



From Critical Capacity to Legitimation Crisis

The EU legitimacy changes and the UK
public sphere before Brexit

Jan Pesl

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Preface

The Post-Crisis Legitimacy of the European Union (PLATO) (2017-2020) was an Innovative Training Network (ITN) funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. 15 PhD researchers have studied the legitimacy of the EU's crisis responses in a number of different areas together with senior researchers in a consortium of nine university partners and eleven training partners, coordinated by ARENA Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo.

By investigating the legitimacy of the EU's responses to recent crises, PLATO has generated new understanding of where crises can also be legitimacy crises for the EU. It has used the example of the financial crisis to build and test theory of what would amount to a legitimacy crisis in the case of a multi-state, non-state political system such as the EU.

This report is part of a project series which publishes the doctoral theses written by PLATO's 15 Early Stage Researchers. In this thesis Jan Pesl uses computer assisted quantitative text analysis to study shifting critiques of the EU's legitimacy in the UK public sphere in the period immediately before Brexit. That was a time when the EU was still in the throes of the financial crisis and the migration crisis was at its worst. Jan's findings identify where the EU's institutional design are likely to create legitimation problems. But whether critique of the EU's institutional design needs to turn into a full-scale legitimacy crisis is less certain and more contingent.

Chris Lord

PLATO Scientific Coordinator

*Dedicated to the memory of professor Ivo Možný
(1932 – 2016)*

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As this arduous, meandering odyssey, replete with diversions and impassable paths, approaches its end, I am delighted to extend my deepest gratitude to the multitude of individuals who have contributed to this moment.

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• **Jan Pesl**
Oslo, May 2023

Abstract

This thesis investigates the EU's legitimacy changes preceding Brexit from 2004 to 2016. Scholars have identified legitimacy deficits and crises within the EU since the 1990s. Against this backdrop, Brexit can be interpreted as a symptom of a deeper EU legitimacy crisis. The thesis investigates the changes in EU legitimacy during the period from 2004 to 2016. During this period, the EU has undergone two crises that have impacted its central arrangements: the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Schengen area of unrestricted movement. By concentrating on the specified timeframe, the thesis documents the legitimization changes that occurred during each crisis and have fundamentally altered the EU's material context. The study examines shifts in legitimation and critique within the UK public sphere using computer-assisted quantitative text analysis (supervised machine-learning) and qualitative discourse analysis. The findings suggest that the EU's institutional design has led to recurrent legitimation problems and a legitimation crisis. However, it is unlikely that the EU has experienced a severe legitimacy crisis in the period. The key implication of these findings is that unless an empirical connection between legitimacy changes and institutional changes is established, the role legitimacy plays in (de)stabilizing the institution should be considered uncertain.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises.

– Jean Monnet (Memoirs, 2015 [1978]: 417)

In March 2017, British Prime Minister Theresa May invoked Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, withdrawing the United Kingdom from European Union (EU). Until then, the European integration process leading to the centralisation of power, extension of policy scope, and territorial expansion seemed unidirectional and irreversible. Despite numerous crises, the European Union has always managed to muddle through (Olsen 2007). As a result, mainstream integration theory does not conceive crises as necessarily negative and stresses that delegating new responsibilities to the EU institutions often presents an effective solution. If a crisis does not trigger more integration right away, it might, according to organisational-institutional approaches (Egeberg and Trondal 2018; March and Olsen 1989), reinforce the existing arrangements. Over the last decades, this has always been the case with one sole exception: the Brexit decision showing that some crises may lead to disintegration in terms of the EU's territory.

The Brexit event invites two distinctive interpretations. On the one hand, the British decision to opt out of the EU can be read as an example of a crisis that once again resulted in deeper integration of the remaining countries. Jones, Kelemen, and Meunier (2016) have influentially claimed that the piecemeal European policies forged in intergovernmental negotiations eventually lead to a crisis that forces a reform which

promotes further integration. This argument has successfully combined two ‘grand theories’ of European integration: liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik 1998; 2006; Saurugger 2014) and neofunctionalism (Haas 2004 [1968]). Instead of portraying European integration as a linear, progressive phenomenon propelled by functional demands, it is now viewed as driven by perpetual crisis dynamics. In concrete terms, Brexit should be read as an example of differentiated integration, where the member states that want more, do more, rather than a case of disintegration. Consequently, mainstream integration theory makes Brexit appear as another example of the known dynamics.

On the other hand, Brexit can be read as a symptom of a deeper crisis. In 2011, in his State of the Union Address, President of the European Commission Barroso recognised the Eurozone financial crisis as ‘a crisis of confidence in our leaders, in Europe itself, and in our capacity to find solutions’ (Barroso 2011). In a similar vein, Ioannou, Leblond and Niemann (2015) documented that the shift from the pre-Maastricht mode of ‘integration through law’ to ‘integration through crises’, characterised by depoliticisation and non-majoritarian policymaking, has weakened the institution’s democratic accountability. Viewed through this lens, Brexit appears as evidence of the proclaimed crisis in EU legitimacy (Lord, Bursens, De Bievre, Trondal and Wessel 2022; Lord 2021; Longo and Murray 2015; Schweiger 2016).

Legitimacy plays a vital role as a stabilising and destabilising element in world politics. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991), an organisation might survive in a highly competitive environment, despite generating sub-optimal policy decisions¹, thanks to its legitimacy in the sense of morally justified citizens’ support and compliance. Since the early 1990s, scholars have pointed out that the EU’s institutional design is haunted by ingrained legitimacy deficits in the sense of discrepancies between the institutional reality and citizens’ normative expectations in terms of accessibility, transparency, accountability and political representation. Once fully recognised by citizens, these legitimacy deficits might pose a threat to the stability of the EU.

¹ The EU’s crisis (mis)management has been characterised by the slogan: ‘too little, too late’. See for example Honohan 2008; Poon 2018.

At the same time, as Andeweg and Aarts have duly noted that the ‘label of legitimacy crisis is in all its simplicity more attractive than other more nuanced explanations’ (2017: 203). Could a legitimacy crisis represent just another instance in the series of crises that will, in the end, result in integrative outcomes, as ‘democratic functionalists’ (Statham and Trez 2015) might assume? What if there is more to the hypothesis about the EU legitimacy crisis than a mere literary hyperbole, in that the legitimacy crisis has now become so grave that it can unleash disintegrative dynamics in individual states? While the EU’s response to the European monetary union (EMU) crisis has, in the end, proved successful at quelling the crisis, serious questions remain concerning the effects of the EU’s long-term legitimacy (Ioannou et al. 2015: 172). So far, the legitimacy deficits never really seemed to endanger the EU’s ability to keep states together. Against this background, the Brexit case stands out as a rare opportunity to examine the significance of EU legitimacy and its changing contours. If we are to draw any lessons out of Brexit, we must submit the proclaimed legitimacy crisis hypothesis to empirical investigation.

In this thesis, legitimacy is understood as pliable via communicative action. In order to learn about legitimacy change, we need to investigate changes in public legitimation and critique in the public sphere. The present thesis, therefore, investigates two research questions:

1. How did EU legitimacy construed in the UK public sphere change against the backdrop of the financial crisis (2008), the sovereign debt crisis (late 2009), and the refugee crisis (2015) – the three crises hitting two EU central arrangements: the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Schengen area of unrestricted movement?; and Dynamics of legitimation can be understood as an interplay between the institutional design affecting peoples’ life chances, actors’ understanding of such context as expressed in (de)legitimation, and the resulting legitimacy that contributes to institutional stability². Since successful legitimation does not hinge

² Galik and Chelbi (2021) demonstrates that the concept of institutional stability, as used in the literature, points out four different modes of stability: 1) passive stability pointing towards an absence of an action leading to a change, 2) active stability highlighting actors practices stabilising the institution, 3) intended inaction when actors willingly avoid the possibly destabilising actions, and 4) failed action, when an

on plain talk only, we must acknowledge the impact of institutional design on legitimation practices and the resulting legitimacy (see Tallberg and Zürn 2019). Therefore, I explore the legitimation changes in the UK public sphere during the two crises hitting the EU's central arrangements: the Economic and Monetary union (EMU) and the Schengen area of unrestricted movement. The aim here is to document legitimation changes taking place during each of the crises that have permanently changed the EU's material context. Such exploration lays the groundwork for the second research question investigating whether these crises acted as a trigger for a legitimacy crisis.

2. Did the EU in the monitored period of consecutive crises (2004-2016) undergo a legitimacy crisis understood as a situation where the probability of disintegration can only be decreased at a price of substantial policy reform?

In this thesis, I reserve the 'crisis' term for situations with severe consequences for the functioning of the institution. This approach is inspired by the literature arguing that a legitimacy crisis amounts to an event 'where the perception that identity, interests, practices, norms or procedures of an institution are rightful has deteriorated to the point where the institution must either adapt or face disempowerment' (Reus-Smit 2007: 158). In other words, I am concerned with legitimacy crisis insofar as it affects the EU's institutional stability. In chapter two, I develop a theoretical model of a legitimacy crisis that can be used to guide the empirical analysis in this thesis. By interpreting the changes in EU legitimacy, as observed in the public sphere and using the model of a legitimacy crisis, I determine whether the EU can be said to experience the legitimacy crisis.

While the stability of nation-states can in times of crisis be bolstered by appeals to a strong collective identity, pragmatism, or claiming the state of emergency limiting public protests and demonstrations, for a transnational regime of governance this is seldom an option (Franck 1990; Hurd 1999). Compared to nation-states, the EU is thus significantly

intended change does not take place. In this thesis, I use the term as description of the ability of an institution to continue in its current form.

more vulnerable to disintegration and circumscribed by its ability to foster and maintain its political support using ‘soft power’ (Nye 2004). In the end, the question of how the financial crisis, sovereign debt crisis and refugee crisis affected EU legitimacy might turn out to be the question of the EU’s continuation in its current state, as its future hinges on the ability to develop into a legitimate mode of governance. Understanding the exceptionality of Brexit regarding EU legitimacy can shed light on what specific consequences the postulated legitimacy crisis has for the future of the European project in the sense of European integration.

