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British Centre-Left Justifications for
European Integration in the Brexit Debate

Lars Wibe Hagen

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Abstract

While Brexit has encouraged further interest in the phenomenon of right-wing Euroscepticism, it also serves as an opportunity to investigate pro-European attitudes. The Brexit process put pro-Europeans in a position where their place within the integration project was under immediate threat and required something so unusual as pro-European mobilisation. This report aims to contribute to that investigation by examining the discussion of the EEA- and Norway-plus models featured online by the British newspaper the *Guardian*. Specifically, it considers the debate in terms of evaluations that explicitly promotes or rejects these models as desirable future relationships.

The analysis treats these evaluations as proxies for European integration to identify how the British centre-left valuate and evaluate the integration project. The decision to focus on the centre-left follows from the British left's historical relationship to European integration as well as its position somewhat on the side of the Brexit debate. This context is thought to make the public discourse on the centre-left a most-likely case for new or alternative modes of justification and defence of the integration project.

The analysis finds considerable congruence between the discussion in the *Guardian* and British interpretations of European integration more generally, as well as with the Conservative-dominated referendum debate. Specifically, supporters typically based their position on an understanding of integration as an economic project, while detractors usually emphasise sovereignty and democracy. The congruence suggests that, despite different conclusion about the desirability of European integration, a consistent understanding existed in Britain across time and ideology platform, of what integration is 'supposed' to be. There is little evidence of innovation in the Brexit discourse on the centre-left; pre-existing frames and interpretations remained untouched.

Acknowledgements

Any and all errors in what follows are mine and mine alone.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

The Brexit referendum outcome on June 23, 2016, came as something of an upset to most people. The decision was the culmination of a Euroscepticism that has increasingly typified the populist right in most European countries, and Britain in particular, over the past few years. British right-wing tabloids, activist parties and movements have been renowned well beyond domestic borders for their fervent anti-European Union (EU) positions. Almost forgotten among the public are older strains of left-wing Euroscepticism, once the only ones of note, and the referendum called by Labour Prime Minister (PM) Harold Wilson in 1975 on whether to leave what is now known as the EU (Bogdanor, 2014). Instead, Tony Blair's New Labour movement and many smaller parties and movements associated with the political centre and centre-left have gradually displaced the Conservatives as strongest supporters of the European integration project. In either case, support for European integration remained understated and received limited public attention, however (Bulmer, 2008; Daddow, 2013).

During the 21st century, however, several events – the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 immigration crisis – and an increasingly Eurosceptic

atmosphere has continued to challenge the integration project. Simultaneously, a harder left-wing influence, traditionally associated with Euroscepticism came gained influence as the Momentum movement within the Labour Party mobilised to have their candidate, Jeremy Corbyn, elected as a new party leader. On top of this, the Brexit referendum required mobilisation in support of European integration was required, as tacit approval no longer would suffice to maintain that status quo. In light of this, this report asks: *What are the main features of the post-Brexit referendum discourse on the British mainstream left regarding a future EU-UK relationship, and what does it suggest about pro-European understandings and valuations of European integration?*

1.2. Main Themes

Although certain pressures on support for the EU has arisen in recent years, this report is not mainly about answering whether this sphere of the British public discourse was 'pro-European'. It was, albeit not universally so. Instead, it seeks to investigate the extent and, most centrally, how support was formulated. One goal in this regard is to highlight the difference in framing support between what we may think of as 'Euro-affirmative' and 'anti-Brexit'; the former being the support of European integration in terms of that project's own merits, while the latter rather emphasises the dangers of Brexit as a project. Moreover, it will investigate what the grounds for support were more concretely. That is, what was European integration understood to deliver that warranted support?

This report seeks to answer the question through paying, in particular, close attention to the key concepts of justification and representation – both discussed in Chapter 3. Justifications are particularly valuable when seeking to access not just whether something is supported, but *why*, and they are therefore thought to be of particular interest for this analysis, given that our preoccupation is with how the British mainstream left understand European integration. The theoretical framework employed to this effect is informed in particular by the work of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (2006) on 'Economies of worth'.

Despite growing contention over European integration in recent years, Brexit stands as a fairly rare case where an active defence of the project has been mobilised and sustained over time. In much of Europe, but

especially in the British context, European integration has traditionally received mainly tacit support, often formulated in terms of its economic benefits. The left-wing Euroscepticism which, e.g., Jeremy Corbyn has occasionally been accused of, on the other hand, has often singled out exactly the 'neo-liberal' economic policy of the EU as the key point of contention. Meanwhile, increasingly frequent European sorties into migration, climate, and social policy, while contentious, have largely pulled in a direction that is popular with the mainstream left. Therefore, despite established expectations about how the British interpret the integration project, there are several factors which open for plausible alternative lines of defence. In this sense, the choice of the British centre-left is deemed a most-likely case for observing alternative justifications of the project.

Therefore, while much of the popular and scholarly attention since the referendum has, quite understandably, been on Eurosceptics, Brexit also represents a golden opportunity to explore how the integration project is understood and represented by those who support it in a situation where continued participation is under severe threat. Accordingly, this report is an investigation of the dynamics of centre-left pro-Europeanism in a state of crisis. Despite the particularities of Britain in a European context, I believe the lessons to add to our understanding of support for European integration at large.

Some empirical clarifications are warranted, more information on which is found in Chapter 4. In practice, this project investigates media coverage sourced from the daily left-wing newspaper *the Guardian*. This paper was chosen for its prominence and ideological profile, making it the primary publication of note on the British left. In particular, the report investigates content discussing the possibility of an EU-UK relationship corresponding to membership in the European Economic Area (EEA) through the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) pillar, colloquially known as the *Norway-model*, or a similar but closer relationship model known mainly as *Norway-plus* or the *Common Market 2.0* options.

The decision to look at these models – referred to collectively as the *Norway models* hereafter – rather than the Remain option is largely motivated by the models' formal status as Brexits, in the sense that they involve the UK leaving the EU. This choice is assumed to limit interaction

with less relevant debates; in particular debates over whether the referendum was legitimate in the first place. I expect these to have coloured the debate over the Remain option to a greater extent due Remain being in direct contradiction to the referendum. At the same time, the Norway models are considered the most similar to EU membership, both in extent and in institutional set-up. As such, they remain useful as representations of the European integration project.

The source materials investigated were sampled from a period starting with the referendum and ending with a series of 'indicative votes' held by British Members of Parliament (MPs) in March/April 2019; i.e. covering nearly three years of discussion. The data are explored qualitatively through a methodology drawing mainly on the approach of Representative Claims Analysis (RCA). The analysis takes particular note of justifications of speakers' stances on the Norway models as a way of assessing how European integration is evaluated and represented in the discourse of the British mainstream left.

1.3. Key Findings

The analysis shows that the discussion of the Norway models in the *Guardian* shared many of the central features of the pre-referendum Brexit debate; a debate which had been dominated by Conservative voices on either side. The defence of the Norway models which was most readily employed in the *Guardian* relied on an economic and mostly utilitarian framing. As such, the models and European integration more broadly was presented mainly in terms of the consequences of Brexit rather than the virtues of integration in its own right. The greater prominence of pro-European positions and centre-left voices yielded a discussion that was notably more supportive of the models than what one would expect from the British media landscape at large. Aside from this, however, the framing of what European integration was about remained remarkably similar.

Besides suggesting a shared and consistent understanding of what European integration is and means across much of the British political landscape, these findings suggest a primarily 'specific' form of support for integration among pro-European voices. That is to say a support owing more to the specific output of the project rather than any more enduring legitimacy (Easton, 1975). Generally, there was also little concern for how

(non-)participation might have impacted specific sub-groups within the national polity. Even in a moment where continued participation in the integration project was under immediate threat, much of the support was, it would appear, predicated on material benefits, and to a much lesser degree on any conception of, e.g., shared European identity of values, or on the EU's ability to solve transnational issues beyond what pertains to trade.

Chapter 2

Problem Background

2.1. The UK and European Integration

The British place in the European integration project has never been frictionless. Its role as an 'awkward partner', in Stephen George's (1990) often cited appellation, is attested to by the objection held against their membership by French president De Gaulle as well as the British track record since becoming a member (Moravcsik, 2000). Since joining in the then European Community (EC) in 1973, the UK has been a central actor in pushing for the single market its currently known shape. The UK has also supported the gradual reduction of member state veto powers on the Council of the European Union, as well as an expanded role for the Union in foreign policy. Nevertheless, it has demanded rebates to its contributions to the EU budget, and it has claimed opt-outs from core features of the Union; including the Euro and the Schengen Agreement (Glencross, 2015). As such, the UK has had a distinctive position within the EU, born from the balancing act between gaining the benefits of membership and appeasing a particularly Eurosceptic domestic audience (Bogdanor, 2016).

One should not ignore the popular factor internal to the UK when discussing the British unease with European integration. Survey results, such as from the Eurobarometer, have shown British responses to

questions on the UK's EU membership, as well as on the EU more generally, to be considerably more negative in their evaluations than the EU average. Such attitudes correspond, moreover, to peculiarities in British media coverage of the EU. Namely, media coverage of European integration in the UK has come to take a notoriously anti-European tone since the 80s, embodied and innovated not least by Boris Johnson's infamous writings on the shapes of bananas and gin bottles as a Brussels correspondent during the 1990s for *The Daily Telegraph*. While media Europe-wide have rarely been actively positive about Europe, the consistency and depth of scepticism of the British conversation are often remarked upon in particular (Daddow, 2012; Schmidt, 2006).

As illustrated by the Labour-initiated EU referendum of 1975, Euroscepticism was mainly a left-wing preoccupation in the early decades of the integration project, but a few exceptions have always existed. The former British Conservative minister, Enoch Powell's, opposition to UK membership was, for instance, prominent in the 1970s, but at the time he remained something of an aberration on the political right (Saunders, 2018). His emphasis on independence, parliamentary sovereignty, as well as the defence of national culture and identity is highly reminiscent of later right-wing critiques of European integration but were so out of touch with his party at the time that he recommended people vote Labour.

The left-wing apprehension about European integration, felt more tightly on the radical left than among mainstream social liberals and social democrats, has for the most part been distinctly different from the right-wing forms of critique that is often treated as synonymous with Euroscepticism today. For the most part, scepticism from the left has consisted of fears that European integration posed a threat to the national welfare state, and that it served as a vehicle for neoliberal economic policies. As such, this 'anti-liberal Euroscepticism' has been much more rooted in concerns with economic policy than the later right-wing wave of 'nationalist Euroscepticism' (van Elsas, 2017), and directed in particular at European institutions' efforts to open and align European markets – often by stripping back or easing national regulation.

While critiques of European integration are virtually as old as the idea of integration itself, the 1990s is sometimes pointed to as an essential period in the history of Euroscepticism, where the 'nationalist Euroscepticism'

began gaining speed. With the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (1993) and the creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU) as crucial catalysts, new critiques gained increased salience as the influence of the EU on public life gained more visibility. Most notably, a narrative of 'democratic deficit' came to inform criticism against the EU by drawing on concerns with the powers afforded to 'unelected bureaucrats' and with Europeans' perceived inability to hold these bureaucrats accountable (Wille, 2012, p. 387). In a British context, the establishment of several single-cause anti-EU organisations – most notably the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in 1993 – was one aspect of this trend, Boris Johnson's *Telegraph* articles another.

In order to understand this shift in a British context, it is necessary to go back another decade, to the 1980s. A severe blow against anti-liberal Euroscepticism took place in the 1983 general elections as Labour, led by ardent Eurosceptic Michael Foot, suffered a crushing defeat. Compared to the previous election, Labour lost nearly 10 per cent of their support. Most of this loss was gobbled up by the pro-European Liberal/Social Democrat electoral alliance, which notable here because the Social Democrats had only recently formed from a moderate Labour splinter group, which among other things disagreed with Labour's anti-European profile (Bogdanor, 2016; Saunders, 2018).

Nearing the 90s, the distance between Labour and European Community (EC) policy preferences also seemed to be shrinking. In a landmark speech in Bournemouth on September 8, 1988, EC President Jacques Delors spoke to the British Trade Union Congress, calling for a social dimension to the single market. The speech came to suggest, in the eyes of many, that European integration could be about more than business interests. Indeed, in the same month, Margaret Thatcher's observed a very similar potential in the EC when speaking to the College of Europe. This vision of a social Europe did not enthuse her, however, and she vehemently rejected the idea. 'We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain', Thatcher declared, 'only to see them re-imposed at a European level' (Thatcher, 1988). She reiterated this message at a party conference later that year, cementing an enduring right-wing critique of European integration based in anti-regulation and sovereignty arguments, painting the integration project as undemocratic and socialist (Daddow, 2013).

As such, new narratives emerged on both sides of UK politics, where the EC became recognised less as a force for imposing neoliberal policy, and more as a potential avenue for combatting the same. Tony Blair's ascent to leadership of Labour in 1994, and Prime Ministership in 1997, further cemented a persistent pro-European stance on the left of British electoral politics. His *New Labour* project took a more positive view of the EU and favoured a commitment to an active role for the UK within the Union. Simultaneously, Labour was shifting its economic policy notably towards more tolerance for or even promotion of liberalisation. Thus, as the EU increasingly neared Labour's policy preferences, Labour similarly adopted positions that enabled further easing of old tensions (Daddow, 2013).

The Tory transition towards Euroscepticism, while started by Thatcher, has been slower coming. Both David Cameron and Theresa May have, for the most part, been reluctant Remainers. Even so, they have routinely played to Eurosceptic elements at the backbenches of their party. Indeed, the referendum itself, as well as May's embrace of the 'Brexit means Brexit'-line after the results were in, are both highly visible examples of this tendency to draw on Euroscepticism for domestic politics or to manage tensions within the party (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Even so, these very tensions speak to a great deal of disagreement on European integration within the Conservatives. As such the Conservative Party as an indisputably Eurosceptic vehicle was fully consolidated by Boris Johnson, who took leadership of the party in late 2019. By removing the whip from most of the party's Remainer MPs that had not already left, replenishing the benches with Brexiters through the general election held in December of the same year, Johnson completed the transitions.

While these developments have been quite noticeable in the British context, they were not entirely out of sync with the remainder of Europe. The qualitative shift project of European integration from emphasising the single market and the EMU to looking at other policy areas, such as employment, environment/climate, and migration – in many ways the very 'social Europe' that Delors had called for in '88 – has had similar, but less marked, effects in most European countries. It is mostly the case across the board that this shift generated policy outcomes that have been favoured more by European centre and centre-left movements than by the right (Marks & Steenbergen, 2004, p. 258). Increasingly ambitious climate

regulation and a comparatively welcoming stance in asylum and immigration policy, in particular, have proven to be good EU selling points for some while being met with vocal resentment by others.

Simultaneously the 'left' and 'right' cleavage as political shorthand has changed to put less emphasis on material economics, putting socio-cultural and value-based questions higher on the agenda. Minority rights, migration, and environment thus took on increased popular salience across the board, just as the EU waded into these debates (van Elsas, 2017, pp. 40–41). Ironically, the EU's efforts to be more responsive to regular people's needs have often proved to be those most criticised for being 'out of touch' with the popular will. Meanwhile, the traditional left-wing critique of integration remains rooted in an outlook on politics that has become less resonant as a liberal ideology has grown more prominent, and socialist thought has grown less influential.

Despite all this discussion of a transition of Euroscepticism from the left to the right, it vital to keep in mind that we are not here discussing the death of 'anti-liberal Euroscepticism'. Instead, whether one looks at political parties or popular sentiment, Euroscepticism increasingly appears to track curvilinearly along the left-right axis, with scepticism growing more prominent towards either political extreme (Aspinwall, 2002; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010; van Elsas, 2017). This curvilinear relationship is less visible in the British party system than elsewhere, as the mainly pro-European Labour has cornered the left-wing of national electoral politics. The notable British third-party alternatives are for the most part as close, or closer, to the centre and even more adamantly pro-European than Labour. The curve is often visible in systems with more parties, however, where the radical left often promotes Eurosceptic positions to varying degrees; examples of such parties include *Rødt* in Norway, *La France Insoumise* in France, and the Dutch *Socialistische Partij*.

As such the strengthening of the left-wing of the UK Labour Party, marked in particular by the surprise grassroots mobilisation for Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2015 is noteworthy. Despite arguing in the run-up to the referendum that there was an 'overwhelming case' for remaining an EU member (BBC News, 2016), Corbyn received repeated criticism for an allegedly anaemic effort in campaigning for Remain; his critics often intimating that he was secret Brexiteer (Bush, 2018; Sherwood,

2019; Wright, 2016a). This criticism was inevitably fed both by a track record of refusing, during the party leadership campaign, to rule out campaigning to leave the Union, his vote in favour of leaving the EC in the 1975 referendum, as well his objection to core elements of the modern EU, such as the Maastricht treaty (MacLellan, 2015; Stone, 2015).

Corbyn's relationship to European integration is anything but clear-cut. He did campaign for Remain, and his admitted concerns about the EU's emphasis on markets and liberal economics should, he has argued, be understood not as Euroscepticism, but as a desire for a Europe which instead delivers a 'sort of social, environmental, solidarity agenda' (MacLellan, 2015). This suggestion implies support for *a form of* European integration; one which is more inspired by Delors' vision of a social Europe than by the economic Europe that has tended to be the official British predilection. It is not clear from this how closely aligned Corbyn's vision was with the version of the EU which the UK exited.

Given the changing nature of the EU, specifically towards a more social and environmental agenda, it would be unsurprising to find Corbyn's assessment of the integration project was more favourable than suggested by his track record. As a consequence, it is also difficult to position this alter-European vision in the context of Brexit, where one could reasonably imagine everything from Corbyn's ostensible Remain-position to a hard Brexit as valid expressions. The exact nature of Corbyn's stance on European integration is not the most central point. His tone, regardless of ultimate stance, was less favourable than his predecessors', and his unexpected rise to leadership does indicate a resurgence of somewhat more radical elements within the Labour party. Historically, Momentum's supplanting of the New Labour orthodoxy would be expected to coincide with a rise in ideas leaning more towards Euroscepticism, or at the very least a realigned narrative as to why European integration was deserving of support.

Ultimately, the shifting positions of Labour and Tories alike go a long way to show how, as a political cleavage, the European question does not align well with those that have traditionally defined the British party landscape. Instead, actors have routinely contested the issue within the parties. As a consequence, British electoral politics have never been able to cater sustainably to all combinations of ideological conviction and stances on

European integration. This inability derives in part from the British reliance on the first-past-the-post system. More importantly for our considerations here, it substantiates why it is insufficient to consider attitudes to European integration in terms of party positions only. It is generally the case that mainstream parties hold considerably more favourable views of European integration than the population at large (Hooghe & Marks, 2009), and systems with big-tent parties will typically be less able to reflect the multifaceted universe of opinion that exist within them.

