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Reconstituting Political Representation in the EU

The Analytical Framework and the Operationalisation of the RECON Models

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Emmanuel Sigalas is Research Fellow at the Institute for European Integration Research (EIF), Austrian Academy of Sciences. E-mail: emmanuel.sigalas@oeaw.ac.at.

Monika Mokre is Research Fellow at the EIF, Austrian Academy of Sciences. E-mail: monika.mokre@oeaw.ac.at.

Johannes Pollak is Senior Research Fellow at the EIF, Austrian Academy of Sciences. E-mail: johannes.pollak@oeaw.ac.at.

Jozef Bátora is Research Fellow at the EIF, Austrian Academy of Sciences. E-mail: jozef.batora@oeaw.ac.at.

Peter Slominski is Research Fellow at the EIF, Austrian Academy of Sciences. E-mail: peter.slominski@oeaw.ac.at.

Abstract

In this paper we elaborate on the analytical framework linking the three RECON democracy models to political representation and claims-making during the European elections campaign. Relying on the models of delegated, federal and regional-cosmopolitan democracy as ideal-types we develop a theoretical and operational framework that guides our empirical research on the prospects of parliamentary mode of representation at the EU level. We argue that parliamentary representation will continue to play a role in the future, but the role of political parties at European level and the claims brought forward to mobilise the electorate will be different in each democracy model. In the case of a delegated EU democracy the national political parties will dominate the European party federations and the EP election campaigns will be predominantly national in their scope. Equally, in a federal EU democracy the influence of the European level parties over their national member will be prominent and political claims will have a distinctively European outlook. In a non-statist, regional-cosmopolitan EU democracy parties and MEP candidates should address also matters of extra-European and of global concern, while the relationship between national and European level parties should be one of consensual agreement rather than of institutionalised hierarchy. The paper ends with the formulation of a series of testable hypotheses that will allow us to assess empirically the prospects for each EU democracy model.

Introduction

The prospect of a democratic European Union (EU) is an issue that concerns both followers and opponents of European integration and ultimately all Europeans.[1] If the underdevelopment of the democratic credentials of the EU is seen as a handicap to the deepening or even survival of European integration, it can also be a powerful argument to re-design the EU and trim off its supranational elements before they grow any further.[2] The democratic transformation of the EU is a challenging task, to say the least. It is not only a matter of political capital, initiative or willingness, but it presupposes the ability to visualise the available alternatives and choose what is best for all the concerned and affected parties. This is why Eriksen and Fossum (2007) speak of a 'democratic challenge' instead of a clear-cut solution, and why re-constituting democracy at the EU level can take different paths and reach different destinations.

The three models of EU democracy developed by Eriksen and Fossum (2007), namely; delegated democracy, federal democracy and regional-cosmopolitan democracy are Weberian ideal types rather than typologies for the classification of the EU. As the authors explain, we find characteristics of the current EU structure in all three models. Whilst there is still 'no agreement on the precise character of the democratic challenge facing Europe' (ibid: 2) there is little doubt the current situation is becoming increasingly untenable. Growing euroscepticism in various EU countries and the shocks of the EU treaty referenda outcomes exert significant pressure to change the structure and scope of the EU.

According to Eriksen and Fossum (2007), globalisation and the current unprecedented level of economic interdependence between the EU member states render the first model the least democratic option for a future EU. The federal model, on the other hand, may be more suitable in a globalised world and for a continent that is already at an advanced level of economic and political integration, but it is the least likely to be adopted in the near future. The prospects of a supranational sovereign state exercising full control over a clearly defined territory, of an institutional structure with a federal centre and regional units, of a European identity co-existing uneasily with long-established national identities, are all developments which the EU member states are still not ready to cope with. The model of regional-cosmopolitan democracy rests, unlike the other two models, on post-national principles. Its main feature is government, or governance, without a state. Eriksen and Fossum (2007) argue that neither government nor democracy is conceptually linked to the function of a sovereign state. This leaves a window of opportunity for the EU to become part of a

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[1] We would like to thank the participants of the RECON at EIF workshop in Vienna (22 May 2009) for their very useful comments and remarks. To the extent it was possible we incorporated some of these observations in our paper. In addition, we are thankful to Chris Lord for reading the paper and providing us with his comments. Nevertheless, the responsibility for the views expressed here remains our own.

[2] See the "Solange-I" (BVerfGE 37, 271) and "Solange-II" (BVerfGE 73, 339) judgments of the German Federal Constitutional Court as well as its latest verdict on the Lisbon Treaty (http://www.bverfg.de/entscheidungen/es20090630_2bve000208en.html).

larger order with a democratic system that is based on human rights and 'the cosmopolitan law of the people' rather than traditional statist principles.[3]

Regardless of the model choice, democracy cannot be fulfilled without an element of representation, if anything, because 'no system can accommodate the participation of all relevant stakeholders' (ibid: 9). We take a representative system to mean a coherent set of established norms, rules, actor roles, focus points, structures and mechanisms constituting political representation in a given political entity. Whilst representation does not take place only within the parliamentary assemblies, a part of RECON's WP 3, Shaping Representative Claims in European Elections (SHARE) focuses on this particular form of representation, since it is the most formalised and potent mode of political representation.[4] Taking the three RECON models of how democracy in the EU can be reconstituted as the point of departure, we argue that each of the models fosters the development of a different representative system. Based on the empirical analysis of the relationship between the European party federations, their constituent parties and individual EP candidates with regard to the formulation of policy positions in the light of the 2009 European elections, our study seeks to establish what kind of representative system is being formed in the EU.

