not have an independent youth department for a long time. Nevertheless, the role or the non-role of the Permanent Representation in the coordination process would be interesting to pursue further, also in contrast to the existing research on the Permanent Representation (e.g. Maurer and Wessels 2001).

Within these regulations, there is room for interpretation of the coordination process by the involved actors. Our data show that in the context of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and bottom-up Europeanisation, the Federal Government, the Länder and NGOs (i.e. non-statutory child and youth services providers and youth organisations) have different expectations when it comes to the question as to how an official German position is or can be best achieved. With a focus on successful European negotiations, the Federal Government takes on a hierarchical role of a gatekeeper, sorting and filtering the interests of domestic actors to achieve a consensual German position. In contrast, the Länder and NGOs assume that the coordination process – and not only the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in Germany – is based on a multi-level governance approach, accompanied by a certain amount of equality between the actors. These expectations and the resulting action strategies cause coordinating problems in the German coordination process. Two coordinating problems stand out. These are the different perceptions and expectations of the coordination process and the lack of a culture of debate that should underlie the coordination process. These problems as well as approaches toward their resolution will be discussed in the following two sections.

Problem 1: Contrasting Perceptions and Expectations

Our data show that the German Federal Government at the one side and the Länder and NGOs at the other side have different perceptions and expectations of the German EU youth policy coordination process.

The German Federal Government pursues a certain objective in the domestic coordination process of EU policies. Its goal is to negotiate with other EU member states in the Youth Working Party and reach a consensus, preferably based on as much German impulses as possible. From experience, the Federal Government knows that individual concerns of member states, especially ones that are of relevance to the specific situation within a member state, do not get heard in EU negotiations. Interview data show that prior to the establishment of an official German position, the BMFSFJ therefore consults with other member states about consistencies in positions. One example in particular, where Germany coordinated its position with other member states, was the design of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes (1580_71). In the negotiations on the European Solidarity Corps, for example, Germany advocated very early on in discussions with other

member states that the participating countries should not be limited to EU member states but should be expanded beyond them (1586_106). Eventually, such European coordination ensures that the position can be transposed into domestic policies by other member states and is consequently of interest to them. At the same time, the BMFSFJ assumes that after a domestic consultation process in Germany, the official German position should be based on this domestic consensus, guaranteeing (domestic) transparency. Establishing a German position thus includes coordination both at the European and at the national level.

In order to deal with both European and domestic coordination, the Federal Government follows a policy of selectivity. This policy is based on the assumption that Länder and NGOs pursue their own interests and issues, which are not necessarily important to other member states. With European coordination in mind, the Federal Government therefore only selects such domestic interests for an official German position if it expects them to be successful in European negotiations. Only limited reference is made to the non-consensual positions of the Länder and NGOs, resulting in these being only incidentally visible to European actors (1580_8-9; 1580_11; 1580_44-45; 1324_27). The Federal Government thus takes on the role of a gatekeeper, responsible for ordering and filtering interests (cf. Shoemaker and Vos 2009, 13f., 21). It acts as mediator between the domestic and European level, reconciling contradictory interests in order to build one common position and forge a consensus. It controls the flow of policy information to contain the ability of opposing actors to veto their political initiatives (cf. Eising 2004, 218; 2016, 192).

On the other hand, various NGOs and Länder assume that, due to the multi-level governance approach defining the implementation process of the EU Youth Strategy, the coordination of an official domestic position takes place on an equal footing at all stages. They are therefore irritated by the behaviour of the Federal Government and under the impression that the BMFSFJ interprets its competences within the scope of the official process to mean that it decides which national positions form the official German position (1762_34- 35; 1580_44-45; 1762_59-63; 1823_78-79; 1762_46-49). The BMFSFJ is perceived as an
actor who ignores equal cooperation in accordance with the multi-level governance approach and selectively decides, according to its own interests, which domestic interests find their way to the European level.

This being said, Länder and NGOs recount that at the European level they do not feel sufficiently acknowledged or represented by the Federal Government and, in part, also not sufficiently supported in their work, sometimes even feeling obstructed (1762_59-61; 1808_110-111). In conjunction with this perception, they see the official coordination process as being fraught with difficulties. Thus, they typically submit their interests and impulses to the European debate separately, operating as individual actors with own opinions in their dealings with European actors in general and the European Commission in particular (1762_31; 1762_135). To do so, the Länder use their own representations in Brussels (Moore 2006), whereas NGOs turn either to their representations in Brussels – if they have one – or use their national organisations. Metaphorically speaking, the Länder and NGOs use alternative side roads to achieve their goal of communicating their interests on the European stage and by-passing the apparent information-blockages by the Federal Government. They look for alternative forms of communicating information in order to spark new impulses and present their interests to the EU. One such way is extensive bilateral lobbying with EU institutions as a way of exchanging opinions and ideas with other stakeholders on the European stage (1324_29; 1741_126; also cf. Callanan 2011, 17; Eising 2016, 192). Others include regularly organised lunch talks between German representatives active in EU youth policy as well as the organisation of youth policy related events. For youth organisations and young people, the Structured Dialogue (now EU Youth Dialogue) is also an opportunity to introduce thematic impulses, as they cannot get directly involved in negotiations. Examples are the topics of digitalisation and young refugees (1586_40).

Summarising the above observations taken from the data, different German actors use different pathways to bring their interests into EU negotiations. The Federal Government strictly adheres to the official path and seeks consensus with other member states in order to have its point of view heard. The Länder and NGOs also use other paths to give force to their arguments. This happens especially when their interests and arguments are not taken up in the official position. This leads to three different scenarios under which German interests are presented at the European level.

First, situations in which the Federal Government, the Länder and NGOs do not agree on German interests. The federal position that is brought to the negotiating table may be weakened under certain circumstances because other actors are using alternative pathways to feed contrary interests into the negotiations. Alternatively, Länder and civil society can use alternative pathways to bring issues on the European agenda that are not considered to be important by the Federal Government. An example of such an issue where Länder in particular are engaging bilaterally with EU institutions and regional partners to get the issue on the agenda, is youth homelessness (1823_114).

Second, situations in which the actors agree in principle on German interests, but the Federal Government decides to introduce a moderate negotiating position as a result of informal talks with other member states, while the Länder and NGOs try to feed their interests into the negotiations through alternative pathways. In this situation the actors pursue a common strategy through two different pathways, pursuing the same goal with more or less moderate positions. An example of this scenario is the German plea for a holistic approach to youth policy, including the importance of participation and non-formal learning for young people's development. This also includes the vision that young people need spaces and freedoms to develop themselves and try things out. According to the interviewees, it was questionable to what extent other member states were interested in such an approach due to their domestic structural conditions. Whereas the Federal Government formulated a more reserved position, this issue was very strongly advocated by NGOs (1564_34).

Third, situations in which the actors can agree on the German position and pursue it through both official and alternative pathways. This was the case in 2015, when the Federal Government and the Länder worked together to ensure that the situation of young refugees is included in the EU work programme (318_215). In general, EU institutions reported that the German voice is both unified and loud when it comes to issues such as values (democracy and diversity, the fight against racism and extremism) and mobility (1324_74; 1564_74).

The dissatisfaction of the actors with the domestic coordination process and the different resulting pathways of bringing their positions to EU level are also due to a tension between the inclusive approach of multi-level governance and the political responsibilities that come with federalism. It seems that the difference between European and domestic regulations may disturb the complex inner state system of checks and balances. This tension may further increase by the peculiarities of youth policy. In the present case, the policy aiming at adopting a multi-level governance approach across all European, national and subnational levels found itself confronted by the federalist division of powers, including the role of the Federal Government as the political actor representing Germany in its relations with the EU. This results in a situation in which the Federal Government exercises greater (European) political authority than other governmental actors (such as the Länder). The Federal Government represents Germany (in terms of youth policy) at the EU level while the Länder have an advisory role and are part of the German delegation during the official negotiations within the Youth Working Party. However, they depend on the goodwill of the Federal Government for information and documents concerning the Youth Working Party (1823_33). NGOs are not included in this official distribution of roles.

At the same time, youth policy in Germany is a field in which the Länder, the local level

and NGOs have a wide scope of action and design which is regulated by law. These different responsibilities "clash" with each other to a certain extent. In particular, the Länder, which are very active in implementing the EU Youth Strategy in Germany, are also very active in the European youth policy field and try to exert influence on EU institutions through their offices in Brussels (Moore 2006).

The difference between European and national responsibilities may even be the cause of some of the problems because the complex system of checks and balances within the country, involving a carefully balanced division of responsibilities and decision-making powers, can be thrown off balance due to actions at the EU level. Within this system of checks and balances, the Federal Government is able to operate relatively autonomously in its dealings with the EU. In other words, it does not explicitly have to ask the Länder and municipalities or NGOs about their interests and, operating in this way, it wields considerable influence in the EU. On the other hand, the Länder and NGOs are much more limited in terms of the amount of autonomy they have and it is not clear to what extent their actions (i.e. using alternative pathways) have an effect at the European level. Incorporating additional pathways as a part of German bottom-up Europeanisation may be a way to restore the complex inner state system of checks and balances. In fact, there is some evidence that the Federal Government is not only aware of these alternative paths, but also actively supports them (Advisory Board 2017). The Federal Government actively supports alternative pathways particularly then, when it agrees to the interests of domestic actors but considers them to be nonviable in European negotiations because of other member states' positions.

Problem 2: A Lacking Culture of Debate

The second coordination problem that could be identified in the data is related to communication structures in the domestic coordination process. The different perceptions and assumptions underlying the domestic coordination process - in particular the multi-level governance approach and the subsidiarity principle - lead to forms of communication becoming the focus of observation. The lack of a culture of debate within the framework of German EU youth policy is identified by the Länder and NGOs as a reason for their dissatisfaction with the coordination process.

In line with the German implementation of the EU Youth Strategy and the assigned responsibilities towards the BMFSFJ within this process, Länder and NGOs expect that such joint debates, organised by the Federal Government, form an integral part of the domestic consultation process (1823_189-193). They criticise that although certain structures to promote coordination and the exchange of ideas and opinions were established with the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, it nevertheless appears that a culture of collective debate is missing between the Federal Government and domestic stakeholders. It is suggested that the principle of subsidiarity stands in the way of a joint debate and that the multi-level governance coordination currently in place is not an adequate substitute (1823_61).

When asked for the reasons for this lack of a culture of debate despite the structures being in place, several different insights were given by the interviewees. Different national actors sit on different committees set up within the framework of the implementation process of the EU Youth Strategy, and information shared in one particular committee is not necessarily made available to all other stakeholders or actors at the other levels. This practice of selective information provision creates closed information loops. Furthermore, the information formats chosen for the committee work, including written questionnaires and oral reports, are considered inappropriate because they prevent the individual stakeholders from engaging in active dialogues (1741_126; 1762_53). These circumstances ultimately lead to a lack of information and understanding, and sometimes even to passivity among the committee members. An attempt to counteract these problems by actively ensuring that all information was shared met with only limited success (Hofmann-van de Poll and Pelzer 2019). As a consequence, the individual actors

at the different levels do not have the necessary information about the topics debated at the other levels which, in turn, means that there is no basis for reciprocal discussions, making the establishment of a common position through open consultation all the more difficult.

Moreover, the Länder and NGOs feel pressured by the way the Federal Government understands their role in the coordination process. In their eyes, the Federal Government expects them to have a fixed position right at the beginning of a consultation process, rather than being able to develop their positions for national consultation after having the opportunity to exchange information with other domestic stakeholders. Such fixed positions dramatically slow down and even obstruct the exchange of ideas, perceptions and opinions in the national context. According to the Länder and NGOs, the Federal Government lacks the procedural flexibility to organise a consultation process more directed towards cooperation and exchange (1762_46-49/53; 1823_60-61). At the same time, the Federal Government points to the lack of engagement shown by the Länder and NGOs in the committees implementing the EU Youth Strategy in Germany.

Summarising these perceptions of the actors, the formalisation of the implementation and coordination processes seems to be a major problem. A culture of debate is lacking due to limited access to the work of the Federal-Länder-Working Group and the Advisory Board, resulting in closed information loops, and further aggravated by unsuitable information formats. Because of these formalised structures and strict rules, the structures do not allow for much latitude regarding other forms of communication. A constructive exchange of ideas and opinions among domestic actors is prevented, as individual pieces of information go missing or are only shared with specific actors. Both groups of actors (the Federal Government and the Länder/NGOs) identify specific characteristics of this formalisation as a problem. However, rather than associating the non-existent culture of debate with overformalised structures, they consider their perception of a non-existent culture of debate within the domestic consultation process as being subjective. It thus seems that the higher the degree of formalisation within the communication structures, the less effective domestic cooperation is.

One way of solving this problem would be to ensure that the network interconnecting the Federal Government, Länder and NGOs is as strong as possible. Here, the term network refers not only to the exchange of ideas and opinions on specific topics between the stakeholders, but also and more importantly to their participation, on an equal footing, in intensive consultations. These consultations should aim at both determining which topics can be successfully incorporated into an official German position – bearing in mind the consensus politics of the Council of the EU – and which pathways of communication and information in the EU can be used to ensure that the agreed-on positions are clearly communicated as the joint German position by all domestic actors operating at the European level. According to the interviewees, a stronger coordinating network would ensure transparency and promotion. Transparency in terms of the process of deciding which of the national impulses are channelled into the official German position becoming more transparent for all the domestic stakeholders, where at the same time giving them a say in the process. Promotion in the sense that the position, having been agreed on by all the actors within this strong network, can subsequently be promoted via the pathways of communication of all the German stakeholders in Brussels - and not only via the Federal Government.

In order to strengthen such a network, suitable platforms for the exchange of ideas, experiences and opinions are a prerequisite. Such platforms should be characterised by the fact that they ensure, by means of free access regulations, regular cycles and suitable communication formats, both the participation and inclusion of all the actors involved in the process of developing and implementing the EU Youth Strategy, thus contributing to a constructive culture of debate and paving the way for joint consultations. In addition, measures must be taken to ensure that the information that is acquired at the European level and is to be distributed within Germany is not only shared with individual

stakeholders, but is made available to each and every one of the actors involved.

CONCLUSION

With the Federal Republic of Germany as an example, the present article provides an insight into circumstances under which domestic actors circumvent the Federal Government and the country's official position in order to promote their interests through lobbying in the EU. At the same time, the study also shows how the Federal Government organises itself, and in some circumstances relies on domestic actors, to pursue its interests in Brussels. It shows that the policy coordination in German EU youth policy resulting from this interplay is highly complex. Two main causes of complexity were analysed here.

First, the complexity is increased by the role of NGOs. While in German youth policy the role of non-statutory child and youth services providers and youth organisations is legally defined, official German EU policy coordination only regulates the cooperation between the federal and state governments by law. At the same time however, NGOs are a strong force in EU youth politics, advocating their own interests at EU institutions - sometimes even with own representations in Brussels. The procedural ambiguity that results from this constellation leads to the second point of complexity.

Due to the domestic circumstances of youth policy and the multi-level governance approach established during the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy on the one hand, and the rules and distribution of competences stipulated by the European processes on the other hand, different perceptions and expectations for the domestic cooperation process arise among the actors. These different perceptions and expectations increase the complexity of the cooperation process and lead to different pathways that actors use to pursue their interests in Brussels.