Traditionally the sense among Eurosceptics has been that Parliament has been overly pro-European compared with the British public. However, in recent years this sense of going underrepresented has not been a Eurosceptic monopoly. Especially after the referendum, a great deal of frustration has been visible among pro-Europeans as well. Feeling their desire to maintain close relations with the EU has not been sufficiently respected, they have several times taken to the streets of London in the hundreds of thousands, waving 12-mullet flags and calling for the 48 per cent who voted Remain to be heard (Tamma, 2019). In this sense, Labour, in particular, has necessarily experienced a pull between the pro-Brexit attitudes of the voters lost outside the big cities, and that of their urban, pro-European voter base.

What seems evident then is that political parties on the mainstream left do not necessarily capture in full their constituencies' diversity of attitudes to European integration. This incapacity relates to the question of whether to support the project in the first place, as evidenced by the collapse of Labour's traditional election home turf in Northern England. However, it may also have applied within the group that remain pro-European as a failure to reflect the various reasons *why* these people were supportive of integration. Both the increased relevance of leftists and the growing salience generally of social and value-oriented politics could suggest mounting importance for types of justification that have been less visible in recent years. In contrast, economic arguments against Brexit, which would probably satisfy many centre-leftists, might be expected to be more contentious. If this is so, we would expect to see these themes more represented in the defences of the Norway models, whereas economy, which has been the go-to defence in Britain across the board, would be less dominant.

2.2. The European Economic Area

2.2.1. History and Features of the Norway Models

Preceding Brexit, the EEA had 31 member states, divided between two pillars. The dominant pillar in this agreement is and has been the EU, with its 28 member states pre-Brexit. The other pillar is the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), which remains constituted by four members, although only Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, which have since 1994 participated in the EEA. The fourth EFTA country, Switzerland, is not an EEA member but entertains a very close relationship with the EU through numerous bilateral agreements.

EFTA was initially founded in 1960 by countries that could not or would not join the EU, then known as the European Economic Community (EEC), including the UK and Norway. The model functioned as an alternative to the Community. In that role, it has since mostly lost out, as most former members have left to join the EU. EFTA remains a platform for negotiating trade agreements with third countries and for handling trade between its members, of course, but its primary function today is, ostensibly, to serve as a vehicle for maintaining close relations to the EU single market sans formal EU membership. Of the Norway models, EFTA-EEA membership has occasionally been termed an 'off-the-shelf'-solution in the Brexit context, due to its long history of sustaining a close relationship between the EU and third countries. The proposed *Norway-plus*/*Common Market 2.0* variations of the EEA model have never been implemented.

One should not understand references to *Norway models* in this report to suggest something special about Norway as such. That country's formal relationship to the EU does not differ substantially from, e.g., Iceland's. Instead, in being, by far, the larger of the three EFTA-EEA countries, Norway has tended to be the one drawing popular comparisons in the Brexit debate. Speaking about *Norway* rather than the *EEA* reflects the colloquial terminology used by many in the public debate. Doing so also reflects that the EFTA-EEA countries' relationships with the EU are defined by many other agreements of varying importance. Even if the EEA is easily the most significant element of the Euro-Norwegian relationship, other notable agreements are also in place; a British take on this solution would likely have involved adherence to some but not all of these other agreements.

Regarding Norway's other agreements we may mention in particular the Schengen agreement and the Dublin-agreements, but in total the Euro-Norwegian relationship is structured by about 130 agreements that cover a wide range of areas beyond what the EEA agreement contains. A number of these agreements are effectively consequences of participation in the EEA. The complementary relationship between the Dublin and Schengen agreements – which manage, e.g., asylum policy and border crossing for most EEA citizens – and the single market principle of free movement of people is, for instance, quite self-evident. At the same time, the UK's opt-out from Schengen, while still an EU member state, shows that these aspects of integration are by no means always mutually dependent on each other to be functional (Fossum, 2016; Fossum & Graver, 2018).

2.2.2. Comparison with EU-membership

While similar in many ways, there are aspects of EU-membership that are not available to countries in the EFTA-EEA pillar. These exclusive features include the adoption of the Euro, participation in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), single market access for goods sources from agriculture and fisheries, and participation in the customs union. For our purposes here, *Norway models* refer to models that either involve an EEA-like set of solutions, i.e. extensive participation in the single market, including in particular the free movement of goods, capital, services, and people, but also any proposed 'plus'-models, which attach one or more of the missing elements above to the existing EEA solution. In practice, this means the *Norway-plus/Common Market 2.0* models, that attach participation in a customs union to EFTA-EEA membership.

These extended models were promoted in particular by the informal cross-party parliamentary 'Norway Plus Group', led by Stephen Kinnock (Labour) and Nick Boles (Conservative). The main distinction of this solution, compared with the existing EFTA-EEA-model, would have been the addition of a customs union to EEA-membership. A report drafted by MPs Lucy Powell and Robert Halfon (2019) formalised the group's arguments for this model, suggesting most of the benefits of EU membership were combinable with enhanced sovereignty and better control over immigration. The model also promised to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, as the added customs union would

remove the need for border controls, which are still required at for instance Euro-Norwegian crossings.

The border between Ireland and Northern Ireland has been one of the central sticking points of the broader Brexit debate; mainly because the government's Brexit plans rarely succeeded in resolving the issue. Even controls of the relatively modest kind that exists between Norway and Sweden have appeared like a potential threat to the Good Friday Agreement, which remains the cornerstone of the peace in Northern Ireland. Even if the history of Northern Ireland were not what it is, reinstituting a hard border, some have argued, would have presented itself as a daunting project from a purely practical perspective. Houses, businesses, and roads cross the border much as if it was not there at all. Consequently, monitoring the border to satisfaction would require substantial resources and invasive measures on peoples' lives and properties in many cases (Sloat, 2018; Tonge, 2017). The Johnson Government's decision to settle for temporarily leaving Northern Ireland under EU legislation, with a customs border instead running through the Irish Sea – a solution Theresa May had previously declared that 'no UK prime minster could ever agree to' (BBC News, 2018) – highlights the difficulty of resolving the issue.

While EFTA-EEA members' relationship to the EU is institutionally, legally, and procedurally distinct from EU-membership, a lot of the key elements remain similar; especially through the broad strokes that descriptions in the public discourse on Brexit have permitted. While EU law does not directly influence Norway unless the Norwegian Parliament implements it, such implementation is both required and necessary in order to ensure continued compatibility between the two EEA pillars, and as such the differences from EU law in relevant areas are typically limited. EEA law does take precedence where it clashes with other domestic law. Rather than the European Commission, it is the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) which ensures this adherence, and EFTA-EEA members are subject to the EFTA Court rather than the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). As such, the EFTA-EEA membership also requires countries to be subject to a non-domestic court. Finally, while the EFTA-EEA pillar grants member countries a formal right of veto against implementing EU law, this has in practice never been used. Norway indicated intent to opt out of the EU's third directive on postal services in

2011, but they withdrew their objections after a change in government. In practice, the veto never came into play (Baudenbacher, 2016a, 2016b; Graver, 2004; Sejersted et al., 2012). Similarly, the provision of Article 112 of the EEA agreement, permitting an 'emergency brake' on free movement in cases where 'serious economic, societal or environmental difficulties of a sectorial or regional nature liable to persist are arising', offers, on paper, added flexibility on this front compared to EU membership, but this too has only been put into practice rarely and in limited fashion (Weatherill, 2017, pp. 171–172).

While legally available then, no assessment of the political consequences of a veto, which could be substantial, can be made beyond semi-informed speculation. How functional this tool truly is was therefore during the Brexit debate an open question. The likelihood of political consequences over invoking Art. 112, if perceived as undue, stands in a similar position. Moreover, the case of the postal services directive illustrates that a government can always withdraw a veto at a later point. Meanwhile, a new government cannot, in the same way, hope to veto something that has already been accepted by its predecessors for incorporation in EEA law. Over time this dynamic encourages the legal conformance of the EFTA-EEA states to EU law, even if EFTA state had employed the veto more actively.

In summary, the Norway models would have satisfied as Brexits in name. They would have maintained many of the trade and economic ties that typify EU-membership, and the EEA would have maintained many practical and institutional features reminiscent of the EU. Parliamentary sovereignty for EFTA-EEA countries in some ways stand stronger, formally speaking, than is the case for EU-membership. However, this strength does not translate into actual autonomy, with regards to areas that are covered by the agreement. The practical reality is that EFTA countries in many ways have less influence on the implementation of EU laws. Like EU membership, adherence to the four freedoms, notably the free movement of people, is still required under the EEA. Moreover, while the EFTA Court does not have quite the 'European supreme court' function that the CJEU does – it is formally an advisory court – it is a non-domestic court passing influential judgments on domestic policy. These judgments, furthermore, are highly informed by CJEU rulings (Baudenbacher, 2016a, 2016b).

Informed by the considerations in this section, we should expect that some issues, peculiar to the Norway models, might be argued to render them unsuitable in ways that do not necessarily reflect on European integration *per se*. Primarily we might expect the lack of influence in shaping EU policy – no seat at the table and no vote – to be sufficient grounds for rejection among some people. At the same time, the large degree of functional and principal similarity between EFTA-EEA and EU membership gives good reason to think the debates on the Norway models are for the most part suitable as a way of accessing attitudes to European integration more broadly.

Chapter 3

Key Concepts

3.1. Representation

3.1.1. The Decline of Institutional Representation

Inherent to the right-wing critiques which target the EU's alleged 'democratic deficit' is a notion of lacking representativeness. Eurosceptics often couch this concern in rhetoric which suggests a mission to retrieve or save (parliamentary) sovereignty. However, the issue is not unique to the EU as such. Indeed, populist voices have often replicated the critique on a domestic level to write parliaments off as unresponsive to the people's will. By this narrative, the political elite, overly urban and globalist, fails to accurately represent the popular will, something typically attested to in populist rhetoric by their holding a too pro-European and pro-immigration sentiment, which they subsequently translate into unacceptable policies (Glencross, 2016). In this sense, the EU's struggles are just one expression of a decline of the legitimacy of would-be representative institutions.

These critiques of a supposedly detached political elite resonate with Rousseaunian understandings of representative democracy. It follows, from this perspective, that representatives' outsize power over resources and information ultimately results in a lack of responsiveness to their constituencies. This lack of responsiveness derives from these assets

potential for rendering popular opinion manipulable and, to some extent, disregardable. Instead, it goes, special interests end up taking precedence in representatives' decision making (Glencross, 2016). While this explanation is not necessarily the 'correct' assessment of policymakers' performance, it paints a picture that fits well with how popular political engagement is seen to have developed over time.

Falling indicators of involvement, such as party membership rates, are well documented across Europe (see, e.g., Katz et al., 1992; Mair & van Biezen, 2001). This decline has given room to concern among certain scholars over a growing 'mutual disengagement' between political parties and the populace. Increasingly, these observers argue, parties have turned to a technocratic mode of governance as administration. This transition has come at the cost of representation and responsiveness to constituents, with electorates having become spectators rather than participants in political life. Consequently, political elites' incentives and interests in considering their constituencies have diminished (Mair, 2006; Pitkin, 2004; Whiteley, 2011). Thus, public political engagement has declined on the national level, but the concern is equally, if not more, valid for the EU. At least, the influence of critiques that juxtapose the European institutions' grey formalities, byzantine peculiarities, and perceived lack of accountability with salient political issues, where the EU and nation-states alike are perceived to be out of touch, such as immigration, is hard to deny.

These depictions tend to follow a few assumptions about representation which are frequent both in popular and scholarly understandings of the concept. First, it assumes that representation is a matter of electoral politics and elected institutions. Second, they commonly assume what Severs (2010, p. 411) calls 'substantive representation'. That is, representation understood in terms of whether members of a constituency are present in an institution. Women representatives thus stand, for instance, for women as a constituency, LGBT+ representatives for the LGBT+ community. Both in their substantial importance and their measurability, these assumptions are understandable. As academic approaches, they derive from a substantial body of work which follows, in particular, Hanna Pitkin's (1967) seminal *The Concept of Representation*. From this perspective, critiques about the underrepresentation of Eurosceptic and anti-immigration views appear more or less substantiated with regards to

recent history. How much depends a great deal on which national context one looks at, but it seems accurate on the EU level. Admittedly, the electoral fortunes of right-wing populist parties in recent years have tended to remedy the issue somewhat, even if they have not necessarily gained free rein to govern.

Without rejecting the importance of these formal conceptions of representation, it seems evident that they are not a complete picture of representation in general. Some of the concern about a decline in engagement – of turning constituents in audiences – misses, for instance, the simultaneous growth in mediatised forms of representation; even if this 'audience representation' should not be understood as some fundamental shift to the nature of European democracy (Michailidou & Trenz, 2013). As a development, this change constitutes, to some degree, a functional compensation for the decline in formal representative practices that traditional operationalisations of representation have often missed. At the same time, Lord (2013, p. 246) notes that although one can readily conceive of representation outside of formal institutions like parliamentary debates, their function of explicitly generating an '"authorised" set' of justifications for why a given policy outcome has majority support is harder to reproduce. In essence, mediatised forms of representation cannot provide a proper substitute for these specific sets of arguments, which open for specific practice of review and contestation, given that the same sort of formalised agreement is neither required nor, in most cases, achievable.

3.1.2 Representative Claims

Two observations follow from the preceding section. First, a decline in the representativeness of institutions is evident. Second, not only does the concept of representation have to be understood to cover something beyond institutions and elections, but that these other forms, including audience representation, are become more significant. Consequently, traditional theories of representation that rely on institutional definitions are increasingly insufficient as depictions of the concept as a whole. In recognition of the second point, Saward (2010) has sought to overcome these traditional notions arguing that representation, as a phenomenon, is situated in institutions. Instead, he has suggested that one should understand representation in terms of speech acts that he calls *representative claims*. Rather than focusing on elections and parliamentary compositions, Saward concerns

himself with events whereby a person (the claimant) suggests that someone (a representative) may credibly speak on behalf of a group (the constituency) on some issue.

This conception seeks to emphasise that there is a distinction to be made between institutional *forms* of political representation and *political representation* as an overarching phenomenon (Saward, 2006, p. 298). We can, from the perspective of Saward, understand all forms of institutional representation in terms of some (implicit) representative claim. One may understand, for instance, elected parliaments to represent the people only insofar as one accepts the claim that its election has somehow warranted that role. On the other hand, there is no shortage of similar claims to representation that do not and are not intended by speakers to result in a formal institutional structure. Saward's (2009, p. 1) uses a statement by U2 singer Bono as an example: 'I represent a lot of people [in Africa] who have no voice at all'.

By representative claims then, instances can be accounted for where representation is not contingent on an election or another prescribed form of appointment. Bono's representation of Africans, for what it is worth, can hardly be said to derive from some agreed-upon institution, for instance. Moreover, we can also account for instances of representation where the would-be representative is not *of* the constituency in the sense that they share in the attributes which define the constituency. A labour union leader may well claim, and be understood, to speak for industry workers while being quite open about the fact that he is not one himself and has perhaps never been one. Moreover, while formal institutional models of representation are necessarily central to concrete policy outcomes, de Wilde (2011, p. 570) is right to observe that 'from the perspective of politicisation' (and I would argue public discourse more generally), what is interesting is 'the *mental map* citizens and their representatives have in mind'. In terms of representation, we may say that this map must undoubtedly cover tracts well beyond parliaments and city halls.

Representative claims also open up for problematising the notion of what a constituency is. A key concern with Pitkin's approach to representation is a focus on the representative that leaves the represented as 'unproblematically given' (Saward, 2006, p. 300). However, it is hardly ever clear what an 'accurate' definition of any given constituency would be. Even

for groups traditionally taken to be self-evident, such as women, it is hard to pinpoint any one trait or combination of traits that constitute a complete, precise, and incontestable definition. As such, it is rather evident that one cannot treat constituencies as immutably pre-existing but that we ought to see them as socially constructed. As such, representative claims also highlight that representation, rather than being descriptive, is inherently creative. Consciously or not, claimants either generate new constituencies by way of defining them, or they alter existing ones by way of redefinition.

A constituency thus created may range from the almost meaninglessly broad – Bono speaking on behalf of 'Africans' – to the very specific, such as a defence attorney representing an individual client. The former, if successful, might be thought to be more politically 'powerful' in the sense that it mobilises the will of a broader constituency. The latter, in contrast, might be thought more likely to mobilise people, given that it permits more specificity about the defining attributes of the constituency. A definition that is clear and recognisable to the constituency may also be more readily accepted as it might appear more easily verifiable to third party audiences. It is generally easier to establish a broadly agreed-upon test for whether a defendant feels represented by their attorney than to satisfactorily test whether Africans (literally defined as a constituency by their supposed lack of voice) feel represented by Bono.

Given the broad salience and impact of any Brexit on the British populace, it would be reasonable to expect claims of representation on this matter to take fairly broad forms when presented by national media or politicians. Speaking on behalf of narrower interests would in all likelihood relatively be less compelling as an argument for taking a particular direction, when so much of the audience could stand to lose significantly from a solution that they regard as suboptimal for themselves. At the same time, if convincing someone to change their opinion, audiences might be easier to reach through more precise constituency definitions that make it easier for individuals to feel like the representative is speaking specifically on behalf of *them*. As such a tendency to speak for more specific constituencies could be seen as an effort to recruit new converts, as opposed to mobilising those already in agreement.

3.2. Justification

3.2.1. Evaluation of Worth

A central component of this report is the concept of justification – the act of defending one's actions or – more appropriately to us – preferences as just or apt (Morgan, 2005, p. 26). In particular, this report draws on Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot's seminal *On Justification* (2006). Theirs is but one of many parallel and more or less separate efforts, an excellent overview of which is given by Lamont (2012), to conceive of a 'sociology of valuation and evaluation' wherein one conceives of actions of assigning worth as a multidimensional landscape. A landscape where we may use different 'orders of worth' to assess different objects according to different standards of 'value'. One may deem Boltanski and Thévenot to be particularly useful here because they offer a pragmatic framework that does not mainly seek to address a distinction between moral values and economic value. Instead, they account for these by treating both as components of what we may understand as different orders, which in turn outline different conceptions of the common good (Levi & Sendroiu, 2019, p. 49; Nyberg & Wright, 2012, p. 1821). Their emphasis on the possibility of changing between different orders of worth is fitting, due in particular to this report's interest in European integration; the integration project has the potential for change and has, as outlined in Chapter 2, changed over time.

