www.jcer.net

Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

ISSN 1815-347X

Contents

Editors' Note: This issue was updated on 11 March 2019 to include the article 'Monitoring Generic Skills Development in a Bachelor European Studies' by Johan Adriaensen, Patrick Bijsmans and Afke Groen.

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Journal of Contemporary
European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

Research Article

How Blurred is European Public Opinion between Legal versus Illegal Immigrants?

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Citation

Canan-Sokullu, E. (2019). 'How Blurred is European Public Opinion between Legal versus Illegal Immigrants? ', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 15(1): 4-20.
https://doi.org/ 10.30950/jcer.v15i1.990

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

Although European public opinion on immigrants has been monitored closely in recent years, there is little work that differentiates attitudes towards legal versus illegal immigrants. This study explores variations in public attitudes in Europe between legal and illegal immigration through multivariate hierarchical modelling. It shows that Europeans' anti-immigrant attitudes are rooted in their concerns more about illegal immigrants. The results also indicate that public opinion in countries with larger immigrant populations is concerned significantly about the illegal immigrants.

Keywords

European public opinion, immigration, legal immigrants, illegal immigrants, hierarchical modelling

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The relative economic prosperity and political stability of Europe has a considerable pull effect on immigrants. Legal and documented immigrants who arrived in Europe during the 1960s were mostly recruited to remedy labour shortages in Western Europe during an era of extraordinary economic growth. However, when Europe experienced recession in the 1970s, immigrants were blamed for their host societies' economic and social problems. With the increased pace of European integration during the 1980s, Europe became attractive to refugees from developing countries, either for seeking refuge from persecution or for simply wanting a better life (Bade 2004: 346). The end of the Cold War opened a new way for immigration to Europe, particularly refugee migrants, who moved out of fear or fled persecution in their homelands.

Immigration has recently developed a bi-dimensional momentum. Besides any increase in the actual number of migrants, the topic of migration has started to raise concerns about legal and illegal migration. Illegal stays detected in Europe between 2009 and 2017 dropped to the lowest level in 2012 (around 72,440) compared with previous years (Statista 2018a). However, this rose by 48 per cent in 2013, with illegal entries between border crossing points increasing to around 107, 370 (Statista 2018b). The detected flow of illegal immigrants in 2014 increased by 170 percent in comparison with 2013, while this figure increased by over 200 percent from 2014 to 2015.According to the European Commission (2017), almost 300,000 illegal entrants were observed in 2014. Public response to this trend has been a greater concern about illegal immigrants than legal immigrants (68 per cent and 28 per cent respectively) (German Marshall Fund 2013).

There are subtle nuances in conceptual definitions of legal and illegal immigrants. Admissions of the former are carried out on various bases, such as family unifications, being nationals of post-colonial territories, labour immigration (Sassen 1988), or as catastrophe or civil war-related asylum seekers and refugees (Bade 2004). Whereas, illegal immigrants enter either secretly aided by human traffickers, crossing borders with forged documents or without any official registration (Miller 1995), or enter legally but overstay using false documents and join the informal sector. Some may seek asylum or refuge, but not through using their legal right to ask for asylum (Goodwin-Gill 1996).

This study argues that the Europeans develop distinct attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants. 'European public opinion' here comprises the popular views in 11 European countries where immigrant populations show variations in terms of country of origin, legal status of residency and history of integration with the host society. While some European states welcome new immigrants and express their commitment to continue receiving them, others declare their limited capacity. Besides the state-level variations, at the mass public level there have also been variations in pro- and anti-immigrant attitudes.

European public opinion on immigrants has been monitored closely in recent years, yet there is little work that examines why or how attitudes toward legal and illegal immigrants differ. This study fills this gap by testing three major bodies of research into public opinion on immigrants to differentiate between attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants. Bratsberg (1995) and Lapinski et al. (1997) suggest that it is illegal immigration which makes people more concerned. Borjas (1990) and Chiswick (1988) devote much attention to estimating the size of the illegal immigrant population and to assessing the impact of both legal and illegal immigration on the welfare of the native-born population. Jasso and Rosenzweig (1982) also address the impacts of the volume of immigration on perceived differences in legal and illegal immigrants.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of patterns in public opinion regarding legal versus illegal immigrants in Europe by testing these predominant theories of public opinion on immigration. The structure of this article is as follows. First, a multivariate theoretical background is introduced. This is followed by an outline of methodology and a presentation of findings. Methodologically, anti-immigrant attitudes are examined through hierarchical analysis of individual- and country-level data. In the conclusion, substantive insights into anti-legal and anti-illegal immigrant attitudes are explored.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are three major bodies of research into public opinion regarding immigrants. Studies concentrating on the individual-level determinants of public opinion on immigration examine the role of socio-economic utility (Sides and Citrin 2007; Pettigrew 1998), symbolic interests (Turner, Brown and Tajfel 1979; McLaren 2003), social contact (Wilkes, Guppy and Farris 2008; McLaren 2003), policy approval (Facchini et al. 2008) and political attentiveness (Sigelman and Niemi 2001; Nadeau, Niemi and Levine 1993; Lahav 2004). The second group of studies investigates the impact of personal attributes (micro-level non-attitudinal predictors) on attitudes towards immigrants, including education (Hello, Scheepers and Sleegers 2006; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010), occupation (Semyonov, Raijman and Gorodzeisky 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Quillian 1995) and income (Jackson et al. 2001; Coenders and Scheepers 2008). Thirdly, a number of studies examine micro-level attitudinal predictors such as perceptions about the size of immigrant population (Hjerm 2007; Green 2009), consequences and perceived threats (realistic and symbolic) of immigration (McLaren 2003), and ideological motivations behind attitudes.

Individual-level determinants of public opinion on immigrants: Utility, symbols, and contact

Micro-level theories that analyse individual level predictors concentrate on self-interest and socio-economic explanatory factors, such as economic utility or the cost of immigrants. National economic factors and/or personal economic discontent may modify how people view immigrants (Canan-Sokullu 2011). Assuming 'self-interest maximizing behaviour' (Facchini et al. 2008:668), attitudes are determined by the utility of immigration and immigrants for each individual. McLaren (2002: 557) defines threat of competing with foreigners for jobs available in the home country as 'realistic threats'. The central contention of her approach is that 'members of the dominant group may come to feel that certain resources belong to them, and when those resources are threatened by a minority group, members of the dominant group are likely to react with hostility' (McLaren 2003: 915). By offering cheap and unskilled labour, immigrants are perceived to be taking jobs away from the host country's citizens (Lutz, O'Neil and Scherbov 2003; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010). To explore whether realistic threats make any changes in attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants, it is hypothesised that:

- (H1a) Perceiving that immigrants are competitors in the job market increases concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.
- (H1b) Perceiving that immigrants are a burden on public and social services increases concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.
- (H2a) Perceiving that immigrants positively contribute to the labour market decreases concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.
- (H2b) Perceiving that immigrants positively contribute to the national economy by creating jobs and setting up businesses decreases concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.

The second group of micro-level theories examines the role of culture and identity. A shared 'we-feeling' triggers positive opinions about the out-group, which offers a symbolic added value for the host communities. An absence of fear of losing one's own values and identity to new-comers prevents estrangement. Carey (2002) expects individuals who favour in-group protection to be less supportive of immigration into Europe. For Buzan (1991: 447), immigration threatens 'communal identity and culture' by changing the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics of the population. Matonyte and Morkevicius (2009) conceptualise 'identitarian' threat as a 'symbolic threat' that is associated with the fear that others will change the domestic culture (McLaren 2003: 917; Carey 2002). Others (Kinder and Sears 1981; Citrin, Reingold and Green 1990) also expect individuals who favour in-group protection to be less supportive of immigration into their country because immigrants who have different morals, values, beliefs and attitudes than those of the host majority group pose a significant perceived symbolic threat to the collective (national) identity. A symbolic threat represents a form of resistance to change based on moral feelings, principles and values that the minority group is perceived to violate (Citrin, Reingold and Green 1990). Drawing on these symbolic conceptualisations, this study expects:

- (H3) Perceived symbolic fears that out-group immigrants pose a cultural threat to in-group members increase concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.
- (H4) Perceived symbolic positive contribution of immigrants to national culture decreases concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.

Thirdly, contact theory looks into the impacts of social or personal contact with immigrants on public opinion. Sherif and Sherif (1953) argued that the type of contact changed concerns about the out-group. Social identity scholars (Turner 1975; Turner, Brown and Tajfel 1979; McLaren 2006; Levine et al. 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2005) have studied the impact of individual self-identification with social identity and national identity on attitudes towards accommodating immigrants within host societies. Scholars of 'primary contact' argue that primary intimate contact with acquaintances, friends or family belonging to the out-group strongly predicts opinion about immigrants, and generally reduces hostility, prejudice or exclusionary behaviour towards the out-group. 'Acquaintance potential' (Cook 1978, 1962) and 'friendship potential' (Pettigrew 1998) thus have a positive impact on attitudes towards immigrants. Having friends or family members who are immigrants, being an immigrant oneself, frequent interaction with immigrants and sharing the same goals are among various indicators of personal or social contact that changes attitudes towards the out-group. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

- (H5) Having primary contact with immigrants through family or friends, or being an immigrant oneself, decreases concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.

Micro-level attitudinal predictors: Awareness and policy approval

The first group of micro-level attitudinal predictors is concerned with being informed about immigrants. One group of scholars (Sigelman and Niemi 2001; Nadeau, Niemi and Levine 1993; Lahav 2004) concentrate on perception about the number of immigrants in the host country. They argue that individuals tend to overestimate the size immigrant of populations due to the visibility of immigrants in the public sphere or false information (for example, the frequency of news about crimes by immigrants or media coverage of the arrival of new waves of immigrants) (Verbon and Meijdam 2008). This study proposes:

- (H6a) Believing that the number of immigrants in the host-country is high increases concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.

- (H6b) Individuals who are politically more attentive are more concerned about legal and illegal immigrants.

Pubic approval of policies on immigration also exerts different levels of impacts on attitudes towards immigrants (Facchini et al. 2008). Individuals who often criticise immigration policies as irresponsible may tend to demonise new-comers for triggering economic and societal security challenges for host societies. Studies of the approval of immigration policies often explore correlations between attitudes towards immigrants and approval of government policies towards immigrants (Verbon and Meijdam 2008; Segovia and Defever 2010). Others study the role of policy changes on policy approval (Esses, Jackson and Armstrong 1998; Bauer, Lofstrom and Zimmermann 2001). In the specific context of illegal immigration, Berg (2009) argues that when governments take stronger measures to curb illegal immigration, approval of governments' policies increases. The status of immigrants and emergency situations which cause an increase in new-comers change perceptions about the out-group. In extraordinary times, policy decisions trigger controversies within host societies due to the humanitarian dimension of a crisis, which in return may constrain policies related to immigrants' accommodation. Drawing on existing scholarship, this study tests the argument:

- (H7) Approval of policies about immigration reduces concerns about legal and illegal immigrants.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study came from the Transatlantic Trends Survey (TTS2013) and the Eurostat (2013).[1] The main rationale for data selection was the availability of comparable data concerning both individual-level determinants and national statistics about immigration. The TTS2013 data comprised a battery of 14 questions to measure dependent, independent and control variables. It included representative data for 11 European countries and over 11,000 respondents.[2] Though there have been various studies that collect data about public opinion on immigration,[3] TTS2013 has been the only one that holds two separate questions that tap the dependent variables studied here. Eurostat provided data about proportional size of population of immigrants (in percentages).

There were two dependent variables, namely 'public opinion on legal immigration' (DVI) and 'public opinion on illegal immigration' (DVII). To operationalise them, two TTS2013 questions were used: 'Can you tell me if you are worried or not worried about (a) legal immigration and (b) illegal immigration?' Both questions were operationalised to measure the binary nominal dependent variables whose categories were (0) not worried and (1) worried. 'Don't know' and 'Refusals' were excluded throughout the analysis.

The first group of independent variables, namely the socio-economic factors and self-interests, include realistic perceptions of threat and opportunity due to immigrants. Threat addresses the possibility of immigrants taking jobs from local citizens (egocentric perception of threat) or the burden of immigrants on services that citizens contribute to through taxes (sociotropic perception of threat). Opportunity is comprised two indicators of perceived realistic opportunities: immigrants as a source of labour in sectors that citizens do not prefer and immigrants' contribution to the economy by setting up new businesses. The second set of indicators to test symbolic interests focused on shared cultural values between immigrants and members of the in-group. Being politically informed was measured by political attentiveness and perceived innumeracy about the size of immigrant population. While there may be other forms of political awareness (e.g. Facchini et al. 2017), it is assumed that individuals who participate in political discussions with their friends are more attentive to all aspects of immigration. The contact hypothesis was tested through three different indicators, namely whether an individual has any immigrant friends, whether at least one of the individual's parents is an immigrant or whether the individual was born in a different country than their country of residence. Measurement of all individual-level independent variables is explained in the appendix.

Since the dependent variables are binary nominal variables, two binary logistic regression models (Model 1 and Model 2) were run for the individual-level analysis of public opinion (Level 1).[4] The two models, one for perceptions about legal immigration and the other for perceptions about illegal immigration, were run with the same set of independent and control variables. Models included age, gender, ideological self-placement, occupation as control variables.[5] All independent and control variables were coded as dummies. A one-unit change in the independent and control variables results in a one-unit change (from 0 to 1) in the dependent variables. A positive *B* coefficient for the independent and control variables indicated an increase in the likelihood of concern about immigrants. Standard errors provided the parameter estimates (log-odds) requested for 95 per cent confidence intervals for the odds-ratios.[6]

This study also tested the impact of one country-level variable (Level 2), to test whether the size of immigrant populations in host countries accounts for cross-national variance in opinion. To the TTS2013 dataset I appended one country-level measure that was derived from the Eurostat data. Hence the data were hierarchically structured with 11,047 individuals at Level 1 nested within 11 countries at Level 2. The estimate about the proportional size of population of immigrants in each country (represented as a percentage) was the country-level independent variable.

Table 1 displays the average estimated percentage of immigrants according to national samples in the 11 European countries studied. Across these countries, there were statistically significant country-specific variations in attitudes towards legal (Pearson (χ^2) = 215.75, $p < .05$) and illegal immigration (Pearson (χ^2) = 677.74, $p < .05$). This suggests that a significant proportion of the variation in attitudes towards immigration may be explained by national level factors.

Table 1. Proportional size of immigrants in 11 European countries (%)

	% of immigrants in total population [1]	*% of non-national EU immigrants*	*% of non-EU immigrants* [2]
Sweden	15.9	22.8	55.4
Spain	13.8	32.2	56.2
United Kingdom	12.4	38.3	47.2
Germany	11.9	51.1	36.4
Netherlands	11.7	40.3	31.6
France	11.6	27.2	38.1
Italy	9.4	25.2	65.5
Portugal	8.4	9.5	21.3
Slovakia	4.7	38.2	9.8
Poland	1.7	13.4	26.8
Romania	0.9	0.7	8.9

Source: Eurostat (2013). For reasons of compatibility, only the EU member states from which the TTS collected data are reported here.
[1] Total number of immigrants includes the national and non-national immigrants. National immigrants can be calculated by subtracting non-national EU immigrants from the total numbers of immigrants.
[2] The proportion of the non-EU immigrants to the total number of immigrants

In this analysis, hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) at individual and country levels was employed.[7] HLM estimated the effects of independent and control variables on concerns about legal and illegal immigration at the individual level within countries (Maas and Hox 2005).[8] Controlling for individual-level effects, HLM analysed the effects of variations at the level of respondents' country of origin.[9]

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results addressed the Level 1 and Level 2 analysis step-by-step. The binary logistic regression results for European public opinion on immigrants are summarised in Table 2, including the coefficients and standard errors for two models (Model 1 and Model 2).[10] To predict the value associated with the negative and positive opinion categories, opinions on legal and illegal immigrants were reconceptualised as an attempt to predict the probability that an individual is either concerned or not concerned. The parameter estimates in Table 2 can be interpreted as representing the variation in the impacts of independent variables on the likelihood that an individual is concerned about legal or illegal immigrants, all else being equal. Thus, negative coefficients are associated with absence of concern, while positive coefficients are associated with presence of concern about immigrants.[11]

Table 2 shows that perceived realistic and symbolic threats and opportunities contributed significantly to public concern on legal immigration. An increase in the perceived threat of immigrants taking jobs away from nationals of a country (H1a) and being a burden on social services (H1b) increased concerns about immigrants. In direct contrast to threat perceptions, the expected opportunity of immigrants offering extra labour in the job market made people less concerned, though this only applied to legal immigrants (H2a). The perceived positive contribution of immigrants to the national economy via creating jobs and setting up businesses decreased concerns about both groups of immigrants (H2b). Regarding the symbolic threat and opportunity perceptions, considering immigrants as a threat to national culture increased the likelihood of individuals being more anti-immigrant (H3). In contrast, if immigrants were perceived to be a factor that enriched the culture then the likelihood of becoming more immigrant-friendly increased for legal immigrants only (H4).

The coefficients of the realistic and symbolic correlates of perceived opportunity appeared to be significant only for legal immigrants.

Table 2. Individual level models: binary logistic regression analysis of public opinion on legal versus illegal immigrants

			Model 1 B (SE)	*Model 2* B (SE)
Intercept			-1.708*** (.170)	-.436*** (.152)
Predictors				
Socio-economic correlates	Threat	…take jobs away from us	.801*** (.059)	.400*** (.063)
		…are a burden on social services	.637*** (.062)	.532*** (.055)
	Opportunity	…fill a shortage of workers	-.235*** (.058)	.089 (.058)
		…create jobs and sets up businesses	-.360*** (.059)	-.381*** (.055)
Symbolic correlates	Threat	…threaten our national culture	.762*** (.060)	.562*** (.072)
	Opportunity	…enrich our culture	-.311*** (.060)	.006 (.062)
Primary contact		Immigrant friend	-.062 (.058)	.054 (.055)
		Immigrant parent	.104 (.109)	-.002 (.095)
		Self-immigrant	.033 (.142)	.001 (.123)
Micro-level Attitudinal Predictors	Perceived size of immigrants	Innumeracy: Too many immigrants	.843*** (.058)	1.238*** (.076)
	Government Approval	Approval of immigration policy	-.323*** (.060)	-.122** (.051)
	Political Attentiveness	Political attentiveness	-.061 (.065)	.055 (.058)
N			9235	9216
Model $\chi^{2\,a}$			2356.80	1490.21
-2LL			8606.73	9857.94
Degrees of freedom			25	25
Nagelkerke R^2			.324	.211

Note 1: The dependent variable in Model 1 is 'opinion on legal immigration' and 'opinion on illegal immigration' in Model 2. Binary categories of both dependent variables are (0) not concerned (1) concerned.
Note 2: Estimates of cut points available from the author upon request.
Note 3. Control variables were included in the estimation but not reported in the table. Available upon request.
[a] Both model chi-squares are statistically significant at p < .001
* p< .001. ** p< .01. *** p< .05

The results for Models 1 and 2 estimated that Europeans who thought that there were 'too many immigrants' in their countries were significantly concerned about immigrants (H6a), where the likelihood of anti-illegal immigrant attitudes was higher. Holding all other independent variables constant, a one-unit increase in perceived number of immigrants from 'not many' to 'too many' resulted in the highest increase in the log-odds of being against both legal and illegal immigrants (B = .843 and B = 1.238, respectively). An increase in approval for government immigration policies decreased the likelihood of evaluating legal and illegal immigrants negatively (H7). All else being equal, individuals' approval of immigration policies decreased their concerns about legal immigrants more.

The control variables produced several additional interesting findings. First, individuals who ideologically self-identified as centrist were significantly concerned about illegal immigrants compared to right-wing respondents. Second, people working in clerical positions were significantly more concerned about legal immigrants. Third, those with only primary education were significantly more concerned about illegal immigrants. Finally, age had a significant impact on the log-odds of concern about illegal immigrants, indicating that older people are more likely to become anti-illegal immigrants (B = .012).

Table 3 contains HLM results examining the level of concern for legal and illegal immigration where individual opinions (Level 1) were nested within host-countries (Level 2). A country-level variable, 'proportional size of immigrants in host country', was added to the baseline models (Model 1 and Model 2) to gauge its effect on individuals' concern for legal and illegal immigration together with all other explanatory variables (Table 3). The first group of a two-level HLM analysis was Model 3 and Model 4 (intercept-only models). They excluded all individual level variables and tested whether being from different countries of origin made any significant impact on concern for legal and illegal immigration at country-level only. In both models, proportional size of immigrants had strong positive impacts on anti-immigrant concerns. Model 5 and Model 6 were fully specified models that included all independent variables, at both individual and country levels. The fixed part of the models provided estimated coefficients and the random effects part presented the variance component for the intercepts at the country level. [12]

Models 5 and 6 showed that socio-economic and symbolic correlates had significant impacts in the expected directions on attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants. Primary acquaintance with either of the immigrant groups made no significant contribution to anti-immigrant attitudes. However, the results contradicted with the micro-level attitudinal predictions. Perceiving there to be 'too many' immigrants decreased individuals' concerns about legal and illegal immigrants (standard estimates were -.165 and -.098, respectively) when the country-level variable 'proportional size of immigrants in host country' was included (Table 3). The estimated size of the immigrant population had significantly positive impacts on concern for illegal immigrants (B = .020) (Model 6). The volume of immigrants within the host society population increased the likelihood of concern for the illegal immigrants, yet remained insignificant to explain the level and direction of concern about legal immigrants. Moreover, being more politically aware caused an increase only in anti-illegal immigrant attitudes.

Table 3. Hierarchical linear modelling of public opinion on legal versus illegal immigrants

			Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Fixed Effects						
Intercept			.276*** (.019)	.684*** (.035)	.578*** (.076)	.617*** (.083)
Level I (Individual Level Factors)						
Socio-economic correlates	Threat	…take jobs away from us			-.147*** (.010)	-.096*** (.011)
		…are a burden on social services			-.085*** (.010)	-.123*** (.010)
	Opportunity	…fill a shortage of workers			.039*** (.009)	.001 (.010)
		…create jobs and sets up businesses			.057*** (.009)	.054*** (.010)
Symbolic correlates	Threat	…threaten our national culture			-.153*** (.011)	-.096*** (.011)
	Opportunity	…enrich our culture			.058*** (.010)	.026** (.011)
Primary contact		Immigrant friend			.009 (.009)	.014 (.010)
		Immigrant parent			-.010 (.016)	-.013 (.017)
		Self-immigrant			-.008 (.021)	-.027 (.022)
Micro-level Attitudinal Predictors	Perceived size of immigrants	Innumeracy: Too many immigrants			-.165*** (.011)	-.098*** (.012)
	Government Approval	Approval of immigration policy			-.053*** (.009)	.009 (.010)
	Political Attentiveness	Political attentiveness			.005 (.010)	.022** (.010)
Level 2 (Country-level factor)						
Proportional size of immigrants in host country					.003 (.002)	.020** (.006)
Random Effects						
Intercept			.196*** (.003)	.202*** (.002)	.151 (.002)	.172 (.002)
Variance component			.003** (.002)	.013** (.006)	.008 (.004)	.013 (.006)
Model Fit Statistics						
-2LL			13137.41	13421.09	8804.59	9979.33
AIC			13143.41	13427.09	8862.59	10037.33
BIC			13165.28	13448.96	9069.39	10244.07

Note 1: The dependent variable in Model 3 and Model 5 is 'opinion on legal immigration' and 'opinion on illegal immigration' in Model 4 and Model 6.
Note 2: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors of estimates.
Note 3. Control variables were included in the estimation but not reported in the table. Available upon request.
* p< .001. ** p< .01. *** p< .05

CONCLUSION

This study focused on modelling the combined impacts of socio-demographic, economic and socio-psychological attributes of members of the in-group society on their attitudes towards legal and illegal immigrants in 11 European countries. The results show that: (i) in line with McLaren's arguments (2003), socio-culturally and economically vulnerable individuals are more likely to express negative attitudes toward both legal and illegal immigrants; (ii) perceiving that there are economic and cultural benefits to immigration decreased the likelihood of concerns about legal immigrants; (iii) concerns about the number of immigrants increased concerns about immigration in general; (iv) approval of governments' performance related with immigration decreased popular concerns about legal immigrants more; (v) there were significant concerns about illegal immigrants in countries with higher immigrant populations; and (vi) the results of primary acquaintance showed no support for the contact thesis.

Thus, this study is important for two main reasons. First, it contributes to recent debates in Europe regarding whether immigrants' legal status is a source of polarisation within immigrant-receiving societies. The central argument in this paper has demonstrated that there are differences between attitudes towards legal and illegal immigration. Perceptions outweigh the realities when it comes to the size of immigrant populations, but mostly for illegal immigrants. What makes individuals most strongly concerned is related with how they perceive the density of immigrants in the society, regardless of the source of information, exposure to accurate information or contact with immigrants. The other interesting contribution of this study is that the *actual* size of immigrant populations affects attitudes towards illegal but not legal immigrants, whereas the *perceived* size of immigrant populations has parallel effects irrespective of their status.

Secondly, this study offers policy prescriptions to decision-makers to design a new immigration regime. Europe will continue to struggle to deliver sustainable and acceptable policy responses to the arrivals of new immigrants both at the national and EU level. Immigration has been one of the key issues for voters and for political competition between parties on the right and left in contemporary European politics (Pardos-Prado 2015; Mudde 2014; Downes and Loveless 2018). Eurobarometer polls show that European public opinion has become markedly more critical of immigration since 2013. Since the 2015 migrant crisis, a majority of Europeans do not agree that immigrants contribute a lot to their countries. Only one-third view immigration positively, compared with six out of ten who say they have a negative view of immigrants from non-European countries.

This means that implementing an effective immigration policy which distinguishes between legal and illegal immigration should be a priority, not only for national politicians, but also for the European Union (EU). Since 2013 there has been almost a 20 per cent increase in those who express that developing an immigration policy that covers legal and illegal immigrants seperately is a priority. As noted by the European Parliament (2017), for legal immigration 'the EU is competent to lay down the conditions governing entry into and legal residence in a Member State'. However, for illegal immigration, it argues that EU-level capacity should be built to prevent or reduce illegal immigration through an effective return policy. Any policy lacking public consent raises the question of a democratic deficit. Given that this study suggests that public support of policies on immigration alters level of concern over immigrants, European governments could significantly alter perceptions about immigrants with the policies they adopt. This points to the need for further research, which should consider additional variables, such as value congruence and immigrants' level of integration with host societies, influencing public opinion on immigration, together with data from a wider range of European countries to comparatively understand attitudes towards legal and illegal immigration across Europe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier version of this paper.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The TTS2013 data was retrieved from http:/t/www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR, and the Eurostat data was retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/f/f5/Immigration_by_citizenship,_2013_YB15.png.

[2] The 11 European countries included are France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. To compare the data from different countries, the results were weighted by socio-demographic weights constructed by the RIM weighting for each country. Neither the original collectors of the data nor the sponsor of the study bears any responsibility for the analysis or interpretations presented here.

[3] There is a large variation in poll or survey questions that measure public opinion on migration. These surveys measure attitudes towards a variety of migration-related issues. A number of data sources also cover multiple countries, allowing for comparative analysis. The European Social Survey (ESS) consists of two modules with collection of questions asked on immigration in a large number of European countries. The first module was fielded in 2002 (ESS1) and the second one in 2014 (ESS7). Questions included measuring attitudes of immigration and perceptions of social realities as well as opinions on public policy and knowledge about immigration were included. Neither rounds had a direct question tapping attitudes towards illegal versus legal immigrants. There were some measures which an index could have been constructed. ESS8 (2016) and recent Eurobarometer (EB) surveys developed measures and questions tapping independent variables such as immigrants (even though it is not worded as immigrants) taking jobs away, unskilled labour, and the like. Since 2011 EB data has not collected trend questions on immigration and directly asked separate question on legal and illegal immigration. In 'Transatlantic Trends: Immigration' (TTI), a special topic public opinion survey conducted yearly between 2008 and 2011, though immigration and integration issues were extensively addressed including the effect of the economic crisis on attitudes towards immigration, immigrants' labour market impacts and effects on wages, and preferences for temporary versus permanent labour migration programmes, illegal immigration was asked only in the USA.

[4] *Model 1:* Logit (Opinion on legal immigrants) = f (socio-economic correlates and self-interests, symbolic correlates, primary contact, innumeracy about the size of immigrant population, political attentiveness, approval of immigration policies, gender, age, ideology, occupation, education); *Model 2:* Logit (Opinion on illegal immigrants) = f (socio-economic correlates and self-interests, symbolic correlates, primary contact, innumeracy about the size of immigrant population, political attentiveness, approval of immigration policies, gender, age, ideology, occupation, education).

[5] Age was a continuous variable for the exact age of the respondent. For incorporating continuous variables into binary logistic regression analysis, see Wooldridge 2009.

[6] This, along with wider descriptive statistics for the study, are available on request to the author.

[7] There are four hierarchical models specified for individual (Level 1) and country (Level 2) levels of analysis. *Model 3:* (Opinion on legal immigrants) = f (estimates about the size of population of immigrants); *Model 4:* (Opinion on illegal immigrants) = f (estimates about the size of population of immigrants); *Model 5:* (Opinion on legal immigrants) = f (socio-economic correlates and self-interests, symbolic correlates, primary contact, innumeracy about the size of immigrant population, political attentiveness, approval of immigration policies, gender, age, ideology, occupation, education, estimates about the size of population of immigrants); *Model 6:*(Opinion on illegal immigrants) = f (socio-economic correlates and self-interests, symbolic correlates, primary contact, innumeracy about the size of immigrant population, political attentiveness, approval of immigration policies, gender, age, ideology, occupation, education, estimates about the size of population of immigrants).

[8] The average intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) measure was .74 with a 95 per cent confidence interval from .70 to .76, which indicated moderate to good reliability (Shrout and Fleiss 1979; Feldt 1965).

[9] Here, the terms 'multilevel' and 'hierarchical' are used interchangeably.

[10] In estimating the models' collinearity between the independent variables was not a problem as the VIF values in Model 1 and Model 2 were below the critical level (VIF < 3) (Menard 1995; Myers 1990). As there was no multicollinearity problem, the between-variables entry method was incorporated into the logit analysis (Chen and Dey 1998: 2003).

[11] Since it is a logit analysis, I interpreted the *B* coefficients instead of the odds ratio in the results.

[12] The model fit statistics for Models 5 and 6 gave the information for comparing maximum likelihood models. The fit for Model 5 and 6 results ($AIC_{Model\ 5}$ =8862.59, $BIC_{Model\ 5}$ =9069.39; $AIC_{Model\ 6}$ =10037.33, $BIC_{Model\ 6}$ =10244.07) were smaller than those of the Model 3 and Model 4, which displayed a better fit for Models 5 and 6 than intercept-only country-level models (Table 3).

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APPENDIX: OPERATIONALISATION OF LEVEL 1 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Variable			Question	Values / notes
Socio-economic correlates	Threat Opportunity	(a) …take jobs away from us (b) …are a burden on social services (c) …fill a shortage of workers (d) …create jobs and sets up businesses	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? (a) Immigrants take jobs away from native born (nationality) (b) Immigrants are a burden on social services (c) Immigrants generally help to fill jobs where there are shortages of workers (d) Immigrants help create jobs as they set up new businesses 1=Agree strongly; 2=Agree somewhat; 3= Disagree somewhat; 4= Disagree strongly.	1 = agree (1&2 collapsed) 0 = disagree (3&4 collapsed)
Symbolic correlates	Threat Opportunity	(a) …threaten our national culture (b) …enrich our culture	How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? (a) Immigrants are a threat to our national culture (b) Immigrants enrich our culture 1=Agree strongly; 2=Agree somewhat; 3= Disagree somewhat; 4= Disagree strongly.	1 = agree (1&2 collapsed) 0 = disagree (3&4 collapsed)
Primary Contact		Immigrant friends	Do you have any friends who were born in another country who now live in [country]? 1= Yes, many; 2 = Yes, a few; 3 = No, none	1 = yes (1&2 collapsed) 0 = no (3 recoded)
		Self-immigrant	Were you born in [country] or in another country?	1= in another country 0 = in [country]
		Immigrant parents	Which of these corresponds to where your parents were born? (1) Your mother and father were born in [country] (2) One of your parents was born in [country] and the other was born in another country (3) Your mother and your father were born in a country other than [country]	1 = immigrant parents (2&3 collapsed) 0 = non-immigrant parents (1 recoded)
Micro-level Attitudinal Predictors	Perceived size of immigrants	Innumeracy: Too many immigrants	Generally speaking, how do you feel about the number of people living in (country) who were not born in country? Are there (1) too many, (2) a lot but not too many, (3) not many?	1= too many 0 = not (too) many (2&3 collapsed)
	Government Approval	Approval of immigration policy	Thinking about the steps that have been taken to manage immigration, would you say that the government has been doing … 1 = a very good job, 2= a good job, 3= a poor job, 4= a very poor job?	1 = a good job (1&2 collapsed) 0 = not a good job (3&4 collapsed)
	Political Attentiveness	Political attentiveness	When you get together with friends, would you say you discuss political matters...? (1) Frequently (2) Occasionally (3) Never	1 = attentive (1&2 collapsed) 0 = not attentive (3 recoded)

Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

Research Article

On the Legitimacy of Fiscal Councils in the European Union: Trustees or Orchestrators of Fiscal Discipline?

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Citation

Tesche, T. (2019). 'On the Legitimacy of Fiscal Councils in the European Union: Trustees or Orchestrators of Fiscal Discipline?', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 15(1): 21-35. https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v15i1.993

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

This article distinguishes theoretically two conceptual models of a fiscal council – the trustee and the orchestrator model. The article reviews the arguments that prominent advocates of fiscal councils have put forth and finds that those who argue that the deficit bias is caused by the common pool problem prefer the trustee model, while others identifying asymmetric information as the root cause of the deficit bias prefer the orchestrator model. While the latter model relies on throughput legitimacy, the former relies on output legitimacy. The article concludes with a discussion about the contribution of fiscal councils towards strengthening EMU and weakening populism.

Keywords

Technocracy; Trusteeship; Orchestration; Fiscal councils; Legitimacy; Democratic accountability

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The Eurozone crisis has reinvigorated a debate about the lack of compliance with the fiscal rules framework devised by the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). Member states eager to reassure financial markets about their credible commitment to repay their debts through fiscal discipline were willing to seize any commitment device promising relief from short-term fiscal stress. The delegation of specific tasks related to fiscal policy to technocrats was a means to regain fiscal credibility during hard times. These expert bodies - so-called fiscal councils - monitor the fiscal rules and sound the 'fire alarm' if the government is in danger of swerving from the path of fiscal rectitude. Their creation dates back to the early economic advisory councils that were first established in Austria (1927) and the Netherlands (1945) (Debrun et al. 2013: 13; European Fiscal Board 2017: 33). After an initial stagnation, their spread continued in the 1970s as a result of oil price shocks that posed a particular challenge for fiscal policy in many countries. International organisations like the IMF, the ECB, the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have been prominent advocates of fiscal councils (Fromage 2017: 109; Tesche 2018).