The paper proceeds as follows; first, we review the three RECON models and outline their main features, second, we explain what the concept of representative system entails and what its main elements are. Following this, we focus on the discursive aspect of representation and, in particular, on the role of polity and policy-related arguments put forward by the Member of the European Parliament (MEP) candidates and their parties in the context of the European elections. In the penultimate section we develop a series of testable hypotheses regarding the possible development of the parliamentary mode of representation under the three RECON models.

A brief overview of the RECON models

The first RECON model, *delegated democracy*, rests upon the assumption that democracy is only possible if associated directly and exclusively with the nation state. The model sees the EU as merely a functional regime fostering cooperation and collective decision-making capacity of member states in addressing problems that each of them is not in the position to solve alone. The democratic quality of the EU is here provided through member states delegating competences to the Union and the Union is thereby mandated to act within a delimited range of policy fields. The EU hence functions as a regulatory regime (Majone 1998) whose legitimacy is based on its ability to produce substantive outcomes (Scharpf 1999). As legitimacy is primarily derived from the Union's technocratic excellence, there is less need for direct popular legitimation and the focus is on the proper functioning of the Union's expert bodies such as EU-level agencies that ensure high quality expert inputs into the decision-

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[3] We opted for the term 'regional-cosmopolitan' democracy instead of plain 'cosmopolitan' used by Eriksen and Fossum (2007), in order to emphasise that the EU is but a region of the world where the cosmopolitan democratic principles may apply. We thank Dario Castiglione for this observation.

[4] SHARE is a sub-project of RECON's work package 3, 'Representation and Institutional Make-up'

making. Democratic authorization can take on the form of intergovernmental bodies in which member state representatives instruct the EU to act. The purpose of an EU-level representative body would not be to serve as the locus of representative democracy, but of what Eriksen and Fossum (2007: 12) term 'audit democracy' – a set of EU-level structures and procedures designed to support member states' ability to hold the EU's intergovernmental decision-making bodies to account. In sum, this model presupposes an upgrading of political representative bodies at the national level along with a downscaling of the EU's legal order. Obviously, this would entail numerous risks related first and foremost to the possibility of a renewed rise in nationalism.

The second model, *federal democracy*, is ontologically not different from the first one – it also envisions the need for a state-capsule for a democratic political system to function properly. The difference from the first model is the scope and level at which democracy can be reconstituted in the EU. The relevant institutional form here would be a 'multinational federal European state' – a political project of building an EU-nation together with nation-building processes at the member state level. Key predispositions for such a federal democracy to function would include a sense of common destiny, an 'imagined common fate' and a sense of a common European 'we', which would be forged through the rise of an EU-wide public sphere, a shared schooling system and welfare institutions. This identity formation around a 'community of values' based on a sense of common traditions would enable clear distinctions between members and non-members of the political community (Europeans and non-Europeans). The Union would also establish direct representative links with citizens in all policy areas and a forging of a democratically accountable EU-level executive, an EU-level party system, and an EU-public sphere.

In general, as Eriksen and Fossum (2007: 19) point out, the challenge with developing democracy within this framework in the EU is that the EU is far more diverse than other federations, and that any further moves in the direction of establishing an EU super-state are likely to spark off massive resistance in the political establishments of member states. More profoundly though, there is no longer obvious that a state built along the lines of the established Westphalian models would be the most appropriate basis for democratic governance in the EU and for realizing what Eriksen and Fossum (2007: 20) term the EU's 'post-national vocation'. The latter aspect brings us to the third model, *regional-cosmopolitan democracy*, which envisages democracy beyond the nation state.

This model is ontologically different from the previous two models in that it is based on the idea of decoupling government from the state and envisions the possibility of a 'non-state, democratic polity with explicit government functions' (ibid: 20). Mechanisms that ensure compliance and consent within such a non-state democratic polity include soft tools such as benchmarking, deliberation, consultancy, horizontal coordination and problem-solving in transnational networks, and also authoritative decision-making in intergovernmental and supranational regional bodies. Boundaries of the non-state democratic polity are not easily drawn as they shift depending on the policy issues and agenda. The model works with a vision of a global order based on regionally integrated democratic non-state entities. It resembles a pyramid structure

featuring on the top a 'global level', containing 'fundamental legal guarantees' which are based upon 'higher ranking principles, such as 'the cosmopolitan law of the people', and a set of regional-functional domains governed by regionally-confined governments clustered around current regional organizations such as the EU, African Union (AU), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Latin-American trade agreement MERCOSUR. (ibid: 22). The EU with its readiness to legal self-binding in international affairs and its 'post-national vocation' may be seen as a vanguard of this global order. A number of obvious problems with the prospects of maintaining a democratic decision-making within such an order led authors such as Cohen and Sabel (1997; 2003) and Bohman (2005) to suggest a modified version of a 'restrained cosmopolitanism' translating into a system of directly deliberative polyarchy. Thus, the third model places a premium on deliberation as a procedural element which might improve the democratic quality of political decision-making (Eriksen and Fossum 2007: 25).