The fundamental function of justification, argue Boltanski and Thévenot (2006, p. 141), is to determine the degree to which, as well as *how*, things or people matter. As such, justification constitutes a tool which allows us to compare object and therefore also to order them hierarchically. So, if we assume that energy efficiency is a matter of importance, one object – and LED lightbulb, for instance – may be *more efficient* than an incandescent bulb, and therefore of higher worth. Of course, we might also assume that efficiency is not a matter of importance, in which case the rank ordering of the two types of bulb might differ. Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) suggest that we can conceive of several *economies of worth*, which can be said to draw on viewing objects from the perspective of different 'worlds'. That is, frameworks that help us conceive of which subjects, objects, and actions have what worth; i.e., what matters. For example, the 'domestic world' holds personal relationships, tradition, proper behaviour, and respect for hierarchies based on these to be crucial sources of worth. In the

'world of fame', objects derive worth from their reputation and visibility, as well as from public opinion. As a third example, the 'industrial world' is a framework which prizes efficiency, performance, measurability. The comparison of lightbulbs above, according to efficiency, can thereby be said to make sense from an industrial perspective, but simultaneously be entirely irrelevant from a domestic perspective.

It is worth noting that these frameworks are theoretical distillations that, for the most part, coexist in actual societies, where they serve as filters that we may change between for different contexts. As such, someone might ascribe great value to some object due to a quality of that object, while someone else might ascribe little value to the same object, not because they disagree that it holds that quality, but because they disagree that this quality should be a significant source of worth in the given context. The British monarchy has a high value from a domestic perspective, but we might suggest that it is left wanting from a civic perspective, where collective action, representation, and 'the general will' are common sources of worth. One does not, therefore, have to disagree about matters of fact in order to disagree about matters of worth. Justification is not just about suggesting that some preferred object is more worthy than another but often also about suggesting where it derives that worth from in the first place.

That the worlds coexist in societies is not to suggest that they can coexist at one point in time when concerning one object evaluated by one individual. The civic and industrial worlds, or any others for that matter, have different and incompatible standards of evaluation. Some objects of immense importance from one perspective are effectively non-existent as far as other perspectives are concerned. Different people might evaluate the same object according to different worlds, but one individual will evaluate an object only from one chosen perspective at any one time. Despite this, negotiation between observers is not therefore impossible, even if their default perspectives differ. People do not subscribe exclusively to one or another world for their evaluations (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 215), but will rely on different worlds for different objects, and may adopt a different perspective with regards to an object from one time to another. A physicist engages in a trade highly oriented towards the values of the industrial realm. However, she may well be active in an

aboriginal peoples' rights advocacy group, an activity primarily valued from a civic perspective, and be a connoisseur of operettas which one would typically appreciate from the perspective of inspired order of worth.

This movement between worlds is only something which we can propose as possible. It is also a matter of necessity for any person navigating a society. 'In a differentiated society, each person regularly has to confront situations stemming from distinct worlds, has to recognise such situations and prove capable of adjusting to them' (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, p. 216). Even if our physicist did not particularly care for the arts, she would, all the same, have to encounter expressions of them and be able to engage with them in some way when she did. Although people draw on different worlds to different degrees and in different situations then, it is hard to imagine someone who did not recognise one or more of these worlds at all as to be an entirely functional participant in society.

Simultaneously, argue Lamont (2012, p. 202), societies that give sufficient space for a plurality of 'matrices of evaluation' allows for greater social resilience. As such, while negotiation and agreement are dependent on the ability to evaluate the same object from the same perspective, but it is not a point unto itself to generally favour a specific order of worth. The plurality opens up for escape by the 'losers' in one order of worth to some other order where value may be retrieved.

To say that conversation and negotiation are made possible by people's ability to access all worlds is to suggest that people come equipped to recognise and assess arguments stemming from any one world. It does not, however, suggest that they will always find any perspective appropriate. Nor does it suggest that we can achieve agreement on a contested issue through an amalgam assessment that seeks to please several or all perspectives. A legitimate societal agreement does, however, rely on a shared understanding of what is the appropriate order for evaluating a given object in a given context (Nyberg & Wright, 2012, p. 1821). Negotiation, thereby, is not only about seeking to agree on the worth ascribed to an object. It is also the search for agreement on to what order an object properly belongs. The existence of multiple worlds generates obstacles for arriving at an agreed-upon evaluation, but people's ability to move between them, to consider alternative perspectives, make

the acts of negotiation and convincing, and therefore agreement, possible (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, pp. 225–232).

This notion of a clear separation between orders of worth requires a caveat. Boltanski & Thévenot (2006, pp. 277–292) argue that we can achieve a *compromise* when we can ascribe equivalence to criteria of worth stemming from different orders. Rather than agree on a mode of evaluation, people agree that one order's criterion of worth equates to that of some other order's. We might here suggest the early origins of European integration, wherein the market-situated value of benefitting from an economic interdependence and shared resource management was seen, by the project's originators, to be equivalent to the civic worth in transcending the divisions of old European rivalries. These compromises are at the same time more vulnerable, in the sense that the parties to the agreement remain committed to different orders for their evaluation and renewed contestation over the object's 'proper' world of belonging are all the closer to the surface.

3.2.2. Tests and Standards of Justification

As the EU has delved into policy on immigration and environment then, we might argue that it has upset evaluations from a market-situated perspective. Therefore, one cannot as readily justify these developments through the previously agreed-upon compromise. This change might help explain the loss of support from sections of the political right, where market perspectives were arguably more common. If we assume that the EU has lost favour from that perspective (or indeed any perspective), regaining support would require either the reformulation of the old equation or the institution of a new, sufficiently pure and agreeable test for evaluating the membership according to a shared perspective. Alternatively, one might propose to substitute the object for some other object that for one reason or the other is deemed better suited to satisfy all parties – some new model of EU-UK relationship, which is to say a Brexit. The Norway models are one set of many such alternatives. For our purposes here they are deemed to be of particular relevance, however, for investigating attitudes to European integration, due to their close similarity to EU membership.

Put simply, to justify a model for a future British relationship to the EU is to propose that this model is somehow worthy. Implicit in that proposal is a suggestion for a way to *test* different models. Moreover, in choosing a

model, the speaker also argues that it is their specific model which best satisfies the test they have proposed. It is the formalisation of these arguments into 'authorised' sets which Lord (2013) holds to be one of the core, all but irreplaceable, functions of parliamentary representation. The arguments are, however, not dependent on parliamentary representation to be formulated. These sets thus include an argument of whether an object matters and one argument about from which order the project ought to derive it worth. The former argument proposes a *valuation* while the latter proposes an *evaluation* (Lamont, 2012, p. 205).

For Brexit purposes, one might suggest that what constitutes 'enough' worth, in terms of a threshold, involves evaluation in the form of a comparison of two or more mutually incompatible models. A model is consequently preferable insofar as it valuated higher than the alternative models. The models under consideration are mutually incompatible because, by their nature, only one EU-relationship model may be in place at one time. A comparison is valid as a threshold because *some* relationship is unavoidable – one model is invariably going to be in place. We may also presume that while different individuals might evaluate the various models from different perspectives, any one individual will evaluate them from one consistent perspective. This assumption is essential to any effort of comparison and thereby form an internally coherent rank order of models. We can compare and rank apples and pears just fine, so long as we compare them according to a shared set of criteria, such as nutritional value. For us to compare and rank two apples is meaningless, however, if we evaluate one according to its nutritional value, and the other according to its aesthetic qualities.

In practice, we may make comparisons between two hypothetical solutions. Until one of them is implemented, this would be the case when comparing a hard Brexit against British EFTA-EEA membership, for inst-ance. Commonly, we may also suppose that a status quo model factors into the comparison; that is EU-membership, in this case. Although this report treats the Norway models as stand-ins for European integration, these are also separate models which observers may compare to, e.g., EU-membership. By default, the least costly and inconvenient solution is to maintain the status quo and, in general, the bigger the change, the higher the costs and the greater the inconvenience. As such, more significant

changes require higher standards of justification in order to promote it effectively. To conceptualise the point in terms of justification, we may here employ Morgan's (2005, pp. 26–29) distinction between *reconciliatory*, *reformative*, *transvaluative*, and *transformative* forms of justification.

Reconciliatory justification in this context refers to a form of justification whereby the claimant seeks to defend the status quo. Generally, this is done by invoking some logic or meaning that one perceives those who desire change to have forgotten. On the premise that European integration is a process towards a federal Europe, Eurosceptics tend, according to Morgan (2005, pp. 22, 56–58), to take the view that it is a world of nation-states that is the status quo. European integration from this perspective is an encroaching alternative that increasingly threatens that status quo. Consequently, Eurosceptics demand strong justification in order to accept the imposition of this 'fundamental rupture' – *transformative* justification, that is. An exit from the integration project is merely a recognition that such a justification (in Eurosceptics' eyes) has not been forthcoming – a restoration of the legitimate order.

Instead, pro-Europeans perceive the question from a perspective where the EU, in its current form, is the status quo. From this perspective, consequently, exit from the integration project is a transformative proposition, whereas the next step in the integration process is reformatory. It is limited in scope and pertains to goods that are widely agreed-on to be desirable (Morgan, 2005, p. 27). We could suggest, however, that the British have primarily understood the EU as a market object and that this interpretation has not, necessarily, remained sustainable according to the previously agreed-upon basis. If this were the case, a defence of European integration according to the market order could not merely resort to a reconciliatory standard. Instead, one would have to reforge the case for integration as a market object and invoke a higher standard of justification. In the eyes of many the status quo version of European integration, as they saw it, is no longer available, and as such, being 'reminded' cannot be the basis for a re-legitimation of the project. Besides differing in their evaluation of European integration as good or bad then, pro-Europeans and Eurosceptics are also, in this sense, in disagreement over who carries the heavier burden of justification.

However, while we may argue that the standard of justification says something about the distance between the status quo and the position they seek to justify, there is a strategic element to justifications that makes this relationship more 'circular'. Inspired by the Thomas theorem, i.e. 'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (Thomas, 1928, p. 572), Boin et al. (2009) note that the standard of justification on offer can also function to argue frame the severity of issue an issue.

Boin et al.'s (2009) work consider 'crises' in particular, and while Brexit in many ways fits the bill of a crisis by their definition, the strategic uses which they outline do not rely on this to be relevant. Specifically, Boin et al. outline three potential strategies for framing crises, which is to say three ways in which actors may choose to present an event to their audiences. The first strategy they outline is the 'no crisis'-strategy of seeking to define away the crisis. Here the goal is for the actor to suggest that, insofar as anything of consequence did happen, no one can be blamed for the event and, as such, there is no reason to change how society does things. The 'crisis as a threat'-strategy entails acknowledging some significance of crisis but simultaneously defends the status quo through diffusing the blame, implying little change is necessary. Finally, treating the 'crisis as an opportunity' revolves around amplifying the sense of significance ascribed to the crisis event, employing it as a platform for attacking the status quo and demanding substantial change (Boin et al., 2009, pp. 84–86).

From this, we can derive some expectations relating to one of the underlying assumptions of this paper – that the Norway models are perceived to be continuity models rather than some qualitatively 'other' form of European integration. Specifically, we might expect to see supporters of the Norway models to adhere to interpretations of Brexit as a process that required relatively minimal change. Meanwhile, we would expect those who would promote a harder Brexit than the Norway models to push for an expanded reading of what changes a satisfactory Brexit process would have to deliver. As noted previously, choosing the Norway models is intended to avoid a debate that focuses too much on the referendum specifically. However, we might still suppose that hard Brexiter perspectives, having incentives to find more extreme anchor points for their interpretation of what Brexit I supposed to deliver, would generally make more frequent reference explicitly to the referendum than supporters of the Norway models.

Chapter 4

European Integration

4.1. Attitudes to European Integration

As noted, since the late 1990s, Euroscepticism has undergone a considerable shift. As a term, it has become a mainstay in popular as well as academic imaginations. This attention is due, in particular, to the success of populist right-wing parties and movements across Europe, which have actively fuelled, and been fuelled, by this shift. One of the central critiques that typify the shift is that targeting the EU's supposed 'democratic deficit'. Even as people post-Maastricht have become more aware of the ever-growing influence had by the EU on Europeans' daily lives, Europeans have not, in the view of many, had much ability to hold decisionmakers accountable or even to understand the opaque workings of EU (Brack & Startin, 2015; Usherwood & Startin, 2013).

Euroscepticism is often imagined, especially in popular discourse, as one end of a bipolar spectrum of attitudes to European integration, with support being the corollary pole. This simple model is often a convenient short-hand in a non-specialised discourse yet, as illustrated by van Elsas' (2017) distinction between 'anti-liberal' and 'nationalist' Euroscepticism, the notion of Euroscepticism as a monolithic set of ideas is a naïve representation. One is glossing over quite a bit of complexity and, in

recognition of this, the literature on attitudes towards European integration has come to reflect the view that more precise and multivariate frameworks are usually needed.

Besides van Elsas' focus on differences in ideologically pinned justifications, we may look to Taggart and Szczerbiak's (2002) distinction between *hard* and *soft* Euroscepticism. They propose that scepticism towards the EU may be grounded in a principled rejection of the EU itself, which would be hard Euroscepticism. We may contrast this rejection against forms of 'qualified opposition' based on concerns over specific EU policy or policies. We may derive from this that the logical demand stemming from hard Euroscepticism is that of exit and that from soft Euroscepticism we should expect calls for reform. Hardliner models of Brexit are driven by an understanding of the Leave vote as an expression of hard scepticism, whereas the question is less clear cut when concerning the Norway models. While it is reasonable to expect that most promoters of those models would qualify as pro-European, it might also include soft Eurosceptics, who may have quite fundamental concerns about the legitimacy of EU-membership, but who see the Norway models as sufficient change to settle their grievances.

Boomgaarden et al. (2011) start from a similar point when they borrow the distinction, made in Easton's (1975) seminal work on political support, between *specific* and *diffuse political support*. Specific support, in this sense, is a support that a citizen directs towards the incumbent policymaker, the *officeholder*, and derives from a utilitarian assessment of policy. A person may look at the correspondence between their policy preferences, and the policy outcomes generated by the officeholder, and offer or withhold support based on how well they match. The political object of relevance here is the officeholder, and the good or ill will they accumulate by this logic, while quickly garnered, is not particularly durable. Good outcomes, once upon a time, are quickly forgotten by citizens in light of recent bad ones.

Diffuse support, by contrast, is more durable. Easton distinguishes this support by suggesting that people direct this support towards a different object; namely that of the *office*. We can represent the differentiation between office and officeholder through the distinction between officeholder Boris Johnson, current Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and the

office of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. A more general distinction between government/policy and regime/polity might be the most fruitful for our purposes here, however. One bases the diffuse form of support on a sense that it is right for policy to emanate from the office, even when one disapproves of a specific policy. The separation between specific and diffuse is not clean, however, given that the performance of officeholders (one way or the other) will rub off on the office over time. It is quite possible – fundamental to a working democracy, even – to disapprove of an officeholder and still accept the legitimacy of the office in general. As such one might accept the office holder's place in office on account of their attaining the office according to the appropriate means.

One might imagine diffuse support can functionally to be a 'reservoir of favourable attitudes' (Easton, 1975, p. 444). Based on the level of the waters in this reservoir, someone may choose to tolerate policy outcomes despite regarding them as unfavourable, or they withdraw their approval of the office and officeholder. A great deal of diffuse support can thereby keep an officeholder floating despite failing to deliver desirable policy outcomes but delivering on policy outcomes can also enable support where the office rests on shaky ground. Water is flowing into the dry reservoir.

While Taggart and Szczerbiak seem to assume that support is the default and that scepticism (at least the soft kind) is earned by way of undesired policy outcomes then, Easton seems to conceive of support as something the office and officeholder have to earn. Easton is also more explicit about recognising a relationship between the two forms of support, though the same connection of soft scepticism over time feeding into hard scepticism seems perfectly compatible with Taggart and Szczerbiak's perspective. Although not in direct conversation, the affinity between the two conceptions is evident, and also overlaps with several other two-category representations of political support, with support divided between a policy-oriented (alternatively termed *utilitarian, instrumental,* or *National–pragmatic*) strain, and one more principled or value-oriented (*affective, political, Supranational–idealistic*) strain (Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010; Semetko et al., 2003). For this report, *specific* and *diffuse* will be the terms mainly in use.

European integration, however, distinguishes itself from most polities in that it is perceived to be, in essence, as much a process as it is a set of

institutions. Support for integration is, consequently, not only a question of whether one approves of the policy or the polity. It is also a matter of whether one approves of what the polity might eventually become. De Wilde and Trenz (2012) highlight the presence of this process-dimension by proposing that we can assess attitudes to European integration according to a three-dimensional framework. These dimensions can be summed up as (1) European integration as a general principle, (2) integration as an ongoing process, and (3) integration as expressed in terms of current institutions. Support for integration in principle here refers to the agreement with the suggestion that European integration is appropriate in *some* form (i.e. not necessarily the current one); a rejection of this premise would seem to be the essence of hard Euroscepticism. Support for further integration would suggest support for more integration than is currently the case. The final dimension presented by De Wilde and Trenz' centres on acceptance or rejection of the current European institutions as appropriate expressions of integration.

This framework leaves us with a considerably more complex image of support for European integration. Some people will wholly embrace or refuse the integration project on all these dimensions. Others, more status quo-oriented, might accept both the principle and the current state of institutions, but reject further deepening. Others still might be pro-integration in principle but object both to the current implementation and to deepening (de Wilde & Trenz, 2012, pp. 547–548). Again, it is probably safe to assume that, similar to specific and diffuse support, the dimension interact, and that certain combinations are more likely or more stable over time.

Support for the existing institutions is also tacitly recognised by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002, p. 4). However, they wave off any practical implications from this by arguing that European integration is a process *in essence*. Consequently, 'if someone supports the EU as it currently exists and opposes any further integration […] they are effectively Eurosceptic because this is at odds with what is the dominant mode of integration that is ongoing'. A legitimate polity, that is, only exists somewhere down the road, and the institutions are only legitimate from this perspective insofar as they serve as a basis from which to arrive at that polity. De Wilde and Trenz' can be said then, on the one hand, to have opted for a theoretically complete framework. On the other hand, Taggart and Szczerbiak

emphasise the practical manifestations that are most likely to be seen in the wild.

By offering a more comprehensive model of support for European integration in terms of objects of support, de Wilde and Trenz are adding to a current preoccupation with unpacking the Euroscepticism. This trend has, however, been less concerned overall with objects of support per se, and has paid more attention to how people (do not) justify their attitudes to the integration project. Hobolt and Brouard (2011) have approached the matter inductively, from factor analysis of survey data, looking at the Dutch and French referenda which both rejected the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005. Their research seems to indicate clear distinctions between *social* (welfare and social protections) and *cultural* dimensions (identity and culture), but also notes a particular role of concrete issues like the Euro, the treaty itself, and enlargement which seem more couched in the particularities of that period. Others have sought to differentiate between left and right-wing Euroscepticisms in terms of what motivates them (van Elsas, 2017; van Elsas et al., 2016), or they have engaged with *ambivalence* as a relevant form of attitude in its own right (de Vries & Steenbergen, 2013; Stöckel, 2013).