In this primarily explorative undertaking, I investigate the possible legitimacy changes to determine whether the EU, as construed in the UK public sphere, has experienced a legitimacy crisis. Using computer-assisted quantitative text classification, I first conduct a macro-level explorative analysis of legitimation changes in terms of politicisation, tone of the coverage, policy areas covered, and the discourses thematising the EU as a polity. Then, I discern normative expectations as expressed in the mediated public sphere, such as having the right to self-determination, in polity centred discourses using qualitative discourse analysis. The value added by the qualitative inquiry lies in outlining the contours of what it would mean for the EU to be legitimate at different times. Whereas the macro-level trends analysis tracks changes in the EU’s political support and likelihood of legitimacy change, the qualitative probe outlines changes in citizens’ normative expectations towards the EU, and thus the qualities of the legitimacy in the making. The mixed-methods approach covers multiple types of legitimacy changes, and thus allows drawing conclusions about the possible EU legitimacy crisis.

In terms of theory, I contribute by delineating a new type of legitimacy change: legitimacy change ‘in kind’. The notion signifies a normative change affecting the scope of political action that can be publicly justified. The legitimacy change in kind is distinct but complementary to the legitimacy change ‘in degree’³ reflecting how much more legitimate or illegitimate an institution is perceived to be. Furthermore, I provide

³ In this context, differentiating by degree means following changes within a same quantity. To differentiate things by kind then means to contrast or compare different quantities.

conceptual clarification of neighbouring terms sharing the same semantic space such as legitimacy, legitimacy crisis, legitimacy deficit, or legitimation. By setting these concepts into their mutual relations, I assemble a model defining the conditions under which it is warranted to talk about legitimacy or legitimation crisis.

In terms of methodology, I advance sociological enquiry into legitimation practices through a multidisciplinary approach built around computer-assisted quantitative text analysis leveraging techniques from the field of natural language processing.

The use of context-aware dense vector representations of textual data allows a researcher to assess semantic similarity beyond what has been possible in terms of the popular frequency-based approaches portraying texts as ‘bag-of- words’ (Goldberg 2017: 69). Furthermore, I demonstrate how a relatively simple supervised machine learning algorithm can achieve satisfactory accuracy in classifying a largely heterogeneous unstructured textual dataset. As a result, this thesis can serve as a point of departure for designing similar social-scientific projects dealing with a large quantity of data in textual or other digital formats.

Lastly, in terms of my empirical contribution to the legitimacy research, I provide a fine-grained picture of what role, if any, legitimacy played in the years preceding Brexit. So far, the connection between EU legitimacy and the British referendum outcome has been assumed but not tested empirically. In addition, by paying attention to the actors’ pre-understanding of a situation, I enrich the existing knowledge base by documenting distinct types of legitimacy change. The current project, therefore, details the importance of legitimacy for institutional stability.

The following section situates the project within the broader research on EU legitimacy and public legitimation. After highlighting the gap in the literature, the remainder of this chapter describes my take on the research problem and discusses the thesis layout.

1.1 Complementary facets of legitimacy and their relevance for the EU's stability

Dictionaries tend to explain legitimacy as a quality of being 'in conformity to the law or rules' (Oxford English Dictionary). In the case of a relatively novel mode of governance such as the EU, it is far from obvious which rules or moral norms to apply when assessing its legitimacy. Likewise, it is unclear who is apt to establish the normative record. Whereas citizens' judgment might be misguided as they lack complete information about the workings of the EU, the normative criteria grounding scholars' judgement are not necessarily representative of the citizens' main concerns. What's more, there has been uncertainty about whether legitimacy – a concept used for evaluating nation-states – is at all relevant for the transnational EU. The EU research has for long been debating these questions. In this section I position this thesis in relation to the existing research while mapping the different forms of legitimacy change depicted in the literature. I break the available literature down into three main topics that have shaped the study of EU legitimacy: 1) Legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness, 2) legitimacy as a product of legitimation, and 3) social efficacy of the different legitimacy concepts.

The first two topics correspond to two broad research strategies (Table 1.1) of tackling the normative-empirical duality of legitimacy in the sense of morally justified compliance and public support. As Beetham noted, the normative-empirical duality must be reflected because legitimacy 'comprises the moral or normative aspects of power relationships; or, more correctly, the sum of these aspects' (2013: 25). This implies that the legitimacy of a power relationship must be assessed not only in terms of its social efficacy manifested in the form of citizens' actions (the empirical dimension) but also based on the moral justification of this relationship (the normative dimension). Each dimension has been a focal point and the literature gives distinct answers to whether and how the normative criteria should be explicated, and how to confront these norms with the empirical reality, or citizens' perception thereof. The third topic of social efficacy of legitimacy, then, opens up the 'so what' question of legitimacy research, namely, the role legitimacy plays in securing institutional stability. Looking at the two introduced research strategies, I theorise what practical consequences a lack of legitimacy in

the sense specific to each of the research strategies might have for an institution and what a potential legitimacy crisis would amount to.

Table 1.1: The two approaches to resolving normative-empirical duality of the legitimacy concept

Conceptualisation	Legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness	Legitimacy as a product of legitimation
<i>Normative criteria</i>	Based on normative theory	Based on citizens' normative expectations expressed in the public sphere
<i>The mode of legitimacy assessment</i>	Benchmarking institutional design using the normative criteria extracted from democratic theory and cross-checked against the levels of diffuse support	Sentiment/tone of the media coverage, politicisation, secondary data on citizens' support

1.1.1 Legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness

The European Union has developed into 'governance without statehood' (Wallace 1996). While exercising political power over citizens of its member states, it lacks many elements of democratic governance that could help turn it into legitimate political authority. The 'nature of the beast' debate (Risse-Kappen 1996) revolved around what criteria should be used for assessing the legitimacy of a system of multilevel governance such as the EU. On the one hand, Moravcsik (2002, 2004) argued that the EU resembles an international organisation more than a state. Similarly, Majone (1994) viewed the EU as a regulatory regime. As such, it is enough if it delivers intended policy outcomes. On the other hand, many scholars developed sophisticated arguments for the need to legitimise the EU according to the standards of liberal democracy (e.g. Eriksen and Fossum 2000; Weale and Nentwich 1998; Scharpf 1999; Schmitter 2001). The resulting body of research can be divided into two categories (see the first column in Table 1.1) based on how the normative attributes such as legality or efficiency, that were identified as relevant for making an informed assessment of EU legitimacy (see Føllesdal and Hix 2006), are combined with empirical enquiries checking the EU's practices against these yardsticks.

The first category uses normative criteria to assess EU legitimacy by benchmarking institutional design and practice. By contrast, the second category surveys citizens' support and crosschecks the criteria of

legitimacy extracted from normative theory against it. By treating the identified criteria as hypothetical predictors of political support for the EU, this strand of research tests which criteria matter most for citizens. I now first introduce the research in the first category, before moving to the second category.

1.1.1.1 Normative theory as the legitimacy benchmark

This strand of research arguably presents the most traditional approach (see for example Hennis 2009 [1975]) implying that citizens are capable of assessing legitimation but not legitimacy. As a result, legitimacy assessments must be carried out by social scientists with appropriate training. What is ultimately being determined here is a correspondence of current state of affairs to the normative definition of good governance justified in advance. Since the normative criteria are established primarily based on the quality of an argument and empirical investigations conducted in a rigorous manner, this type of EU legitimacy evaluation can be endorsed based on its construct validity. However, unless EU citizens themselves adopt the very same criteria when judging EU legitimacy, social efficacy of a benchmark of good governance remains limited to a potentiality. In the same vein, legitimacy deficits such as the lack of representative mechanisms enabling public control of the EU (see Dahl 1999; Zürn 2000; Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2004) that were identified based on democratic theory, might not have much effect on the citizens' compliance and support of the EU, unless their implications are widely known and fully recognised. Consequently, the research benchmarking institutional reality against the standards of normative theory has specific research goals and logics of scientific inquiry that views EU legitimacy as an objective quality of EU institutional design.

By contrast, the present thesis is primarily concerned with legitimacy as a stabilising and destabilising element in world politics. It approaches legitimacy as a causally efficacious element shaping political order and emerging in social interactions. The normative criteria comprising the legitimacy benchmark remain relevant insofar as these ideals permeate public debate in the EU member states. This means that the normative works and democratic theory can be used to generate hypotheses about the foundations of legitimacy, which can then be tested empirically. Such empirical testing is needed because although the EU might be well

justified in terms of legality, accountability, or transparency, we cannot assume that this is what makes it equally justified in the eyes of its citizens. Clearly, the normative approach and the more sociological perspective of this thesis are empirically related but analytically distinct (Bernstein 2011; Zürn 2004). Since the acceptance of normative ideals by different audiences cannot be taken for granted, I once again revisit the question of what makes the EU legitimate. What I suggest here is to treat legitimacy as an empirical problem. Such a move draws a direct link between the mapped normative criteria invoked by citizens and citizens' support for the EU, thus unpacking how a legitimacy crisis might threaten institutional stability and survival.

1.1.1.2 Adjusting the legitimacy benchmark for predictors of public support

In parallel with the debate on the EU's characteristics (the 'nature of the beast') and the adequate normative yardsticks outlined in the previous section, social scientists have focused on the empirical aspect of the concept's normative- empirical duality: public support and citizens' compliance. The legitimacy benchmark based on normative theory indicates justifiability, yet its social efficacy remains questionable. It was first with Max Weber's *Economy and Society* (1978 [1922]) that legitimacy literature took an empirical turn. Starting with the works of Thucydides (1963 [423 B.C.]), Plato (2003 [380 B.C.]), and Aristotle (1998 [350 B.C.]), the question of institutional legitimacy has traditionally been left to informed scholars capable of making legitimacy judgements. This has only changed with Weber's theory of legitimacy (1964 [1918]) that made citizens the ultimate arbiters of legitimacy. This move has arguably started the empirical turn in legitimacy research.

The main ambition of the empirical strand of legitimacy research is to estimate political stability based on measuring public support in general, rather than legitimacy in particular. The measured public support is then used to identify the most valent normative yardsticks shaping citizens' own evaluations.

