

The Politicization of the European Union: From Constitutional Dreams to Euro-Zone crisis Nightmares

Paul Statham
(University of Bristol – paul.statham@blueyonder.co.uk)

and

Hans-Jörg Trenz
(University of Copenhagen - trenz@hum.ku.dk)

ARENA, University of Oslo

*Wäre es da
Nicht doch einfacher, die Regierung
Löste das Volk auf und
Wähle ein anderes?*

*Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
And elect another?*

‘The Solution’ by Bertolt Brecht¹

¹ The English translation is from Bertolt Brecht, *Poems 1913-1956*, eds. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (Methuen 1976), p. 440.

Introduction

Today, the politicization of European Union seems obvious and its advance inevitable. From a vantage point when Euro-zone monetary policy is publicly debated and challenged over the debt crises in Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Italy, it seems strange that less than a decade ago a primary concern of European elites was a lack of attention by citizens and parties for the integration project. The financial crisis era of Eurozone austerity cuts and bailouts has made the consequences of monetary union felt in the pockets of citizens across the region, from the Spanish unemployed, to the German taxpayer, and the British pensioner. The angry peoples of Europe make their voices heard in the news, on the streets, and at the ballot box. It has also led to renewed calls by some for advancing integration. Thus, Joschka Fischer, in ‘Does Europe Have a Death Wish?’ sees greater political integration within the EU as the only way to address the financial crisis which is destabilizing it.² This pessimistic ‘no alternative’ to political integration contrasts starkly to the optimistic ‘no alternative’ delivered in his legendary ‘Quo vadis, Europa?’ speech at the Humboldt University in 2000, when for the first time a member state minister launched a federal vision for the European Union based on a written Constitution. The *zeitgeist* has changed and so has the political context. Europe now matters, politically, more than ever before.

From one side, the increase in politicization can be seen as beneficial to European democracy: it heralds a ‘normalization’ of EU-level decisions through their incorporation within national politics. From the other, the same development can be viewed as a threat to democracy by leading to an increase in populist, reactionary, and in some cases xenophobic responses – a nationalist politics built on people’s fears and insecurities – and an overall decline in political trust among the community. The important question for the future of European integration is what kind of Europe will politicization lead to? Will dissensus become so strong that it breaks apart the elite-led pro-integration agenda, replacing it with Eurosceptic re-nationalized agendas? Or will dissensus remain constrained within a set of norms that on balance remain constructively critical of the EU, so that politics expands beyond elites and includes input from other public actors, thereby enhancing democratic legitimacy? Does the European Union risk being torn apart by new identity conflicts, as predicted by Hooghe and Marks (2008), or will it finally enter the contentious world of democratic politics, party competition and elections?

Politicization is distinct from conflicts and bargaining that remains behind closed doors within institutions, and between governments, because it is publicly visible. The politicization of executive decision-making occurs when issues become subject to debates and controversies among political parties, interest groups, NGOs and social movements, in the public sphere. Politicization requires the expansion of debates from closed elite-dominated policy arenas to wider publics. At the same time a focus on contentious European issues has a potential to enhance the Europeanization of national public spheres, as domestic public debates include more references to actors, issues and decisions from other European countries and from the EU-level. In this way, politicization occurs through a combination of the Europeanization of national public spheres, on one side, and public contestation over European issues and decisions, on the other. Public debates carried by mass media are the important

² <http://www.social-europe.eu/2011/06/>

location where the politicization of Europe takes place and can be studied. While not the only forum or form of public debate, the mass media is crucial because it is where the general public can gain access to information about executive decision-making, and the stances of political actors who challenge decisions.

In this article, we examine the factors that are conducive to EU politicization and aim to contribute to theory and understanding of *how* this process is underway. To study the *public dimension* of the EU's politicization, we take the hitherto most prominent case, which is also recognised as a catalyst and a critical event, in determining the overall degree and form of EU politicization: the public debates over the Constitutional Treaty. The aim is that by examining the emergence of European politicization at its genesis, we can reach a better understanding of the conditions which brought it about, and the mechanisms which can drive it forward. Our study of the Constitution case draws on detailed empirical findings on the transformation of public debates in France, Germany and Britain, from our forthcoming book.³ This allows us to test propositions in the theoretical literature on the politicization of Europe.

In the next section, we examine existing theories on EU politicization by focusing on the emphasis on 'identity politics' in political science approaches, especially that of Hooghe and Marks (2008), and contrasting this to our own public sphere perspective. We then outline key empirical findings on the emergence of public contestation between political actors in the Constitution case. These findings are used to draw lessons about the conditions and mechanisms through which EU politicization occurs. Finally, we apply these insights to account for the new wave of politicization underway in the Eurozone crisis.

Theories of EU Politicization: A New Identity Politics or Public Sphere Contestation?

Although not all agree that politicization is underway⁴, there has been a renewed attempt within political science to theorize EU politicization, by referring to a new salience of identity conflicts (see, Fligstein 2008, Katzenstein and Checkel 2009). A good example is Hooghe and Marks' (2008) explicit attempt to theorize the developments whereby Europe has become politicized. They call this a general 'post-functional' theory of European integration which heralds the onset of 'mass politics' and 'identity politics'. Here we critically examine their ideas which combine this claim for a new salience of identity conflicts with a perspective based on political parties' strategic action.

Hooghe and Marks describe how from 1991 onwards the 'permissive consensus' whereby executives had more or less a free hand within their national political arenas and from voters to advance European integration was replaced by what they call a 'constraining dissensus'. They argue there has not been a significant transformation in public attitudes. People have not changed their minds over the value of Europe. For them, what has changed is that while in the past national executives and European

³ *The Politicization of Europe: Public Contestation over the Constitution*. London: Routledge. Paul Statham and Hans-Jörg Trenz (to be published 2012).

⁴ Mair (2007) disputes the advent of politicization saying that the EU remains remarkably underpoliticized.

elites took decisions within closed institutional areas, now the locus for legitimate decision-making has shifted to national domestic arenas that are characterised by ‘mass politics’. In this view, party elites running national governments increasingly have to watch their backs when negotiating European issues, because their actions come under more strategic challenges from their own domestic political arena. In other words, Europe is increasingly subjected to domestic party competition and driven by the strategic decisions of party leaders (2008: 9): ‘European issues have entered party competition. On major issues, governments, i.e., party leaders in positions of executive authority, try to anticipate the effect of their decisions on domestic politics. Public opinion on European integration has become a field of strategic interaction among party elites in their contest for political power.’

Hooghe and Marks consider three contextual changes have created incentives for parties to mobilize strategically over Europe: first, public attitudes towards European integration became less superficial, meaning they provide a stable structure of electoral incentives for party positioning; second, Europe became a higher salience issue for the ‘general public’, meaning that it influences party competition; and third, the issues raised by European integration became more evidently linked to the basic conflicts that structure party competition. For them, the driving force of change is the strategic decisions of party leaders that are made tactically within the context of party competition. New incentives for party leaders to transform their behaviour over Europe have been created by a shift of executive decision making over Europe from in their terms the ‘interest group arena’ to the ‘mass arena’. They see European integration issues entering the ‘mass arena’ not because of their substantive contents, but because political entrepreneurs choose to mobilize over them, in order to strategically challenge their institutionally powerful opponents (2008: 18/19): ‘To understand which issues are politicized we need to investigate strategic interaction between political parties... Whether an issue enters mass politics depends not on its intrinsic importance, but on whether a party picks it up... We assume that party leaders seek to politicize an issue when they see an electoral advantage in doing so.’