Of particular interest here is de Wilde et al.'s (2014) effort to operationalise Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006) conception of orders of worth for use in investigating European integration. They arrive at five distinct dimensions according which people evaluate the integration project: The first revolves around the European integration's ability to increase democracy. The second addresses the project's role as a promoter of European culture and values. The third dimension reflects on integration as a utility for meeting challenges and commitments that the nation-state is less able to. The fourth dimension emphasises economic growth and welfare. Finally, the fifth dimension highlights integration as a security project; protecting European from internal and external threats.

De Wilde et al. (2014) find that concerns with democracy were particularly salient across the board, but much more so among citizens than with 'party-actors'. They also find democracy to be less salient with strict pro-Europeans (18.8 per cent) than with people who have reservations about the integration project (~30–45 per cent). The findings still show democracy to be the primary concern also of pro-Europeans, but barely

ahead of the 'utility'-dimension (17 per cent); the remaining dimensions only account for a little less than 10 per cent each. For our purposes here, the overall weighting of these factors can serve as something of a benchmark, even if the specific analyses will not be directly comparable.

Worth noting is also Hobolt and Brouard's (2011) observation regarding French attitudes to integration that seems to suggest a specific concern with what sort of Europe might emerge without the treaty. What would France's 'Plan B' if they forsook continued European integration? From here originates the interest in this report for considering a distinction between Euro-positive attitudes, reflecting fondness of integration specifically, and anti-Brexit attitudes, reflecting a fear of what the UK might become outside the EU. One would expect the latter to be considerably more prominent than in Hobolt and Brouard's findings, where it was a minor presence, because the Brexit referendum turned the notion of a 'Plan B' from a possible consequence into the declared government policy.

4.2. European Integration in the Media

As noted by de Wilde & Trenz (2012, pp. 538–539), attitudes to European integration has a well-established body of literature that concerns itself with public opinion in terms of elections and political parties. Meanwhile, they argue that the role of (new) media has received less direct attention. The parallels to the overarching literature on representation is evident. However, if we are to take the notion of audience representation seriously, it is clear that we must move beyond traditional representative institutions to get the full picture of representative practices.

For this reason, media becomes a particularly important site for analysing these practices, as their very function very often is to provide a platform where some voices may speak in a more informal capacity on behalf of a broader constituency. Moreover, while a critical function of representative institutions is to create an 'authorised' set of justifications for the decisions made, no such set exists to define Brexit. Hence, no doubt, much of the turbulence following the referendum. Instead, alternative sources are necessary in order to understand how alternative approaches to European integration are presented and understood by the British public. Again, debates in media stand out as an important location for us to be looking.

These acknowledgements are not made in a vacuum, however. A growing body of literature within the study of European integration does dedicate itself to the social and political impact of media, and online media in particular (see, e.g., Barisione & Michailidou, 2017; Caiani & Guerra, 2017; de Wilde et al., 2013; Galpin & Trenz, 2018; Hawkins, 2012; Startin, 2015; Statham & Trenz, 2013). As with the broader contemporary literature on European integration, these works also often emphasise the relationship between media and Euroscepticism, or to mapping out attitudes more generally. This emphasis is, in a sense, appropriate given that 'media perspective accounts for the public salience and resonance of Euroscepticism and for its cultural, ideological and historical specifics' (de Wilde & Trenz, 2012, p. 539). Salience and resonance may not be the first words to occur concerning pro-Europeanism but media perspectives, or the lack thereof, are also significant for explaining this. With Brexit serving to mobilise many pro-Europeans, the traditional disinterest among media in fronting pro-European positions should not be taken for granted, however.

4.2.1. The British Landscape

While the media across Europe have often been identified as negative or ambivalent about European integration, this has necessarily translated into outright and active hostility. The British media landscape, for instance, was in the 1970s still on the whole pro-European, and although it was rarely bombastic in its support, the 1975 referendum mobilised in particular papers like *the Daily Mail* and *the Daily Express* for the Remain camp. No major newspaper explicitly backed the campaign to leave (Bogdanor, 2014; Daddow, 2012). The contrast against the modern British press could hardly be starker.

Indeed, it has become impossible to discuss modern British Euroscepticism without touching on the fervour of tabloids such as the *Daily Mail*, the *Sun*, and the *Daily Express*. Not to mention the person of media mogul Rupert Murdoch, whose name today often serves as a metonym for the English tabloid press. These have long since gained a reputation well beyond British borders for their antipathy towards the EU; a feature which has only gotten more pronounced over time (Startin, 2015; Usherwood & Startin, 2013). The combative tone was already evident by the 1990s, however, as illustrated by the *Sun's* now-iconic November 1990

front page, protesting the European Currency Unit by exclaiming 'UP YOURS DELORS', and telling the French European Commission President to 'FROG OFF!' ('Up Yours Delors', 1990). Typical for these outlets has been a populist right-leaning editorial line, employing the sort of outrage-baiting ways of framing issues, well represented above by the *Sun*.

Culturally, the *Daily Mail* and its readership are treated as opposites of papers like the *Independent* or the *Guardian* and their readers. The former are seen as nationalist, value-conservative, and working-class, while the latter are often imagined to be social-liberals, globalist, and middle class. However, this juxtaposition has not meant that these left-leaning outlets have, traditionally, mirrored the strong Euroscepticism of tabloids with any particularly vocal pro-Europeanism of their own. Startin (2015), for instance, categorises both the *Guardian* and the *Independent* as 'europositive/euroambivalent' outlets. The same categorisation was also ascribed to the *Guardian* by an expert survey, reported by Caiani & Guerra (2017). The image of these newspaper, implied by these categorisations, suggests a general lack of interest in European integration, or measured support at most. Even this stands out in the otherwise mostly Eurosceptic crowd of British media, however. The only strictly Euro-positive paper in Startin's regard was the *Financial Times*, a paper whose appeal is mainly to a business-oriented readership that aligns ideologically with the centre/centre-right. Even if the mainstream left-wing press has been moderately pro-integration, the reinforcement of that message seems to have been weak, whereas the broader media landscape they have existed in has been quite active in pushing a Eurosceptic line.

Unsurprisingly, Galpin & Trenz (2018) note that British media – in comparison with German media – tend to depict the EU more negatively. They also note that whereas German media tend to direct their negativity at 'policy', the British direct their at 'polity'. This difference is visible not just when compared with German media, however. Studying a broader range of countries, De Wilde et al. (2014) observed a 'more intense EU polity contestation' particular to the UK in their comparison of online media's coverage of the European Parliament elections in 2009. Tying this into Easton's (1975) distinction between specific and diffuse support, it is clear the UK media in their Euroscepticism lean quite heavily towards the

diffuse end of the spectrum. The outrage at *what* the EU decides is secondary to the outrage at *that* the EU decides. Galpin & Trenz (2018) argue that this mode of discussion serves to be particularly potent in terms of demotivating public attitudes towards European integration. Moreover, diffuse scepticism does not serve the same function as policy critique of political control particularly well, because it does not identify an issue, with any clarity, which decisionmakers can fix.

Without a clear issue definition, institutions have limited ability to resolve concerns meaningfully. Consequently, there is limited room for demonstrating the institutions' would-be responsiveness to popular concerns. The resulting discourse, argue Galpin & Trenz (2018, p. 168), turns out 'defamatory' rather than constructively critical. Of course, one should note, that the intent behind polity critiques is *not* that new policy should resolve the issue. The polity is the issue, and polity change is the point. Regardless, the path back to regaining lost legitimacy through policymaking is invariably made difficult given that the institutions are perceived, specifically, to be in an illegitimate position to make policy. In this sense, the British have crossed a threshold by turning to diffuse critiques, from which it would have been challenging to come back. This is especially true, given that the erosive nature of the Euroscepticism in British media has rarely been met by a sustained counternarrative that might have reinforced support in (parts of) the population.

4.2.2. The Referendum Campaign

With regards to the Brexit campaign, a little additional depth about the rhetoric leading up to the vote might be useful. In broad strokes, the Conservative Party dominate the debate. The Tories, moreover, were torn between the backers of Remain-campaigners, like David Cameron and George Osborne, and Brexiters, like Boris Johnson and Michael Gove. As such they the party was not only the biggest actor in the debate, but it also held that distinction for both sides of the debate. The media coverage was highly polarised, with outlets tying themselves tightly to one or the other position; *the Guardian* being strongly pro-Remain. However, weighted for readership numbers, the overall media debate was heavily tilted towards a Leave position (Loughborough University Centre for Research in Communication and Culture, 2016).

Looking at televised debates, Shaw et al. (2017) have suggested that one of the most striking features of the Remain/Leave-debate prior to the referendum was a difference in message focus. Generally, they observe, Remain delved into a broader range of themes and arguments and as such had a less consistent message. They also tended, to a higher degree, to wade into topics where Leave had a stronger position. The most frequent themes on offer from Remain in Shaw et al.'s estimation were arguments about the economic ramifications of leaving, as well efforts to promote the reforms David Cameron had negotiated before the referendum campaign started.

Levy et al. (2018, p. 20) also finds economy to be the dominant Remain theme in British newspapers. Economy is also a more commonly cited theme in broadsheets than tabloids, albeit with *the Guardian* (45 per cent) being more in line with tabloids like *the Sun* or *Daily Mirror* (both 43 per cent) than centre-right broadsheets like the *Financial Times* (59 per cent) and *the Times* (57 per cent). They also found that while Remain supporters discussed economy for the majority of the time (54 per cent of the arguments), Leave arguments divided themselves much more evenly between economy (36 per cent), sovereignty (29 per cent), and migration (20 per cent), which seems to raise questions about message focus, as argued by Shaw et al. (2017). Indeed, an alternative reading of the campaign distinguishes between two effectively parallel Leave-campaigns. One emphasised a neo-liberal, globalising, and anti-regulation Brexit, while the other was much more inward-looking, concerned with migration and sovereignty ('After the Vote, Chaos', 2016).

On the other hand, Levy et al. (Levy et al., 2018, p. 21) note that 'economy' was, in certain respects, a diverse topic unto itself. Many different themes, ranging from single market benefits to housing and National Health Services (NHS) financing, all fell under this broad category. Meanwhile we may note that both sovereignty and migration were more easily reduced to the 'take back control' narrative, brandished by the Leave campaign, and in certain respects thereby may have represented a more coherent message than a focus on the economy might have.

Moreover, while one could categorise economy as the dominant theme in the debate overall, it is worth noting that this dominance was more prominent in the early parts of the campaign period. As the referendum approached, immigration gained in prominence and corresponded with

an improved position in polls for Leave (Loughborough University Centre for Research in Communication and Culture, 2016). Thus, even if the Leave argumentation, on the whole, was more varied than that of Remain, it became more focused over time. Moreover, one might suggest that the televised debates analysed by Shaw et al. is more representative of the message that reached 'everyone'. In contrast, the diversity across newspapers is less significant as readers to a much higher extent self-select into the readership of one or a few outlets. A variation on the macro level may therefore not reflect variation within individual outlets, and consequently not for individual newspaper readers. Focus, in the sense of consistent and repetitive messaging, has to be qualified by consideration of which messages reach what audiences.

The key theme of the televised debates, immigration, was dominated by Leavers, who couched their messaging primarily in subthemes of taking back control of the border, as well as immigration's alleged negative impact on jobs, social services, and housing. Remainers also took to the theme of immigration. Their argumentation in this area followed along subthemes such as 'Leaving is a bad way to control immigration' and 'stop migration by raising standards across Europe', which would seem to appreciate immigration as a problem, but not Brexit as the solution to it. Meanwhile, subthemes like 'Migrants are not the main strain on public services' and 'Immigrants are financially beneficial for the UK', were also presented, which would seem to argue that immigration was not a problem, or even that it was a boon. (Shaw et al., 2017, pp. 1026–1027). All in all, the messaging on this topic seemed inconsistent compared to the more decisive direction of Leave's argumentation: Immigration was an issue for the UK and that leaving the EU would improve the situation.

Moreover, observing the categories of themes described by (Shaw et al., 2017), it is clear that much of the Remain argumentation had a negative tone, in the sense that it played on worries regarding economic consequences, fear of isolation, and warnings about the chaos and risks that awaited if the UK were to leave the EU. Moreover, a tendency is evident for Remain argumentation to take the form of negating of the Leave campaign's argumentation. This tendency is particularly interesting in the context of polyphonic theory, which highlights that a negated statement also tends to give implicit voice to the positive form of the claim (Fløttum, 2013, p.

993). An argument that 'Migrants are *not* the main strain on public services' is effectively in conversation with some other voice stating that 'Migrants *are* the main strain on public services'. It would seem, therefore, that the discourse tended to be premised more-so on the Leave campaign's framing.

To what degree this polyphony was cause or consequence of the Remain campaign's tendency to enter into debates where it was on unsure footing is not clear. What is evident, however, is that this form of argumentation may be read more as anti-Brexit in tone than pro-European given that they necessarily did not to make a positive case for European integration. Whether this, as well as other features of the referendum debate, is something we could expect to see in *the Guardian* post-referendum is not self-evident, given that so much of the UK media landscape differs from that newspaper in ideological terms and on European integration specifically. Instead, given the Tories' dominance of the debate, *the Guardian* is the least likely to mimic the debate's general features. This is not to say that the *Guardian* is *unlikely* to do so, however. Even if specific outlets, for the most part, are discussed only intermittently in the literature cited above, they leave little reason to think the Guardian is entirely out of sync with the remaining pro-European landscape.

Chapter 5

Data and Method

5.1 Data

5.1.1. Why the Guardian?

The basis, data-wise, for this analysis are claims, made in the *Guardian*, evaluating the Norway models. Choosing to rely on an online newspaper has a practical element to it in terms of accessibility. At the same time, there are also significant substantive reasons for choosing this source material; particularly as a way to access something we might think of as a segment of 'the public discourse'. In general, the agenda-setting power of the press, in the sense that it significantly influences issue salience both with the public and the political elite, is well documented (Dursun-Ozkanca, 2011; McCombs, 2006; Walgrave et al., 2008). One should note, however, that the degree of influence appears to be dependent on how consistent the press is in its messaging (Carey & Burton, 2004).

Moreover, while 'public', newspapers also serve to create room for distinct group identities for people in power of letting them identify as *readers*. Hence the cultural significance of being a *Guardian* or *Daily Mail* reader discussed in the previous chapter. Outlets thereby serve a representative function in the sense that its stances are often understood, by its readers and third-party on-lookers, to be those of its readership as

well (Trenz, 2009). Although newspapers rarely speak explicitly on behalf of their readership as such, this relationship remains a context where representation as claims has considerable relevance. The significance of this connection is also particularly evident in the British context, where a strong informal association between mastheads and specific political parties or ideological outlooks remains. As such the press is particularly useful for accessing specific socio-political subsets of the public discourse, in terms of who a speaker imagines their audience to be, where public television and social media might often be, respectively, too broad or too fragmented.

The choice to analyse digital content rather than print is rather inconsequential in the sense that there is little difference in how issues are discussed and framed between print and online when it comes to established media (Michailidou, 2015, p. 327). Even less so, of course, when considering content produced by the same outlet. Online media is increasingly the default format for the press, and this online presence also means that practices such as posting, sharing, and responding to content produced by legacy outlets are central also to how politics is framed in social media (Schlosberg, 2017, p. 47). As such, there are good reasons to stick to digital unless specific considerations should suggest otherwise; such considerations are not evident for this analysis.

The *Guardian* is consistently one of the more widely read online newspapers in the UK, and it has primarily faced competition for that crown from right-leaning newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph*. This predominance does not, of course, make it a complete representation of the debate on the British political left. The most notable alternative outlet is probably the *Independent*, which is now entirely online. The *Guardian's* sister weekly, the *Observer*, could also be counted as an alternative. However, the *Guardian's* website also publishes commentary and editorials from the *Observer*. As such, the analysed data will include content from the *Observer* if and when it fulfils the other criteria. One could have considered smaller weeklies or outlets further to the left, but none such have both a suitable ideological profile for this analysis or a sufficiently significant position in the British news landscape.

The stature of the *Guardian* on the centre-left of the media landscape makes it a useful weathervane with regards to that subsection of the

public conversation. The amount and kind of content it produces also yields a relatively comprehensive overview of both daily stories and the more general themes of the debate. Altogether, this makes the *Guardian* particularly useful source for detailed analyses of centre-left public debate. The *Guardian* leans further left than the most attractive alternatives, such as the *Independent*. It is, therefore, the most likely to capture the discourse on the centre-*left*, specifically. As we are following a 'most-likely' approach with regards to the emergence of new justifications, this makes the *Guardian* a higher priority for analysis for our purposes here.

Even so, one might assume the difference to be relatively small. As a consequence, one would expect that including other comparable outlets to the analysis would add relatively little new information. Sticking to one outlet seem preferable, given a goal of being comprehensive about the debate over an extended period, as well as a practical concern with how much data one can reasonably analyse within the scope of the report. As such, a singular focus on the *Guardian* is both warranted and justifiable for this analysis.

5.1.2. Data Collection

The texts analysed were collected from the BENCHMARK corpus.[1] 'Texts' here refers primarily to articles, leaders, commentary, and live blogs. 'Live blogs' can be understood summaries of the day's (political) events. They are given mostly paragraph-sized updates throughout the day to provide immediate coverage of things as they happen. Live blogs are not intended to be read from beginning to end like a traditional article, and as such, they are longer and tend to have a more disjointed form than the other genres. As a consequence, they tend to be somewhat more repetitive and to cover a range of disconnected topics; traits which one might deem to be drawbacks. If whole articles were the units of analysis, these

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[1] BENCHMARK (Benchmarking Brexit: Norway and the Legitimacy of UK-EU relations after Brexit) is a research project coordinated by Prof. Christopher Lord at ARENA, and funded by the Research Council of Norway from 2018 to 2021. The corpus contains a collection of media and parliamentary texts from Switzerland, the UK, and Norway; singled out and collected through data scraping for their relevance to the Brexit debate. The collection includes 24,900 texts from The Guardian's online version, collected through the newspaper's API service. The Guardian article collection stretches from November 4, 2014, to May 16, 2019.

considerations would likely have been grounds for exclusion. However, this is not the case here (see the next section), and live blogs are therefore included in this analysis.