Both reasons for the complexity can be found causally in the circumstances of German and European youth policy. Nevertheless, lessons for German policy coordination in general can be drawn from the consequences of this complexity. These lessons come into play in particular when, in addition to the official cooperation between the federal and Länder governments, other actors also appear as stakeholders in a policy field. It is then necessary for all those involved, but especially for the Federal Government in its gatekeeper function, to establish a certain transparency among themselves as to how positions arise and which positions are brought to the European level, why and how. Such transparency could lead to a mutual strengthening of positions and thus to a strengthening of the officially represented position of Germany. However, it remains to be examined whether this conclusion would apply equally to soft law and hard law policy areas. The important role of NGOs as stakeholders, especially at the European level, is not least due to the fact that youth policy is a soft law policy field that essentially depends on the cooperation of relevant actors.

Looking at bottom-up Europeanisation in general, our findings show that the functioning of traditional modes of governance in European policy-making, in which governments mirror the national position at the European level, highly depends on national political frameworks (such as federalism) and the national and European framework of the policy field (here youth policy). A strong and inclusive coordination process can strengthen national position at EU negotiations. This requires that actors leave traditional modes of governance and are open to new forms of cooperation. Actors can use their presence and contacts in Brussels to introduce a previously agreed national position also outside the negotiations in the Council, thus getting a feeling regarding which actors from other member states could be potential supporters of their position. By using different pathways of communication and influence, interests can be brought in more strongly. The interaction between these pathways opens up new possibilities of bottom-up Europeanisation, the interplay of which has hardly been explored so far. For

Europeanisation research, it would therefore be interesting to look beyond the generally known forms of policy coordination (Kassim et al. 2001; e.g. Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000) and expand research on the interplay between official and alternative pathways, such as lobbying of NGOs at European institutions, the use of organising conferences and informal meetings for agenda-setting etc.

Another question raised by these findings relates to how the framework conditions of an EU policy field influence actor constellations and thus domestic coordination processes. With regard to federal states, our study shows that depending on how the framework conditions of an EU policy field are designed, adjustments to the national framework conditions in federal states could be necessary. These adjustments should be directed towards participation and cooperation specifically, and the framework conditions in the national context should be expanded, if necessary, so that actors are involved on an equal footing. However, these adjustments should be clearly outspoken and not be based on unspoken assumptions. Our findings show that such adjustments can on the one hand consist of the establishment of exchange platforms and a discussion about their composition. The flow of in- formation also plays a role here in order to create transparency. On the other hand, the ways in the EU can be used more intensively by discussing which pathways are used by whom in order to strengthen national interests at EU level. Such adjustments may reduce the potential for domestic conflict and make coordination more productive. It would be interesting for further research to explore the question of the mutual influence of EU policy field framework conditions and domestic coordination processes. At least for soft law policy, there seems to be such a fluidity.

Multi-level governance requires the cooperation of different levels and state and non-state actors. Against this background, this article has focused more strongly on the role of NGOs in the structure of federal-Länder cooperation in a soft law policy field. However, it is apparent that some of the problems that have come to the fore in this cooperation can be traced back to the different perceptions and expectations of the involved actors. In this sense, it would be interesting to take a closer look at such cooperation structures in other states and policy fields as well. This article is intended as a first contribution to this research.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Frederike Hofmann-van de Poll, Centre for European Youth Policy at the German Youth Institute, Nockherstrasse 2, 81541 Munich, Germany. [fhofmann@dji.de]

Daniela Keilberth, Munich, Germany. [daniela.keilberth@gmail.com]

ENDNOTES

[1] 1762_35 refers to line 35 in interview nr. 1762. All interviews have been assigned random numbers to maintain anonymity.

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Research Article

Evolutionary Stable Global Orders: Co-Relational Power and Multilateral Security Organisations

Cornelia Baciu and Dominika Kunertova

Abstract

Drawing on a Foucauldian philosophy of thought, this article proposes a novel concept in the study of evolutionary stable global orders: co-relational power. Co-relational power is substantively understood as a form of non-zero sum power. Non-zero sum or positive power is defined as the situation in which the power of one actor is not detrimental to the power of another actor, but it is instead a sum of asymptotic interactions between actors. We argue that, in a context of competitive multipolarity, multilateral security organisations, such as NATO and the EU, seek to adapt and to develop progressive and evolutionary grand strategies that can remain stable over time. This becomes a prerequisite for institutional survival. Our analysis shows that both NATO and the EU face geopolitical dilemmas while they seek to adapt to novel international orders and constellations of threats. The contribution of this article is twofold. First, it produces new knowledge about the conceptual underpinnings and practical implications of the concept of co-relational power. Second, it generates new insights on the design and foundations of progressive strategies and evolutionary stable global environments.

Keywords

Co-Relational Power; International Organisations; Evolutionary Stability; NATO; EU; Foucault.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of multipolarity and great power competition, understanding the underpinnings of an evolutionary stable global order and the impact of international organisations is both academically challenging and a timely endeavour. Intergovernmental organisations constitute potential 'building blocks of order' (Mearsheimer 2019: 9), with authority to set redlines, guide the behaviour of states, but also to shape international politics. While intergovernmental organisations[1] seek to have a stabilising role on societies, they inevitably become players in the international system themselves. Seeking to address this puzzle, the line of inquiry that guides this article is: *How to gain relevance and 'power' without entering the spiral of great power competition?* Existing literature on organisational change and adaptation (MacBryde *et al.* 2014; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Keijzer 2020; Pettigrew and Whipp 1993) has to a large extent focused on the dynamics of change in institutions and organisations in the political or business domains in general, while the strategies and determinants of adaptation of international security organisations, such as the EU and NATO, especially in a multipolar context of competition have received less scholarly attention hitherto. Specifically, the concept of power is not sufficiently examined. Notions of power are crucial to understand in a complex matrix in which several orders compete for relevance and influence, because the outcome of this competition is anticipated to depend on the distributional power balances. Drawing on a Foucauldian philosophy of thought, we propose a new conceptualisation of power, which we call *co-relational power*, underpinned by a positive, non-zero sum understanding of power – 'power with'. We argue that co-relational power can ensure evolutionary stable global order strategies, i.e. strategies that remain stable over time. Evolutionary stability refers to the enablement of *progressive* grand strategies that can lead to promoting conditions of well-being, an improvement of human security, and global progress.

While an *evolutionary stable strategy* and a *progressive strategy* might seem to represent an ontological contradiction at a first sight, this is not the case. Conceptually, an evolutionary stable strategy is assumed to lead to a progressive strategy, in the sense that it aims at contributing to a stabilisation of the multilateral world order. Nonlinear behaviours and complexity associated with multipolarity, crises and the intersection of multiple interdependent dynamics make prediction in the international security order a major source of instability and uncertainty. An evolutionary stable grand strategy refers to a strategy that enables asymptotic stability (Bukuwski and Miekisz 2004) rooted in the convergence on a common trajectory. The two case studies of this research, NATO and the EU, are expected to feature heterogeneity and even friction due to divergences among their members. Even though NATO and EU policy, specifically the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)/Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), is enacted mostly at intergovernmental level, the two international organisations can ensure evolutionary stable equilibriums in the absence of a central authority because they are reciprocity-based systems in which interactions and prisoners dilemmas are infinitely repeated (Axelrod 1981). This article argues, first, that, through leadership, relations and capacity, international organisations can have agency in international relations. Second, and key to our argument, we claim that international organisations envision evolution and progress, in order to survive. In the context of an evolving world order and a proliferation of crises, maintaining system stability (resilience) and efficiency, i.e. the system's ability to maintain its power and ensure that participants comply with the rules of a specific institutional order, are two major objectives of international organisations (Hasenclever et al. 1997). The more resilient a regime is, the more uncertainty and instability it can handle. Convergence is assumed to emerge at the point of asymptotic stability, which is per definition a stable equilibrium point (Bukuwski and Miekisz 2004). Convergence is premised by a common root

trajectory, thus generating the possibility of development of an evolutionary stable strategy that remains stable over time (a robust Nash equilibrium) (Bendor and Swistak 1997). While existing IR literature on grand strategy in international relations (Silove 2018; Layton 2018; Lissner 2018; Mykleby *et al.* 2016) focused on the generic definition of strategy as integrating ends, means and ways, the normative underpinnings of a grand strategy that *upholds power without entering in the spiral of great power competition* remained largely unaddressed. The notion of grand strategy that we put forward in this article distinguishes from the understandings of strategy in the military and strategic domain in that it concerns all the means at government's disposal to ensure security of the state. This includes not only material power (economy, demography, defence budget), but also foreign policy choices – alliances, membership in international organisations, etc. Here, the problem with the EU and NATO is which one is the constituency and in whose competence security and foreign policy decisions will ultimately fall. Only very few studies (Fiott and Simon 2019; Biscop 2012) explored whether international organisations can have a grand strategy. Aiming to pre-empt this imminent scientific gap, this article proposes a conceptualisation of an evolutionary grand strategy by exploring the concept of *co-relational power* underpinned by a Foucauldian paradigm. It does so by employing NATO and the EU as case studies. While NATO and the EU's CSDP/CFSP are arguably different institutions, with distinct organisational structures, the intergovernmental decision-making procedure requiring unanimity, increasing military cooperation in the framework of EU mechanisms such as PESCO, and EU's striving for more military agency makes these two institutions comparable. While NATO is more focused on deterrence and territorial defence and CSDP is more aimed to enable expeditionary force, both organisations rely on multilateral security and participate in crisis management operations. In addition, through taking on new operational domains, such as cyber and space, or adopting a policy towards China, NATO displays increased global reach and foreign policy agency to become a player in a context of great power competition, similar to the EU CFSP.

In this article, we seek to increase our conceptual understanding of key elements of progressive grand strategies in a context of global power re-configurations and eroding multilateralism, and how *co-relational power* relates to these dynamics. To this end, the remainder of this article is structured as follows: the following two sections assess the future geopolitical dilemmas of the two multilateral security organisations from the perspective of power dynamics in the global order; the fourth section elaborates on the concept of *co-relational power* as a form of progressive grand strategy that can enable an evolutionary stable global order; fifth, we empirically examine processes of change and adaptation in our two cases, NATO and the EU across time and in the last decade in particular; in the sixth section we discuss the findings from the perspective of the proposed concept of *co-relational power*. The article concludes by discussing limitations of our method and proposing avenues for future research.

NATO'S GEOPOLITICAL DILEMMAS IN A CONTEXT OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

In a context of great power competition, geopolitical dilemmas arise for state and non-state actors, such as inter-governmental organisations. In the case of NATO, one of its main contemporary challenges is to be able to prioritise its growing portfolio of tasks vis-à-vis Russia. NATO cannot move forward and maintain its relevance in the future without rethinking its geopolitical engagements, especially with the main contester of international order, China. Adjusting the Alliance's geopolitical compass must translate into striking the right balance 'between power and purpose, global and regional interests, and policies of restraint and affirmation' (Rynning 2019: 2).

Crucially, addressing the global shifts of power and the changing world order would require a concerted political leadership in the capitals of NATO member countries, particularly the US, France, Germany and the UK, in order to overcome the global vs Euro-centric conceptions of the Alliance's purpose.

After Russia's invasion in Ukraine, any future NATO strategic engagement with Russia is likely to be premised by a combination of even stronger commitment to collective self-defence and intensified hostilities. The new NATO 2022 Strategic Concept calls Russia the most significant and direct security threat in the Euro-Atlantic area. To strengthen the protection of its eastern members, and the shared border with Russia which doubled with the accession of Sweden and Finland, the Atlantic Alliance returned to the Cold-War era forward defence plans, abandoning the tripwire concept. The new concept also prioritizes risk reduction and crisis prevention, at the expense of arms control. Prior to the war in Ukraine, engaging diplomatically with Russia seems to be able to prevent in the long run a closer alliance between Russia and China (Rynning 2019: xiv). To this end, the NATO-Russia Council could have liaised as a conspicuous focal point of NATO's diplomatic engagement and constructive dialogue with Russia, for instance through reviving the traditional agenda of confidence building measures and arms control. This is nonetheless imperilled by Russia's actions in Ukraine.

While NATO as a regional actor has been strengthening the defence and deterrence posture on its Eastern flank, NATO has been cultivating partnerships spreading beyond Europe across the globe to project stability through cooperation (see also Böller 2018). For NATO to remain a central pillar of American national security thinking, the Alliance will most likely have to consider how to strategically engage with China's global presence. While China does not seem to pose a direct military threat to most NATO allies, closer attention needs to be dedicated to the Chinese expansionism and its broader strategic consequences. NATO's new Strategic Concept recognizes China as an emerging global challenge with increasing military, economic, and technological power and is Washington's main geo-political competitor in the long run. To keep the US interested in NATO, and by extension in European security, NATO might be exposed to the ensuing task of addressing the question of a raising role of China and to prevent closer Sino-Russian alignment. As an official from the US State Department related, on China, NATO will likely focus on those aspects which have a clear security nexus (e. g. cyber, 5G) (Interview with Senior Official, US State Department, 2020, Washington DC). It might prove challenging to forge a common NATO policies on China, yet the Alliance, operating on a consensus-based decision-making procedure, has experience with overcoming major discords among its members using footnotes in its documents, such as the conundrum of complicated relations among Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, or North Macedonia.

EU'S GEOPOLITICAL DILEMMAS IN A SETTING OF COMPETITIVE MULTIPOLARITY

In the case of the EU, defining the central elements of a grand strategy for international peace and prosperity is likely to constitute one of the organisation's most important geopolitical dilemmas in the 21st century. Traditionally, the EU was perceived to have embraced the approach 'normative power Europe' (Manners 2002) in its foreign policy and vision for international security, notwithstanding the controversies around this term (Hamilton 2008: 43; see also Steglich 2021)[2]. Specialist literature argues that the EU has pursued 'a distinctive European grand strategy and a positive agenda for world politics', different than that of other great powers, and had a rather non-interventionist role in providing global security and social justice given its focus on facilitating the bottom-up emergence of procedures,

processes and implementation plans (Biscop 2019: 145). The question is, however, whether the EU pursued a non-interventionary approach in international politics by refraining from power politics – which involves exerting agency to refrain from intervening – or was unable to do otherwise? Lack of capabilities and consensus has often impeded the EU to take greater responsibility in the world.

One future normative predicament of the future EU global strategy will likely be finding a way to achieve multipolar stability (Martill and ten Brinke 2019) while simultaneously avoiding great power competition. One possibility to escape this dilemma is to seek to 'shift arenas of international relations from power-based outcomes to rule-based outcomes' (Drezner 2009: 65). Promoting great power *cooperation* would imply a strategy of relationship-building, inclusion, engagement and interdependence with all great powers, while simultaneously building incentives and conditionality for them not to defect from international cooperative regimes and multilateral systems. Exclusion of any great power would be hazardous, as it would prompt the excluded power to ally with other actors and engage in counterbalancing, which is per default a less cooperative strategy.

If the EU envisions to become a collective security actor and be perceived as such by the international community, the EU needs to pursue a 'power Europe' agenda and become a pole of power in international politics. The concept of *co-relational power* can help answering the question of how this could be achieved in the field of security, without entering the spiral of great power competition. In a recent book focusing on boundaries and European security, Kamil Zwolski (2018) pleads that international federalism and functionalism theories could be useful for studying contemporary dilemmas of European security, maintaining that there is a continuity between federalism and functionalism and the more recent research programmes of Europe as a 'power/global actor' and European security governance, respectively. Functionalism (Mitrany 1966) was a precursor of the European security governance agenda. Functionalism is underpinned by a process-oriented logic, it is needs-driven and based on flexibility, and thus, linked to an understanding of positive peace (non-zero sum). Through processes of spill-over, 'security without boundaries' and a 'progressive view of human development' (Zwolski 2018) can be achieved.