Hooghe and Marks argue that because the mainstream parties of centre left and centre right have carried the project of European integration, it is populist non-governing parties that use the European issue to strategically challenge them, with the result that (2008: 21): ‘The debate on Europe has been framed by opponents of European integration, i.e. populist *tan*⁵ parties, nationalists in conservative parties, and radical left parties.’ According to them, this rise of populism, in particular by parties that mobilize exclusive national identities, has increasingly made political competition over Europe about identity politics (‘who we are’), rather than interest politics about concerns of redistribution (‘who gets what’). The other part of the equation that makes this development possible is that, first, they see the public as easily influenced over Europe which makes them susceptible to claims by nationalist populist parties, and second, they see public opinion as an inherent source of Euroscepticism. In their own words: ‘public opinion on Europe is particularly susceptible to construction: i.e. priming (making a consideration salient), framing (connecting a particular consideration to a political object), and cueing (instilling a bias).’ (2008:13) ‘Most mainstream parties continued to resist politicizing the issue. But a number of populist,

⁵ *Tan* is shorthand for traditionalism/authority/nationalism that opposes *gal* green/alternative/libertarian in the cleavage structure which Hooghe and Marks find shapes party positions over European integration.

non-governing, parties smelt blood. Their instinctive Euroscepticism was closer to the pulse of public opinion.’(2008: 21).

Overall, Hooghe and Marks see the politicization of Europe by its opening up to national public domains as a negative development, normatively, because it potentially damages EU-level decision-making, where it is likely to generate disputes along national (identity) lines, and constrain the potential for transnational agreements. In this way, they share the view of the intergovernmentalists (see, Moravcik 2006) that opening up the EU to the public sphere distorts its capacity for rational decisions based on functional logics.

While we consider Hooghe and Marks’ make an important contribution on the emergence of partisanship over Europe, we do not agree that the politicization process can be explained only by reference to party leaders’ strategic interactions. For an approach where the shift of decision making from the closed world of interest group bargaining to the public domain of mass politics is central, it is striking that their view of politicization has virtually nothing to say about the role of political communication, nor the role of mass mediated public debates. In fact, Hooghe and Marks’ only reference to the potential influence of mass media gives it a negative connotation. They depict national media as systems that are only able to mediate information in a way that entrenches public attachments to the nation (2008: 14): ‘National peculiarities are more pronounced among publics than elites because publics are more nationally rooted and are more dependent on information filtered by national media.’ This presents national publics and mass media in a one-dimensional way as something that retards the good work of the political elites who try to advance European integration. So without actually examining media performance over Europe or including it as a variable, Hooghe and Marks claim that mediated public debates do not have the potential to change public opinion in a way that would be favourable to European integration. Instead the mass media can only entrench national identities, and thereby sustain the potential for populism against Europe. In this view, media discourse retards national publics leaving them at an evolutionary distance from their enlightened party leaders over the benefits of integration.

In sum, Hooghe and Marks have a negative view of politicization. For them politicization grows from national public domains as a form of identity politics that distorts the functional logics of elite decision-making within the EU multi-level system. While we agree with many aspects of their general observations of political developments, we disagree with their depiction of the roles of strategic partisanship and negative (‘manipulated’) public opinion. Hooghe and Marks’ theoretical pessimism with regard to the media and the public leads them to give insufficient consideration to mass communication processes as a linking mechanism between political elites and the general public. They fail to grasp how the presence of a public transforms the political game.⁶

A more optimistic viewpoint on how the public can enhance decision-making and democratic performance comes from the public sphere tradition⁷, which from

⁶ See de Wilde 2011 for a more systematic elaboration of this point.

⁷ Public sphere researchers study the emergence of public discourses that supply legitimacy to the decision-making arenas of political institutions. The approach attributes a central role to public debates carried by the mass media, political communication, and collective mobilization by civil society and

Habermas onwards, sees the bottom-up expansion of a public sphere to be constitutive for democracy. In his version, Risse (2010) argues that the democratic deficit is not the result of a lack of sense of community among Europeans. He sees the people as a source for advancing European democracy and mass media allow this to happen. To make this point, Risse coins the phrase of ‘transnational communities of communication’ which he sees as constitutive of a better political community for Europe (2010: 232): ‘Media representations and mutual observation enable citizens to make informed decisions about Europe and the EU. In addition, transnational communities of communication are essential for the development of democratic policymaking beyond the nation-state. Without Europeanized public spheres to enable cross-border communication, European politics would be next to impossible. The emergence of Europeanized public spheres constitutes a first step in the politicization of European policies. This is very good news for European democracy.’

Although we broadly agree with Risse’s approach,⁸ his concept of a ‘transnational community of communication’ remains a somewhat vague and general formulation. It stands as little more than a metaphor for an emergent European public sphere. What we aim to do in this article is to specify and analyze in more detail *how* the public sphere carried by mass media has become a driving mechanism for EU politicization. First we outline our perspective on the public sphere and EU politicization, before applying this to the emergence of politicization within mediated public debates over the Constitutionalization.

The basic idea is that the politicization of European integration is driven by an expanding public discourse. This public discourse fulfils an important democratizing function: it makes executive decisions transparent, includes civil society, and provides important critical feedbacks, while it is carried by an independent self-steering mass media. While not the only forum or form of public debate, the mass media is crucial because it is where the general public can gain access to information about executive decision-making, and the stances of political actors who challenge decisions. Hence the public debate carried by the mass media is an important location where politicization takes place and a source of data for studying it. In contrast to Hooghe and Marks, the public is a source for enhancing democracy, not retarding it. Also public contestation is not restricted to strategic interactions between competing political parties, but occurs between a broad range of executive and civil society actors, and because it is mass mediated, in front of a public. From one side, the presence of a public importantly shapes the behaviour of political actors who try to shape public opinion, while, from the other, the visibility of public contestation over issues allows the possibility for public opinion formation and learning processes.

In our view, the multi-level nature of the European Union’s institutions contains contradictions between different levels of the polity, different member states, and different political actors, that stimulates public communication and political

social movements in the public domain, i.e. a public discourse. For ‘state of the art’ on the many contributions to the research field on a European public sphere, see Koopmans and Statham 2010a, Risse 2010.

⁸ This is not surprising since Risse’s public sphere perspective draws heavily on theories and empirical findings advanced by our own research and that by the respective collaborations within which it has been embedded (see e.g., Eder and Trenz 2007, Koopmans and Statham 2010; see also Kantner 2004).

contention.⁹ Our thesis is that an emerging European public sphere has a self-constituting dynamic that couples the unfolding of transnational spaces of political communication to the democratization of EU's institutional system. The normative viewpoint is that public spheres can democratize institutions: the more political actors debate decision-making over European integration, the more this constitutes a Europeanized space of communication, and the better the chances are for supplying the important sources of critical feedback that enhance the democratic legitimacy of executive decisions.¹⁰

Importantly, a public sphere includes not only those who take an active part in the debate, but it presupposes that communication resonates among others, a 'public', for whom it is also relevant. This resonance of public communication between institutional actors and publics is carried primarily by mass-mediated political debates. It effectively 'brings the public back in' to European democratic politics. This idea that people can be part of a shared political community through the structure of their communicative relationships draws from the classical work of Karl Deutsch (1953).