The EU in its current form, shares features that of course can be drawn from all three models; For instance, the existence of a powerful Council of Ministers points towards the model of delegated democracy; the continuous growth of the European Parliament, in power and legitimacy, hints at a 'federal' democracy; the Commission, having, on the one hand, the members of the college appointed by the national governments and, on the other, acting as the integration motor, treads on both the intergovernmental and federal model; and finally, the growing deliberation of the EU with NGOs and civil society agencies can be interpreted as a mark of the regional-cosmopolitan model. The cross-cutting between the different categories is hardly surprising, for the RECON models are, as noted earlier, ideal-types of democratic systems and not an inescapable reality. From the latter point follows also the expectation that the empirical progress of the EU in the future is unlikely to allow us its exclusive classification into a single model. In other words, we expect the democratic system of the EU to continue to have a hybrid form in the future, although the balance may shift in favour of one model at the expense of the others.

Since the three models offer alternative visions for democracy at the EU level, the representative system in each model will be different. Before we start to describe how the EU representative system may look like in each model, it is necessary to elaborate what is meant by representative system and what its main constituent parts and processes are.

Representative systems and their properties

We follow Pitkin's (1967: 209) definition of political representation according to which representation means 'acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them'. A representative system is a set of structures and procedures to aggregate political preferences in order to ensure legitimate governance. In a democratic representative system aggregation entails the public discussion of policy alternatives with equal access for all citizens. During the discussion process, which takes place within the public sphere of a polity, the potential representatives put forward their positions and make their views public so the represented can choose

between different polity and policy alternatives. Depending on the circumstances these positions take a variety of forms, such as abstract political principles, specific policy proposals or personal viewpoints.

Preference aggregation does not take place only through the parliament, but in other channels as well that can be equally or less institutionalised. For instance, non-governmental organisations represent the interests of their members or even of whole sectors without being a part of the formal constitutional arrangements of a polity. Thus, we can argue that a representative system is constituted by several modes of representation. A representative mode is a coherent set of established norms, rules, actor roles, focus points, structures and mechanisms constituting political representation in a given polity. Depending on the method by which representatives are selected, the extent of authorisation they receive and the accountability structure they are embedded in, we can distinguish between different modes of representation.

Table 1: Representative system, its modes and mechanisms

	Representative system			
Mode of representation	Parliamentary	Executive	Bureaucratic	Interest-Group
Mechanisms				
Selection method	Election	Election	Appointment	Appointment
Form of authorisation	Non-binding popular mandate	Constitutionally delimited role	Legal constraints and rules of procedure	Binding mandate
Accountability towards…	Constituency/people	Parliament	Institute hierarchy	Members

Modern democratic systems usually feature a parliamentary, an executive, a bureaucratic and an interest group based mode of representation. That is because preferences are aggregated and represented via the parliament, the government, the state apparatus and a wide array of non-governmental organisations. As Table 1 shows, in the parliamentary representation mode the representatives (the MPs) are elected rather than appointed, they receive a non-binding mandate, which means they do not abolish the property of independent judgement, and they are accountable to the whole electorate body. At the other end lies interest group representation, which is normally far more narrower in scope compared to the other modes. Thus, interest group representatives are, more often than not, appointed instead of elected, they act under a binding mandate (i.e. they pursue certain interests only) and they are normally accountable for their actions only to the members of the respective organisations.

Depending on the historical development of a political system, its socio-economic properties and the particular constitutional arrangements, the balance between the modes varies. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that in all representative systems the

parliamentary mode is the most prominent one, which is also one of the reasons why the SHARE project focuses on the alternative developments of EU parliamentary representation. More importantly, parliamentary representation is the most democratic component of a representative system because: (a) the members of parliament are elected rather than appointed and (b) the MPs are accountable to the whole electorate instead of a fragment of it. Consequently, a future EU democratic order cannot afford to omit parliamentary representation altogether, even if its role grows, diminishes or stays the same (see also Lord and Beetham 2001). As the following section shows, parliamentary representation plays a prominent role in both delegated and federal democracy. Even in the third, non-statist model there is a place for parliamentary representation, although its role is subtler and less conventional.

Parliamentary representation in the RECON models

Parliamentary representation at the EU level is currently embodied institutionally in the European Parliament (EP). The MEPs are elected directly by the electorates of the member states, they receive no binding mandate and they are ultimately accountable to the national voters. It is no secret that the present structure strikes a balance between the intergovernmental and supranational Europe. While MEPs are directly elected by the European citizens, it is the national parties that decide who stands as a candidate, and despite the use of proportional representation systems throughout the EU, each member state elects its MEPs according to its own electoral rules. At the same time, the EP can afford to behave in a way that may contravene the wishes of the national governments, precisely because its members are elected directly by the people instead of being appointed by the national authorities. The EP parties may lack the cohesion and power of the national parties, but it cannot be denied that they provide a common, transnational roof for the cooperation, and possibly the coordination, of MEPs and national parties.

If EU democracy is going to be re-constituted in accordance with the principles of the RECON models the delicate balance between the supranational and intergovernmental elements will inevitably be disturbed. This is not necessarily an unwelcome development, since a new institutional architecture may be more appropriate for the demands of the 21st century Europe.