The idea of treating legitimacy as a product of citizens' beliefs, whose effects are palpable in citizen's support (or lack thereof) and compliance with the rules was elaborated in Easton's system theory (1953). Easton claimed that what ultimately inhibits a regime's stability is its level of 'diffuse support' understood as 'a reservoir of favourable attitudes or

goodwill that helps members [of the polity] to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effect of which they see as damaging to their wants' (Easton 1965: 273). The degree of one's diffuse support for an institution develops throughout their life via continuous socialisation and has multiple dimensions (Easton 1975: 445-447). The two typical reasons for supporting a regime in Easton's terms are trust and legitimacy. Trust has been defined as the feeling that one's own interests will be attended even if the authorities are left without supervision or scrutiny (Easton 1975: 447). By contrast, legitimacy has been understood as the conviction that it is right and proper to accept and obey the authorities who obey to one's own moral principles, i.e. one's own sense of what is right and proper in the political sphere (Easton 1965: 278).

Thanks to its multidimensional character, diffuse support for a regime does not stand and fall with the regime's legitimacy only. Trying to infer legitimacy based on measurements of diffuse support would mean conflating legitimacy with social acceptance. Indeed, even an illegitimate mode of governance might survive as long as it can draw on support from other sources. Citizens' support for a regime can sometimes be explained by habitual obedience, fear of coercion, or one's calculation that supporting the regime will maximize one's self-interest and private gain (Barker 1990; Pakulski 1986). Only when all reasons for support dissipate, does estimated diffuse support decline.

Specific support, unlike diffuse support related to a more abstract polity or a system, is object-specific and bound to concrete policy interventions. Pipa Norris, therefore, describes typical dynamics of political stability as 'a multidimensional phenomenon ranging on a continuum from the most diffuse to the most specific levels' (Norris 2017: 23). In other words, policy-specific critique tends to precede system-level critique.

The concept of diffuse support comprises legitimacy, as well as the other components, which lends it more explanatory power than legitimacy alone. At the same time, the relationship and conditionality between the individual dimensions of diffuse support remain under-theorised and explaining its fluctuations has proven to be a challenging task. The debate on the 'nature of the beast' has shown that there is no obvious set of benchmarks that would apply to the EU. Since the EU shares many features of otherwise dissimilar models such as a regulatory agency (Majone 1999), intergovernmental organisation (Scharpf 2009; Moravcsik

2002), federation (Hix 2008), ‘demoicracy’ (Cheneval and Schimmelfennig 2012), or multilevel governance (Schmidt 2013, Benz 2015), there will always be room for disagreement (for a more in-depth literature review, see Hurrelmann 2019). Since legitimacy together with trust constitute the two crucial expressions of public support, scholars have invested substantial efforts into testing whether various normative criteria extracted from normative theory can help predict levels of citizens’ support (see e.g. de Vries 2016; Serrichio, Tsakatika and Quaglia 2013; Markowski 2016; Tóka, Henjak and Markowski 2012).

In a search for correlates, the EU’s diffuse support deduced from indicators such as citizens’ opinions, attitudes, the system’s performance, or (lack of) protest behaviour was contrasted with how the EU scores according to the normative criteria such as inclusiveness, transparency, deliberative ethic, representation of citizens’ interests, or effectiveness. When it comes to assessing institutional legitimacy itself, Beetham’s definition captures the main rationale of this approach. In his terms, something is legitimate not simply because people believe so, but because it can be *justified in terms of* their beliefs (Beetham 2013: 11). In other words, a high level of diffuse support does not mean that an institution is legitimate. However, diffuse support can be used to survey peoples’ beliefs that constitute the legitimacy benchmark. Although it is still the social scientist who has the final word in the legitimacy assessment, the benchmark becomes reflexive to citizens’ normative expectations towards the EU, which improves the social efficacy of the legitimacy concept.

In practice, instead of comparing individual normative criteria against diffuse support, normative criteria were grouped in two components introduced in the input/output framework of Fritz Scharpf (1999), which was later supplemented with a third ‘throughput’ type of legitimacy (Schmidt 2013). Input and throughput relates to the procedural legitimacy of processes determining who can partake and influence decision-making. The throughput component focuses more specifically on multilevel governance processes and their qualities such as accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and openness. Finally, output legitimacy then refers to instrumental qualities such as the system’s efficiency and ability to deliver expected outcomes. Together, the three components of Schmidt’s input/throughput/output scheme (Schmidt

2013) are assumed to ground citizen's legitimacy beliefs and influence the measured diffuse support.

Researchers highlighting the input side find that opportunities for being involved in decision-making are perceived as especially important (Tyler 2000; Bengtsson and Mattila 2009; Esaiasson, Giljam, and Persson 2012). Other studies inferred legitimacy using the activity of protest movements (e.g. Ruzza 2011), civil society (e.g. Liebert and Trenz 2011), voting behaviour during elections to the European Parliament (EP) (Hobolt and Franklin 2011; Gabel 2003), measured political party orientations (Hix 2008; Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004; Ray 1999), and conducted a plethora of attitude and public opinion studies based typically on survey-data from Eurobarometer or European Election Studies (Van der Brug et al. 2016; Eichenberg and Dalton 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2007; Gabel 1998). Legitimacy is, therefore deduced directly from citizens' responses or their behaviour.

Throughout legitimacy research discusses the role of transparency in the EU's policy-making (Héritier 2003), the quality of deliberation (Papadopoulos and Warin 2007), the EU's multilevel administration (Benz and Papadopoulos 2006), the EU institutions (Schmidt 2020; Schmidt 2016; Iusmen and Boswell 2017; Fromage 2018; Fromage and Van den Brink 2018), the EU agencies (Klika 2015; Chatzopoulou 2015), and the impact of the European semester on accountability, transparency, and efficacy (Munta 2020; Coman 2017). In this case, the research relies less heavily on survey data but assesses legitimacy based on scholars' evaluations of the processual qualities.

Lastly, research looking at the output side draws on various measurements of system efficiency (Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Eckersley 2007) dominated by economic indicators such as the proportion of trade between EU countries (e.g. Anderson and Reichert 1995), while more complex models incorporating national identities are less frequent (see Ehin 2008). This research strand measures legitimacy by proxy of diffuse support. Consequently, legitimacy appears as an *explanandum* to be predicted based on measures of system performance as *explanantia*.

When the three components of the normative legitimacy definition are weighted according to their effect on diffuse support, the findings

demonstrate that indicators of output legitimacy correlate strongest with diffuse support (Bernauer, Mohrenberg, and Koubi 2020; Fuchs 2011) and weigh more than the quality of democratic procedures, an indicator of input legitimacy (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Esaiasson et al. 2016; Arnesen 2017). In the same vein, Rothstein (2009) suggests that citizens' perception of their economic situation comes first, before other considerations such as quality of democracy, or indicators of throughput legitimacy, such as system transparency, have an effect. However, others (see Hooghe and Marks 2005) found that questions of national identity and sovereignty affect the EU's legitimacy more than economic performance. The main lesson appears to be that while system performance is the strongest predictor, other factors related to input and throughput legitimacy also influence legitimacy beliefs. This means that all of them must be covered when mapping citizens' normative expectations towards the EU.

Ultimately, the input/throughput/output framework links normative legitimacy with public support for the EU, which lends the legitimacy concept more social efficacy than the normative approaches relying on scholar's legitimacy judgements. Indeed, by weighting the individual components of the normative definition, it becomes possible to adjust scholars' normative legitimacy assessments of the EU, so they better reflect what actually influences citizens' support (see e.g. Strebel, Kubler, and Marcinkowski 2018). At the same time, legitimacy changes that can be detected in these terms are limited to shifting weights between the three main components (input, throughout and output). The input/throughput/output framework says little, if anything, about the communicative processes in which citizens may come to recognise and appreciate the identified normative goodness of EU governance. In addition, it remains unclear whether the normative criteria reflect or correlate with citizens' own value judgements.

In response to these challenges, an alternative practice-oriented research strategy took the empirical turn started by Weber even further by fully embracing the 'communicative turn'. Instead of taking the normative definition of legitimacy as a point of departure, the research strategy relies on a descriptive legitimacy definition based on practices rendering the EU legitimate via public legitimation (see e.g. Tallberg and Zürn 2019). The approach assumes that the qualities of governance, highlighted by the normative legitimacy concept, influence public

legitimation, which in turn affects legitimacy. In comparison to the research treating legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness that assumes a direct relationship between the institutional reality and political outcomes, the practice-oriented strategy including citizens' cognition into the 'legitimacy loop' emerges as more aligned with the goals of the present project. Its goal then is to map communicative action evaluating the EU to define what the legitimacy would mean based on citizens' own perceptions.

1.1.2 Legitimacy as the product of public legitimation

In contrast to the research measuring legitimacy as a particular subcomponent of the EU's diffuse support, this second strand of research stresses that 'legitimacy is not caused, but created' (Abulof 2015: 75; see also Barker 2001; Suchman 1995). This leads to a research programme where the scholar is not the author of legitimacy judgements but rather an observer of legitimation practices of other actors that (de)stabilise legitimacy supporting a specific mode of governance (e.g. Hurrelmann 2017; Biegoń 2016; Banchoff and Smith 1999; Beetham and Lord 1998). Ultimately, the legitimation dynamic is seen as dependent on actors' competences to elaborate and diffuse ideational resources rendering the EU not only meaningful but also legitimate, illegitimate, or 'a-legitimate' (Steffek 2007: 190).