In the literature competing definitions of fiscal councils exist emphasising different design features. The IMF defines a fiscal council as 'a permanent agency with a statutory or executive mandate to assess publicly and independently from partisan influence government's fiscal policies, plans and performance' (Debrun et al. 2013: 8; for alternative definitions, see Debrun, Hauner, and Kumar 2009: 45-6; Wyplosz 2005). According to EU Directive 2011/85 (Art.6(1)(b)) fiscal councils are 'independent bodies or bodies endowed with functional autonomy vis-à-vis the fiscal authorities' that carry out reliable and independent analysis in line with the fiscal rule framework (Fromage 2017: 111; Jankovics and Sherwood 2017: 9). Further details are laid down in Art.2(1)(a) of Regulation EU No. 473/2013, which include: (i) 'a statutory regime grounded in national laws, regulations or binding administrative provisions', (ii) 'not taking instructions from budgetary authorities of the member states', (iii) 'the capacity to communicate publicly in a timely manner', (iv) 'nominating members based on experience and competence', and (v) 'adequate resources and appropriate access to information' (Fromage 2017: 112). Article 5 stipulates further that monitoring the fiscal rules shall be the main task of the national fiscal councils. This includes assessing whether significant deviations from national fiscal plans are justifiable given the circumstances or whether the so-called correction mechanism needs to be activated to return to the desired fiscal path (Fromage 2017: 113). In sum, European legislation left a lot of wiggle room for the member states to make their national fiscal councils compatible with their domestic economic and political system and still comply with the rules (European Commission 2017b), which in turn paved the way towards the emergence of heterogeneous fiscal council models.

Two opposing views have emerged regarding the democratic legitimacy of fiscal councils. The first sees the rise of fiscal councils as compatible with and even democracy enhancing (Fasone and Griglio 2013; European Commission 2014; Fasone and Fromage 2017). The other argues that it undergirds 'increasing technocratic tendencies, where experts no longer inform decision making but become the decision-makers' (Connor 2017: 6) depriving democratically elected representatives of their policy tools. This article argues that these two views are aimed at two conceptually distinct models of a fiscal council. The latter view refers to the trustee model of a fiscal council which foresees that the government (trustor) entrusts a politically independent fiscal council (trustee) with direct fiscal policy instruments (such as setting a debt or expenditure ceiling) (Majone 2001; Abbott et al. 2018; Basso and Costain 2018). Further bolstering the authority of national fiscal councils could entail a 'comply-or-explain rule' that would put the onus on the government to provide reasons why it diverted from the advice issued by the fiscal council (European Fiscal Board 2017: 37). This principle could allow fiscal councils 'to have the right of legislative initiative on issues related to their specific mandate' (European Fiscal Board 2017: 39). Ultimately, it could be extended towards having the right to propose budgetary amendments to the Parliament. According to such a model an independent fiscal council would make distributive choices, however, not without the interference of elected representatives. Advocates of the trustee model point to the output legitimacy of such an independent fiscal council measured in terms of the boost in fiscal discipline. They emphasise that more independent fiscal councils possess a higher fiscal scrutiny capacity (von Trapp and Nicol 2018). These claims need to be taken with a grain of salt given that the evidence on the effectiveness of fiscal councils on fiscal outcomes is inconclusive (see Debrun et al. 2013: 51-4; Debrun and Kumar 2007; Lledó 2018).

The second model prescribes an orchestrating role to the fiscal council (Tesche 2018: 6-7). Governments establish fiscal councils as orchestrators that rely on intermediaries (i.e. parliaments, media or rating agencies) to influence fiscal policy indirectly. Fiscal councils lack any direct policy instruments that could adjust the fiscal path, so they try to force the hand of a fiscally profligate government through their orchestration capabilities, i.e. the dissemination of non-partisan analyses of fiscal policy choices. This article argues that while the trustee model can rely on output legitimacy, a well-designed orchestration model can improve the 'throughput legitimacy' of fiscal policy making by 'governing with the people' (Schmidt 2013).

The article is structured as follows. First, the article provides an overview of the origins of the deficit bias, i.e. a government's tendency to run persistently high budget deficits. It then goes on to make a normative point that the identified root cause of the deficit bias should ideally determine which conceptual model of a fiscal council one prefers. If the common pool problem causes the deficit bias, one should prefer the trustee model. But if asymmetric information has been identified as the cause of the deficit bias, then the orchestration model seems more appropriate to eliminate the deficit bias. In many cases, the contribution of fiscal councils goes beyond deficit and debt reduction. It encompasses the production of macroeconomic forecasts and can even entail an advisory role in national spending reviews. In the subsequent section, the design features of the trustee and the orchestrator model are described in further detail. The main section assesses the legitimacy of fiscal councils using the familiar concepts of input, output and throughput legitimacy (Scharpf 1999;

Schmidt 2013). In general, fiscal councils have the capacity to generate 'technocratic input legitimacy' by improving the quality of fiscal policy deliberations through injecting 'unbiased' information into the democratic process. Furthermore, a fiscal council's toolkit is scrutinised from an interdisciplinary perspective. The article concludes with a discussion about the role of fiscal councils in fixing EMU´s design flaws and weakening populism.

THE ORIGINS OF THE DEFICIT BIAS

The literature on the deficit bias has identified a host of reasons for the persistence of budget deficits. The specific cause of the deficit bias should inform the design features of the fiscal council so that the root cause can be effectively eliminated (von Hagen 2013). However, correctly identifying the underlying cause of the deficit bias is not straightforward. After all, fiscal policy is the most important tool to build winning coalitions in electoral competitions. Politicians have no incentive to limit their own fiscal room for maneuver (Alesina and Tabellini 2007). The advocates of the trustee model argue that the origin of the deficit bias lies in the common pool problem (i.e. concentrated benefits but dispersed societal costs of spending choices) (von Hagen 2018), whereas the proponents of the orchestration model suggest that the deficit bias is nourished by asymmetric information and fiscal opaqueness (Beetsma and Debrun 2017). These diverging opinions on the origins of the deficit bias have important downstream consequences for the preferred fiscal council model. If you assume that the common pool problem causes the deficit bias, then a politically independent fiscal council should have direct control over fiscal policy instruments that would enable it to undertake across the board spending cuts (von Hagen and Harden 1995). In essence, a trustee fiscal council would have to possess the capacity to decisively intervene in the government's budget making process. If on the other hand the deficit bias is caused because voters, parliamentarians and other actors such as credit rating agencies hold asymmetric information vis-à-vis the government, then it would be sensible to instill an orchestrating fiscal council with a mandate that disseminates impartial information about the 'true' fiscal policy stance of the government. Governments tend to be overly optimistic with regards to their macroeconomic forecasts which has knock-on effects on their capacity to conduct prudent fiscal policy (Jonung and Larch 2006). Relying on third party intermediaries allows the orchestrator (the fiscal council) to enlist certain capabilities that it does not possess itself (Abbott et al. 2015b). Thus, it can indirectly govern fiscal policy choices of the government by flattening the asymmetrical information between the government and other actors.

The Common Pool Problem

Governments often target individual groups of society through increased spending (financed by all taxpayers) to reward the loyalty of their constituency (Weingast, Shepsle, and Johnsen 1981; Calmfors 2010; Calmfors and Wren-Lewis 2011; von Hagen 2013). If the state fails to internalise this externality, for example, through coordinated spending decisions in a structured budget process, it will lead to concentrated benefits with dispersed costs resulting in excessive debts, deficits and spending (von Hagen 2013). A dynamic version of the problem is the 'war of attrition' over fiscal consolidation. In the presence of an unsustainable budget deficit various groups in society can holdout in the hope that the burden of adjustment will be shifted to another group. This 'waiting game' will delay the inevitable consolidation and simultaneously raise its general costs. Eventually, fiscal consolidation will be more painful due to the high level of accumulated debts (von Hagen 2013). Again, the negative externality could be internalised by a coordinated approach decided upon by a trustee fiscal council that would evenly split the costs of fiscal consolidation between the groups. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether these trade-offs should be solved through delegation to independent technocrats. Rather, democratic and open deliberation among the different societal groups affected by a certain fiscal policy should guide the decision-making process. Politicians with short time horizons can shift the burden of adjustment into the future. In older societies the electoral pay-off for 'kicking the can down the road' is particularly high but with detrimental consequences for inter-generational justice because future generations will face exploitation through higher taxes (Calmfors and Wren-Lewis 2011). Streeck (2014) has pointed out that the politics of the consolidation state entails pitting the younger versus the older generation. This inter-generational cleavage inevitably creates difficult trade-offs. Delegation to fiscal councils is an attempt to paper over these by suggesting that they could be resolved in a purely technocratic manner. This is indicative of a broader trend towards 'governing by the rules and ruling by the numbers' (Schmidt 2015).

Asymmetric Information

Well-functioning democracies require all parties to be fully informed. However, this condition is often unfulfilled because informational asymmetries exist between the government on the one hand and the voters and opposition parties on the other. Thus, the electorate may not be able to observe the 'true' fiscal position of the government. In the absence of a sufficient understanding of the intertemporal budget constraint - that postulates that future primary surpluses need to be equal or greater than the outstanding net government debt - voters might be prone to succumb to over-optimism regarding the 'true' state of public finances ('fiscal illusion') (Calmfors 2010, 2015). A government claiming that a fiscal policy measure will be budgetary neutral, leaves the average voter struggling to verify this information (Calmfors and Wren-Lewis 2011). If governments exploit this informational asymmetry for electoral gain, the well-known political business cycle will ensue creating persistently high budget deficits. Thus, disseminating non-partisan assessments of fiscal policy can foster a shared understanding of the underlying fiscal policy trade-offs and even out informational asymmetries (Bos and Teulings 2013).

TWO CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF A FISCAL COUNCIL

The trustee model of an independent fiscal council

The success of the independent central bank model has inspired scholars to advocate its application to other policy areas such as fiscal policy (Blinder 1997; Wyplosz 2005; European Central Bank 2010). Politicians with short time horizons face a credible commitment problem which they can overcome by delegating authority over policy instruments in the realm of fiscal policy to independent trustees (Majone 2001). The trustee fiscal council could determine a long-term debt target and outline the short-term fiscal balance required to achieve it (von Hagen and Harden 1995; Eichengreen, Hausmann, and Von Hagen 1999; Calmfors 2003). Existing proposals diverge regarding the optimal mix between objectives and the necessary policy instruments (see Debrun, Hauner, and Kumar 2009). Advocates of the trustee fiscal council argue that it could mimic the success of inflation-targeting central banks (Wyplosz 2005; Blinder 1997). According to Wyplosz (2005: 72), 'combining short-run flexibility with long-run discipline, can be achieved in the area of fiscal policy in the same way as it has been achieved in the area of monetary policy'.

The output legitimacy of a trustee fiscal council

The trustee model raises a host of democratic legitimacy issues which renders its implementation fragile. Insulating fiscal policy from politics is contestable because it would mean giving up a degree of democratic control. Decision-making on taxing and spending, however, is a sovereign prerogative of elected representatives and should not be delegated ('no taxation without representation')

(Wren-Lewis 2013). Thus, the redistributive implications of fiscal policy and the lack of clearly measurable objectives are an obstacle for entrusting it with independent experts (Alesina and Tabellini 2007, 2008). A trustee fiscal council could suffer from a democratic legitimacy deficit unless a strong societal consensus existed about its objectives. But society's preferences on fiscal policy do not seem to be stable and public opinion regarding budget deficits is highly susceptible to media and elite framing (Barnes and Hicks 2018). While there is no trustee fiscal council conducting fiscal policy instead of the government (Wren-Lewis 2013), fiscal councils with trustee-like features do exist.

One way of measuring the impact on the conduct of fiscal policy making could be to measure the variation in the sovereign risk premium demanded by financial markets. Trustee-like fiscal councils that raise the credibility of a government's fiscal policy by promoting fiscal transparency might see the spreads of government bonds declining. Alternatively, the output legitimacy of trustee fiscal councils could be measured by assessing whether the fiscal council has increased the compliance with the fiscal rules or whether the forecasting error of the government's macroeconomic and budgetary forecasts has been reduced. Furthermore, fiscal council's output legitimacy could be assessed by measuring the fiscal literacy of mass publics, i.e. the publics' skills and knowledge enabling them to take an informed stance on fiscal policy matters. Regardless of which measure one ultimately uses, it would be already an improvement if fiscal councils could improve the parliamentary debate about fiscal policy by forcing parliamentarians to be transparent about the distributional impact of their policy proposals.

Empirical case: The failure of the Hungarian Fiscal Council of 2008 – a cautious tale of a quasi-trustee

Hungary experienced a prolonged period of rising debts and deficits in the early 2000s due to a rampant common pool problem which culminated in a financial assistance programme jointly monitored by the EU and the IMF. In 2008, the Hungarian parliament passed the fiscal responsibility law which created a fiscal council (Kopits and Romhanyi 2013). Even though the parliament ultimately decided against bestowing any legally binding instruments of enforcement upon the fiscal council, the latter operated in many respects as a quasi-trustee with a high level of political and operational independence. Its wide mandate enabled it to intervene in parliamentary debates and steer fiscal expectations to reduce the sovereign risk premium. For example, the fiscal council prepared its own 'macro-fiscal projections, conducted real-time evaluation of the effects of each fiscal proposal prior to parliamentary debate, and monitored fiscal rules' (Kopits and Romhanyi 2013: 212). Three fiscal rules were of particular importance (Kopits and Romhanyi 2013: 223): (1) prevention of any legislation proposal to produce a net deficit in the current and subsequent year (pay-go rule); (2) cap on primary expenditure growth; (3) limit on the real stock of central government debt. During the 2010 budget bill debate the fiscal council scrutinised numerous MP proposals to assess whether they were in line with the pay-go rule (Kopits and Romhanyi 2013: 223). However, shortly after the 2010 general election MPs of the ruling Fidesz party proposed significant budget cuts and later disbanded the fiscal council completely to narrow its mandate. Stripped off its responsibilities, the fiscal council is now merely 'a part-time deliberative body without remuneration' (Kopits and Romhanyi 2013: 227). In sum, the Hungarian fiscal council fell prey to its own success as a highly independent expert body with trustee-like features. A less powerful fiscal council might have survived the populist onslaught with some minor budget cuts without being coopted. But a fiscal council with such a high capacity for fiscal scrutiny compelled the Hungarian government to dismantle its core.

Fiscal councils as orchestrators of fiscal discipline

The orchestrator-intermediary-target (O-I-T) model (Abbott et al. 2015a, 2015b) provides a useful heuristic device to understand the functioning of a fiscal council. Orchestration is defined as 'the mobilisation of an intermediary by an orchestrator on a voluntary basis in pursuit of a joint governance goal' (Abbott et al. 2015b: 722). First, orchestrating fiscal councils lack the authority to directly exert control over the targets they want to govern (Abbott et al. 2015b: 720). They neither possess decision-making authority nor do they have legally-binding enforcement powers (Kopits 2011; Hemming and Joyce 2013). A fiscal council might want to reduce the budget deficit to comply with the European fiscal rules but lacks control over the fiscal instruments to achieve this goal. Governments can easily dismiss the orchestrator's fiscal recommendations unless it is politically costly to do so. To raise the reputational costs to governments a fiscal council should possesses a degree of focality in budgetary politics and a strong ability to communicate with the public. Second, an orchestrator enlists a voluntary intermediary whose goals are aligned (Abbott et al. 2015b). Fiscal councils (orchestrators) can enlist voters, the media, credit rating agencies or parliamentarians (intermediaries) with a strong preference for fiscal discipline (target) by providing ideational support, such as independent budgetary forecasts, normative assessments and recommendations or costing of specific fiscal policy measures (soft inducements). If the electorate cannot check and balance the government on fiscal issues due to informational asymmetries, fiscal councils can send a credible signal to voters about the 'true' fiscal stance of a government (Beetsma and Debrun 2017). This signal will be the stronger, the higher the reputation of the fiscal council for non-partisanship. Third, by enhancing fiscal transparency better informed citizens will make better decisions when judging the government's fiscal competence (Beetsma, Debrun, and Sloof 2017). Hence, the ideational support provided by the orchestrator is crucial in flattening out any existing informational imbalances. In sum, fiscal councils as 'producers of reliable information' can harness the benefits of expertise without having formal decision-making powers (Tucker 2018: 94-5).

The throughput legitimacy of an orchestrating fiscal council

An in-built incentive of orchestrating fiscal councils is to be as transparent, inclusive and open as possible. Even if a larger share of the public will be enabled to adequately judge the fiscal competence of the government, this does not necessarily lead to lower deficits. Hence, the traditional concept of output legitimacy might fail to capture the contribution of orchestrating fiscal councils. Given that fiscal councils have only indirect means of influencing fiscal policy it would be difficult to measure their impact on fiscal policy outcomes. Against this backdrop, a more process-oriented, 'real-time' measure of legitimacy is 'throughput' legitimacy or 'governing with the people' (Schmidt 2013). Located in-between input and output, 'throughput' legitimacy relates to the quality of the decision-making process (Torres 2013: 291-2) and, thus, is key to the work of orchestrators. 'Throughput legitimacy demands institutional and constructive governance processes that work with efficacy, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and openness' with an emphasis on consultations with the people (Schmidt 2013: 7-8).

A major advantage of the orchestration model is that it is democracy-compatible. Fiscal councils can function as 'accountability multipliers' and enhance the role of national parliaments due to its improved fiscal scrutiny capacity (Fasone and Griglio 2013; European Commission 2014; Fasone and Fromage 2017). Importantly, a fiscal council can 'nudge the intermediary toward governance goals that are compatible with its own goals' (Abbott et al. 2015b: 722). However, the legitimacy of an orchestrating fiscal council will ultimately depend on the public´s support for its goals (i.e. the degree of local ownership). In many European countries orchestrating fiscal councils have become highly reputable bodies which makes it harder for parties to ignore their recommendations (Horvath 2018).

But it is often a balancing act for an orchestrating fiscal council to preserve its aura of nonpartisanship and to critically assesses the government´s fiscal policy at the same time.

Empirical case: The Portuguese fiscal council - an orchestrator with throughput legitimacy

The case of the Portuguese fiscal council shows that well-designed fiscal councils can reconcile accountability with democratic legitimacy when a broad political compromise provides the foundation for strong national ownership. The mandate of the Portuguese CFP explicitly mentions the enhancement of the quality of democracy as one of its core tasks. The Conselho das Finanças Públicas (CFP) was set up in May 2011 as part of the fifth amendment to the 2001 Budget Framework Law (Law 22/2011) and became operational at the beginning of 2012. Several beneficial circumstances have facilitated the CFP's high effectiveness. First, already in 2010 (before the arrival of the troika) a cross-party consensus to set up a fiscal council between the Socialist government and the largest opposition party (the Social Democrats) emerged (von Trapp, Lienert, and Wehner 2016, 190). An independent working group was tasked with drawing up the CFP's statues, which cumulated in the signing of law 54/2011. The resulting high level of local ownership has proven beneficial for the CFP's democratic legitimacy. Second, the CFP has a broad mandate that covers eight different tasks. Among them are assessing macroeconomic and fiscal projections, public debt sustainability, compliance with the budget balance rules and the rules on expenditure by the central government, autonomous regions and local governments. In sum, the CFP is not merely in charge of conducting assessments of the compliance with the fiscal rules but, crucially, assesses the government's overall fiscal strategy. Third, the CFP's financial independence is guaranteed through state budget appropriations which can only be modified under 'exceptional circumstances'. The CFP's budget of €2.53 million (in 2014) accounts for the breath of its mandate and allowed it to hire a sufficient number of qualified research staff (von Trapp, Lienert, and Wehner 2016: 189-203). Fourth, the CFP is supposed to have access to all information that it needs to perform its tasks. Fifth, the CFP's strong commitment to transparency and democratic accountability requires it to publish all its reports on the its website. They are sent to the President of the Republic, the government, the parliament, the Court of Auditors and the Central Bank. The use of social media and media outreach ensure that the CFP sends credible signals to the public at large as foreseen in the orchestration model. In doing so, the CFP multiplies its impact and lives up to its full orchestration potential.

FISCAL COUNCILS AND THEIR TOOLKIT

Macroeconomic indicators and forecasting

Macroeconomic forecasting is based on economic formulae that make distributional choices by default. This is because macroeconomic indicators such as public deficits are calculated on the basis of deeply political formulae engrained with significant distributive implications (Mügge 2016). Powerful neoliberal ideas linger in the background and govern these indicators. If one follows this line of argument, it would mean that even a fiscal council with a narrow mandate to only produce macroeconomic or budgetary forecasts inevitably makes deeply distributional choices. Accordingly, these forecasts can never be completely 'unbiased' because a specific measurement will always lead to an advantage for some societal groups over others (Mügge 2016). However, the mere production of 'unbiased' macroeconomic projections can improve the conduct of fiscal policy significantly (Jonung and Larch 2006).

Beckert (2016: 231) argues that 'forecasting should be considered as an instrument for the construction of fictional expectations'. Orphanides and van Norden (2002) have shown that using measures such as the output gap will lead to persistent measurement errors due to the unreliability of real-time data. This raises doubts about the capacity of fiscal councils to produce accurate forecasts. Beckert, however, cautions that it is not the actual accuracy that is important but the 'credible claim for correctness' (Beckert 2016: 231). Given that future contingencies cannot be foreseen, forecasts turn into focal points around which actors' expectations converge (Beckert 2016: 234). Macroeconomic and budgetary forecasts have a special responsibility because they influence the economic behavior of domestic households. Overoptimistic governmental forecasts that falsely predict a balanced budget might incentivise households to reduce savings when they should have created saving buffers for future consumption smoothing. These 'fiscal fictions' will ultimately lead to coordination failure. Fiscal councils have, thus, an important role to play in 'de-politicizing' forecasting and in creating a reliable coordination device for households' economic activities.

Fiscal rules

In the EMU, the fiscal rules devised by the SGP have often been criticised as arbitrary and overly intrusive to the point that some have advocated a complete renationalisation of fiscal policy (Eichengreen and Wyplosz 2016). The rule-based approach to fiscal policy has aimed at constraining discretionary fiscal policy. This might be successful at creating long run debt sustainability but comes at the expense of short-term output stabilisation. It bears the risk that fiscal policy becomes pro-cyclical as tax revenues decline and automatic stabilisers kick in during economic downturns (Wyplosz 2005). Because fiscal rules are either too lax or too tight they should be substituted with an independent fiscal council that does not exhibit a deficit bias and can use its discretion to engage in deficit targeting (Wyplosz 2005, 2008). The practical reality is that most fiscal councils function as complements to the existing fiscal rules (Debrun et al. 2013; Calmfors 2015). This is due to the rule complexity trade-off. The more complex a fiscal rule is, the more difficult it is to monitor and the more likely that its implementation will be outsourced to experts (Calmfors 2015). Vice versa, the simpler the fiscal rule, the easier it is to monitor without the need for an independent fiscal council. However, a simple fiscal rule like a cap on the annual budget deficit can provide for inadequate fiscal policy for a given state of the business cycle. In this regard, it is important to understand the role of fiscal councils in fiscal regimes that exhibit permanent budget surpluses like Sweden. The Swedish fiscal council, for example, criticised the government that clinging to an expenditure ceiling irrespective of the general economic developments can be costly (Haffert and Mehrtens 2015: 138). The example shows that fiscal councils can also turn into champions of Keynesian stimulus spending if governments leave their fiscal space unexploited.

The 'scientisation' of fiscal policy

Leeper (2010: 2) has observed that 'monetary policy tends to employ systematic analytics, while fiscal policy relies on unsystematic speculation' or what he terms 'fiscal alchemy'. He advocates for a 'fiscal science' that would anchor the fiscal expectations of households in order to improve economic decision-making. In the current regime of 'fiscal alchemy' uncertainty about entitlement reform might incentivise individuals to hold savings above the optimal level. Unanchored fiscal expectations are likely to create negative spill-over effects on the ability of central banks to curb inflation. Leeper (2010: 4) cautions further that 'in the coming era of fiscal stress with no credible government plans to confront the growing fiscal strains, unanchored fiscal expectations become a certainty'. Thus, if fiscal policy would be subject to the same scrutiny as monetary policy by independent fiscal councils, it would offer more reliable guidance for private households. For this purpose, the 'less political' aspects of fiscal policy that are 'more amendable to science' should be separated and a societal consensus should be formed on them. Among these aspects Leeper (2010: 6) lists the debt target, the adjustment path of tax rates and spending to ensure debt sustainability and specific circumstances under which a change in the debt target is permissible. Larch and Braendle (2018) argue that the Musgravian stabilisation function of fiscal policy should be entrusted with independent technocrats. An independent fiscal council would then set the ceiling for the nominal budget deficit for a certain period.

The fiscal rules enshrined in the SGP have set tight limits on the debt-to-GDP ratio and the permissible budget deficits but have become increasingly complex and flexible over time. Yet, they have contributed to the ‘scientisation’ of fiscal policy that has pervaded monetary policy (see Marcussen 2009). As political deliberations about the redistributive implications of fiscal policy are gradually ‘crowded out’ by technocratic discourses, fiscal policy is being ‘apoliticised’. Technocrats that are nominated to serve on fiscal councils on the basis of their expertise and knowledge gain in legitimacy and expert authority. At the same time, this increases the likelihood that more and more tasks related to fiscal policy will be subject to delegation as fiscal policy appears to be ridden of ideological debates. This is a governance process that Schmidt (2015) has described as ‘governing by the rules and ruling by the numbers’. Since a complete contract including all unanticipated contingencies can never be written, the question remains what the reaction function of a fiscal council would be during an emergency situation when fiscal stress renders its forecasts obsolete. What can a fiscal council do if the central bank engages in fiscal policy by stealth? Does the national statistics office collect the type of data that allows to measure a government’s hidden off-balance sheet debts? These questions only scratch the surface of the problems that fiscal councils will have to tackle going forward.

DISCUSSION: FISCAL COUNCILS AND THE FUTURE OF EMU

Strengthening market discipline and fiscal literacy, weakening populists

Fiscal councils can contribute to a stable EMU governance architecture in various ways. First, fiscal councils can strengthen market discipline. Financial markets have repeatedly been criticised for not being able to adequately fulfill their watchdog function because they tend to overreact during bad times. Thus, market discipline only works ex post and fails to exert sufficient ex ante pressures for fiscal discipline during good times. Fiscal opaqueness of governments contributes to the failure of market discipline because credit rating agencies do not possess the adequate information to assess a government’s fiscal stance correctly which results in rapid downgrading cascades during a crisis. A fiscal council that manages to rebalance the informational asymmetries in favor of third parties will decisively contribute to more accurate credit ratings. Moreover, if the fiscal council enjoys a high reputation and credibility, it will contribute to faster upgrades of ratings after an asymmetric shock has hit the economy. In 2014, Moody’s referred extensively to the CFP’s assessments in its decision to upgrade Portugal’s government bond rating (Moody's 2014). As credit rating agencies benefit from better information, financial markets will move closer to perfect discrimination between euro area sovereign bonds. During good times fiscal councils help to encourage a government to undertake counter-cyclical fiscal policy and remain committed to long-term debt sustainability. By avoiding stirring negative market sentiments and bringing sovereign bond ratings in line with economic fundamentals positive spill-over effects for the stability of the euro area as a whole are likely to ensue.

Second, fiscal councils can help to contain populism. The populist governments across the EU have rattled the financial markets and led to a spike in sovereign bond rates. They show disdain of fiscal rules and a tendency to politicise them for electoral gain. Their policy prescriptions are characterised by an excessive short-term bias resulting in a neglect for future-oriented investments. The longer time horizon of fiscal councils could provide an effective remedy against populist myopia. Jacobs

(2016: 442) has argued that to cope with the political problem of the long term, institutions need to (i) 'enhance the relative quality of information about the long-run consequences', (ii) 'stabilise political commitments over time', and (iii) 'minimise distributive opportunism by organized groups'. Fiscal councils make a strong contribution to each of these dimensions. In the Netherlands, for example, all parties submit their economic proposals to the Dutch fiscal council (CPB) for an independent assessment of their policy proposals to facilitate a better understanding of the fiscal consequences of different electoral platforms (Bos and Teulings 2013; European Fiscal Board 2017: 36). This allows voters to take an informed vote that is more aligned with voters' own fiscal preferences. Interestingly, all parties voluntarily participate in this exercise even though the fiscal council has no legal means of enforcing their participation (Bos and Teulings 2013). The example of the CPB shows that fiscal councils can govern effectively even with a thin legal and political basis because it is reputationally costly for parties to withdraw from the process (especially shortly before a general election). Thus, the Dutch model facilitates the stabilisation of the political commitments over time by providing an effective check on excessive spending promises of populist parties. Moreover, the costing of policy proposals contributes to minimising distributive opportunism by stating explicitly which societal groups will bear the brunt of the adjustment burden. In a nutshell, fiscal councils have an important role to play in preventing the rise of populism by continuously fact checking the fiscal policy debate. Even in countries in which fiscal councils have been weakened through budget cuts (like in Hungary) their tasks have been partially taken over by private initiatives like the Fiscal Responsibility Institute Budapest (Kopits and Romhanyi 2013: 228). These bottom-up initiatives could also help to regain trust in the work of experts. Promoting fiscal transparency could broaden political participation and build trust in the reliability of information. This would increase the overall quality of democratic decision-making.

Third, a policy proposal by 14 French and German economists called for 'more independent fiscal watchdogs at both national and European levels' (Bénassy-Quéré et al. 2018: 5). The authors advocate to delegate the fiscal and macroeconomic watchdog role to the European Fiscal Board (EFB), which is currently an independent advisory body of the Commission. They sketch out a scenario in which fully independent national fiscal councils propose a rolling 5-year medium term debt reduction target (subject to approval by the euro area fiscal watchdog) and forecast nominal growth projections. In a second step, national fiscal councils would determine the nominal expenditure ceiling compatible with the debt reduction target. This proposal would mirror the European System of Central Banks and pave the way towards a European System of Fiscal Councils (ESFC) (Asatryan et al. 2017). Given that national fiscal councils have been careful to avoid deepened cooperation with the EFB in order not to tarnish their institutional independence (Asatryan et al. 2017), it is unlikely that an ESFC will emerge. In December 2017 the European Commission has proposed a directive that would enhance the enforcement capacity of national fiscal councils (European Commission 2017a). According to the proposed directive national fiscal councils should command more tools to ratchet up compliance with the fiscal rule framework. Yet, unless governments are willing to guarantee a minimum level of operational independence, fiscal councils would merely function as ineffective 'smokescreens' (Debrun and Kumar 2007). Strengthening the operational independence of fiscal councils would make rapid strides towards improving the general 'fiscal literacy' of the electorate. In other words, increased throughput legitimacy can generate various positive spill-over effects despite the fact that governments might still be able to simply ignore the fiscal council's recommendation and get off scot-free.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the underlying assumptions about the causes of the deficit bias have led to two distinct conceptual models of fiscal councils. While proponents of the trustee model argue that the common pool problem causes the deficit bias, others championing the orchestrator model point to asymmetric information as the cause of the deficit bias. Furthermore, while the trustee model relies on output legitimacy, the orchestrator relies on throughput legitimacy. The short-lived experience of the Hungarian trustee fiscal council points to the challenges that powerful fiscal councils face. In contrast, the Portuguese example shows that an orchestrating fiscal council can be even democracy enhancing. In addition, this article has argued that fiscal councils are likely to foster market discipline and fiscal literacy in the EU and could even contribute towards tackling the rising threats to democracy stemming from populism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Christian Lequesne for hosting me at the Centre de Recherches Internationales (CERI) at SciencesPo Paris and Andreas Nölke for hosting me at the Goethe University Frankfurt. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Brussels-based think tank CEPS for hosting me during a research stay.

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Journal of Contemporary
European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

Research Article

The Relative Influence of the European Council in EU External Action

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Citation

Lonardo, L. (2019). 'The Relative Influence of the European Council in EU External Action', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 15(1): 36-56.
https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v15i1.967

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

The European Council is the institution of the European Union (EU) in charge of defining and implementing European external action. Despite the prominent role assigned to it by EU law, studies have proposed two contrasting narratives. On the one hand, legal scholarship and some political scientists assert the relevance of the European Council in the field of the EU's external action while others, mostly political scientists, downplay its significance. This article seeks to advance the debate by offering a quantitative analysis of the European Council conclusions referred to in subsequent EU binding acts. The data are presented according to different variables in turn: (1) the European Council conclusion mentioned in the act; (2) the subject area of the European Council conclusion mentioned; (3) the year other institutions adopted the act; (4) and the subject per year. The reference period for this study is 1st December 2009 - 31st August 2017. The main finding of the study is a challenge to the orthodoxy in legal scholarship on this institution: the European Council leads European external action mainly on relatively uncontroversial issues; there is no evidence of its leadership in critical situations such as the Arab uprisings and the migration crisis. This result opens up promising avenues for research on agenda-setting strategies in time of crisis.

Keywords

European council; common foreign and security policy; agenda setting; EU law

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The European Council, in the fifty-two meetings since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, has dealt with many of the most relevant and topical issues in international relations. Thus, the European Council has expressed an opinion on the Arab uprisings, on the economic and financial crisis, on the 2015 'migration crisis', on the conflict in Ukraine; but also on less dramatic issues pertaining to the 'everyday' administration of EU foreign policy, such as the maintenance of its relationship with the neighbourhood, the establishment of a common defence market, and the EU strategy to tackle climate change in view of the 2015 Paris conference (see Annex 1).

EU law assigns a prominent role to the European Council, in particular in matters related to the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (Vanhoonacker 2011: 90; Craig and de Burca 2011a: 48; Piris 2010:67). This is one of the major formal innovations of the Lisbon Treaty in EU external action (Biondi et al, 2012; Craig and de Burca 2011: 49; Schutze 2012: 24; Hermann 2008: 25). In all areas of EU action, the European Council 'provides the Union with its necessary impetus and defines the general political directions and priorities thereof' (Article 15 TEU). The top role of this institution is also apparent from its power to decide on exceptional circumstances (what Schutze 2012: 103, 104 calls constitutional and arbitration powers): it has the final say on the breach of values of the EU by a MS (Article 7(2)), and may meet in extraordinary session if international developments so require (these exceptional meetings are discussed below). The leading role of the European Council flows also from its composition: it is constituted by the Heads of State or Government of the Member States. The President of the European Council and the President of the Commission also sit on it.

In CFSP, the European Council 'defines and implements' the policy, together with the Council. Member States shall consult within it in order to determine a common approach (Article 32 TEU). Exactly as in other areas of EU's external action, decision of the European Council on strategic interests and objectives 'may concern the relations of the Union with a specific country or region or may be thematic in approach. They shall define their duration, and the means to be made available by the Union and the Member States.' (Article 22(2) TEU). On the basis of these, the Foreign Affairs Council 'shall elaborate the Union's external action' (Article 16(6) TEU), and with the High Representative shall frame and implement the CFSP (Article 26(2) and 27(1) TEU). Member States are under the obligation to 'coordinate their action in international organisations and at international conferences. They shall uphold the Union's positions in such forums' (Article 34 TEU). The President of the European Council ensures external representation of the Union.[i] The European Council also decides on when the framing of a common EU defence policy will lead to a common defence (this is the wording of Article 42(2) TEU).[ii] Again with power to decide on exceptional circumstances, the European Council has the final say if a Member State opposes, for vital and stated reasons of national policy, the adoption of a decision by qualified majority in the Council.

Given the clarity of the legal framework, legal scholarship is almost unanimous on the role of the European Council in CFSP. Thus, the 'orthodoxy' in legal scholarship maintains that the European Council plays indeed the top-role in decision making that the TEU assigns to it. However, other authors, mostly political scientists, have pointed out that in reality the European Council influences only marginally the substance of EU's CFSP.