In a context of perpetual changes in the strategic environment, 'genuine multipolarity' (Kagan 1998) and great power competition, international organisations such as NATO and the EU are facing new geopolitical dilemmas: how to develop a grand strategy that ensures progressivity in global affairs? In this article, progressive grand strategy is understood as a strategy that is collective and evolutionary stable, in the sense that it remains stable over time and leads progressively to a stabilisation of the multilateral security order, improvement of human security and global advancement. For conceptualising the underpinnings of an evolutionary stable grand strategy, we propose the concept of *co-relational power*.

A STARTING POINT FOR A PROGRESSIVE GRAND STRATEGY: CO-RELATIONAL POWER

One shortcoming of traditional grand theories (realism, liberalism or constructivism) to explain predicaments in the Euro-Atlantic security policy is their normative and thus prescriptive nature. In order to enable international stability, realists prescribe the balance of power; liberalists predicate the promotion of cooperation and liberal values, while constructivists focus on meanings (Zwolski 2018). The end of American hegemony and retreat from the global order, demonstrated by the US gradual withdrawal from several international agreements and conflicts (e.g. Syria and Afghanistan), can be attributed to a realist paradigm. During the Trump mandate,

realist underpinnings of the American grand strategy were also indicated by the American disengagement from the international rules-based, multilateral system (and return to bilateralism). Diminishing American primacy creates a vacuum in the international system, with novel disruptions and geopolitical shifts emerging (Mérand 2020). Against the background of competitive multipolarity, accompanied by an inward-looking US, this paper assumes that security organisations, such as NATO and the EU, will seek to become important players as 'building blocks' of regional or global orders (Mearsheimer 2019).The concept of power is central to 21st century strategies of peace, security and evolutionary stable international order, however, the traditional understanding of power needs to be re-considered to better grasp the role that multilateral security organisations can assume in the international order. Our proposed concept of *co-relational power* seeks to address these limitations by integrating three levels of power struggles: international, national and daily life (Richmond 2017: 637). Co-relational power can lead to a progressive grand strategy in the case of security organisations such as NATO and the EU. Developing own progressive grand strategies, based on an asymptotic logic of evolutionary stability, could eventually lead to finding common grounds and arriving at the same destination. An asymptotic logic of evolutionary, multipolar stability at the grand strategic level of international organisations means similar positionality towards great and emerging powers, embodied in the proposed paradigm of co-relational power, to avoid friction and enable a convergence around a common trajectory.[3] Notwithstanding, this should not be equated with the EU and NATO developing the same progressive grand strategy.

At a conceptual level, *co-relational power* transcends the Weberian notion of power understood as 'power over' something or someone in the sense of domination, to a notion of co-relational power, 'power with', in which power is horizontally performed in processes of action and acting. 'Power with' stems from relationships, interactions and cooperation, at different levels of interaction and governance. It builds on Foucault's philosophy of power, inspired by the Kantian, Nietzschean and surprisingly Machiavellian (Paolucci *et al.* 2005), paradigms of thought. Foucault argues that 'power in the substantive sense, *Ie pouvoir*, doesn't exist' (Foucault cited in Gordon 1980, pp. 236-237). It follows that 'power is not an institution, a structure, or a certain force with which certain people are endowed; it is the name given to a complex strategic relation in a given society' (Ibid). This type of strategic relationship is central to the co-relational concept of power. Subjective manifestations of power allow us to transcend the traditional understanding of power as domination (power of A over B) to a concept of positive power, which has a multiplicity effect (*power with*) rather than exclusionary (zero sum). In a multi-polar world order, 'positive' power is rooted in relationships and cooperation at inter-organisational, inter-agency, inter-government and inter-personal level. Positive power might help overcoming the 'paradox between peace and power' (Richmond 2017: 637). It can have multiple sources of legitimacy, including stemming from regulatory power and core competences in new domains such as such as unmanned and cyber technologies, autonomous robotics or artificial intelligence (Csernatoni 2019).

At institutional-organisational level, positive, *co-relational power* (power with), could correspond to a type of deliberative democratic security governance (Pollack 2005: 357) in which actors are involved in a way or another in decision-making, e. g. in the form of common declarations, parliamentary hearings or international cooperative agreements. A co-relational type of power would not *impose* agency, but rather *enable*, by sustaining the conditions permitting the emergence of local agency, knowledge and power. Capabilities become thus a premise for this type of enabling and 'empowering' power. Contrasting Foucault's thoughts, which claim that power should not be equated with the exercise of agency[4], co-relational power is *not* antithetical with agency and leadership, quite the opposite, it requires competent leadership with diplomatic abilities and a solution-oriented vision for global affairs.

In sum, there are three pivotal elements that relate to the concept of co-relationality: (i) capabilities to enable and empower; (ii) relations, cooperation and interactions among players; and (iii) leadership as a source of positive constraint towards progressive visions of the international order. While the theoretical elaboration of these elements can be the subject of another paper, for the parsimony of the current analysis, we now proceed with the discussion of the practical application of our proposed conceptual approach, around the concept of 'positive', co-relational power for the two security organisations examined in this article, NATO and the EU.

STRENGTHENING THE RULES-BASED INTERNATIONAL ORDER: ADAPTATION AND POWER

Not only capabilities, but also relations, interactions and cooperation with partners and allies can feed into new sources of power and legitimacy. Future NATO and EU efforts at strengthening the rules-based order might depend on the capacity to develop adequate competencies and on the correspondent budget allocations for investments in international peace and security, as well as on how efficient mechanisms on the peace-security-defence-space continuum will be operationalised and linked. In this context, the US role, the meaning of strategic autonomy and the implications of crises such as Brexit or COVID-19, on both EU and NATO, necessitate closer discussion. In the following two sub-sections we discuss how the EU, respectively NATO, have responded and adapted to some of these (and other) anomalous sequences in the international order, and how these processes relate to the proposed concept of *co-relational power*.

NATO ADAPTATION

NATO faces its own internal challenges, which test the organisation's purpose and cohesion. Despite the absence of a clear existential threat in the post-Cold War security environment until February 2022[5], converging national security interests, a strong sense of community and US leadership have kept NATO together (Jakobsen and Ringsmose 2018: 38). However, cohesion of the already 73-year-old Alliance based on liberal-democratic values has been eroding due to the twin-crises of democracy and leadership (Lute and Burns 2019). Recent democratic backsliding in several member states pose challenges to both the EU and NATO, yet only the EU has the tools to address the authoritarian tendencies under the current leadership in Poland and Hungary. Even though NATO included non-democratic members from its onset, the recent rise of illiberal democracies is particularly worrisome as the Alliance does not have the tools to address challenges coming from within its members. The very logic of collective defence action and consensual decision-making is undermined by the variety of threats affecting NATO member countries in different ways. While NATO's cornerstone of the right of collective self-defence has been its clear mission statement elaborated in Art. 5 of the Washington Treaty of 1949, the Alliance has since become a complex politico-military community seeking to shape the wider international order. NATO has evolved from a single purpose alliance (collective defence of its member countries' territory) to a multi-purpose security institution: it is simultaneously a collective defence organisation, a crisis management tool and a coordinator of partner relationships (Williams 2018).

The 2017-2021 absence of traditionally strong American presidential leadership within NATO was unprecedented, raising questions about NATO's political health. The White House rhetoric and ambivalence during the Trump mandate about NATO's value to US security undermined NATO's cohesion and created doubts about the US

commitment to defend its NATO allies. This has been coupled with US criticism of unfair burden-sharing and a transactional approach towards America's traditional partners. On the other hand, US commitments to its European allies remain strong, as the European Deterrence Initiative and the deployment of further US troops on the Alliance's Eastern flank demonstrate. While coalition building and alliances have become again one of the pillars of the US foreign policy under Joe Biden, the return of the great power competition shifts the US attention away from Europe towards the Asia-Pacific region.

While NATO (and the US in particular) does not discourage the EU's initiatives for more robust European defence union and investments into EU capabilities, provided that these would complement and not duplicate or compete with NATO's existing structures and capabilities, the alliance membership itself has failed to generate the political will in European capitals to spend more on defence. However, this has changed with the war in Ukraine, with more NATO members reaching, and even surpassing, the 2 percent defence spending pledge. Paradoxically, even though the US has been consistently asking the European countries to do more to correct the transatlantic bargain, the US defence industry usually opposed the EU's ideas for how to do it.

At times, Washington has been concerned about the EU's strategic autonomy narrative and, eventually, greater military integration. The EU must manage misperceptions of its new defence investment tools, such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), European Defence Fund (EDF) or Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD), especially to dismiss the US claims about the EU's protectionism. Washington has already taken countermeasures to secure the position of American defence contractors on the EU market as it aims to subsidize US weapons sales to former Eastern bloc countries that still operate Soviet equipment through its new European Recapitalization Incentive Program (Mehta and Sprenger 2019). The US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear accord, climate change negotiations, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and the Open Skies Treaty were yet another demonstration of strained transatlantic relations. Importantly, the Trump Administration has been viewing the EU as an economic competitor rather than a partner (Lute and Burns 2019: 29). This has changed with the mandate of Joe Biden, who is a known transatlanticist and adept of a rules-based international order.

From a military perspective, there will be no viable alternative to NATO, or a US-less NATO as long as Europe is not able to defend itself – and the EU-led collective defence is yet still far from materialising (Kunertova 2021). Institutions in general are easier and cheaper to keep and adapt, rather than establish new ones (Wallander 2000). In the event of the US retreat from its commitments to defend its European partners – e.g., similar to Trump's blitz withdrawal decision of one third of the US troops in Germany in 2020 – improving the military capabilities of European countries would require much greater political and financial will than spending 2 per cent on defence (for which national governments are not prepared, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic aftermath) and extending France's nuclear capabilities to provide extended deterrence on the European continent given that the UK has left the EU, not mentioning the need to replicate NATO's integrated command structure.

Brexit can mean a major turning point for the EU, but not so much for NATO itself. On the one hand, Brexit would result in less defence capabilities and expertise for the EU. On the other hand, the importance of NATO would grow as after Brexit, 80 percent of NATO's defence expenditure, as well as its three out of four battalions in Eastern Europe, will come from non-EU members. The UK would step up its efforts in NATO to demonstrate its commitment to security in Europe and use the Alliance as a platform for international cooperation and power projection. At the same time, the UK may become less valuable to the US since it would no longer be able to use

that channel to influence EU security and defence policy from the inside and its capacity to play the role of strategic bridge between the EU and the US will be reduced. Its bridging function would depend on how vital its 'special relationship' with the US will continue to be, given that the UK was protecting NATO from duplicative and competing EU initiatives since the St Malo declaration in 1998. The EU, even in terms of future defence union, would need allies and a continuing strong transatlantic partnership that has come with the US extended nuclear deterrent against the nuclear-armed Russia. Perhaps Lord Ismay's depiction of the Alliance's purpose need to be reformulated as to keep Russians out, Americans in, and – in resonance with the proposed concept of co-relational power – 'Europeans engaged'.

EU ADAPTATION

'Americans are from Mars, Europeans are from Venus' were the introductory words from Robert Kagan's book 2003 *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* in relation to the EU and US foreign policy. While Europe resembled a 'political paradise' similar to the order of eternal peace proposed by Immanuel Kant, the US was the only superpower to invest a great amount of money in defence and which could have been at war on many fronts at the same time in almost any environment in a 'violent, anarchic Hobbesian world' (Turner 2003). While these contrasting worldviews largely preserved, crises and anomalous sequences in the international security order, such as the war in Ukraine, Brexit, transformations in transatlantic relations, the rise of China or the COVID-19 global pandemic, have shown that Europe's responsibilities have changed. Multiple crises and the urgent need for future stability impelled on the EU to adapt. Adaptation is demonstrated by an increasing concern with actorness, strategy and capacity, both perceived to be necessary to promote the core values of EU foreign policy identity and strategy, i. e. democracy, human rights and the rule of law, but also the EU interests.

EU adaptation in response to endogenous and exogenous crises materialised in a series of advancements in the CSDP/CFSP. A series of notable developments followed gradually after the Brexit referendum in June 2016: the adoption of PESCO, EDF and CARD, the planned extension of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) to non-executive missions, the adoption of a more ambitious global strategy with the new European institutions that commenced their mandate in 2019, and a strategic implementation plan that will complement the EU Strategic Compass (Interview with European Parliament representative in Brussels, 2019). In addition, debates on strategic autonomy have intensified, also in response to uncertainty and non-linearities in the US policy. These debates have revealed some crucial challenges related to this objective, such as its unclear meaning, despite the mentions to this term in the EU Global Strategy paper of 2016. For example, does strategic autonomy mean the ability to act independently from other actors (powers), does it imply the EU to act independently from its member states or does it involve unanimity of EU27? Depending on where in Europe one is, if in Germany, France, Denmark, Romania, Ireland or other European state, strategic autonomy can have different meanings, making it thus provoking to operationalise this term. Assuming that strategic autonomy would involve the development of independent capacities entreats further questions: for example, whether new initiatives such as the European Intervention Initiative, outside the EU structure would constitute an addition to independent capacity or whether, for example, strategic autonomy would involve energy autonomy, as well. A consolidated vision of strategic autonomy requires answers to these (and other) questions, and foremost defining the identity that the EU wants to project in the world. The Strategic Compass adopted in 2020 and the assessment of the potential for convergence (Baciu 2020) might constitute an important step towards a clearer operationalisation of future cooperation. From a regime complexity

perspective, strategic autonomy could theoretically take the form of institutional overlap or merger between CSDP and NATO (Hofmann 2009; Howorth 2017) or an Europeanisation of NATO (Rynning 2019), and while elaborating on these endeavours might beseech the length of another article, we now turn to discuss the implications relating to the proposed concept of co-relational power. The next section discusses the Foucauldian-based concept of *co-relational power* applying it to the two security organisations and beacons the three main findings that can be traced from this analysis.

DISCUSSION: CO-RELATIONAL POWER AND EU'S FUTURE STRATEGIC RELATION WITH NATO

In the conceptual section of this article we argued that there are three sources of *co-relational power*: (i) capabilities to enable and empower; (ii) relations, cooperation and interactions among players; and (iii) leadership as a source of positive constraint towards progressive visions of the international order.

First, capabilities and the capacity to act constitute crucial elements of the proposed notion of co-relational power. Drawing on a Foucauldian philosophy of thought, power does not equate with an institution, a structure, or a certain force, but it is a rather a matter of perception. It follows that, to be perceived as a power requires first defining and operationalising how an organisation needs to act and behave, at internal and global level. While the EU has been doing significant work in promoting multi-domain cooperation (single market, CSDP missions, technology, environment, etc.) it is not being unequivocally perceived as a global power, particularly in the military domain. One main impediment is the lack of unity in security and foreign policy. Even close partners and important CSDP/CFSP policy entrepreneurs, such as France and Germany, often do not agree – for example, regarding the production of a European advanced drone, whether it shall be armed or unarmed. If France and Germany (and Spain) will jointly develop a weapon system, for example the Future Combat Air System or a next-generation tank, it remains to be seen whether the EU will be perceived as a global security actor and how these new endogenously-developed capabilities will be integrated into its overall global strategy. In the last years, we have seen a synergy of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism in European security and defence, in the form of EDF or at operational level, in the form of the Athena mechanism (Terpan 2015) or the European Peace Facility, and there have been debates on complementing decision making in security and foreign policy with qualified majority voting procedures. As recent interviews by one of the authors with EU officials in Brussels in 2019 revealed, QMV has been on the table of the new HRVP Josep Borrell and his mandate might see an increased debate in this direction. While the CSDP/CFSP are constitutionally intergovernmental and likely to largely remain so, any substantive change would most likely require a treaty change – which, Brexit or the war in Ukraine might set incentives for – or a creative institutional mechanism.