Such a descriptive legitimacy definition requires addressing the question of both public support for the EU and the underlying norms informing an actor's judgement (see the second column in Table 1.1). The vast body of relevant literature addresses the circumstances that spark legitimation, the distinct arenas where legitimation unravels, the content of legitimation, and the consequences of legitimation (for a detailed literature review see Hurrelmann 2017). Legitimation practices form a subset of politicisation practices. Politicisation research therefore studies trends highly relevant for legitimacy studies (Rauh, Bes, and Schoonvelde 2020; de Wilde, Leupold, and Schimdtke 2018; De Wilde and Zürn 2012, Statham and Trenz 2013a, 2013b). The gradual increase in politicisation of the EU interpreted as a shift from 'permissive consensus' to 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks 2009) seems to be widely accepted (cf. Hurrelmann 2017; Schrag Sternberg 2013). Walter (2021) documents that permissive consensus is also consistent with the public opinion on Brexit negotiations in the EU public spheres. Ferrara and

Kriesi (2021) advance this account by theorising that the 2015 refugee crisis response as shaped by a ‘constraining dissensus’ led to little advancement of the EU’s institutional architecture. By contrast, the EU’s response to the Covid-19 crisis is seen as an ‘enabling consensus’ (see also van Middelaar and Waters 2021), which allowed the Next Generation European Union (NGEU) financial package to be adopted in July 2020.

As legitimation practices are assumed to take place in the public sphere, scholars have studied legitimation in parliamentary debates (Auel 2019; Maatsch 2017; Wendler 2014), party manifestos (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Hutter and Grande 2014; Spoon 2012), media reporting (Hutter and Kriesi 2019; Kriesi and Grande 2016; Leupold 2016), and social media (Michailidou 2017). Their findings seem to paint a dynamic picture of legitimation practices. Instead of a steady increase, legitimation changes often closely follow a selected significant event, such as the Eurozone crisis (see e.g. Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020; Schimmelfennig 2014; Statham and Trenz 2015).

For instance, the research that has scrutinised to what degree parliamentary communication contributed to EU legitimacy stresses the role of parliamentary deliberation and scrutiny of governmental action (Auel and Benz 2006). Public deliberation in the parliaments can make EU policy as well as the governmental actions in the EU more accessible and transparent for the citizens. Rozenberg and Hefftlar (2015) finds that during the ratification of the Lisbon treaty and the Eurozone crisis, there was an increase in parliamentary engagement in EU affairs and the national parliaments became more visible in the public debate. Yet, Auel, Eisele, and Kinski (2016: 164) show that despite the increasing number of debates during the Eurozone crisis, the parliaments spent only about eight per cent of debating time in the plenary on EU debates. The literature, therefore, still supports the conclusion of Auel and Raunio (2014: 25) that ‘while specific and very controversial EU topics and decisions are being debated, so far most parliaments do not live up to their task of bringing ‘Europe’ closer to the citizens or enabling them to make informed political (electoral) choices and exercise democratic control’.

When it comes to mapping the structure of EU legitimation, scholars have focused on overarching narratives rendering the European project

meaningful (Benett 2022; Blokker 2021; Dingwerth, Schmidtke and Wiese 2019; Trenz 2016; Lacroix and Nicolaidis 2010; Eder 2010), proliferating discourses about European integration (Ruzza 2021; Kutter 2020; Schrag Sternberg 2013; Hepp et al. 2016), framing in European media coverage (Bousiou and Papada 2020; Michailidou et al. 2014), national legitimisation discourses (Hurrelmann, Gora, and Wagner 2013; Hurrelmann, Schneider and Steffek 2007), and political claims analysis of utterances on the EU (Ciancara 2021; de Wilde, Michailidou, Trenz, and Crespy 2013). Which topics are prevalent seems to be affected mainly by the momentary agenda discussed in the public sphere. Nevertheless, delegitimation narratives seem more likely to criticise the EU for its moral, ethical, and democratic deficiencies, whereas the justifying narratives tend to draw on the EU's concrete outputs (see e.g. Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020; Scicluna 2012). Given the complexity and relevance of the research programme treating legitimacy as a product of legitimisation for the present project, I discuss the significance of this dimension more in-depth in subsection 1.1.2.3.

Lastly, there has been a lively debate about the consequences of public legitimisation. On the one hand, the legitimisation (and politicisation) of the EU creates pressures towards further democratisation (Statham and Trenz 2015). On the other hand, it might impede European integration, as pooling more competencies at the EU level has become increasingly contested (Hutter and Kriesi 2019; De Wilde and Zürn 2012). The debate in the literature appears dominated by functionalist reasoning, where further integration is expected to automatically translate into increased delegitimation. Here we can recall the argument made by Moravcsik (2002; 2004) and Majone (1994) during the 'nature of the beast' debate (see section 1.1.1). Insofar as the EU is perceived simply as an economic regime or international organisation, all that matters to citizens should be its performance. Its authority would be based primarily on different sources of support rather than legitimacy. This division is in my view the inevitable effect of contingency of the legitimisation processes that could render the EU less but also more legitimate in the long run. When the EU ends up justified in terms of an economic regime or international organisation, it might have positive effects on its legitimacy as well as its democratic deficit. If, however, the EU fails to justify itself, the negative public sentiment might limit further European integration. In other

words, the public attention the EU receives is in itself neither negative nor positive, because its outcomes are unpredictable.

Given the research objectives of the current project seeking to explore as broad variety of EU legitimacy changes as possible in order to conclude whether a legitimacy crisis has taken place, the descriptive approach to legitimacy research provides a better point of departure than the strategies introduced above. However, unless the following two conditions are fulfilled the question of EU legitimation remains largely irrelevant for both its legitimacy and institutional stability: 1) there is a public sphere where European affairs can be discussed, and 2) the EU has been politicised, i.e. perceived as a salient object of politics.

First, even when the authority of a mode of governance relies on democratic consent, there has to be a public arena where politicisation of public affairs could take place. Indeed, politicisation requires institutional settings making this public debate possible; that is a public sphere and a public that authorities can address and which conceives of itself as a relevant political actor with the power to influence the course of politics. As Hennis points out, 'where the human individual owes whatever he is entirely to the commonwealth, where he is defined as a *zoon politikon*, there can be no basic problem of legitimacy' (Hennis 2009 [1975]: 101-102, [italics in original]).

Second, unless the EU has been sufficiently politicised, it might not be perceived as a salient object of politics. In this case, we have to revert to a normative theory-based legitimacy definition to assess the legitimacy of the 'a-legitimate' EU, as the descriptive approaches rely on normative criteria elaborated in public debate. The term 'a-legitimate' characterises an institution that is so remote to citizens' political experiences that the citizens do not demand its explicit legitimation (see Steffek 2007: 190). Indeed, investigating how an 'a-legitimate institution' is justified for the public tells us very little about its legitimacy. Insofar as a regime manages to remain a-legitimate, any delegitimation based building on democratic theory is likely to be ineffective. In these cases, its legitimacy can only be discussed in terms of its normative goodness as assessed by the scholar. Moreover, these assessments can always be disputed for trying to apply irrelevant normative criteria in the process, as we have seen in the 'nature of the beast' debate. I now proceed with a discussion detailing to what degree the conditions of the existence of a public

sphere and the institutional politicisation are fulfilled in the case of the EU.

1.1.2.1 Condition I: the existence of the European public sphere

Effective legitimation, as any discursive will formation, can only take place in an arena accessible to a broad public that allows for politicisation of public affairs (Habermas 1989b: 154). Without the infrastructure required to circulate the information, its impact will remain constrained to few recipients. Similarly, without the possibility to participate in the debate, the circulated information will not reflect the heterogeneity of citizens' perspectives. Consequently, any empirical legitimacy research must first establish whether there is a public sphere in which the legitimation practices could take place.

While there has been a complex and captivating theoretical discussion about the very concept of the public sphere, for the purposes of this project, only a concise definition is needed. Arguably, the most influential account was developed by Habermas (1989a [1969]). In his more recent work, he outlines a public sphere dominated by communicative rationality with the mass media as the central infrastructure:

A dispersed public interconnected almost exclusively through the electronic media can keep up to date on all kinds of issues and contributions in the mass media with a minimum of attention, even in fleeting moments during the day, in small private circles. [. . .] Public communication acts as a hinge between informal opinion-formation and the institutionalized processes of will formation – a general election or a cabinet meeting, for example.

(Habermas 2016: 9)

In this account, the public sphere presents a fraction of the discursive that was made public by the media, rather than concrete spaces of salons, coffee houses, or the like.

The existence of a European public sphere is crucial for justifying the EU on democratic grounds (Lindner, Aichholzer and Hennen 2016), as citizens that have too little information about actions of the ruling elites would not be able to conclude whether the EU's authority is rightful or not. At the transnational level, it is then assumed that as EU influence

over the member states grows, the media will thematise the specific issues and raise citizens' awareness. In the words of Statham and Trenz (2015: 292):

A public sphere includes not only those who take an active part in the debate, but it presupposes that communication resonates among others, a 'public', for whom it is also relevant. This resonance of public communication between institutional actors and publics is carried primarily by mass-mediated political debates.

Following this line of reasoning, the present thesis will focus on the EU coverage in the mass-media, which creates a space for input from a large variety of publics.

Trying to deal with the democratic deficit identified already during the 'nature of the beast' debate (e.g. Eriksen and Fossum 2002; Esser and Pfetsch 2004; Weiler 1996), significant efforts were dedicated to ascertaining the existence of a transnational European public sphere (for an exhaustive literature review see Walter 2017). Based on the adopted theoretical model of a public sphere, I distinguish studies assessing the possible emergence of a unitary transnational public (e.g. Lingenberg 2010), a pan-European public sphere (e.g. Grimm 1995) resembling a jettisoned version of a national public sphere, and a multi-segmented European public sphere (e.g. Hepp et al. 2016) consisting of more or less Europeanised constituent public spheres.

While the transnational model insists that all the normative requirements associated with a democratic public sphere must be fulfilled to warrant the use of the 'public sphere' term, such requirements might not be realistic. According to Fraser, there is currently no public space inclusive of all subjected citizens of the EU and the responsiveness of EU's institutions to the public sentiment remains relatively low (Fraser 2014: 130). Taking the case of national public spheres as a point of reference, studies focusing on the pan-European model usually conclude that due to language heterogeneity, lack of shared media (Scharpf 1996) and diverse identities (Hrbek 1992; Wessler 2008), a genuine European public sphere is unlikely to emerge (e.g. Grimm 1995; Gripsrud 2007). Although some have expected some sort of virtual, networked public sphere as described by Castells (2008) to emerge at the European scale, Hennen (2020: 84) is sceptical about these prospects and stresses that online

media 'are increasingly used by political institutions in a vertical and scarcely in a horizontal or interactive manner of communication'. In addition, Hennen recognises the destructive role social media has in spreading disinformation, creating filter bubbles, and extending the reach of anti-European populist movements, which have detrimental effects on public deliberation.