With a view to advancing this debate, this article seeks to contribute to the legal scholarship on CFSP and on the European Council by exploring how institutions have interpreted the rules of EU primary law on CFSP. In particular, the aim of the article is to ascertain whether institutions have been deferent to the constitutional text that assigns to the European Council the power to decide the political priorities of the Union.

The main shortcoming of the existing legal scholarship on the European Council is that it has adopted a traditional doctrinal approach, while the present research, empirical in nature, aims to ground the analysis in quantitative data: how many acts of EU institutions, since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, refer to European Council conclusions (not just in CFSP matters but in all areas of EU decision-making)? The reference in an EU binding act to a previous European Council conclusion, while not carrying legal value per se, is hereby taken as the proxy to measure the European Council's influence. Precisely because it is not mandatory, the fact that other institutions mention an European Council conclusion is not a simple technicality: it is, instead, a concrete measure of the formal deference to the European Council's choice. Indeed, the Court of Justice has affirmed that it would be against the principle of the balance of powers to make the adoption of binding acts conditional upon the European Council having defined guidelines (Rosas and Armati 2018).[iii]

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON CFSP

Debaere and Haesebrouck (2015: 347) offer a comprehensive review of the literature on the European Council within the CFSP and regret a 'lack of systematic review of European Council's activities'. It is nonetheless possible to identify two trends in the literature. Lawyers have traditionally taken the view that the European Council has indeed played the prominent role that the drafters of the Treaty on the European Union envisaged for it (Chalmers, Davies, Monti 2010: 75; Craig and de Burca 2011a: 48; Craig and de Burca 2011b: 36, 55; De Schoutheete 2012; Van Vooren and Wessel 2013: 369; Eeckhout 2013: 476; Koutrakos 2013: 427). This stream of scholarship describes the European Council as an institution that assumes strategic leadership and offers political guidance (Wessel 2016; Vauchez 2016: 42), or that exercises the role of 'collective head of state' (De Schoutheete 2012), even within the paradigm of multi-level governance (Marks, Hooghe, Blank, 1996), which recognises that national governments are major players in the process of EU governance, but do not have a monopoly of control (Craig and De Burca 2011b: 22). It is worth noting that lawyers derive this view mostly from a purely doctrinal analysis of the institution, whereas an empirical legal analysis is missing.

Devuyst (2012: 333), instead, concentrates on how the European Council has handled an unforeseen event. He endorses the opinion expressed by former officials and commentators that for the first two years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Council did not take strategic decision. National diplomats, instead, were in charge of drafting foreign policy documents which later would simply receive a seal of approval or an 'upgrading' by the European Council. He then builds a narrative that shows that Member States were not united in facing the 'Arab uprisings' – for example, over the role to be played by Mubarak in Egypt. Member States did not coordinate within the EU, and instead issued statements and pursued policies that were at times inconsistent with those of other Member States (Devuyst 2012: 334). This resulted in a major split in the UN Security Council of 17 March 2011, when France, the United Kingdom and Portugal voted in favour of the no-fly zone, while Germany decided to abstain. For Devuyst, this was the result of the failure by the European Council to find a common position. Scholars have thus indicated that the European Council may actually fail to lead in CFSP. This, however, is hardly an institutional failure, but may rather derive from the composition of the institution and the way discussions are prepared, which heavily load the dice in favour of national power rather than European unity (Sjursen 2011: 1078). The regular schedule of its meetings, together with the presence of many non-foreign policy issues to be discussed, hardly lends itself to tackling critical unforeseen events. Finally, the rule requiring unanimity is also a hindrance to effective decision-making.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this article is to contribute to deciphering the role of the European Council in EU external action in general, and in CFSP in particular. Two clarifications are needed. First, the role of CFSP in European Council meeting is roughly easier to ascertain (Puetter 2015). Out of the 39 formal meeting of the European Council that took place since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, CFSP issues figure in all but seven of the conclusions thereby adopted (that is, in 82% of the meetings of the European Council). In addition to these, the European Council also holds informal or exceptional meetings of heads of state or government, sometimes with a third country. Following these meetings, leaders usually adopt a statement or declaration rather than official conclusions. Since the Lisbon Treaty, there have been 13 of these statements (Annex 2). In total, CFSP issues were discussed in 35 out of 52 European Council meetings. As we can see in the Data section below, 12 of the above conclusions have led to the adoption of common positions or other CFSP instruments (see table 1 below).

Second, previous studies answering broadly similar research questions conflated two issues: one being the original determination of a position and the other the influence of Council on that decision. But this may lead to a non sequitur: simply because the European Council was the first to arrive at a conclusion, it does not follow that the institution was influential. For example, based on the analysis of the European Council conclusions and on interviews with officials, Puetter (2012a: 161) suggests that the quest for consensus takes place in the European Council, as opposed to the Council, and from this would follow the prominence of the former. His research concerned specifically economic governance, an area of EU decision-making which shares some remarkable features with CFSP law: the European Council has a steering role, and the Commission does not have the exclusive prerogative to begin the legislative process. Dijkstra considered a related issue, the influence of the High Representative on CFSP (Vanhoonacker et al. 2010), and studied, to this effect, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions (Dijkstra 2013:454). Based on interviews with officials directly involved in the events, he concluded that CSDP missions in Aceh, Bosnia, Chad and Kosovo were put in place thanks to the High Representative incumbent at the time (Javier Solana). This happened owing to a loop of feedback whereby Solana was constantly involved in shaping CSDP operations. Vanhoonacker and Pomorska (2013:1316), building upon precedent theory, show how the narrative they build about the behaviour of High Representative Ashton and interviews with 14 EU officials supports the conclusion that some activities of Ashton have been more influential than others in agenda-setting. However, this methodology has the same potential shortcomings as Puetter's. Indeed, simply reading the European Council conclusions and asking people who were present at a given moment may not offer an accurate answer to the question on where the decisions were originally made. As far as direct witnesses are involved, there are epistemic shortcomings to which they are prone (Lamont and Swidler 2014:153; Riddervold 2016: 358). As far as European Council conclusions, even though that institution is the first to have officialised a certain policy it does not mean that the real discussion took place on that occasion, nor that the real decision was made in those circumstances. Nonetheless, it is not necessary to answer at this stage the question of where decisions are really made in CFSP: this will be the task of the historian, who will access, in several years, declassified materials; or, as Fletcher suggests, it is maybe the task of diplomats, whose mission depends on the ability to identify where power really resides (Fletcher 2016:104).

Therefore, to determine the influence of the European Council in CFSP, the variable to be considered is not where the original determination was made, nor is it the sheer presence or quantity of CFSP issues in European Council conclusions. This article counts, instead, how many acts of other EU institutions have referred, since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, to European Council conclusions. And to get a sense of the weight of CFSP as opposed to other policies, the article counts the acts mentioning not just CFSP matters but all European Council conclusions, that is, all areas of EU law-making. By mention it is meant both when subsequent EU acts explicitly state that they are based on a certain European Council conclusion, and when they implicitly acknowledge this by adopting Article 26(2) TFEU as legal basis.

The study was conducted by retrieving on the EurLex database the basic binding acts of EU institutions that, since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and until 31 December 2016, mention Conclusions of the European Council (available at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html). By basic act it is meant new acts, and not those simply amending previous ones. Following the categorisation of acts provided for by Article 288 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, recommendations and opinions of EU institutions have no binding force, and therefore are excluded from the data. Naturally, the counting excluded merely preparatory work and staff working documents because the interest lies in what European Council conclusions actually resulted in a definitive and binding act. The data also excludes the cases decided by the Court of Justice of the European Union, given the qualitatively different nature of case law from other forms of decision-making.[iv] The data also excludes the yearly act implementing the Union's budget and those appointing Members of institutions. Rarely, EU acts refer to more than one European Council conclusion. This was mostly the case in Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) where reference was made to the first conclusion adopted in the area, in 1999, and subsequent developments. In that case, only the first reference was kept.

The author is aware of the shortcomings of this methodology. The fact that an institution mentions or even endorses a European Council conclusion does not mean that the act is based upon it, or owes its existence to the influence of the European Council. More importantly, this study does not take into account all of the instances (theoretically, all other EU acts) in which the decision is based on a European Council Conclusion but the act does not mention it. Why would an EU institution adopt an act on the basis of a European Council conclusion without mentioning is, probably, a question worthy of exploration from a purely political science perspective. This point is discussed again in the conclusion. The count presented here offers nonetheless a quantitative, and therefore easily falsifiable, measure of the acts spawned by each European Council conclusion. The results are presented considering different variables in turn: (1) the European Council conclusion mentioned in the act; (2) the subject area of the European Council conclusion; (3) the year other institutions adopted the act; (4) and the subject per year.

The study endeavours to respect as much as possible the terminology used by the European Council conclusions, even though the use is inconsistent throughout the years[v], and does not reflect the legal distinctions of the EU fundamental Treaties. Of particular interest for the present analysis is the fact that the European Council, in its conclusions, does not respect the distinction between CFSP and other external action competences. This is a distinction that appears in Article 24 TEU, which states that 'The common foreign and security policy is subject to specific rules and procedures', and is reinforced by a unique mechanism whereby the Court of Justice has the final say over the enforcement of the distinction between CFSP competence and other external action competences Given the uncertainty hovering over the scope of CFSP in the practice of institutions and the case law of the Court of Justice (Wessel 2009:117), the radical solution of the European Council is the abolition of any distinction. It is submitted that the European Council has taken such a broad interpretation of CFSP that it has abolished the distinction, encompassing any external competence outside migration (which is treated under its own heading) under CFSP. In the conclusions of the European Council, external relation issues, countries, or geographical areas are called by their own names (eg: 'Syria', or 'eastern neighbourhood'), rather than resorting to the legal label (see table 1). And the same happens for other policies (e.g. 'inclusive growth' is not the name of any official Union's policy). Despite an anti-formalistic approach by the European Council, this article retains the formal division of competences that exists in EU law. Therefore, this article distinguishes, in the European Council's conclusions, between subjects of 'CFSP proper' (such as Common Security and Defence Policy missions, or restrictive measures), and items relating to other areas of external action (such as enlargement or migration).

DATA & DISCUSSION

The research yielded 204 EU binding acts.[vi] This means that since December 2009, on average three binding EU act are adopted every month on the basis of a European Council conclusion. The data includes acts which mention European Council conclusions adopted before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

REFERENCES TO EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

The uneven distribution of references to European Council conclusions – analysed and discussed in this paragraph – requires an explanation of what factors make any given European Council conclusion more influential than others. The quest for this explanation informs the rest of this article.

Table 1. European Council Conclusions after the Lisbon Treaty

Date	Subject mentioned in subsequent acts
20-21 October 2016	Area of Freedom Security and Justice
17-18 March 2016	Economic growth
18-19 February 2016	Area of Freedom Security and Justice
23 April 2015	CFSP (2 mentions); Migration (4 mentions)
19-20 March 2015	Energy policy; CFSP (2 mentions)
18 December 2014	Internal Market
23-24 October 2014	Climate and energy policy (6 mentions); AFSJ
26-27 June 2014	CFSP
20-21 March 2014	CFSP (6 mentions)
20 December 2013	CFSP (CSDP)
25 October 2013	Public administration
28 June 2013	Growth
14-15 March 2013	Internal market
7-8 February 2013	Area of Freedom Security and Justice; Economic Growth; Multiannual Financial Framework (2 mentions); Finance (3 mentions)
December 2012	Internal market; CFSP
28-29 June 2012	Economic Growth (2 mentions); Internal Market; Taxation
9 December 2011	CFSP (2 mentions)
23 October 2011	Internal market; CFSP (3 mentions)
23-24 June 2011	Area of Freedom Security and Justice; Space policy (2 mentions)
24-25 March 2011	CFSP (2 mentions)
4 February 2011	Energy (3 mentions) + Economic Growth + Internal Market
16-17 December 2010	CFSP
16 September 2010	CFSP
17 June 2010	Economic growth (14 mentions); CFSP (8 mentions); Employment (4 mentions); Energy (2 mentions); Digital Communication
March 2010	Economic Growth
February 2010	Finance
December 2009	AFSJ (9 mentions); Finance

Note: Total of mentions of European Council conclusions that took place since 1 December 2009: 98

Table 2. European Council Conclusions before the Lisbon Treaty

Date	Subject mentioned in subsequent acts
October 2009	Energy
June 2009	Finance (3 mentions); AFSJ
March 2009	Finance
December 2008	Constitutional Affairs; CFSP
September 2008	CFSP (2 mentions); Area of Freedom Security and Justice
December 2007	Growth; Environment; CFSP
June 2007	CFSP (2 mentions) + Economics
March 2007	Energy (4 mentions)
December 2006	Energy
June 2006	Economics
March 2006	Employment
December 2005	CFSP (11 mentions)
December 2004	CFSP
November 2004	Area of Freedom Security and Justice
December 2003	CFSP (29 mentions)
Thessaloniki 2003	Enlargement (5 mentions); Environment
December 2002	Internal Market + CFSP
June 2001	CFSP (7 mentions); Economic Growth
Nice 2000	Enlargement (4 mentions)
Tampere 1999	Area of Freedom Security and Justice (18 mentions)
December 1997	CFSP (2 mentions)
April 1997	CFSP
December 1994	Competition
June 1993	Enlargement (2 mentions)
June 1985	Internal Market

Note: Total of mentions of European Council conclusions that took place before December 2009: 111. Total mentions: 209

The starting point of the analysis is the datum that references to European Council conclusions are unevenly distributed: more than half of the references are to European Council conclusions adopted before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Obviously, this uneven distribution could be due to the fact that there have been more European Council conclusions before 2009 than after (102 to 52), and so it would just be more likely that EU acts cite them. But EU acts do not cite European Conclusions randomly: if it was so, there would be two references to conclusions pre-Lisbon for each one to conclusions post-Lisbon, and each European Council would receive, in the long run, an equal number of citation. This is not the case. Rather, the references to pre-2009 conclusions tend to be concentrated in few 'important' European councils: three of them make up more than half of the whole pre-Lisbon citations. These are Tampere 1999, December 2003, and December 2005 conclusions. The same holds for post-Lisbon European Council: the three most-cited, December 2009, June 2010, and October 2014 make up for almost half of the post-Lisbon citations. Thus, the 12% of European Council conclusions mentioned received 50% of the total references. Another aspect needs to be considered: since December 2009, the European Council has met 52 times. This means an average of once every 42 days, but nearly half of those meetings have taken place in the last two and a half years, since March 2015 (The 52 European Council meetings before Lisbon, by way of comparison, spanned over 13 years: almost twice as long a time). And yet there are only eight references in EU acts to European Council conclusions that took place since 2015 (4% of the total).

In other words, some European Councils are far more influential than others. While the article discusses possible explanations later, for the moment it suffices to state that the reason why some European Councils are more significant than other might be the simplest one: they discussed an important issue or introduced a new programme. For example, the conclusions of October 2014 proved influential in climate and energy matters because they introduced the 2030 climate and energy framework, also in view of the 2015 Paris conference on climate change. The European Council of February 2013 introduced the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework and other rules on European public finance. The June 2010 European Council, the third ever since the inception of the Lisbon Treaty and the one that was mentioned most often (29 times) introduced the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; and, in light of the financial crisis, it agreed 'on first orientations as regards the Stability and Growth Pact and budgetary surveillance'. The Tampere European Council of 1999 introduced the first programme on the newly created Area of Freedom Security and Justice. However, the innovative or salient character of the European Council conclusions is only a necessary condition of its influence, without being sufficient to ensure a high number of subsequent quotations. Indeed, it is not the case that every time an important issue is discussed in a conclusion, that conclusion is referenced in subsequent EU acts. This issue will be teased out in the rest of the article, but already at this stage an example may help illustrate the point: many European Council conclusions dealt with terrorism, yet hardly any new basic acts mention them.

SUBJECTS OF EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS REFERENCED

CFSP and economic governance are the two subjects of European Council conclusions that obtain citations in more EU acts (97 and 52, respectively). Economic matters, broadly understood so as to encompass EU and Member State finance, growth, employment, and internal market make up one quarter of all references. AFSJ constitutes 17% (two thirds of which concern matters of asylum, border checks, and immigration) of the references. 10% of the references concern matters of climate change and energy policy.

In order to answer the research question of this Article, special attention should be given to the score of European Council conclusions on CFSP in relation to other subject areas. Among the conclusions adopted after December 2009, CFSP is discussed in 35 of European Council, and is referenced in 30 EU acts.[vii] Economic matters figure in 36 European Council conclusions and received 41 references. 12 European Council mentioned energy and/or climate change, and they received 12 mentions. 18 conclusions mention migration, and these received 12 references. The important parameter here is the mention: this study did not calculate how much of each single European Council conclusion is devoted to CFSP, or to economics, or how much of an EU is devoted to the same subject (it would be impossible to do so), but simply the occurrences.

One might be led to conclude, given these figures, that the European Council after 2009 is influential in energy, climate change, and economic matters more than in CFSP and AFSJ. But this, again, would be only part of the picture, as it does not offer an explanation as to why this is the case. In order to get a clear understanding of whether the European Council has indeed had a saying in crucial events and has therefore injected vital political input in the EU mechanism, it is necessary to look at what European Councils conclusions are referenced, that is, what substantive issues was the legislation addressing.

It is already worth noting at this stage, however, how CFSP is the only subject-area in which the European Council after Lisbon has been referenced less than before Lisbon. It is a hint of the relatively low influence of the European Council in this critical area.

Fig. 1 Total references to European Council conclusions dealing with CFSP topics in other institution's act

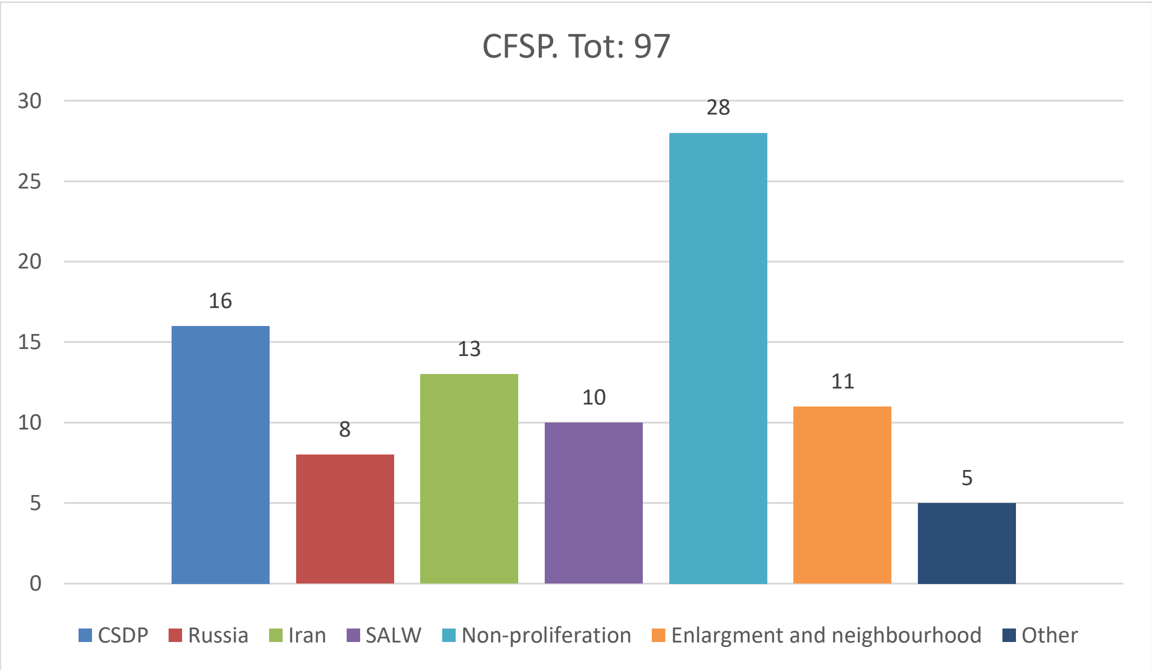


Fig. 2 Total references to European Council conclusions dealing with economic topics in other institution's act

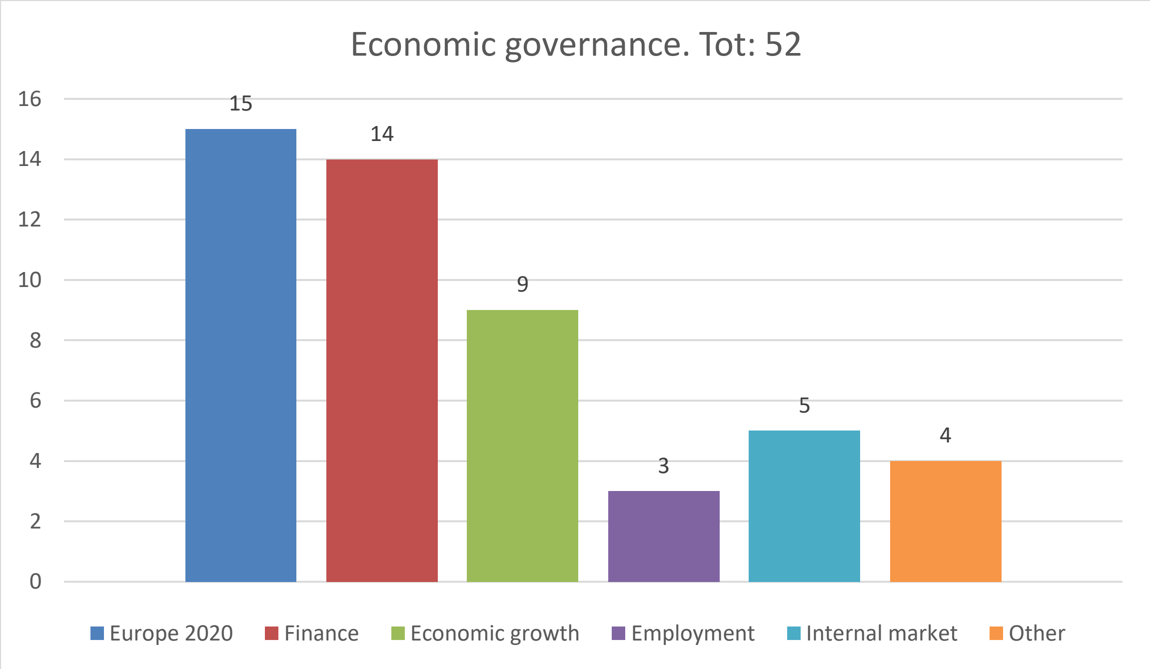
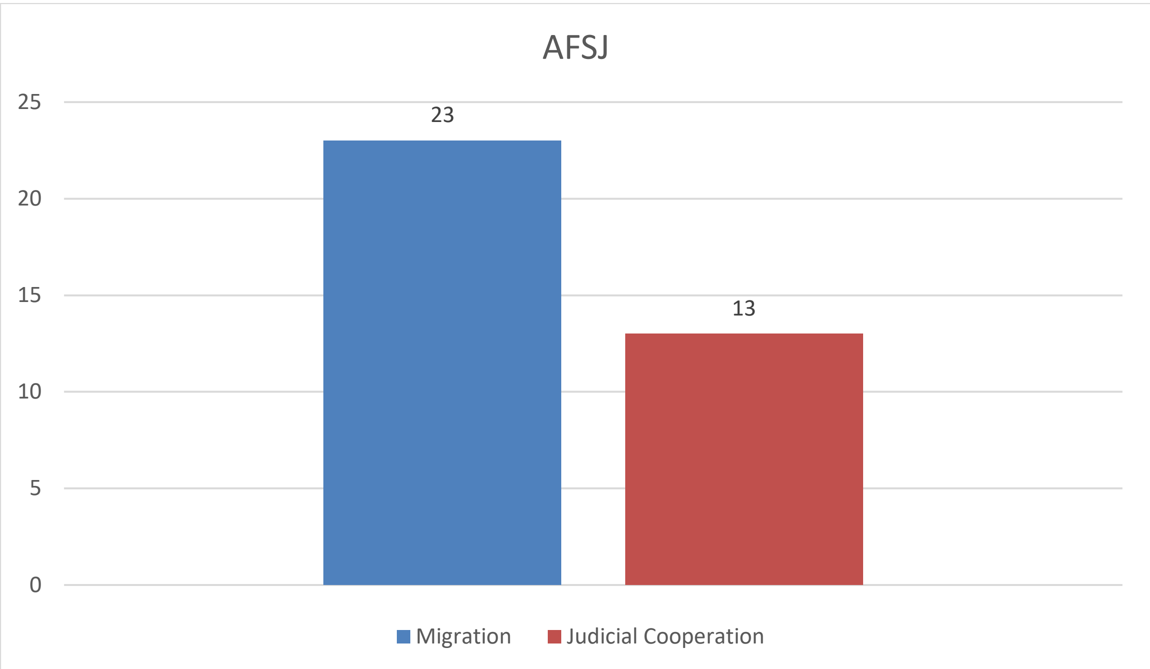


Fig. 3 Total references to European Council conclusions dealing with Area of Freedom Security and Justice topics in other institution's act



YEARS OF ADOPTION OF EU ACTS MENTIONING EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

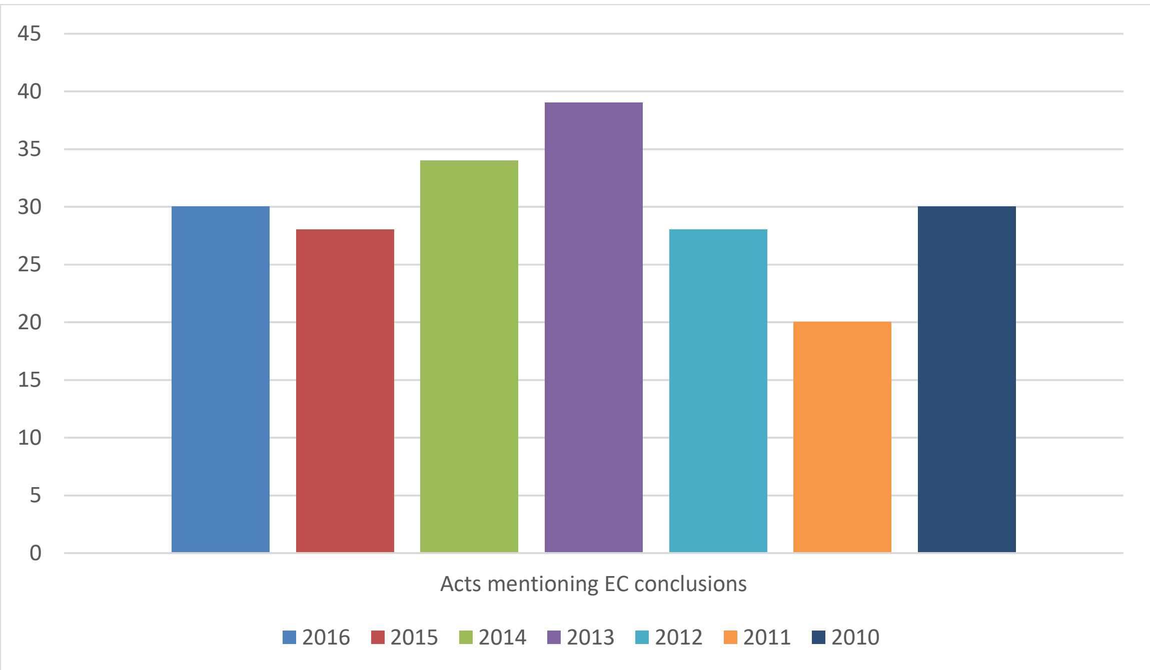
The most striking feature of fig. 4 is the remarkably small percentage of EU acts mentioning European Council conclusions, on the total of EU basic acts adopted: between 1.2 and 2.4%.

By assuming, as this study does, that the mention, in a subsequent act, of a European Council conclusion is a measure of the influence of that institution, the scant amount of references relative to the overall production of EU acts would suggest that, in general terms, the European Council does not in fact play the prominent role that EU law assigns to it.

This is highly significant, as it is an important instance of divergence between EU constitutional law and the way institutions have interpreted their role. If it is true that the European Council 'provides the Union with its necessary impetus and defines the general political directions and priorities thereof', then there is virtually no area of EU decision-making in which this institution does not have a say. And not just 'a say': the European Council should have the most influential steering role. Thus its conclusions, always on paper, should result in other binding acts. But this is not the case. Interestingly, the number of European Parliament resolutions based on European Council conclusions is almost threefold as the total of acts of the other institutions which reference European Council conclusions: however, these are not in the data as resolutions are not binding as they express a purely political will, a direction for future binding action.

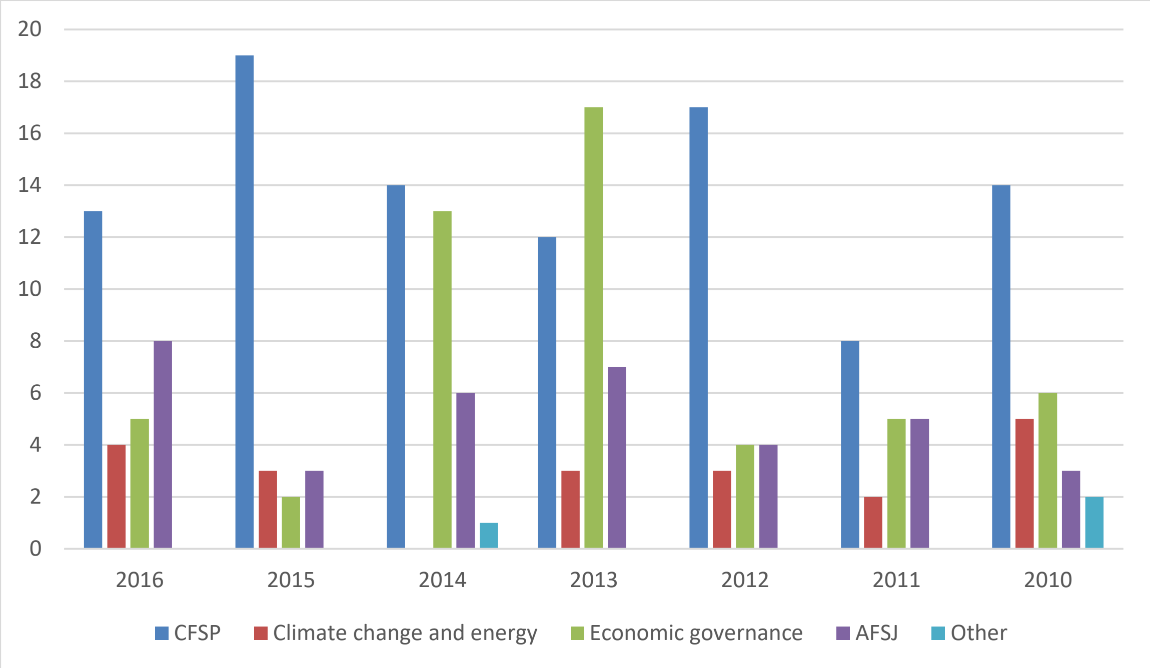
To continue the research of the explanation of the factors that justify the significance of any given European Council conclusion, it is worth noticing that there is a correlation between the year of adoption of an EU act and the subject area: for example, in 2013 and 2014, at the height of the Eurozone financial crisis, economic matters figure prominently in the references (which are highest in absolute terms and in percentage to the total of EU acts). The data thus gives us an idea of the most important junctures in European and international history: but, crucially, this is true on only for some subject areas, like economics or energy. The following paragraph discusses the relative influence of the European Council in CFSP and links it back to the question on whether that institution carried weight in pivotal events.

Fig. 4 Number of other institution's documents referencing European Council conclusion by year



SUBJECTS AND YEARS: WHERE, WHEN, AND WHY THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IS MOST INFLUENTIAL

Fig. 5 Reference to European Council conclusion by year and by topic



The main significance of the data in fig. 5 lies in the scant influence of CFSP European Council conclusions adopted in critical situations: the Arab uprisings are an outstanding example of this.

More analytically: even though nearly half of the 209 references are to CFSP, these regard relatively uncontroversial issues such as the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or old European Councils, such as the 2005 conclusions on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The European Council that received most references in CFSP is the one held in December 2003, which endorsed the second version of the European Security Strategy drafted by Javier Solana and the new non-proliferation strategy (28 references); the European Council of December 2005, which adopted the EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, obtained 10 references.

Seventeen out of the 98 European Council conclusions mentioned in CFSP acts concern CSDP missions – but references are not to newly established missions nor to measures adopted, within those mission, to face particularly urgent or critical situations. For example, in 2015 CFSP decisions were adopted to establish a Committee of Contributors for CSDP missions in Mali and in the Central African Republic (Political and Security Committee 2015a and 2015b). The cases of Ukraine and Lybia are mentioned below.

Only four references were contained in international agreements: all with countries in Western Balkans. The treaty with Kosovo, adopted in 2015, might have been considered a major influence of the European Council, if one considers the declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008 a major development in international affairs and given the substantial split between EU countries as to the status of that territory. However, not only the treaty was concluded several years after the independence of Kosovo and explicitly states that it is 'without prejudice to positions on status', thus cannot be regarded as reflecting a particularly innovative stance of the EU; most importantly, the European Council conclusion referred to is the one adopted in 2003 in Thessaloniki. More significant are the European Council's stances against Iran and Russia (8 references each).

The only critical event in which the European Council conclusions seemingly had immediate influence is the conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. During the tensions between the EU and Russia over an armed conflict in Ukraine, in March 2014 the European Council stated its support for the Ukrainian people and condemned Russia's behaviour. In June of the same year, following the fall of a civilian airplane in Ukraine allegedly caused by Russian technology, the European Council urged 'the Russian Federation to actively use its influence over the illegally armed groups and to stop the flow of weapons and militants across the border, in order to achieve rapid and tangible results in de-escalation'. Several provisions were adopted pursuant to this call: six in 2014 and two the next year.

There are, however, outstanding instances in which there is no European Council trace in EU acts. This 'silence' is all the more striking because the EU, instead, has passed binding acts with regard to those countries, so if the European Council tried to constrain institutions' behaviour in those cases, it failed (a point discussed in the conclusion). It is the case of Tunisia (Council 2011a); Egypt (Council 2011b); Libya (Council 2011c); Syria (Council 2011d); the self-styled caliphate in Syria and Iraq (Council 2016). Possible explanations as to why the European Council was more active in the developments in Ukraine than those in northern Africa are hardly due to legal factors. The EU fundamental Treaties, and thus the role of the European Council, did not change in foreign policy matters between 2011 and 2014. Accounts can be developed to study whether the High Representative increased the influence of the European Council – it would be quite counter-intuitive if this was the case. Or, possibly, the difference lies in the Arab uprisings being treated as purely political (i.e. under CFSP), whereas the Ukrainian conflict escalated out of trade negotiations carried out by the Commission – which may suggest that in the latter case, the MSs had already reached a common position.