Delegated democracy[5]

The model of delegated democracy describes an EU that is fully intergovernmental. That is, the EU will not be dissolved, but the nation-state will become the sole source of EU's legitimacy. The member states will be delegating tasks to the EU if they find this necessary, but any new powers will be granted with the explicit understanding that they can be repealed at any time. Assuming that the national parliaments will not subsume completely the EP, in the first model the role of the latter is clearly limited.

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[5] The three RECON models are presented here as ideal types or extreme cases of nationalisation, federalisation and cosmopolitisation of EU democracy, respectively. Obviously, real life developments towards one or the other model may take much more restricted forms than those suggested in our theoretical analysis.

The EP will no longer co-legislate, but merely serve as an additional body that will be auditing the performance of the EU. Since the EU will draw its input legitimacy directly from the member states, the direct elections will have to be revoked if the model of delegated democracy is implemented *in extremis*. Thus, MEPs will be appointed by the national authorities, as was the case before 1979. As a result, MEPs will no longer be directly accountable to the citizens of their country, or indeed the citizens of any other EU country, but only indirectly through the accountability of the national governments to their electorates.[6]

Strengthening the intergovernmental dimension of the EU implies bad news for the European political groups in the EP. The present transnational party families may keep the term 'European' in their official titles, but this will have even less substantive meaning than today. Cohesion and co-ordination within the European political groups will be even more limited, whereas party discipline will be exercised exclusively by the national parties. Not only the stick, but the carrot too will then be in the hands of the national party leaderships. Presently, MEPs have an incentive to cooperate with the party mechanism of their own European political group as well as with MEPs from the other parties in order to climb the EP hierarchy and maximise their chances to get rapporteurships and committee chairmanships. All this will eclipse as soon as all important decisions will be the product of strict intergovernmental bargaining. The European party federations will become loose organisations resembling more international *fora* rather than unified parties. Whilst contact between different national parties and between the European and national level may continue to exist, there will be no strict formal arrangements so that any common decisions will be based on the principle of unanimity. Hence, anumbrella organisation at a European level will have no say on how the national parties should design, develop and implement their strategic priorities or electoral campaigns.

The hopes for a European public sphere will also evaporate if the member states opt for transforming the EU into yet another international organisation. The insistence to treat the European elections as second-order means that debates will continue to evolve primarily, if not exclusively, around national issues while ignoring their European dimension. Related matters that should concern all European citizens equally, such as the political orientation of the new EP, the election of a new Commission president, the effectiveness of EU policies, the adoption of a new EU treaty or the expansion of EU powers, will hardly ever appear during the European electoral campaigns. Similarly, topics of global importance and relevance, such as climate change, world poverty or the global financial crisis will either be viewed in relation to the national context or manipulated to undermine national political opponents. Clearly, EU democracy under the delegated model will exacerbate the trend of nationalising European and global issues. Since most of political power will reside in the national parliaments and governments, it is normal to expect the political

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[6] One could perhaps argue that as long as MEPs are nominated by the national parties and the EP is stripped off its legislative powers direct European elections could continue to operate in the case of delegated democracy. However, direct elections strengthen the link between citizens and the parliament and imply direct legitimacy for the EP. We believe this contradicts the strictly intergovernmental character of delegated democracy which makes direct elections unsuitable for the first model.

debates to stay predominantly national in their orientation. This, in turn, will leave its imprint on another very important aspect of the representative systems, namely, defining who the represented are.

A parenthesis is necessary here: reaching a clear understanding of who the represented are is always a difficult task, not least because of the inherent ambiguity of the concept of representation and the representatives' own perception of whom or what they should represent. In other words, it is far from obvious that representatives act in the interests only of the electorate, for this automatically excludes a large part of the population who do not have voting rights (children, immigrants, detainees etc.).[7] Representation in the parliament is often understood as a function where MPs act in the interests not only of the voters, but of the country or the nation as a whole.

All European citizens, that is, all individuals with a citizenship of one of the EU member states, have the right to vote for the MEPs of an EU country other than their own, provided that they live there. Such a non-territorial right adds a supranational dimension to the identity of the represented which, of course, can not exist in the case of delegated democracy. Regardless of whether the term European citizenship survives in the treaties or not – if it does it will be nothing more than an empty shell – the fact that MEPs will be appointed instead of elected will strip the EU completely of a sense of a European demos. The represented will be the domestic audience of each member state, and the representatives will be the MPs of the national parliaments. The shift of formal powers from the supranational to the national level will enhance the procedural role of the national authorities, including of the national parliaments, but, as Eriksen and Fossum (2007) explain, in a globalised world their substantive powers can only remain limited. This means that the function of the MEPs would merely be a duplication of the tasks of the Council of the EU: the representation of member states' interests.