When it comes to the research on the pan-European model of public sphere resembling a national public sphere but in the size of the EU (Grimm 1995), this model did not seem to correspond to the actual processes of European integration and has been widely discarded (Adam 2016: 3). We find 'a general consensus in the (primarily empirical) literature that we should not conceive of European public sphere as arenas of communication that are located above and beyond local-, national-, or issue-specific public spheres in an artificial supranational space' (Risse 2015: 10). Instead of searching for a new institutional configuration, the Europeanised public sphere emerges on top of established national structures. As Risse noted, the prevalence of this understanding of the Europeanisation process of the public sphere is remarkable as scholars disagree both on the conceptualisation of the public sphere and other methodological choices (2015: 17).

Despite recognising that 'public spheres have a social and cultural foundation that extends well beyond the framework of media markets and media organisations' (Peters 2008: 246), the majority of studies assume that modern public spheres are structured around mass media (Kriesi 2013: 38). While early works document coverage of European issues almost exclusively in quality press (e.g. D'Haenens 2005; Meyer 2005; Trenz 2004) or television (e.g. Jochen and De Vreese 2003; Peter, Semetko and De Vreese 2004), scholars have gradually started to also include regional press (e.g. Downey, Mihelj, and König 2012; Gattermann 2013; Offerhaus, Mollen, and Hepp 2014), and online platforms (e.g. Bennett, Lang, and Sgerberg 2015; Barisione and Michailidou 2017; Michailidou, de Wilde, and Trenz 2014; Rasmussen 2013; Hepp et al. 2016).

Another strand of literature investigates the degree of Europeanisation of national public spheres (e.g. Boomgarden et al. 2013; Koopmans, Erbe, and Meyer 2010; Gleissner and de Vreese 2005; Liebert 2007; Sifft et al. 2007; Trenz 2007; Triandafyllidou, Wodak, and Krzyzanowski 2009; Gray

and Statham 2005; Olsen 2002; Trenz 2008; Schlesinger and Kevin 2000) defined as:

Processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies.

(Radaelli 2003: 30)

The Europeanisation of the national public spheres is typically operationalised as a) visibility of European issues in the national public spheres, b) visibility of actors from other member states in the local media, and c) the same European issues are discussed in the different national public spheres (Hennen 2020: 58). Other works thematise partial aspects of making EU issues visible such as the role of mass media (Sarikakis and Kolokytha 2019, Statham and Trenz 2013a, 2013b; Fossum and Trenz 2006), the role of political journalists (Michailidou and Trenz 2020; Statham 2008), the logic of mediatisation of the European affairs (de Wilde 2019), the representation of protest movement (e.g. Imig and Tarrow 2001), the structure of EU's political communication (e.g. Seoane-Pérez 2013), the EU's communication policies (e.g. Bee and Bozzini 2010), and the role of civil society (Liebert, Gattig, and Evas 2013; Greenwood and Tuokko 2017).

Overall, existing research shows that the visibility of European issues in national media has increased since the mid-1990s (Boomgaarden and de Vreese 2016; Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart, de Vreese, and Schuck 2010; Wessler (ed) 2008; Koopmans and Statham 2010). A new strategy towards building a more transnational European public sphere leveraging memory politics has also been documented (Abraham 2018). Driven by the logic of mediatisation that favours high conflictuality, mass media have over time contributed to Europeanisation of the national public spheres by covering Eurosceptic perspectives on European affairs (Segesten and Bosetta 2019; Galpin and Trenz 2018). Michailidou et al. (2014) have further shown that national public spheres are on the one hand Europeanised to the extent that people are

discussing the same issues at the same time, yet, on the other hand, they do not relate to each other across national borders.

All in all, while there is no unitary European public sphere, the national public sphere has become increasingly open to European affairs. This means that the first condition for conducting an empirical legitimacy research is satisfied. It remains to investigate the second condition, i.e. whether the EU has been sufficiently politicised.

1.1.2.2 Condition II: politicisation of the EU

Since the post-Maastricht era, we have seen a rise in scholarly interest in the concept of politicisation (e.g. Koopmans and Statham 2010; Risse 2010; de Wilde 2011; de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Statham and Trenz 2013a, 2013b; de Wilde and Lord 2015; de Wilde et al. 2018). From the perspective of systems theory (Easton 1965), politicisation consists of ‘transporting’ an object from one functionally differentiated sphere into the sphere of politics (Zürn 2016). Similarly, scholars, who see politics as a result rather than a condition preceding politicisation, highlight the importance of developing actors’ political awareness of alternative, creative forms of marking something as political, which go beyond mere participation in established institutional forms such as elections (Kauppi, Palonen, and Wiesner 2016). The arguably most influential study of Hooghe and Marks (2009) famously documented the shift in attitude towards the EU that could be coined as ‘permissive consensus’ towards ‘constraining dissensus’, as EU affairs became widely controversial. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the constraining dissensus has arguably transformed into ‘enabling consensus’ (Ferrara and Kriesi 2021). Genschel and Jachtenfuchs (2021) argue that when crisis pressures have similar effects on member states, it leads to more empathic responses and lowers the politicisation of European integration in the crisis resolution process.

There is consensus that EU politicisation was sparked in the early 1990s (Leupold 2016; Schmidtke 2016; Schmidtke 2014). Nevertheless, these trends were hardly unidirectional (Grande and Hutter 2014). This makes their generalisability difficult because the patterns of politicisation vary across national borders (Grande and Hutter 2015; Schmidtke 2016; Leupold 2016). When the different arenas were assessed separately, most ambiguous findings came from the studies of how the general public contests the EU (Duchesne et al. 2013; van Ingelgom 2014; White 2011).

When it comes to the institutionalised arenas of government communication (Crespy and Schmidt 2014), party manifestos (Benoit and Laver 2006), protest movements (Imig 2004), or the European parliament (Hix, Noury, and Roland, 2007), there is a general agreement that the EU has been politicised to a considerable degree in both institutional and intermediate arenas (NGOs, political parties, media, parliament), while considerably less politicised in citizen arenas.

As Börzel and Risse (2018: 84-85) document, while the attempts of European elites to depoliticise the EU by transferring competencies to the EU level were relatively successful in the case of the euro crisis, the case of the Schengen crisis shows that politicisation cannot be easily contained or reverted. Since the body of available research suggests cultural availability of ideational resources making the EU a salient object of political communication, the second condition needed to exclude the possibility of the EU being 'a-legitimate' has been met.

Next, knowing that the link between EU legitimacy and its public legitimation can be convincingly established, I delve into the available research relevant for the study of EU legitimation and identify gaps in the literature.

1.1.2.3 Significance of EU media studies for EU legitimacy research

Most of the available research on the EU's public legitimation have focused on media. Indeed, the mass media distort the 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas 1970: 372) governed by rationality and act as the central nodes of the public debate. With the rise of social media, the media sphere became more decentralised and networked (Rasmussen 2016). Furthermore, a large body of research found an effect of media coverage on consumers' attitudes. While the measured effects varied across countries, Nardis (2015) demonstrated that positive news coverage could increase trust in the EU. By comparing visibility and tonality of the EU news with the measured trust in the EU, Brosius, van Elsas, and de Vreese (2018) found that both visibility and tonality have a moderate effect. While some studies demonstrate that consuming negative news is associated with perceiving an institution as less legitimate (Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett 2020), a negative coverage does not always induce negative attitudes (Norris 2000; Nardis 2015). When it comes to more stable phenomena such as European identity, Ejaz (2019) finds only minimal media effects. While the structure of the

media sphere has changed drastically, the news coverage often presents the main source of information about the EU and therefore has a significant potential to affect public opinion. The strength of media effects, however, varies from country to country.

Since only a fraction of the research on EU media coverage was conducted with the actual aim to say something about EU legitimacy, it is vital to clarify its significance for EU legitimacy studies in general, and this thesis in particular. The literature helps us to pinpoint the change in the EU's public legitimation along three main dimensions: 1) politicisation of European affairs, i.e. their visibility, debate polarisation, and expansion of the involved actors, 2) change in sentiment of the coverage, and 3) changes in the content of legitimation.

Even though politicisation has been seen by some as a negative phenomenon (e.g. Rauh et al. 2020) threatening European integration in itself, its relevance lies mainly in directing our attention to moments where a more fundamental legitimacy change may have happened. Similarly, the sentiment of EU coverage has been customarily interpreted in a straight-forward fashion as either positive and legitimating or negative and delegitimizing, yet I argue that it is long-term trends in the sentiment of the EU coverage rather than momentary shifts in tone that indicates possible legitimacy change. In this strand of research, much attention has been dedicated to Euroscepticism and the negative side of the discourse (Taylor 2008; Fuchs, Magni-Berton, and Roger 2009; Hooghe 2007; Usherwood and Startin 2013; Startin and Krouwel 2013). However, a few studies (e.g. Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020; De Wilde et al. 2013) have scrutinised both public justification and contestations. Schmidtke (2019) has found that international organisations in the media tend to be portrayed slightly negatively. Hurrelmann and Wagner (2020) have been studying changes in EU media coverage in Germany, Austria, Ireland, and Spain related to the Eurocrisis in the period 2009-2014 and found that despite the severity of the crisis, the tonality showed some fluctuations but no clear trends. While changes in politicisation and sentiment of the coverage might point our attention towards time periods where legitimacy change has likely happened, it is the third indicator that is decisive for any legitimation change, namely, shifts in the normative criteria invoked when evaluating EU legitimacy. It is also this dimension that requires most attention and unpacking.