How does this work, practically? We consider that a public sphere for Europe is built from three elements: collective action within institutional networks; a field of public communication that can be seen by a public; and resonance, the mutual observation between institutional actors and audiences (with feedback loops). Collective actors mobilize their 'claims for democracy' – e.g., claims about the EU's 'democratic deficit' – that are an organizing principle of public debates over the EU. The more public claims are mobilized by collective actors, the more this leads to a public debate characterised by an intensified communication over the EU and an increase in the reflexive public evaluation and monitoring of the EU polity. The result is that collective learning processes emerge that couple the EU's institutional arenas and publics. In this way, intensified public communication about the EU's perceived democratic problems can stimulate the processes that can potentially solve it (see Trenz and Eder 2004). This approach places the emergence of a European public sphere at the centre of a theoretical model for the transformation of European multilevel governance. It sets an empirical research agenda for the democratization processes of the EU that focuses on public debates, contestation, and the critical thematization of European integration, carried by mass media.

The Constitutional Treaty Case: Political Claim making over integration

Europe's attempt at Constitutionalization provided a unique experimental setting for examining the capacity of public communication to transform in response to the available specific political opportunities. This is not only an abstract concern for public sphere researchers, but goes to the core of the questions about the capacity of

⁹ Social movement researchers make a similar point when they anticipate the emergence of 'contentious Europeans' in the form of bottom-up collective mobilization to challenge the EU's multi-level polity (Imig and Tarrow 2001: 16): 'Europe is a composite polity composed of semisovereign states, quasi-autonomous European institutions, and virtually represented citizens. This kind of polity fosters ambiguity, perceptions of uncertainty, and shifting alliances - exactly the combination of properties... most likely to produce contentious politics.'

¹⁰ To relate public sphere developments to European institutions in a way that can potentially democratize them – linking 'politicization' to 'democratization' – we draw on the 'theory of democratic functionalism' (Eder and Trenz 2002, 2007, Trenz and Eder 2004).

media and political systems to meet adequate democratic standards when decision-making shifts to a institutional level beyond the nation-state. The European Union's system of multilevel governance was an important test case, and its efforts at Constitutionalization were motivated by a perceived need among EU-level and member state executives to address the EU's well-publicised 'deficits'. The proposed institutional reforms and substantive steps in advancing integration through the Constitutional Treaty required some degree of input legitimacy to consolidate this as a multi-level structure that could take the EU forward.

To operationalize our study of the transformation of public spheres, we applied political claim making analysis (Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2010b). News is a rich source for retrieving data on 'mediated politics': it provides information on which actors successfully mobilize their concerns, what positions they take on issues, the ideological contents expressed when they frame their arguments, the interests they represent, who they address, support, and oppose, and whether this expands the debate, spatially, by communicating across national contexts, and across political levels. *A political claim-making act is a purposeful communicative action in the public sphere. Claim-making acts consist of public speech acts that articulate political demands, calls to action, proposals, or criticisms, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants or other collective actors* (Koopmans and Statham 2010b). The claim making approach focuses on political actors and draws from the 'political opportunity' literature¹¹ which emphasises that levels and forms of mobilization by social movements, interest groups and citizens' initiatives are strongly influenced by the institutional structure and public discourses of the political systems in which these groups operate. Instead of focussing only on civil society actors, however, claim making analysis studies the full range of collective actors, including executives, elites, etc., which is necessary for explaining the transformation of the field. In this way, we see claim-making 'acts' as a set of 'communicative networks' that may link political actors across institutional levels of governance, and across national borders. In the study, we retrieved 'claims' over European integration from newspaper coverage in France, Germany and Britain¹², to capture the two intersecting processes that constitute *EU politicization*: first, the Europeanization of national public spheres; and second, political contestation and the mobilization of resonant public critiques over European integration issues.

The dimensions we applied for studying this transformation of the public sphere were visibility, inclusiveness and contestation over legitimacy (see, Statham 2010a). First, for there to be something that meaningfully resembles a public sphere, European-level decision-making needs to be *visible* to citizens. Essential here is the performance of mass media in thematizing and making the relevant decisions about EU Constitutionalization, and their mobilized alternatives, visible to people. Second, the degree to which the public debates over European Constitutionalization are *inclusive* is important. This refers to who is able to participate in public debates, the

¹¹ Political opportunities are defined by Tarrow (1994: 85) as "consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success or failure."

¹² For the study we retrieved samples of 'claims' from newspaper coverage in Germany, France and Britain, in three distinct time periods: 'pre-Constitution' before the Constitution; 'Drafting' during the Convention period; 'Ratification' the period of ratification by national governments. This allowed for systematic comparative analyses, across time-phase, across country, and by actor type.

accessibility of European decision-making over the constitution to publics, either through party competition, interest representation or by collective action mobilized from civil society. For non-executive actors, and in particular, civil society actors, NGOs and social movements to get their message across and challenge the discursive power of state authorities, the ability to gain access to mass-mediated public debates over decision-making is a vital resource (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). When public debates lack oppositional and non-state ‘voices’ to provide some degree of input legitimacy, then they suffer a qualitative deficit.

A third dimension resulting from the degree of visibility and inclusiveness is the potential for *contestation* over legitimacy. Contestation occurs when collective actors mobilize critiques over European issues and decisions relevant to Constitutionalization that become resonant within the public debate. The potential for collective actors to mobilize critical evaluations relates to the institutional political opportunity structure and the discursive opportunities that provide them with incentives to mobilize – i.e., their perceptions that they can succeed in making their legitimacy claims for a specific type political order resonate sufficiently to shape public opinion, and the stances of other actors. A crucial determinant is the formal degree of access to institutional decision-making arenas which shapes the scope of a public debate and the form that contestation takes within national public spheres. The degree to which public voices are able to respond to the available discursive opportunities and mobilize challenges to dominant (European and national) institutional viewpoints demonstrates their discursive power over integration issues relative to other actors. Contestation to gain public legitimacy comes in the forms of political party competition, public challenges mobilized by interest groups, NGOs and social movements, and even journalists’ own acts of political opinion-leading and commentating. These sources of public ‘talk’ are mass-mediated and played before a public, hence they are able to resonate, and influence the opinions of others. In this way, party competition and mobilization by civil society actors can launch critical debates over European decisions and issues over the Constitution. This mobilized public critique and opinion opens up institutional decision-making to more public debate and has a ‘democratizing’ potential (Eder 2007).

We now report our findings by focussing on the emergence of party political contestation in the Ratification phase. We discuss party contestation rather than mobilization by civil society actors because this was the dominant form of contestation that occurred.¹³ Also this particular set of findings allows us to directly address the position of Hooghe and Marks with recourse to empirical data.

Political Party Contestation over the Constitution

¹³ Generally, our study showed hardly any evidence for politicization in the Drafting phase of the Convention but we found some evidence for increasing public contestation in mediated public debates in the Ratification phase. However, this was almost entirely a result of the French referendum, so that public debates in Britain and Germany were attentive only as ‘bystanders’ to national domestic contestation in France. In France, domestic contestation increased significantly but was driven much more by political party competition than by civil society mobilization. Here we found that two thirds (67%) of French claim-makers in the French public sphere had a political party identity, which is three times the number who were civil society actors (21%).

The crucial ingredient for transforming the public spheres in our study was the field of national domestic contestation in France generated by President Chirac's decision to devolve ratification to the French people through a referendum. The referendum directly engaged the public in decision-making because it required them to express their popular will through the ballot box and was legally binding. While the President and government initially expected the centre-party consensus to hold and a straightforward favourable result (see, Hainsworth 2006), the referendum brought public attention to the issue and provided an open opportunity for collective actors to challenge the government's stance. Decision-making was momentarily taken from the elite controlled political institutional arena and lodged in the mass-mediated public debate. Although they remained powerful, the executive effectively relinquished direct control over ratification and allowed it to be subjected to a discursive struggle in the public domain. So what conclusions can we draw about politicization from the way that domestic political party competition shaped the discursive struggle over the Constitution?