Due to the method of data collection employed in building the corpus, only plain text was captured to file. Images and other content relating to audio-visual content or formatting was therefore nor directly available for coding. Tweets were a notable form of content lost to this process, as the *Guardian* include these via a Twitter plug-in. Tweets were mainly a feature of live blogs, which tended to be the genre where the loss of formatting was the most noticeable. Despite this, the vast majority of relevant content remained available as plain text. Relevant details beyond the plain text were for the most part accessible by visiting the original page when clarification was needed, but all the coding was done in the plain text format.

From the BENCHMARK corpus, texts were selected which contained *any* mention of 'Norway-plus', 'Common market 2.0', or 'EEA'; this being the primary vocabulary for referring to the Norway models. The search was made agnostic of capitalisation and yielded 487 texts in total. Subsequently, the data were filtered to fit the time frame set out for the project. It was decided to cover the period starting with the referendum, held on 23 June 2019, as this changed the basic premises of the entire Brexit debate and process. Indeed, the Norway models were probably more likely to be promoted by Eurosceptics than pro-Europeans before the referendum.

In the other end, an endpoint was introduced at April 7, 2019. This date was chosen to coincide with the House of Commons' series of indicative votes (i.e. indicating which model of relations they prefer), which concluded on April 1, 2019, and was also informed by the proximity to the expiration of the original deadline for Article 50 negotiations on March 28. It was opted to include one week of delay after the votes, as the ensuing debate was deemed to be a relevant part of that event. These votes were the last landmark event for discussing the EEA/Norway-plus models, even if some mention is more than likely to have occurred also after this endpoint. In practice, the analysed texts had publication dates ranging from June 26, 2016, to April 7, 2019. Of the initial set harvested from the corpus, 23 articles were cut, leaving 461 for analysis.

5.2 Claims Analysis

This qualitative coding draws in particular on Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham's (1999, 2010) work on *claims analysis*, as well as Pieter de Wilde's (2013) outline for a marriage between claims analysis and representative claims in what he has termed *representative claims analysis* (RCA). That is to say that, while the articles constituted the raw data for this report, they were not the primary unit of analysis. Instead, the fundamental units analysed were *claims*, which are units of text within the articles.

Claims analysis originates from social movement research, where it has mainly served to capture acts of political contention that go beyond what is captured by, e.g., protest event analysis. Such claims can take many forms, and for social movement research also extend beyond studies of media (Koopmans & Statham, 2010, p. 54). By the nature of this analysis, all claims are considered claims in the media. At the same time, many of the claims would, in practice, have been performed first in a different form. Such forms include speeches at a party convention, a tweet, or a parliamentary debate. It is primarily their presence in the media that makes them interesting for our purposes, however.

The main benefit of claims analysis over many other forms of content analysis which, for instance, mainly consider articles or authors, is the attention afforded to the polyphonic nature of texts. That is, it facilitates attention to the arrays of political actors, issues, stances, and frames, which may present themselves within a single text rather than taking it all to originate from one authorial voice (Koopmans & Statham, 2010, p. 54). It also makes available claims facing readers in contexts that may not otherwise be, substantially, about that topic. A live blog might, for instance, by covering some other irrelevant topic, but incidentally also include a relevant claim about the Norway models within it. This content might often be lost if articles were considered as holistic entities, as one would likely have regarded the live blog as irrelevant.

While there are strong arguments for considering claims analysis, this choice does come with a trade-off. By singling out the many voices within a text, claims analysis typically forgoes attention to the author's power in selecting, contextualising, and juxtaposing these elements according to their preferences. As a consequence, the approach risks underestimating

the agency and voices of the *Guardian* and its staff. This issue is somewhat accounted for in this report, however. Picking the *Guardian* to serve as a proxy for centre-left-wing debate, builds fundamentally on making assumptions, *a priori*, about the perspectives that inform their authorship and curatorial decisions. Emphasising authors' and editors' agency and power is, therefore, a core premise already at the point of data selection.

Koopmans and Statham (2010, pp. 54–55) propose that 'claim-making acts consist of public speech acts […] that articulate political demands, calls to action, proposals, or criticisms, which, actually or potentially affect the interests or integrity of the claimants or other collective actors'. This outline yields a unit – a claim – which they reduce into seven constitutive elements: (1) *Location* in space/time; (2) the *claimant*; (3) its *form*; (4) the *addressee*; (5) the *substantive issue* (what the claim is about); (6) the *object* ('who would be affected by the claim if it was realized[?]'); and (7) the claim's *justification* or framing.

By design, we take the substantive issue as well as the form of the claim to be given. The substantive issue is taken to be whether to opt for an EEA/Norway-plus model for the UK. The form can be understood as a call for or against implementing such a model. We may also treat the location to be texts published in the *Guardian* on the date of publication. This choice is less self-evident because – as previously noted – some claims in the *Guardian* are reports about claims, such as speeches at rallies, which the claimant initially presented in a different time and place. Ultimately, all that is knowable for our purposes here is that the reader of the claim has encountered it in the article, and so it makes the most sense to give primacy to that. The addressee, or audience, is the readership of the *Guardian*.

Besides a general stance (*for* or *against*) on the substantive issue, this leaves us with three basic units to consider, namely *claimant*, *object*, and *justification*. It is fairly evident, however, that the notion of the object, as defined by Koopmans and Statham, is hard to operationalise accurately. The definition on offer leaves open the possibility of many disparate 'objects', but it also leaves one open to contention over whether an actor or group is an 'object' in the suggested sense at all. Different observers' standards for 'being affected' can differ wildly, after all. This ambiguity makes the object, as outlined by Koopmans and Statham, a poor fit for this project. Koopmans' (2002, p. 43) added specificity about 'affectedness', by

emphasising that objects be affected 'materially', only exacerbates the issue. The material impact is relevant here, but so are more abstract principles and values people might hold.

The affinity between Koopmans and Statham's methodological framework and Saward's notion of the representative claim comes to the rescue. Rather than grappling with ill-defined *objects*, de Wilde (2013, pp. 286–287) suggests we turn to Saward and look at the *constituency* as a more operationalisable alternative. The constituency refers to some alleged actor or group of actors who hold shared traits, have shared interests deriving from those traits, and someone representing those interests. The representative may be, formally speaking, the claimant themselves, or some third party they propose. For this analysis, the claimants are assumed to be the representative.

From a theoretical standpoint, de Wilde's approach replaces Koopmans and Statham's idea of the 'object' as someone (materially) affected by the realisation of the claim, with Pitkin's (1967, pp. 8–9, emphasis in original) notion of the represented as someone 'present *in some sense* which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact', but emphasises Saward's empirical focus on representation as claims. In practice, Pitkin's criterion of *non-presence* was relaxed in this analysis. Claimants could thus be recorded as 'representing' themselves individually. This choice is not entirely in line with theoretical conceptions of representation, where one actor stands in for another but, as the represented is explicitly identified in the coding, this is not considered to be an issue.

By not taking the traditional institutional conception as a basis for the analysis here, one significant benefit of those approaches is made unavailable. The benefit in question is the ability to measure constituencies' responsiveness to would-be representatives. Put simply, if a group does not feel that a would-be representative has filled their role satisfactorily, one could from an institutional perspective expect that it would show in, e.g., elections. The availability of this option is notwithstanding the ontological concerns about whether we can take constituencies as given; that issue is often tolerable from the perspective of methodology. An indisputable definition of 'women' might not be available but, for a given project, one might well argue that *some* definition could be sufficiently good to serve as an operationalisation.

Meanwhile, although Saward (2008, p. 94) offers recognition of the idea that representation is also about 'whether [representative] claims and presentations are accepted or not', his approach does not sufficiently conceptualise responsiveness or the factors that shape audience and constituency responses (Severs, 2010). Nor does the constructive turn in thinking about representation which Saward represents sufficiently account for whether 'the representative [is] authorised by the represented and accountable to its interests' (Disch, 2015, p. 488). There is no evident alternate mechanism that may consistently replace election and similar phenomena. While Saward has moved us forward in problematising the ontological nature of constituencies, his notion of representation also still rests heavily on emphasising the representative rather than the represented.

Consequently, it is neither possible nor attempted here to measure with any accuracy the extent to which specific types of claims were accepted or not. Two points deriving from the data selection are therefore assumed to ensure the relevance of the claims as representations salient to the mainstream left. First, in many cases, the very fact of uttering claims in *the Guardian* ought to garner at least some modicum of approval for claimants. This approval derives from being selected for representation in *the Guardian*, which has an identity-generating and agenda-setting capacity in its own right. Second, any semi-persistent claim over time can be assumed to have received some sort of acceptance to encourage its reproduction over time. This assumption presumes at least some partial selection dynamic to claims made in the public sphere. Specifically, one expects that claims which are perceived to be non-performing (receiving no acceptance) are less likely to be reiterated.

5.3 Coding

5.3.1. Claims Coding in Practice

For this report, claims were coded with a particular eye for four elements, namely the *claimant*, the intended *constituency*, a *stance* on EEA/Norway-plus, and finally a *justification* for said stance. These claims were not required to correspond to a specific length or grammatical entity, such as sentences or paragraphs. Instead, the aim was to cover all the constituent elements, and as little else as possible. The coding was carried out in a two-step process, after an outline by Shapiro and Markoff (1998, pp. 73–

96). Shapiro and Markoff have been chosen here because their work has a close connection to the conception of claims analysis (Koopmans & Statham, 1999, p. 208). Their approach also coincides well with the open nature of the data, in the sense that one cannot necessarily know the range of potential values beforehand. Consequently, the first stage of this process involved coding in an 'open' manner. That is to say that while the primary unit was a claim defined by having the four codable categories present, potential values for these categories would be added as they were encountered.

One should not read 'open' to mean being entirely prior to any theoretical assumptions. Such a claim would not be credible, nor would such an approach be desirable. In practice, all justifications were coded in three subcategories. One category, *principle*, captured value-based assessments of the Norway models, thought to reflect references to diffuse support/scepticism. A second, pragmatism, captured justifications that referenced material/practical justifications for the claimant's stance concerning the Norway models. Finally, a third category, *policy*, captured justifications that did not make broad assessments about the models but, instead, based their arguments on references to one policy or policy area. On the most granular level, the categories draw on several considerations discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4. A particular effort was made to keep the coding conversant with Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006) orders of worth and the 'dimensions' outlined by de Wilde et al. (2014).

Shapiro and Markoff (1998, pp. 83–84) note the risk that this open approach to the coding process could yield coded material that is too unstructured to enable analysis. Several countermeasures are put in place to counteract this. First, this issue is one of the main reason why some modicum of prior theoretical grounding is desirable, as it helps structure expectations and understanding of what might be salient values to code for and what will not be of value. Second, the definition of claims in terms of required constituent elements put significant limits on the kind of content that may be coded. Third, by ordering the codes hierarchically, so that a claimant (*a*) that is a politician (*p*) for Labour (*lab*) is rendered *a.p.lab*, a constant mind is paid to the situation of a given value relative to others. Consequently, relatively comparable degrees of specificity are ensured. Finally, regular revisions of the coding during the process was performed

to weed out non-performing categories or to redefine categories as a better understanding of the data arose.

The purpose of this admittedly labour-intensive approach was to allow for a more concrete and context-aware scheme by not committing wholesale to a theoretical framework beforehand. One could thereby avoid shoehorning units into pre-defined categories which might later prove to be a poor fit. One may also avoid the alternative of leaving out analytically interesting units for lack of an appropriate pre-defined value by which to tag it. By dropping the claim into a big and abstract sack immediately, it would also have been hard to retrieve the claim later in case the chosen framework proved unsuitable or if one were to desire to compare the same data according to multiple configurations.

Subsequently, the second step of the coding process entailed recoding the data into theoretically salient categories. Stopping at the first stage would invariably yield far too many, and far too small, groups of values to be useful. Moreover, in performing this process after the initial coding, as previously implied, a given theoretical framework's degree of salience could be assessed more easily. It also opens for considering the data from different perspectives, as recoding the initial codes several times according to different perspectives is entirely possible.

5.3.2. Software

In terms of tools, the coding was done in a simple qualitative data analysis (QDA) software called Taguette (Rampin, 2019). Taguette is mainly dedicated to the central task of QDA, namely highlighting and tagging text extracts according to categories (i.e. 'codes'). This software was chosen over more advanced QDA alternatives such as Nvivo or MaxQDA for its ease of exporting the coded data into widely accessible file formats such as CSV or Excel spreadsheets. Other alternatives rely on proprietary file formats which are difficult to access with third-party software. Much of the added functionality of the advanced software alternatives were either redundant for this project, or it could be replaced and improved upon by employing third-party software.

Given that Taguette has quite limited native opportunities for analysis, much of the data handling after the initial coding was done in R[2]. R originated as a programming language aimed at quantitative analyses and has an extensive collection of user-developed packages to manage data management and visualisation. It has also come to sport many features for natural language processing and handling natural text as data, including some solutions for QDA. This functionality went beyond both what was expected to be needed and what eventually came to be used. However, the flexibility of using R over the QDA software mentioned above was considered safer, as it was thought to ensure that later calls with regards to the analysis could be made on substantial grounds rather than due to technical limitations.

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[2] See R: A language and environment for statistical computing. R Foundation for Statistical Computing (3.6.0) [Computer software]. https://www.R-project.org/.

Chapter 6

Results and Analysis

6.1. Overview of Data

6.1.1. On the Precision of the Coding Process

Of the 461 texts analysed 147 contained codable claims and, in total, 206 claims were gathered. In other words, only about a third of the texts analysed contained codable claims and the texts that did contain claims averaged at about 1.4 claims. The highest number of claims in any one text was five, and only ten texts had three or more claims. Six of these ten were live blogs, which are a considerably longer format than the others. As such, the density of codable claims relative to the amount of text under consideration was limited.

Given these results, it is worth reflecting on whether the approach of capturing claims, as outlined in the previous chapter, can be said to have been successful. The main contributing factor seems to have been the initial rough filtering of articles from the BENCHMARK corpus through keywords. 'EEA' in particular yielded a lot of false positives, in the sense that they did not discuss models for future EU-UK relationship. Instead, they often contained mention of 'EEA-workers' when discussing, for instance, the plight of foreign National Health Service (NHS) staff after the referendum (departures from the UK increasing and recruitment

falling). Overall, the fundamental premise for the coding was a goal of capturing explicit evaluations of the Norway models. During the coding process, the approach did permit the coding of most of the explicit claims encountered, and there were no issues with irrelevant content qualifying for coding according to the outlined framework. As such, we may consider the process to have been successful.

The process did not capture implicit claims, which due to, e.g., practices of formulating certain content in a language which suggested journalistic/editorial neutrality were quite common. A mere description of the impact of different models on GDP growth would not have been coded, for instance, unless paired with a decisive message arguing about choosing one or the other model. One could easily read these as messages that the model with the least loss/highest gain was preferable, however, unless additional information was provided to nuance the picture. In general, these represent evaluations of European integration in a very loose sense, and so their omission was a minor issue at best. There was little to suggest, moreover, that somehow incorporating these indirect claims would have markedly changed the central points in the analysis below.

6.1.2. Timing of Claims

Diving into the data, we find that in terms of the publication date, the analysed texts clustered around specific events in the Brexit process. Given the number of false positives in the original body of data, this could be misleading, but the same trend is visible when analysing only articles containing one or more claims. Generally, it would seem that attention to the models appears to have grown in the wake of perceived defeats for the Conservative government. While it follows from this that the Norway models only captured the interest of observers in intermittent periods, it would appear that their irregular popularity had less to do with changes in formal opposition to them and more to do with their feasibility as a probable outcome of the broader Brexit process. Whenever harder Brexit options fronted by the government appeared to falter, the Norway models resurged, presumably as attempts to exploit the opportunity window generated by outward signs of government weakness.

Four key events are identifiable in particular. First, we may count the surprising outcome of the general election on June 8, 2017. The Tories' predicted landslide victory turned into a surprising loss of their majority on election day. After some uncertainty, the party eventually became, somewhat controversially, reliant on the support of the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to keep governing. Second, in May 2018, the Conservative Government faced several humiliating defeats in the House of Lords as the peers voted among other things to request that it be the Government's official goal to negotiate for continued membership of the EEA.[3]

The third 'event' can be dated to November of 2018 when the UK government arrived at an agreement with the EU. This agreement drew significantly on a UK government white paper from July the same year. The white paper was colloquially known as the *Chequers Plan*, named after the PM's country house *Chequers*, where she first presented it (Department for Exiting the European Union, 2018). Quickly, the accepted narrative in many corners became that *May's deal* would never pass a vote in the Commons, in turn resulting in a perception of a Government defeat. The actual vote on ratification was not brought to Parliament by the Government until later, and its formal defeat was less influential. The publication of the *Common Market 2.0* (Powell & Halfon, 2019) report by the informal parliamentary cross-party Norway Plus Group in January occurred at the tail end of this 'event'. Finally, as the parliamentary impasse became increasingly evident throughout spring of 2019, a series of 'indicative votes' (those indicating the endpoint of data collection for this analysis) was eventually called for respectively March 28, 2019, and April 1, 2019. Among the models voted on in these sessions were the *Common Market 2.0* as proposed by independent (former Tory) MP Nick Boles and regular membership in EFTA-EEA, as proposed by Tory MP George Eustice (Walker, 2019).

The period from the third event through to the fourth was where the texts indicate people paid the most attention paid to the Norway models. Talk of these models as actual contenders, maybe even the only real contenders to be the final Brexit outcome, typified this bout of attention. The renewed

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[3] This decision had no formal bearing as the House of Commons eventually struck it down, but it still amounted to a loss of face for Theresa May.

faith seems to have derived less from the models' inherent popularity, however, and more from the apparent collapse, one by one, of all other contending models. At the same time, the number of articles containing claims did not quite follow suit. This 'paradox' derives from a more general shift in the Brexit coverage taking place from around the New Year of 2019. A general de-emphasis on the virtues and issues of the various models discussed typified this shift. Instead, observers paid close attention to which of the models were plausible outcomes at all in terms of *realpolitik*. Discussions, that is to say, turned towards trying to figure out whether any models were more likely to pass a vote from the perspective of parliamentary arithmetic, party strategic considerations, and procedural esoterica.

This development can hardly be said to be surprising. The political death of May's deal and the onrush of the original deadline for the Article 50 negotiations, due on March 29, 2019, meant the default outcome of a 'no deal'-Brexit (i.e. WTO terms) increasingly loomed as a real possibility. Pressure consequently built towards sorting out how to reach *some* agreement, as only a relatively small minority of MPs were willing to entertain the idea of a no-deal exit. These debates were not codable in that they did constitute claims about feasibility rather than the virtues of the models per se. They were therefore deemed not to be evaluations of the models and therefore not codable. These debates, moreover, supplanted the older debates on virtues, rather than expand on them and so the relatively large amount of discussion yielded a low density of claims.