The count of CFSP acts referencing European Council conclusions would be, in itself, of little value. By way of comparison, European Council conclusions on topical economic matters have received references in EU acts. The difference between CFSP and economic 'citations' lies not in the quantity, but so to say in the quality of citations. It is important to recall that less than a third of CFSP citations are to European Council conclusions held after Lisbon, while in economic matters 41 out of 52 refer post-Lisbon European Council conclusions. And even when the reference is to conclusions prior to the Lisbon Treaty, these are only few months old. By way of example, the creation of a European system of financial regulation in EU law – i.e. the establishment in 2010 of the European Systemic Risk Board, of the European Securities and Market Authorities, of European Banking Authority etc – references the relevant European Council conclusions of June 2009. Possible reasons for this difference may be that in financial crisis matters, the EU has a clear competence (which in relation to monetary policy, which was threatened by the crisis, is exclusive) and therefore EU measures are easier (and therefore more likely) to be adopted; or that some of the EU initiatives in financial regulation in fact originated from the G20 after the financial crisis (this is the case of, e.g., credit rating agencies regulation). Thus, the involvement of the European Council reflects the existence of pre-existing political consensus at the international level. What holds true for economic governance does not work for migration: 18 European Council conclusions discussed migration after 2009. These include, and this information is crucial, half of the extraordinary European Council meetings. There have been five ad hoc European Council meetings on migration – including two with Turkey – since 2015, and yet these have received only one explicit reference – and once case before the Court.[viii]

Finally, and most relevant for the present analysis, to be highly influential an European Council conclusion in CFSP must display the two following characteristics, cumulatively: (1) it introduces a policy innovation (2) in a non-controversial issue. As far (1) is concerned, the element of policy innovation is evident in European Council conclusions that received most references in EU acts: for example, the conclusions of December 2003. Those conclusions adopted the Security Strategy drafted by Javier Solana (in its December version, see Missiroli 2015), which was the first of its kind for the EU. Crucially, the conclusions also introduced the strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The requirement that the council conclusions, to receive subsequent mentions, should introduce a policy change is a substantial one, in the sense that the conclusions must have some added value, and not simply re-state a well-established Union policy. As far as (2) is concerned, indeed, subsequent references to the December 2003 European Council conclusions concern almost exclusively the newly introduced strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Counter-proliferation, however, is hardly a contentious topic in the EU. By way of example, the very year 2003 had, instead, seen the highly divisive Iraq war, which had resulted in a major split in EU MSs, including within the UN Security Council – a war on which the December conclusions are silent. Nor was the counter-proliferation strategy by any means the only major policy innovation of those years: the 'big bang' enlargement of 2004 – despite not being labelled as new 'strategy' – being an outstanding instance of an important policy shift which was not officially named strategy (Missiroli 2015: 9).

The reason for the influence of the European Council conclusion is, again, not just due to legal factors. Instead, a suitable explanation seems to be the narrative, well-established in social sciences (Craig and de Burca 2011b: 60), of CFSP as a domain that Member States perceive as power-driven (rather than law driven) and in which they want to retain as much authority as possible (Dashwood and Hillion 2000; Koutrakos 2013), to the extent that they had originally even tried 'to prevent the European Council from acting within the scope of the Treaties' (Schutze 2012: 101). Previous studies have shown that the salience of an item influences whether it is discussed at top-executive level (e.g. ministerial level in the Council; Häge 2009). Member States prefer to act at intergovernmental level – rather than supranational – for controversial issues (a well-documented exception is the law of defence procurement: Blauberger and Weiss 2013). Possibly for this reason, Member States are reticent to pursue in binding acts the political statements formulated in the European Council. Thus, in times of crisis, the European Council has little influence EU's external action.

CONCLUSIONS

The data show that, in foreign policy, only the European Council conclusions that addressed a relatively uncontroversial matter were referred to in other EU law acts. This article adopted an empirical legal perspective to discuss the influence of the European Council on other institutions in the domain of CFSP. These findings can be discussed from other angles: for example, efficiency; or democracy (Sjursen 2011:1079) and accountability; or from a purely political perspective: why, for example, so little new basic acts on terrorism are adopted despite the matter figuring prominently in European Council conclusions? Has the EU failed to concretise these political declarations, and if so, does this confirm that the nature of European Council's activity is political rather than legal? Or is it perhaps the case that such references to foreign policy matters in European Council statements were in fact influential in the framing of CFSP action but they were not referred to expressly? Why are European Council conclusions on the Western Balkans more cited than others?

The study partially confirms a conclusion of previous contributions on the role of the European Council: it is true that the European Council is influential in matters of CSDP and economic governance. However, this is only a partial picture. As Devuyst wrote (2012), the institution lacked impact during the Arab uprisings. The data collected appears to confirm and expand this finding: there is no evidence that the European Council has proved influential in crisis situations concerning the EU's external relations, in CFSP as well as in migration matters. It is not impossible that it has been influential, but this does not result from the acts adopted by other institutions. As mentioned in the methodology section, however, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence: a way through which the European Council might have influenced the political agenda is precisely through restraining rather than through coercing. As explained by Bachrach and Baratz (1962: 949) in their article 'Two faces of power', influence is not only exercised in a positive manner (the first face). The second 'face', instead, is the 'restrictive face of power' involving the 'dynamics of non-decision making': in the words of the Authors, this is the authority to 'limit decision-making' by other actors.

Therefore, while it is true that the European Council is influential in the external relations of the EU, this might be the case only on non-critical issues. Instead, it fails to express an influential position when highly divisive topics are on the table, and there is no evidence of its influence. But if really the European Council has only taken a leading role under normal conditions and has failed to provide input at critical junctures, it suggests that it does not work. Who would board a plane that stops functioning in case of unexpected turbulence?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to Professor Takis Tridimas and to the anonymous reviewers for their comments.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The Treaty says 'without prejudice to the powers of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy'. The issue of representation of the EU should be resolved in the sense of granting the President of European Council representation at government level, and to HR representation at anything below that level (that is, exchanges between diplomats). PJ Kuijper et als, *The Law of EU External Relations. Cases, Materials, and Commentary on the EU as an International Legal Actor* (OUP 2015) 26.

[2] 'The common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides.'

[3] Joined Cases C-643/15 and C-647/15 *Slovakia and Hungary v Council* EU:C:2017:631 paras 145-50.

[4] Case C-348/12 P *Council v Manufacturing Support & Procurement Kala* Naft ECLI:EU:C:2013:776; Case C-176/13 *P Council of the European Union v Bank Mellat* ECLI:EU:C:2016:96; Case C-200/13 P *Council of the European Union v Bank Saderat Iran* ECLI:EU:C:2016:284; Case C-440/14 P *National Iranian Oil Company v Council of the European Union* ECLI:EU:C:2016:128; Case T 52/15 *Sharif University of Technology v Council of the European Union* ECLI:EU:T:2016:254.

[5] Matters of public finance fall, in the European Council conclusions, sometimes under the label of 'finance', sometimes under that of 'economic growth': in this study, they are grouped them under 'finance'. The European Council is also able to distinguish between jobs and employment: this study assumes the terms are perfect synonyms and always called it employment.

[6] If one included the non-binding acts mentioned in Article 288 TFEU, the total would be more than fivefold.

[7] I could not retrieve any data on the percentage of CFSP acts out of the total of EU acts.

[8] Case T 192/16 *NF v European Council* ECLI:EU:T:2017:128

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Council (2011b) Decision 2011/172/CFSP of 21 March 2011 concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Egypt

Council (2011c) Decision 2011/210/CFSP of 1 April 2011 on a European Union military operation in support of humanitarian assistance operations in response to the crisis situation in Libya (EUFOR Libya)

Council (2011d) Decision 2011/273/CFSP of 9 May 2011 concerning restrictive measures against Syria

Council (2016) 'Decision (CFSP) 2016/1693 of 20 September 2016 concerning restrictive measures against ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda and persons, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them and repealing Common Position 2002/402/CFSP refers to the European Council meeting of October 2001 on terrorism'

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ANNEX 1: EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS SINCE 1 DECEMBER 2009, LIST OF TITLES OF ISSUES DISCUSSED.

N.	N. per year	Date	Object
1	1	22-23 June 2017	Security and Defence; Paris Agreement; Jobs, Growth, and Competitiveness; Migration; Digital Europe
2	2	29 April 2017	Article 50
3	1	15 December 2016	Migration; Security; Economic Development; Cyprus; External Relations (Ukraine/Syria)
4	2	20-21 October 2016	Migration; Trade; Other Global and Economic Issues; External Relations
5	3	28 June 2016	Migration; Jobs, Growth, and Investments; External Relations (Libya); UK Referendum
6	4	17-18 March 2016	Migration; Jobs, Growth, and Competitiveness; Climate and Energy
7	5	18-19 February 2016	UK and EU; Migration; External Relations (Syria and Libya); European Semester
8	1	17-18 December 2015	Migration; Fight against Terrorism; EMU; Internal Market; UK; External Relations (Syria and Libya)
9	2	15 October 2015	Migration (including Syria and Libya); Other items
10	3	25-26 June 2015	Migration; Security and Defence; Jobs, Growth, and Competitiveness; UK
11	4	19-20 March 2015	Energy Union; Jobs, Growth; External Relations (Russia; Libya)
12	1	18 December	Investment in Europe; Ukraine
13	2	23-24 October 2014	2030 Climate and Energy Policy; Economic Issues; Other items (Ukraine; Moldova; Northern Cyprus)
14	3	30 August 2014	Next Institutional cycle; Economic Issues; External Relations (Ukraine; Syria; Libya; Ghaza)
15	4	16 July 2014	Next institutional cycle; External relations (Ukraine; Gaza)
16	5	26-27 June 2014	AFSJ; Jobs, Growth, and Competitiveness; Next Institutional cycle; Other items (Ukraine)
17	6	20-21 March 2014	Jobs, Growth, and Competitiveness; Industrial Competitiveness and Policy; Climate and Energy; Cyrpus; External Relations (Ukraine; EU-Africa relations; Sri Lanka)
18	1	19-20 December 2013	CSDP; Economic and Social Policy; EMU; Migration; Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process; External Relations (Syria; CAF; Eastern Partnership); Other items
19	2	24-25 October 2013	Digital economy; Economic and Social Policy; EMU; Eastern Partnership; Migration.
20	3	27-28 June 2013	Youth Employment; Jobs, Growth, and Competitiveness; EMU; Other items

21	4	22 May 2013	Energy; Taxation
22	5	14-15 March 2013	Economic and Social policy; other items
23	6	7-8 February 2013	Trade; Arab Spring
24	1	13-14 December 2012	Economic Policy; Other items (CSDP; Syria)
25	2	18-19 October 2012	Economic Policy; Strategic Partners; Other items (Syria; Iran)
26	3	28-29 June 2012	Growth, Investment, and jobs; Report on EMU; Multiannual Financial Framework; Other Items (Syria; Iran)
27	4	1-2 March 2012	Economic Policy; International Summits; Foreign Policy; Other Issues
28	1	9 December 2011	Economic Policy; Energy; Enlargment; Other items (Syria)
29	2	23 October 2011	Economic Policy; G20; Climate Change; Foreign Policy
30	3	23-24 June 2011	Economic Policy; Migration; Croatia; Other items (Southern Neighbours)
31	4	24-25 March 2011	Economic Policy; Libya; Japan;
32	5	11 March 2011	Lybia
33	6	4 February 2011	Energy; Innovation; Economic Situation; External Relations (Egypt)
34	1	16-17 December 2010	Economic Policy; Other issues (Cote d'Ivoire)
35	2	28-29 October 2010	Economic Governance; G20; Cancun conference on climate change; Summits with 3rd countries
36	3	16 September 2010	Relations with strategic partners; Economic governance;
37	4	17 June 2010	New strategy for jobs and growth; G20; Millennium Dev Goals; Climate Change; Other issues.
38	5	25-26 March 2010	New strategy for jobs and growth; Climate change
39	1	10 December 2009	Institutional issues; economic, financial, and employment situation; AFSJ; enlargement; external relations (Iran, Afghanistan)

ANNEX 2: INFORMAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL STATEMENTS OR DECLARATION SINCE 1 DECEMBER 2009.

N	Date	Object
1	25 March 2017	Rome declaration in the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties
2	9 March 2017	Jobs, growth and competitiveness, Security and Defence, Migration, Western Balkans
3	3 February 2017	External aspects of migration
4	15 December 2016	UK and Article 50
5	16 September 2016	Principles for the future of the European Union
6	29 June 2016	UK withdrawal referendum
7	22 March 2016	Terrorist attacks in Brussels
8	7 March 2016	With Turkey: migration
9	29 November 2015	With Turkey: migration and future accession
10	23 September 2015	Migration
11	23 April 2015	Migration
12	12 February 2015	Terrorism
13	11 February 2010	Greece

Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

Research Article

Austerity as the Solution to the Eurozone Crisis: Analysing the Ordo-Liberal Pre-Eminence over Contending Framings of the Crisis

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Citation

Pottier, C. and Delette, G. (2019). 'Austerity as the Solution to the Eurozone Crisis: Analysing the Ordo-Liberal Pre-Eminence over Contending Framings of the Crisis', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 15(1): 57-73.
https://doi.org/ 10.30950/jcer.v15i1.886

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

Using a multiple stream framework and constructivist theories, this article provides an explanation for the adoption of austerity packages in the Eurozone. It argues that the European debt sovereign crisis that began in 2009 was mainly managed according to ordo-liberal principles. Yet other explanations for the crisis, accompanied by different solutions other than austerity, were promulgated. Just as the persuasive power of ordo-liberals upon national heads of state, along with the European Central Bank and the European Commission are the main reasons for the success of the ordo-liberal political entrepreneurs, likewise the longevity of the ordo-liberal framing can be explained through an examination of the interplay of politics and ideologies.

Keywords

Austerity; Eurozone crisis; Ordo-liberalism; Germany; Multiple streams approach

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The adoption of strong austerity measures in the Eurozone as a solution to address the economic crisis has provoked numerous protests. The peak of these protests was the election of the radical left wing Syriza party in Greece in January 2015 following a campaign against austerity imposed by the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as compensation for international bailouts. Yet, as Greece's eurozone bailout ended in September 2018, it appears austerity has remained largely unchallenged at the EU level despite the long and difficult recovery from a crisis that began nearly a decade ago.

Austerity, however, was not the only possible solution to the crisis, and debates over it have taken place in those academic and policy circles where political decisions and reforms are discussed. When the debt sovereign crisis was sparked off in the Eurozone, many stakeholders declared their resistance to austerity plans and promoted other solutions.

Nevertheless, it was austerity, 'a form of voluntary deflation in which the economy adjusts through the reduction of wages, prices, and public spending to restore competitiveness which is (supposedly) best achieved by cutting the state's budget, debts, and deficits' (Blyth 2013: 2) that was defined as the solution by the entire European Monetary Union (EMU) governing bodies – the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB), the ECOFIN (Economic and Financial Affairs) Council and the European Council. Influenced by ordo-liberal theories developed in post-war Germany and to some extent in EMU since its creation, they understood the Eurozone crisis as a 'crisis of state spending' and imposed austerity measures on the profligate periphery states to resolve it (Blyth 2013). However, there was no unanimous approval of this explanation and solution.

The purpose of this article is to explain how different schools of thought haggled over the interpretation of the crisis. It will focus on how ordo-liberalism won acceptance by European policymakers and how its proponents managed to keep ordo-liberalism as the main set of ideas to understand the crisis several years after its beginning and despite protests at national levels and economic hardships in the Eurozone.

Although the ordo-liberals dominated the crisis resolution process, their solution need not be understood as the best option. Using Kingdon's (1984) multiple streams theory which stresses disorder in the policymaking process, this article argues that tough austerity measures were implemented because the ordo-liberals managed to join the problem, policy and politics streams.

The main contribution of this article is to highlight the relations within and among EMU institutions in the light of the Eurozone crisis resolution process and then – in this particular case – to demonstrate why the ordo-liberal framing of the crisis predominated in the initial political debate over the framing of the crisis (i.e. 2009 – 2011) and thereafter, even as national elections and economic results were threatening it. Indeed, while ordo-liberal principles were infringed upon, depending on the interests of the actors who claim to defend it, the framing of the crisis in ordo-liberal terms has quickly stabilised and remained remarkably unchanged, increasing the political power of some actors (mainly the ECB) and forcing others to adapt to maintain their influence (such as the European Commission).

This article is divided into three sections. The first one demonstrates the pertinence of the use of a multiple streams approach to the Eurozone crisis. Contributions of strategic and social constructivism also enrich this approach. The second section analyses the problem, politics and policy streams that were associated with each other by ordo-liberal thinkers. Particular attention is also paid to contending framings of the crisis that could have united the three streams. The third and last section explains why and how the ordo-liberal framing of the crisis dominated the decision-making process in EMU intergovernmental bodies, the ECB, and the European Commission, and how the longevity of the ordo-liberal framing can be explained through the multiple streams approach, thus giving room to argue for a combination of political and ideological reasons.

MULTIPLE STREAMS FRAMEWORK AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE EUROZONE CRISIS

The Strengths of the Multiple Streams Approach

Multiple streams theory argues that during a period of uncertainty, such as the Eurozone crisis, there is only very limited rationality in policymaking. This is particularly the case within the EU's 'deinstitutionalized' (Benz 2003: 101) policymaking where informality of power, entrepreneurial politics, strategies and political power play a greater role in the policymaking than the power deriving from institutional design. Zahariadis (2008: 515) argues that 'in the presence of time constraints and ambiguity, a relatively small group of skilled policy entrepreneurs are capable of dominating the process and steering decisions toward their favorite outcomes'. Based on the multiple streams theory, the author assumes that policy outcomes are more determined by political power than by a problem–solution sequence. Far from having to provide solutions to a predefined issue, the policy entrepreneurs need to present a convincing explanation and a related solution to the issue. With each policy, political actors fight to advance their own explanations of the situation and their own solutions to address it in compliance with their own interests.

Contrary to rational institutionalism, multiple streams theory refutes the idea that solutions to economic crises are natural or objective. Rather, the decisional process achieved is the result of a dynamic between problems, solutions and representatives of interests. In that sense, the policymaking process can be compared to a garbage can (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972). According to Kingdon (1984), a decision is the result of the joining of three streams: the problem stream, the policy stream and the politics stream. The problem stream is comprised of an issue that has been signalled by a clear event or report. This issue alerts the policymakers seeking measures to address it. The policy stream is composed of solutions already drawn up by experts. The policymakers advocate one of these solutions according to their political party and ideology. Finally, the politics stream is imposed by electoral timetables, political power plays or what the politicians believe to be the demands or mood of their constituents.

A policy window opens either in the politics stream or in the problem stream. Some policy entrepreneurs seize the opportunity to draw attention to the policies that they were already defending before the policy window opened (Kingdon 1995). The policy entrepreneurs that manage to combine the three streams push forward their policies. Windows are therefore fleeting 'opportunit[ies] for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems' (Kingdon 1995:165). Contrary to institutional theory which asserts that a problem is first identified and then followed by solutions, multiple streams theory claims that windows structure the policymaking process.

Constructivism and the Strategic Use of Ideas to Legitimise Solutions

Policymakers that join the three streams impose their narrative of the crisis and the related solution to address it. Joining those streams requires a strategic use of ideas. They legitimise an actor's own explanation or narrative of the crisis. Once it is legitimised, it is easier to find support and enforce the measures advocated. The use of constructivist theories is fruitful to understand this aspect of the joining. Two intertwined branches of constructivism in European studies – social constructivism and strategic constructivism – provide explanations to understand better how certain actors manage to join the streams.

Social constructivists, such as Schimmelfennig (2000), argue that the member states' perceptions of their own political interests evolve thanks to international socialisation processes. This socialisation leads to success in implementing rules, norms and legal principles at the European level (Wiener 2006). In the EU, policy entrepreneurs are more likely to impose a new way of thinking when a window of opportunity opens (Saurugger 2009).

As for strategic constructivism, Blyth (2002) highlights the strategic considerations of the actors and the social construction of ideas. As a result of the high uncertainty of the situations, what constitutes an economic crisis is not clearly understood. It has to be narrated and explained. Therefore, ideas are used for strategic purposes and play a key role during an economic crisis. Ideas allow agents to propose solutions to build new economic stability. They help individuals to understand their role in the decision process in order to harmonise collective action. Finally, ideas offer guidelines for the transformation of the preexisting environment by explaining to actors how to adapt the former projects to the circumstances. This 'strategic social construction' of reality (Blyth, Widmaier and Seabrooke 2007: 748) is appropriate for (re)defining key concepts and to convince one's partners. In other words, crises are opportune moments to replace the existing system with a new one through the interpretation of new events. Nevertheless, a crisis will not necessarily bring a change in a paradigm because the meaning of the problems, their interpretation and analysis is filtered by ideals and cultural structures within which political actors operate. We can argue that, in a period of crisis, dominant political actors try to control changes and contestation by explaining the crisis through their ideological reading grids (McNamara 2006).

The multiple streams framework highlights the point that the difficulty in policymaking lies in understanding the problem raised rather than in finding the best solution to a clearly defined problem. The art of defining the problem is central when it comes to promoting certain policies (Rochefort and Cobb 1993). As argued by Zahariadis (2005: 198), 'strategically emphasizing [...] one conceptualisation of the problem or threat over others enable[s] policy entrepreneurs to steer the debate, and, therefore, bias the policy making, toward certain types of policy and away from others'. Both sides of the coin have to be considered: for political actors, having successfully framed a debate in a certain way is not only crucial in order to implement their preferred policies, but also to prevent competing policies being adopted. The following sections will focus on the application of multiple streams theory to understand how austerity became the mainstream discourse of EMU.

THE COUPLING OF THE THREE STREAMS LEADING TO THE ADOPTION OF AUSTERITY MEASURES IN THE EUROZONE

This section examines the problem, policy and politics streams that were associated by ordo-liberal political entrepreneurs. It starts with an overview of the main tenets of the ordo-liberal theory. It then provides a panorama of the other narratives and solutions to the crisis that were advocated by competing political entrepreneurs.

The Principles of Ordo-Liberalism

Ordo-liberalism is the German version of neoliberalism that shaped the German economic model from 1945 onwards. Its principles were developed by Walter Eucken, Franz Böhm and Hans Grossman-Doerth during the Nazi period. It was designed to overcome the failings of economic liberalism and Hitler's consequent rise to power. At that time, economic liberalism was associated with economic chaos, demonstrated by the hyperinflation of the 1920s (Balaam and Dillman 2011).

Ordo-liberals concur with many classical liberal values and principles such as humanist values, democracy, economic and political freedoms, protection of individuals from excessive state power, control of monopolies to maintain open markets and competition as a source of economic well-being. However, they consider that liberal policies can be effective only if they take into account the embedding of the market into legal and political systems. The ordo-liberals therefore argue that 'the market process will support and promote liberal values only if appropriate rules governing the market process (property law, contract law, trade law, competition policy, etc.) are established by the state' (Balaam and Dillman 2011: 50). By conducting a regulatory policy, the state makes possible the existence of a market that creates just outcomes with a need for redistribution only in special circumstances (Vanberg 2004). Expansive monetary policies cannot be used and a strong independent central bank secures financial stability (Commun 2003). For instance, the Deutsche Bundesbank Act stipulates that the Central Bank shall not be subject to instructions from the Federal Government, and in this way defines the maintenance of price stability as the primary objective. The rules governing the market process are constitutional – enshrined in the German Constitution – to avoid their manipulation by politicians influenced by interest groups.

What matters for ordo-liberals therefore is creating the conditions in which markets can function (such as fair competition). The state is not deemed legitimate or sufficiently efficient to organise significant redistributions, between sectors or regions, or to implement expansive monetary policies. In ordo-liberals' opinion, to create the aforesaid conditions in the overly indebted countries, it was necessary to implement structural reforms and austerity measures which would in return restore confidence in the financial markets and improve competitiveness.

It is important to note now that ordo-liberalism is not the belief that the ideas that made the German economy flourish in the 1950s should be maintained: rather, it is one explanation of this economic success that emphasises certain aspects of the political and institutional framework of that time over others, e.g. the importance of the Marshall Plan and the leniency of Germany's creditors which allowed for economic policies of investment rather than austerity. Ordo-liberalism's efficiency and results are still a matter of debate amongst historians, economists and political scientists, as 'little work has been done to question the ordo-liberal assumptions and whether these ideas were in fact [so] important for the German economic growth' (Young 2014: 282).

Ordo-liberalism is mainly a German economic tradition, yet we will see that it has influenced the creation of EMU and the whole European approach to the economic crisis of 2008, as its proponents managed to impose their views by combine the problem, policy and politics streams.

The Problem Stream

The problem stream is here presented in the form of a factual synthesis of how the crisis unfolded in the first few years, based on Adda's (2012) work. It is difficult to pinpoint an end to the crisis but as our analysis concentrates mainly on the framing of the crisis, and on sovereign debts rather than on deflation and economic stagnation, we need only to establish the background of the political debates in the first few years of the crisis.

The European economies were struck by a crisis that originally was a financial one and had broken out in the United States in July 2007 when two investment funds of the investment bank Bear Stearns went bankrupt. This event can be identified as the phenomenon that allowed the policy window to open in the problem stream.

Like many American and some European banks, Bear Stearns had been weakened by the collapse of the subprime market that led to a global liquidity crisis threatening the economy with a credit crunch. This destabilisation of the banking sector obliged the central banks and governments to intervene in order to avoid a banking crisis whose systemic effects would have been devastating for the whole economy. However, the financial crisis worsened in September 2008 when the American Government decided not to bail out Lehman Brothers. In October 2008, European governments had to bail out banks in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom. This crisis forced households and financial institutions to engage in a long process of de-leveraging that was detrimental to economic growth and employment. The double commitment of the government in support of the banking sector – the socialisation of banking losses – and of the economy contributed to a significant increase in public deficits. In Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, the financing of public deficits did not cause major problems particularly, thanks to the monetary issuing powers of their central banks. That was not the case for the overly indebted EMU countries; nor could they rely on European budgetary integration. The financial crisis, therefore, became a sovereign debt crisis, severe enough to threaten the existence of the monetary union.

The first signal forecasting the evolution of the crisis was the downgrading of Greece's sovereign debt at the end of 2009 from A to BBB+ by the rating agency Fitch. As early as February 2010, the euro went through a sharp depreciation against the US dollar and the Greek budget deficit was revised upward by Eurostat. Italy, Ireland, Portugal and Spain also proved to have worrying debt deficits. Rating agencies downgraded these countries' sovereign debt. The financial markets, alerted by the rating agencies, increased the interest rates on those countries' loans. From that moment onward, there were concerns about a systemic crisis in EMU. The European institutions had to take action to prevent European countries from going bankrupt and to contain the diffusion of the debt-sovereign crisis. However, as explained by Hall, 'bond markets are simply strident messengers about problems originating elsewhere, and many factors converged to produce this crisis' (2012: 357). As a consequence, diverse policy entrepreneurs offered various profound reasons and solutions for the crisis. They pointed out certain loopholes in EMU while disregarding others, as demonstrated in the sub-section below.

The Politics Stream

The politics stream was influenced by public opinion and future elections in Germany. Those ordo-liberal leaders led the crisis management as illustrated in the final section. Indeed, Germany has played a role of paramount importance with regards to the resolution of the crisis: while it is generally considered to be one of the motors of the EU, the importance placed on sovereign debts and long-term interest rates for member states made it appear as a model during the crisis.

According to Schuman (2011), German voters were resistant to the idea of rescuing profligate states and making risky loans to them. The main reason why Chancellor Angela Merkel was reluctant to approve the bailout package requested by Greece in April 2010 was the regional election in North Rhine-Westphalia scheduled for May 2010 (Schneider 2013). This election was of major importance because a defeat of the CDU-coalition would have resulted in a loss of its majority in the Bundesrat. Given that 90 per cent of the voters in Nordrhein-Westfalen were opposed to the Greek bailout, Angela Merkel, who had shown a firm attitude towards Greece in her public speeches, wanted to postpone an agreement until after the regional elections. The Greek bailout and the poor results of the German negotiators in the European and international summits became the most important topic in the election campaigns and the CDU achieved its worst ever result in the region. This was a clear demonstration that straying from the ordo-liberal model at the European level was costly at the national level for the German government.

German perceptions of the Greeks were influenced not only by ordo-liberal political and economic elites but also by the mass media. The latter engaged in a populist campaign caricaturing the Greek people. Mylonas (2012) calls this phenomenon 'culturalization' of the crisis. The author points out the 'hegemonic naturalization of the economic crisis by the "free market" economistic ideology' (2012: 1). He depicts Greece as a scapegoat. German elites and the mass media floated the idea that Greece was the epicentre of the crisis. Appealing to the 'German tradition of frugality' (Young 2014: 281), they described the Greeks as a spendthrift and irresponsible people. As reported by *The Guardian* (2010), Josef Schlarmann, a member of the CDU party, said that 'those in insolvency have to sell everything they have to pay their creditors'. German magazines also used this topic for their covers. For instance, *Focus* magazine showed in their February 2010 issue the Venus de Milo making a finger gesture under the headline 'Swindlers in the eurozone'.

The politics stream cannot be summed up entirely by German national debates as other governments also had to take into account elections and internal debates, while austerity measures have not always proven to be popular. While he was Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker stated that he knew how to implement austerity measures but not how to be reelected after that (Fontan 2013). In fact, the importance of national politics in the European solution to the crisis has been the subject of heated debates, epitomised by the election of anti-austerity Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (known as 'Syriza') in 2015. Few concessions were made to the new Greek government even though it had been elected on a programme emphasising the refusal of the original bailout plan. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, commented that 'there can be no democratic choices against the European treaties' (Mével, 2015).

The Policy Stream

The predominant narrative of the crisis has competed with other narratives during the process of crisis resolution. The following sub-section is structured around the five narratives pinpointed by Matthijs (2011) but is completed by our own supplementary work. Each narrative identifies the real roots of the crisis but only a combination of two were taken into account by EMU governing bodies.

The first explanation of the Eurozone crisis is that the original institutional design of EMU was not sustainable. EMU, which established the Euro as a currency in 1999, was not an optimum currency area according to Mundell (1961). Indeed, it did not meet the conditions required to compensate the loss of monetary policy, i.e. having a coordinated fiscal policy and free movement of labour and capital among countries (Lane 2012). The European Commission argued that EMU would increase trade and financial integration, which would lead to a better business cycle convergence and then would make EMU member states suitable for the currency union. However, this proved to be wishful thinking, and the imbalances became more acute. Lane (2012) argues that the solution to this crisis is either to let periphery states leave EMU, devaluate their currency and come back once they have regained competitiveness; or to implement a fiscal transfer mechanism or a banking union in order to balance the impact of the unified monetary policy.

The second explanation is that the crisis is a budgetary or fiscal one. At the beginning, this narrative was associated with the German policy elite. It suggests that the crisis happened because EMU member states did not respect the convergence criteria in terms of public deficit and debt. In 1992, article 121 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, Maastricht version (1992) limited government deficits to 3 per cent of GDP and public debt levels to 60 per cent. In 1997, the member states agreed to strengthen these criteria with the Stability and Growth Pact. However, in 2005, Germany and France convinced ECOFIN to water down the fiscal criteria and opened the way to a lack of discipline regarding the respect of these criteria. The level of deficit and debt of peripheral states climbed without significant reactions from European institutions and financial markets where borrowing rates were at record lows for EMU members. However, when the financial crisis spread in Europe, investors realised that the budgets of profligate states were not sustainable, and the bond yields of these countries soared (Ngai 2012). The solution to this crisis is to harden the fiscal rules, to clean public accounts and to implement austerity measures.

The third explanation also originates from the German policy elite. It suggests that it is a crisis of competitiveness 'where slow, anemic and economic reform-resistant Southern Europe could no longer pretend to compete on an equal footing with a flexible, productive and fast-growing Northern Europe' (Matthijs 2011: 6). In southern European countries, growth strategy is based on domestic demand. These countries experienced an economic boom and salary inflation in the early 2000s whereas their partners, particularly Finland, Germany and the Netherlands, experienced relatively low economic growth and low wage increases (Hall 2012). The differentials in economic growth and inflation levels across EMU led to divergent movements in international competitiveness and trade imbalances within the Eurozone. This narrative advocates that the solution to this crisis is to cause a salary deflation and to implement structural reforms based on economic liberalisation. Jürgen Von Hagen (2010) advocates for a widened scope of policy coordination while Kouretas and Vlami (2010) emphasise the internal devaluation in the non-tradeable sector to promote exportation.

The fourth explanation asserts that it is a crisis of intra-European macroeconomic imbalances. From 1992 to 2007, Northern countries experienced current account surpluses and acted as net investors while Southern countries experienced current account deficits and accumulated net foreign liabilities. The launch of the single currency allowed the Southern countries to attract increasing inflows of capital from investors. The diverging current accounts could be seen as a natural consequence of the convergence process among countries with different levels of development within a monetary union. However, Holinski, Kool and Muysken (2012) argue that the evolution of the financial and competitive patterns in the Eurozone do not match with the neoclassical hypothesis of convergence. They prefer to explain the intra-European macroeconomic imbalances by cross-country differences in time preference, planning horizon and risk aversion. They argue that 'systematic monitoring of external imbalances and implementation of better coordinated policies to prevent the emergence of unsustainably large imbalances in the Euro area is advisable' (Holinski et al. 2012: 1).

The last explanation is certainly the most ignored in the literature. It argues that the crisis evidences the inefficiency of the financial markets. According to Prüm (2013), EMU has been established in accordance with the liberal efficient capital market hypothesis which encouraged European politicians not to regulate the financial industry too strictly and even to deregulate it. Yet, the sovereign debt crisis has highlighted the limits of this hypothesis and the instability it creates. Prüm (2013) argues that the overreaching goal of EMU should be to release the stress that the financial markets exercise upon it.

Among these five narratives, only the second and third ones were completely taken into account by EMU governing bodies (Matthijs 2011). Both are narratives supported by the ordo-liberal policy elite who dominated Europe's process of crisis resolution. Thus, structural reforms and austerity measures were chosen as the solution to the crisis. We will now explore how the ordo-liberal theory was championed at the European level, mostly by the German Government and the ECB.

IMPOSING AND MAINTAINING A FRAMING: THE PERSUASIVE POWERS OF ORDO-LIBERAL THINKERS

This section will examine how the ordo-liberals managed to couple the policy, politics and policy streams and therefore to impose austerity measures. An analysis of the strategies adopted by the national and EU leaders will highlight the persuasive power of the ordo-liberals and will put into perspective the rationality of the policymaking process.

The Pre-Eminence of Ordo-Liberal Solutions

The ordo-liberal vision of the crisis has certainly dominated the EU crisis resolution but, nonetheless, some concessions to the three other narratives were made, particularly to the fifth narrative. For instance, the European Financial Stability System (EFSS) was recast in December 2010 with the implementation of the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB), and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) of EUR 720 billion was created in May 2010 to protect the countries that were facing an increase of the bond yields. The objective of those measures was to create substantial financial clout able to act as a firebreak in case of loss of confidence in the financial markets, thus preventing a state from refinancing itself in normal conditions (Adda 2012).

Nevertheless, Fontan (2014) argues that the three other narratives were never at the heart of the conclusions of the Eurozone meetings that orchestrated the crisis resolution process. The condition for the activation of the EFSF was to realise structural reforms in line with the German social market economy model: squeezing of public wages, privatisation, lowering pension contributions, liberalisation, strengthening competitiveness rules, etc. The European Stability Mechanism (ESM) implemented under the leadership of the European Council in December 2010 led to further automaticity in sanctions in the case of fiscal deficit throughout a stronger Stability and Growth Pack. Eventually, instruments such as the 'Six pack', the 'Fiscal Pact', the 'two Pack' and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance created a strict rule-based system against the fiscal profligacy of EMU member states. Moreover, none of the conclusions of the European Council meetings between 2008 and 2014 were agreed "without a reminder to budgetary discipline and to the implementation of structural reforms" (Fontan 2014:113).

The Persuasive Power of Ordo-Liberals upon National Heads of State

The decisions taken by the heads of state of EMU countries at the Euro Summits demonstrate the coupling of the problem, politics, and policy steams by the ordo-liberals. It is during those summits that the financial funds (EFSF and ESM) were created and made available to the countries in difficulty on condition that they respect budgetary discipline. This highlights the persuasive power of ordo-liberal actors.