Facing an open set of discursive opportunities, resulting from the referendum and high media attention, a substantial section of the main opposition party, the social democrat Parti Socialiste (PS), mobilized a challenge to the conservative-liberal coalition government's support for the Constitution.¹⁴ Formally, the main governing centre-right and opposition centre-left parties had adopted programmatic stances supporting a yes-vote for the Constitutional Treaty. However, the longstanding consensus among centre parties based on a tacit support for European integration was destroyed in the ensuing discursive struggle played out on the public stage. The centre-party consensus was broken up especially by members of the Socialist Party, who overall evaluated the Constitution in a dominantly negative way (by a ratio of 3:2). Hence oppositional actors from within the main opposition party challenged the pro-integrationist stance their own party leader, and they were successful in making this critique their party's dominant line in the public discourse.

Our frame analysis showed that party actors' claims over the Constitution were not simply tactical, either against opponents, or over the vote. In many cases, their critical (and supportive) claims were based on justifications that drew from broader ideological legitimating discourses. In other words, they constructed a critical narrative that attempted to achieve resonance in a way that would convince the public to take a specific stance over the Constitution issue. Specifically, the PS faction mobilized a challenger frame that depicted the Constitutional Treaty as a final victory for the neo-liberal economic model over the alternative of a 'Social Europe' of regulated capitalism with welfare guarantees. On this basis, the PS stole the clothes of the French radical left, who had long criticised the harmful effects of Europe's free market for France's social model, and challenged the pro-Constitution orthodoxy backed by the governing parties. Forced to defend the orthodoxy not only against the usual suspects from the radical left and radical right but against this PS challenge, the main governing UMP party mobilized a public campaign in support of the Constitution that appealed to culture, values and identity. The UMP justified a yes vote on a 'France within Europe' basis. Here the narrative ran that Europe is an indivisible part of France's heritage and historical destiny. Unlike the Socialists, the

¹⁴ The governing conservative-liberal coalition was led from the centre-right by the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) with support from the junior partner, Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF).

UMP did not draw from the ideas of their radical cousins, not least because the radical right parties' remained strongly nationalist and ideologically opposed to Europe. However, the UMP's defence of the Constitution did not engage directly with the challenger frame either, because the socialist challengers were not opposing 'France within Europe' but demanding a 'more social France within Europe'. So those who found the socialist challenger narrative convincing actually heard little from the UMP to dissuade them.

The French referendum case study demonstrated how party competition over Europe can grow through public discourse. Under these conditions of enhanced public attention and voters' mobilization in a referendum, the politicization of European integration is more likely to support the re-nationalisation of EU politics than opening a transnational arena of contestation about the Constitution. The more mainstream parties start to politicize European integration issues, the more they try to frame Europe so that it has direct relevance for national publics. This mobilization of competing narratives by parties leads to a critical thematization of Europe in mediated public debates. Importantly, this transforms the discursive contents of contestation over Europe. For example, we saw that the launching of mainstream party competition in response to the opportunities presented by the French referendum shifted the focus of debates from stances 'for or against Europe' to stances on 'what kind of Europe for France'. It led to a more 'mature' public debate in the way that Europe was evaluated.

In addition, the discursive struggle carried by the media translates European integration issues into options that are recognisable and understandable for the people living within a national public sphere. It makes Europe 'normal' politics. Parties have an important role to play in translating European decisions and issues into the everyday language that people are familiar with in domestic politics. This contributes to the input side of democracy, because it makes Europe more of a tangible psychological reality for ordinary people. Only then, can collective learning processes begin among the public with their potential for introducing more reflexivity about European decision-making. In this way, mediated party competition effectively introduces Europe into 'normal' domestic politics within national public spheres.

From these findings we deduce that politicization cannot take place without the critical thematization of European issues in a mediated public debate. Even when politicization is carried by party competition, it cannot, as Hooghe and Marks suggest, be reduced to the outcome of strategic interactions between party leaders. Against their perspective, we argue that politicization also requires the contextual presence of a public –i.e., mass-mediated debates– because this is the gallery who party actors play to, and to which they adapt their behaviour to, when they take a position over issue, in the attempt to win a vote.

Also a politically mobilized critique has to have a basis to be convincing to enough people to resonate publicly, and be successful. Against this, Hooghe and Marks' account sees European integration issues as basically content-less (2008:19): 'Whether an issue enters mass politics depends not on its intrinsic importance, but on whether a party picks it up... We assume that party leaders seek to politicize an issue when they see an electoral advantage in doing so.' So they have no explanation for why party actors would select some narrative interpretations of European integration

and its consequences over others. Here we think that the core identity of a party matters in determining the range of meanings that a party can attribute to political events (on this, see also Helbling et al 2009 on party framing), but whether and how actors from a party choose to mobilize over an issue-field depends on the available opportunities and their perceptions of their chances of winning public support and beating opponents in the media debate. In this case, there was sufficient space within the Socialists core identity for some party members to mobilize a critical narrative over Europe. Also the socialists' challenger frame had some success because it resonated publicly with concerns over the potentially damaging consequences of integration to the French social model. The UMP's framing of Europe as part of national identity did not break the resonance of this challenge. Those backing the critical narrative and advocating a 'Social Europe' saw an opportunity, to advance their position relative to others, by expressing this view.

Our empirical findings do not fit Hooghe and Marks' explanatory model for politicization through party competition, either. They argue that populist parties who oppose European integration by mobilizing exclusive national identities have made party political competition over Europe about identity, 'who we are', rather than distribution, 'who gets what'. Against this, the PS faction who challenged the Constitution was not a populist party from the traditionalist/authoritarian/nationalist right and they were not opposed to Europe, but advocated a different kind of Europe. Also their challenging frame for a more Social European model was about 'who we are' *and* 'who gets what'. It depicted the social constituency of French working people as the 'losers' of advancing market-driven European integration. Hence we find Hooghe and Marks' separation of (bad) identity politics from (good) distribution politics to be overly rigid and a false dualism. Actually, 'who you are' is often strongly related to 'what you get', both factually and discursively.

Of course, in defence of Hooghe and Marks one could argue that the referendum was an exceptional event where normal party behaviour was suspended. However, most see the French and Dutch referendums as a catalytic event which kick-started politicization (e.g., Risse 2010). In any case, our objection is primarily conceptual and methodological. If mediated public debates are excluded from the theoretical model – and are not a source of data – then it is difficult to see on what basis one can draw conclusions about how party contestation leads to politicization. However, political science approaches often view the relationship between parties and the public in a way that fails to include contestation within mediated debates.¹⁵

A pertinent example here is Crum's analysis of political parties' stances in referendums over the Constitution. In the French case, he explains the 'no' outcome as a failure by the opposition parties to enforce party discipline and loyalty among voters (2007:76): 'In the French case ... it is the abysmal performance of the pro-Constitution opposition that is most striking. Having decided to endorse the 'Yes'

¹⁵ There is a tendency to see a party's stance as uniform and represented by its formal programmatic statements – see, for example, the studies based on party programmes – while the public are depicted as little more than a set of voting preferences (gauged by opinion polls) to be collected by party leaders. Media and political communication is seldom included as a variable in the model. For example, Hobolt's (2007) examines what she calls 'voter competence' relative to party cues in referendums on European integration without any reference to media, despite the centrality of access to political information in the study.

camp after internal party referendums, the social democrat Socialist Party (PS) and the Greens (Verts) failed to sway their voters and found the majority of them defecting to the other side.’ However, this interpretation is only partial because it fails to take into consideration the public face that parties presented to the public through the mass media. Actually, the figures (from Eurobarometer sources) which Crum presents for voters’ voting in the referendum match our own data on the position by the claim-making in media debates. Thus, for the Socialist party, 35% voted ‘Yes’ and 55% ‘No’ (Crum 2007:76), while we found that 43% of evaluative claim-making by the PS was in favour of the Constitution and 57% against. Of course, this is not to suggest that there is a direct causal link, however, socialist voters expressed a position that is close to that made by their party in public statements running up to the referendum. So talk of party ‘failures’ and ‘defecting’ voters, seems misplaced.