6.2 Claimants and Constituents

6.2.1. A Debate for Politicians

Although opting to look at media coverage rather than, e.g. parliamentary debates, was intended to recognise that public discourse consists of more than politicians, it was politicians' voices that dominated (see Error! R eference source not found.). 127 (62 per cent) of all coded claims could be attributed to actors representing political parties; almost exclusively current or former MPs or peers. In terms of membership, 112 (88 per cent) of the politicians' claims were assigned to Labour (61) or the Conservatives (51). The Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Scottish Government, which was SNP controlled throughout the period, were

responsible for a total of 6 claims. The Norwegian Conservative party (*Høyre*) were credited with 3 claims; this was the dominant party in a string of Norwegian coalition governments to sit in this period. Besides this, little attention was paid to minor parties in the UK, to devolved governments and parliaments, or European politicians. The presence of Norwegian politicians, but comparatively few other Europeans likely follows from that it is this report's focus to look at the Norway models rather than the Brexit debate in its totality. Norway would have had a particular interest and a central role in the implementation of a British EFTA-EEA membership, should it have become the chosen destination. Given that Norway was not formally engaged in the EU-UK negotiations, moreover, they both had a freer position to speak publicly, and incentive to do so in order to communicate their interests.
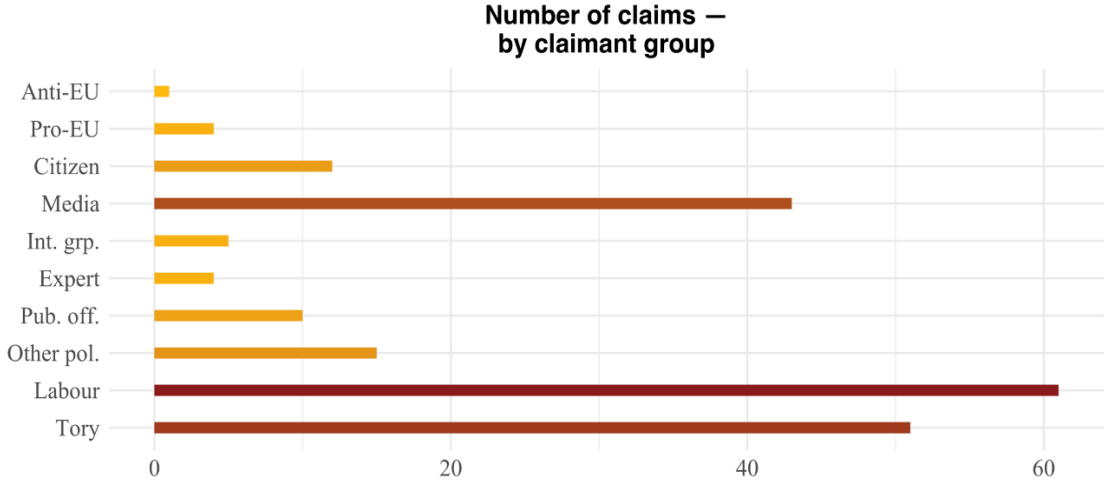
Figure 1

It was all the same surprising to find so little input from Northern Irish and Scottish perspectives in particular, given how relevant these models could be, both with the Irish border question in mind as well as Holyrood's desire to uphold close ties to the EU. Moreover, given the notable pro-Norway models/European integration angle carried by the *Guardian*, one would have thought that these countries, whose Brexit votes both yielded Remain majorities, would have been of interest to cover.

The coverage of the Norway models was not mainly shaped by active efforts from the *Guardian,* however. Judging by the origin of the claims, it would seem that the paper mostly did not actively seek out claims about

these models. Instead, the majority of claims featured either as asides in articles primarily dedicated to other topics, or they were 'second-hand' – reported from Parliamentary debates or other settings where media are typically present and monitoring as part of their daily routine. Given that much of the daily life of UK national politics takes place in a 'London bubble' where major UK-wide parties like Labour and the Tories are the dominant voices, and Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish voices more or less by definition are less available, this might explain the general lack of voices speaking for the devolved nations. Except for England, that is, which has no devolved governance structure of its own, and the interests of which are often more or less conflated with British interests as expressed in Westminster.

At 43 claims (21 per cent), media were the only other major voice in the debate. About three-quarters of claims by media could be ascribed to the Guardian's own commentary or editorial pieces. Claims ascribed to reporting journalists, competing outlets, or other media actors, are sporadic to the point of being negligible. A caveat here, noted in Chapter 4, is that tweets were not reproduced by the analysed material. As commentary from actors in competing outlets often took the form of tweets in live blogs, the data may have been slightly skewed towards underreporting cases of media claims. Occasional checks of the tweets on the published webpages did not imply that codable claims were a frequent occurrence in this form, however, nor were these tweets so frequent as to make the issue particularly concerning.

The overall picture shows that while looking at media outlets, in theory, opens up the stage for considering participants other than politicians in the public debate, the actual diversity of voices on offer remains relatively narrow with regards to discussing the Norway model. In part, we may explain this by the report's emphasis on relationships in terms of models. These are of great importance to politicians who have the task of delivering a holistic solution to the Brexit-conundrum. Most ordinary citizens, however, and also to many interest groups, would more likely only need to formulate what they wanted or did not want from Brexit in less comprehensive terms. Ruling this out is not entirely possible, given that the raw data were selected based on looking for texts that did discuss

models, but a general predominance of media and politicians was evident also for content that did not warrant coding.

To complete the picture, we can sum up with the following categories: 12 claims were attributed to *citizens*, which would imply people speaking in a personal capacity either in an interview or in the letters section. 10 claims could be attributed to *public officials*, almost entirely owing to pronouncements from Mark Carney and Jens Weidman; heads of the UK and German central banks respectively. *Interest groups* were responsible for 5 claims, while *experts* accounted for 4. Think tanks specifically promoting *pro-European* positions were responsible for 4 claims, while the only dedicated *pro-Brexit* organisation represented was the Vote Leave campaign with 1 claim.

6.2.2. Speaking on Behalf of 'Everyone'

The expectation that politicians and national media would resort to present their claims as representing fairly broad constituencies seem reflected in the results yielded from coding for constituents. Two categories accounted for 85 per cent of the claims. 142 (69 per cent) of the claims in question were ascribed to a category termed *UK*, a catch-all category containing references to the UK, the British people, or which spoke for some broad, ill-defined *we* or *us*. An additional 35 (17 per cent) claims presented themselves to be speaking on behalf of 'voters'. Almost invariably these were references to referendum voters, which is to say that, although it generated more interest in the models for a period, the 2017 general election did little to alter conceptions of what British voters desired. The referendum remained the primary reference point for these claims on behalf of voters throughout the period investigated. We could read this finding as an indication that referenda tend to be 'sticky' in their perceived role as representations of the will of voters even as new feasible benchmarks come along.

Of all claims attributed to politicians, 90 per cent fell into the two categories mentioned above. Save for one claim presented to be on behalf of UK businesses, all claims by Conservatives fit into either category; these were likely particularly to appeal to 'catch-all' constituencies given their position as the governing party. Meanwhile, Labour politicians claimed to speak on behalf of these categories 93 per cent of the time. At 75 per cent,

third parties were slightly more particularistic. Claims originating from media are slightly more varied, though they as well 'represented' these categories 75 per cent of the time.

While *voter* is, nominally speaking, a more clearly defined category than the *UK* catch-all category, there is reason to think of the two as more or less overlapping. In either case, claimants who suggested they speak on behalf of these constituencies offered little or no substantiation as to why their claims should be accepted to represent voters or the British public. With specific regards to *voters* as a constituency, there is a trend towards hard Brexiters framing the voters' will in terms of the majority that voted to Leave, offering no recognition to any variance in opinion behind that vote. Meanwhile, the claimants promoting the Norway models emphasised how one should also understand the *voters'* intent in terms of the 48 per cent that voted to Remain.

These broader, and often vague forms of representation arguably reinforced cleavages along a pro-European/Eurosceptic line by portraying the issue as a question of what is right for '*us'* as a country-wide totality. As such, the debate over whether Brexit was a good idea took premise in the assumption, on either side, that the virtue of any given model applied to all British people in equal measure. The notion that different models may have had a differentiated impact on different groups of people became less pronounced as the specific interests of specific groups, as well as consequences for these, went underspecified. As such, there is little trace of an effort to equate the conflict over Brexit to any other political cleavage.

Referring to broad constituencies such as the *people* or *voters*, while simultaneously defining these constituencies in terms of specific opinions could also be seen as relevant to the polarised atmosphere of the Brexit debate. Insofar as a reader agrees with the claimant, these underspecified claims might yield a sense of being in the majority, and consequently to derive a sense of right from that. This sensation would be particularly likely in cases where the same message is repeated by speakers of different political persuasions, giving, at the very least, the illusion of a broad agreement.

6.2.3. 'Everyone' vs. the Tories

We may also argue that a sense of belonging to a majority may be reinforced by what groups claimants typically makes a given claim. Generally, those who spoke against the Norway models, arguing instead for a harder Brexit, constituted a more uniform set of voices than those who promoted the Norway models. Almost three-quarters of all claims by Conservatives were negative to the models, and they almost exclusively argued for a harder Brexit. Meanwhile, the majority of claims attributed to any other sizable claimant group was supportive of the Norway models (Figure 2). Given the dominance of Labour and the media in terms of the sheer quantity of claims, this makes them the principal 'owners' of the pro-Norway models position. However, they had a more diverse cast of claimants backing them, a diversity perhaps made possible specifically by how the question of European integration cuts across traditional cleavages.
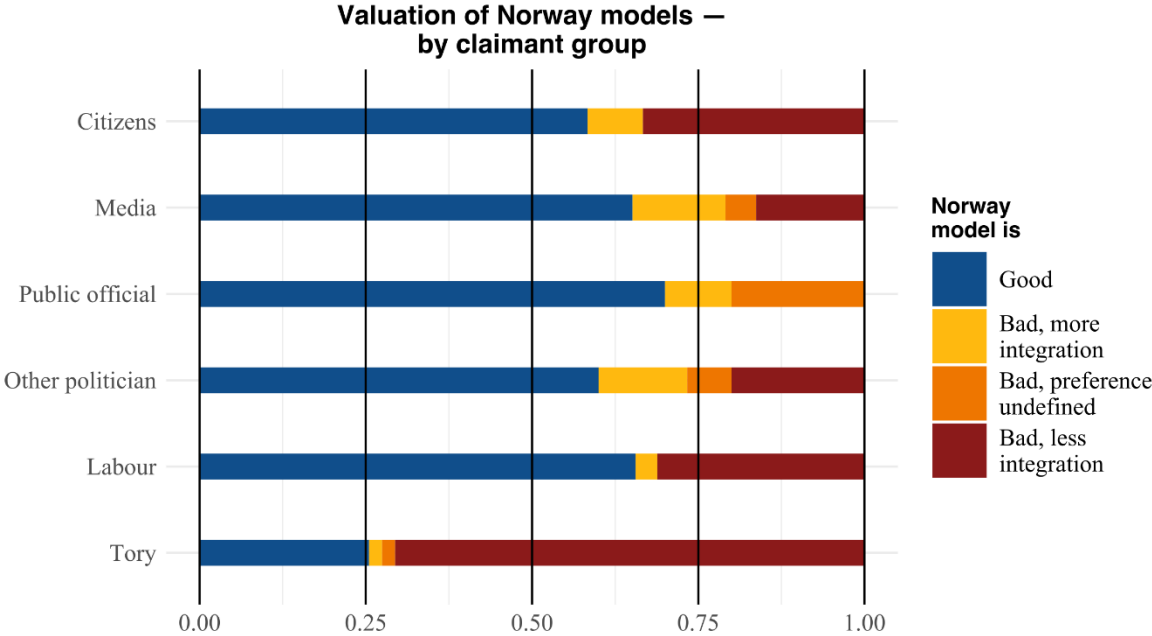
Figure 2: Excluding groups with < 10 claims

If we invert the categories, we find that 51 per cent of all claims calling for a harder Brexit than the Norway models could be attributed to Conservatives, granting them a significant degree of ownership to that stance. Labour politicians were responsible for 27 per cent of claims promoting a harder Brexit. However, these Labour claimants often framed their claims as positions that were against their personal preferences. They

were made necessary in the grander scheme of things, however, in order to respond appropriately to the referendum. Often the motivation, implicit or explicit, seems understood to have been a fear of losing seats in their Leave-voting ridings come future elections. As such, what we might call the 'hard Brexit' position is defined by the aggregate of claims as a preoccupation of the Conservative Party. This party, it is worth noting, would not typically be seen in a favourable light by readers of the *Guardian*. As such, while there is a considerable presence of claims promoting a 'hard Brexit', the majority of those are coded, by reference to the context of British party politics, to be antagonistic claims, or as arguments coming from would-be allies whose hands are tied.

Despite the antagonistic 'casting' of Brexiters, we find neither UKIP nor the Brexit Party represented to any significant extent in the texts.[4] Notable non-Tory pro-Brexit organisations and personalities (e.g. Nigel Farage) are similarly barely represented among the claimants at all. Possibly, these actors became more intermittent participants in the broader debate following the referendum as the Conservative Party increasingly gained ownership of Brexit. This supposition would not explain their absence entirely, however. While UKIP, having achieved their goal and suffering from infighting, was marginalised in the post-referendum debate, Farage did remain visible in the landscape through a radio show he hosted at the LBC radio channel, through various other media appearances, as well as some high-profile stunts like launching the Brexit Party.

One might suggest that these actors were not particularly concerned with the Norway models per se, though non-*Guardian* examples to the contrary seem easy to come by (see, e.g., Parfitt, 2016; Perring, 2017 for examples of Farage addressing the Norway models). The most likely, it would seem, is that these voices generally received less attention from the *Guardian* than they did from the media landscape in general. This lack of attention could result from the *Guardian's* lack of actively pursuing stories about the Norway models, but it could also be a more concrete editorial decision not to feature these actors. Either way, this contributed significantly to isolating the Conservative Party as *the* party of hard Brexit.

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[4] One claim could be attributed to UKIP, part of the 'Other politicians' category in the data as they are presented here.

Meanwhile, the coverage casts Labour (35 per cent) and media (25 per cent; primarily associated with the *Guardian*) as the leading proponents of the Norway models. As noted, what typified this stance was more diversity, with public officials, third parties, and private citizens represented to a higher degree. There is also a significant presence of claims promoting the Norway models by Tories (12 per cent) who, from the claims credited to them, would appear to be personally convinced of the models' preferability. Labour's size as an organisation and significance for British politics necessarily inflates its presence. However, its degree of ownership to the Norway models could be said to be somewhat odd, given that these models were never the official party line, and that there also existed several claims, attributed to senior party members including Jeremy Corbyn, which actively rejected these models. The resulting image, nevertheless, seems to that of a trans-ideological coalition of the willing, headed by Labour, intent on standing up against a specifically Tory hard Brexit. As noted, we may read this diversity as a counter to the Brexiter narrative of 'the will of the people'. Occasionally this notion was reflected in arguments suggesting the Norway models could be a consensus solution that offers a little bit for everyone. Take, for instance, this claim presented in a commentary by a regular *Guardian*-columnist, '[…] given that the referendum two years ago was so close, the EEA position would seem a fair reflection of the will of the people' (Freedland, 2018). For the most part, however, this framing was rarely explicitly recognised.

6.3 Justifications

6.3.1 Standards of Justification

As outlined in Chapter 4, rather than categorising claims according to whether claimants justify their stances concerning specific or diffuse support, claims were coded into the three classes *principle*, *pragmatism*, and *policy*. The distribution of these categories according to whether they were invoked by claimants promoting the Norway models or a 'hard Brexit' option is reproduced in Figure 3. In this schema, justifications which supported or rejected the Norway model with regards to specific European policy outcomes/preferences were coded as *policy* justifications. Policy justifications made up 12 per cent of the claims and were consequently the smallest of the three categories by a wide margin. It included Corbynite concerns that single market membership would

prevent would-be efforts of renationalisation and state aid and, most substantially, concerns with immigration policy. Policy justifications tended to focus on a clear and delineated idea of what area they wanted to see outcomes in, and in this sense, they tended to reflect specific support.[5]
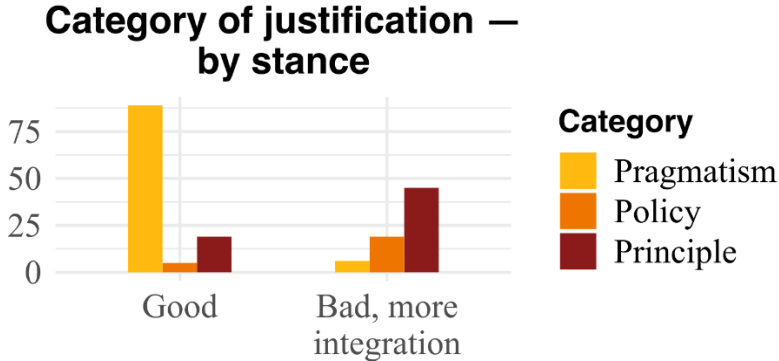
Category of justification — by stance

Figure 3: pro-Norway plus vs. 'hard Brexit' stances

Justifications coded as being a matter of *principle* instead related to immaterial and value-oriented concerns that were broader or more fundamental than worries over specific policy areas. At 40 per cent of claims, this was the second biggest category. Overwhelmingly these reflected on questions of sovereignty and delivering the people's will as expressed through referendum/elections. Rarer examples also involved reference to European values and identity, among other things. These justifications tended to correspond to diffuse support in that they took a stance on polity rather than policy and were often also 'diffuse' in the sense that they would appeal to an abstract moral concept without much explicit effort to substantiate the reasoning behind why this or that concept would be applicable. Claimants might argue, for instance, that the Norway models constituted a threat to, e.g., British sovereignty. Often, however, a concretisation of why these allegations were warranted, or how an alternative model would perform better, were omitted.

Pragmatic justifications in this schema were justifications that pertained to practical or material benefits of accepting or rejecting the Norway models, but which did not pertain to specific policy positions or outcomes per se. This category was the bigger of the three at 49 per cent. Typical examples

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[5] See the discussion about immigration in the section on 'hollow justifications'.

of this category would be arguments suggesting that remaining within the single market would avoid chaos or avoid economic losses or, as in the claim ascribed to former Labour leader Ed Miliband below, a loss of British jobs.