This persuasive power is due to an historic balance of power in favour of the creditors and to the detriment of the debtors (Dyson 2010). In times of crisis, creditor countries are more able to rewrite the governance rules according to their views, as debtor countries have less negotiating leverage, especially those who were, like Spain, on the brink of bankruptcy. In this way, creditor countries of the Eurozone which had a preference for the orthodox politics tended to ally and carry further weight during the crisis negotiations in the European Council – contrary to the debtor countries that advocated heterodox policies.

The Euro Summit statements reflect this ratio of power. The Euro Summit held on July 12, 2015 was organised in order to reach an agreement on the new aid plan for Greece. European heads of state repeated that Greece was responsible for the crisis and insisted on the efforts made by the European creditors to resolve the crisis. In the Euro Summit statement of 12 July 2015 (2015: 6), it was claimed that

> There are serious concerns regarding the sustainability of Greek debt. This is due to the easing of policies during the last twelve months, which resulted in the recent deterioration in the domestic macroeconomic and financial environment. The Euro Summit recalls that the euro area Member States have, throughout the last few years, adopted a remarkable set of measures supporting Greece's debt sustainability, which have smoothed Greece's debt servicing path and reduced costs significantly.

Matthijs and McNamara (2015) demonstrate that there has been an entanglement among academic, think tank, business, bank, investor and political communities who participated in the social construction of the southern countries as sinners and the northern countries as saints. Once the southern countries were portrayed as sinners, the ordo-liberal insistence on the necessity to adopt austerity measures was legitimised in the eyes of most of the European heads of state. Young (2014) argues that German political leaders have extolled the virtues and advantages of the ordo-liberal economic model as a panacea for the Eurozone countries to recover the path of growth. She claims that ordo-liberals have used their doctrine as an 'agenda setter' for the Euro crisis 'to prevent alternative ideas from challenging the austerity discourse in the Eurozone' (Young 2014:276).

Matthijs (2011) argues that the ordo-liberal viewpoint prevailed thanks to the persuasive power of its ideas. According to him, EMU should address all the issues raised in the five narratives mentioned above so as to become stronger, and yet only the second and third ones were admitted because of the 'ability of political actors to construct a convincing narrative of the causes of a crisis' (Matthijs 2011:15). As a result, the preexisting paradigm of fiscal discipline and price stability in EMU was reinforced. Matthijs adds that the early recovery of the German economy in 2010 strengthened the German stance and that once Chancellor Angela Merkel had convinced the French President Nicolas Sarkozy that Germany had the best explanation to the crisis, the other heads of state 'could not do anything else but grudgingly agree' (Matthijs 2011: 20).

Given that France and Germany are the leading countries of the EU (in economic matters at least) – as evidenced by the famous metaphor of 'the Franco-German motor' – the other countries had no other alternative but to accept the austerity measures unless they were ready to exit the Eurozone and face the consequences. According to Crespy and Schmidt (2014), the convergence of Germany and France and the obedience of other EMU countries demonstrate that the Franco-German initiatives remain the basic dynamic of integration in economic and financial terms. Through a qualitative analysis of Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel's discourses, Crespy and Schmidt explain why and how France and Germany agreed on EMU reforms even though their stances were different at the beginning of the crisis. Sarkozy, depicted as a 'white knight', seemed to be ready to rescue weak Eurozone countries while Merkel, perceived as the new 'Iron Lady', rejected financing a rescue of indebted countries. Eventually, Merkel consented to the mechanisms of financial solidarity and in exchange, Sarkozy gave approval of the conversion to ordo-liberalism for the entire Eurozone. This 'grand bargain' on the reforms was only possible because Sarkozy and Merkel justified the common solutions at home by using their national and traditional norms, values, economic paradigms and policy solutions that could be understood and accepted in their respective public opinions.

The implementation of austerity measures was additionally facilitated by the formation of new pro-EU governments in the countries in difficulty. In Italy, Prime Minister Berlusconi was replaced in November 2012 by Mario Monti, a former member of the Santer and Prodi Commission. In Greece, Prime Minister Papandreou was replaced in May 2012 by Loukas Papadimos, former Vice-President of the ECB.

These analyses reflect the ordo-liberal entrepreneurs' strategic use of ideas presented in the first section. Thanks to their persuasive power, these ideological entrepreneurs promoted their explanation of the crisis while minimising others. They managed to dominate the European Council, the informal Eurogroup meetings and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council where the emergency measures taken to address the crisis were taken.

The Persuasive Power of Ordo-Liberals upon the European Commission

The European Commission was first sidelined from the Eurozone crisis resolution but managed to regain influence when it conformed to the ordo-liberal stance through the establishment of austerity principles, structural reforms and economic surveillance in the Europe 2020 strategy.

The Commission was one of the main supporters of the creation of EMU (Jabko, 2011) and has since initiated many important economic projects, such as the Lisbon Strategy launched in 2000. This strategy aimed at making the EU the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. It illustrates the ordo-liberal orientation of the Commission. Indeed, Internal Market and Taxation Commissioner Frits Bolkestein described the Lisbon Strategy as 'an ambitious program of deregulation and increased flexibility' that 'will be a major step in the direction of an ordo-liberal Europe' (2000: 4). Puetter (2012) argues that despite the declared ordo-liberal orientation of the Commission, the latter lacked visibility in early management of the crisis. In fact, the Commission suffered from a lack of credibility, for which Copeland and James (2014) offer three persuasive explanations. First, it was slow in responding to the crisis. Second, the Barroso Commission had confusing objectives when it started to revise the Lisbon Strategy. Third, the open method of coordination turned out to be a failure. Nevertheless, Copeland and James argue that the Commission was still able to benefit from the opportunity window in early 2010 when its new composition was confirmed. Indeed, at that moment, the member states demonstrated their support for the Commission's ambition to address fiscal and macroeconomic challenges in the new Europe 2020 Strategy. A second policy window opened in the politics stream with the arrival of the Finnish liberal Olli Rehn as Economic and Financial Affairs Commissioner. He declared that his priority for the Europe 2020 Strategy was the restoration of fiscal discipline (Rehn 2010). A clear line of work was followed and the other DGs were almost excluded from the writing of the strategy. The

Commission Secretariat General allied with the DG ECFIN to ensure that the Commission would play a key role in the future economic governance of the EU.

It should be noted, however, that the Commission carefully supported the Eurobond instrument as an alternative solution to the crisis. Several think tanks like Centre Forum in the UK, Instituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale in Italy and Bruegel in Belgium proposed establishing this common debt instrument in order to strengthen the overall macroeconomic governance framework of the Eurozone. This solution received substantial support in the policy debate but was dismissed by German opinion leaders who were afraid of the moral hazard it would bring. The Commission, which was well aware of the reluctance of the ordo-liberal group for the Eurobond, presented a Green Paper assessing the feasibility of introducing 'Stability Bonds'. The name of this instrument was carefully chosen to emphasise the stability role of these bonds and then secure an agreement from the German leaders. However, their logic was similar to that of the Eurobonds (Matthijs and McNamara. 2015). Even if the proposal was rejected, the way the Commission presented the Stability Bonds confirms the importance of perceptions in the EU political system, where each body wants to secure its power. This is even more so the case during a crisis resolution process when the resources owned by the political actors fluctuate (Dobry 1992).

Ultimately, the Commission managed to regain visibility and preserve its reputation by aligning itself with the ordo-liberal principles. It reframed its Europe 2020 proposal within the solution to the crisis advocated by the European Council and ECOFIN. By taking up the fiscal and budgetary framing of the crisis and by implementing governance architecture of economic surveillance in the Europe 2020 strategy, the Commission succeeded in maintaining a key role in the EU economic governance but it also strengthened the paradigm of fiscal discipline and the governance architecture of economic surveillance.

The Persuasive Power of Ordo-Liberals upon the ECB

The principal mission of the ECB is to focus on price stability – like the Bundesbank – but there is no numeric specification of what price stability is in its legal status (Dyson and Featherstone 1999). As a result, its legal status does not really constrain its monetary policy. Neither is its policy restrained by the mandatory report of the ECB President to the European Parliament, given that these reports are more akin to a strategic arrangement between both institutions than real democratic control over ECB activities (Jabko 2009). Therefore, the monetary policy of the ECB can be in line with the ordo-liberal theories on which the ECB was built. For instance, during the crisis, it minimised the responsibility of monetary policy in the crisis and accentuated the role of national fiscal policy in accordance with the ordo-liberal stance. That is why it pleaded for the automaticity of the sanctions in case of fiscal indiscipline and refused the possibility of involuntary debt default (Fontan 2014).

Another element played a central role in the ECB's position: the importance it grants to political leaders' perceptions. Indeed, the ECB was mindful of how its audiences – European Council, ECOFIN and the Economic and Financial Committee (which prepares the meetings of ECOFIN) – could think about its handling of the crisis. One of its main concerns was to protect its reputation, that is to say the:

> Set of symbolic beliefs about an organization, beliefs embedded in multiple audiences [...]. Reputation built regulatory power in all of its facets. And power, once possessed, has been used and managed in ways that maintain reputation, and hence power itself (Carpenter 2010: 10).

The ECB acted in accordance with the ordo-liberal audiences in order to remain trusted (Fontan 2014). This was crucial to preserve its power, as a Central Bank's reputation is its principal source of regulatory power (Jervis 1976).

As a result, when the crisis was threatening the Eurozone and the ECB felt the need to react with an expansionist monetary policy not aligned with ordo-liberal principles, it could not swerve too much from its original mission. Therefore, the ECB used ambiguity in the monetary instruments and in institutional communication. For example, to stabilise the exchange rate in the debt market in 2010, the ECB implemented the Security Market Programme (SMP) that was an instrument designed to facilitate the refinancing of distressed sovereigns but was presented as a technical tool to avoid tensions with EMU leaders.

Thus, the action of the ECB aimed at protecting, preserving and even enhancing its reputation. In other words, it respected the fiscal, budgetary and competitiveness framing of the crisis to retain the confidence of the ordo-liberal-orientated leaders and even to extend its competences to new policy territories. Fontan (2014) argues that the ECB benefited from the framing of crisis made by the European Council because it strengthens the preexisting paradigm of price stability and strict fiscal policies on which EMU has been built. This kind of behaviour motivated by the willingness to be well perceived, is representative of the EU's 'de-institutionalized' (Benz 2003: 101) policymaking presented in the first section.

External influences were also exerted to keep the ECB from departing from its original ordo-liberal principles. In particular, the German Government was firmly committed to protect the ordo-liberal stance of the ECB. Angela Merkel demonstrated it by her strong support for the appointment of Mario Draghi to succeed Jean-Claude Trichet as ECB President. According to the Financial Post (2011), she told *Die Zeit* newspaper in May 2011: 'I know Mario Draghi. He's very close to our ideas of a stability culture and solid economic policy. Germany could support his candidacy for the office of the ECB president'.

The Longevity of the Ordo-Liberal Framing

The economic crisis was a 'window of opportunity' that has allowed ordo-liberal actors to push their agenda and their framing forward. However, as the crisis went on for months, and then years, it became important for these actors to close this window of opportunity, that is to say to prevent competing framings and competing policies to gain ground. In that respect, the two main proponents of ordo-liberalism at the European level, the German Government and the ECB, were careful to maintain the preponderance of their framing, and therefore, in the long-term, to preserve their reputation, power and expertise.

Thus, solutions that were dismissed in the first years of the crisis were rebranded and reexamined in later years (Matthijs and McNamara 2015) and compromises were found when those solutions could be reformulated in a way that was compliant with ordo-liberal principles, at least superficially. For example, Schäfer (2016) demonstrated that the German Government accepted the principles of the Single Resolution Fund once a compromise was made with ordo-liberalism reluctance for moral hazards.

Ordo-liberalism has remained the norm at the discursive level while the practice became more nuanced, and sometimes even paradoxical. Indeed, the ECB's 'unconventional and loose monetary policies [operated] in direct opposition to the tight fiscal policies of its member states' government' (Matthijs and Blyth 2018: 110). Mario Draghi, then President of the ECB, in a press conference on 18 June 2013 defended it, saying that it was not violating its 'ordoliberal principles' after the ECB decided to carry out long-term refinancing operations supporting banks that had bought toxic assets, a moral hazard that should not be backed by institutions, according to ordo-liberal theory.

In fact, proponents of strict ordo-liberalism showed their disagreements with the policies implemented. For instance, in February 2011, Alex Weber, President of the Bundesbank, expressed his disagreement over what he perceived as heterodox policies by leaving his position and announcing that he would not accept the presidency of the ECB after Trichet's end of term, despite being a front-runner.

The importance attached to maintaining this ordo-liberal framing while adopting less ideological policies has been explained by its convenient compatibility with the culture of northern creditor countries, especially Germany (Hien and Joerges 2018). It can be further explained by the interests of ordo-liberalism's champions: counter-narratives could have put the emphasis on subjects they did not wish to tackle, such as the deficiencies of the economic governance in the EU (Matthijs and McNamara 2015) or the chronic imbalances between the economic deficits or surpluses of European countries' trade balances (Jabko 2013). An ordo-liberal framing is a political tool that puts the burden of adjusting to the crisis on indebted countries. This is further evidenced by the fact that Germany itself cannot be said to have implemented strict ordo-liberal policies during the crisis (Young 2014), despite its influential Minister of Finance, Wolfgang Schaüble, claiming in the *Financial Times* that 'Austerity is only cure for the Eurozone' (Schaüble 2011). Moreover, path dependence makes it all the more so difficult for competing policy entrepreneurs to overthrow the institutionalisation of austerity. This was exemplified by the Greek contestation of austerity that took a new lease of life in 2015 with the election of Alexis Tsipras. After six months of negotiations with European institutions and within EMU, Tsipras declared on 14 July 2015 that he was 'signing a text that [he does] not believe in, but [feels] obliged to implement'.

CONCLUSION

The Eurozone crisis was a window of opportunity for the political actors of EMU. The debt sovereign crisis that emerged in Greece in late 2009 was threatening to spread across Europe and forced political actors to react quickly. The unclear information about the phenomenon allowed various policy entrepreneurs to promote different explanations for the crisis in accordance with their interests. The narrative of the crisis that won over the others was brought by ordo-liberal leaders. They managed to persuade other leaders, through a strategic and persuasive use of ideas, that ordo-liberalism could adequately explain the roots of the crisis, and that ordo-liberal austerity measures were the better solution. To do so, they used the example of Germany, given that the country seemed to have quickly recovered from the economic crisis. Other political actors with different narratives could have won, but the willingness of institutional actors to maintain their reputation and strengthen their power helped the ordo-liberal framing to become the consensus. The result was a spread of austerity measures, the diffusion of the German model of economic institutions in Europe and the strengthening of the existing ordo-liberal paradigm in the Eurozone.

However, a decade after the beginning of the crisis of sovereign debt, the thesis of an ordo-liberalisation of Europe must be nuanced. While the need for consistency pushed actors to maintain their discourse, negotiations with dissenting actors and the need for quick, good economic results pushed the champions of ordo-liberalism in power to adapt to the situation and be flexible on their principles.

The framing of the crisis, but also the maintenance of this framing, is at the interplay between power plays and ideology. The multiple stream framework provides us with the tool to show that actors have neither been acting completely ideologically, nor in a Machiavellian manner: actors who managed to push forward their framing at the beginning of the crisis gained from closing the window of opportunity that was still usable in the continuing crisis. This article's analysis of the gap between discourses and practices in the Eurozone crisis highlights that the ordo-liberal rhetoric has been strategically used to construct a coherent narrative of the political responses. This was done to save face and to retain power while, in fact, the adopted policies were not always ideologically coherent.

Yet, the propagation of austerity measures and structural reforms based on the ordo-liberal economic model might very well have endangered the EU project. On the one hand, more and more populist and Eurosceptic political parties are registering successes across the EU, especially in countries most deeply affected by austerity. On the other hand, the European people can interpret the strengthening of austerity measures in Greece – despite the referendum rejecting these measures – as a negation of sovereign democracy. Precise academic work to highlight the influence of diverse ideologies in the responses to the economic crisis is, in that sense, a necessity for the democratic debate.

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Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

Research Article

From Peace and Prosperity to Space and Sustainability

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Citation

Hoerber, T., Demion, A. and Wenger, M. (2019). 'From Peace and Prosperity to Space and Sustainability', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 15(1): 74-92.
https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v15i1.897

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

The concept of sustainability and its sophistication in sustainable development has become one of the EU's core policy fields with institutional meaning. European Space policy is acquiring more and more importance in EU politics. A connection between both policy fields seems far-fetched, at first glance. However, there are already some obvious examples such as earth observation for environmental protection or disaster relief. This article will go further. It will look at issues of the protection of the earth orbit from the more and more serious issue of space debris and it will look at the European Space Agency's policy towards sustainable development. Evident issues of environmental pollution resulting from space technologies, such as launchers, will be discussed asking the question of whether space technologies can continue to benefit from exceptional treatment which was conceived for a small sector mainly for scientific purposes. Today, there is a sizable space industry in Europe and the commercialisation of its services poses this question of whether the space industry is becoming a 'normal' part of European industry and therefore should adhere to normal standards of environmental protection. The article will also consider implications for the progress of the European integration process through the lens of European space policy.

Keywords

European integration; Sustainable development; European Space Policy; Integration dynamics; Space debris

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The purpose of this paper is to establish a relationship between space and sustainability in the particular context of European integration. In order to lay the foundations for this article, three founding documents will be introduced in what follows: for European integration this is the Schuman Declaration of 1950; for space in Europe this is the Convention of the European Space Agency of 1975 (European Space Agency 2010), which entered into force in 1980; for sustainable development, the founding document is the UN Report *Our Common Future* of 1987, more commonly known as the Brundtland Report in honour of its editor, Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former Norwegian Prime Minister.

The article will use the following structure. Firstly, we will look at the environmental sustainability of space activities in the current major issues of space debris, radio frequencies interference, the sustainability of the space industry on Earth and available space for satellite location in orbit. Secondly, we will look at the European Space Agency (ESA) and Sustainable Development. The ESA addressed the social, environmental and economic aspects of its space activities, primarily in its three Resolutions of December 2014 (European Space Agency 2014). Thirdly, the article will bring the evolution from sustainability to sustainable development to the analysis of the space sector, in a subsection on economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Eventually, this will lead to two research questions. The first will address the link between sustainability and space, including the analysis of the fundamental contents which constitute that link. The second research question will set this analysis of space sustainability in the European integration process, asking what space activities have contributed and can contribute to it.

Starting with the Brundtland Report, this recognised the connection between space and sustainability on Earth and saw a utility for space, which one must call surprisingly prescient for the time when it was written, in 1987:

> In the middle of the 20th century, we saw our planet from space for the first time. Historians may eventually find that this vision had a greater impact on thought than did the Copernicus revolution of the 16th century, which upset the human self-image by revealing that Earth is not the centre of the universe. From space, we see a small and fragile ball dominated not by human activity and edifice but by patterns of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils. Humanity's inability to fit its activities into that pattern is changing planetary systems, fundamentally. Many such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards. This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognized – and managed. (United Nations 1987, An Overview, para. 1.).

This ground-breaking definition of sustainable development is set out in the Brundtland Report to this day. The Report turned a multifarious and often chaotic discourse on sustainability (Barnes, Hoerber 2013: 245) into a structured definition of sustainable development: 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (United Nations 1987: Part I, Ch. 2, para. 1). Later, the document defined sustainable development as environmental, social and economic sustainability.

The connection with space came in a lucid analysis of the utility of space for sustainable development on Earth (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II,1, para. 58), or what later became Earth-observation technology (United Nations, 1987, Ch. 10, II, 1, para. 62). The Report, however, goes one step further. Space, it suggests, could become a 'global commons'. It reiterated the UN principle that space belongs to no one, but must be preserved by all.

> Outer space can play a vital role in ensuring the continued habitability of the Earth, largely through space technology, to monitor the vital signs of the planet and aid humans in protecting its health. According to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use of occupation, or by any other means. The UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space has been laboring to see that these ideals remain on the agenda. This Commission, in view of these developments, considers space as a global commons and part of the common heritage of mankind. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, para. 56.)

This concept of the global commons entails common heritage, but also common use, similar to the concept of the commons of earlier human history, where village dwellers would share part of the land and institutions with joint responsibility. The concept of the global commons has been discussed extensively, notably by Garrett Hardin's 'Tragedy of the Commons' (Hardin 1968) and, importantly, after the impetus the Brundtland Report gave to it.

For the purpose of this article, the Brundtland Report established an analytical structure for sustainability in defining it in its social, economic and environmental aspects. This structure will be used in the analysis of European space policy herein. Perhaps more importantly, the Brundtland Report established the first tangible link between sustainable development and human space activities. Therefore, it provides a framework within which both research questions can be answered, i.e. the connection between space and sustainability and the function of space within the European integration process.

The institution that has put the idea of a shared space programme into action in Europe is the European Space Agency (ESA). The Convention of the European Space Agency was the founding document of a 'European space programme' (European Space Agency 2010: 11). The ESA was set up as an intergovernmental organisation – most notably through the key principle of *juste retour*, which guarantees each member state a return investment corresponding roughly to its own contribution to ESA. It was given technical competences only; there was no aspiration by the founding states to create another supranational community like the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) or the European Economic Community or Euratom (both 1958), which the French Gaullists particularly viewed with suspicion. They were seen in the 1960s and 70s as encroaching upon national prerogatives, well exemplified in the discourse of *L'Europe des Patries* (Samuel 1999: 244; for the application of the discourse of the Europe of Nation states to space policy, see Hoerber 2016). Nevertheless, the ESA united European space endeavours by bringing together the European Launch Development Organization (ELDO) and the European Space Research Organization (ESRO). The objective was to put Europe on the map of space technology.

Therefore, the use of the ESA Convention and corresponding ESA document should provide a structure within which the research question of this article on the function of space in the European integration process can be addressed. A good example of this is that the ESA is independent of the EU, but acts as the special interlocutor for European nations which engage in space activities. Some EU countries are not members and some non-EU countries (Switzerland and Norway as full members, Canada as an associate member) are. The ESA implements several key EU space programmes, Galileo (geo-positioning system) and Copernicus (Earth observation) as EU flagship programmes are good examples. This has led to a protracted and lively debate about the institutional relationship between ESA and the EU (Peter, Stoffl 2009; Gaubert, Lebeau 2009; Hoerber 2009; Hoerber, Stephenson 2016; Hoerber, Sigalas 2016). For some time, the ESA had been intended as the space agency of the EU, but the ESA Ministerial Council of December 2014 declared it would keep the ESA as an 'independent' organisation while making it the 'long-term partner of choice for the EU for jointly defining and implementing the European Space Policy together with their respective Member States' (European Space Agency, Resolution 3, 2014: 5).

For the purpose of this article, the ESA Convention and several other ESA documents, such as this Council Resolution, highlight the function of space policies within the European integration process: in addition, the ESA has addressed issues of sustainability (mostly the economic aspects of business sustainability and not sustainable development) in several documents. The later analysis of them here addresses the research question on the connection between space and sustainable development.

The Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950 defined peace and prosperity as the key objectives of European integration. These would become the guiding ideals of the post-war European integration process (Harryvan, Harst 1997: 60-63). Neither space nor sustainability featured at the time as political projects. Today, both have emerged as important policy fields in the EU (European Commission 2016), for which the Schuman Declaration was the foundation. In 2012, it was suggested that the EU may have to look for new guiding ideals, because it has fulfilled the original ones of peace and prosperity. Space exploration, or rather a European space policy, was suggested as one new guiding ideal for the European integration process – see Table 1. Here, therefore, these foundations will be developed further through the argument that both policy fields have become major components of the European integration process. Their connection is thus of interest for the understanding of the process, beyond their importance as individual policy areas in the EU. This argument will answer to the research question on the importance of space policy and sustainable development for the European integration process.

Table 1

	Old	New
Internal	Prosperity ⇨ economic integration	Consolidation ⇨ territorial ⇨ constitutional
External	Peace ⇨ politically cooperation	[Space] Exploration ⇨ outreach

Source: Hoerber (2012: 78)

This rough sketch may need some updating and indeed some more concrete policy examples in order to show the connection between space and sustainability. Therefore, the conclusion of this article will suggest a refinement.

As we have seen in this introduction, the relationship between space and sustainability has existed for a long time. It was considered in the Brundtland Report in issues such as early Earth observation initiatives to arrive at reliable data on the major changes and threats on Earth, but also in the issue of space debris. Sustainability in space has been a recurrent topic in the ESA and a good understanding of the guiding ideals of the Schuman Declaration may well be important for the formulation of new ones for the future of the European integration process. The three key documents make up a composite source base for a method which is geared towards answering the research questions on the connection between space and sustainability and the function of both policy fields in the European integration process.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SPACE ACTIVITIES

Space Debris

The Brundtland Report outlined the growing problem of sustainability in space under the heading 'Managing the Commons'.

> There are growing concerns about the management of orbital space, centring on using satellite technology for monitoring planetary systems; on making the most effective use of the limited capacity of geosynchronous orbit for communication satellites; and on limiting space debris. The orbiting and testing of weapons in space would greatly increase this debris. The international community should seek to design and implement a space regime to ensure that space remains a peaceful environment for the benefit of all. (United Nations 1987, From One Earth to One World III., 2, para. 84.)

As the US made serious steps towards an implementation of President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) the Cold War had paralysed the UN by the ideological separation of the two blocs, where no common ground, as it were, could be found for the governance of space (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, para. 57). The language that was used between the two blocs was that of force, threat and deterrence through nuclear weapons. SDI was conceived to disable intercontinental nuclear missiles through satellite-based lasers. It was also a political weapon enabling the Reagan administration to put an end to the Soviet Union by sheer weight of financial resources. Weapons tests were conducted in space and the UN voiced its concerns as to the devastating effects of such a weapon system on sustainability in space.

> (…) the creation of debris is an integral and unavoidable consequence of the testing and use of space weapons. The contribution of military activity to the Earth's 'debris belt' could grow greatly if plans to place large numbers of satellite based weapons and weapon-related sensors are realized.
>
> The most important measure to minimize space debris, therefore, is to prevent the further testing and deployment of space based weapons or weapons designed to [be] use[d] against objects in space. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 3, para. 71-72.)

In the event, there was no actual 'weaponisation' of space in the 1980s and, mercifully, no 'Star Wars'. SDI proved too costly, even for the United States, and therefore the danger of increasing space debris from that source was largely avoided. However, today, humankind is becoming more and more dependent on space based technology and this holds its own dangers in terms of the increased use of space. There are several sources of space debris, e.g. old satellites, burned up rockets stages, engines and fuel containers.

These parts become dangerous in the two main orbits. The first one is called Low-Earth-Orbit, as described in the following quotation from the Brundtland Report: 'Debris in orbit is a growing threat to human activities in space. […] This debris consists of spent fuel tanks, rocket shells, satellites that no longer function, and shrapnel from explosions in space: it is concentrated between 160 and 1760 kilometres above Earth' (United Nations, 1987, Ch. 10, II, 3, para. 70). In Low-Earth-Orbit, telecommunication satellites usually operate for 10 to 15 years; spy satellites may last only a few months, because of higher strain and wear; scientific probes can last up to 40 years.

The second trajectory where debris poses a threat to space infrastructure is called geostationary orbit, and lies at 35,786 km above sea level, which is

> the most valuable part of Earth's orbital space [, because] (…) [m]ost communication and many weather satellites – as well as many military orbits – [can be found there.] (…) To prevent signals to and from the satellites interfering with one another, satellites must be placed some distance apart, effectively limiting the number that can use this valuable band to 180. Thus the geosynchronous orbit is not only a valuable but also a scarce and limited global resource. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 2, para. 64.)

The Brundtland Report summarises the problem of managing the Commons in space, which is, however, older than the Report.

> The first effort to devise a property regime of geosynchronous orbit was the 1976 Bogota Declaration signed by seven equatorial countries. These countries [Colombia, Ecuador, Congo, Indonesia, Kenya, Uganda, Zaire and Brazil] declared that the orbits above them were extensions of their territorial aerospace. The Bogota Declaration has been challenged by some nations that see it as contradicting the 'non-appropriation' principle of the Outer Space Treaty. (…) Another way of managing this resource and capturing its rental value for the common interest would be for an international body to own and license the slots to bidders at an auction. Such an alternative would be analogous to the Seabed Authority in the Law of the Sea Convention. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 2, para. 65-67, see also Bogota Declaration 1976 (Equatorial Countries 1976).)

The Declaration has never won universal international recognition, neither is there a universal regime on how to manage the Commons in space. This article will address the question of the non-existence of sustainable development in space in the context of the European integration process later. For the moment, it shall suffice to say that the absence of sustainable development in space clearly touches on the survival of humankind, the key question which sustainable development addresses.

In addition, there is no available means of clearing up space, despite several options which have been discussed in the past, e.g. a space tug (Reinke 2004: 138-140), a robotic arm, small engines fixed to debris, a towing net, or even an ion canon to force flotsam out of orbit and out of the pull of Earth's gravity. The reason why there is no 'space cleaning service' was stated in very clear terms in the Brundtland Report as the lack of political will resulting from the high cost and difficult technical feasibility (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 3, para. 73)

Another alternative to cleaning up is to reduce the generation of debris in the first place. For instance, in 2016, the US private company SpaceX successfully landed a re-usable launcher, the Falcon 9 (Grush 2016). This new technology has influenced the redesign of the European Ariane rocket which will have to include reusable components in the future. Currently, the argument at ArianeSpace is still that reusable space vehicles are heavier at lift-off, because they have to store the extra fuel needed for re-entry. Therefore, the consumption of fuel in the atmosphere is much heavier, particularly during landing back on Earth, which creates emissions, which do not exist with single-use rockets. However, reusable components have been accepted as a breakthrough in space technology and European companies, such as ArianeSpace, will have to adapt their products if they do not want to be outperformed by non-European competitors. A more sustainable use of space may result from that, too.

Radio Frequency Interference

There is another sustainability challenge that is important for all that it is invisible: radio frequency interference. Brundtland had already identified the problem in the 1980s.

> Since satellite communications involve the use of radio waves, a de facto regime for the parcelling out of slots in the geosynchronous orbit has emerged through the activities of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) in the past several years. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 2, para. 69.)

Any radio emission potentially causes interference, which can lead to the loss of communication and radio interference is not only generated by humans. Space weather, for example, is highly unpredictable and strongly influences the reliability of transmissions. Apart from this phenomenon, every country has the right to use radio frequencies in space, with the caveat mentioned in the above quotation. As more and more countries develop their telecommunication and TV-broadcasting networks, ever more data is released into space. Even if the issue is not as serious as space debris itself, the pollution of space by radio frequency is a sustainability challenge in the long term. To regulate radio transmission in space, common ground has to be found between all countries operating in this field. The fact that radio waves are the main means of communication adds another element exerting pressure on the Earth's surrounding space as a limited resource.

Sustainability of Space Technology on Earth

A rocket contains very harmful components, sometimes even radioactive parts, and it always needs very powerful engines to overcome Earth's gravitation. Without discussing segments left behind at a launch, or even fatal accidents of space craft, the use of space technology inevitably brings with it sustainability problems on Earth. The environmental impact of rocket launchers is most harmful up to 70 km height. Up to 7.5 km, the first stage of the launch takes place, which is the most demanding in term of propulsion power. Two main types of propulsion are used. First, oxygen and kerosene, similar to aircraft engines; secondly a mix of rubbers, ammonium, aluminium and other solid fuels, in a container that is called a booster. The American space shuttles used the latter type of propulsion, for example. Massive exhaust emissions result from the use of such boosters. They also use Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) in the combustion. CFCs were banned in the 1990s in all domestic products, because they are destructive of the ozone layer (see US Environmental Protection Agency 1993; see also European Commission 2000). The space sector is the only industry where their use is still allowed, but the harmful effects are the same. Arguably, the effect of current launch activity on the ozone layer is low, but this may change with a growing rocket launch market (Ross, Toohey, Peinemann, Ross 2009). For smaller rockets, such as the European Vega, solutions have been found (European Space Agency n.d.). China, too, launched 20 micro-satellites in 2015 using a rocket free of toxic fuel. It still uses kerosene, but it is as environmentally friendly as combustion in a rocket engines can get.

From 7.5km, rockets burn hydrogen and oxygen and therefore produce only steam as exhaust. The spacecraft maintains its speed without further acceleration not only for reasons of fuel and weight efficiency, but also because the vehicle could suffer damage from particles in the atmosphere if velocity were further increased. Thus, the exhausts of rocket propulsion do cause pollution, which is becoming an increasing problem in a market of growing launch activities.

The Fall-Back of Space Debris

Space debris, such as batteries, empty fuel containers, tools, old satellites and sometimes even radioactive elements can fall out of orbit back to Earth. Entry into the atmosphere destroys most elements. All debris and meteorites of less than 10cm diameter completely vaporise before reaching the ground. Debris of 10cm or more often explodes and turns to dust. Very little gets right through.

However, officially eleven satellites with radioactive components have re-entered the Earth's atmosphere and reached the ground since the 1960s. The biggest event is probably that of the Russian satellite Cosmos-954 in 1978. A substantial part of the Canadian countryside was contaminated with uranium (Galloway 1979: 407). Fall-back events remain unusual and collisions in space under the Kessler effect naturally reduce the size of space debris (Pelton 2013, Ch. 2). However, some environmental NGOs – notably 'Robin Hood' – believe that the increase of uranium and plutonium particles in the air is mainly due to the disintegration of satellites (des Bois 2011). The Brundtland Report concurred with this threat evaluation to some extent:

> Many spacecraft are nuclear-powered and threaten contamination if they fall to the Earth.[1] There are two basic approaches to the problem: Ban or regulate. […] A ban on reactors in space would be easy to monitor, because reactors produce waste heat detectable by infrared sensors at great distance.
>
> A wide variety of methods are available for regulating the use of radioactive materials in space. The most important include limiting the size of reactors permitted in orbit, requiring shielding around the radioactive material sufficient to withstand re-entry into Earth's atmosphere, and requiring deep space disposal of spacecraft that contain radioactive material. All are technologically feasible, but would add cost and complexity to missions. Nevertheless, these measures should be implemented, as a minimum step. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 4, para. 74-75.)

As we have seen above, because of this phenomenon some serious damage has been done to the environment. However, the fall-back of radioactive parts was mainly a challenge for the early space era. Now, space agencies track space debris (see Appendix 1) and thus such events can be anticipated. Consequently, there has not been a single radioactive fall-back in the last 20 years.

However, against the backdrop of more and more activity in space, the space industry may have to adapt to sustainability standards just like any other industry on Earth. The attitude that argues that pollution from fuel exhaust and from fall-back is an acceptable price to pay in the great cause of further space exploration and the development of humankind may have to change in the interest of the sustainable development of the space industry itself. This may require a change of mindset from interpreting sustainability almost exclusively in its economic sense today, to considering environmental and social sustainable development equally, as defined in the Brundtland Report.

THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The most important developments in the ESA's sustainable development date from the Council meeting of 2 December 2014. The Ministerial Council of 2 December 2016 added nothing more substantial in the field of sustainable development (European Space Agency 2016). Three resolutions of 2014 spelled out the directions of European space programmes for years to come, with the launch of Ariane 6, for example. Today, the question of sustainable development has to be considered in space activities too. The ESA's role in the process of introducing sustainable development into space activities is crucial.