Our objection to Hooghe and Marks is not their focus on political parties, but on the absence of mass media, communication and a public in their model. We think that studies of how party contestation play out in public debates based on their statements retrieved news analysis have an important contribution to understanding the relationship between parties and voters. The claim-making approach to political party contestation over Europe in mass media debates has been applied elsewhere (see, Statham and Koopmans 2009). Also Kriesi et al (2008; see also Helbling et al 2009) offer an empirically based examination that locates the politicization of Europe within a transformation of the cleavage structure of political parties in Western Europe. However, the Kriesi approach does include mass-mediated communication with its model, not least because, like our own research its main data source on parties’ statements is drawn from newspaper sources. This in itself requires the premise that political party competition is to an important degree located and ‘works’ within public debates carried by mass media.¹⁶

Regarding whether our study supports the idea of an emerging trend of domestic party contestation over Europe, our quantity of data varied across the countries, because of their different opportunity structures. The impact of the referendum in generating party contestation was profound. In France the number of party political claims in the Ratification phase more than doubled, compared to Drafting, while in Germany and Britain it halved. The Constitution event led to an erosion of centre party consensus that was favourable towards European integration in France and Germany. The German and French cases demonstrated that Constitutionalization played an important role in generating critical evaluations over Europe among the major opposition parties. While a centre party pro-European consensus held before the Constitution, domestic parties’ claim-making became increasingly critical overall, first in the Drafting, and then more so in the Ratification phase. This transformation was driven by the opposition centre parties, who made more claims than their respective parties of government, and which by the Ratification phase held stances that were on aggregate Eurocritical in their evaluations of the Constitution. In Britain, Europe was already subjected to competition between the Labour and Conservative parties in the pre-Constitution sample, with the Conservatives very highly critical of integration

¹⁶ For the most part, it is the supply of party statements carried by the mass media that the public have the opportunity to see, when making their minds up about who to vote for. Also media debates have become central to party activity and have become an important forum where party actors mobilize in relation to events. This contributes to shaping their party’s identity, and so it is also an important context where we can trace how parties’ positions over issues change.

issues. This pattern was simply replicated throughout the Drafting and Ratification phases.

In contrast to France, we saw that in Britain and Germany the critiques of the Constitution came from the centre-right not the centre-left. In Britain, the Conservatives built a Eurosceptic critique rejecting European integration; in Germany, opposition was largely by the junior partner from the conservative coalition, the Bavarian CSU, against the possibility of Turkey's accession to the EU. Overall, there was not a common ideological basis for parties criticising integration, instead party mobilization remained bound within national context.

In this sense, our findings pointed against a general theory of emerging party contestation over Europe, of the type suggested by Hooghe and Marks and Kriesi et al. (2008). Instead it seems that the national context of political opportunities was important for determining the degree and patterns of party contestation and the substance of the critiques. However, we agree with the basic idea that party contestation is emergent within national politics. We just think that it still has some considerable emerging to do, and that the patterns of emergence will be uneven over time and across countries. This is because the politicization of European integration occurs from within already existing configurations of national party politics and opportunity structures. We saw that centre parties were prepared to criticise Europe (within limits and for 'good reasons', not just populism), when integration was a salient public issue, domestically, and there was a specific opportunity to challenge the government. This means that both centre left and centre right parties will not always support integration on principle. Also, when the domestic spotlight increasingly turns onto European issues, centre parties need to put forward 'what kind of Europe' they support and 'what kind of Europe' they oppose. This critical political thematization that is lodged and carried by mediated public debates is what we see starting in the French referendum debate. In the future, we think that choices about different paths to Europeanization (including negative options) will be mobilized increasingly by political parties in their domestic public debates. This makes effective party competition and media performance vital for translating interpretations of the consequences of European integration –e.g., the financial debt crisis in the Eurozone– into voting choices for the people who are living with them. We return to the recent politicization in the Eurozone crisis in the final part, first, we draw the lessons for how EU politicization advances from the Constitution study.

Lessons from the Constitution Study: Conditions for EU Politicization

The politicization of Europe remains a partial occurrence and theoretical attempts to grasp it, so far, remain partial theories, tested by partial empirical evidence. However, we think that there are important insights and findings from our Constitution study which point a way forward.

First, our study showed that political institutional context matters. The complex institutional arrangements for decision-making within multi-level governance create a potential for contradictions across political levels (EU-level v national elites), across countries (national elite competition), and within countries (competition between elites within a country). However, for these potential contradictions to be politicized they need to be made publicly visible. This raises the question of mass media

performance and whether there is a field of public communication that can supply adequate resources of political information to the public domain. So, the performance of (national) media systems also matters, before we can begin to talk of politicization.

Against the simplistic view that media do not cover Europe (see, Hix 2008), we found that mediated public debates not only existed, but that they had a capacity to transform significantly, and adapt quickly, to cover the specific institutional arena where consequential European decisions were being taken. Indeed our findings showed that the degree and form of Europeanization of public debates was crucially determined by the location (political-level, country) of relevant institutional arenas for decision-making. Also the degree and form of public contestation between political actors was strongly shaped by the formal channels of access to these institutional arenas. Generally, this showed that mediated public debates have the capacity to follow European multi-level institutions' decisions and make political information about them available to the public. Media attention was not really a problem. It seems that journalists for the most part do their job, at least to the same standards as they do when covering national politics.¹⁷

None the less, although we found that mass media debates are able to shift the focus of their attention in response to relevant developments at the institutional-level, we still found qualitative 'deficits' in the field of public communication. In the Drafting phase, we witnessed a public debate that was excessively dominated by executive elite actors. The relative inability of civil society actors to raise significant alternative 'voices' over the Convention within the public discourse must also have undermined their ability to press their case within institutional arenas. At this stage there was a lack of politicization: elites swamped the public debates with 'good news' favouring the Constitution. The public debate was visible but flat: it carried an insufficient degree of political mobilization by parties and from civil society to generate a critical narrative that could make the proposed institutional changes resonate in the minds of national publics. It lacked public contestation. These conditions changed in the ratification phase. The French President's decision to hold a legally binding referendum transformed the political opportunity structure for public claim making. The referendum was an exceptional and unusual political event because it shifted decision-making from the institutional arena to the public domain. The French referendum politicized European integration, but the degree of politicization was relative. It produced an uneven pattern of Europeanization of national public spheres – a 'Frenchification' – and domestic contestation in France was primarily mobilized from within the institutional arena by party competition, not by civil society mobilization. Nonetheless, the event illustrates how the *mechanisms* for politicization work.