Federal democracy

The second RECON model envisages an EU democracy structured along federal lines. Just like the first model, it rests on statist notions and practices. Only in this case the EU will have a fully fledged supranational instead of an intergovernmental structure. This does not necessarily imply a centralist polity as federal models are also defined by diversity. However, a clear-cut supranational political structure and party alignments according to other than national affiliations are to be expected. Thus, the role of the EP is significantly enhanced. Not only will it have competences on more policy areas than before, but it is likely to be upgraded from co-legislator to sole legislator at the federal level. The national parliaments will play the role of a second,

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[7] As Manin et al. (1999: 29) point out, representatives are politicians and they may have their own goals and interests which may not coincide with those of the represented. From a normative point of view serving one's own interest at the expense of the interests of the represented is not only inappropriate but contravenes the very essence of representation. By default, one can not represent oneself but only others, which means that the interests the representative serves should be those of the represented and not of himself or herself.

regional chamber. The exact distribution of powers between the federal and national *qua* regional parliaments will have to be determined constitutionally.

The election of the representatives in the federal chamber will continue to be direct, and the rights to stand as a candidate in an EU country or vote in the European elections of any member state will be consolidated. In practice we should see an increase of the exercise of these electoral rights. Whilst the choice of where to exercise one's right to vote for the EP will continue to depend on one's residence arrangements, we should see more party lists containing candidates from other EU states. Since the EU political space will become fully unified, the EP electoral rules will have to be homogenised resulting to a single system throughout the EU.

The creation of an integrated political space will automatically upgrade the role of the European party federations and of the transnational political groups in the EP. From loosely bound coalitions they will become fully fledged parties with a pan-European strategy outlook and real power over their members. Most of the important decisions will be taken at central, federal level. This also means that the strategic priorities and consequently the nature and content of the electoral campaigns will be decided at the European level. Such decisions will be based on majority voting principles, and the exact formula determining the voting power of each country and party will have to be specified. Party discipline will no longer have to rely on the influence of the national member parties, but it will be exercised effectively from the central party authorities. Consequently, the main cleavages within the EP will not be based on national interests but on ideological positions. In short, the connection between national and European parties will be very close, where the role of the national parties will be peripheral, providing the European party with input as requested, and implementing locally the decisions taken at the European level.

Since the political power will be shifted from the national to the supranational level, the prospects of a proper, transnational European public sphere should look particularly good. The European parties will be competing fiercely for seats in the EP and in order to attract as many voters from as many countries as possible, their agenda will have to downplay the national dimension in favour of a pan-European one. This should become obvious especially during the European elections campaign where we would expect common themes to appear across Europe. Common concerns, which may or may not have to do with EU politics directly, will emerge not only as the natural consequence of a more integrated EU (i.e. policy impacts and external shocks will travel faster and wider across the EU) but also as a result of a centrally coordinated party campaign.

In a typical federal representative democracy the question of who is, or should be, represented by the upper chamber should be easier to settle. The notion of European citizenship would reach its full potential serving to distinguish who is and who is not part of the European demos. Regardless of whether a common collective identity will be based on ethno-cultural or civic traits, or whether it will co-exist harmoniously with the national identities or not, MEPs will have to put at the forefront the interests of the European demos as a whole. The interests of the individual nations will have to

be reflected exclusively in the national parliaments, whereas there can only be limited, on an *ad hoc* basis, scope for extra-EU interests in the EP.

Regional-cosmopolitan democracy

Identifying precisely the characteristics of parliamentary representation in a post-national political environment, as the third RECON model demands, is a formidable challenge. Although Eriksen and Fossum (2007) make no explicit references to the EP when they outline the main features of democracy without a state, it is clear that the EP will continue to fulfil the role of popular representation via the parliamentary channel. However, the qualities of the third democratic model are fundamentally different from the two statist models, and the simple dichotomy intergovernmental-supranational is of little use here.

The cornerstone of the third model is the principle of the 'cosmopolitan law of the people'. As such, it favours the interest-group representation mode which is bound only loosely to territorial interests and political positions. This does not mean that there is no place for the EP in the structure of a cosmopolitan democratic EU. The EP will continue to pursue the interests of the represented, but the definition of who the represented will be inclusive instead of exclusive. Such a definition will encompass not only European citizens, but also people residing in Europe who may not have citizenship rights. In addition, it will consider the rights of people who do not live in Europe at all. As Eriksen and Fossum (2007: 21) explain, citizenship in the regional-cosmopolitan model is 'premised on "the right to have rights"'. In other words, the represented are potentially the whole world, to the extent the EU can promote issues of global relevance and importance, such as human rights, global warming, financial instability and violent conflicts.

According to our understanding of regional-cosmopolitan governance and democracy, the attention has to shift from what the EU is to what it does. Eriksen and Fossum (2007) maintain that the EU will form the avant-garde of a new global order based on the principles of international law and the rulings of the United Nations. Thus, the questions of the selection, authorisation and accountability mechanisms in relation to the EU parliamentary representation will remain open-ended. That means the institutional *status quo* may or may not change – what will change are the outlook and the priorities of the EU, and accordingly of the EP, the European political groups and the European public sphere.

Since the EU will be concentrating its attention and soft power on matters that are directly or indirectly related to the promotion of human rights and on problems that require global action (e.g. climate change, world poverty, international financial crisis, flu pandemic), the EP may acquire more powers in the relevant policy areas. Consequently, the agenda of the European political groups, the party federations and the national parties may shift accordingly. However, such a shift in attention should not be the result of enforcement mechanisms. On the contrary, it should stem from enhanced, but voluntary cooperation between the different decision-making levels. Thus, the relationship between the European party federations and their national

party members will be founded on a common understanding of what is good and necessary for Europe and other regions and countries. Agreements about the strategic priorities and the electoral campaigns will be based on consensus rather than majority voting.