The Three Resolutions of December 2014

The Ministerial Council of December 2014 (held in Luxembourg) brought all 20 ESA member states together (European Space Agency 2014). The first Resolution was concentrated around the new launchers the European Space Agency was developing. The Council insisted that they should be economically competitive. Here we see the industry focus on *economic* sustainability, which in a blunt reading is nothing more than having the best product for the most competitive price. That makes the Ariane launcher economically viable, with the social consequence of guaranteeing and/or growing employment in the European space industry. In this vein, we also find the ESA advocating the commercialisation of space services: the European space industry should rely less and less on public funds and try to be as efficient as possible in the market. That is important because it can serve to free up funds in the ESA, either for primary research, which has always been high risk and economically unsuitable for private actors, or, indeed, for reducing the costs of the space programmes overall. This economic sustainability was the main line reinforced by the 2016 ESA Ministerial Council Resolution (European Space Agency 2016). For Ariane, cost reduction should be achieved by improved synergy among the various actors involved in the construction of the launchers.

The second Resolution reset the objectives of the ESA. The practical objectives are important but more important was deemed to be the pursuit of a successful European space policy. One could sum this up as economic sustainability, leading to positive social spin-offs in employment in the European space industry and a growing critical awareness of the threats to the environment constituted by some of the activities of the industry. This remains a very neo-liberal attitude in which *economic* viability seems to be a prevailing consideration, while social sustainability remains only a positive by-product. The development of technologies for environmental protection is, in this reading, essentially a source of revenue for the European space industry.

The third Resolution showed how the ESA should evolve. This is the major change in comparison with the previous Ministerial Council. Agenda 2011 of the European Space Agency stated: 'the long-term and political perspective is to make ESA become an Agency of the EU by 2014' (European Space Agency 2011: 25). This is no longer the case. In fact, this Resolution reaffirmed the independence of the European Space Agency from the European Union. The ESA becoming the space agency of the EU seems no longer to be an option, a change which may well lead to difficulties, hampering efforts to unify the space policies of the European states.

SPACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The key question here is that of the sustainability of such space programmes. Space exploration often suffers from the image of a science that costs a lot without providing returns justifying the investment. In the following, we will offer some answers using the threefold definition of sustainable development from Brundtland and in the light of a tentative neo-institutional analysis.

Economic Sustainability

The three Resolutions of the ESA Ministerial Council of 2014 concede that space programmes will probably not produce enough direct revenue to cover the investments made in them, e.g. by selling launchers or other ESA products. In a rational choice sense, this is a clear argument against the financial commitment of rational actors, such as nation states, to space programmes. However, one may well argue that the very reason why the ESA exists is that the programmes it runs do not produce sufficient return on investment to make a profit. This does not mean that space programmes can never be economically viable. The ESA has made its launchers more competitive than they were and is charged with creating competitive launchers for the market, achieving economic sustainability. It is important to remember that the Council is staffed by the member states of the ESA and not companies. These countries can benefit from indirect economic revenue. In April 2013, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) produced a document called 'NASA socio-economic impact'. It shows the economic growth NASA helps to generate for the United States of America (NASA 2013: 11-13). NASA's efforts to demonstrate its usefulness can be connected with one of the objectives the Council gave to the ESA, i.e. economic relevance. Scientific discoveries from ESA projects can be used to stimulate innovation for European companies. Such innovation can provide competitive advantage for European companies and, with this, growth. In addition, individual ESA member states have always had their specific space research preference, e.g. solar research for Germany (Reinke 2004: 300-318), launcher development for France, or communication satellites for Britain (Hoerber 2016: 19-21). The pursuit of these longstanding research priorities is more of a well-justified habit than a rational choice for the most cost-effective space programme. However, one can also argue that spin-offs from space research will help to generate economic growth in other parts of the economy, which will yield, however indirectly, tax revenue for the states. This could be seen as a model for the *economic* sustainability of the European space sector at least.

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability may not be as visible and measurable as economic sustainability, but society is an important stakeholder in space exploration too (Cameron, Crawley, Loureiro, Rebentisch 2008: 327). Space exploration does not now enjoy the same support that it attracted during the Cold War (Vedda 2008: 24), but it is a sector that benefits society in many ways. That is why three of the four objectives defined by the Council revolve around this aspect. First, technological progress can be extremely useful to everyday life, notably in the field of medicine. It can help us understand better the functioning of the human body when weightless, for example. It can provide sociological and psychological insights, for example through the unique experience that isolation in space represents (Dudley-Rowley, Gangale 2006: 4). It may also provide breakthroughs in transport, such as technologies for sub-orbital flight, which could well shorten travel times drastically in the future. The second objective related to social sustainability is international cooperation. Even in periods of crisis, cooperation in space has continued, notably between Russia and the West during the Crimean crisis. Many space projects, e.g. the Hubble Space Telescope and the International Space Station, were created and are maintained through international cooperation. They are an element of stability in international politics and cooperation in the space sector may spill over into other sectors and hopefully, of course, to the next generation. The final objective of the social sustainability of space is the 'inspiration' it provides. Science and space can inspire future generations to seek out ever newer horizons. By trying to answer important questions of humankind - such as what is the universe *made* of? Is there life elsewhere? How was the universe created? - space acts as an incentive for progress in science, understanding and the progress of humankind. This may well be seen as a new definition of social sustainability, taken from the space sector.

Environmental Sustainability

The only reference made to environmental sustainability in the three Resolutions is in respect of the objectives for 2030:

> […] able to respond, together with the scientific communities, to emerging demands, such as monitoring humankind's impact on the environment, climate change, the polar regions and food security. (European Space Agency 2014: Ch.1, 2a.)

Ecological considerations are mentioned as impacting on the economic viability of the European space industry, e.g. in the search for future customers, but they are not an objective in themselves. The ESA is good at Earth observation, for environmental protection on land and the seas (Carpenter 2016: 239-248), but environmental sustainability does not seem to be considered by the Council as an end in itself. Major questions regarding environmental sustainability remain unanswered, most notably the treatment of currently existing space debris and how to avoid it in the future. This finding confirms that in the space sector sustainability still follows a weak interpretation (Barnes, Hoerber 2013: 245), where profit comes first and environmental protection last.

THE WAY AHEAD

Space and Sustainability in European Integration

The Brundtland Report once more describes the problem and suggests an answer in the idealistic manner of the UN.

> Orbital space cannot be effectively managed by any one country alone. The inherently international character of space has been recognized by a majority of nations in the Outer Space Treaty. The international community should seek to design and implement a space regime to ensure that space remains a peaceful environment for the benefit of all. […] A system of space traffic control in which some [practices] were forbidden and others harmonized cuts a middle path between the extremes of a sole Space Authority and the present near anarchy. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 5, para. 77-78.)

Space has proved itself a rare exception to the endemic disunity of humankind. Many space projects have been and could only be realised through international cooperation. The examples of the Hubble Space telescope and the ISS have been given. However, the UN seems hardly capable of bringing its member states together around sustainable development, let alone sustainability in space because of its intergovernmental nature and the consequently frequent vetoes in the Security Council and the failure to ratify treaties.

It might be more promising to look to the EU for solutions. The reasons are simple. The European Union is much larger and has more funding sources than any of its member states for major space initiatives such as Galileo or Copernicus. It has supranational characteristics and cannot be blocked. The EU acquired space competences in the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 189) and it has engaged in the two above-mentioned flagship space programmes. As already set out, in 2012, it was suggested that the EU may have to look for new guiding ideals, because it has fulfilled the original ones of peace and prosperity (Table 1, Hoerber 2012: 78). Table 2 is suggested as a refinement of those rough ideas from 2012.

Table 2: Proposal of the Authors

	Peace	Prosperity	Space	Sustainability
Internal	German Question	ECs	ESA + EU	20/20/20
External	Cold War	Liberalism *vs.* Communism	Outer Space exploration	Survival of humankind

Internally, the European integration process has always been about building institutions, be it in solving the German Question by binding (West) Germany into the nascent European institutions to guarantee peace or by building the European Communities to create prosperity from the 1950s onwards. Today the EU still follows that pattern. For space, that is reflected in the debate about the proper structure of cooperation between the ESA and the EU (as suggested at the beginning of this article). For sustainability, policies such as the 20/20/20 objectives, i.e. 20% reduction of CO_2 emissions by 2020 in comparison with 1990 standards have poised the EU as a global leader in sustainable development. Unfortunately, the European Commission has only rarely exhibited sufficient leadership capabilities, in this case for European sustainable development. The Environmental Action Programmes (EAP) are good examples of how the EU has actively taken European sustainable development forward. The Fifth EAP of 1992 has been shown as a good example, where the EU implemented the Brundtland definition of sustainable development to set concrete norms and policies of its own.

Externally, the situation has always been more conflictual. After the Cold War, peace was not only maintained, at any rate as the absence of conflict, as during the Cold War, but was firmly established from 1989 onwards with the substantial help of the EU and its corresponding good repute in the new member states. During the Cold War prosperity, relative living standards and comparative growth rates, were always a bone of contention between Liberalism and Communism. Liberalism, in its capitalist manifestation, clearly won out. This has led to an increase in, if not to the creation of, a globalised system in which the EU is itself a major actor. The objectives were to win the Cold War and demonstrate the superiority of Liberalism as an economic system. These policy objectives have been achieved, despite the fact that we see contestations of liberal market logic today and without wanting to suggest that peace and prosperity have been achieved for good and that their maintenance would not need constant attention. However, the argument at this point, which the authors would like to suggest, is that, somewhat paradoxically, because of the success of the European integration progress in achieving the initial guiding ideals, these ideals have lost their power to pull the member states together and to push the integration process further forward. The exploration of outer space and the survival of humankind on Earth are suggested as having the potential to become new policy objectives corresponding to the internal institutionalisation of space and sustainability in the EU as described above.

All four aspects of 'Peace' and 'Prosperity' and 'Internal' and 'External' have been resolved; not only by the European integration process, but nevertheless with some help from it. This leads to the suggestion that the European integration process needs new guiding ideals, as proposed on the right of Table 2. The fundamental conviction which leads to this suggestion is that the guiding ideals of peace and prosperity have exercised a considerable motivation towards further integration of the EU member states. These ideals, which could only be achieved together, have induced the member states to accept compromises to their national sovereignty which have substantially altered the reality of European polity. They were right in doing so, because the objectives of these ideals have been fulfilled. However, as a consequence of the success of the European integration process, the guiding ideals have weakened. It stands to reason, therefore, that new ideals are needed. Just like the original ideals of peace and prosperity, the new ideals should be visionary, as yet unachieved and difficult to attain in order to draw the EU member states together in the pursuit of common targets. These do not necessarily replace the old ideals, because peace and prosperity will always be vulnerable, but new ideals ought now to be found to give the European integration process new impetus and direction and are therefore suggested here. Such large targets for the future are essential for the political integration process, which will endeavour to bring its members ever more closely together and will provide aspirations for the future, just as the European integration process did throughout the Cold War.

CONCLUSION

All of the sustainability concerns regarding space discussed above can potentially jeopardise humankind's ability to make the most of Earth's surroundings and deny us the many benefits they currently provide and the new ones that can be developed.

Sustainability in Space

The space community should be able to manage environmental challenges as outlined early in the Brundtland Report:

> A fine balance must be struck between regulating activities too late and regulating non-existent activities too soon. Regulating activities on the Moon, for example, beyond the general principle laid out in the Outer Space Treaty is clearly premature. But regulating space debris and nuclear materials in Earth orbit is clearly overdue. (United Nations 1987, Ch. 10, II, 5, para. 80.)

This becomes more important with the increasing commercialisation of space technology. There are more and more private-sector companies operating in the space industry, notably SpaceX, EADS Astrium, Sierra Nevada Corporation and Copenhagen Suborbital. For now, their operations consist mainly of supplying space components and rockets to public agencies, but one day we may well see hotels on the moon or a casino in orbit, a mining company reaching asteroids, or long-haul flight in Low-Earth-Orbit. Environmental concerns will consequently grow. The commercialisation of the geosphere can therefore have negative consequences for both our planet and its surrounding space. Space, and particularly the orbit around Earth, may become a limited resource. To make outer space activities sustainable in the long term, regulatory regimes and guidance for new actors in the space arena should be implemented.

On the positive side, space activities provide substantial benefits and greatly influence sustainability policies on Earth. Space technologies help to develop environmental monitoring, meteorological forecasting, climate modelling, resource management and disaster relief.

On 2 December 2014, the ESA Ministerial Council agreed that sustainability of space exploration is achievable. It is achievable because there are many stakeholders who do not pursue economic profit alone as an objective. It is achievable because we are able to create institutions, such as the ESA and the EU, which bring member states together. It is achievable because solutions to intractable problems can be found. The ESA has given a good example of that in its activities in space over past decades (European Space Agency 2014).

Sustainability in European Space Policy

Perhaps most importantly, sustainability and space may become new guiding ideals for the European integration process. Since its inception, the EU has been one of the most positive forces in the world, exemplified in its guiding ideals of peace and prosperity. Adding space to this canon of guiding ideals of the EU may well facilitate renewal of this remarkable organisation, while maintaining its positive impetus. The Communication on the Space Strategy for Europe (European Commission 2016) is a good example of the EU waking up to the political importance of space in the EU. It is seen as a way to push the European integration process forward. The resulting attempt to establish a single European space policy may be seen as inducing more rationality into collaboration in space affairs in Europe. The debate about the institutional relationship between the ESA and the EU is the reflection of that process, but the ways and means of how to achieve a European space policy still remain contested. The debate about the relationship between the ESA and EU shows this very well. Moreover, it has been shown that an institutional logic of economic sustainability – still dominant in the space sector – was different from environmental or social sustainability. However, in the Brundtland Report they were brought together in the concept of sustainable development. This has become the dominant rationale today, building a new institution, which has become the reference point for the EU and ESA alike. Rather than just sticking to the economic rationale, a European Space Policy will have to reflect the environmental and the social aspects of sustainable development. The current lack of those two elements leads the authors of this article to the conclusion that the formulation of a European Space Policy has only just begun. This process will most likely lead to new institutions, treaties or *modi vivendi* which will add the still lacking elements of social and environmental sustainability. The space sector in Europe will therefore become more normal in reflecting the demands asked of all other policy fields in the EU, i.e. the transversal nature of sustainable development. This will most likely be done in a step-by-step approach during which the still diverging logics of space and sustainability will become aligned. Therefore, the important contribution of the paper is to further an understanding of how different constructions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – can be found in existing European space policies and where they are still missing. It has been suggested that the coherent application of sustainable development in *a* European space policy and particularly the connection of both policy fields should make them both more influential in the EU and should foster the European integration process as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article will be published in an extended version in Hoerber T, L. Lieberman (eds) (2019). *A European Space Policy – past consolidation, present challenges and future perspectives*, forthcoming with Routledge, Ch. 6.

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ENDNOTES

[1] 'The United States has launched 23 spacecraft that relied at least in part upon nuclear power sources: one source was a reactor; the rest were radioactive materials the decay heat of which is converted into electricity (thermoelectric generators). By the end of 1986, the Soviet Union had launched 31 nuclear-powered spacecraft, almost all of which contained fission reactors, and it currently operates all of the reactor-powered satellites.'

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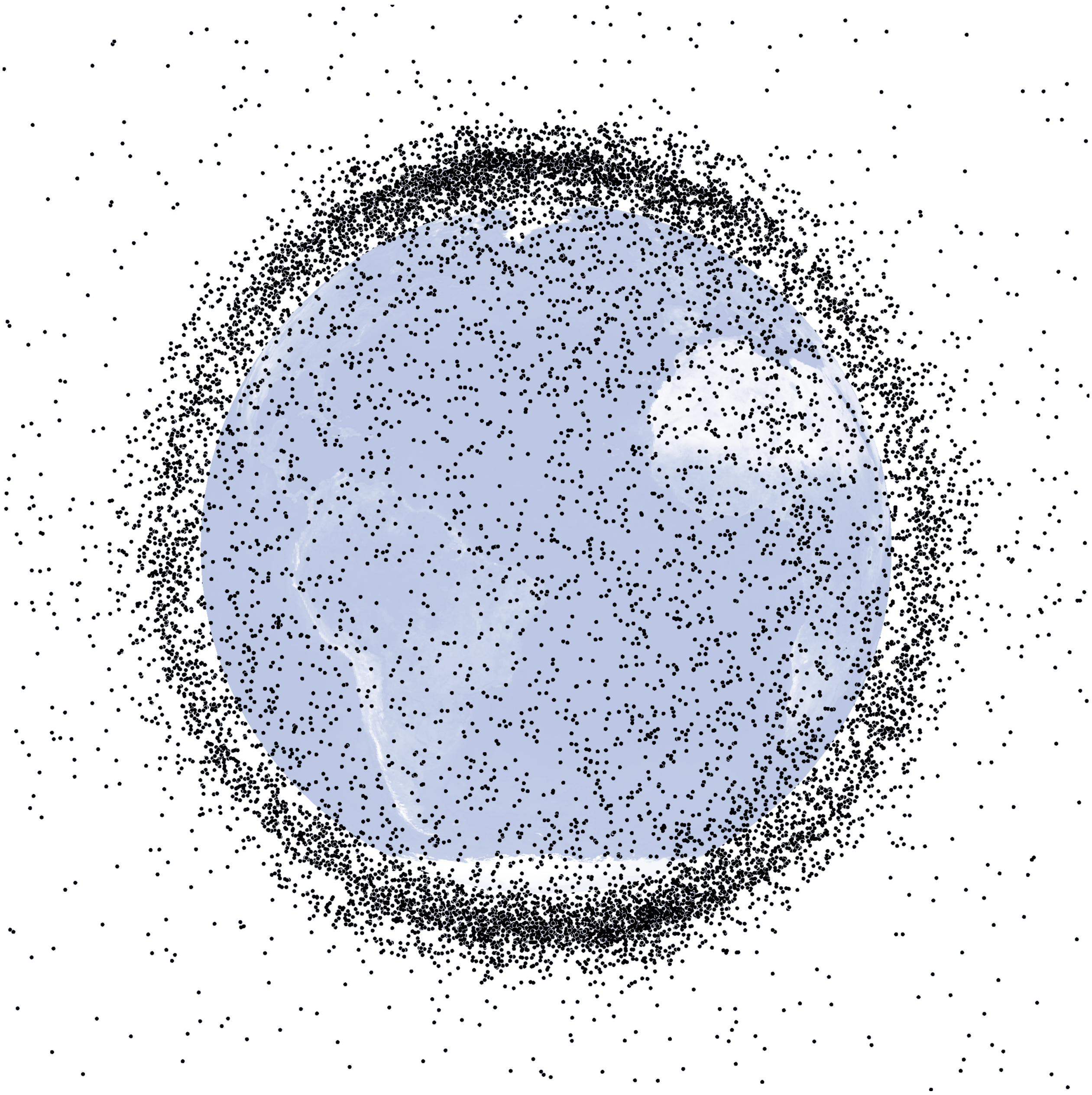
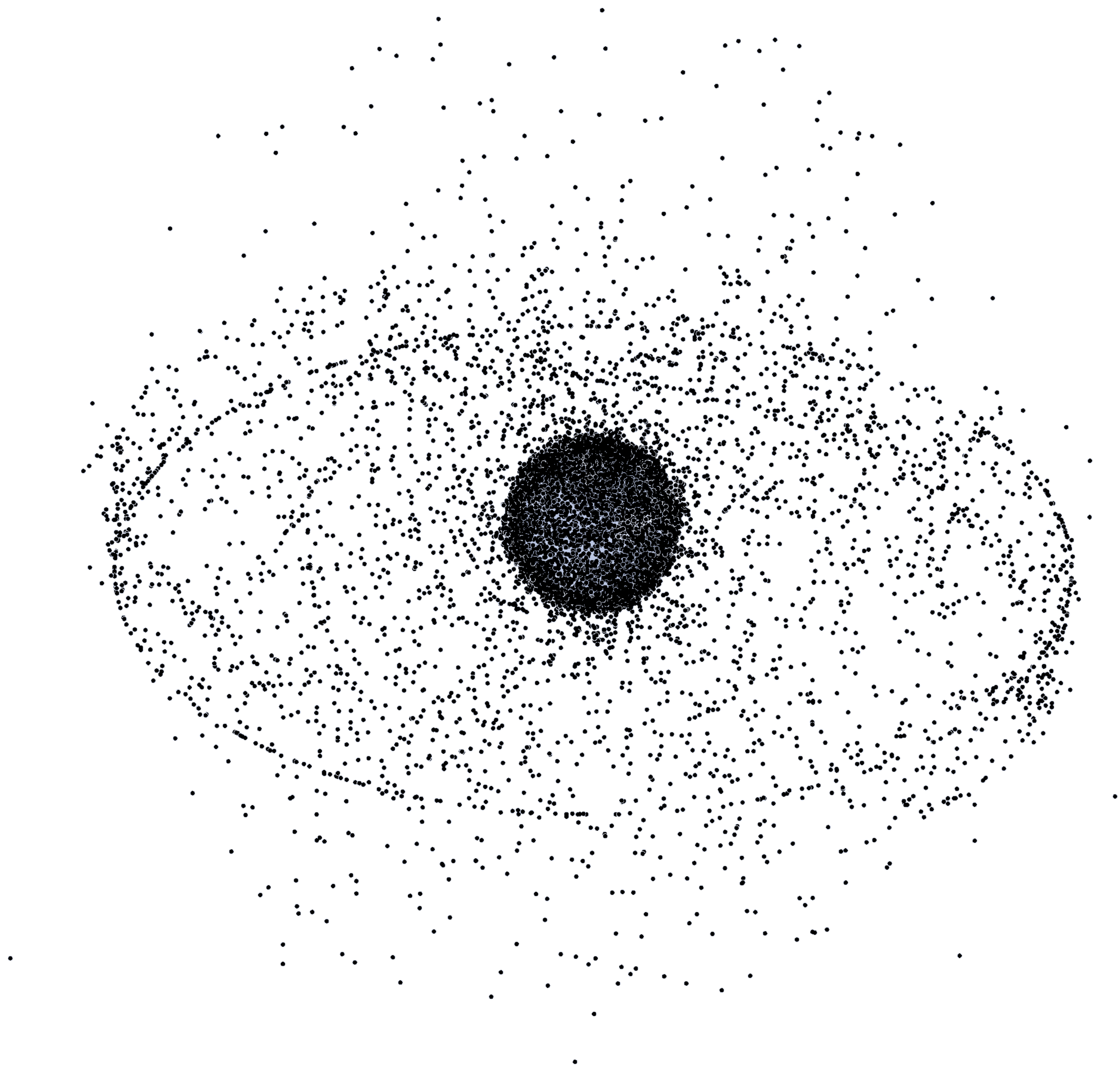
Appendix 1: Map of space debris in Low-Earth-Orbit tracked by NASA



Source: NASA (2009)

Appendix 2: Map of space debris in High-Earth-Orbit tracked by NASA



Source: NASA (2009)

Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

Teaching, Learning and the Profession

The Effectiveness of Simulations as an Outreach Tool: Using Simulations to Boost Interest in EU-Related Higher Education Study

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Citation

Heard Laureote, K., Bortun, V. and Kreuschitz M. (2019). 'The Effectiveness of Simulations as an Outreach Tool: Using Simulations to Boost Interest in EU-Related Higher Education Study', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 15(1): 93-109.
https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v15i1.986

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

The pedagogical effectiveness of active learning methods within university teaching, such as simulations, has been widely acknowledged. There is some evidence that simulations are effective tools at engaging students in the classroom. Yet, empirical evidence of actual impacts on learning are not as well-documented as they could be. Importantly however, little work has been done to see their contribution and impact as an outreach and recruitment tool to bring new students into the social sciences discipline. This article builds on the assumption that simulations can prove effective when used as university outreach tools to enhance interest in pursuing higher education study. We argue that EU-related simulations engaging students in secondary education stimulate their interest in studying European politics and, more generally, international relations at university level. The article relies on data collected through pre- and post-simulation questionnaires completed by the pupils who participated in simulations that took place in six secondary schools between 2016 and 2017. The empirical investigation reveals three key effects of those simulations. First, the simulations enhanced the participants' interest in pursuing university degrees associated with European Union (EU) politics. Second, the simulations increased the participants' self-assessed knowledge of EU politics. Third, the simulations consolidated the participants' perceived importance of understanding how the EU works. Overall, these findings back our claim that EU-related simulations may be used as outreach tools to boost interest in pursuing EU-related subjects in higher education. In the context of the ongoing Brexit process, such a boost is desirable as the understanding of EU politics will continue to be relevant for the future generations of British students.

Keywords

Education; Empirical; Outreach; Simulations; European politics; Higher education; Brexit

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[1]The pedagogical benefits of active learning environments such as simulations within university teaching has now been widely acknowledged. Although empirical evidence of actual impacts on learning - at least in political science education - are not as well-documented as they could be (Baranowski and Weir, 2015), there is some evidence that simulations are effective tools at engaging students in the classroom. Importantly, however, little work has been done to see their contribution and impact as an outreach and recruitment tool to bring new students into the social sciences discipline.

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[1] Editor's note: *Karen Heard-Lauréote is Section Editor for JCER's Teaching, Learning and the Profession section. In the case of this article, the anonymous review process, publishing decision and final editing and copyediting were undertaken by Editor-in-Chief, Maxine David.*

In the field of social sciences, simulations can generally be defined as activities where students are placed 'within a reasonable representation of a real environment within which political or social interactions occur' (Krain and Shadle 2006: 52). Their use as a teaching tool to engage university students in the curriculum has been widely researched and documented (cf. Hertel and Millis 2002; Jones, 2013; Sobisch, Scherpereel, Loedel, Van Dyke and Clark 2018). However, the employment of simulations as a *university outreach tool* at the pre-admission stage is less widely explored. 'University outreach' is the term most-often used to designate a range of services, events and activities offered by universities to schools and colleges in order to improve transition routes into higher education (HE). While there are some studies on simulations as an outreach tool for degrees related to STEM and medical sciences, there is virtually no similar study for degrees related to European Union (EU) politics (cf. Guasti, Muno and Niemann 2015) in particular or even social sciences in general. This is a significant oversight given that recent studies have revealed that simulations may lead to greater levels of student interest once enrolled on a university-level EU politics course (Clark, Van Dyke, Loedel, Scherpereel and Sobisch 2017). By extension, simulations should therefore boost interest amongst potential undergraduate students in enrolling on EU politics-related university degrees.

This article argues that EU-related simulations with students in secondary education may be used as an outreach tool to enhance their interest in studying at university level EU politics and, more generally, international relations and social sciences. This is expected to be the case especially for students with a pre-existing interest in these fields. To support this argument, the article relies on data collected via pre- and post-simulation questionnaires completed by participants in secondary school-based outreach simulations that took place between March 2016 and November 2017. They involved three universities (University of Portsmouth, Newcastle University and Loughborough University) and eight secondary schools and colleges situated in five localities across the UK: Portsmouth, Orpington, Dudley, Loughborough and Newcastle. The simulations took place in collaboration with the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES), on the topic of freedom of movement in the EU.

The simulations had three key effects that are relevant to the present research. First, they enhanced participants' interest in pursuing university degrees in fields associated with EU politics, namely international relations (IR). This finding supports previous claims that active learning environments can increase students' interest (Schnurr, De Santo and Green 2014). At the same time, it suggests that the pupils taking part in the simulations often associated EU politics with IR rather than European studies (ES), which reinforces the recent trend, certainly within the curricula of UK universities, of the EU being studied within the field of political science, particularly IR (Drake 2017; McGowan 2008), rather than as part of area studies. We argue that, given the UK's prospective exit from the EU, this trend might be justified in the case of British universities.

Second, the simulations increased participants' self-assessed knowledge of EU politics. In other words, simulations boost participants' confidence regarding their understanding of the subject. Correlated with the fact that most participants manifested a predisposition for the subject of EU politics, this finding also supports the article's wider argument about the potential of EU-related simulations to increase interest in pursuing EU-related subjects at university level.

Third, the simulations consolidated the participants' perceived importance of understanding the workings of the EU. Although this finding was not statistically significant, assuming that an increased perceived importance of understanding a subject tends to lead to an enhanced interest in that subject (see Hulleman, Godes, Hendricks and Harackiewicz 2010; Hulleman, Thoman, Dicke and Harackiewicz 2017), this finding can also be seen as further strengthening the key argument of the article about the potential effectiveness of simulations as outreach tools.

The article is structured as follows: the first section provides an overview of the existing literature on simulations and the gap that the article addresses. The second section explains the methodology used within the case study. The third presents and discusses the findings and their implications. It suffices to note here that one of the most central is that a more systematic use of simulations as an outreach tool for enhancing interest in EU politics-related university degrees might be useful in the context of Brexit. Despite - or perhaps precisely because of the ongoing Brexit process, and the many uncertainties it entails, comprehension of EU politics will arguably continue to be an important asset for younger and future generations of UK-based university students.

SIMULATIONS IN THE LITERATURE

Simulations and role-plays are teaching methods that fall into a larger body of teaching strategies often-labelled as ‘active learning techniques’ or, more recently, ‘student-activating learning environments’ or ‘active learning environments’ (Ishiyama, Miller and Simon 2016; Krain, Kille and Lantis 2015; Lantis, Kille and Krain 2010). This pedagogic form also includes group discussions, debates, collaborative projects and internships. In essence, active learning can include any method that asks students to help develop and apply their own knowledge (Gibson and Shaw 2010).

Most definitions of simulations tend to be clouded by the often-interchangeable use of the terms ‘simulation’ and ‘role-play’ and other methods such as ‘games’ and ‘gaming’ (Smith and Boyer 1996). Whereas individual, computer-based simulations are frequent in STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and maths), this article is concerned with the use of simulations in social sciences and, in particular, in political science and EU politics. Thus, in line with Krain and Shadle (2006: 52), in this article, simulations are understood as those learning situations in which students are placed ‘within a reasonable representation of a real environment within which political or social interactions occur’. The focus here is on political simulations, that is, simulated political deliberation or decision-making environments.

The use of simulations within HE and, in particular, in social sciences courses is not new. Indeed, practical examples of their empirical usage can be found stretching back at least to the 1950s across a variety of disciplines, from law to psychology to politics (see Bloomfield and Padelford 1959; Goldhamer and Speier 1959; Guetzkow 1959). As a result of this widespread and longstanding practical application, simulations as a pedagogical tool have been widely researched across a number of disciplines, including sociology (cf. Greenblat 1973), IR (cf. Asal 2005), law (cf. Hensley 1993), international development (cf. Krain and Shadle 2006) and economics (cf. Rodgers 1996).

One key aspect of the literature on simulations as a teaching method has been the focus on their perceived benefits, which are often seen in terms of more efficient and stimulated learning (Cobb 2000). More to the point, simulations entail three specific key benefits: increased depth of learning, student engagement and transferable skills development. First, simulations enhance depth of learning due to their ability ‘to recreate complex, dynamic political processes in the classroom, allowing students to examine the motivations, behavioural constraints, resources and interactions among institutional actors’ (Smith and Boyer 1996: 690). Consequently, students’ deep immersion within the context of real decision-making and the real-world application of abstract ideas, theories and concepts leads to deeper understanding (Clayton and Gizelis 2005). Linked at least in part to the depth of learning benefits achieved is the positive effect of simulations on study results (Raymond and Usherwood 2013).

Second, simulations enhance student engagement by providing an opportunity to apply new knowledge learnt to actual situations. As such, they contribute to affective learning development in terms of empathy and appreciation of the complexity of the real world and learning regarding the self (Druckman and Ebner 2013). Importantly, the student engagement benefits of simulations are not only due to their ability to apply new knowledge to actual situations, but also because they are fun and a change from more traditional lecture styles of teaching, they create intrinsic desires to learn and can allow for social relationships to develop (cf. Hromek and Roffey 2009; McCarthy 2014). Simulations also show real-world implications allowing students to determine the relevance of what they are being taught. Simulations thus provide obvious incentives for students to learn and truly to engage with the learning process. Some research also shows that simulations promote increases in student participation, motivation (Raymond and Usherwood 2013) and preparedness compared to traditional teaching modes, based on evidence from attendance monitoring and the duration of students' pre-reading and preparation (Shellman and Turan 2006).

Finally, simulations facilitate transferable skills development as a means to increase student opportunities for critical thinking, debating, public speaking, presenting and communicating, reasoning, negotiating and by facilitating overall enhancement of individual self-confidence (Schnurr et al. 2014).

These three broad positive characteristics usually associated with simulations as a beneficial learning tool can be complemented by simulations' other marketable attributes. For example, they can help promote universities as having contemporary relevance and being innovative and enterprising destinations for prospective students; an attribute commonly reflected and promoted in HEIs' mission statements. Simulations can also positively influence the image of disciplines like political science which can be perceived of as dry, staid or theoretically complex, making them more interesting, exciting and accessible. The UK-based Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) benchmarks for politics and international relations degrees in the UK state that students are expected to use a range of learning methods, with an appropriate balance of lectures, seminars, workshops, student-led and tutor-led sessions and skills-based, discussion based and knowledge based classes as well as placements, field trips and simulation exercises (QAA 2015: 14).

Simulations are not yet, however, necessarily considered a mainstream teaching technique for political science. Although more widespread than in the past, scholars have noted that politics departments have generally remained reluctant to adopt or even resistant to simulations (cf. Kozimor-King & Chin, 2018) despite the benefits they offer and that these practices reflect a culture of inertia (Parker and Wyman 2012: 8). This is problematic when politics departments are educating students for an academic career when the strengths of many students may be in, for example, argument, debate, communicating to non-specialist audiences (Usherwood 2016).

Crucially, while much literature has discussed the potential or assumed benefits of simulations on learning and student engagement as noted above, research falls short of providing adequate empirical evidence of their actual interest boosting effects; specifically, their contribution and impact as an outreach and recruitment tool to bring new students into the social sciences discipline. This article speaks to these drawbacks by presenting such evidence. Interest boosting effects are associated with affective learning outcomes (LOs) as opposed to cognitive (enhanced learning) or regulative (enhanced reflective skills) learning outcomes. Affective LOs relate to the feelings that arise during learning experiences that create an emotional state that may positively, neutrally or negatively affect the learning process (Vermunt and Vermetten 2004). Research on the use of active learning environments like simulations within political science mostly defines these affective LOs as interest (e.g. Bridge and Radford 2014; Zaino and Mulligan 2009) or motivation (e.g. DiCicco 2014; Jones and Bursens 2015). Sparking university students' individual interests is significant because these are 'enduring' and 'trait-like' and thus they 'can have a powerful influence on people's lives, by impacting how they choose to spend their free time ... [and] the trajectory of students' careers after college' (Harackiewicz and Hulleman 2010: 44). Indeed, research demonstrates that university students who are interested in a topic tend to engage more with material, to interrogate concepts more freely and rigorously, to lose themselves in pursuit of topic-related knowledge, and to sustain levels of engagement over time (Ainley, Hidi and Berndorff 2002; Hidi and Baird 1988; Hidi and Renninger 2006; Schiefele, Krapp and Winteler 1992).