First, an *institutional opportunity structure* opened that allowed opponents to see a chance to successfully challenge the government over Europe. Second, the political relevance of the referendum generated *high media attention*. This combination

¹⁷ For a detailed empirical study of journalism whose findings support this general view, see Statham 2008, 2010. Of course, there are many claims that all media performance is inadequate in contemporary democracies, for example, discussions about 'dumbing down' and 'mediatization'. However, from an analytic viewpoint, adequate normative standards for media performance over Europe are that political information is supplied according to the same criteria of relevance that also apply for domestic national politics.

produced a potential for politicization. The referendum forced political actors to address the public and increased the influence of mass-mediated debates in shaping the outcome. This temporarily shifted decision-making to the public arena and opened new *discursive opportunities* for claim making. Such conditions created the potential for *elite divisions* among the French political class which was crucial for generating public contestation.¹⁸ Facing these opportunities, an elite actor – a *political entrepreneur* – took the decision to break ranks and mobilize publicly against the dominant elite stance over the Constitution. The Socialist Party faction not only perceived an opportunity to challenge the government’s (and their own leadership’s) authority, but they had sufficient organizational *resources* and access to media debates to mobilize a public critique. Their challenge required the government to respond by mobilizing *justifications* for its own stance on the public stage. This need to publicly justify positions over the Constitution transformed political competition from an institutional-level game into a *discursive struggle*. In this way, elite competition transformed the field of public communication carried by mass media into the primary locus for contestation and thereby presented new opportunities for other actors to see chances of success through acts of public claim making. Overall, this led to a *critical thematization* of European integration in the public domain.

Importantly, the Socialist critique was a ‘successful’ *framing* because it gave a meaningful interpretation to the Constitution event that was sufficiently convincing to enough people to *resonate* and shape the understandings of some voters. It translated the hitherto abstract and distant issue of a European Constitution into a set of real and understandable consequences for the French public. The Socialists’ critique advocated ‘Social Europe’ as a preferable alternative to the ‘neo-liberal Constitution’. This framing gained sufficient public resonance as a rational, convincing and legitimate way of viewing the Constitution. It worked by telling the French people ‘who would get what’ (combining identity and distribution) and be the constituency of ‘losers’ from this Constitutionalization. By contrast, the French government’s appeal to a unitary French-European cultural identity proved to be an insufficiently convincing narrative to win the vote.

From this, we draw a couple of general conclusions, one on the top-down, and one on the bottom-up, conditions for politicization.

First, elites play an important role in determining the degree of politicization that can occur by the amount and form of access they grant to the public in decision-making. In this view, the Constitution vote ‘failure’ was not a public sphere failure, but a failure by executive elites to create the adequate political conditions and opportunities for a genuine democratic public debate. In fact, executive actors relinquished hardly any control over decisions in the Constitution event. It was managed behind closed doors at the EU-level in drafting and national executives tried to manage and control ratification with a yes vote. The German government marched the Constitution through the Bundestag, the British procrastinated only through fear of failure in a referendum, while the French President Chirac introduced a referendum by tactical error under the misguided belief that a favourable vote was guaranteed and would

¹⁸ Divisions between elites within a national polity have been recognized in the social movement literature as a condition that provides opportunities for challengers to perceive enhanced chances of success for their protests (see, Kriesi et al 1995). In our case the main division occurred within the leadership of the main opposition Socialist Party.

bolster his national Presidency and Europe (in that order). Overall, executives did little to make the Constitution a vehicle of European politicization; that which occurred was an accidental by-product of the French referendum – it was the unintended outcome of the elite’s attempt to advance European integration under the old norms of the permissive consensus. In this sense, elites get the public sphere that their democratic aspirations (measured by the degree of access they grant the public to decision-making) deserve.

Second, when we speak of general or mass publics, the potential for collective learning processes is structurally located for the most part within national public spheres. This means that the politicization of Europe must occur through a nationally-filtered language of claims and critical narratives that are able to resonate with national political understandings. We think that this makes mediated politics within national public spheres the crucial vehicle for a *socialization* of Europe into the everyday understandings of Europeans. So far, we have not been convinced by the argument that a socialization of Europe will occur through a kind of automatic increase in ‘European’ self-identifications. Even advocates of this viewpoint concede that European identification to the extent it exists is secondary to national identification, an ‘identity-lite’ (see, Fligstein 2008, Katzenstein and Checkel 2009, Risse 2010). From this, it does not follow logically –as many of these authors assume– that a limited emergence of secondary ‘identity-lite’ Europeans among national publics can serve anything like the same function as primary national identification did in the building of the nation-state.¹⁹ On the contrary, we see levels of European (secondary) self-identifications among national publics as a by-product of (and indicator for) the degree of socialization of Europe that is generated by resonant public debates. So European identification matters as an indicator for the socialization of Europe, but for us the driver for socialization comes from the public resonance of mediated politics.²⁰

We think that a vital way to increase the resonance of Europe within public perceptions is through critical public debates that are carried by mass media. When political actors mobilize claims over Europe, then they provide critical narratives that bring Europe into domestic political understandings. A further selection and ‘translating’ is added to this, when journalists choose which stories are politically relevant and transform this information into a format and idiom that is comprehensible to their readers. This process of ‘double translation’ that renders European decisions and issues into *news* is exactly the same as that, which occurs within national politics, when, for example, a government’s large and complex national budget and its consequences are covered by the media. In other words, the existing national political and media systems are not only adequate for making Europe public, they also represent the best chance for making Europe politically relevant ‘bottom-up’ by stimulating the collective learning process that lead to socialization. We think that looking for evolving European self-identification misses the point. It is a methodological hangover from the search for something akin to the role the ‘nation’

¹⁹ It only makes sense to talk of the possible emergence of self-conscious self-identifying ‘Europeans’ as a group or ‘people’ (or in Marx’s term’s a ‘group for itself’) with reference to the small transnational Brussels-Strasbourg elite, not general or mass (national) publics.

²⁰ It is interesting to note that even for Risse (2010) who combines European identity and European public sphere approaches, his concluding chapter locates and explains changes primarily through reference to public sphere factors.

played in the making of modern political communities. First and foremost, Europe needs a public discourse that renders it with consequential meaning. Eder's theory of 'Europe as a narrative network' also makes this point when he states (2011:42): 'collective identity in Europe is still in a process of becoming, and instead of pre-empting a 'European identity' we should look at the process and the factors that shape the robustness of the meaning of the events happening in its course.' In this sense, the future of Europe needs a storyline (or story lines) that will convince sufficient people (in their distinct national public spheres) of its ongoing social value and political worth. The important 'translators' providing these 'stories' about Europe are the political party and media systems that are predominantly structured at the national level. This also means that the EU-level institutions' efforts to communicate directly to individual citizens through internet initiatives are likely to have little effect in socializing Europeans.

Thoughts on politicization through the Euro-zone crisis: whither integration?

Fast-forwarding from the failed Constitutional dreams of the 2000s to the financial debt crises that characterize the early 2010s, the political context for European integration has transformed radically. How do we account for this new politicization of Europe, based on lessons from the Constitution study?

In the so-called 'Euro-zone' crisis, the seventeen EU members who entered into monetary union have attempted to prevent the risk of national debt defaults by several member countries that would de-stabilize the whole currency, common market, and have damaging knock-on effects for the whole global economy. The path from the 'Constitution' crisis leading to the 'Euro-zone' is self evident. A Monetary Union that was not backed by a common fiscal policy proved to be structurally unsustainable. In response to the debt crisis, member states' governments have once more had to enter into EU constitutional politics, but in contrast to previous processes, this time they have reverted to a form of 'executive constitutionalism' (Menéndez 2011). After setting aside the supposedly 'rigorous' rules for monetary policies that bound the governments in the existing Treaty framework, EU-level negotiations among national executives have hammered out common policies for financial bail-outs for indebted countries in return for the implementation of stringent national austerity policies. These negotiations have been dominated by Germany and France, who have called the shots and acted through the European Central Bank and with support from the International Monetary Fund. In brief, structural contradictions within the Euro zone have resulted in a clear power hegemony between the central core countries (Germany and France) who make the decisions, and the economically weakest countries at the periphery, the so called PIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain), who largely follow instructions. However, the fate of all members is tied: economically, because market integration means that the banks of the strong countries lent heavily to the weak, and so all countries will suffer from any defaults; and politically, because monetary union was a flagship project for integration driven by the strong countries, and because 'solutions' need ratification by the polities of all Euro-zone countries.