> [Ed Miliband] said there was a strong argument for the UK to stay both in the customs union and the European Economic Area (EEA) after Brexit. He urged Labour to support a Lords amendment passed last week seeking continued UK membership of the EEA. 'The Labour position was not to support that', Miliband said. 'And the warning for Jeremy Corbyn is that if he's not very careful, he will be the midwife of a hard Brexit that threatens the living standards of the very people that he says he wants to stand up to represent'.
>
> (Walker, 2018)

While there were usually tacit assumptions about both principles and policies underlying these justifications, they were harder to separate into a specific/diffuse dichotomy. On the one hand, they differed from specific support in that they tended to rely on passive or non-specified qualities of the model they promoted. Reduced growth was, for instance, often cited as an undesirable consequence of leaving the single market. Claimants rarely elaborated on what specific problems the thought would lead to growth falling, however, and such elaboration, when provided, usually invoked the sheer size of the single market, rather than any initiatives or actions taken by actors relating to the EU/EEA as such.

At the same time, these claims had a 'specific' component in that implicit in an argument for staying in a Norway-like relationship for the economic benefits lay an argument for leaving the moment that arithmetic was no longer favourable. As such, these justifications perhaps mirrored specific support the most. At least it did so in the sense that support/scepticism still rested directly on actual performance rather than some inherent legitimacy ascribed to European institutions as a policymaking actor in Britain. Given the counterproposal by Brexiters such as Boris Johnson of global British economy unshackled from European restrictions and free to negotiate numerous new trade deals with countries all over the world (Johnson, 2016), that arithmetic may not have been in the pro-Europeans' favour, at least in the eyes of many laypeople.

A related feature in this regard was the tendency for pragmatic justifications invoke a tone of alarm over what might happen if the UK did not go along with the claimant's preference. In this, they mimicked the aforementioned 'Plan B'-factor identified by Hobolt & Brouard (2011) among French voters in the 2005 European Constitutional Treaty-referendum. Take the claim made on behalf of the SNP, attributed to MP Stephen Gethins: '*The SNP has been consistently clear; the only way to protect the economy, businesses, and the interests of the UK is by negotiating to keep us all in the single market and customs union*' (Greenfield & Sparrow, 2018);[6] or the claim ascribed to Labour MP John Mann, warning about what might become of Labour if they did not go through with a Brexit that was harder than the Norway models: '*MP John Mann warned that Labour would lose seats like his in Bassetlaw if it was perceived that the party had 'watered down' its Brexit position'*. (Elgot, 2018). In either case, their stance was justified not by the would-be virtues of what they proposed but by the danger it would represent to some vital interest to choose anything else.

This angle of framing has considerable consequences for how we interpret the strong pro-European bent of the claims found. A full 89 (79 per cent) out 115 coded claims in support of the Norway models employ pragmatic justifications. This overrepresentation suggests that while readers of the *Guardian's* content on the Norway models were quite likely to encounter claims which promoted these models, the majority of this promotion took a decidedly anti-Brexit tone, more so than a pro-European one. One should note that pragmatic justifications and anti-Brexit frames were not a one-to-one overlap. At the same time, the relationship is sufficient to argue that we can read the prominence of pragmatic justifications among claims supporting the Norway models as an indicator that concerns about a (Tory-led) Brexit were the more frequent. Given that most justifications for the Norway models were pragmatic and given that pragmatic justification tended to be anti-Brexit, it follows that pro-European efforts to make a positive case for the virtues European integration as a project were less frequent. Indeed, through claimants' focus on structural features

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[6] All cited claims are reported verbatim unless otherwise indicated. Some claims feature in shortened form, however, to highlight the most relevant portion of the text and to ensure brevity and legibility.

like the size of the single market, the idea of European institutions as actors with independent agency and influence was often overlooked.

In this sense, the justifications matched the attitude – the positivity towards a big free trading market, but a rejection of the 'ever closer union' in most other areas – that has earned the UK its reputation as an awkward partner. While 19 claims did defend the Norway models with regards to principles, half of these were accounted for by references to democracy, primarily arguing that the Norway models were the appropriate response to the Brexit-referendum outcome, rather than any concretely defined virtuous features of the models as such. They were the right answer, but not necessarily an exciting answer.

The higher prevalence of justifications on the grounds of principle among claims promoting *more* integration than the Norway models (remaining a member, effectively) does not change this picture much. This limited relevance derives from the tendency for such claims to be rejections of the Norway models, specifically. Such rejections were offered on account of a perceived loss of decision-making power through the Norway models without gaining enough in terms of autonomy: '*Britain would have to operate EU rules, without a vote or a veto, for both goods and services – becoming a rule taker – making it largely pointless to leave*' (Mandelson, 2019). As such, they were not value-based defences of integration so much as they took issue with a specific feature of the Norway models. This juxtaposition (pro-EU but anti-Norway models) substantiates the concern that some actors might see the Norway models as solutions with particular attributes that made them undesirable regardless of stance on European integration. This special status would weaken their position as proxies for European integration. However, at 9 per cent of the claims, this line of argumentation had a quite limited presence.

This framing of the Norway models sometimes summed up as the 'worst of possible worlds' (Elgot & Walker, 2017), also seem to have mostly been particular to committed Remainers. Although occasionally also invoking the same angle, similarly, justified claims for a harder Brexit usually did not distinguish between the Norway modes and European integration: '*The UK did not recently vote for a slightly beefed up version of Mr Cameron's attempted renegotiation with the EU. We voted to leave, to take back control of our laws, our money and our borders*' (Henley & Elgot, 2016). As such, the

models seem to have fulfilled their use as a proxy for opinions on European integration as a broader phenomenon, though the data yield limited useful information on hardcore Remainers specifically.

Concerning Morgan's (2005) forms of justification, it seems that the case for the Norway models predominantly took the shape of *reconciliatory* or *reformative* claims. The claims sought to reassure audiences that the status quo was still the preferable situation, or they argued that the UK could resolve its issues with the status quo could through small adjustments. Whether the Norway models could be said to represent a minor change in practice is questionable; any form of Brexit would entail significant change. It remains the case, however, that the Norway models were consistently presented by defenders and detractors alike as a continuity option. Claimants often appeared to downplay the degree to which the models constituted any meaningful change from EU membership. Instead, the disagreement revolved around whether such continuity was desirable.

6.3.2 Hollow Justifications

Nominally speaking, the debate featured justifications that adhered to many of the dimensions or orders of worth. For instance are all five dimensions proposed by de Wilde et al. (2014) – *democracy*, *culture*, *necessity*, *economy*, *security* – are identifiable in the coded data, though some dimensions were decidedly rarer than others. However, a sizable number of identified themes did not correspond to one such dimension of European integration in particular. The fit of these broad dimensions was therefore inappropriate in many cases. The third-largest category of justifications, for instance, were ones that pertained to *immigration*; mainly understood in the context of freedom of movement. When specified, these arguments tended to lean towards the economical – EU immigrants took jobs from British worker and deflated wage levels, or they were essential to the UK economy.

The contentiousness around migration in recent decades has not merely been an economic concern, however. It has also drawn considerably on argumentation about culture and security. Even if the issue was not usually framed in those terms in the *Guardian*, it is evident from the broader Brexit culture and security informed how the British understood the issue. The row over Nigel Farage's notorious 'anti-migrant poster' during the referendum campaign had undertones playing on security and

culture more than the economy, for instance (Wright, 2016b). These arguments would have remained frequent talking points long after the referendum, but mainly in other fora than the *Guardian*. In this light, justifications for claimants' attitudes to the Norway models often become harder to decipher.

Many of the claims that pertained to immigration often failed to substantiate what aspect of immigration that was the primary concern. Accordingly, there is no straight-forward way, with reference to frameworks like de Wilde et al.'s (2014), of categorising the following claim attributed to Prime Minister Theresa May:

> I've been very clear about my position, we won't be in the customs union […] What you see in the political declaration is what would be a deal for the United Kingdom that is not Norway, it is not Canada, it is a more ambitious free trade agreement than Canada, and it ends free movement – which Norway doesn't do.
>
> (Murray, 2018)

What the perceived goal was of ending free movement went unspecified, and so it was unclear whether it intended to pertain to economy, security, culture, or something else.

Similarly, many of the claims presented in defence of the Norway models highlight their ability to provide *continuity* (15 claims) or *access* to various programmes (8). These categories could pertain to de Wilde et al.'s (2014) dimension of 'necessity'; proponents might see access to many EU agencies and programmes as a way to help manage transnational policy issues. It could also speak to economic growth, and in the case of programmes like Erasmus+, one might even propose to think in terms of a cultural dimension. In practice, the question cannot be answered in most cases because the claimants rarely defined what parts of the integration project they would like to continue accessing. They also rarely substantiated on who might derive what benefit from that access.

De Wilde et al. (2014) operate with the term 'diffuse' to deal with claims that are insufficiently defined for categorisation. In order to avoid confusion, the phenomenon described in the preceding paragraphs will be referred to as 'hollow claims'. That said, the definition by de Wilde et al.

has an affinity with Easton's (1975) use of 'diffuse' in that such evaluations are treated by de Wilde et al. as indicators of diffuse Euroscepticism, which is to say what they equate diffuse evaluations with diffuse scepticism. A similar assumption also underbuilds how Galpin and Trenz' (2018) arrive at their differentiation, discussed in Chapter 4, between British media's tendency to critique polity and German media's critique of policy.

We can, in some instances, apply the same logic to hollow claims. However, it seems inappropriate, in this context, to make an equation between the 'diffuseness' of claims and support. Claimants typically offered some degree of specificity in that a claim was, for instance, specifically about immigration. The claims usually also carried an expectation about policy outcomes, such as reduced immigration numbers; claimants often only delineated the issue in along broad lines suggesting 'there is too much immigration'. Insofar as we can say that claimants provided a benchmark or criterion to test against at all, consequently, those tended to underspecify what level of immigration would be acceptable. They also failed to specify what reduced immigration as a policy would have to achieve in order for them to consider it a success. Immigration rarely got highlighted as the problem itself, after all, but was portrayed as the cause of other problems. In this sense, there is a considerable proportion of claims that seem to walk the borderlands, at the very least, of diffuse and specific attitudes to European integration.

We might also consider the function of these hollow justifications in terms of reaching an agreement, however. Presented, for instance, with a hollow justification which highlighted access to EU programmes and institutions, some readers might have found their desire for security sated by the premise of remaining a party to Europol and similar bodies. Others would feel their concerns about losing access to a shared European identity eased by the premise of the UK participating in the Erasmus+ or European Capital of Culture programmes. Others still might have embraced the economic benefits of remaining within standard-setting agencies like the European Medicines Agency or the European Securities and Market Authority. These conclusions all derived from the same claim, while the claimant may not have intended either of these meanings.

Consequently, this would have enabled the audience to assess the same justification according to different dimensions or orders of worth,

depending more on what they tended to find reasonable or desirable, than on any suggestion by the claimant. In this sense, one might perceive of hollow claims as less likely to challenge the already held preferences of an audience. As a strategy, therefore, this would put less at risk in the short-term. It could also make the claim able to convince more readers than a more concretely specified justification would. At the same time, as a basis for agreement, it would run a similar risk as *compromises* do according to Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006). That is to say, contestation over what is the 'right' perspective for an evaluation would be more likely to occur. Since these unspecified claims are inadequate for constructing a clear and commonly understood test by which to consider a proposed model, contestation over how to evaluate would be quite likely to re-emerge with any discussion as to whether the model has 'delivered' on it promises.

The observations in this section make it clear that the dimensions supplied by de Wilde et al. (2014), or Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006) orders of worth, cannot always be applied to claims, as they are understood in this report, without relying on guesswork or suppositions based on sparse information. This uncertainty reflects how 'sufficient' specificity about European integration cannot always be achieved in the public discourse, due to demands for brevity or off-the-cuff answers. However, it also reflects what de Wilde et al. recognises with their choice to operationalise diffuse claims as a measure of diffuse support, namely that under-specification sometimes has a purpose unto itself. It is not clear from this analysis that a similar effort to treat diffuse claims as evidence of diffuse scepticism would be appropriate. Often hollow or diffuse claims simply provide too little information to be identified either way. In some cases, these claims appear to draw on the audience's pre-existing conceptions about the issue, making the distinction even harder to draw.

6.3.3 Sources of Worth

While there was some diversity in terms of how the coded claims evaluate the Norway models, we can identify three dominant stance-justification combinations. One involved support for the Norway models, defending those models according to an economic dimension. Of all claims supporting the Norway models, 40 per cent cited an economic justification. In second, the need for *continuity* – a category with a considerable degree of hollow justifications – trailed well behind with only 13 per cent of claims.

As such, it is clear that economy was the predominant category of justifications in support of the Norway models.

The other two dominant factors were in opposition to the models, and favoured further distance from the EU, justifying that position by appeal to either *sovereignty* (20 per cent of hard Brexit claims), understood as the UK's ability to introduce policy and laws unilaterally, or *democracy* (34 per cent), understood as the people of the UK being the legitimate source of power to make such policy and laws. From the perspective of de Wilde et al. (2014), the latter two would both fall under the *democracy* dimension but are worth separate mention here. We could also include immigration (24 per cent) here, although the emphasis on 'taking control of our borders' and 'delivering on what the people voted for' narratives makes a large portion of this category one flavour of the sovereignty or democracy clusters. Claimants rarely specified, as noted in the previous section, for what end they desired immigration control. Having the control often seems to be the point in and of itself, and so it seems most appropriate to focus on the factors that emphasised delivering or wielding that control.

The economic justifications for the Norway models quite closely matched Boltanski & Thévenot's (2006, p. 194) argument that 'economic actions are based on at least two main forms of coordination, one by the marketplace, the other by an industrial order'. Claims, such as '*there is only one way that Britain can enjoy the same tariff-free rights and regulatory privileges we currently have inside Europe's single market – that is by joining the European Economic Area (EEA), as Norway did when it rejected EU membership*' (Mandelson, 2017), often reflected the market order's preoccupation with *competition* and seizing *opportunities*. Even more frequent were claims which painted Brexit in negative market terms of *losing out* and being *unwanted*; here the Norway models served as the remedy. Outside the single market, UK businesses would lose opportunities and be less competitive, and European consumers, employers, and investors would spurn British products, labour, and services.

These justifications also relied on framing the issue according to the industrial order, oriented towards the future, efficiency and measurability. However, this order was not incorporated into justifications in their own right. Instead, they were a means for describing the models. *Measuring* tools such as the predicted decline of GDP-growth were often used to

warn about what a hard Brexit might mean for the UK. This decline was, in turn, explained in the context of concerns with *efficiency* and *systems* by invoking threats to the transport sector by Brexit's impact on just-in-time supply chains and roll-on-roll-off ferry services across the Channel. The logistics of parts moving seamlessly back and forth across borders for processing at different stages in car production to cut the need for costly and inefficient storage was a favoured example. The consequences of these issues were, however, a concern with lost opportunity and competitiveness. As such, the evaluations in the claims ultimately boiled down to the market order of worth.

There is ample reason to suggest that the economic line was one of the more persuasive lines of argument both in support of the Norway models and European integration more generally. One might argue that presenting the integration project as subject to the economic sphere was more likely to appease a moderate centrist audience rather than those further to the left. In this sense, it added consistency to the line of argumentation across party lines; moderate Tories could, and Labour politicians could speak with more or less one voice. It was also consistent with how the pro-European argument had been carried out pre-referendum, which might be more desirable than a complete change of tone. At the same time, it seems at odds with the left-wing economics ideas which inspired, e.g., Corbyn. More concerned – albeit to varying extent, one might suppose – with distribution equality and an active role for government in the economy, such audiences would likely have responded more to macro-economic argumentation that took a more civic angle of interest group representation. This angle would also have been in line with the EU's foray into social questions, although whether it would have been convincing as a line of argumentation is a matter of opinion.

This emphasis on the economy also constituted an apparent disinterest in speaking to, or on behalf of, Brexit voters. Goodwin & Heath (2016) and Liberina et al. (2017), observe that support for Brexit in the populace related in large part to personal economic problems or prospects – unemployment, lack of education or opportunities, and similar. Accordingly, it seems unlikely that arguing for the desirability of the status quo in economic terms would be convincing, given that those who rejected the integration project were the more likely to feel failed, economically, by the

status quo. At least this would be the case without a narrative which concretely addressed how the issue impacted these groups in particular. If we consider the general lack of claimants speaking for specific constituencies, it should be clear that the *Guardian's* readership was not provided with such a narrative.

The claims representing economic justifications had in common with the sovereignty perspective that they both mainly presented themselves to speak on behalf of the *UK* category of constituents, which is to say references to an ill-defined *we* or *us*, or to the country in the broadest sense. Unsurprisingly, the democracy-oriented claims tended to speak on behalf of voters. Besides this the main distinction between the two categories is that the sovereignty critique relied on a rule-taker vs rule-maker narrative, such as in the following claim ascribed to SNP politician Neil Findlay: '*It means you're a rule-taker and not a rule-maker, and that is not in our national interest*' (Carrell, 2018). Meanwhile, the democracy argument leaned more on what the people had chosen, or that they should have the ability to choose their path without European interference.

While the references to democracy and sovereignty generally might tend to draw associations to the 'civic' world, this was not the dominant perspective employed by the critics of the Norway models that invoked these concepts. Indeed, while *representation* – a concept often associated with worth in the civic world – is obviously in play when relating to democracy and sovereignty, these categories tended to align more closely with the 'world of fame' and the 'domestic world' respectively. The 'civic' perspective tends to value *organised* and *collective action* and modes of expressing the *general will* that is structured around *committees*, *assemblies*, and *authorised delegates*. These are perhaps most significantly the central basis underlying the organisation of liberal democratic governance, as well as the academic understandings of representation which build on the work of, e.g., Hanna Pitkin.

The references to the people or to (referendum) voters instead highlighted a less organised form of popular opinion, however. According to this line of argumentation, the Norway models did not satisfy the mandate given to politicians through the referendum. Therefore, it was not a 'real' Brexit. It is worth remembering, however, that the referendum was not, and could not in its own right be the origin of any test for what a 'real' Brexit

ought to be. After all, much of the reason the British had a post-referendum debate at all was precisely the referendum's failure to adequately delineate what leaving would actually entail. A claim ascribed to Labour MP Barry Gardiner illustrates this pattern of justification well:

> If you do what Norway does, what happens is the very reasons that most people who voted leave, voted to leave – namely to regain sovereignty, to regain control of our borders, not to pay money into the European budget – all are not achieved.
>
> (Sparrow, 2017)

The claim suggests that the central issue with the models is that they would not have delivered on what the people asked for when they voted in the referendum, although none of the points used to describe the people's supposed intent are derived from the referendum text itself; it is a separate proposition about public opinion.