The impact of simulations on the levels of interest of students enrolled at university has been tackled in several studies (Asal and Blake 2006; McKeachie 1986; Schnurr et al. 2014; Shellman and Turan 2006). There seems to be a division in the literature between those who believe simulations arouse students' interest in the subject of study covered by the simulations (Belloni 2009; Shellman and Turan 2006) and those who either contest any causal relation between simulation and levels of interest (Raymond 2010; Raymond and Usherwood 2013) or even argue that simulations might actually decrease levels of interest (Schnurr et al. 2014; Smith 2012). There seems to be a consensus, however, that there is insufficient empirical - and not merely 'anecdotal' (Raymond and Usherwood 2013) - evidence that simulations boost the interest of enrolled students. Importantly, one of Raymond and Usherwood's (2013) main critiques of the existing literature is that instructors tend to assess learning using student self-assessment of learning, and that more empirical work needs to be done on instructor or external assessment of learning. Although the research presented in this article also relies on student self-assessment of learning, it contributes to the debate by bringing original empirical evidence that supports the expected causal link between simulations and increased participant interest. Moreover, the article builds on the premise that if simulations can spark students' interest once enrolled at university, they also have the potential to generate positive effects on interest levels amongst prospective university students yet to enrol on a university undergraduate course. Specifically, it is argued that political simulations have the capacity to spark an interest in studying a social science discipline at university; in this case, to study EU politics particularly. In this way, it is argued here that simulations can be used as an effective university outreach tool.

'University outreach' is the term most-often used to describe a range of services, events and activities that universities offer to schools and colleges to improve transition routes into HE. They are meant to help inform and inspire potential students to take up opportunities available in HE. The incentive for universities to provide outreach services, at least in the UK context, primarily resulted from the widening participation agenda aimed at widening admissions to students from non-traditional backgrounds. There is also an economic imperative behind outreach. In 2011, the British government shut down its AimHigher and Connexions programmes – the careers services for sixth-form and Further Education (FE) pupils. In the aftermath of the 2011 Education Act, approximately 450M GBP was cut from school careers services, which have been replaced with the National Careers Service: a mere website and helpline with no special remit to help school leavers (Rich 2012). Hence, university outreach services have to some extent filled the considerable vacuum in careers advice in sixth forms - of course, not purely out of altruistic intentions, but as an integral condition for the introduction of higher student fees. Outreach also contributes to universities' engagement with local business and services, such as sixth form and other educational providers that supply technical and vocational education (the new 'T levels'), which is also part of the government strategy. Undoubtedly, outreach is becoming more prominent within the university sector. One indicator of the direction of travel is the recent advent of senior university posts such as Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education Partnerships. For instance, that is the case at the authors' own university, where a new senior member of staff has been recruited to develop links with schools and colleges in order to encourage progression routes into HE.

Finally, there is an emerging body of literature exploring the use of simulations as an outreach tool in STEM-related subjects, such as engineering courses (cf. Bugallo and Kelly 2017) and computer sciences (Lakanen 2016). However, such literature in the case of humanities and social sciences is still scarce, even more so in the particular case of EU politics. Although 'the use of EU simulations is growing' (Guasti, Muno and Niemann, 2015: 206), the few studies discussing their benefits as a learning tool (Baroncelli, Farneti, Horga and Vanhoonacker 2014; Brunazzo and Settembri 2014; Jones and Bursens 2014) do not deal with the question of interest-boosting or whether simulations may also be used as effective outreach tools. Therefore, the present study aims to bring much needed empirical evidence of the utility of political simulations for outreach, i.e. as a tool to stimulate interest in university degree courses related to EU politics. Before doing so, the following section describes the context in which the empirical research was conducted.

SECONDARY SCHOOL-BASED POLITICAL SIMULATIONS

The political simulations that form the focus of this analysis were part of a wider set of activities linked to an Erasmus + Jean Monnet Activities funded project entitled 'Teaching Young People European Studies' (TYPES) led by the UK-based organisation, UACES. The latter is a professional organisation dedicated to the advancement of education for the public benefit through the promotion of teaching and research in contemporary European studies (UACES 2019). The project included, amongst other activities, funding for a series of EU politics-based political simulations involving A-level pupils. The simulations were organised by the TYPES Project Steering Group as part of the UACES Teaching and Learning Working Group (of which the lead author is a member). The simulations were delivered in collaboration with three UK universities, the University of Portsmouth (two simulations), Loughborough University (two simulations) and Newcastle University (one simulation). Pupils from eight secondary schools and sixth form colleges (South Downs College in Havant, Hampshire; Newstead Wood School in Orpington, Kent; De Lisle College in Loughborough; Dudley College in Dudley; and Burnside College, Sacred Heart High School, Durham School, and Churchill Community College, all in Newcastle) participated in the simulations included in this study.

The TYPES project aimed to engage A-level and AS-level politics pupils in critical thinking about EU politics. It entailed them taking on the role of different stakeholders within two negotiation scenarios revolving around the topic of free movement in the EU; one focusing on free movement in the context of the refugee crisis and the other in the context of the Brexit process. Both scenarios saw pupils taking on roles of British and French/European officials as well as of representatives of other stakeholders such as local communities and businesses. In both cases, the parties were encouraged to debate their positions, under the guidance of two of their colleagues who acted as moderators, with the aim of reaching a consensual decision. Such a decision was achieved in each iteration of the simulations. The pupils were supported throughout the simulation by academics, and sometimes also by undergraduate and postgraduate students from the partner universities. These were students who had experienced political simulations as part of their own degree courses and who were present to provide mentoring to the pupils. Academics from these universities travelled to the schools prior to the simulation events to talk to teachers and pupils and provide materials for the day.

In order to account for any potential change in pupils' interest in EU politics as a result of participating in the simulations, a survey was conducted using two written questionnaires - one distributed at the beginning of the political simulation ('before'/'pre') and one at the end ('after'/'post'). The data collected from these questionnaires provides the evidence underpinning the analysis in this article.

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the schools taking part in the simulations. This was based on each school's convenient accessibility (through pre-established contacts) and geographical proximity to the TYPES Steering Group members. The same sampling technique was used to select the A-level pupils for the simulations, with the lead teacher at each school inviting them to participate. In some cases, the lead teacher targeted invitations at those pupils they believed to be most interested in taking part. This pre-selection process is noteworthy in the context of the findings, which suggest that these simulations boosted pupil interest in EU politics. Given that the boost occurred amongst a cohort of predisposed pupils already expressing higher interest levels than their peers, there might be risk of a selection bias. However, there are three key points to make with regards to this. First, any selection bias is inevitable given that simulations as outreach tools are not compulsory (in the same way that simulations as learning tools might be when used in a credit-bearing module) but work on a voluntary basis. As such, these events will inevitably draw participants with some pre-existing interest in the subject of the simulations. Second, even so, the fact that in this particular case participants seemed interested to take part in a simulation on EU politics does not necessarily mean that they were already interested in EU politics. They might have just been targeted by the teachers because of their broader interest in politics, good communication skills or because they were seen as potentially good ambassadors for the school at an event organised by external actors. Third, and most important, even if participants had a pre-existing level of interest in EU politics specifically beyond simply politics in general, this is already acknowledged through the pre-event questionnaires. Therefore, pre-existing selection bias can be safely discounted for this article.

Approximately thirty pupils from each school were invited to participate voluntarily in the simulations as part of their ‘enrichment’ activities, with the large majority of those taking part being enrolled on the Politics A- or AS level. Overall, N=95 anonymous questionnaires were gathered in the simulations conducted for this article before (‘before’/’pre’ data) and after (‘after’/’post’ data) the simulations. The null hypothesis was taken to be ‘no change’, meaning that the students’ responses would not be affected by the simulation activity. The collected quantitative data was then tested for departures from our null hypothesis and their statistical significance. As the before and after questionnaires had both quantitative and qualitative open-ended response options and were not entirely identical, our statistical pre- and post-analysis focused on three quantifiable questions that were identical in both sets of questionnaires. The central question of our article regards the effectiveness of simulation exercises as an outreach tool for A-level students. The three core questions of our pre- and post-analysis included one multiple choice question and two five-point Likert-scale items. The multiple-choice question addressed participants’ intentions regarding their interests in studying any humanities and social science subjects related to EU politics at university. The Likert-scale items asked for (i) participants’ self-assessment of their knowledge of the workings of the EU and (ii) for an evaluation of the importance of understanding the EU in general.

ANALYSIS

The data gathered through the questionnaires was transferred into Microsoft Excel worksheets and data cleaning was performed prior to the analysis. For instance, the first question related to participants’ intentions and their interest in studying at university level subjects related to EU politics: political science, IR, European studies, law. In response, several participants did not cross either of the possible options but then proceeded to write the same or similar choices into their open-ended ‘other’ response option. In these cases, their responses were re-assigned into the predefined answer options in order to facilitate accurate statistical analysis. Furthermore, a number of the 95 questionnaires were returned incomplete, which was accounted for in our significance tests, by using correct values for N depending on the response rate for each question item. As this first question was binomial in nature, merely asking for interest or disinterest for each of the subject options, binomial tests were carried out for each answer option to determine whether the individual increases in the ‘after’ questionnaires could be explained by the effect of having participated in the simulation with a p=0.95 certainty.

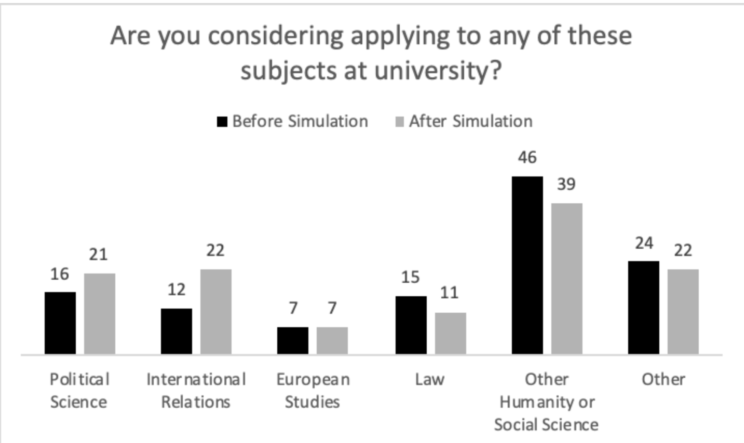
Data cleaning was not necessary for the two five-point Likert-scale items asking for participants’ self-assessment of their knowledge of the European Union and for their perceived importance of understanding the EU. However, as mentioned earlier, a number of participants did not hand in complete questionnaires at the end of simulations. This small discrepancy in responses was mathematically accounted for within our analysis, again by taking care to use correct values for N for both pre- and post-questionnaires. Here, standard t-tests were carried out to assess the statistical significance of the departure from our null-hypothesis that simulations would not change participants' self-assessments of their EU knowledge and perceived importance of such knowledge. The remaining questions were qualitative and open ended in nature and were not considered in this part of the analysis. Nevertheless, they provided interesting contextual information for our wider understanding of the effectiveness of simulations as an outreach tool.

The collected data generated three key findings. First, statistically significant increases were recorded, after the simulations were conducted, in participants' interest towards studying IR at university level, but not for European studies or political science. Second, a statistically significant shift towards higher self-assessment of EU knowledge was recorded after completing the simulations. Third, despite a small change towards assessing the importance of EU knowledge as 'very important', the results are not statistically significant. These findings are each discussed in detail below.

Finding 1: participants' interest towards studying university degrees related to EU politics

A-level pupils participating in the simulations were asked whether they were considering a range of humanities and social sciences degrees at university, specifically in fields of study cognate to EU politics. Pre- and post-event responses to our question 'Are you considering applying to any of these subjects at university?' (Figure 1) show an increase in two of the four predefined answer options (political science, IR and European studies) and a decrease in interest in studying law and the 'Other' options.

Fig. 1. Pre- and post-lobbying simulation responses of participants regarding students' considerations of fields of study at university



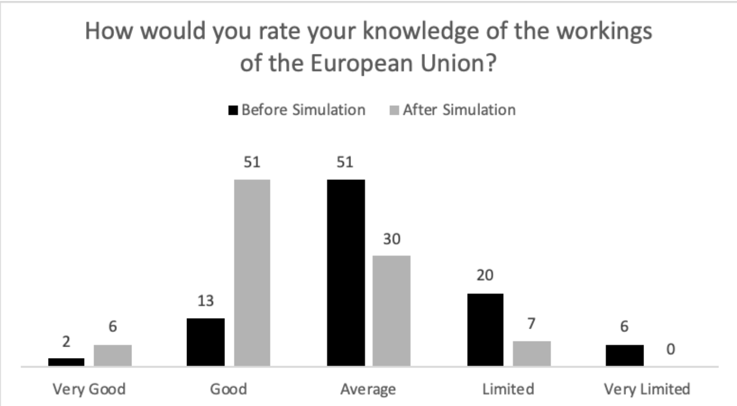
Following binomial testing of each subject independently, the 9.63 per cent increase for IR resulted in a rejection of our null-hypothesis of 'no-change' with over 95 per cent certainty, meaning that we could consider the increase in interest for this subject as statistically significant. We conclude, therefore, that the increase of academic interest in this discipline is most likely due to the experience of having participated in the simulation activity and cannot be explained by random variation within our N=95 test group. However, the same cannot be said for the increase in interest in studying European studies or political science. Indeed, with N=95, the 0 per cent increase in interest towards studying European studies, and 3.78 per cent increase in interest towards studying political science, were both statistically insignificant, thus confirming the null-hypothesis of 'no change'.

In sum, as a result of the simulations, the statistically significant increases in interest amongst the A-level pupils were recorded towards studying IR at university, but not for European studies or political science. However, when taking all three politically orientated subjects (political science, IR, European studies) together, the increase in interest for them remains statistically significant overall. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the data do not indicate that pupils expressing an initial desire to study university degree subjects that fall outside of the humanities and social sciences become more attracted to the latter. Instead, it shows that pupils who are predisposed to studying humanities and social science subjects see that interest consolidated through their participation in the simulation outreach activity.

Finding 2: participants' self-assessment of their knowledge of EU politics interest towards studying university degrees related to EU politics

A-level pupils participating in the political simulations were asked to rate, before and after the event, their knowledge of the workings of the EU in order to determine whether the simulation was a driver for enhanced self-assessment of knowledge. A five-point Likert-scale question was used - 'How would you rate your knowledge of the workings of the European Union?'.

Fig. 2. Pre- and post-simulation participants' self-assessment of knowledge of the workings of the EU



As depicted in Figure 2, the survey responses recorded a noticeable shift towards higher self-assessment of participants' knowledge of the EU after having participated in the simulation. Subsequent data analysis supported this finding. A one-tailed t-test of 'before and after', looking for increase only, shows that our null-hypothesis of 'no-increase' can be rejected with t=-4.65. Thus, we can say that the increase between the 'before and after' results is significant with 95 per cent certainty, which means that the participants' increased self-assessment of the EU is highly likely to be an effect of the simulation itself.

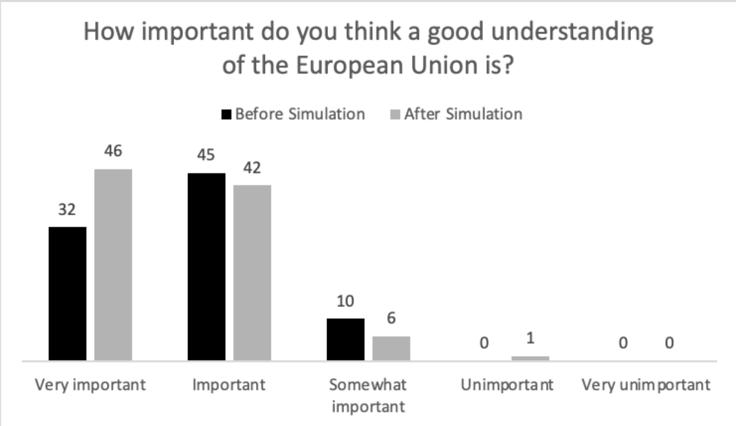
Finding 3: participants' perceived importance of understanding how the EU works

The A-level pupils who participated in the simulations were asked to rate their perceived importance of understanding the EU. To capture this, a second Likert-scale question asked 'How important do you think a good understanding of the European Union is?'. As depicted in Figure 3, the responses show only a small change in pupils' self-assessed perceived importance of EU knowledge as 'very important'.

The subsequent analysis confirmed that, while a small change with t=-1.46 in perceived importance can be seen, the increase recorded after the simulation is nevertheless too weak to be considered statistically significant.

Considering that the 'before' data for this question was already strongly biased towards pupils' perceived importance, this result is not very surprising, as none of the participants deemed the understanding of EU workings as very unimportant, with only one respondent considering this understanding to be unimportant.

Fig. 3. Pre- and post-lobbying simulation responses of participants' assessment of the importance of understanding the workings of the EU



DISCUSSION

As pointed out in the introduction, one of the central and broader implications of Finding 1 is that political simulations with secondary school students significantly increase their interest in pursuing EU politics-related subjects, namely IR, at university level. In other words, political simulations may be effectively used as outreach tools to increase interest in higher education degrees in IR. While the effectiveness of political simulations as outreach tools might seem intuitive given their arguable effectiveness as learning tools for these subjects, there has been very limited, if any, empirical evidence to support the former. Thus, the present research helps bridge a gap in the existing literature, which has been focusing so far on the role of simulations as outreach tools in the case of STEM-related degrees or only on their role as learning tools in the case of social sciences.

While increased interest in studying IR at university level is manifested mainly among those predisposed to studying such subjects, that might also be seen as a testimony to the effectiveness of political simulations in consolidating pre-existing interest in IR. Thereby, this finding also confirms the claim that active learning environments and particularly simulations can boost interest, thus contributing to the ongoing debate on this issue (see Schnurr et al. 2014). Moreover, this implication seems particularly significant for the UK context, which has recently witnessed decreasing public funding for social sciences in general (Shaw 2015); for decreasing public funding arguably compels departments of social sciences to rely more on the revenue provided by tuition fees. Indeed, the lack of public funding might act as a deterrent for pre-university students themselves when considering which degree to choose, particularly so in the case of those already aiming at pursuing, later on, postgraduate research degrees, which tend to depend to a large extent on government funding. In other words, the need for attracting students to social science-related degrees, including the IR-related ones, is now greater in the context of decreasing public funding and political simulations might, therefore, play a role in that respect.

In the particular case of EU politics, although there has not been a significant increase in participants' interest in pursuing specifically EU politics-related degrees at university level, such as European studies, there has been an increase in interest towards IR. That suggests that participants tended to associate EU politics with IR rather than with ES. This implication aligns with the trend for EU politics to be studied, at least in the British higher education system, as a subfield of political science and particularly IR, in contrast to its more traditional location within area studies (Drake 2017; McGowan 2008). This latter field, including ES, has 'undergone something of a crisis' (McGowan 2008). Indeed, according to Drake, 'European studies has all but disappeared from UK university curricula, departments have closed, and the subject area no longer merited its own 'sub-panel' in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF)...' (Drake 2017). However, while ES has declined as a university subject (see also Smith 2003, 2002), the EU studies subfield of regional integration 'has flourished' and gone 'from strength to strength' (McGowan 2008). This is perhaps due to the ability of this subfield to identify itself effectively as a branch of political science (McGowan 2008) - a trend that is certainly reflected at the authors' own institution. However, despite this trend, the increase in participants' interest in studying political science at university level was not statistically significant, which may be related to secondary school pupils not associating 'politics' with 'science'.

Going back to the association of EU politics with the field of IR, the Brexit process itself and the new relationships that will emerge from it between the UK and the remaining member states of the EU warrant placing EU politics within the field of IR, at least in British universities. In other words, it does make more sense for British students to study EU politics in an IR context once Britain will stop being a member of the EU. Moreover, the EU's own future is more uncertain than ever with potential further disintegration, as other current members might choose to break away in the future. Indeed, all European countries (not just the EU) are currently experiencing multiple challenges, from prolonged austerity measures to the migrant crisis to the resurgence of extremist and populist politics. It is therefore important that universities continue to form the next generation of decision makers to understand Europe as a wider geopolitical construct, which may be best done in the context of comparative regionalism within IR.

Last but not least, the image of studying the EU as a UK university degree subject in its own right is arguably marred by general public discontent and scepticism with the EU, often amplified by the media. It takes a courageous student to go against the anti-EU populist tide in the UK (particularly in these Brexit years) and enrol for a course devoted to the study of the EU that may be negatively perceived by friends and family. This, of course, has knock-on effects for the size of cohorts where low student numbers on EU studies make courses untenable. Conceiving of studying the EU as part of a broader IR programme is thus perhaps more palatable.

According to Finding 2, the participants in the simulations indicated, in the post-event questionnaire, a better knowledge of the workings of the EU than before the simulation. While this does not directly suggest a greater interest in studying the EU at university level, it does demonstrate that, following the simulation, A-level pupils have greater confidence in their own knowledge and capability of understanding the subject. In turn, such increased confidence may arguably make them (more) confident in choosing EU politics as part of their university degree studies, given that a certain level of interest in the subject was present in most participants prior to the simulation. Therefore, Finding 2 supports the article's claim that political simulations may be used as effective outreach tools to boost interest in EU politics-related subjects at university level. At the same time, by revealing the boost in self-perceived understanding of how the EU works, Finding 2 confirms the claim in the current literature that simulations are effective learning tools.

Finding 3 shows that simulation participants expressed, in the post-event questionnaire, an increased awareness of the importance of understanding the EU, with a 11.73 per cent increase on the 'Very Important' option. However, the overall increase within the answers of this question were not statistically significant, given that students attended the simulation with a pre-existing high level of perceived importance of understanding the EU. Nevertheless, that perceived importance has been at least consolidated. We may assume - along the lines of Hulleman et al. (2010; 2017) - that the more students perceive the understanding of a subject as important, the more likely it is that they will be interested in understanding and studying that subject. Therefore, by consolidating the participants' perceived importance of understanding the EU, the simulation arguably also consolidated their interest in understanding and, thereby, studying the EU. Therefore, Finding 3 indirectly supports the key argument of the article that political simulations may be effective outreach tools to promote interest in pursuing EU politics-related subjects at university level.

Indeed, as discussed with respect to Finding 1, enhancing the awareness of present and future generations of British students regarding the importance of understanding the EU will remain relevant despite the UK's exit from the EU or perhaps precisely because of that exit and all the uncertainties it entails. Given that, as pointed out earlier, the Brexit process will most likely fundamentally restructure the UK's relations with both the EU as a whole and its individual member states, understanding EU workings and politics, and thereby EU-related university degrees, will be as relevant as ever.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this article bridges identified lacunas in our knowledge about the pedagogical benefits of simulations by providing much needed evidence of their empirical effects. The key effects documented here are threefold. First, simulations increased participants' interest in pursuing university degrees in fields cognate to EU politics such as IR, particularly in the case of students predisposed to pursuing a degree in this field. Second, simulations increased participants' self-assessment of knowledge of EU politics and, third, simulations consolidated participants' assessment of the importance of understanding the workings of the EU. As such, the article also provides much needed empirical evidence of affective learning outcomes of simulations, particularly their interest boosting potential.

Collectively, these findings substantiate the article's overall claim regarding the potential effectiveness of simulations as an university outreach tool to enhance interest in studying EU politics-related subjects. In this way, the findings contribute to filling a gap in the current literature about the empirical effects of simulations at the pre-university admission stage rather than the literature's common focus on simulations' pedagogical benefits as a teaching tool for enrolled university students. In particular, the article targets the space between secondary and higher education levels by providing evidence for the usefulness of simulations as an outreach tool for subjects cognate to EU politics, IR in particular.

This article used data gathered via a pre- and post-simulation questionnaire, which was completed by the participants in the simulations that took place at secondary schools with overall N=95 participants. However, further study could help improve the overall statistical reliability and precision as well as confirm statistical significance for those data points where positive changes have been observed but significance thresholds have not been reached. Moreover, it would be interesting to conduct a further post-event questionnaire after a period of time to assess the durability of the simulation effects discussed here and also to identify which subjects the participating pupils went on to study at University.

The findings presented in this article focus on the UK and may suggest unique British perspectives on matters regarding the study of EU politics that may not be generalisable internationally. More importantly, however, the question of whether simulations are effective outreach tools to boost interest in studying at university level should be investigated internationally, adding a geographical comparative dimension to confirm further this article's findings. Thanks to the relatively simple design of the questionnaires used by the authors, replicating the experiment in other countries would pose no foreseeable problems, as long as the questionnaires are translated correctly in regard to language and cultural contexts.

In addition to the geographically comparative perspectives, further research should also investigate whether the findings could also be replicated regarding different fields in humanities and social sciences. The simulations' interest boosting effects presented in this article have likely been contingent on having dealt with the highly topical and contentious contemporary issues of the European migration crisis and Brexit. The success of simulations as outreach tools for humanities and social sciences is likely to depend on contemporary contexts, suggesting that simulations need not only to be relevant, but are also limited by time in their applicability. Therefore, the topics of the migration crisis and Brexit were ideal subjects for conducting this research in the United Kingdom between 2016 and 2017.

One significant implication of our findings is that secondary school students tend to associate EU politics with IR rather than ES, which confirms an ongoing trend in British universities that has been noticed by several scholars (Drake 2017; McGowan 2008; Smith 2003; 2002). Indeed, it might be the case that IR better suits the study of EU politics, at least in the UK, given the Brexit process and the redefined relations that the UK will have with the individual member states of the EU. Moreover, in a background of rising Euro-hostile attitudes and political forces across the EU, the possibility of further disintegration - albeit not likely for the present time - does enhance the need to understand and study Europe in a broader way.

Last but not least, we have also pointed out that the relatively hostile environment towards the EU within British society might make IR more attractive to students, at least more so than ES. On the other hand, there is, of course, the argument that EU politics should be studied as part of ES not only because the EU is still a highly integrated entity both economically and politically that arguably warrants a non-IR approach, but also from a British perspective, as the UK will still have to deal with the EU as a whole, and not just its individual members, thus maintaining the relevance of understanding its workings as a whole. In any case, regardless of whether EU politics is better off as part of ES or IR (a debate which falls outside the scope of the present article), it is worth emphasising that understanding the EU and Europe as a whole will continue to be relevant - despite, or precisely because, of the Brexit process - for present and future generations of British students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank UACES and the TYPES Project Steering Group for funding and organising the political simulations discussed in this article. Also, a draft version of the article benefited from valuable feedback at the 2018 Joint Sessions of Workshops organised by the ECPR at the University of Nicosia, Cyprus, where our participation was facilitated by CESTE2 funding. Finally, we would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for the constructive advice offered during the review process.

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Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 15, Issue 1 (2019)

Teaching, Learning and the Profession

Monitoring Generic Skills Development in a Bachelor European Studies

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Citation

Adriaensen, J., Bijsmans, P. and Groen, A. (2019). 'Monitoring Generic Skills Development in a Bachelor European Studies', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 15(1): 110-127. https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v15i1.1018

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

To ensure a smooth transition from studies to professional careers, students' skills and attitudes are often considered of greater value than theoretical knowledge and understanding. Yet, whereas typical academic skills such as research and writing are commonly monitored and trained, generic skills such as teamwork and communication receive scant attention. At Maastricht University, we developed a portfolio to raise awareness about skills required to take full advantage of the Problem-Based Learning environment, and to initiate self-reflection by students. As such, the portfolio also provides an opportunity to engage in a more in-depth assessment of students' skills acquisition. Students assessed their skills at the start of the bachelor programme through a survey that was administered again at two later stages during the first year. Comparing data of 414 students, we provide a unique insight into skills progression in an active learning environment. Repeated measures can thus provide a first impression of the impact of an active learning environment on generic skills acquisition. While we argue that the current portfolio achieves its educational objectives, as an instrument for measurement of skills acquisition it has its limitations.

Keywords

Generic skills; Active learning; Problem-Based Learning; European Studies; Mentoring

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National and European policy-makers have put skills high on the agenda of Higher Education (HE). Skills, including research skills needed to continue an academic career, have always been an important component of HE. The explicit focus is, however, increasingly on the 'generic' skills that students require to make a smooth transition into the labour market. This development has been pushed both by the European Commission, through, for instance, the New Skills Agenda launched in 2016, and by the inter-governmental Bologna process that made 'employability' a main goal of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)[1]. In the context of mass higher education, increased competition among HE institutions, youth unemployment, and fast-changing demands of the modern global economy, it is only natural that HE started to pay more attention to students' acquisition of generic skills to ensure employability.

The concept of employability is not without its critics (for a discussion see Clark and Martin 2016), but it has triggered a fruitful exchange about the identification, teaching and learning of relevant skills in HE programmes. Since then, extensive debates have ensued on the definition and identification of relevant employability skills (Suleman 2017), the responsibility of HE institutions in providing such training (Sin and Neave 2016), and the integration of these skills in university programmes (Lee, Foster and Snaith 2016).

In contrast to the extensive range of ways to assess and evaluate different types of knowledge and academic skills, tools to evaluate students' generic skills are far less developed. This is despite the existence of work that has looked at graduates' self-reported skills development in different learning environments (Vaatstra and De Vries 2007; Schmidt and van der Molen 2001; Knipprath 2017). In the social sciences, teaching practice has already adjusted by incorporating simulations (Bursens, Donche, Gijbels and Spooren 2018), classroom debates (Oros 2007), and the use of work placement (Crebert et al. 2004) in curricula. While these are steps in the right direction, they also raise questions about the proper monitoring of students' generic skills development. Can students revise their learning strategies or study programme based on the evaluation and feedback obtained? Is there also scope for reflection and repeated learning? Perhaps too often, skills training is isolated in a separate course, simulation or internship (see Wingate 2006).

This article engages with these questions by focusing on the use of an online portfolio as part of students' mentoring programme at Maastricht University's Bachelor in European Studies (BA ES). Portfolios in HE usually consist of work that illustrates a student's development and progress (Slepcevic-Zach and Stock 2018: 2-4). One of the aims of the portfolio used in the BA ES is to raise awareness about skills required to take full advantage of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) environment that applies across the university. PBL is a student-centred approach to learning, based on active construction of knowledge in the context of specific problems. Learning takes place in small groups guided by a tutor, who acts as a facilitator rather than a lecturer (Maurer 2015). Another aim of the portfolio is to support students' self-reflection. As such, the portfolio provides an opportunity to engage in a more in-depth evaluation of students' skills acquisition.

To explore the suitability of this portfolio as a tool to monitor generic skills development, the article proceeds in four sections. In the first section, we situate our research within the broader literature. The second section discusses the creation and content of the portfolio. It also provides a first insight into the structure of the questionnaire described and analysed in the third section. The fourth section adopts a critical perspective and re-assesses the original instrument, proposing revisions for future use. We conclude by reflecting on the challenge of combining the educational purposes of the portfolio with the development of an objective instrument for the measurement of skills acquisition.

SKILLS AND MAPPING THEIR PROGRESSION

Much of the debate about skills acquisition concerns the concept of 'employability' and its implications. Clark and Martin (2016), for example, argue that particularly in the UK the employability agenda has been driven by government policies, national student surveys, concerns of parents and students faced with high tuition fees, and the Bologna process (see also Lee et al. 2016). As Sin and Neave (2016) show, European policy-makers and employers have promoted a discourse that stresses students' need to become 'employable' individuals, and emphasises the responsibility of HE institutions to equip students with the necessary skills to do so (see also Crebert et al. 2004, on Australia; Mohan et al. 2010, on the United States).

Given these pressures on HE institutions, scholars have looked into two related questions. First, what are the 'employability skills' that students need to acquire? There is some recognition that these skills may be different depending on the discipline that students are trained in. Dunne, Bennett and Carré (2000: 108-109), for example, differentiate between skills that are central to a particular discipline and skills that are not discipline-specific. In the employability debate, the focus has by and large been on the latter type of skills – usually based on the argument that these have become crucial in a globalising environment with fast-changing technologies (Shuman, Besterfield-Sacre and McGourty 2005: 42-44).

Nevertheless, as Suleman (2017: 2) points out, the conceptualisation and identification of what such generic skills are is 'far from straightforward'. She finds that scholars have used methods ranging from inductive analyses of job advertisements or interviews with employers, to studies of the importance of a particular pre-defined skill or set of skills. Three sets of skills are usually mentioned: ‘relational skills’, such as communication and teamwork skills; ‘cognitive skills’, such as analytical and critical thinking, learning abilities and organising and planning skills; and ‘technical skills’ such as IT skills. These skills are echoed in studies that survey graduates (Schmidt and Van der Molen 2001) as well as enrolled students (Badcock, Pattison and Harris 2010). Dunne et al. (2000: 111) also identify four similar areas of generic skills: ‘management of self’, including learning abilities; of ‘others’, including group work; of ‘task’, including conceptualisation; and of ‘information’, including IT and critical use of information.

This identification of generic skills leads to the second question, namely, how can these skills best be taught? Here, there seems to be some tension between the teaching of disciplinary and generic skills, both when it comes to the attitude of staff towards the teaching of the latter skills (Díaz, Santaolalla and González 2010), and to the design of programme curricula (Dunne et al. 2000: 109-110; Drummond, Nixon and Wiltshire 1998). That is, HE programmes are usually organised within a particular discipline, so that generic skills need to be taught in the context of a discipline-oriented programme. For this reason, some scholars discuss the introduction of courses dedicated to the teaching of skills in curricula, ranging from generic skills in engineering (Mohan et al. 2010; see also Shuman et al. 2005), to teamwork in programming (Sancho-Thomas, Fuentes-Fernández and Fernández-Manjón 2009), and intellectual skills in political science (Clark 2011).

Many scholars have made a case for a comprehensive approach to teaching generic skills. Wingate (2006: 459) argues that extra-curricular courses on study skills like time management and note taking ‘divorce’ skills from subject knowledge. Effective training rather requires a ‘built-in’ approach, in which skills are embedded in the entire programme (see also Drummond et al. 1998). As Wingate (2006: 465) writes, a built-in approach ‘recognize[s] (a) the complexity of the learning involved and the time needed for it; and (b) the relevance of the skills beyond university.’ There are some good examples of this comprehensive approach in the literature. Atlay and Harris (2000), for instance, find that extensive discussions with the community both in- and outside the university were key to the successful introduction of a university-wide skills template at the University of Luton. It also required the re-thinking and re-structuring of all modules offered at the university, in order to make explicit the ‘skills embedded within them’ (78). In a study of European Studies programmes in Maastricht and Newcastle, Maurer and Mawdsley (2014: 40) also show how ‘both universities attempt to increasingly combine academic knowledge transfer […] with the training in transferable skills’.

Arguably, such a comprehensive approach to teaching generic skills is especially important in the social sciences, where students are usually not trained in a particular profession (Clark and Martin 2016), and where ‘critical engagement with […] the social world’ is central to curricula (Lee et al. 2016: 108). Maurer and Mawdsley (2014: 39) find that programmes about policies and politics are also ‘well-suited’ for a comprehensive approach to the teaching of skills, as ‘engagement with the policy environment is already embedded in mainstream understandings of how to teach the subject’. While the implementation of this approach may be difficult (Wingate 2006: 467; Drummond et al. 1998: 21; Adriaensen, Coremans and Slootmaeckers 2014: 261-262), it may be facilitated by an active learning environment in which students synthesise, evaluate, apply, and critically reflect upon course material in tutorial group discussions (Clark 2011: 136).

Yet academic attention to employability, its associated skills, and its integration in teaching programmes is not necessarily accompanied by attention to skills evaluation and development. Indeed, neither measurement nor assessment of generic skills is an easy task (Atlay and Harris 2000: 78-89). Scholars have looked at graduates’ self-reported effects of skills development in different learning environments (Vaatstra and De Vries 2007; Schmidt and van der Molen 2001; Knipprath 2017). However, there are only a few examples of surveys that look at students’ perceived gains in skills after a particular course in their studies (Sancho-Thomas et al. 2009; Mohan et al. 2010). Clark (2011), for example, reports that students gained more confidence with skills in a political science research methods course that integrated some generic skills, such as teamwork and presentation.