An evolutionary stable regional or global order based on a conceptual understanding of co-relational power would imply *evolving* from a reactive organisation, which has to adapt to the developments in the international environment into an actor with a collective strategy and *agency* in global affairs. How to embody agency without entering the spiral of power competition was the research question guiding this article. Especially for multilateral security organisations, such as the EU and NATO, their agency as 'building blocks of order' can stem from the cumulative acceptance by member states and partners, and thus legitimacy. For both NATO and the EU, 'power with' needs first to work at internal level, i.e. power with the member states. This would involve a detailed assessment of the member states' potential in

mediation, peace, defence, diplomacy and problem-solving in the world. For example, for mediating in the conflict in Syria, the embassy of Romania, which at the time of the high escalations in the region was among the very few EU/NATO countries which had an ambassador and consular services in Damascus, and had traditionally a good relationship with Syrian governments (Baciu and Friede 2020), could be used as a diplomatic channel of negotiation. Sharing the burden, e.g. in defence spending and capabilities development, and enabling all member states (and their citizens, via citizens dialogues) to participate and have a stake, while managing their expectations, will be key for the future of 'power with' endeavours. This might imply exploring a role-player model (see Baciu and Ewers Peters forthcoming) based on an adequate level of responsibility and power, to enable member states to become part of a collective strategy and normative order. The ultimate goal of both organizations is the same: protection of liberal-democratic values, strengthening free institutions, and promoting friendly international relations. In the case of NATO, this underlying purpose enshrined in its foundation treaty, the "why" of the organisation, sometimes gets side-lined in the narrow discussions about how to keep the alliance's military-technological edge in the changing international balance of power and where the scope of NATO's mandate ends vis-à-vis the EU (Tardy 2019).

To translate into a 'positive' agenda in international affairs and a globally resilient strategy, a vision of progressive power would require, for both NATO and the EU, more complex and sophisticated checks and balances to strengthen democracy and to ensure that legitimacy is built in the context of global justice. This might be achieved through a fair distribution of resources and empowerment of local communities and implies a departure from a fixed architecture to broader conceptions of intervention such as mobility, network, transversality, as well as mutual and entangled intervention (top down and bottom up) (Richmond 2017: 637). A resilient strategy here refers to a strategy that enables international security organisations to uphold their values and contribute to a stabilisation of the multilateral world order. As mentioned elsewhere in this article, we do not call for NATO and the EU to embrace a common grand strategy. A grand strategy underpinned by the concept of co-relational power (*power with*) would involve a degree of commonality and convergence pertaining to the three pivotal elements of co-relational power, i. e. capabilities, relations and leadership. The latter two are canvassed in the following.

Relations, partnerships, cooperation and interactions were argued to be a *second* major source of 'co-relational' power. To become more relevant, multilateral security institutions might need to have a stronger engagement with big powers, such as the US or China, but also with each other as well as to other security organisations such as the UN, African Union or OSCE. Paradoxically, 'saving' NATO (see Deutch et al. 1999) might translate into strengthening the European Union. The evidence presented in this article invites us to anticipate that EU-NATO cooperation is likely to be enhanced by future common declarations and strategic papers. The cooperation between the two organisations in defence and security reached unprecedented levels since 2016 as the two organisations adopted the Joint Declaration to address the poor state of practical security and defence cooperation within Europe. This has already changed the status quo in NATO-EU relations as their respective organisational cultures have been adapting to the new NATO-EU cooperation 2.0. One notable example of the reinforced cooperation between the two organisations is constituted by the practical attempts at synchronising their respective lists of capability priorities and defence planning processes as well as the joint work program on military mobility in Europe.

Yet complementarity-competition dynamics continue to characterise NATO-EU relations as they still need to overcome one philosophical and one political factor: the Eurocentric-Atlanticist divide and the tensions between Turkey, Greece and Cyprus (Sloan 2016: 320), which prevent more comprehensive information sharing between

NATO and the EU. Due to the steep increase in the number and frequency of contacts, both NATO and EU staffs now face numerous practical issues. The underlying problem remains: it is difficult to get a sense of what the other organisation is doing, identify complementary efforts, and implement them. Effective operational output requires more than high-profile declarations of intent or multiplication of cooperative defence initiatives. More tangible results should include acquiring superior defence capabilities, making better use of states' contributions, and assuring interoperability across all domains.

The *third* dimension in our proposed concept of co-relational power is leadership. Based on our analysis we predict that overcoming future challenges in NATO-EU cooperation will require a good deal of political will in the capitals, notably France and Germany, since defence and security still pertain to the intergovernmental sphere of decision-making. The question does not stand (yet) as to which institutional structures, NATO or the EU, the European countries should prioritise in order to strengthen European security. Both NATO and the EU, together with the OSCE, continue to be the core security providers in Europe. Thus, the EU's ambition to improve its actorness in security and defence on the European continent should not result in deepening estrangement from NATO. Without a strong partnership between NATO and the EU, and presumably, a strong European leadership in NATO (premised by proportional capability contributions) to account for the vacuum left by the US ambivalence, there would be no winners, only losers.

CONCLUSION. EVOLUTIONARY STABLE GLOBAL ORDERS

The main novel contribution of this article was the notion of *co-relational power* and its practical application for order stability. Hitherto, little was known about the conceptualisation of the concept of co-relational power underpinned by a Foucauldian philosophy of thought. In this article, *co-relational power* was substantively understood as non-zero sum (positive) power, i.e. the power of one actor is not detrimental to the power of another actor, but it is instead a sum of cooperative interactions between actors. Applying empirical evidence from two cases of intergovernmental security organisations, NATO and the EU, this research revealed that co-relational power requires convergence pertaining to *relations*, *leadership* and *capabilities*. This normatively enables exponential stability through concurrence towards asymptotic trajectories and equilibrium points. Being exponentially stable, a grand strategy based on this logic can allow the two organisations to contribute to the stabilisation of the multilateral security order without entering the spiral of competition. If the two organisations incorporate this logic into their processes of adaptation, this might help them to address geopolitical dilemmas. This article has argued that, a future geopolitical dilemma of both the EU and NATO will be linked to defining a grand strategy that can enable evolutionary stable peace and multipolar stability. Strengthening the rules-based international order will depend not only on the fallout from the Ukraine war and Washington's European strategy, but also on the operationalisation of the vision of strategic autonomy, the post-Brexit Europe and post-pandemic level of ambition both in the EU and NATO. Overall, *co-relational power* might be conducive to increased linearity and evolutionary equilibria in organisations' agency, with anticipated reinforcing effects on system resilience (upholding values) and system effectiveness (ability to ensure compliance and maintain power).

This research has uncovered a series of new puzzles, which should be addressed by future research. First, future studies could investigate the precise positionality dynamics between intergovernmental security organisations such as the EU and NATO and great powers, for example, the US, but also BRICS. Specifically, future

work could address whether and how the once-again US-led NATO cooperating with great powers would add to a vision of multipolar stable global order. Second, while, in this analysis we revealed dynamics of Europeanisation within NATO, we do not argue for an international order based on NATO and the EU without US involvement, which would be, indeed, improbable. If divisions within NATO and the EU are overcome, this might be propitious for the evolution of an exponentially stable regional order, at a minimum. Third, while this article has demonstrated the usefulness of *co-relational power* (understood as positive, non-zero sum) for an evolutionary stable global order, one limitation pertains to the application of this concept from a supra-national perspective. Both NATO and the EU are frameworks that imply boundaries and non-members are treated differently than members. Future studies could explore whether and how great power consensus can be achieved, which was beyond the scope of this article. The article focused instead on the conditions that enable intergovernmental organisations to contribute to stabilising the multilateral security order. Therefore, more research is needed to better understand what a progressive international order substantively means given that ordering in itself might be equated with an illiberal process (Porter 2020).

To conclude, 'learning the language of power' might mean learning the language of 'positive' power in global affairs. As this article has demonstrated, positive power stems from autonomous capabilities (including military) and interactions with members states, on the side, and with global players and organisations, on the other side, to forge a multiplicity effect from cooperative relationships and advance an evolutionary stable global order in an era of competitive multipolarity.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Dr Cornelia Baciu, Centre for Military Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark[6]

Dr Dominika Kunertova, Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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ENDNOTES

[1] In this article, intergovernmental organisations, multilateral security organisations and international organisations are sometimes used intermittently.

[2] For a detailed discussion on the various aspects of the vision of 'normative power Europe', see Dan Hamilton, 2008. The EU ability to exert global projection and promote stability was to a considerable extent thanks to US security guarantee in Europe; this while a 'regulatory norm-setting' has been part of the US grand strategy and vision since a long time.

[3] For an in-depth discussion of the underpinnings of asymptotic stability, see Bukowski, M. and J. Miekisz (2004).

[4] Colin Gordon and Michel Foucault (eds), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972 - 1977* (Vintage Books, New York 1980).

[5] Despite the recent Russian military incursions in Ukraine, the seriousness of the Russian threat is not being perceived in the same way across the allied countries.

[6] At the time of the submission, Cornelia Baciu was affiliated with the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.

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Research Article

Looking for the 'Social' in the European Semester: The Ambiguous 'Socialisation' of EU Economic Governance in the European Parliament

Anna Elomäki and Barbara Gaweda

Abstract

The European Semester, the foundation of postcrisis economic governance in the European Union (EU), has become the locus of struggle between the economic and social goals of the EU. The persistent hierarchy of social and economic goals and subsuming of social policies to market-making logic have been at the centre of scholarly and political discussions about the Semester since its inception. This article examines how the European Parliament (EP), the EU's representative institution, engages with the social/economic relationship within the technocratic and expert-led Semester and what political and ideological alternatives the EP proposes. We ask where and what are the key conflicts within the EP regarding the social dimension of economic governance and how they affect policy outcomes. By discursively exploring the EP reports on the European Semester for the 2014-19 term and analysing the conflicts between political groups and between the EP committees, the article argues that the EP takes an ambiguous and contradictory position on the relationship between economic and social governance and does not provide a real alternative to the status quo.

Keywords

The European Semester, which serves as the main framework of the postcrisis economic governance of the European Union (EU), has enhanced the powers of EU institutions, particularly the European Commission, in scrutinising and coordinating member states' fiscal, macroeconomic and social policies (Verdun and Zeitlin 2018). The European Semester has also become a key arena in which the long-standing battles between the EU economic and social goals are fought and where the relationship between 'the social' and the 'economic' is negotiated within and between the various EU institutions (for example Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018; Copeland 2020). Over the 2010s, the Semester has been partially 'socialised' in the sense that social goals have become more visible in policy recommendations and social actors have gained more power within the process (Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018). Despite these advances, as well as the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in 2017 and its integration in the Semester, social policy continues to be framed in terms of macroeconomic priorities and market logic (Dawson 2018; Copeland 2020; Copeland and Daly 2018). Based on this, it has been suggested that the EU suffers from a social deficit in terms of the interests it represents and the policies it pursues (Copeland 2020). The social deficit intertwines with the democratic deficit in EU economic governance caused, among other things, by the lack parliamentary involvement and political and public debate

This article scrutinises the struggles around the relationship between 'the social' and 'the economic' within the European Semester in the context of the European Parliament (EP). In doing so, it examines the involvement of the EP, the only EU institution with a direct democratic mandate, in technocratic economic governance processes that impact the daily lives of EU citizens, as well as the political alternatives the EP proposes. The European Semester has been seen as a 'bureaucratic process geared towards expertise' (Crespy and Schmidt 2017: 108) and out of reach of political debate and democratic accountability to the EP and national parliaments (Fromage and van den Brink 2018; Crum 2018). The role of the EP in the procedures of the European Semester has been limited to the economic dialogue between the EP and other EU institutions (Fromage 2018). However, as part of its efforts to profile itself as a 'democratic watchdog' of EU economic governance (Crespy and Schmidt 2017: 110), the EP has looked for other channels of influence (see Fromage 2018). One such channel is the annual reports by the EP commenting on the policy priorities of the European Commission and the policies implemented by the member states. Although this non-legislative input has little impact on the Semester's policy priorities and policy recommendations, it provides an opportunity to study democratic and political struggles over the content of the technocratic governance process in the EU political space, as well as political and ideological alternatives to the status quo. The input of the EP can either legitimise or challenge the Semester's policies and understandings as it contributes to the discursive construction, or transformation, of the persistent economic/social hierarchy.

Our analysis of the EP's positions and internal battles around the social/economic relationship in the European Semester draws on the idea that assessing the role of the 'social' requires exploring how the dominant ideas in EU economic governance shape the constructions of the social/economic relationship and hierarchies and framings of social issues (see Adranghi, Koutny, Corti, Sardo, et al. 2019: 16). We ask how the key power players of the EP, the political groups and committees, construct the economic/social relationship within the European Semester and how these competing constructions influence the ability of the EP to challenge the hierarchies between economic and social goals. More specifically, we ask what and where are the key conflicts within the EP regarding the social content of economic governance and how these conflicts influence policy outcomes. The research material consists of 16 European Semester reports prepared by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), as well as related committee debates from the 2014-2019 legislature and 16 semi-structured interviews

with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and staff involved with the reports. We analyse the data through a critical discourse analysis.

The contribution we make to the research on the European Semester is twofold. First, studying the social/economic relationship within the European Semester from the EP perspective adds new insights to earlier literature on the topic, which has focused on the European Commission and Council of the EU (for example Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018; Maricut and Puetter 2018; Copeland 2020; Copeland and Daly 2018), here by drawing attention to processes of democratic legitimisation and contestation. Second, the research on the EP's involvement in the European Semester has focused on the instruments and mechanisms of EP participation (for example Fromage 2018; Crum 2018). Our emphasis on intraparliamentary struggles on the policy content of the Semester shifts attention to the alternatives provided by the EP. The article also contributes to the literature on conflicts within the EP in relation to economic governance (for example Roger, Otjes and van der Veer 2017) and social policies (for example Vesan and Corti 2019; Crespy and Gajewska 2010). In contrast to this stream of the literature, which has focused on conflicts within and between EP political groups, the current article demonstrates how the political conflicts related to the social/economic relationship also play out between the economic and social actors of the EP. We argue that because of these conflicts, the EP takes an ambiguous and contradictory position on the relationship between economic and social governance, being neither a fully progressive 'socialising' institution, nor a mere rubber stamp for the market-making logic of the European Semester. Therefore, the EP does not provide a real political and ideological alternative to the market-oriented social policies of the Semester.

We begin by discussing the literature on the limited 'socialisation' of the European Semester and the lines of conflict within the EP. The following section outlines the methodology and research material. The three empirical sections analyse the main contestations we found in the EP regarding the social/economic relationship within the Semester: the struggle for the balance between the economic and the social; the hierarchy in social policies and their framings; and the role of social spending. We conclude discussing the new research avenues and questions that have been opened up by our analysis.