The emphasis on public opinion is central to the world of fame. It is gauged less by groups negotiating and expressing their opinions and draws more on the success and the attention garnered by individuals where popularity serves as a proxy for approval. These are effectively the sorts of practices which Saward hoped to integrate into the concept of representation by focusing on claims rather than institutions, which highlights civic representation. In the Brexit case, this corresponded to the framing of the people's will, or at the very least the will of Leave voters, as being represented by the views the Leave campaign and of popular figures like Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson; the legitimacy of either grounded in the attention they garnered. They were in this sense informal representatives, although Johnson, being an MP and Farage an MEP, obviously also served as a representative in the civic sense.

Boltanski & Thévenot (2006, pp. 180–181) note the role of public opinion surveys in generating value in the sense that the majority can rest safe that their opinion is right, insofar as the order of fame is concerned, because the majority is demonstrated to think that way. The referendum's function as such a survey seems clear. Its power lay not mainly in measuring people's opinion about the question about the ballot but functioned instead mainly as one way to cast the Brexiters as popular and successful, and therefore *their* opinion as 'right'. Despite all the likely variation in

attitudes among those who voted leave, from protest voters through soft Leavers to die-hard Brexiters, those 52 per cent stood as monolithic proof that the majority of the population – 'the people' – held whichever opinion was spread by visible Brexiters such as Johnson and Farage.

The sovereignty cluster seems informed by a 'domestic' line of reasoning – i.e. concerns with *hierarchy* and with what is *appropriate*. Consider the following claims, ascribed to Barry Gardiner and taken from a *Guardian* editorial respectively:

> [On] Radio 4's Westminster Hour last night Barry Gardiner, the shadow international trade secretary, said following Norway would amount to the UK becoming a 'vassal state'.
>
> (Sparrow, 2017)

> A reasonable argument is that the EEA is an imperfect, off-the-shelf model that would lock the UK into too subordinate a relationship with Brussels, and that Labour cannot be seen to settle for such a mediocre deal.
>
> (The Guardian, 2018)

Both reflect the notion that one should not necessarily consider the Norway models to be universally poor options. The models are, however, wrong for the UK because they would render the UK 'subordinate'. While one set of standards might be appropriate for countries such as Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, the claims imply that the UK's station requires a set of different, higher, standards, befitting its stature. In some cases, such as the above, these arguments are directed at the EEA models specifically, implying that some see these models as particularly unfit in this regard, but they fit into a broader set of arguments that highlights this as an issue of European integration more generally.

The argumentation in favour of the Norway models appears to have reflected an interpretation of these models, and European integration as a phenomenon, as predominantly economic market objects. This finding is very much in line with observations about traditional British ways of framing pro-European arguments, and perhaps most in line with the moderate Tory/New Labour mode of defence. The EU's social and environmental profile, which one might have expected to appeal to the

centre and progressive left, was barely visible. When using the term 'economic', it should also be noted that the underlying premise for this support was almost exclusively premised on what might be understood as the integration project's liberal economic profile and its ability to boost trade and growth. In this sense there is little about the framing that seems impacted by the influence of the EU's move towards social and environmental issues, nor of any effort to realign argumentation towards something that might better align with the resurgence of left-wing economic ideas as represented by Corbyn and the Momentum movement.

Any assessment of how to valuate and evaluate European integration, the EU, and the Norway models is always partly informed by personal normative inclinations as well as the models' descriptive qualities. In this sense, one should not understand it as wrong to argue that these objects models should derive their worth from a market-centric evaluation. At the same time, it is evident that many significant developments of integration, as pertains to EU-membership and EFTA-EEA membership alike, in recent decades has pertained to areas, and gone in directions, which are less obviously justifiable by that perspective's standards and expectations. Whether or not one finds the project justifiable in similar economic terms to those described here today, it seems evident, with the current trajectory of European integration, that such justifications will be less and less sustainable over time. Either the trajectories change, or these economic narratives insofar as they are dominant elsewhere of what integration is must find ways of incorporating that trajectory into its narrative.

A minor strain of claims highlights this sense of discrepancy between what the EU is and what it was once thought to be. These argue that the Norway models as superior to EU-membership because the Norway models were economic objects, whereas EU-membership no longer was. The claim below, ascribed to Tory MP Stephen Hammond illustrates this idea. It suggests that the Norway models could deliver European integration as the form of economic integration project which the British could accept. This ability made them qualitatively unlike EU membership, which had turned into an unacceptable civic object: '*It would be a return to the common market principles that Margaret Thatcher advocated when the UK led the creation of the single market*' (Hammond, 2018). This notion that the Norway models were uniquely desirable (i.e. in opposition to both

continued membership and a harder Brexit) is relatively rare, suggesting that this reading of the models as some sort of return to the good old days did not gain much traction overall.

Claims such as that ascribed to Hammond exemplified a more *reformative/transformative* standard of argumentation. They suggested that the Norway models were not like EU-membership and, because of this, the models ought to be accepted. The difference between these arguments and the more dominant *reconciliatory/reformative* standard arguments lay not so much in suggesting a different interpretation of the Norway models, but rather in a different understanding of what EU membership was. While both assumed that European integration should be an economic project, the *reformative/transformative* line of argumentation maintains that only one of the objects qualify for that function. In contrast, the *reconciliatory/reformative* mode treats the models as comparable if not necessarily equal.

Either way, European integration appears to be understood even by the mainstream left in Britain as something which is 'supposed' to be defensible in market terms, a line of justification that, it would appear, which has become harder to sustain. The integration project has for many British and, by all accounts, many other Europeans as well, gradually become something qualitatively different than they understood themselves to have joined. Inherently a process of change, such transitions are perhaps just the nature of the beast when it comes to European integration but, for pro-Europeans, it raises the challenge of how to convincingly argue for the project's legitimacy in periods when public agreement on how to evaluate the project is in flux.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

We might say that Brexit, from certain perspectives, has been among the crown achievements of right-wing Euroscepticism. Despite the pains of the process a member state has, for the first time, left behind the core of the European integration project to follow a different trajectory. How distant the UK's final orbit might become remains an open question, as do the ramifications of its leaving. Many questions remain to be answered but, by most indications, British ties to the EU will be looser than those of the EEA-countries. So why does the discussion of the Norway models still matter?

As an event, Brexit has naturally given sustenance to an already existing preoccupation, popularly as well as scholarly, with the right-wing populist brand of Euroscepticism. This brand has increasingly become the dominant strain for critiques of European integration in the public discourse and, for many, the success of the movements behind it represents a potential threat to more than just European integration; as such the attention is both understandable and warranted. However, Brexit should encourage every bit as much interest in pro-European sentiments and arguments. Although the European debt crisis of the late noughts, the migration crisis of 2015 and, most recently, the staggering onset of Covid-19, have all been touted as hypothetical existential threats to European integration, Brexit remains more or less unique in having posed a clear

and immediate threat to the continued participation in the integration project for a sizable portion of EU citizens.

Consequently, the study of pro-European discourse and practices in the Brexit debate have significant consequences for how we might understand the functioning of the integration project's 'immune system' when the need for mobilisation is the greatest. Is there mobilisation against the threat? How does the mobilisation manifest itself? Finally, the central point of this report, *why* do people see the integration project as something to mobilise for at all? The Brexit process was undoubtedly *the* occasion for British pro-Europeans to bring out their best representations of what they perceived European integration to be, and their best justifications for why that projects, whichever way defined, was worth defending.

This report has explored that question by looking at the centre-left, singling out the debate in the *Guardian* about the so-called Norway models. The centre-left was of particular interest because it is assumed to be one of the current bulwarks of pro-European sentiment in the UK and, given its history and ideological influences, also the most likely place to see emerging frames and defences of the integration project reach a mainstream audience. The *Guardian* was chosen with the expectation that in being the left-most flagship of the British media landscape, it was the most likely location for observing any such emergence.

Choosing the Norway models as a centre of attention was intended to ensure a debate that focussed on European integration. It was expected that a debate over the referendum might bog down the debate about more obvious options like Remain or a new referendum. That is, the goal was to explore *how* the UK-EU relationship was understood in public discourse, rather than *whether* it was understood. With no comparison available, the relative success of this remains hard to quantify. In light of the results, it is probably fair to say, however, that the choice was not as effective as had been expected. However, it is also worth observing that most of the debate *did* pertain to European integration. At the same time, and according to expectations, the claims which supported the Norway models were considerably less likely to discuss the referendum. These claims were also the most important to this analysis. While the choice of the Norway models did not quite live up to the expectations, it seems safe,

overall, to argue that the Norway models proved to be an appropriate choice for this investigation.

From previous research, we already know quite a bit about the pre-referendum British media debate as well as the historical British relationship to European integration. In broad strokes, the findings in this report appear to align with the expectations one might derive from that work. While more the Norway models and European integration than most other outlets, this was only to be expected, given the British centre-left's growing easiness about the integration project over the last few decades. The main themes of the Norway models-debate were recognisable from the pre-referendum debate and British attitudes to Europe more generally. Liberal economic concerns typified support for the Norway models and the integration project. Meanwhile, negative evaluations of the models drew on concerns about sovereignty and democracy.

Given that (1) the juxtaposition of these themes failed to win British pro-Europeans the referendum, (2) the internal realignment of the Labour party, and (3) that the Conservatives dominated on either side of the pre-referendum debate, it is perhaps this lack of surprises that is the most striking. The *Guardian* did promote a pro-European stance and, in this sense, it differed from most UK outlets. Simultaneously, the *Guardian's* post-referendum debate about the Norway models mostly repeated justifications from the Conservative-dominated pre-referendum debate. Even if the predominantly positive evaluation of European integration differed from much of the public discourse, the image presented of what European integration was, as well as its supposed virtues or failings, was not.

Despite growing popular mobilisation, and despite the pressing need generated by the referendum outcome to re-legitimise European integration, there was little evidence that the centre-left were able or willing to reframe the question; neither out of strategic concerns nor for ideological reasons. In this context, it is also of particular interest that so much of the supposedly pro-European argumentation, rather than seeking to promote the integration project, attacked imaginations of what Brexit might turn out to be. This tendency suggests that even in relatively Euro-positive environments, there was little of could be described as wholehearted support for the integration project in its own right. Pro-Europeanism remained predicated primarily on specific support, on the assumption

that European integration was an economic project, and on the notion that it was the least bad of the alternatives on offer.

It has occasionally been suggested that too much of the Brexit debate was an effort to settle scores between pro-Europeans and Eurosceptics within the Conservative Party. This allegation is not wrong given the debacle's origin as an effort by Tory-leader David Cameron to get peace within his party. However, as we have observed, the most significant justification from the Tory-dominated debate also got reproduced in the *Guardian*. One of two conclusions seem evident: Either the centre-left was ineffective, even when speaking to their own audiences, in reframing the debate to something more suitable or, and this seems more likely, the debate was not so specific to the Tories. Different corners of the British political spectrum might take different sides to different degrees on the matter of European integration, but ultimately the understanding of what European integration is, and should be, about seems to remain quite stable over time, and across the mainstream of British politics.

More generally it might be suggested that heightened mobilisation both for and against European integration seems to follow pre-established understandings of the project, rather than generate new lines of attack or defence. In this sense, existing research on attitudes to integration in more general day-to-day settings remains informative. On the other hand, the historically low level of awareness about European integration within the UK might also have made it particularly unfertile ground for the emergence of new forms of justification. Both the ability to generate new justifications for audiences to meaningfully evaluate them, one might argue, are dependent on some modicum of understanding.

Notable about this last point is the lack of claims representing constituencies below the state-wide populace. Whether we are talking about different socio-economic groups, specific geographical areas, or other interest groups, the claims only paid limited attention to their preferences or the impact of European integration on them. This observation was evident through the claimants' situation in society, belonging mainly to major UK-wide parties and media. More significantly, we see the inattention reflected in whom the claimants' purported to speak on behalf of; mostly broad and ill-defined groups like 'the people', voters, and '*us*'. We could suggest that this effect partly derived from the decision to look

at the UK-EU relationship in terms of 'models'. That choice might inherently favour exactly politicians and media voices, who are more incentivised and generally better positioned to consider the question in terms of models. There is little about the data analysed here, however, to suggest that there existed some separate non-model-oriented conversation involving other sets of actors or constituencies.

As such, it seems safe to argue that the debate did relatively little to add depth or nuance was over time with regards to how European integration was understood to impact subsets of the British populace. Despite nearly three years of debate, the discussion never departed from the juxtaposition of two arguments: 'Removing ourselves from the integration project will hurt our economy, and therefore leaving is bad' vs 'Participating in European integration has deleterious consequences on British sovereignty and democracy, and therefore leaving is good'. The arguments of these positions are not in conversation with each other, in the sense that accepting one as true did not require rejecting the other as false. Moreover, the degree of personal benefits or drawback either way for any given member of society remained ambiguous. One might argue that this made the framing less likely to convince anyone to change their minds on the matter. Either way, the lack of such nuance constituted an unfertile ground from which new arguments might emerge.

The Brexit referendum failed to provide an authorised set of justifications about what leaving the integration project should look like. Even so, the British understanding of what European integration ought to represent appears consistent. The difference lay not so much in which order of worth European integration should be, however, as in what claimants deemed it to be. Three years of debate among pro-Europeans on the British centre-left did little to change outlooks in either respect. A clear, distinct narrative did not surface to account for what integration represented (if anything) other than an economic undertaking. Nor did arguments clarify why those who might feel left out by the status quo had anything to gain by maintaining it. In most instances, the claims supporting the Norway models appear like acts of publishing for the choir; not an effective way of changing minds.

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Appendix
Codebook

Step 1: Initial step of coding, used directly in analysis only sparingly.

Note: 206 claims were coded in total, each primary category should add up to 206 claims.

a: Claimants

    a.c: Citizens [12 claims, including subcategories]

        a.c.ac: Academic writing in a private capacity [2]

        a.c.blog: Blogger [1]

        c.eu: non-British EU-citizen resident in the UK [1]

    a.eu: EU official [1]

    a.ex: Expert [4]

        a.ex.eulaw: Expert in Europeam law [1]

        a.ex.eupol: Expert in European politics [1]

        a.ex.fin: Expert in finance [1]

        a.ex.reshe: Expert on research and higher education [1]

a.ig: Interest groups [10]

a.ig.aeu: Another Europe [2]

a.ig.char: Charity [1]

a.ig.farm: Agricultural interest group [1]

a.ig.ngo.gdev: NGO dedicated to global development [1]

ig.psm: Pro-single market organisation [1]

ig.tt.eu: European integration think tank [1]

ig.uni: Labour union [2]

ig.vl: Vote Leave campaign [1]

a.m: Media [43]

a.m.og.comm: Guardian/Observer *commentator* [31]

a.m.og.edit: Guardian/Observer *editorial* [5]

a.m.og.journ: Guardian *journalist* [4]

a.m.t.edit: Other medium, editorial [3]

a.p: Politician [128]

a.p.con: Conservative [51]

a.p.cp: Cross-party statement [2]

a.p.green: Green party [1]

a.p.lab: Labour party [62]

a.p.lib: Liberal Democrats [1]

p.norw_h: Norwegian Conservatives, Høyre [3]

a.p.scotgov: Scottish government [2]

p.sdlp: *Social Democratic Labour Party* [1]

p.snp: Scottish National Party [4]

a.p.ukip United Kingdom Independence Party [1]

a.po: Public official [9]

>*a.po.cb: Central bank [7]*

>*a.po.efta: EFTA official [2]*

r: Constituencies

r.b: Business [6]

>*r.b.city: UK finance sector [4]*

>*r.b.agri: Agriculture [1]*

r.c: Country/nation [132]

>*r.c.scot: Scotland [4]*

>*r.c.uk: United Kingdom [128]*

r.ig: Interest group [2]

>*r.ig.char: Charities [1]*

>*r.ig.reshe: Research and Higher education sector [1]*

r.p: People [23]

>*r.p.brit: British people [14]*

>*r.p.nie : Northern Irish people [2]*

>*r.p.work: Working people [7]*

r.pol: Political party [6]

>*r.pol.lab: Labour Party [6]*

r.s: Self [1]

r.v: Voters:

>*r.v.2017: Voters in 2017 general election [1]*

>*r.v.brex: Voter in Brexit referendum [34]*

r.var: Several groups to equal degree [1]

s: Stances on Norway models

s.b: Negative to models [93]

s.b.more: Models are bad, more integration desired [17]

s.b.less: Models are bad, less integration desired [70]

s.g: Positive to models [113]

j: Justifications

j.pol: Policy justifications [21]

j.pol.imm: Immigration [19]

j.pol.prot: Protection of labour/consumer rights [1]

j.pol.state: State aid/nationalization [1]

j.prag: Pragmatic justifications [91]

j.prag.acc: Access to EU programmes/functions [8]

j.prag.cont: Maintaining continuity/avoiding chaos [15]

j.prag.econ: Economic consequences [47]

j.prag.flex: Flexibility of models [7]

j.prag.iebo: Irish border [3]

j.prag.infl: Abillity to have an influence [4]

j.prag.tlab: Threat to Labour party [2]

j.prag.tory: Consequences of Tory-led Brexit [5]

j.prc: Practical justifications [9]

j.prc.inst: Institutional arrangements [9]

j.prin: Principled justifications

j.prin.clim: Climate impact [1]

j.prin.dem: Democracy [9]

> *j.prin.EUid: European identity* [2]
>
> *j.prin.EUval: Shared European values* [1]
>
> *j.prin.ref: Respect for referendum outcome* [30]
>
> *j.prin.sov: Sovreignty* [39]

Step 2: Sorting data into more manageable categories; primary set used for analysis

Claimants:

Citizens:	*All a.c*
Eurosceptic groups:	*a.ig.vl*
Experts:	*All a.ex*
Media:	*All a.m*
Politicians:	*Conservative: a.p.con*
	Labour: a.p.lab
	Other Politicians: All a.p, expect a.p.lab and a.p.con
Pro-European grps:	*a.ig.aeu, a.ig.psm, a.ig.tt.eu*
Public officials:	*a.po.cb, a.po.efta, a.eu*

Constituents:

Business:	*r.b, r.b.city*
Devolved countries:	*r.p.nie, r.c.scot*
Interest groups:	*r.ig.char, r.ig.reshe*
Labour:	*r.pol.lab*
Others:	*r.s, r.var*
UK:	*r.p.brit, r.c.uk*
Voters:	*r.c.2017, r.v.brex*
Workers:	*r.b.agri, r.p.work*

Stances on Norway models:

Kept as is.

Justifications:

Kept as is, except values starting with *j.prc* were recoded to *j.prag*.

Note: The R-script used in this analysis handles basic data wrangling, like the recoding outlined above, and data visualisation. It is not deemed relevant for assessment. It and most other resources used can be made available upon request, however.