The shape and content of the public sphere should reflect the fact that the EU is only one region in a globalised world. This means that overarching themes will resonate across much of the world and subsequently to the EU region too. For example, climate change has repercussions on the whole planet and inevitably also on Europe and the individual member states. Consequently, issues of global importance and relevance are likely to engage and mobilise people from all over the EU and we should see this reflected in the European election campaigns too.

Studying representative systems through the analysis of claims-making

By analysing the political arguments brought forward during the 2009 EP election campaign by the national and European parties and their MEP candidates SHARE aims at contributing to a more differentiated understanding of parliamentary representation in the EU. We are specifically interested in those arguments that have a political content and reflect political priorities, choices, preferences, values and principles. These arguments can take the form of elaborate and detailed proposals on policy and polity matters, but they can also appear as more general references to what needs to be done at the national, EU and global level. Political arguments may be channelled into the public sphere by individuals (MEP candidates and party officials), but their original source are the parties, since it is at the party level that the political positions and themes of the electoral campaign are being adopted. Thus, SHARE is analysing the political positions found in the official party documents and the political arguments traced in the public statements of the individual MEP candidates.

The present study takes into account the supra-nationalisation and internationalisation of the political decision-making process, as well as the still dominant influence of national political structures, actors and especially of national political parties. In spite of the growing political relevance of the European Parliament, European party federations have remained relatively weak in comparison to national parties. This is mainly due to the specific political structure of the EU where parliamentary elections are not linked to governmental functions. Thus, European party federations 'do not act as channels between citizens' interests and governmental or supragovernmental institutions' (Gaffney, 1996: 17). In addition, the definition of socio-economic problems and the implementation of policies largely remain at the national level, while the agenda-setting and the policy initiatives have shifted to a considerable extent to the supranational level. This leads to an ever-growing cleavage between the agenda-setting power and the vote/office/-policy-seeking strategies of parties (Müller and Strøm, 1999). With regard to the organisation and execution of elections, even the European ones, national political parties remain the main force.

This has led to EP elections being framed as 'second order' national elections. According to this concept, brought up in an analysis of the first EP elections in 1979 by Reif and Schmitt (1980), EP-elections are understood by voters as yet another national election, albeit less important than the national parliament elections. Thus, voting decisions are made on the basis of national political issues and preferences and depend, among other things, on the timing of EP elections within the national elections cycle. Since the EP elections are perceived as mid-term elections of limited impact, turnout tends to be significantly lower than in national elections, while smaller and more radical parties tend to get more votes than in national elections; the opposite holds true for governing parties as voters are less concerned about 'wasting' their vote on smaller parties. The comparatively limited interest of voters is also mirrored in media coverage, being significantly smaller than that offered for the national elections (see e.g. Holtz-Bacha 2005). The 'second-order-elections' thesis has been mostly confirmed in later analyses (e.g. Marsh 1998; 2005; Delwit and Poirier 2005; Bruell and Mokre 2006). However;

> evidence indicates that EU-related concerns are relevant to voters. Preferences are structured to some degree by such concerns […]. In itself this is not inconsistent with the second-order model as we might expect that national elections could also be influenced by the European issue
>
> (Marsh 2005: 143).

An analysis of the representatives' political arguments tackles the question of EP elections from a perspective that is different from that commonly found in the hitherto literature. Our study focuses on the activities of parties and MEP candidates rather than on the interests of voters, although obviously these factors influence each other. Thereby, we aim at revealing the public positions of parties and candidates in relation to the polity as whole, different policy areas and the latest political developments. In this way we can learn about the political priorities of the individual candidates standing for election, but also about the issues the party leadership judges as being the most important and topical.

Adopting a comparative perspective adds significantly to the value of data we can gather. Hence, we can discover what issues the parties within a political system think are most likely to mobilise the electorate. Adding one more layer into the analysis can give us the political outlook across Europe. SHARE looks at two dimensions regarding representatives' claims-making: a horizontal and a vertical one. The former compares the political positions and proposals between the different EU member states, while the latter compares the political positions of the European party federations with those of their constituent parties. Furthermore, we are interested not only in the content of the discourse during the European election campaigns, but also in its sources. In particular, one of our research objectives is to determine whether the European party federations exerted substantial influence over their members regarding the development of the European election manifestoes. If the decision about the contents of the electoral campaign is made at the European level, then it follows that some aspects of federal democracy are already in operation. Equally, evidence suggesting that national parties remain 'sovereign' in the formation of their positions and arguments during the European election campaign point towards delegated

democracy. Finally, signs of coordination between the European and national level without the operation of any enforcement mechanisms constitute some evidence regarding the possible emergence of a regional-cosmopolitan democratic order.

The empirical analysis

The empirical part of SHARE focuses on the 2009 EP election campaigns in the EU member states. The main question is which political arguments are formulated during the EP electoral campaigns? Do we find similar or common arguments in the selected countries? To what extent are those arguments influenced by common strategies orchestrated by European party federations? And, finally, are such similar or common political arguments more frequent in some policy fields than in others? These tendencies will be differentiated according to policy fields, member states, and party groups.