Earlier, I have argued that EU empirical legitimacy research is concerned with both citizens' support for a concrete institution and the normative criteria citizens apply when making their legitimacy judgements. EU media research tracks changes in the foundations of legitimacy built in the public sphere, as it happens. The reviewed literature varies in terms of investigated patterns of meaning, each operating at a different level of abstraction. Scholars makes use of various units of analysis: narratives (Díez Medrano 2013; Trenz 2015; Nicolaidis and Lacroix 2010; Eder 2010), discourses (Hurrelmann et al. 2013; Hurrelmann et al. 2007; Schrag Sternberg 2013; Hepp et al. 2016), frames (Michailidou et al. 2014), and political claims (Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020). Notably, there is no broad agreement regarding the differences between the various concepts, which makes interpreting the findings in relation to each other somewhat challenging. Moreover, the differences in the selected unit of analysis strangely does not seem to affect the analytical strategy. Regardless of the adopted unit of analysis, the analysis tends to end with a recovered taxonomy of the invoked evaluative standards such as participation, legality, fairness, expertise, effectiveness, gains, or tradition (Zürn 2018). At the same time, the relevance of the described legitimation changes for EU legitimacy is far from obvious.

Even though some of the discussed EU media studies are clearly informative for legitimacy research, they were not conducted with the aim of mapping EU legitimacy changes in mind. As a result, it is rarely specified what the possible consequences of the described change in the content of public justification and critique for EU legitimacy are. However, even those, who clearly view legitimation as capable of shaping EU legitimacy, portray legitimation changes as designed to primarily 'nurture the belief in legitimacy' (Tallberg and Zürn 2019: 589). As long as the legitimation manages to secure or challenge legitimacy, which normative standard will prevail seems to play only a secondary role. This then begs the question of what causal significance the content of the dominant narrative does have for legitimacy in the making. While the literature richly documents diversity in the standards invoked during legitimation and contestation of the EU, without a theory that could be used to specify significance of these findings, the link between the mapped legitimation change and EU legitimacy changes remains unclear (I explore this issue in more detail in Chapter 2).

As most of the reviewed research does not specify how the documented legitimation changes raises normative concerns and leads to a legitimacy change, Schrag Sternberg (2013) and Biegoń (2013, 2016) present notable exceptions. Recognising that much of the scholarship is 'relatively silent about the processes by which certain criteria rather than others come to be generally accepted as conditions of legitimacy' (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 7), Schrag Sternberg turns her attention to what it *means* for the EU to be legitimate.

In a similar vein, Biegoń (2016) documents the discursive battle over legitimacy in the European Commission between 1973 and 2013. The study reconstructs meanings that are attributed to legitimate EC/EU governance and the struggles accompanying the process of establishing commonsensical notions of legitimacy (Idem: 8). These meanings are seen as constitutive for attitudes towards the EU. By following a constitutive rather than a causal logic (Doty 1993; Weldes and Saco 1996), Biegoń (2016) shows how particular legitimacy discourses made certain policies possible while restraining others.

Inspired by discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008) and 'new institutionalisms' (Hall and Taylor 1996), Schrag Sternberg views discourses as ways of representing and making sense of the world. This lends them causal power to shape what 'makes sense to say about the EU's and the integration's legitimacy' (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 4). Indeed, any evaluation invoked in the public sphere is only meaningful against the background of actors' pre-understandings of what a concrete institution stands for. This implies that an observed change in the content of legitimation could not only influence citizens legitimacy judgements but also contest what 'EU legitimacy' signifies. The described legitimation changes can, therefore, be connected to specific effects on EU legitimacy. As a result, her historical study of 'discursive politics of EU legitimation' goes beyond a mere description of strategically deployed discourses to (de)legitimate the EU and offers more fine-grained investigation into the 'ideational conditions' (White 2010: 63) and the 'arena of possibilities' (Walters and Haahr 2005: 72). In other words, it 'investigates ways of representing the social and political world that come to make sense to people' (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 223) and that influences what can be legitimised.

Schrag Sternberg (2013) identified four distinct understandings of EU legitimacy: Monnet's pragmatic, indirect, intergovernmental legitimacy, 2) direct- democratic legitimacy, 3) post-Maastricht redefinition of democratic legitimacy, and 4) elitist paradigms emphasising non- or counter-majoritarian sources of legitimacy. Biegoń (2013) distinguished between 1) the narrative of a functionalist Europe, which broadly corresponds to the first discourse in Schrag Sternberg (2013), 2) the narrative of a European identity, and 3) the narrative of a democratic Europe. In order to grasp the type of cultural change that is of interest here, I briefly introduce the shifts between the distinct understandings.

In the early years of the European Communities, the understanding of legitimation followed the foundational peace-and-prosperity narrative. The European integration has been seen as uncontroversial and also indispensable to securing what was construed as a/the 'European common good' (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 188). Its legitimacy could therefore be tested by the ability to deliver the desired outcomes.

When the ability of the European communities to guarantee peace and economic benefits became questioned in the early 1980s, the counter-narratives promoting an alternative understanding started to gain traction. In contrast to the dominant understanding of EC legitimacy, the counter-narratives called for direct European elections and 'envisaged the EP as a motor for further integration *as well* as the main repository of democratic legitimacy in the Community structure' (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 193, emphasis in the original). Schrag Sternberg (2013) and Biegoń (2013, 2016) shows how the European institutions responded by re-imagining the functionally defined cooperation in terms of 'the narrative of a European identity' and 'People's Europe'. Whereas the legitimacy used to hinge fully on the representativeness of the national governments, the introduction of the directly elected representatives in a European institution into the equation has arguably altered citizens' normative expectations towards the EU.

The third understanding of legitimacy has been shaped by the Maastricht crisis. It became impossible to maintain that the EU brought about by Maastricht reflected what the Europeans wanted (Schrag Sternberg 2013). In fact, the public debate revolved about the very possibility of realising democracy on a European scale. Biegoń (2013, 2016), therefore, speaks of the narrative of democratic Europe. As

opposed to classical democratic authorisation, control, representation, or accountability, the European institutions attempted to redefine the democratic EU in terms of transparency, subsidiarity, and civil society consultation (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 193). The the official 'openness and transparency paradigm' projected an image of citizens capable of overseeing all stages of EU decision- making while treating citizens as spectators and objects of control (Idem: 220).

Lastly, Schrag Sternberg describes elitist understandings emphasising non- or counter-majoritarian sources of legitimacy. These originated in the academic literature's turn to rehabilitate the EU's output legitimacy and argued that besides participatory democracy, legitimacy can be achieved through the authority of law, technical expertise, or delegation to semi-autonomous authorities such as central banks (Idem: 201). Instead of justifying the EU by the promise of desirable outcomes, its legitimacy should arise from optimal procedures and processes.

By highlighting not only the normative standards invoked during public legitimation but also the changes in the cultural norms underlying the justifications, Schrag Sternberg (2013) and Biegoń (2013, 2016) shows a more context-sensitive way of capturing a granular picture of legitimation change. Each of the discussed understandings has distinctive implications for how EU legitimacy should be assessed. Consequently, the empirical legitimacy research cannot proceed to evaluate EU legitimacy before it has established what legitimacy means in the given cultural context. Since this thesis strives to detect the variety of legitimacy changes in the studied period, this analytical dimension cannot be bracketed out.

Up to this point, I have outlined two of the approaches to studying EU legitimacy (Table 1.1): the normative approach and the descriptive approach. Each provides a distinct answer to how the normative-empirical duality of the legitimacy concept should be addressed. The research treating legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness formulates a hypothesis about the relevant normative criteria based on democratic theory, then identifies the most impactful of these criteria by crosschecking them with measured diffuse support, and finally, uses these to benchmark the institutional reality. By contrast, the second approach treats legitimacy as a product of legitimation. This implies that the normative criteria should be based on citizens' expressed normative

expectations. Although the former approach provides a more accurate measure of the qualities of the EU's institutional design, the latter approach better reflects the probability of social and political change. This makes it more appropriate for the present study concerned primarily with the stabilising role of legitimacy in world politics.

Throughout this subsection, I have reviewed the available literature investigating the two conditions that must be present to make empirical study of EU legitimation reasonable, namely, sufficient politicisation of the EU and existence of a public sphere where debates about European affairs could be taking place. The research suggests that the EU has, over time, become increasingly politicised, mainly in the media and institutional settings. This allows us to rule out the option that the EU has been 'a-legitimate'. Indeed, as long as a regime remains 'a-legitimate', its legitimacy can be assessed only in the normative sense, based on the qualities of its governance. Furthermore, the literature shows that a varying degree of Europeanisation of national public spheres has been detected. Based on these findings, it is safe to assume that probing EU legitimation using the descriptive approach to learn about EU legitimacy is a meaningful research strategy.

Drawing on the available research tackling EU public legitimation and critique, I have identified three possible dimensions of change (Table 1.2): 1) politicisation of European affairs, i.e. their visibility, debate polarisation, and expansion of the involved actors, 2) change in the sentiment of the coverage, and 3) change in the foundations of the legitimacy built in the public sphere. In terms of the last of the three indicators, I distinguish between a) normative standards invoked when making public arguments, and b) the cultural norms suggesting the appropriate way of publicly assessing institutional legitimacy. The normative standards signify various qualities of institutions that can be used to develop a justification or critique. For example, an institution can be justified by invoking its economic performance, its capability to coordinate some complex operations, its positive environmental effects, or its responsiveness to the needs of the target group. By contrast, the cultural norms refer to the broader 'ideational conditions' (White 2010: 63) shaping these normative expectations and ultimately what is meant by legitimacy in the case of a concrete institution. The literature suggests that while the EU was once legitimised by leveraging the same cultural norms as other international organisations, namely, its outputs, its

legitimacy has been re-imagined along the line of the cultural norms of deliberative democracy expecting the outputs to emerge in a public debate. In other words, whereas the cultural norms delimit how the EU could possibly be rendered legitimate, the normative standards present specific qualities, relevant in the light of the cultural norms, that are used to develop a justification or critique.

Since this thesis seeks to explore whether the EU has, as construed in the UK public sphere, in the monitored period of 2004-2016 experienced a legitimacy crisis, I proceed by reviewing literature that investigates consequences of lacking legitimacy.