According to the model we developed through studying the Constitution case, we think that the Eurozone crisis has an extraordinarily high potential for generating a deep and ongoing politicization of the EU within national domestic politics across the region. What is crucial to understanding this new wave of politicization is that it is

driven by redistributive conflicts both within and across member states, and this is how it has expressed itself through public contestation. Through the Eurozone crisis, European member states have torn apart the core founding myth that integration leads to stability and growth for all (countries and citizens). Importantly, this runs counter to the view in political science that European integration faces a threat driven by a new mobilization of identity politics ('who you are') of nationalists, xenophobes and populists (see especially, Hooghe and Marks 2008, Katzenstein and Checkel 2009). We think that the 'Eurocrisis' conflict is first and foremost about questions of redistribution ('what you get') within the European Union, something which national executives and political elites previously swept under the carpet in the public domain, to ensure a common purpose and unity that would drive integration forward. It is a conflict over redistribution (between countries, within countries, and between social constituencies of winners and losers within and across countries). Of course, this transformation of the power relationships and rules of the game between countries and political actors in the European Union, and the transformation of the ways in which member states conduct their relationships to the EU, will impact on the identities and political meanings that arise in the conflict. However, it is not a rise of nationalist populism that is challenging the EU, it is the transformation of power relationships within the EU, that is creating conditions that might lead to a rise in populist nationalist parties within domestic polities. The Euro-zone debt crisis brings to the fore that now 'what you get' is strongly tied to 'who you are'. The forms of identity politics that emerge, e.g., 'sovereign national people versus EU monetary technocrats', 'Germans versus Greeks', are constructions which tells us about the groups forming in the conflicts and communicate the basis of the redistributive conflicts that arise around the new structural inequalities generated by monetary union.

Specifically, we expect politicization in the Euro-zone crisis to unfold along the following lines:

First, the potential for transnational elite divisions between executives from creditor and indebted countries is built into the structure of the Euro debt crisis. This conflict field is structured around a powerful European core (admittedly with internal frictions between Germany and France) on one side, and a European periphery (PIGS) who have harsh austerity measures imposed upon them, on the other. Other EU member states position themselves in relation to these blocs, including those outside of the 'Euro', but facing its political and economic consequences. In addition to transnational elite divisions, however, the potential for elite divisions within each country's national polity is even stronger, because executives not only need to renegotiate the debts and the requirements for maintaining monetary stability, but they also have to carry these decisions for austerity measures through their own polities. Eurozone bailout packages have required ratification by all domestic Parliaments and, in an unprecedented way in the history of European integration, at the time of writing two governments (Slovakia, Greece) have already fallen over it, with more (probably Italy) likely to follow, shortly. Even non-Euro members, such as Britain and Poland, have witnessed renewed elite divisions over their relationships to the European Union, as a direct consequence of their respective governments having to justify their stances over this new European political order, in the face of opposition.

Second, the timing and passage of events in the ‘Eurozone crisis’ and their public contestation is determined by global financial market fluctuations, which occur independently from and outside the control of national executives. When the Constitution fell in the 2005 referendums, political elites were still able to control the fallout by taking decision-making away from public arenas and advancing integration through executive-level agreement behind ‘closed doors’ By contrast, political elites have virtually no control over when the ‘Eurozone crisis’ hits the public agenda and they have a very restricted scope in the decisions they can take in response. Under these conditions, executive actors are exposed to the double uncertainty of the market and the popular vote. Economic uncertainty (markets) is compounded by and feeds off political uncertainty (EU’s capacity for decision-making and implementation), and vice versa.

A third factor enhancing politicization results from the high media attention for the Eurozone crisis across the region and the world. Media respond to an increase across the region in the demand for information by a public that feels personally affected by these uncertain but consequential events. Gabriel Almond (1960) in his classic research on public opinion and foreign policy argued that the only time when the ‘general public’ –in distinction to the ‘attentive public’ and ‘policy and opinion elite’– knew or cared much beyond their immediate concerns was at the exceptional time of ‘crisis’. ‘Crisis’ is the rare moment when to use Gitlin’s (1980) phrase ‘the whole world is watching’. The structural financial instability which is compounded by political instability has a very high ‘news value’. It has created a climate of risk and public uncertainty that has increased the public thirst for knowledge and expanded public debates about possible solutions and consequences. Mass media also plays a part as an actor in the crisis, as an agenda-setter and through media framing, that also contributes to the potential exacerbation or diffusion of a critical situation, e.g., through creating financial ‘panics’. News tends to report conflicts. Mediated public debates can influentially translate the Euro-crisis into different and cross-cutting viewpoints: as conflicts within a country; as conflicts between EU countries, or blocs of countries (North versus South, centre versus periphery); or over democracy (elites versus citizens), or between social constituencies (winners and losers of debt reduction measures). In contrast to the view put forward by Hooghe and Marks, these media logics are not uni-dimensional, negative and nationalizing. Yes, it is true, some versions of the media drama support ‘re-nationalizations’ of debates and a new sharp confrontation of national publics (talk of the ‘lazy’ and ‘fraudulent Greeks’, or the ‘Nazi Germans’). But it is equally true, that the media across Europe have become the locus for attempts to regain of democratic control from elites, by giving voice to the chorus of intellectuals, civil society actors and movements who challenge this new discretionary power of government, both nationally and transnationally, as well as carrying discussions of fairness, and in some cases solidarity (sympathy for the Portuguese ‘who took their medicine’ in the first round of cuts). The outcome of this framing contest between political actors within mediated public debates has the potential to shape how publics across the region come to interpret the relevance of the Euro-crisis to them. It can therefore feed back into the field of public mobilization and contestation.

A fourth factor leading to a high potential for politicization results from the mobilization of public unrest and opposition. In the Constitution study, we found relatively little civil society mobilization as a source of contestation, politicization

turned out to be driven primarily by party competition in the French referendum. By contrast, the potential for civil society mobilization and protest movements is much stronger in the Eurozone crisis, building divisions between citizens and elites, within and across countries. Over time we think this will shape new ideological divisions that define the relationships between the people of Europe. For example, the protest camps in European capital cities opposing the consequences of financial globalization may be the latent emergence of a social constituency of people who see themselves as 'losers' starting to join collectively as a 'group' or even 'new class' to demand changes and a better deal from the political authorities. The degree to which this opposition can become a form of mass politics that expresses coherent demands, that can become the basis for a social movement, or for party competition, remains unclear. Within the current context what we can say with certainty is that national political elites appear to have institutionally underwritten the passage of unpopular policy measures, and this presents exactly the type of closed opportunity structure that is likely to provoke extra-parliamentary challenges by social movements and marginalised political parties. One reason is because the emergency measures imposed by national executives and the harsh austerity measures linked to it seem to violate the core of popular sovereignty and the capacity of the people to shape their own destiny. Thus, consulting 'the people' and seeking a popular mandate to support implementing the harsh austerity measures in the idea of a national referendum in Greece faced fierce opposition from other Euro-zone governments, but not really from the people of Europe. The democratic legitimacy problem with implementing these unpopular policy measures provides incentives for social movements (like the Occupy movement in Frankfurt and elsewhere) to challenge the system on the basis of this perceived injustice (lack of democratic legitimacy, national self-determination, will of the people) in the face of the (negative) consequences economic globalization. Important in this respect is that national executives have provided very little formal access to the public in their decisions to ratify their respective national commitments to 'bailout packages'. To publics from the weaker countries, these consequential national decisions seem like decisions imposed by executives and civil servants from other countries, who they have no chance to vote in or out. To publics from the stronger countries, they seem like handouts of scarce national public revenues to foreign failed economies that have not been ratified by the people in national elections.