The research material consists of manifestos, electoral brochures, speeches, blogs, and newspaper articles cross-analysed between seven countries (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Slovakia, United Kingdom) and the European party level (including party federations and EP factions). Face-to-face interviews will complement the picture. Our selection of countries enables the adoption of various comparative perspectives on the research questions. The countries differ in size, geographical situation, political culture and time of accession to the EU. We cover all enlargement rounds (except that of 2007), centralist and federalist member states and, finally, traditionally rather euro-friendly and eurosceptic countries. We expect all these factors to impact on the election campaigns.

Furthermore, we expect actual domestic circumstances to play a central role. This comprises the individual situation of the candidate (e.g. party member, non-attached, member of opposition, government party) and the general domestic political situation (e.g. high unemployment, ongoing structural reforms). Other variables are the general international situation (e.g. fight against terrorism, security) and the European state of affairs (upcoming legislative initiatives, e.g. CO_2 emissions initiative or institutional reforms). Amongst the possible variables influencing the formulation of individual arguments we expect the European party federations, or the national political parties using the platform of European party federations, to be one of the most important ones. By orchestrating we understand the definition of positions (e.g. with regard to the party's position on transatlantic relations, on a common foreign and security policy etc.) which are recommended to be adopted by the federation members in the electoral campaign. Moreover, apart from policy-orchestrating influences we also expect the European party federations to exert a structural influence, i.e. increasing efficiency in the organisation of electoral campaigns in the sense of common advertisement subjects, sharing of resources etc.

The interpretation of the empirical results will illustrate if fundamental aspects of the parliamentary representation mode are moving towards a delegated, federal or regional-cosmopolitan democracy. While we do not expect to find overwhelming support towards a single ideal type model, especially since the election campaigns

take place within the present EU framework which deviates from all three models, our analysis allows us to discern tendencies in one or the other direction. Firstly, determining the mechanism and extent of cooperation between national and European parties will give us valuable information on the structure and nature of their relationship and on the relative importance of the national and European party level. Secondly, the nature of the political arguments and their (dis-) similarities between the European and national level and between the EU member states will provide evidence; if public spheres remain (mostly) national; if a European public sphere or several European public spheres already exist or emerge; or if we can find signs of a regional-cosmopolitan public sphere. Finally, the empirical findings will help us understand to whom the representatives feel accountable: their national constituency, the European electorate or cosmopolitan moral standards and interests.

The testable hypotheses of SHARE

Before articulating our testable hypotheses some observations are necessary. First, their confirmation or rejection do not necessarily prove that the EU is moving in a deterministic fashion towards a delegated, federal or regional-cosmopolitan democracy. Second, the potential confirmation of the hypotheses implies that there is some evidence pointing to one or the other RECON models. This is because SHARE deals only with one part of a democratic system, namely, representation and the public sphere. Third, since the three models are ideal-types of democracy, and since it is unlikely that the evidence will fit neatly in only one category, we deem the use of cumulative hypotheses as necessary. This means that the progressive acceptance of the different sub-hypotheses brings us closer towards a model and, equally, the progressive rejection of the sub-hypotheses diminishes the prospects for a certain model. Finally, the quantitative threshold could not be the same for all hypotheses. In particular, we believe that some, even limited, evidence pointing towards a regional-cosmopolitan democratic system need to be given due attention.

For each model of EU democratic system we developed a set of hypotheses relating to party positions and arguments that can be divided in two complementary categories. The first group of hypotheses looks at the content of the electoral campaign, at the similarities found between the European and national level and between the campaigns of the member states. The second group examines the structure of the relationship between the European and national level.

Delegated democracy

Within a delegated democracy, we expect to find limited similarities in the electoral campaign of the different EU member states and the role of the European party federations to be kept minimal.

Hypothesis 1: The party positions at the EU level bear no or very little resemblance to the positions at the national level.
- Hypothesis 1a: There are no or few similarities between the political manifesto positions of the European party federations and of the national parties.

- Hypothesis 1b: There are no or few common traits, in the context of the European elections, in the national press and the European party federation manifestos.

Hypothesis 2: There are more differences than similarities in the positions articulated in the different EU member states.
- Hypothesis 2a: There are more differences than similarities between EU countries in the European election manifesto positions of the national parties.
- Hypothesis 2b: There are no or few common traits, in the context of the European elections, in the national press of the different EU countries.

Hypothesis 3: The EP electoral campaign is largely or fully nationalised.
- Hypothesis 3a: The national party manifestos issued in the context of the European elections refer mostly or exclusively to national issues.
- Hypothesis 3b: The party and candidate positions appearing in the national press address mostly national issues and concerns.

Hypothesis 4: There is no or little coordination of the European electoral campaign between the European party federations and the national party members.
- Hypothesis 4a: The European party federations do not coordinate the national campaigns.
- Hypothesis 4b: If any coordination at all takes place, it relies on the voluntary cooperation of the national parties. There are no fixed rules of procedure determining the relationship between the European and national parties, but if there are national parties retain veto powers.

Federal democracy

Within a federal democracy, we expect full coordination between the European and national parties. In addition, we anticipate a fairly homogenous campaign across the EU where the focus on national issues is limited. Finally, there are fixed rules of procedure determining the influence of the national and European parties in the shaping of the electoral campaign; the wishes of national parties can be outvoted (a form of majority voting applies).