THE LIMITED 'SOCIALISATION' OF THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER

In this section, based on scholarly debates about the 'socialisation' of the European Semester, we suggest that assessing the role of the 'social' requires paying attention to how it is constructed in the policy process. The annual European Semester process is a governance tool for scrutinising and coordinating the member states' fiscal, macroeconomic and social policies through a mix of regulatory binding and sanctioned instruments and voluntary coordination (Verdun and Zeitlin 2018). During the policy coordination cycle, the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Council set socioeconomic priorities for the EU (Annual Growth Survey, AGS), review national performance and policies, and issue country-specific recommendations (CSRs) to member states across a wide range of policy fields, from fiscal policy to wage determination, education and healthcare. In addition, the draft budgets of Eurozone countries are assessed.

The 'constitutional asymmetry' (Scharpf 2010) between the 'economic' and 'social' goals and policies of the EU is found at the foundations of the Semester (Parker and Pye 2018; Crespy and Mentz 2015; Copeland and Daly 2015). One reason for this is that the economic governance tools of the Semester, the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), the Fiscal Compact and the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP), are more binding and better reinforced than the social aspects, such as the poverty target of the Europe 2020 Strategy (de la Porte

and Heins 2015). Yet the European Semester has evolved from its initial emphasis on fiscal consolidation towards a more social direction. For instance, the number of social and employment recommendations has increased (Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018; Bekker 2015). The integration of the EPSR into the Semester in the 2018 cycle further increased the visibility of social goals (Hacker 2019; Adranghi, Koutny, Corti, Sardo, et al. 2019).

Zeitlin and Vanhercke (2018) see these shifts as 'a partial but progressive socialisation' of the European Semester. They point out that despite institutional asymmetries and power imbalances, social and employment actors have been able to reshape the content and processes of the Semester. We hold, however, that any attempt to assess the role of the 'social' in the Semester must look beyond the mere presence of social content and actors. It is crucial to examine how the social/economic relationship is constructed, which social issues are included and how the underlying assumptions and ideas shape the understandings of these issues.

Based on earlier research, we argue that the 'socialisation' of the European Semester has been limited in three ways. First, only a restricted number of social issues supporting the EU's economic goals have been included. For example, the implementation of the EPSR into the Semester has focused on the principles related to employment; that is, policies compatible with the economic priorities of the EU, such as achieving fair competition in the labour market, and increasing labour productivity and flexibility (Hacker 2019: 57). Some priorities have been completely or partly missing (for example no references to in-work poverty or the right to fair wages), and some have been weakened (for example the right to adequate minimum income linked to certain conditions) (Adranghi, Koutny, Corti, Sardo, et al. 2019: 19).

Second, economic goals and ideas shape the way social goals and policies are discussed within the Semester. Copeland and Daly (2018: 1002) argue 'EU social policy as enunciated through the CSRs is much more oriented to supporting market development than it is to correcting for market failures'. This means that with the Semester, social policy is 'a matter of making individuals fit the market' (Dawson 2018: 206), here treating human beings 'as though they are pure commodities' (Copeland 2020: 7). For example, the rationale for pension-related CSRs was more often that of removing barriers to labour market participation than giving individuals adequate pension levels. These economised framings illustrate the narrow room for social policy within the Semester. They also show that the social actors engaged in the process have adopted this frame to have their voices heard (Dawson 2018: 206-207; Copeland and Daly 2018: 1012).

Third, the 'socialisation' of the Semester has neither affected the dominance of fiscal and macroeconomic goals, nor has it transformed EU macroeconomic policies. The EPSR principles related to the right to affordable, good-quality health and long-term care and adequate old-age income and pensions could be understood as challenging budget discipline and austerity. However, from the very beginning, these principles have been subordinated to the treaty-based fiscal rules of the EU (Sabato and Corti 2018: 64-65). Rather than transforming EU macroeconomic policies, the 'socialisation' of the Semester has led to increasing contradictions and tensions between social and economic goals. Because the fiscal goals are backed by stronger legal bases and enforcement mechanisms, these conflicts are likely to end with the economic side winning (Parker and Pye 2017: 813; Crespy and Vanheuverzwijn 2019: 107). Thus, sound public finances and budgetary discipline continue to be the principles upon which all other policy objectives are 'dependent' (Copeland and Daly 2015: 156).

POLITICAL CONTESTATIONS IN EP BETWEEN POLITICAL GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

Research on the social/economic relationship within the European Semester has revealed how the struggles between social and economic actors within the European Commission and the Council shape the policy content of the Semester (Maricut and Puetter 2018; Copeland 2020). In the EP, the lines of conflict are more complex and involve a party-political dimension. Previous research on EP economic and social policies has shown the multiple lines of political conflict between EP political groups and between national party delegations within the groups. We suggest that studying the contestations and policy outcomes related to the European Semester requires taking into account how inter- and intragroup conflicts intertwine with those conflicts between the other key power players in the EP: its committees.

Although economic policy has traditionally divided political groups on a left-right axis (Hix, Noury and Roland 2006), the pro/anti-EU axis became more dominant after the economic crisis (Otjes and van der Veer 2016). In the case of the legislative aspects of the EU postcrisis economic governance, the pro-EU groups on the centre-left and centre-right – the social democratic S&D, the Greens-European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA), the conservative European People's Party (EPP) and the liberal Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) – put their ideological differences aside to save the euro and have a strong negotiation position vis-a-vis the Council (Roger, Otjes and van der Veer 2017; Bressanelli and Chelotti 2018). The Eurosceptic groups on the left and the right – the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL), the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), and the radical right Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) and the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) – voted against.

In terms of social policy, research has drawn attention to increasing political contestation, as well as multiple overlapping cleavages (Vesan and Corti 2019; Crespy and Gajewska 2010). Regarding the EPSR, the traditional left-right and pro/anti-EU axes were supplemented with tensions cutting across the groups, between creditor and debtor countries and high-wage/high-welfare and low-wage/low-welfare countries, that reduced the internal cohesion of ALDE and EPP. The conflicts were related to the content of social policy (a more or less interventionist approach), locus of authority (national versus supranational) and boundaries of responsibility (who should carry the burden and of what) (Vesan and Corti 2019).

This literature on conflicts and policy processes related to economic and social policies of the EP has focused on the ECON and the EMPL committees, respectively. In the case of the social/economic relationship within the European Semester, it is crucial to look at both committees because the Semester is debated in both. This raises new questions regarding party-political conflicts. Are the lines of conflict within and between the political groups the same in both committees? How does committee membership create additional cleavages within the groups? These questions necessitate an analysis of the conflicts between committees.

The EP committees are the key location of its legislative work (Yordanova 2009; Settembri and Neuhold 2009) and the 'locus for the expression of policy expertise' (Burns 2017: 52). The committees draft and adopt legislative and non-legislative reports before they are voted in the plenary, and committees are the main place for negotiating compromises between political groups (Settembri and Neuhold 2009). Committee procedures and outcomes are shaped by key actors, such as the rapporteur in charge of a file, shadow rapporteurs appointed by other political groups to take part in intra- and interinstitutional negotiations, and group coordinators, who supervise groups' work on the committee (Settembri and Neuhold 2009; Ripoll Servent and Panning 2019). Earlier research has shown that the committees' ideological preferences are not representative of the overall plenary and that the political dynamics vary between committees (Yordanova 2009; Burns 2017). On the one hand, committees attract

MEPs with a special interest in the topic, for instance EMPL membership has been found to correlate with trade union interests and ECON membership with business/industry interests (Yordanova 2009). On the other hand, committees can be seen as having their own logics of appropriateness (March and Olsen 2009) and rules about appropriate behaviour that the committee members seek to fulfil. In line with their different interests and rules, EMPL and ECON have been shown to have conflicting views on specific social topics in relation to the European Semester, such as gender equality (Elomäki 2021). Therefore, we anticipate conflicts between the two committees under our analysis and varying positions from political groups based on committee membership.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

We study the social/economic relationship in positions in the EP on the European Semester and the conflicts related to this relationship by using an interpretive-discursive approach. Moving away from identifying political cleavages based on voting records and interviews that have been characteristic of EP research, our approach provides an avenue for exploring how discourses of economic governance embed, sustain and reproduce the meanings of the social/economic relationship in the EP. The focus is on deconstructing the meaning of policy-relevant elements that are situation-specific and contextualised (see Yanow 2007). The method goes beyond a content analysis to attain a higher level of interpretation and deeper understanding. The elements we analyse are mutually constitutive with social realities and instrumental in perpetuating, justifying or transforming them, thereby affecting the construction of EU economic and social governance. Our interpretive methodology deconstructs texts and relates them to their political, institutional and ideological contexts (see van Dijk 2002).

Our research material focuses on the 8th EP legislature (2014-2019). The data cover 16 non-legislative reports on the European Semester, including draft reports, amendments and adopted texts: six ECON reports, six EMPL reports and four ECON reports with EMPL as an associated committee[1]. A part of the reports outlined EP views on the socioeconomic priorities set in the AGS of the Commission, while others discussed member state policies. These non-legislative reports are the main tool of the EP to take a stance on the Semester, and many political groups see them as important, despite their limited influence. The document material was triangulated with 20 committee debates and 16 semi-structured interviews with MEPs and political group staff from the ECON and EMPL committees conducted in 2018-2020. Our purposively selected sample includes interviewees involved in the analysed reports as rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs or political advisers, with a focus on mainstream groups participating in the policymaking process (see Brack 2017). The interview guide focused on intragroup and intergroup policy-making processes and group positions.

Our analysis proceeded in three interconnected steps. First, we coded the document material in the qualitative analysis programme Atlas.ti to structure the extensive data for the discursive and interpretive textual analyses and to allow for comparisons between committees and groups. The coding system developed deductively and inductively was informed by the literature on the social/economic hierarchy within the Semester and was designed and discussed in multiple meetings to ensure consistency and coherence between the coders. The coding system aimed to identify discursive constructions of the social/economic relationship (for example economy prioritised, social prioritised), the specific social policy issues discussed (for example poverty, different care services) and discursive constructions of these issues (for example a cost, an investment, valuable in itself, labour-market logic) (see Appendix 1). Based on our coding, we compared the presence of different social issues between the political groups and the committees and identified differences between the groups and committees in

terms of how the social/economic relationship and specific social issues were constructed. We also compared draft reports, amendments and adopted texts to assess which perspectives were included in the compromises.

Second, to deepen the analysis of political group positions and conflicts between them, we analysed videos of 20 committee debates corresponding to the reports, here by following a schedule of sensitising questions on political conflicts and policy content. The committee debates provided interpretive material for the analysis of the political and ideological contexts of the discourses. Finally, we used the interviews to contextualise, explore meta-narratives and nuances within political group positions and gain insights into the policymaking processes. In line with our discursive approach, we analysed the interviews as discursive constructions of group positions and policy-making processes. We triangulated the research material to juxtapose, compare and contrast the data from EP documents, debates and interviews, aiming for a high credibility and validity of our interpretive outcomes.

Our data show that the relationship between social and economic goals and policies was one of the key Semester-related conflicts between the political groups. Nuancing debates about political contestations in the EP and the Semester 'socialisation', our interpretive discourse analysis, which is informed by extant literature and the triangulation of our research material, has identified three main contestations: conflicts over the balance between the economic and social dimensions; the hierarchies of importance within social governance and the framing of social issues; and the role of social spending. The following sections examine these findings, focusing on the ECON and EMPL committees and the different discursive positionalities of the political groups within them.

THE CONTESTED 'BALANCE' OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL

In the ECON committee, the mere idea of having a social dimension in the European Semester was contentious along the left-right axis. S&D actors represented the social dimension as one of the Semester-related priorities of the group (Interviews 3, 6, 11), and the group took the lead in raising social concerns in the committee, here supported by the Greens-EFA, the GUE/NGL and the Italian EFDD delegation. However, only the pro-EU S&D and, to a lesser extent, the Greens-EFA demanded a stronger social dimension to the Semester, mainly through technical calls for more visible social objectives and the better use of social indicators in macroeconomic surveillance. In contrast, the EPP, joined by the other centre-right group, the ALDE and the moderately Eurosceptic ECR, reproduced the hierarchy between economic and social goals and an understanding of social policies as 'secondary order issues' (Copeland 2020), taking a critical view of the Commission's efforts to enhance the social dimension of the Semester: 'The Annual Growth Survey is a matter of economic policy coordination, and therefore needs to remain a matter of economic policy coordination' (Interview 7). EPP actors described social concerns, including the EPSR, as 'additional issues' (Interview 5) that were threatening 'pure' economic policy coordination (Interview 7).

Conflict over the social dimension surfaced in committee debates. The S&D, together with the Greens-EFA, GUE/NGL and the Italian delegation of the EFDD, criticised the EPP for paying even less attention to social issues in draft reports than the Commission: 'All references by the Commission to inclusiveness simply disappear with the text. That is a problem, a political problem for us' (Pereira, S&D/PT, debate on the AGS 2019 draft report). The EPP, in turn, criticised S&D draft reports for being too 'social':

> The first point of concern is the proportion between the economic, social and environmental objectives. Here I would like to remind all the colleagues that

the main problem we are facing in Europe is low growth and the situation has
gotten worse … Of course all those concerns that have been put in the report
concerning social inequalities, poverty, are very important, nevertheless I think
that those have to be balanced with a meaningful recipe for activation and
accelerating economic growth. (Rosati, EPP/PL, debate on AGS 2016 draft
report)

The quote above reveals how the 'social' is discursively constructed as less important than
the 'economic' in a manner that legitimises the social/economic hierarchy within the
Semester. Representing low growth as the 'main problem' implies that social problems are
secondary. The juxtaposition between social concerns and measures to achieve growth
ignores the interrelationships between social and economic development and constructs social
concerns as less relevant to economic governance.

The boundary policing by the EPP meant that progressive groups had to fight hard for the
inclusion of social priorities in the reports (Interviews 6, 8, 9). The outcome could be described
as a 'social whitewashing' of the unchanged economic priorities that is reminiscent of the
European Commission's contradictory discourse (see Hacker 2019). In the adopted reports,
passing references to social concerns—often just the word 'social'—existed side by side with
the more elaborated economic goals. Structural reforms to increase employment and
competitiveness were to be 'socially balanced', fiscally sustainable pension and social
protection systems were also to be 'adequate', and discussions of the fiscal sustainability and
cost-effectiveness of healthcare services were softened with references to 'quality' and
'universal access'. Furthermore, the ECON committee was mainly silent about enhancing the
social dimension of the Semester, thus ignoring the increased visibility of social issues and
integration of the EPSR into the Semester (Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018; Hacker 2019). The
S&D and Greens-EFA's calls for better use of social indicators and better integration of the
EPSR were mainly overridden by the EPP, ALDE and ECR.

In the EMPL committee, in contrast, all groups saw the social dimension as important.
However, the EPP's and ALDE's preference for the economic over the social was visible in how
they reminded the committee of the need to take economic issues into account: 'In a
globalised world there is no sustainable social development without a strong and competitive
economy' (Ribeiro, EPP/PT, debate on AGS 2016 draft report). Moreover, for the centre-right
groups, a balance between social and economic concerns did not necessarily mean a change
in the economic goals. Competitiveness and fiscal consolidation, policies with questionable
social impacts, remained a key priority.