Following the approach outlined in this article, we think the outcomes for European integration and the future of the EU (collectively and for individual member states) will be shaped by this contentious politics and struggle over democratic legitimacy that is carried by mediated public debates. In the crisis we are at a high-tide point of claims about democracy and what the EU should constitute. The Euro-zone crisis has opened up new *opportunities* for challenges to national executives' stances over Europe, particularly from within their own domestic politics. Maybe for the first time in the history of European integration, the pooling of EU sovereignty cannot be justified as a 'positive sum' game with the promise of benefits for all. The new monetary policies have clear redistributive consequences and damaging social and economic impacts for large parts of the population. This new situation is particularly challenging for national executives who have to try to publicly justify their support for these measures. In the weaker countries, national executives have had to justify stringent policy measures for cutting public expenditure, while the German government, and those of the other stronger countries, have had to justify financing

the debt bailouts of the weaker countries and attempting to secure a ‘common’ long-term financial stability. This creates political opportunities for competition within national politics between parties (or within parties) over the effects of redistribution (who gets what and who pays for what) and, maybe even more explosive, over the attribution of causalities and responsibilities (who is to blame for crisis). It is precisely when redistribution conflicts (who gets what) becomes a ‘blame game’ within national politics that populism and identity politics enters onto the stage, but this does not have to be equivalent with the rise of populist nationalist parties, mainstream centre parties are also capable of co-opting such messages, and integrating them into their own views on redistribution. Overall, it is indisputable that the context provides incentives for political entrepreneurs and is strongly likely to result in *elite divisions* within and across the member states.

A key factor which shifts this elite competition within political institutions to a *discursive struggle* in the public domain is the structural financial instability and climate of public uncertainty. Government *justifications* for their international agreements, and criticisms from party and civil society actors, all in the media spotlight, leads to contestation and a *critical thematization* of the Eurozone crisis. Here we think that one crucial difference between the Eurozone crisis and the Constitution case concerns the potential for *public resonance* of the issue. We saw that in the referendum, the French Socialists’ claims resonated by translating the rather abstract issue of a European Constitution and European institutional reform into a set of (social) consequences that were relevant to a constituency of French people. By contrast, the public relevance of the Eurozone crisis and its potential consequences is self-evident and requires little translation. Publics have long understood the direct implications of budgetary measures to their household incomes – this is always one of the main bases of party competition for voters in elections. Importantly, this links again to our criticisms of Hooghe and Marks’ false dualism between identity and interest politics. Central to the Eurozone crisis is that the ‘who you are’ question is following behind the restructuring of social relationships across the region according to ‘what you get’ in redistributive outcomes. Carried by public debates, the Eurozone crisis has become a mediated stage for playing out which countries, and which actors, are the new power-holders and ‘winners’ of integration, and which its ‘losers’. In this way, public contestation and the discursive struggle has torn apart the old universalism that the European Union is somehow an equal partnership between countries, and between its citizens. On the contrary some countries are more equal than others, and some constituencies ‘win’ and some ‘lose’, as a result of market integration. Public debates make clear to the public, whether they belong to a constituency (national, group) of winners or losers, and thereby transforms the basis for political competition. Also the power struggle between elites is itself a target for public contestation. Public contestation over the Eurozone crisis is making the citizen-elite divide more salient. The closed access to decision-making over a country’s obligations to its contribution to the common rescue package has created a gap between national political elites (of left and right mainstream parties), who have carried the integration agenda and ‘the people’ who now face the resultant consequences. Public debates are *socializing* these new divisions.

In addition, this re-framing of conflicts over distribution between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’, occurs on the streets of European cities, not least among the angry European citizens of the Southern countries, who are hardest hit. There have been new protest

waves across Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece of the ‘indignant’ people, who are in many cases unemployed public sector workers and qualified graduates who face diminishing prospects in the new austerity climate, having already borne the brunt of the previous round of cuts. In addition, the Greek bailout package in October 2011 was greeted by a wave of violent protests on the steps of the Parliament against proposed austerity measures. It is worth noting, the Greek Prime Minister Papandreou’s failed attempt to call a national referendum to ratify the deep austerity measures agreed as part of the Greek bailout in October 2011, was precisely an attempt to court favour among the Greek people, to try to ensure his political survival in the face of the gap, between the agreements he made with other leaders of Eurozone countries, and the violent opposition on the streets of Athens. Meanwhile reporters in countries financing the bail outs, especially Germany, have had no difficulty in finding ‘Germans’ who think that the costs of Europe are too high, who are increasingly critical of monetary union and who blame ‘the Greeks’. This demonstrates how much a critical thematization of the financial crisis and its consequences has ‘hit home’ within domestic politics. In addition, this new wave of protests and mobilizations against institutional politics may encourage populist parties to challenge the mainstream centre parties, on an anti-systemic, anti-elitist, nationalist basis, by blaming the ‘old guard’ parties of left and right for the consequences resulting from the Eurozone crisis. In turn, if new populist parties emerge, then the old centre parties will need to re-adjust to make deals with the newcomers, or steal some of their clothes.

Another important issue which the Euro-zone debt crisis clarifies is the potential for supranational ‘Euro-parties’ and a European Parliament. It is striking that barely a squeak has been heard from the European-level elected representatives in the whole of this crisis. They are conspicuous only by their absence and irrelevance. This underlines that EU politicization grows from within national politics and it renders discussions about how to reform the EU-level polity (see e.g., Hix 2008) as little more than an abstract academic exercise.

To conclude, the Euro-zone crisis has led to an unprecedented degree of politicization and transformed the context for European integration. The important question is whether politicization through nationally structured mediated politics will expose the weaknesses of the existing institutional design still further or provide a remedy for it. In a first scenario, we could see an institutional collapse of the European Union driven by the increasing salience of Eurosceptic discourses within national politics. This would result in a sort of ‘balkanisation’ of the EU driven by populist nationalism. Against this, a second scenario is that we could see the problems resulting from the EU’s poor institutional design ‘democratized’ by a rise of the type of Eurocritical discourses that make the EU-level of decision-making meaningful and accountable through national politics. This would be a ‘normalization’ and legitimation of EU-level decision-making within contentious national politics. However, there are possibilities that result from the incompleteness and unevenness of the processes driving these changes. In a third scenario, we could envisage an outcome where a strong political core in the EU could be constantly challenged by the weaker countries and their struggles over burden-sharing and redistribution. This would result in a sort of ‘Empire’ where a hegemonic EU core seeks to exert control over the periphery, and where public contestation is driven by claims over perceived inequalities in the distribution of life chances (for countries, regions and groups) that result from the new

order. There is a fourth in-between scenario, too. Here we could witness an unresolved process characterised by deep disagreements and continuing waves of relative dissatisfaction and satisfaction with the existing institutional situation carried by critical national public debates and contestation. This could lead to an uneven, two-tier, or two-speed EU, where some countries drop out of integration projects, some move forward, and some stand still. However, over time this could incrementally add up to a quasi-legitimation of this flexible institutional arrangement. But it would be one that is realistic of the democratic and problem-solving limitations of governance beyond the nation state, because it would be carried by critical Europeanized public debates that occur in view of its (national) peoples, instead of driven by an elite's overambitious plans for supranational democracy. Quo vadis Europa?

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