Hypothesis 5: The party positions at the EU level resemble the positions at the national level.
- Hypothesis 5a: There are many similarities between the political manifesto positions of the European party federations and the national parties.
- Hypothesis 5b: There are many common traits in the context of the European elections, in the national press and the European party federation manifestos.

Hypothesis 6: There are more similarities than differences in the positions articulated in the different EU member states.
- Hypothesis 6a: There are more similarities than differences between EU countries in the European election manifesto positions of the main national parties.

- Hypothesis 6b: There are many common traits in the context of the European elections, in the national press of the different EU countries.

Hypothesis 7: The EP electoral campaign is largely or fully Europeanised.
- Hypothesis 7a: The national party manifestos issued in the context of the European elections refer mostly or exclusively to pan-European instead of national issues.
- Hypothesis 7b: The party and candidate positions appearing in the national press address mostly European-wide issues and concerns.

Hypothesis 8: There is full coordination of the European electoral campaign between the European party federations and the national party members.
- Hypothesis 8a: The European party federations exert very strong influence upon the national parties.
- Hypothesis 8b: The European party influence is consolidated in fixed rules of procedure where national party positions can be outvoted.

Regional Cosmopolitan democracy

In the framework of the regional-cosmopolitan model the emphasis of the hypotheses shifts away from the quantity of similarities of party and individual candidate positions towards the quality of these similarities. In particular, since the third model resides on governance without a government and on the spread of shared global values, we hypothesize that there will be some similarities of positions between the European and national parties and between the EU countries, but such similarities will derive from consensual agreement instead of a highly institutionalised decision-making system. More importantly, we would expect the themes of the electoral campaign to focus neither on European nor on national matters exclusively. Unlike the case of the other two models, in the regional-cosmopolitan order we should see references to issues that matter to the world as a whole (e.g. climate change, global poverty) and/or to non-Europeans too. Obviously, this approach makes it more difficult, compared to the other models, to accept the third model as true. Therefore, we believe that even limited evidence in this respect should be viewed as signs of a developing regional-cosmopolitan order.

Hypothesis 9: The EP electoral campaign focuses on non-territorial and global matters (e.g. human rights, climate change, international crises).
- Hypothesis 9a: Non-territorial and global issues occupy an important position in the European party manifestos issued in the context of the European elections.
- Hypothesis 9b: Non-territorial and global issues occupy an important position in the national party manifestos issued in the context of the European elections.
- Hypothesis 9c: Many of the party and candidate positions appearing in the national press address non-territorial and global issues.

Hypothesis 10: The EP electoral campaign includes positions relating to people or groups not belonging to the constituency (people living within the EU without

suffrage, e.g. asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, as well as people living outside of the EU)

- Hypothesis 10a: Party and candidate positions relating to people or groups not belonging to the constituency are part of the European party manifestos issued in the context of the European elections.
- Hypothesis 10b: Party and candidate positions relating to people or groups not belonging to the constituency are part of the national party manifestos issued in the context of the European elections.
- Hypothesis 10c: Party and candidate positions relating to people or groups not belonging to the constituency can be found in the national press.

Hypothesis 11: Similarities between the European and national level regarding party and candidate positions may or may not result from coordination. In any case coordination is not resting on majoritarian decision making, but on consensus between countries and between the European and national parties.

Conclusions

SHARE aims at contributing to the further elaboration of the three RECON models (delegated democracy, federal democracy, regional-cosmopolitan democracy) by specifying the representative system each of the models would comprise. This contribution has a theoretical as well as an empirical aspect.

On the theoretical level, four modes of representation (parliamentary, executive, bureaucratic, and interest-group-based) are differentiated according to three dimensions (selection mode, forms of authorisation, accountability). The relative importance of these modes of representation as well as their properties has changed over time and European integration has played an eminent role for their development. The ideal types of the three RECON models call for specific adaptations of the representative system which are the main issue of our analysis.

Probably the most obvious effect of European integration on the representative system on the European level as well as within the member states is the growing role of non-parliamentary representation at the cost of the power of parliaments and, thus, also of political parties. Keeping this in mind, we still understand parliamentary representation as the most powerful mode, and political parties as important agents in every form of democracy. Thus, party performance and party functions in each of the three models are the core question of SHARE.

Empirically, this is done by an analysis of political arguments brought forward by the parties and the individual MEP candidates during the 2009 EP election campaign. By assessing to what degree these arguments are nationalised, Europeanised or cosmopolitanised we can assess the relevance of each of the three RECON models for current political debates and for the development of the representative system of the EU.

This paper links our theoretical work with the ensuing empirical analysis. Our main hypothesis is that European party federations are likely to have influenced the

political positions of their member parties as well as the arguments of individual representatives. If that is true, we should see some similarities in the electoral campaigns of the EU member states. However, the existence of similarities between the European and national levels proves little in itself. This is why we introduced a structural element in our hypotheses aiming to capture the extent and direction of influence between the European and national parties. A content analysis of the political positions and arguments of parties and candidates (as expressed in official party documents and the national press), in combination with the analysis of formal and informal decision making structures (based on official documents as well as on interviews) will contribute to the empirical assessment of the three RECON, enrich the existing literature on EP elections and, perhaps more daringly, catch a glimpse of what the future may hold for the European political order.

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