The controversies focused on concrete measures to strengthen the social dimension. Apart
from the far-right Eurosceptic groups, political groups agreed to include more social indicators
and EPSR principles in the Semester. The amendments and interviews reveal, however, that
disagreements surfaced when it came to addressing the asymmetry between enforceable
economic policies and unenforceable social goals (see de la Porte and Heins 2015). The
Greens-EFA and S&D MEPs regretted that the social indicators in the MIP were not binding,
suggesting that, like economic indicators, they should 'trigger corrective action' (Jean
Lambert, Greens-EFA/UK, amendment to AGS 2017). Even if some ALDE and EPP MEPs used
the rhetoric of 'equal footing' in amendments and debates, the idea of binding social indicators
was constructed as a 'red flag' within the groups (Interview 13). Despite the positive rhetoric,
EPP and ALDE MEPs, together with the ECR and ENF, often tabled amendments to remove
references to more visible and better reinforced social indicators from S&D draft reports.

Despite these conflicts, the EMPL committee addressed the hierarchy between social and
economic goals within the Semester: 'The EU's social goals and commitments should be as
equal a priority as its economic goals' (Employment and Social Policies 2018). The committee

also made far-reaching proposals to enhance the social dimension beyond the actions proposed by the Commission, despite the compromises on bindingness illustrated by the call for a 'non-punitive social imbalances procedure' (Opinion for Implementation of the 2017 priorities).

Thus, our analysis reveals that the 'socialisation' of the European Semester was a contested topic not just between the political groups, but also between committees. In ECON, the mere presence of social issues within the Semester was contested on the left-right axis and in EMPL controversies focused on the bindingness of the social dimension. Although the political compromises in the ECON committee legitimised the dominance of macroeconomic goals and policies, the EMPL committee's call for a more social Semester, to some extent, challenged the way social priorities have been made dependent on economic priorities (see Copeland and Daly 2015). Yet the EMPL committee also fell short of questioning the asymmetries related to enforcement (see de la Porte and Heins 2015).

THE HIERARCHIES OF IMPORTANCE AND FRAMINGS OF SOCIAL POLICIES

In ECON, as seen above, the social policies on the agenda become secondary to whether they appear there at all. Of the existing references, social security and education were the most frequently occurring issues in the adopted ECON reports (Figure 1). In debates and proposed amendments, EPP and ALDE MEPs particularly stressed the importance of education, framing it almost exclusively from a labour market perspective—lifelong learning and access to 'quality' education meant matching jobs with skills and raising employment levels. ALDE MEPs framed education regarding improving the economic competitiveness of the EU (Wierinck/BE, debate on economic policies of the euro area, 2017).

Moreover, social security was usually related to fiscal sustainability, despite the inclusion of qualifiers such as 'adequate' through amendments by the S&D and Greens-EFA. Although poverty was mentioned in drafts and amendments proposed by the S&D and EFDD almost as often as social security, ECON reports hardly included the theme (Figure 1). Similarly, unemployment was only mentioned when it came to fixing the inefficacies in the labour market. Care services and long-term care were hardly mentioned in the ECON reports, demonstrating the concrete lack of importance placed on them by ECON MEPs (Figure 1).

Structural reforms and the social impacts of economic policies were contentious in ECON debates. S&D, Greens-EFA and EFDD MEPs tabled amendments on the social impacts of austerity and structural reforms. However, the topic was highly controversial for EPP and ALDE MEPs, who systematically removed references to social impacts from S&D draft reports. The adopted ECON AGS reports acknowledged the social impacts only once, noting in a technical manner that 'due regard should be given to the social and employment impact of [structural] reforms' (AGS 2015 ECON). On the other hand, the political fringe groups—the GUE/NGL, EFDD and ENF—strongly critiqued the social costs and inequality impacts of EU economic governance and austerity. Conversely, EPP, ECR and ENF MEPs focused on subsidiarity in economic and social governance and generally opposed the social dimension.
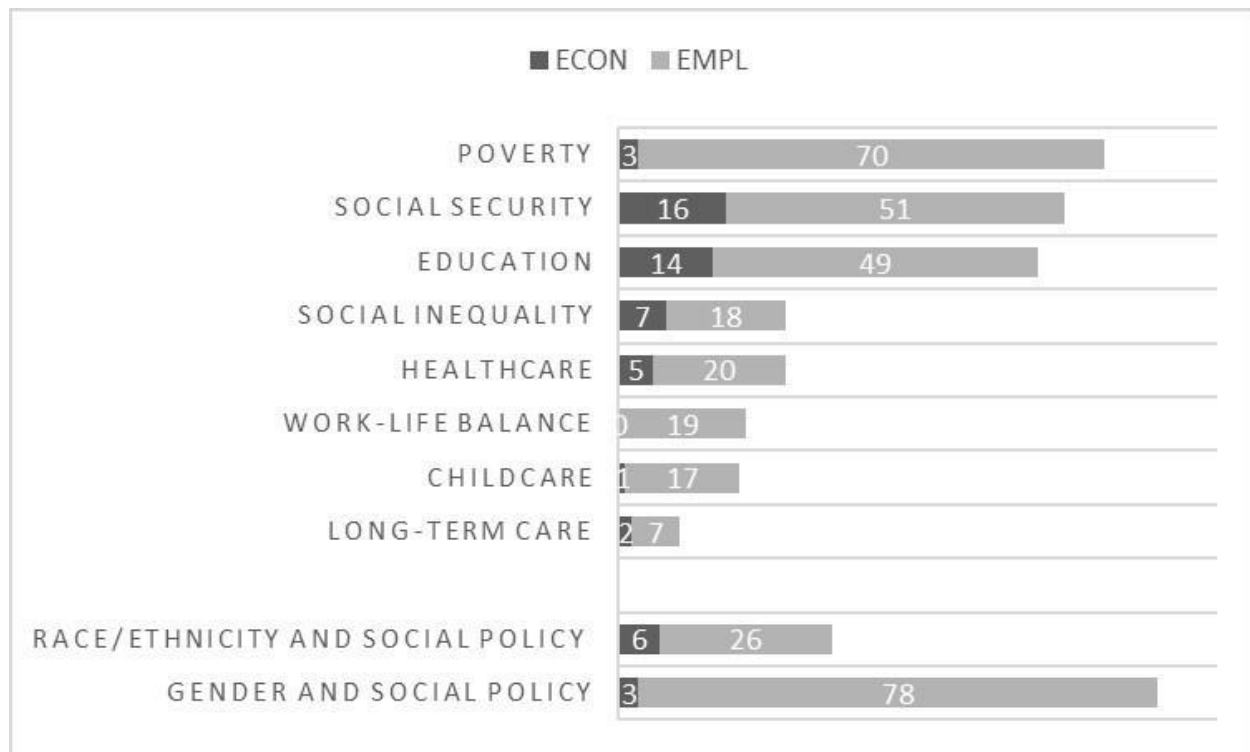
Figure 1: Frequency of references to different social issues in five ECON and five EMPL reports on AGS, 2015-2019.

In terms of discursive framings, the inclusion of 'social' in the final ECON reports appeared only as a formality. ECON MEPs hardly went into the meaning of the social dimension. Furthermore, MEPs only included in a positive light those issues that mattered from a macroeconomic perspective, especially education and employment. Nonetheless, there was a slight qualitative change following the establishment of the EPSR. Particularly, S&D and Greens-EFA (and occasionally ALDE) MEPs began stressing the need to fulfil EPSR commitments and fight inequalities.

In the EMPL committee, our analysis points to the possibility of including a broader spectrum of social issues in the reports. Conflicts focused on concrete policies, such as the child guarantee, minimum wage and minimum income schemes (Interviews 1, 11, 13). Moreover, S&D interviewees mentioned the gender pay and pension gaps, the implementation of the EPSR, work-life balance and measures to support the participation of women in the labour market as priority policies (Interview 11). The ALDE prioritised the social economy and social entrepreneurship, labour mobility and EPSR. However, for the ALDE, there were limits to how much 'social' was acceptable. As one interviewee put it, referring to minimum wage: 'I don't see any consensus for that. … Kind of *extreme social*, which may be a good thing, but they're just not doable' (Interview 12). S&D, Greens-EFA, GUE/NGL and ALDE/Renew MEPs added more 'intersectional' amendments to EMPL reports and inserted mentions of (gender) equality in their proposals.

Furthermore, the EMPL committee, there was a clear hierarchy of importance of social issues. The 'employment' component was more heavily stressed than 'social affairs'. Care services (especially childcare and long-term care) and work-life balance measures appeared to be necessary factors enabling labour market participation. EPP and ALDE MEPs spoke only about employment-related issues in committee debates. Education was again framed as a way to

full employment, particularly by ALDE MEPs: 'The failures of the education system impact the availability of a skilled workforce' (Toom, ALDE/EE, economic policies of the euro area 2017 debate). The EMPL debates constructed jobs as the optimal social policy (AGS 2016 EMPL debate, ECR). Yet EMPL committee opinions on the economic policy priorities between 2014 and 2017 typically included mentions of inequalities and some intersectional aspects of the labour market. However, it was often the radical right groups (EFDD and ENF) that most vocally drew attention to issues such as social impacts and social exclusion, especially by criticising EU's austerity-oriented economic policy or the Eurozone setup.

Even if the question of social impacts was difficult for the EPP and ALDE in the EMPL committee, the compromises at times went beyond the technical call for impact assessments, making visible some of the negative social impacts of the policies implemented in the Semester. For instance, the AGS 2016 report was 'concerned at the social impact of those fiscal adjustment policies which focus on cutting expenditure' and regretted that 'in certain cases the labour reforms have favoured flexibility at the expense of security, resulting in precariousness and a lack of employment protection'.

The struggles within the EMPL committee also centred on the framing of social issues. Political groups accentuated and weighed social policies differently by using action verbs or qualifier adjectives. For instance, S&D and GUE/NGL MEPs proposed amendments on 'decent', 'public' or 'universal access' to services (EMPL opinion on 2014 economic policy priorities). Some of these amendments were deemed too far and were rejected before the report was tabled. One interviewee said the following:

Sometimes it comes down to very small things like wording, so 'implementing' versus 'realising' … one implies that there's a mandatory obligation versus an aspiration. … 'Quality employment' is okay, 'quality jobs' isn't. … These are very nuanced positions to take, but that's the way it is. (Interview 13)

Hence, the contestations in the EMPL committee focused not only on policy content (employment versus social affairs) and the strength of the language, but also on the ideological framing of the relationship between the social and economic. Overall, in both the ECON and EMPL committees, there were degrees of discursive popularity and stress given to social policies. The ECON committee framed education from a neoliberal, market-oriented perspective as a way to full and cost-efficient labour market participation and economic growth. The highest concern for the cost efficiency of social policies was evident. In the EMPL committee, MEPs introduced gendered and intersectional components to their framing of social policies. However, employment remained central, hierarchising social policies from a labour market efficiency perspective (albeit from a somewhat nuanced perspective), along with the proclaimed fight against social exclusion and poverty. What we observed was a discursive commodification of social policies, subsuming them under the needs of the labour market and exposing a narrow field of available discursive options when talking about the 'social' (see Copeland 2020).

IT IS ALL ABOUT THE MONEY: SOCIAL SPENDING BETWEEN COST AND INVESTMENT

In this final analysis section, we explore constructions of social spending and their relationship to EU fiscal rules at the heart of the Semester that limit this spending (de la Porte and Heins 2015). In the ECON committee, the key battle around social spending revolved around whether it should be understood as a cost or investment necessary to spur growth. The centre-right groups that, in the aftermath of the euro crisis, had advocated for stricter fiscal rules (for example Roger Otjes and van der Veer 2017) consistently subjugated social

spending to budget discipline and fiscal rules. In particular, the EPP frequently constructed social policies as a threat to public finances, describing the rising costs of pensions and healthcare as a 'massive burden on public finances' (Vandenkendelaere, EPP/BE, draft report on AGS 2019) and as having 'a significant impact on public deficits' (Hökmark, EPP/SE, draft report on AGS 2017).

The idea of social policy as a mere cost was also implied in the demands by the ALDE and EPP that member states shift resources from 'consumption' or 'current expenditure' to 'productive public investment'. Because national accounting categorises social spending as current expenditure (Elson 2017), the implication is that public spending should be shifted away from social policy. Sometimes, this was made explicit: '[T]oo high social expenditure and current expenditure in several countries, instead of investing in projects focusing on research and innovation, might further anchor them within a middle-income trap' (Rosati, EPP/PL, amendment to AGS 2016).

In contrast, the S&D, and to a lesser extent the GUE/NGL, Greens-EFA, and EFDD, defended social policies against additional cuts, calling for more resources. This was mainly done through the idea of social investment that conventionally refers to policies that enhance human capital development and contribute to its efficient use (Hemerijck 2017) and that has become more visible in the European Semester since 2015 (Crespy and Vanheuverzwijn 2019). In the ECON committee, the S&D almost never called for social spending for its own sake, instead framing social spending as an input for the economy, adapting it to the economised discourse of the Semester (see Dawson 2018: 206-207).

The groups on the right contested efforts to reframe social spending as an investment. EPP, ALDE and ECR MEPs consistently removed references to 'social investment' from S&D draft reports. This issue also emerged in the committee debates. The ALDE saw the investment in care services as a 'difficult recommendation' (Wierinck, ALDE/NL, debate on the implementation of the 2016 priorities draft report), and the ECR questioned the idea of social investment altogether: 'Do not use the language of public investment because this could be misunderstood' (Lucke, ECR/DE, debate on AGS 2017 draft report). Yet the EPP and ALDE also called for additional public spending on education, here in line with the human capital focus of the social investment paradigm.

The outcome in the ECON committee was the dominance of the cost perspective, even if the EPP, ALDE and ECR portrayals of healthcare and pensions as a fiscal threat were somewhat softened in the compromises. References to social investment were removed from S&D reports, and education was the only social issue for which public spending was encouraged. Thus, the ECON committee took a stricter approach to social spending than the European Commission, which has increasingly addressed social investment in AGSs and CSRs (Crespy and Vanheuverzwijn 2019).

In the EMPL committee, in contrast, there was a wide consensus on more rather than less social spending. Here, EPP and ALDE MEPs frequently spoke about 'social investment', though they mainly did so in relation to education. The S&D and Greens-EFA stretched the social investment discourse beyond the original human capital approach, which has been criticised for side-lining the poor and elderly (i.e. traditional social protection) (Hemerijck 2017), calling on the member states 'to increase their investments in social protection systems' (S&D, amendment to AGS 2018) and 'to increase their social investment, especially in healthcare, childcare, housing support and rehabilitation services' (Jean Lambert, Greens-EFA/UK, amendment to AGS 2016). Thus, the S&D and Greens-EFA constructed a broad range of social policies, including traditional income support and healthcare, as investments.

Some S&D and Greens-EFA MEPs acknowledged that EU fiscal rules curtail member states' possibilities of increasing social spending and called for changes to the rules. Although the idea of social investment, even in its expanded form, was acceptable to most EPP and ALDE MEPs, the amendments to changing the fiscal rules to allow such investments were too controversial to pass. The interviewees described the issue as difficult, even for the Greens-EFA, because of the German members of the group (Interviews 4, 8, 15).

Contrary to the ECON committee, the adopted EMPL reports consistently constructed social spending as an investment through a discourse of social investment that stretched beyond human capital. The EMPL even once called for excluding investment in education from the EU deficit rules (Employment and social aspects of AGS 2015), a demand that would have been inconceivable in the ECON committee. Constructions of social policy as a cost, mainly proposed by the EPP and ALDE MEPs, were always embedded in discussions on adequacy and access.