Table 1.2: Relevance of individual analytical dimensions mapped in the EU coverage research for legitimacy research

Indicator of legitimation change		Relevance for legitimacy research
<i>Degree of politicisation</i>		Indicate moments of high probability of legitimacy change
<i>Change in the sentiment of coverage</i>		
<i>Content of justifications and critique</i>	<i>Citizens' normative expectations</i>	Establish the standards for legitimacy assessment
	<i>Cultural norms</i>	The appropriate mode of (e)valuation

1.1.3 Social efficacy of the different legitimacy concepts

Based on the legitimacy definition scholars choose, the literature highlights distinct forms of legitimacy changes. Nevertheless, the question of why we should care about legitimacy in the first place is often side-lined. Whereas the legitimacy concept presents an important reference point in debates about ethical governance, if we are to claim that legitimacy is actually consequential, we have to address its effects. Indeed, before we a little too eagerly start drawing connections between EU legitimacy and Brexit, the possible impact of lacking legitimacy must be clarified. This section reviews different ideas from the literature theorising the significance of legitimacy.

Based on the adopted approach to studying legitimacy, the literature introduces three main negative outcomes of lacking legitimacy: legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy crisis. At times, every 'failed' EU referendum such as the one in France (2005), the Netherlands (2005), and Ireland (2008), has been interpreted as social proof of an EU legitimacy crisis (see for example Ward 2010; Collignon 2006; van Apeldoorn 2009, Risse-kappen 1996). However, before Brexit,

the EU did not have to face any form of disintegration. In subsection 1.1.1, I have noted that the strand of research treating legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness uses the language of ‘legitimacy deficits’ rather than ‘legitimacy crises’. In the case of the referenda, this concept seems more fitting. The EU’s many legitimacy deficits are well established (Dahl 1999; Zürn 2000; Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2005). Recently, Vivien Schmidt has explored the legitimacy deficits in her book *Europe’s Crisis of Legitimacy* (2020). Using the lenses of democratic theory, she problematises the EU’s conduct during the Eurocrisis along the yardsticks of input, throughput, and output legitimacy. The book argues that the rules governing crisis management were altered in a process, which was lacking in transparency, and which resulted in a crisis of legitimacy. Nevertheless, the author does not specify why the described situation amounts to a crisis nor its assumed consequences for the functioning of the EU. Indeed, legitimacy in the sense of normative goodness of EU governance can influence public support and compliance only indirectly via communicative processes and citizens’ personal experience with governance. This means that the identified issues do not have immediate effects. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that wider audiences beyond the academic community consider the specific legitimacy issues as serious. Therefore, the present thesis is mainly concerned with the phenomena of legitimation and legitimacy crises.

In comparison to the literature working with the normative legitimacy definition, the research invoking the legitimation or legitimacy crisis imagery links EU legitimacy directly to public support and the likelihood of citizens’ compliance. In this view, legitimacy matters because coercion and incentives that could be used to uphold social order are unavailable, or too costly to use (Bernstein 2011; Hurd 2007). However, legitimacy was not portrayed as the currency of a crisis until the book *Legitimation crisis* (1975) by Habermas. In the context of his scholarship, this work stands out as it is strongly influenced by orthodox Marxist thought. Some of his later writings such as the *Theory of communicative action* (1987), present arguments incompatible with the reasoning in the *Legitimation crisis* (1975). Furthermore, since Habermas himself has never returned to revise the original conceptual definition, I choose to present this account here as demonstrative of the early thought on the subject rather than the broader legacy of Habermas.

The book *Legitimation crisis* (1975) outlines the phenomenon as induced by the crisis tendencies of capitalist economies that have been displaced via state interventions into the sphere of politics. In practice, legitimation crisis is a description of the states' position within the global capitalist economy. Moreover, it might be argued that the focus on legitimation as a communicative action is misleading, because the root cause and the sole solution to the crisis seems to lie in the economic subsystem. Even though the economic crisis affects the social integration by impeding states' legitimation, the success of legitimation itself is fully determined by the context, which renders it ultimately inconsequential. By contrast, contemporary legitimation research tends to assume that legitimacy is not a characteristic fixed by other functional subsystems, but created during legitimation of political institutions (e.g. Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020; Biegoń 2016; Abulof 2015; Barker 2001). This is one of the main reasons why empirical research rarely refers back to this work of Habermas.

When contrasted with more contemporary scholarship, it is noteworthy that the threshold for coining an event as a legitimation crisis was set rather high in *Legitimation crisis* (1975) and reserved for crises threatening the stability of the very system. Nowadays, the notion of 'legitimation crisis' is often used as a rhetorical rather than analytical device to stress the gravity of legitimation problems (see e.g. Longo and Murray 2015; Schweiger 2016; Schmidt 2020). As a result, it is not clear what distinguishes a crisis from mere public contestations. In a similar vein, organisational scholars tend to use the term as a synonym for failed legitimation attempts (e.g. Gronau and Schmidtke 2016). This strand of research revolves predominantly around public legitimation strategies designed to convince or persuade a given audience (Vaara 2014; Cheney, Christensen, Conrad and Lair 2004; Green 2004). Much attention has been dedicated to evaluating procedural issues of deploying different legitimation strategies (Tallberg and Zürn 2019; Steffek, Kissling, and Nanz 2008; Grigorescu 2015). When legitimacy is questioned, the results show that international organisations try to persuade audiences about their accountability, accessibility, and transparency. Out of all the empirical EU research, only the policy brief of Severs and Mattelaer (2014) has argued that the EU suffers from a legitimation crisis. Instead of investigating EU legitimation strategies, they draw conclusions about the crisis based on the levels of political trust. The question of whether

the EU has experienced a legitimisation crisis in the past, therefore, has not been systematically examined. Chapter 2 of this thesis further specifies what would amount to a legitimisation crisis in the case of the EU and how it could be detected (see section 2.3.2).

When it comes to legitimacy crises, Hurrelmann (2019) noted that the crisis diagnoses tend to originate in abstract works (e.g. Longo and Murray 2015; Schweiger 2016) that employ the term rather loosely or leave it entirely undefined (Hurrelmann 2019: 12). Many scholars use the concept in a way which 'exaggerates the extent of political dissatisfaction and too often falls into the dangers of fact-free hyperbole' (Norris 2011: 241). Moreover, the term legitimacy crisis has also been conflated with legitimisation crisis, and in some cases, the two are used interchangeably (see for example Gronau and Schmidtke 2016). Such practice curbs the analytical purchase strength of the two concepts.

The scholars testing the legitimacy crisis hypothesis in empirical research have been looking for its signs in all thinkable directions: organised protests and other large-scale breaches of order (Lyrintzis 2011), changing attitudes (Lindgren and Persson 2010), respondents' evaluations of the EU membership from the Eurobarometer surveys (Verney 2014; Fuchs and Escher 2015), trends in electoral behaviour (Rossteutscher, Faas, and Arzheimer 2015; Andeweg and Farrell 2017) normative standards of democratic legitimacy (Bellamy and Weale 2015), class and ideology formations (Van Apeldoorn 2014), political party positions (Hall 2014), and critical discourses animating public debates (Statham and Trenz 2015, Vaara 2014). While research documents trends in the chosen variables, when it comes to pinpointing the legitimacy crisis, the findings do not seem to provide a coherent picture. On the one hand, accounts such as of Hansen and Williams (1999) conclude that the EU suffers from a legitimacy crisis that is caused by a lack of a shared myth that could legitimate the European project and competing mythological structures (Hansen and Williams 1999: 246). As the authors infer the legitimacy crisis based on legitimisation problems, the distinction between the two types of crises ends up obfuscated in the process. On the other hand, as Ward (2010) points out, 'in the absence of large-scale protests, it could also be argued that the EU has no crisis of legitimacy' (Ward 2010: 116). Yet another strand of research relies on survey methods mapping popular support. Lindgen and Persson (2010: 455) state that 'the legitimacy crisis of the EU is, first and foremost, one of low

and weakening support for EU policy-making among ordinary citizens'. Despite using the same kind of data, Fuchs and Escher (2015) reached the opposite conclusion while pointing out that:

If one can speak of a crisis at all, then it is rather a crisis of support than a crisis of legitimacy. Whether a crisis exists depends on the extent to which citizens withdraw support from a regime. Yet, there are no theoretical criteria that help us to determine at what point one should begin to speak of a crisis.

(Fuchs and Escher 2015: 91)

Indeed, the noted arbitrariness of the threshold after which a situation is coined as a crisis exposes how the current lack of a widely accepted definition renders the findings inconclusive. If the legitimacy crisis is understood as an explicit denial of the EU's rightfulness, in compliance with the EU's decisions, and demand of the EU's abolition, existing research provides little of evidence of it (Hurrelmann 2019: 12; see also Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020).

In sum, legitimacy research outlines the consequences of lacking legitimacy using three concepts: legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy crisis. The available literature points out many of the EU's legitimacy deficits with regard to democratic theory. As the legitimacy deficit presents mostly an ethical challenge, until the identified legitimacy issues are recognised by citizens, it might have no effect on the functioning of the institution. By contrast, legitimation and legitimacy crises are assumed to threaten the stability of the institution. While the former term is usually used to describe a failure to justify its conduct, the latter is seen as the result of lacking popular support. When it comes to the question of whether the EU has suffered a legitimation or legitimacy crisis, the lack of any widely accepted research strategy renders the findings of the existing empirical research as a whole inconclusive. Therefore, it is not possible to dismiss the claim that 'there is [no] legitimacy crisis but only the perception of one' (Banchoff and Smith 1999: 3). Against this background, in section 2.3.3, I develop an alternative approach to testing the crisis hypothesis.

1.2 Outline of research agenda

In the context of the possible EU legitimacy crisis, this thesis sets out to explore two main research questions:

1. How did EU legitimacy construed in the UK public sphere change against the backdrop of the financial crisis (2008), the sovereign debt crisis (late 2009), and the refugee crisis (2015) – the three crises hitting two EU central arrangements: the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Schengen area of unrestricted movement?; and
2. Did the EU in the monitored period of consecutive crises (2004-2016) undergo a legitimacy crisis understood as a situation where the probability of disintegration can only be decreased at a price of substantial policy reform?