Such approaches to the evaluation of skills progression are, however, rather isolated – with little attention to repeated or continuous learning. In a more comprehensive approach, Badcock et al. (2010) study – amongst other questions – the effect of years of university experience on students' performance in the Australian Graduate Skills Assessment test. They found only 'limited evidence that students in their later years of study demonstrated higher skill levels when compared with students in their earlier years of study' (454), with the exception of problem-solving skills. However, as they recognise themselves, the cross-sectional design of the study 'may be susceptible to cohort effects', and thus provides only limited information about individual students' skills progression over the course of their studies (Badcock et al. 2010: 454).

To conclude, there is only limited knowledge about students' gradual skills progression throughout their studies. Moreover, evaluations based only on surveys may have the disadvantage of providing little opportunity for students to reflect on their learning trajectory and adapt accordingly. As we set out below, a portfolio that tracks students' learning over time may address these challenges

THE SKILLS PORTFOLIO IN MAASTRICHT'S BA EUROPEAN STUDIES

Maastricht University's BA ES is a three-year, English-taught interdisciplinary programme. The programme attracts a diverse, international group of students, representing over 30 nationalities. Content-wise, the BA ES is concerned with the analysis of cultural, economic, legal, political and social issues related to Europe in its widest sense. Its approach resembles what Rumford (2009: 3) describes as the core focus of European Studies, namely 'to explore its [Europe's] multiple constructions, meanings, histories, and geographies'. Despite calls for a 'core curriculum' the field of European Studies does not come with one clear framework (cf. Rumford and Murray 2003). Whereas some programmes focus on the European Union (EU), others resemble more traditional Area Studies programmes (Rosamond 2007; Calhoun 2003). One of the points that constantly surfaces in the debate, is the – sometimes contested – interdisciplinary nature of European Studies and the benefits of such an interdisciplinary approach for understanding European developments (Rumford and Murray 2003; David, Drake and Linnemann 2017).

The debate about the focus and nature of European Studies, however, often concerns European Studies as a research field, rather than as a field of student learning (cf. Rittberger and Blauberger 2018). While this is less problematic in terms of general focus, it does raise questions regarding skills attainment: what are the skills students in European Studies (need to) acquire during their studies? Because European Studies is an interdisciplinary programme that is non-vocational by nature, a clear-cut differentiation between core (discipline-specific) and generic (cross-disciplinary) skills is difficult to make. Indeed, some skills that may be considered generic in some disciplines are core to the social sciences, including communication skills, critical thinking and analytical skills (see Lee et al. 2016: 108; Clark and Martin 2016).

In Maastricht University's BA ES, some skills are explicitly made part of the curriculum – either as part of content courses or as part of the 'skills track' that runs alongside content courses. These include skills mentioned in the European Studies literature, such as foreign language skills (Smith 2003) and the ability to understand and analyse the practice of politics and policy-making (Maurer and Mawdsley 2014). They also include academic research and writing skills, skills in qualitative and quantitative methods, and negotiation skills.

Generic skills are a more implicit part of the programme with no dedicated courses or skills tracks developed for their training. While this characteristic is common among European Studies programmes elsewhere, the major characteristic distinguishing the BA ES from other programmes, is its commitment to PBL across the curriculum (Timus, Cebotari and Hosein 2016). In fact, broadly speaking there are very few programmes in European Studies and similar programmes in International Relations and Politics that are (partly) taught in line with the principles of PBL (Craig and Hale 2008). One consequence of this reliance on PBL is the training of generic skills (Maurer and Mawdsley 2014).

Generic skills required and trained in a PBL environment

PBL revolves around four key principles that are especially apt for learning in an interdisciplinary environment: constructive, collaborative, contextual and self-directed. Learning is an active process in which knowledge and meaning are (re-)constructed through interaction between and collaboration with fellow students. The context is set by practical and theoretical 'problems', which serve as a starting point for the learning process. Working in small groups, students direct the learning process by contributing existing knowledge and deciding on how to address these problems (Dolmans, De Grave, Wolfhagen and Van Der Vleuten 2005).

Many of the skills central to a PBL environment are also appreciated in a professional working environment: ranging from more basic skills such as being on time and raising questions, to more advanced skills like realising a productive, collaborative atmosphere. Moreover, students take up different roles during tutorial sessions, including discussion leader and whiteboard worker. Clearly, such roles and skills also matter in working environments. As Clark (2011: 138) writes, 'working in teams is a standard practice in most employment situations'. In fact, Drohan, Mauffette and Allard (2011) call generic skills a 'by-product' of PBL. While the evidence is not always clear-cut (see Knipprath 2017), there is research that suggests that graduates who studied in a PBL learning environment have developed better generic competences (Vaatstra and De Vries 2007; Schmidt and van der Molen 2001).

In Maastricht, the learning process is structured through the so-called seven steps (see Table 1), which mimic the research process (Maurer 2015: 371-372): students start with a puzzle, determine what they know and what they do not know about the topic, and develop one or more research questions to guide their research. To answer the questions and arrive at a conclusion, they consult different sources. Together, the first five steps form the so-called pre-discussion. Here, students determine gaps in their knowledge and devise a research strategy. The sixth step, the self-study phase, usually takes two days during which students study the material. They report back during the so-called post-discussion. Throughout these seven steps, students continuously practice generic skills. This makes active learning, in general, and PBL, in particular, different from other learning settings such as traditional lecture-based programmes (see also Clark 2011).

The skills portfolio that was designed as part of the BA ES mentor programme (see below) identifies five main sets of skills: communication skills, analytical skills, teamwork, time-management skills and professional attitude – each subdivided in six to ten statements (see Tables 2 to 6 below). The skills identified in the portfolio are amongst those mentioned in the academic literature on the development of generic skills in HE discussed above. First, students need to develop good *communication skills*. Being able to clearly communicate with and listen to fellow students is of utmost importance in a collaborative learning environment. This concerns asking questions, making contributions and discussing the material. Particularly in the role of discussion leader, students also need to be able to summarise arguments and reflect on them. The student working at the whiteboard or taking notes needs to be able to succinctly summarise on-going discussions.

Table 1. Maastricht University's PBL seven steps

1. Clarification of terms and concepts
2. Defining the problem statement
3. Brainstorm using prior knowledge and common sense
4. Structuring of the brainstorm through constructing a detailed and coherent 'theory'
5. Formulation of learning objectives for self-directed learning
6. Self-study to fill the gaps in knowledge
7. Post-discussion to integrate acquired knowledge in a suitable explanation

See also the video 'Problem-Based Learning at Maastricht University', Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMtLXXf9Sko [accessed 17 January 2019].

Second, while research skills are an explicit part of the BA ES programme – many students end up in jobs that require them to do research (cf. Lightfoot 2012: 199-200) – PBL also mimics the research process and a key element of becoming a good researcher is developing more generic *analytical skills*. This requires critical engagement with the problem, drafting clear learning objectives and in-depth reading of the material to be studied, but also thorough discussion in the group.

Third, PBL is a collaborative learning process. Students thus need to develop skills related to *teamwork*. That is, only by working together with their peers, will students achieve a better understanding of the problems. This requires the ability to share knowledge with the group and to allow others to do so as well, but also an ability to critically reflect on the group process. The discussion leader plays a key role in making sure that the group functions well, by creating a space for open debate and by inviting students to contribute.

Fourth, *time management* is important throughout. Each group meeting lasts two hours, with two days in between for self-study. During the first half of a tutorial, students report what they read with the aim of achieving a better understanding of the problem. A structured and well-managed discussion is key to answering the learning objectives raised previously. The second part of the meeting is devoted to the pre-discussion of a new problem. Being able to formulate good learning objectives requires a proper brainstorm (steps 3 and 4 in Table 1) instead of a rushed, superficial discussion. Finally, during the self-study phase students benefit from good time-management skills and the ability to work on their own to get to grips with the material necessary for answering the learning objectives.

Fifth and finally, in addition to general skills related to working in a team, students are expected to show a *professional attitude* towards their group members and teaching staff. This includes, for example, showing courtesy to fellow students, but also informing a tutor in case of absence. Groups change every four to eight weeks, so that students experience working with different people. Roles change too, with a new discussion leader, whiteboard worker and note-taker for every session or problem. This promotes students' professional ability to work in a broad range of dynamic settings (Sancho-Thomas et al. 2009: 523).

Motives behind the portfolio

The skills portfolio that is the subject of this study was designed as part of the BA ES mentor programme. To support students' transition to university, the BA ES introduced a mentor programme in 2011 simultaneously with Matching, which is an intake process aimed at helping prospective students make their study choice (Bijsmans and Harbers 2014). Research into early examples of Matching had shown that it is most effective when complemented by a dedicated mentor programme (Verbeek, van Eck and Glaudé 2011). Generally, literature on first-year experience in HE stresses the importance of guiding students into academia. These ideas were considered when designing the mentor programme (Brahm, Jenert and Wagner 2017).

Initially, the idea was to set up a system in which students would regularly meet their mentor – a member of the teaching staff – throughout the full three years of their studies. However, it soon became clear that practical obstacles such as the availability of staff made a three-year programme unrealistic. Consequently, it was decided to focus on individual mentoring in the first year, which is generally seen as the most important year in HE (Jansen, Suhre and André 2017; Brahm et al. 2017). During the second and third years, mentoring takes a broader approach, for instance by organising group sessions on internship opportunities and pitching.

From the start, the BA ES has experimented with different types of meetings and several iterations of the portfolio, including an e-portfolio that came with numerous technical obstacles. As far as the meetings are concerned, since the academic year 2017/2018, the first two 1½-hour group sessions take place during the programme's introduction days. Set up in accordance with PBL philosophy, mentor groups of about 12 students discuss an assignment text that raises questions about issues related to the transition from high school to university, but also covers issues regarding programme content and students' future learning environment. After these meetings, students continue to meet their mentor on an individual basis during three scheduled 30-minute sessions, while more sessions may be planned depending on individual needs.

The BA ES portfolio serves as a means for students to reflect on their learning process, but also as input for their mentor meetings. As the aim is to support students in their first year of studies, the emphasis of the portfolio is mostly on those skills that are necessary for further learning (see also Atlay and Harris 2000: 77-78). The portfolio consists of three core elements, which have been embedded into the online survey tool Qualtrics in autumn 2017. By moving from a paper-based to a web-based portfolio, it was hoped to strengthen engagement with the portfolio (cf. Driessen, Muijtjens, Van Tartwijk and Van Der Vleuten 2007).

The first part of the portfolio consists of a number of open questions on study choice, motivation and expectations, and challenges and experience related to programme content and learning environment. For the first meeting, these questions relate back to the Matching questionnaire that students complete upon application to the programme. As the year progresses – an academic year consists of five periods – the questions are adapted to reflect students' development and experience.

The second part of the portfolio consists of a self-score card for students to reflect on the key PBL-related generic skills discussed above. This part was already tested within the Qualtrics environment in 2015-2016. Lähteenmäki and Uhlin (2011: 154-155) call portfolios a 'powerful tool' to stimulate continuous reflection on PBL and generic skills development. In addition, many new students are not accustomed to self-directed learning and working in groups, hence it is important to introduce them to and have them reflect on what it takes to make a PBL-tutorial a success (Peterson 1997). This specific part of the portfolio is the focus of our empirical analysis.

The final part of the portfolio is aimed at the further development of skills. Students are asked to reflect on their objectives, the way in which they are going to achieve them, where and when, and who they might ask for help. The university's student psychologists, who also provide the annual training session for mentors, designed this part. The focus of this training session is predominantly on the third part of the portfolio, but the trained mentoring skills, such as how to ask good questions, are relevant for the entire portfolio and mentor programme.

Portfolio, reflection and skills progression

The inclusion of a PBL self-score card in the portfolio serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it signals the skills expected in HE, in general, and in a PBL environment, in particular; on the other hand, it provides some concrete measures that enable reflection and self-directed learning by the students. Mentors can also use this information to further support students' development.

Having students reflect on the current level of their skills and identify potential areas of improvement initiates a process of learning. In between meetings with their mentor, students are expected to develop their skills. This can take the form of pro-actively applying for chairing roles within the tutorial, formulating a number of questions prior to the tutorial, or purposefully monitoring the means by which fellow students try to engage the rest of the group.

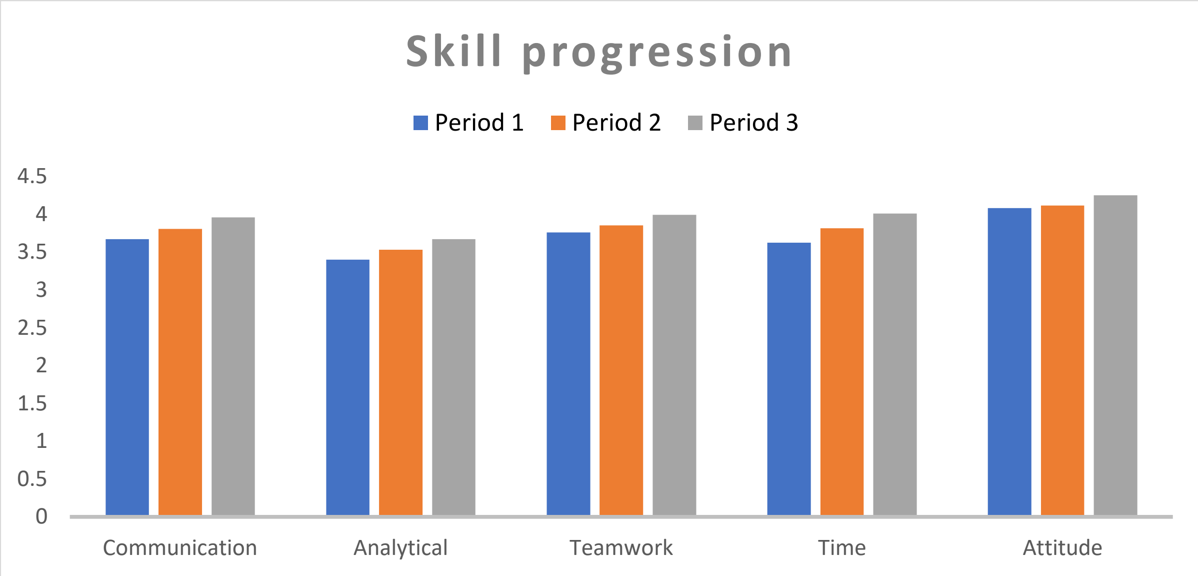
In a sense, the portfolio works much like a formative evaluation. It does not try to cast an objective measurement, but is rather used to create opportunities for critical self-reflection and reflection with the mentor, initiating a process of remediation and learning. As a result, we expect that students will ultimately improve their generic (PBL) skills throughout the mentoring programme.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPEAN STUDIES

The surveys analysed in this paper were distributed at three intervals during the academic years 2015-2016 and 2017-2018. Due to unforeseen practical obstacles in terms of ICT support, the online portfolio could not be used in the academic year 2016-2017. Out of 627 students, 414 completed the first and second wave of the survey. For the third and final survey, no individual reminders were sent to the 2015-2016 cohort due to the aforementioned practical obstacles, resulting in a significant drop in the response rate, with only 126 students (out of 320) participating. The comparison between the second and third wave therefore relies on a reduced sample of 283 students.

We decided to pool the two cohorts for the ensuing analysis. At the level of the aggregated indicators depicted in Figure 1, pairwise t-tests indicate that the difference between the two cohorts was not significantly different from zero across 14 out 15 comparisons.[2] At the aggregate level, the measured skills evolved positively across the three waves. In the following sub-sections, we analyse each of the five identified skills in greater detail discussing its items, the evolution across the three measurements, and an assessment of their significance. These results are then contextualised in light of the BA ES curriculum and students' exposure to an active learning environment.

Fig 1. Skill progression in an active learning environment: first-year Bachelor students



Communication skills

Student responses with respect to their communication skills are summarised in Table 2. Looking at the separate items, three observations can be made. First, the responses are invariably high, which suggests that students consider their communicative skills well developed. Second, while students believed they made progression on most items, their ability to 'listen to their fellow students' remained unchanged at a reasonably high level (highlighted in grey). A third and final observation can be made with regard to the timing of improvement across the different items: that is, improvements from the first to the second period mostly concerned students' propensity to ask questions, the chairing of meetings, their ability to summarise theories and concepts, and to wrap up a discussion.

This is not surprising as these questions refer to the basic PBL skills that students will be confronted with first.[3] Chairing and summarising concepts in a novel teaching environment are quite alien to a student just entering HE and may thus appear more difficult at first. From the second to the third period, we mostly noted improvements in students' self-assessed ability to raise questions and communicate their ideas. These are more advanced PBL skills and, in that sense, it is perhaps not surprising that an improvement only becomes visible later in the year. An alternative explanation could zoom in on the dynamics within the classes they attended. Courses organised in between the last two measurements deal with more contemporary issues, which – potentially – stimulates greater debate. Yet, at the same time students are also confronted with teaching that is less in line with basic PBL principles – varying by course and by tutor – which may actually go at the expense of proper training of generic skills. All differences were tested using a matched pairs t-test in STATA.

Table 2. Communication skills – item responses

Item	Avg	Sd	Δ1	Δ2
I dare to raise questions in case issues remain unclear	3.92	0.91	0.10**	0.17***
I am able to communicate my ideas in a clear and succinct way	3.65	0.78	0.09	0.19***
I listen carefully to my fellow students if needed I ask for clarification	4.17	0.75	0.00	0.10*
I am able to summarise theories and concepts	3.70	0.79	0.19***	0.12**
I am able to wrap up a discussion	3.60	0.83	0.11***	0.10**
I am able to chair a meeting, realising a productive, collaborative atmosphere	3.69	0.90	0.22***	0.14***
Aggregated Indicator	3.79	0.57	0.12***	0.14***

* Significant at the 0.9 confidence interval; ** significant at the 95% confidence interval; *** significant at the 99% confidence interval

Analytical skills

It was already apparent from Fig.1 that students had most difficulties with analytical skills. While progression has been quite significant, there is much variation across the different items.

Table 3. Analytical skills – item responses

Item	Avg	Sd	Δ1	Δ2
I am able to distil and communicate relevant topics from a text/assignment	3.72	0.73	0.13***	0.13***
I am able to phrase a clear, to the point and unequivocal problem statement	3.54	0.84	0.19***	0.16***
I am able to exemplify by highlighting relevant examples or counter examples	3.70	0.74	0.05	0.10*
I am able to reveal incorrect and unfounded arguments	3.44	0.84	0.10**	0.12**
I demonstrate reflective insight	3.56	0.73	0.13***	0.17***
I have the ability to give a discussion analytical depth	3.33	0.82	0.24***	0.15***
I am able to raise additional questions that highlight issues which are overlooked or taken for granted	3.43	0.90	0.05	0.18***
I am able to highlight the analytical/theoretical progress which has been made during a group session	3.40	0.79	0.05	0.28***
Aggregated Indicator	3.51	0.55	0.12***	0.16***

* Significant at the 0.9 confidence interval; ** significant at the 95% confidence interval; *** significant at the 99% confidence interval

As in the previous section, the items most strongly associated with PBL showcase large improvements in the short run. Phrasing problem statements and distilling the relevant topics from an assignment are two obvious examples. Giving a discussion analytical depth is a more unfamiliar skill for any new student. Through their experience in the first year, their sense of self-efficacy may have shifted, explaining the significant improvements. Alternatively, students may become more experienced with using theories and concepts during group discussions.

Yet, the responses also raise questions regarding the application of PBL and the role of the different tutors supervising the groups, as well as the extent to which dynamics within the tutorial create a constructive learning environment. Future research explaining skills acquisition in a PBL context should – ideally – enable differentiation across the tutor groups and courses that students attended.

Several items did not show a notable increase over a single period, predominantly in the earlier stages. Yet, the sizeable improvements over the two consecutive periods did culminate in a 'significant' improvement over the course of our measurement. In a sense, this is not so surprising as the acquisition of some skills may take more time than others. The analytical skills required are also often new to students, with some students taking more time to adjust than others.

Teamwork

We can deduce from Fig.1 that students' self-assessed skills in teamwork were already at quite a high level. The Matching procedure discussed above may be partly responsible as students that lack such skills are more likely to prefer a 'traditional' individualistic teaching philosophy (cf. Bijsmans and Harbers 2014). Indeed, the Matching procedure probes both at substantive interests and affinity with Maastricht University's PBL format. Looking at the specific items in Table 4, more variation is uncovered. The items for this generic skill showed more limited improvements across the different measurements. This can partly be explained by the relatively high averages on specific items, leaving limited room for improvement. Students' willingness to share knowledge or showing respect for different opinions or cultural sensitivities (average 4.35 and 4.25) are examples thereof.

Table 4: Teamwork – item responses

Item	Avg	Sd	Δ1	Δ2
I create room for all students	4.18	0.81	0.09**	0.11**
I am willing to share my knowledge	4.35	0.79	0.03	0.10**
I contribute to making a PBL session into a real group session, also giving room to 'silent' students	3.75	0.90	0.06	0.10*
(While brainstorming,) I am able to think 'creatively' to bring in new perspectives	3.49	0.86	0.07	0.16***
I encourage fellow students to come up with additional, complementary or opposing views	3.33	0.94	0.07	0.15***
I dare to discuss obstacles to a productive group setting	3.46	0.89	0.08*	0.27***
I am able to reflect upon the group dynamics and suggest interventions to improve its dynamics	3.52	0.91	0.15***	0.16***
I show sensitivity for cultural differences	4.25	0.82	0.07	0.12**
I am able to discuss diverging insights/perspectives, without jumping to conclusions	3.84	0.81	0.15***	0.08
I have the ability to discuss normative/ethical/political issues, showing respect for opposing views	4.30	0.76	0.09**	0.03
Aggregated Indicator	3.85	0.54	0.09***	0.12***

* Significant at the 0.9 confidence interval; ** significant at the 95% confidence interval; *** significant at the 99% confidence interval

The biggest improvements can be observed with regards to the groups' functioning. The willingness to discuss or reflect upon the group dynamics is something innate to PBL environments. It is therefore not surprising that students see this skill as having improved most strongly throughout the three waves.

Time management

A fourth generic skill deemed relevant in a PBL context is time management, which concerns both the pre and post-discussion phases during the group meetings and the self-study phase at home. Students collaboratively need to decide upon a strategy to tackle the problem at hand. During the self-study phase they gather and study the necessary material, alone or with fellow students. The seven steps offer a strategy to cope with the challenge of managing time. This may help explain the initial low score for students' abilities to develop strategies to tackle complex problems, but also their significant improvement over the year.

Table 5: Time Management – item responses

Item	Avg	Sd	Δ1	Δ2
I am on time	4.31	0.95	0.07	0.13**
I demonstrate to have done what is expected from me	3.89	0.87	0.06	0.10**
I possess time management skills, e.g. as chairman of a meeting	3.77	0.90	0.22***	0.08
I am time efficient	3.56	1.00	0.20***	0.23***
I am able to develop strategies to tackle complex problems	3.45	0.84	0.21***	0.23***
I am able, if needed, to divide tasks and responsibilities	3.83	0.85	0.16***	0.16***
Aggregated Indicator	3.79	0.65	0.15***	0.15***

* Significant at the 0.9 confidence interval; ** significant at the 95% confidence interval; *** significant at the 99% confidence interval

Professional attitude

Professional attitude was the fifth and final skill included in the questionnaire. Contrary to the skills discussed earlier, here we find several items in which no improvement could be observed (highlighted in grey). The set of questions formulated had a strong signalling function for the behaviour expected from students in the BA ES. As a result, several items had a high social desirability bias. With an average score of 4.69 and limited variation, it is not surprising barely any improvement can be observed in the first two items.

Table 6: Professional Attitude – item responses

Item	Avg	Sd	Δ1	Δ2
I communicate in a respectful way with fellow students and with staff members	4.69	0.57	-0.01	0.09
I show interest	4.44	0.70	-0.06	0.12
I recognise that there are no silly questions	4.02	1.01	0.08	0.12
I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses	4.01	0.78	0.02	0.24**
I am able to create synergy between theories, practices, and personal experiences	3.58	0.82	0.11	0.30***
I inform my tutor in case of absence	4.41	0.93	0.11	0.07
I am able to recall relevant insights from previous sessions and courses	3.90	0.75	0.11	0.17*
Aggregated Indicator	4.15	0.52	0.02	0.14**

The difference between the third and first measurement was significant with a confidence interval above 95%; * significant at the 0.9 confidence interval; ** significant at the 95% confidence interval; *** significant at the 99% confidence interval

As highlighted earlier, the portfolio aims to advance students' skills by stimulating active reflection. In that sense, it is interesting that students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses significantly increased over time. In future research, it may be interesting to consider a selection of items.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

The portfolio from which the data was derived was not primarily conceived as a formal measurement of skills acquisition. It had a signalling function to create awareness among students of the skills and attitudes deemed appropriate to create a stimulating PBL environment, but it also provided a means of – guided – reflection on students' behaviour within their tutorials. This results in two challenges highlighted in this section: on the one hand, there is the limited transferability of the questionnaire to other teaching environments (external validity); on the other hand, the selection and formulation of specific questions (internal validity) are sub-optimal for an objective academic assessment.

Transferability to other teaching programmes or institutions is important to create a test group to assess the impact of a teaching innovation. There are ethical objections to expose only a subset of the students to educational innovations that aim to improve student learning. Comparing across institutions or programmes thus presents an interesting alternative. To properly assess whether an active learning environment is better at stimulating certain skills, the derived measures need to be equally applicable in other contexts. The current formulation does not permit such immediate transfer. Several questions are highly context-specific and refer to concepts inherent to the PBL format, but are alien to more conventional teaching (such as chairing or formulating problem statements), or to the international teaching environment in Maastricht (such as sensitivity for different cultures).

Related to this observation, it is important to note that the skills we focused on above are not uniquely linked to the BA ES programme. These are generic skills that have also been addressed by other studies (Salomonson, Aberg and Allwood 2012; Jackson 2014). These studies have come up with different measuring instruments – all with slightly varying focus, but often with a stronger methodological basis. Drawing on such research can be useful as it may provide us with validated survey instruments, but it also enables proper benchmarking to compare our findings.

This also brings us to the second critical reflection regarding the challenge of internal validity. As explained above, the questionnaire was originally not conceived of as an instrument for research. Less attention had therefore been devoted to criteria of proper survey design. For example, the questions focused on students' *abilities* instead of their *inabilities* or challenges. The absence of 'negatively framed' items may bias responses and reduce variation in our measures. The portfolio was set up with the aim to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and re-direct their learning activities within the tutorials to address individual challenges. Certain questions therefore had a largely pedagogical signalling function, creating awareness of cultural diversity, inclusion and collegiality. As a result, these questions suffered from a high social desirability bias and invariably high scores.

CONCLUSION

Generic skills have been attributed increased importance in recent debates about HE. It comes as no surprise then to find the mainstreaming of innovative teaching activities where students can practice generic skills, whether they concern simulations, internships or skills trajectories on research methods. The issue of evaluation of such activities is not only a practical nuisance within a traditional curriculum (how many ECTS credits correspond with a simulation? How to put a grade on an internship?), but also warrants our attention as evaluation provides opportunities for feedback. A proper assessment is thus needed to help students direct their learning efforts and mitigate their weaknesses. It also enables an assessment of the effectiveness of the various methods devised to improve the development of students' skills.

In this paper, we propose the portfolio as a tool for reflection and self-guided learning. The questionnaire in the portfolio was particularly oriented towards a set of generic skills central to the PBL philosophy employed at Maastricht University. The questionnaire provided data for five such skills and our ensuing analyses showed improvement throughout the first year. It also laid bare several weaknesses and points for improvement.

Can we reconcile the educational objectives of the portfolio with our scholarly objectives? We believe it is definitely possible to achieve a better compromise and are currently considering four directions for improvement. First, and most obviously, we would like to revise the questionnaire to address the critiques formulated in the previous section. Second, we consider exploring the possibilities for explanatory analyses to better identify which factors stimulate the mastery of different skills. Such progression may be determined by sociological factors (gender, age, educational background), active participation in PBL tutorials (attendance, participation, taking up chairing roles), and contextual factors (consistent application of PBL characteristics, group dynamics in a tutorial, the role of the tutor or the quality of mentoring provided). A third direction of future research would take a holistic approach in studying the portfolio. In this study we have focused exclusively on the questionnaire, but did not delve deeper into the other components of the portfolio and how they relate to the quantitative self-assessment. The fourth direction is to proceed comparatively and incorporate similar questionnaires in other universities that apply different pedagogical principles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to our colleagues from the faculty's Bachelor in Arts and Culture for their cooperation during the initial stages of designing the mentor programme and the accompanying portfolio, and to Heidi Maurer, in particular, for her original input in terms of defining PBL skills. We also thank Sjoerd Stoffels for his invaluable technical support in designing and executing the online portfolio and retracting the data. Finally, a thank you to the participants in the workshop 'Beyond descriptions and good practices. Empirical effects of active learning environments on political science students' learning outcomes' (ECPR Joint Sessions, Nicosia, 1-14 April 2018) for their input on an earlier version of this paper.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Note that the European Commission also plays an important role in the Bologna process. See Dakowska and Serrano-Velarde 2018 on the relation between EU policies and inter-governmental frameworks.

[2] All items were averaged into a single scale using equal weights. For all skills, the set of items only contained one eigenvalue that scored above 1, so no additional factors were extracted. Consistency of the constructed indicator was medium to high with Crombach alphas between 0.73 (attitude) and 0.84 (analytical skills).

[3] Note that students are introduced to PBL during the aforementioned introduction days.

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Book Review

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THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE AND EU FOREIGN POLICY INTEGRATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KOSOVO AND UKRAINE

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Abstract

This book offers an account of how the institutionalisation of the EU foreign and security policy has impacted processes of European integration. The manuscript proposes a 'synthetic' model through which it examines evidence of EU member states' preference ordering and interest aggregation by the High Representative in the context of EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations.

Keywords

European Union integration; Foreign policy; Security; Convergence; Strategic choice; Governance

The book's focal methodological critique lies in the inapposite nature of the prevalent supranational-intergovernmental dichotomy permeating the study of the EU's foreign and security policy. In its early chapters, it sets out to investigate how the institutionalisation of this policy arena by the Lisbon Treaty has increased the complexity of interest aggregation and ideational convergence amongst EU member states and the extent to which the High Representative (HR) has come to operate as an agenda-setter. After establishing this, the manuscript then turns to a comparative analysis of EU-Ukraine and EU-Kosovo relations within the parameters of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

The recognition of the complexity of decision-making in the CFSP is certainly timely and appropriate. The Lisbon Treaty introduced a series of institutional and governance reforms to this policy area. These include the EU acquiring legal personality in relations with third countries and the creation of the HR to cohere common positions both horizontally and vertically, such as across EU institutions and between EU institutions and the member states. These reforms notwithstanding, the CFSP continues to operate essentially under rules of unanimity and as an area of no legislation (European

Parliament 2008). This specific modus operandi differs significantly from other policy areas of the EU, such as the internal market, and speaks to the conceptual nature of the EU as a system of differentiated integration (Schimmelfennig, Leuffen and Rittberger 2015). In this view, the CFSP is not an area of high integration, unlike the single market, which in turn, makes it highly politicised. In practical terms, this means that it is very difficult for the HR to articulate common positions given the divergent interests (and indeed, in some cases, Treaty opt-outs) of the member states, which continue to maintain controlled oversight.

It is against this backdrop that the author of this manuscript takes stock of a decade of the CFSP post-Lisbon in the context of two testing cases for the agenda-setting prowess of the HR – the long-standing relationship with Kosovo and the more recent but formative developments vis-à-vis Ukraine. Further, the author advances hypotheses about the HR approaches in the face of divergent member states' interest preference ordering. The analysis has two directions of impact: first, the book makes an effort to contribute to normative discussions by proposing an analytical model that is derived from a review of a range of theoretical perspectives; second, the manuscript presents a comparative analysis of empirical evidence from two significant crises in the immediate geographic vicinity of the EU, namely (1) the *insecurity* of state coherence in the case of Ukraine; and (2) the quandary over the status of Kosovo in the context of the widening of EU integration to the Western Balkans. Hereafter, this review looks at each of the directions of impact of the book in turn.

The manuscript offers an appraisal of dominant and middle-range theoretical frameworks in EU studies arguing for the emergence of a synthesised 'analytically eclectic model' arrived at through a strategic choice approach. The resulting amalgam appears to rest heavily on tweaked inputs from institutionalism (institutions conceived as unitary actors), rational choice (EU member states behaving as utility-maximisers) and new intergovernmentalism (preferences are fixed but can change through strategic interaction). The maze of the theoretical complexity is organised through several hypotheses, the first of which is most impactful, namely: 'The current EU foreign and security policy institutional framework results from the interaction between the decrease of the mechanisms of organizational abandonment in the face of unsatisfactory outcomes and the creation of mechanisms of intra-organizational correction and recuperation'. Closely aligned with Weiler, this hypothesis tests the EU member states' ideational convergence, as evidenced in their approach to the cases of Kosovo and Ukraine. The ensuing analysis establishes that the mechanisms of correction and recuperation have resulted in significant leeway for EU member states over regional policies. The remaining hypotheses centre on what seems to be a more closely anticipated role of the HR as agenda-setter, functionally resulting from the direction of the impact of reforms in this policy arena as introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. With this, the book turns to the case studies proper of EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations.

The time-line of the case study investigation is kept broadly uniform by selecting the London Treaty (1913) as the departing point for the case of Kosovo and the end of the First World War (1918) for Ukraine. The arising reductionist problematic of statehood claims is ameliorated by the fact that the volume is not concerned with interest aggregation by third countries in the EU foreign and security policy arena. Indeed, with that caveat, the timeline of the case justification is rendered practically immaterial to the objectives of the volume as stated here. What is of interest are goals pursued in lieu of the 'carrot' of enlargement since there was a lack of EU member state ideational convergence and preference alignment with a view to the latter. The volume notes that exogenous factors over time caused preference convergence towards stabilisation (Kosovo) and economic integration (Ukraine) instead. Thus, this book opens an interesting discussion as to whether the tools of stabilisation and economic integration respectively can serve as stepping stones towards widening goals. In this sense, it would be critical to see whether future developments in EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations affirm the role of the HR as agenda-setter or whether the implementation of agreements on the ground and the various hurdles encountered lead to a fall back on the liberal intergovernmentalist narrative of the CFSP, which has so far dominated much of the discourse on the Lisbon Treaty.

The book makes an interesting contribution to the study of EU foreign and security policy through its emphasis on policy complexity and the unpacking of what it calls a synthetic methodological framework. The volume establishes that whereas EU conditionality is rigid and uniform, EU member states interest aggregation can change through strategic interaction with governance structures. Furthermore, the empirical analysis of EU-Kosovo and EU-Ukraine relations contributes to our understanding of recent developments and debates surrounding the future of EU enlargement, the Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. This book will serve well students of normative discussions in EU integration, with a specific focus on the CFSP. The volume has benefited from positive reviews from Caposaro and Menon, especially as concerning the contributions of the author to comparative foreign policy analysis and the institutional impact on this policy arena over the decade since the Lisbon Treaty. The most interesting aspect of the book remains its skilfully proposed resolution to member state impasses in addressing significant events in the geographic vicinity of the EU and the potential therein to devise a more impactful European foreign and security policy with adaptive approaches, as evidenced through the case studies.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The High Representative and EU Foreign Policy Integration: A Comparative Study of Kosovo and Ukraine

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Palgrave MacMillan, 2018

ISBN: 978-3-319-76613-3; £119.99; 274 pages