Thus the outcome of the political and institutional struggles over social spending was again contradictory, with the ECON committee viewing social expenditure mainly as a cost and the EMPL committee advocating for an extended social investment perspective. However, even in the EMPL committee, the idea of investing in education, childcare, healthcare and income support remained subjected to the fiscal rules. As an interviewed critic of the EPP/S&D compromises in the ECON committee pointed out, 'Whatever you say about social, it will not work out when you don't change your numbers' (Interview 10).

THE AMBIGUOUS POSITION OF THE EP ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GOVERNANCE

In this article, we have contributed to the debates about the limited 'socialisation' of the European Semester and the EU social deficit by analysing how the EP, as the representative institution of the EU, legitimises or challenges the persistent social/economic hierarchy within the Semester. Our analysis of the EP Semester reports and policy processes behind them has exposed the ambiguous and contradictory position of the parliament on the social/economic relationship, as well as the narrowness of the alternative it provides to the status quo embedded in a market-making logic.

Although the different aspects of the social/economic relationship (the balance between social and economic goals, hierarchies of importance and framings of social issues and social expenditure) divided the EP political groups, mainly on the left-right axis, conflicts also emerged between the two committees involved: the ECON and EMPL committees. Whereas the ECON committee took a more conservative line to 'socialising' the Semester than the European Commission and its superficial references to social issues merely whitewashed unchanged fiscal and economic priorities, the EMPL committee made detailed proposals to enhance the social dimension of the Semester and stressed the importance of social investment. Yet even in the EMPL committee, and within the progressive groups therein, social issues were overshadowed by employment perspectives and framed in economic terms, reflecting the way the Semester framework influences the understanding of social issues (Dawson 2018; Copeland 2020). Despite calls for 'social investment', social spending was subjected to EU fiscal rules. The outcome of these struggles was that the EP was neither a fully progressive 'socialising' institution nor a mere rubber stamp for the continuous market-making logic of the European Semester.

Our findings invite reflection on the role of the EP as the democratic watchdog of EU economic governance and on the role of the EP in addressing social deficits in the EU. The democratic

role of the EP stems from the way it represents citizens' interests in EU-level decision-making, as well as from party-political competition between its political groups and their different agendas. The EU citizens' demand a more social Europe (Graziano and Hartlapp 2019: 1488), yet this demand is not fully reflected in the contradictory position of the EP. Our findings indicate that one reason for this is a lack of real political alternatives to the status quo. Even if our analysis shows a clear left-right divide in constructing the social/economic relationship, the choice between ideological positions was nevertheless limited.

First, only the Eurosceptic groups on the left and right challenged the existing economic governance framework and its fiscal rules that maintain the social/economic hierarchy. Although the centre-left groups provided a Keynesian alternative to fiscal discipline in the sense of calling for social investments, they rarely challenged the fiscal rules that could curtail such investments. Moreover, as pointed out by Bremer and McDaniel (2019), the social investment paradigm does not necessarily provide a real alternative to the austerity-focused status quo because it has been integrated into what they call 'a social democratic idea of austerity'.

Second, even the progressive groups were discursively immersed in the economised framework of the Semester, which limits the understandings of social issues, thereby impeding its 'socialisation'. Finally, the political compromises, particularly in the ECON committee, were weak from a social perspective. This indicates how the culture of compromise in the EP that encourages left-right coalitions reduces political polarisation and bends compromises on economic policies towards the viewpoint of the right—at least in the 2014-2019 term that was analysed. The relative weakness of ideological alternatives to the primacy of economic concerns and framings adds a new layer to the argument that 'the lack of ideological contestation within the EU's political space … has narrowed to that between a centre-left or centre-right vision of neoliberalism' (Copeland 2020: 157).

For the literature on the political conflicts within the EP, our findings illustrate how the conflicts involved in the efforts to 'socialise' the Semester within the EP extended from party politics to conflicts between social and economic actors (Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018; Maricut and Puetter 2018). This suggests the need for further analysis of the conflicts between the economic and social actors within the EP, which have been overshadowed by the focus on conflicts between groups and national delegations within the groups.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Anna Elomäki, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Kalevantie 4, Tampere University, 33100 Tampere, Finland [anna.elomaki@tuni.fi]

Barbara Gaweda, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Kalevantie 4, Tampere University, 33100 Tampere, Finland [barbara.gaweda@tuni.fi]

ENDNOTES

[1] Both the ECON and EMPL committees now annually adopt two reports each, one report on the AGS and one on member states' policies. The institutional process of the latter reports changed during that period. From 2014 to 2017, the ECON committee adopted the report on member states' policies, with the EMPL committee as an associated committee: the EMPL committee adopted an opinion that was integrated almost directly into the final ECON report. Since 2018, the two committees have adopted separate reports entitled 'Economic policies of the euro area' and 'Employment and social policies of the euro area'. The reasons for this shift are beyond the scope of this article

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APPENDIX

Interviews

1. EPP staff EMPL 2.12.2018, Brussels

2. ALDE staff ECON 29.1.2019, Brussels

3. S&D MEP 1 ECON 30.1.2019, Brussels

4. Greens-EFA MEP EMPL 31.1.2019, Brussels

5. EPP staff ECON 25.02.2019, Brussels

6. S&D MEP 2 ECON 26.02.2019, Brussels

7. EPP MEP ECON 23.3.2019, Brussels

8. Greens-EFA staff ECON 15.05.2019, Brussels

9. S&D staff ECON 15.05.2019, Brussels

10. GUE/NGL staff ECON 15.6.2019, Brussels

11. S&D staff EMPL 04.03.2020, Brussels

12. Renew MEP EMPL 04.03.2020, Brussels

13. Renew staff EMPL 04.03.2020, Brussels

14. GUE/NGL staff EMPL 05.03.2020, Brussels

15. EPP MEP EMPL 18.03.2020, phone interview

16. Greens-EFA MEP ECON 29.05.2020, phone interview

Additional Information on Data and Analysis

To analyse EP documents (draft reports, amendments and adopted texts), we used ATLAS.ti software, which is a qualitative research tool that can be used for coding and analysing text materials. We coded the documents according to the following scheme, which was developed based on earlier research on the social/economic relationship, here by taking into account the perspectives arising from the data during the coding process. The coded draft reports and amendments were also coded for the political groups.

- Discoursive constructions of social/economic relationship
    - Causality economic to social
    - Causality social to economic
    - Economy prioritised

- Enhancing the social dimension
- Economic and social goals side by side
- Social issues
  - Care
    - Childcare
    - Healthcare
    - Long-term care
    - Unpaid or informal care
  - Civil society
  - Education
  - European Pillar of Social Rights
  - Immigration
  - Inequality
  - Work-life balance
  - Living conditions
  - Poverty
  - Public goods
  - Social rights
  - Social dialogue
  - General social goals
  - Social impacts of economic policies
  - Social security
  - Wages
- Discoursive constructions of social issues
  - Labour market logic
  - Social policy as valuable in itself
  - Social policy as cost
  - Social policy as investment
- Opposition to social issues/enhancing the social dimension
  - Subsidiarity
- Intersectionality
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Disability
  - Race/ethnicity

Research Article

Sir Julian Priestley (1950-2017), European Parliament Secretary General, 1997-2007; a case study of a *consequential* senior European Union civil servant

Martin Westlake

Abstract

Despite a growing body of academic literature about the European Union's public administration, there is a dearth of studies about the most senior managers in the institutions, the Secretaries-General. Consideration of the rich life of the late Sir Julian Priestley, an influential Secretary-General (SG) of the European Parliament, 1997-2007, demonstrates not only how Secretaries-General can be interesting subjects of study in their own right, but also how such SGs can, through the decisions they take and the policies they champion, be *consequential* for their institutions.

Keywords

THE DEARTH OF STUDIES ABOUT SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND SECRETARIES-GENERAL

Despite the proliferation of studies about the European civil service, there has been a dearth of studies about managers (Heads of Unit), particularly senior managers (Directors, Directors-General) (see Wille, 2007, for a rare exception), and very little at all about the top managers – the Secretaries-General of the EU institutions. Indeed, there has been no general study – historical, comparative or otherwise and, with two exceptions (Westlake, 1995; Kassim, 2004), there have been no comparative studies of successive Secretaries-General *within* particular institutions.

Emile Noël, the first and longest-serving Secretary-General of the European Commission, has been the subject of a biographical study (Bossuat, 2011). Five years after his retirement, Noël himself wrote a very short treatment of his role (Noël, 1992). David Williamson and Carlo Trojan wrote *vignettes* about their roles in Spence (1997). Julian Priestley wrote an at times fly-on the wall account of *Six Battles That Shaped Europe's Parliament*, but abstracted his own role from his accounts (2008).

To date, however, no Secretary-General of an EU institution has written an autobiographical study about her/his career. Nor, with the major exception of Emile Noël, have there been any studies of a particular Secretary-General. And yet, clearly, top managers of any institution or organisation can, and frequently do, play influential and, at times, decisive roles. As this research note will argue, their decisions and policies, particularly in times of change and/or crisis, can be consequential for their institution and for EU politics more generally.

SIR JULIAN PRIESTLEY (1950-2017), A CASE STUDY

One of the ironies about the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union was that so many British-origin senior European Union civil servants had contributed so much to the European integration process over the years between the UK's accession in 1973 and its departure in 2020. (Westlake, 2020, pp. 115-118) Sir Julian Priestley, who retired as EP Secretary General in 1997, and died on 22 April 2017, was a prime example of this phenomenon. He joined the administration of the European Parliament (EP) in 1973, shortly after the United Kingdom had become a Member State of the then EEC and, over a thirty-four-year career, rose to become EP Secretary-General, 1997-2007. In its obituary, *The Times* pointed out that Priestley's time as Secretary General 'almost exactly corresponded to the UK premiership of Tony Blair.' (*The Times*)

Following on from (Lord) David Williamson's 1987-1997 period as Secretary-General of the European Commission, Priestley's appointment (together with, at a political level, Pauline Green's PES Group presidency (1994-1999) and Graham Watson's ALDE Group presidency (2002-2009) in the European Parliament) did seem to symbolize the way the UK had finally come in from the sceptical cold and become a mainstream player in the EU institutions. (Westlake, 2020, p.117) This proved to be an illusion; the UK voted to leave the European Union in June 2016. Priestley was therefore the last ever British-origin Secretary-General of a major EU institution – David Williamson having been the first.

Priestley had a rare combination of administrative and political talents that would surely still now be passionately harnessed to the pro-European cause, if illness and an untimely death had not cut short his life. Priestley's significance was not only a matter of his nationality. As will be seen, Priestley's appointment, mandate, achievements, and post-mandate achievements were all significant in their own right. In addition, his life provides a case study of what might be termed a *consequential* senior EU civil servant.

Early Promise

Sir Julian Gordon Priestley was born on 26 May 1950, the son of Arthur David Noel Priestley (1908-1977), chief accountant for an Anglo-French car components company, and Patricia, *née* Maynard (1916-2014), a clerical assistant at the time of her marriage. Though the Priestleys were nominally Anglicans, the young Priestley attended a Plymouth Roman Catholic direct grant school where he 'loved the opportunities for debating, political history and drama'. His mother and father were both 'active in the Labour Party and strong, early supporters of Britain being in Europe.' (Priestley blog)

In 1968, Priestley spent a gap year in Paris, with a ring-side view of *les événements*. The following year, he went up to Balliol College, Oxford, to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE), admitting he 'spent too much of my time immersed in student politics.' He became chairman of the Oxford University Labour Club in 1970 and was elected to the Standing Committee of the Oxford Union Society in Michaelmas Term of that year. Thereafter, he became 'the dominant figure in the politics of the Union in 1971-72.' (Thomas) He served variously as Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian of the Union and was (unusually) returned unopposed as President for Hilary Term 1972, a feat speaking 'volumes for the strength of his personality and the high quality of his oratory…' (Ibid.)

At the Union, Priestley was deeply engaged on one side of a heated argument about the stewardship of the Union which at one stage led him into an alliance with a fellow PPE-ist from Lady Margaret Hall, Ann Widdecombe. It was, 'a most unlikely cabal – she, the determined, ideologically committed Conservative; he, a middle-of-the road Labourite…' She even visited his parents' house in Plymouth over the Easter vacation in 1971 'to plan tactics' (Kochan, 2000, p.51) Ultimately, he resigned, in controversial circumstances, three days before the end of his term. He embarked on a debating tour of the United States, sponsored by the Oxford Union and the English-Speaking Union; 'two months, sixty debates, each time on a different campus.' He was still very much talked about at Oxford the following year, having achieved the 'triple' of being President of the Union, chair of his party-political club, and chair of the Oxford Committee for Europe, a cross-party organisation which Priestley himself founded in Hilary term 1972. (Corbett, Philip McDonagh)

A Career in the European Parliament

In 1973, shortly after the United Kingdom acceded to the EEC, Priestley began work as the Youth Officer of the UK European Movement and immediately became a leading member of the Young European Left. At that time, the EC institutions had started to recruit British nationals as European civil servants. Priestley's taste for debate led him to apply to the European Parliament (EP). In the second half of 1973 he became a junior EP official, based in Luxembourg. He would remain with the Parliament until his retirement in 2007. The pre-direct elections EP was composed of seconded national parliamentarians. The Labour Party refused to send a delegation until after the UK membership question was resolved by the 1975 referendum and, not for the last time, Priestley found himself balancing loyalty to his party with commitment to his institution and to the EC more generally.

Priestley began as an administrator, and then a principal administrator, with the secretariat of the EP's Committee on Budgets, 1973-83. It was a good place to be, since the Parliament's main powers at that time lay in the budgetary field. The first direct elections to the EP were held in June 1979 and the Parliament immediately flexed its muscles by rejecting the Community's draft 1980 budget. Priestley was intimately involved in this early declaration of the Parliament's intent to be an autonomous political body, working closely with the Dutch Socialist rapporteur, Piet Dankert, in drafting the parliamentary resolution. (Harris)

Priestley meanwhile juggled his career in the Parliament with his growing political ambitions, as allowed under EU civil service rules. In the October 1974 British general election, he stood as the Labour candidate for Plymouth Sutton, losing to the sitting Conservative MP, Alan Clark. In 1974, in Luxembourg, he was elected the President of the Young European Federalists (JEF), serving till 1975. He was active in the youth campaign for 'Britain in Europe' in the June 1975 referendum on continued membership of the European Community. He stood unsuccessfully a second time against Clark in Plymouth Sutton in the May 1979 general election. He stood one last time as a Labour candidate in the June 1983 general election, this time in Plymouth, Devonport, coming third behind the sitting Social Democrat MP, Dr David Owen, and his old Oxford Union sparring partner and erstwhile co-conspirator, Ann Widdecombe, for the Conservatives, and knowing that many of Labour's fervent pro-European voters had defected to the SDP. (*Daily Telegraph*)

A hidden irony was that Priestley knew and had previously liked Owen, who had been a Plymouth Labour MP since 1966, through his father's local Labour Party activities. (Harris) Moreover, the former Foreign Secretary was pro-EC membership at a time when the Labour Party manifesto (on which Priestley, alongside, for example, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, all fought) promised to take the UK out of the Community without a referendum. But, according to Widdecombe's biographer, Priestley could not forgive Owen for betraying the Labour Party, and the result was 'almost tangible hostility' between the two men. (Kochan, 2000, p.92) In any case, Priestley returned bruised and despondent after a third election defeat; 'The political career which had been mapped out for him since Oxford now seemed barred.' (Harley)

In 1983 Priestley met a Luxembourg property advisor, Jean Schons, who became his devoted partner for the next 33 years. Thereafter, having chosen to concentrate on his EU career, Priestley rapidly zig-zagged his way up the parliamentary hierarchy, switching back and forth between administrative, managerial and political positions, speeded along by his considerable political skills, oratorical prowess, commanding voice and patrician bearing. He was Chair of the EP's Staff Committee, 1981-83, a high-profile, 'counter-establishment' position. On his watch, a general strike about conditions for EP staff was organised at a time when Piet Dankert, with whom Priestley had worked on the 1980 budget resolution, was EP President. It was a tribute to Priestley's skills and charm that the two men remained on friendly terms. It was also no doubt Priestley's 'political' status that enabled him to fight in a general election on a manifesto commitment that would otherwise have raised many an eyebrow among his administrative superiors.

The Rise to Senior Management

Priestley was then appointed head of the secretariat for the Parliamentary Committee on Energy, Research and Technology, 1984-87 (his first managerial position), working with the Chair of the Committee, Michel Poniatowski, a former French minister of the interior. In parallel, he also served as co-chair, 1985-87, of the committee for reform of the Staff Regulations of Community officials. His abundant skills led to early promotion, with the strong support of the British Conservative President of the Parliament at that time, Henry Plumb, to the position of Director in the Directorate-General for Committees and Delegations, with specific responsibility for budgetary affairs and the single market, 1987-89 (Harley). During this period, Priestley headed a task force on 'Making a Success of the Single European Act' and worked closely with its chair, Lord Plumb. (Donaldson) Meanwhile, back in the UK, the Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, was bringing his party back into the progressive left's pro-European mainstream, of which the European Parliamentary Labour Party was gradually becoming an important part. The 1989 European Parliament elections saw 45 Labour MEPs returned. The now more cohesive and mainstream Labour grouping was a significant force within the EP's Socialist Group, and in 1989, as a reflection of that, Priestley was appointed as Secretary-General of the Group.

It was this high-profile position that, particularly through the European Socialist summits, brought Priestley and his talents to the attention of a wider international audience. In 1994, the newly elected leader of the Labour Party, Tony Blair, approached Priestley 'for consideration as a potential Chief of Staff.' Blair considered him to be 'an ideal candidate, combining the political activist with intimate knowledge of government.' (Blair) Ultimately, Priestley withdrew himself from consideration for a variety of reasons, 'not least his dedication to what he was doing in Brussels.' But also for love. (Corbett, 2018) Blair continued to hold Priestley 'in the highest regard' and believed that, if he had been appointed, 'he would have been a huge success.' (Blair) Priestley was also Peter Mandelson's first choice, the latter describing him as 'politically astute, good with people, and a gifted organiser and manager who had helped Tony on his Europe speech in the leadership campaign.' (Mandelson, 2010, p. 178; see also Campbell, p. 36) It was to no avail.

Instead, in July 1994, Priestley was appointed Head of the private office of the incoming President of the European Parliament, German SPD MEP Klaus Hänsch, a position he occupied until the end of Hänsch's presidency in 1997. 'The appointment,' recalls Hänsch, 'was my choice and decision. I had decided before being elected President, in a clear difference from my predecessors, that I would choose someone to run my private office who came from the Parliament's administration, and not from a national administration – someone not necessarily of my nationality but clearly with political skills. Julian was simply and clearly the best.' (Hänsch) Priestley was expected to move from his previous position because in the 1994 European elections Labour had done so well – winning 62 seats (out of 87) – that it was able to claim the leadership of the Socialist Group and it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to have 'Brits' occupying both of the two top positions.

Pauline Green was duly elected Chair of the Parliamentary Group of the PES and Priestley went to work for Hänsch. The position gave Priestley, 'an additional opportunity to develop his skills to more leading parliamentarians beyond the limits of a political group.' He was appreciated for his team-forming and team-leading skills, Hänsch remembers, 'leading by convincing and encouraging, by boosting the skills of each team member, by engaging colleagues through his own commitment. The excellence of my Priestley-led private office was a cornerstone of the success of my presidency.' (Hänsch)

EP Secretary-General (1997-2007)

As the Hänsch presidency advanced, Priestley became increasingly regarded as the obvious candidate to become the next Secretary-General of the European Parliament itself. So it came to pass, with Priestley appointed Secretary-General in 1997. When Priestley took up the reins, the EP employed some 4,000 officials, split between Brussels and Luxembourg, and held twelve monthly plenary sessions in Strasbourg. With the EP's legislative and political powers being continually extended by the Maastricht (1993), Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2003) Treaties, and with fresh waves of enlargement (2004, 2007) ahead (with the EC moving from 15 to 27 Member States), it was clear to Priestley that the Parliament's administration would require a complete overhaul to respond to these challenges. He therefore developed, launched and implemented a major reform process, dubbed 'raising the game', which was separate from, but ran in parallel with, the overall 'Kinnock package' for administrative reform of the European Commission and the EU civil service.

One of Priestley's main achievements as Secretary General was to prepare the Parliament for such a massive enlargement, particularly regarding translation and interpretation services. He thus successfully met the 'nightmare challenge of guaranteeing MEPs the right to speak in 21 languages.' (Harley) The decision to cover all languages in that way was, 'a courageous one, but the right one. Today, all the citizens of the European Union can listen to the Parliament's debates and proceedings in their own languages and realising that was very much one of Julian's achievements.' (Welle)

Another aspect of the combination of enlargement and the Parliament's own growing powers, dominant in terms of the time and energy required, was buildings policy. 'He spent an awful amount of time working on incredibly complex negotiations to bring home huge projects both in Brussels and Strasbourg … it was his main purgatory.' (Clark) As a result, the EP developed a far more serious and professional capacity to handle its growing work. Priestley also worked hard to boost the Parliament's communications capacity. The Parlamentarium in Brussels stands as a testimony to his energies and ambitions in that regard. (Clark) As Secretary General, Priestley also made significant contributions to the speeches of the various EP Presidents with whom he worked, particularly for presentations at European Council meetings, further illustrating his 'uniquely combined political flair and administrative competence.' (Harley)

Priestley's mandate as Secretary General was marked by one other major challenge and reform process; negotiating and establishing a new financial and administrative statute for the Members. It was an issue par excellence to be resolved by MEPs themselves, and not by officials. It was a delicate and extremely sensitive task, which was both completely unavoidable and immensely unpopular. Priestley worked closely with the two EP Presidents, Pat Cox and Josep Borrell, who took on the task, and helped them to push through the reform.

A Rich 'Afterlife'

In 2007, after ten years in the position, Priestley decided to take early retirement. He was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (KCMG) in the 2007 Birthday Honours. A succession of speakers took the floor at a Strasbourg farewell event. Clearly, Priestley had commanded respect and affection from across the political spectrum. Indeed, an overlooked aspect of his talents was his ability to work with continental politicians, starting with Michel Poniatowski, then Jean-Pierre Cot, then Klaus Hänsch, and then four Presidents during his time as Secretary General (José Maria Gil Robles, Nicole Fontaine, Pat Cox and Josep Borrell), only one of whom (Borrell) was a fellow socialist.

In retirement, Priestley shared his time between Luxembourg, Brussels, the Belgian coast (Ostend) and southern Spain (Marbella). There was more time for his passions of golf, music, film and reading, but he also rapidly developed a portfolio of positions. He served as Chairman of the Board, European Public Policy Advisors. He served as a Member of the Board, Notre Europe (later the Jacques Delors Institute), of Vote Watch, and of the Scientific Council of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

Priestley wrote or co-wrote three studies. The first, *Six Battles that Shaped Europe's Parliament* (2008) contained authoritative accounts of defining episodes in the EP's development, including the dramatic events of March 1999 when, under pressure from the Parliament, the whole of the European Commission resigned. In the second*, European Political Parties: The missing link* (2010), Priestley re-fanned his passion for a truly federal Europe and for the European Parliament. A third, *Europe's Parliament: People, places, politics* (2012), co-authored with Stephen Clark, recounted the personalities and events that had characterised the Parliament in which he had spent all of his working life as an EU official.

Following David Cameron's 2013 Bloomberg speech, with its promise of an in-out referendum, Priestley rediscovered his campaigning zeal, co-founding and chairing a Brussels-based, pro-Remain campaigning group, Pro-Europa. Disappointed by the course of European and Labour politics, Priestley edited a collection of polemical essays, *Our Europe, Not Theirs* (2013). In the same period, he discovered the delights of the social media, both as campaigning platforms and as a pleasant way of strolling down Memory Lane. In 2014, he became special adviser to the German SPD MEP, Martin Schulz, in his ultimately unsuccessful campaign, as the Party of European Socialists' *Spitzenkandidat*

(lead candidate) to become President of the European Commission. Priestley went on to co-author a book, with Nereo Penalver Garcia, based on the experience, *The Making of a European President* (2014). In March 2015, Priestley married his partner of 33 years, Jean Schons. The same day, he requested, and was later granted, Luxembourg nationality as a naturalised citizen (though he maintained his British citizenship).

In 2015-2016, Priestley served as a visiting professor at the College of Europe (Bruges), teaching a popular course on the European Parliament. Ill-health prevented him from continuing his teaching, but it could not prevent him from continuing to communicate. That year, his novel, '*Putsch!*', subtitled, '*Principle, Ambition, Compromise, Intrigue, Threats, Sex – Well, That's Politics*', was published, with more than a few autobiographical hints in its pages. Priestley was working on a sequel when he died. He was disillusioned by the Labour Party's lukewarm support for EU membership under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. In December 2016, he began a series of passionate and frequently excoriating blogposts about British and European politics. The first, entitled 'The Delusional Left' was published on 11 December. In the last, 'Macron – The Choice for Europe', published on 29 March 2017, he nailed his colours firmly to the mast less than a month before his own death, and less than twenty-four hours before Macron's first-round victory in the French presidential election.

Ironies and Counterfactuals

Following a long illness, Priestley died in Bad Berka (Thuringia) on 22 April 2017, at the age of 66. His life had been rich in ironies and counter-factuals. What if he had been elected to the Commons in the late 1970s or early 1980s? (Many of his Oxford contemporaries expected to see him become at least a Cabinet minister). What if he had accepted Tony Blair's 1994 invitation to become his chief of staff? How might the Blair administration's EU policy have differed, and what might Priestley have moved on to later? What if the Labour government of the early 2000s had proceeded to a referendum on membership of the single currency, which Blair himself believed could have been winnable? (In the wake of the Labour Party's May 1997 general election victory, it was rumoured that Priestley was invited by 'Number Ten' to head up the campaign for the UK to join the single currency in the referendum that Labour had promised on the issue. The offer, if extended, was not accepted. Subsequently, the Blairite project of sterling joining, in the face of Gordon Brown's opposition, became an ever more distant prospect.) What if Martin Schulz had become President of the European Commission in 2014? How might that have changed the relationship between the EU and David Cameron's government? And what if Priestley had not died prematurely in 2017?

Perhaps the greatest irony was that, within his lifetime, Priestley fought for UK membership of the EEC in the early 1970s, fought for the UK to remain in 1975, fought against David Cameron's 2013 promise of an in-out referendum, and finally saw the UK vote to leave in 2016. Priestley had seen his dream come true, and then seen it shattered. It was a great blow, although Priestley did not become embittered. A second irony was that he, as a British-born civil servant dedicated to parliamentarianism, had done more than most to help transform the relatively toothless European institution he had joined in 1973 into the co-legislative and co-budgetary and political power that the EP is today.

A Consequential Senior EU Civil Servant

Priestley was, it can be argued, a *consequential* senior civil servant in several respects. First, his appointment established what is now, with the exception of the brief (2007-2009) interregnum of Harald Romer, an accepted convention that the EP's Secretary-General should be the 'pick' not only of the numerically largest political group in the Parliament but also, ideally, share the nationality of the largest national contingent within that Group. (Implicit in his departure was the fact that he no longer fulfilled those conditions.) In the same context, Priestley's appointment was part of what was seen as

being an almost inexorable dominance of the Socialists in the European Parliament and led the other main political family, the European People's Party (EPP), to reflect on how that dominance could be overturned (e.g., Welle, 2007) and, ultimately, to the EPP's successful strategy in embracing new sister parties in Central and Eastern Europe, with a view to the enlargements of 2004, 2007 and 2013 (see Martens, 2009).

Second, Priestley recognised, perhaps more than most, the urgent need for the EP to bolster its administrative culture if it were to exploit to the full its growing political, legislative and budgetary powers. His reform package, 'raising the game' was vital in that context. By the time he became SG, the Parliament had been directly-elected for almost twenty years and had made great progress in winning itself further powers. Always ambitious for his institution, Priestley saw that tendencies to inertia and complacency could easily undermine the Parliament's credibility in bidding for the further powers he passionately believed were still necessary.

Third, Priestley understood that full linguistic capacity was vital if the EP were to continue to claim to be the democratic cradle of the EU and he therefore was at great pains to ensure that the Parliament could offer the same linguistic possibilities to all of its members – also after future anticipated enlargements had occurred. This may seem self-evident now, but was by no means guaranteed in 1997 when his mandate began and required a great deal of forward planning in budgetary and administrative terms. Indeed, the EP remains a unique institution in being able to offer all of its members full language '*régimes*' (in the jargon) – that is, to be able to speak, listen, and read in their mother tongues in all formal meetings. In contrast, the EU's advisory bodies – the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions – do not have this capacity for all meetings, for example, and have to 'borrow' the buildings of the European Parliament and the European Commission for their plenary sessions.

Fourth, in the general context of a change in the building policy of the EU's institutions, Priestley ensured that the institution's buildings matched up to its ambitions, whether in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg. This was not just a matter of ensuring that the new buildings coming on stream contained sufficient space and capacity for interpreters' cabins and office space for future new members. There were more arcane, but nonetheless important, details that were bound up in the Parliament's perception of itself as the twin arm of the legislative and budgetary authority, relating to such matters as, for example, the geography of meeting rooms and in particular of the rooms where conciliation committees would meet. Priestley also put great emphasis on generous provision of communication facilities, such as working spaces for journalists and television studios. Through the symbiotic relationship between languages and buildings, the EP is now locked into a permanent expansion process of sorts, even if the number of members remains the same. But it has also safeguarded the democratic principle of equal rights for all languages.

Those, then, are the legacies of the late Sir Julian Priestley – a *consequential* senior European Union civil servant.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Martin Westlake, College of Europe (Bruges) and LSE European Institute, [m.westlake@lse.ac.uk]

CORRESPONDENCE/CONVERSATIONS CITED

Sir Tony Blair, 27 May 2020

Richard Corbett, 1-2 June 2020 (Labour MEP and EPLP leader, 2017-2020, friend)

Morag Donaldson, 4 June 2020 (personal assistant to Priestley when Secretary General)

Klaus Hänsch, 10 June 2020 (President of the EP, 1994-1997)

David Harley, 4 June 2020 (former EP Deputy Secretary General and SG of the Socialist Group)

Geoffrey Harris, 3 June 2020 (Labour Party and EP contemporary)

Philip McDonagh, 4 June (Balliol, OULC and OUS contemporary)

Dietmar Nickel, 3-4 June 2020 (EP and Socialist Group contemporary)

David Thomas, 25 April 2020 (unofficial Oxford Union Society historian)

Klaus Welle, 4 June 2020 (Secretary General, EP, 2009-)

Priestley's website, including his polemical pieces about British and European politics, is still accessible at: online https://julianpriestley.eu/biography/ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations in this entry are from that website.

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