Concerning the first research question, the literature review presented in the previous sections established a research gap in EU legitimation studies. I now outline the research agenda designed to fill these.

In order to answer the first research question, we need to control for the different forms of legitimation change in terms of these dimensions during the crisis-ridden period 2004-2016. Whereas the approaches using the normative legitimacy definition provide a valuable benchmark of the EU institutional design's normative goodness, it is neither clear how the quality of governance influences legitimation nor how and with what delay it translates into legitimacy in the sense of morally justified citizens' support and compliance. Therefore, I adopt the descriptive legitimacy definition focusing on the link between public legitimation and legitimacy. I have identified three dimensions of legitimation change addressed in the literature: 1) politicisation of the European affairs, i.e. their visibility, debate polarisation, and expansion of the involved actors, change in the tone of the coverage, and 3) change in the content of public justifications/critique. While there is enough research measuring changes in diffuse support for the EU, politicisation, and tone of the EU coverage, I have located the main research gap within the third dimension.

The available literature depicts changes in the content of legitimation, but seldom specifies the effects these changes have on EU legitimacy. Since not all studies attribute causal importance to legitimation, authors tend to restrain themselves from explicating what significance the described change has for EU legitimacy. As a result, the question of what it would *mean* at different times for the EU to be legitimate has been left largely understudied and undertheorised. Before I proceed with the empirical inquiry into the first research question, the following must be clarified: a) what consequences does changing the content of legitimation have for qualities of the legitimacy in the making, and b) what types of legitimation changes are consequential. I, therefore, argue for the need to broaden the research agenda.

By introducing the notion of a legitimacy change in kind that affects the scope of justifiable authority, chapter 2 forges the missing link of the causal chain connecting legitimation change, legitimacy change, and the legitimacy in the making. The chapter starts with discussing how the legitimacy concept has been approached in empirical research and what types of legitimacy changes have been monitored, and presents the theoretical background of the project. It instructs us to pay attention to what is otherwise taken for granted: the cultural norms palpable as distinct modes of valuation. Each of these modes of valuation convey an appropriate way of assessing institutional legitimacy with relevant normative standards. The highlighted cultural norms and the normative expectations influencing the institution's legitimation make it possible to capture changes in the qualities of the legitimacy in the making.

Next, the third chapter translates the analytical framework into operational terms. Operationalisation typically unfolds in these steps: choosing the relevant case(s), selecting method(s) of data collection, coding strategy, determining method(s) of data analysis, and clarifying the significance of the findings. The chapter presents the chosen research design, methods of collecting and cleaning the data, and explicates how each of the three dimensions of legitimation change are studied. Lastly, chapter 3 discusses the analytical, practical, and ethical considerations of the projects.

Based on the methodological discussion in chapter 3, the current study investigates EU legitimacy changes as inferred from a large-N dataset used to document legitimation changes in the UK media sphere from

2004 to 2016, collected from the Lexis Nexis archive. In order to increase robustness of the findings and address multiple dimensions of the legitimacy concept, a mixed- methods research design is implemented. While a quantitative computer-assisted text analysis tracks macro-level legitimisation changes and highlights trends over time, a qualitative discourse analysis of the observed discourses links the discovered legitimisation changes with EU legitimacy changes. Since a discourse allows for representing a particular strand of public (de)legitimation consistently with the assumptions of theoretical framework introduced in chapter 2, it is selected as the best unit of analysis for the thesis.

Taking the introduced analytical framework and research design as a point of departure, the fourth chapter opens up the empirical analysis by tracking legitimisation changes in the EU media coverage thematising the EU policy interventions. Indeed, the legitimisation practices comprise not only utterances of what is at stake, but also statements defining what is going on. In this case, the coverage of EU policies qualifies the EU as an institutional body with certain authority and competences. Therefore, the fourth chapter pays close attention to how the EU is depicted as an entity in individual media reports. Following the existing research (section 1.1.1.2), it is unlikely that a system-level critique puts legitimacy of the EU as a polity under pressure unless its political interventions have been thoroughly delegitimised. In other words, as the policy-specific debate tends to precede system-level critique, the empirical analysis of this thesis begins with an analysis of policy-centred EU media coverage. Therefore, the fourth chapter keeps track of the changes in the structure of EU media coverage in terms of the covered EU policy areas, as structured on the EU's official document site EUR-Lex⁴. Besides indicating times when a legitimacy change was likely, the policy-centred analysis reveals the most salient discourses that might be developed further for mounting a critique of the EU itself.

In comparison to the EU policy area coverage, where a policy intervention comprises the object of the debate, the critique in the polity-centred media coverage is no longer directed against concrete policies, but evaluates the EU itself. The fifth chapter investigates the most salient

⁴ EUR-Lex: Access to European Union law. (01.01.2023). Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

(de)legitimation discourses identified in chapter four as likely to be developed for evaluating the EU as a polity. An increase in relative visibility of the polity-centred EU media coverage might signal unresolved legitimation issues that are likely to result in a legitimacy change in the future. However, it must be specified what legitimacy changes these discourses are likely to bring about. Consequently, special attention is paid to the dominant cultural norms indicating how EU legitimacy should be assessed. In sum, the empirical chapters four and five cover the variety of conceivable and consequential legitimation changes in the UK public sphere. The sixth chapter, then, determines what type of legitimacy changes have taken place and at which point, and discusses the significance of the observed legitimation changes for EU legitimacy.

When it comes to the second research question, the available literature does not provide a clear answer on whether the EU has suffered a legitimacy crisis. The legitimacy crisis concept has been used predominantly as a rhetorical device. To test the crisis hypothesis, I start with clarifying the relationship between neighbouring concepts such as legitimacy crisis, legitimation crisis, legitimacy deficit, or diffuse support. While some scholars refer to trends in citizens' trust, low turnout rates during elections to the European parliament, or failure of public referenda concerning treaty ratifications, they do so with limited discussion of where the border between a legitimation problem and legitimacy crisis lies. Since the existing studies disagree on what situation amounts to a crisis, the findings are inconclusive. To address this lack of clarity, the second chapter models the mutual relationship between the neighbouring concepts of legitimacy crisis, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy deficit.

With the theoretical model explaining the role of institutional design, public debate, and citizens' perception in legitimation dynamics, the links between the involved elements are specified. The theoretical model also specifies indicators that allows developing operational definition of the legitimacy crisis. Whether the EU has undergone a legitimacy crisis is established based on the legitimacy changes described in chapters four and five. In line with the approaches that place the conceptual bar relatively high (see e.g. Reus-Smit 2007; Barker 2003; Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020), Chapter 6, then, interprets the results of the fine-grained analysis in the two preceding chapters using the theoretical model

(section 2.3) to resolve whether the EU has suffered a crisis of legitimacy or simply legitimization problems in the monitored period.

The concluding, seventh, chapter then reviews what the findings of the analysis in chapters 4, 5, and 6 mean for the empirical puzzle of the impact that the multiple crises had on EU legitimacy and the role its changes played in the years preceding the Brexit referendum. Finally, I point out several avenues for future research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical and conceptual design

According to Rousseau, 'the strongest man is never strong enough to be always master unless he transforms his power into right, and obedience into duty' (Rousseau 1968: 10). Since 2004, the EU went through multiple crises, yet never had to face disempowerment. This robustness is particularly noteworthy, as the EU cannot resort to the use of coercive power. If we are to fully understand its institutional stability, the legitimacy might turn out to be the key factor. Therefore, this thesis sets out to firstly explore how EU legitimacy construed in the UK public sphere changed over the crisis-ridden period of 2004-2016 and secondly, to assess whether the EU has suffered from a legitimacy crisis during the monitored time or not. Before we can delve into any empirical investigation, we have to clarify what exactly legitimacy means, formulate the theoretical expectations regarding what changes it can undergo, and identify what analytical tools might help capture these changes. Furthermore, the conditions that amount to a legitimacy crisis must be delineated. These are the main objectives of the present chapter.

Legitimacy has been one of the central concepts in political theory (Beetham 2013: 41; Coicaud and Curtis 2002). However, its normative-empirical nature, in the sense of covering not citizens' support in general, but specifically the support rooted in morality, makes the concept elusive. The act of choosing a research approach for this project has a character of a balancing act. On the one hand, overemphasising the normative aspect could result in writing a history of normative ideas. On the other hand, putting too much stress on its empirical dimension comprised of measured citizens' support risks conflating legitimacy with

social acceptance. For the time being, there is no widely accepted conceptual definition of the term. The available research depicts legitimacy as popular belief (Lipset 1959), discursive phenomenon (Bukovansky 2002), fairness and justice (Hegtvedt and Johnson 2009), willing obedience (Cromartie 2003), diffuse public support (Gronau and Schmidtke 2016; Gilley 2006), compliance (Booth and Seligson 2009), acceptability (Freedon 2005), appropriateness (Olsen and March 2004), sense of obligation (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009), a result of communicative construction (Hepp et al. 2016), and favourable democratic outcome (Hurd 2007). In the literature review (see section 1.1), I have distinguished between two broad research strategies for dealing with the normative-empirical duality. The first, 'normative' research strategy develops the legitimacy concept by deducing the norms of legitimate rule such as accountability from democratic theory, weighting these norms based on their correlation with citizens' support, and evaluating the current state of affairs against these ranked dimensions.

The other, 'descriptive' strategy proceeds inductively, establishing the norms based on publicly raised citizens' concerns. This approach provides a stronger link between legitimacy and institutional stability. Being primarily concerned with legitimacy as a stabilising and destabilising element in world politics, the current project adopts the latter approach, as it is better suited for empirical mapping of various types of legitimacy changes.

In line with the ontology sketched out in the previous chapter (section 1.2), I treat EU legitimacy as a relational property conditioned by citizens' perceptions of EU's policy interventions (see also Tallberg and Zürn 2019, Hurd 2007). Legitimacy acts upon the subjected, whether they recognise its existence or not. By contrast, legitimation work relies on the available ideational means that actors have at their disposal to establish a normative record of a regime and voice concerns. Disobedience of a legitimate authority might have dire consequences for one's life chances. Seen through the lenses of social theory, legitimacy appears as the normative sustainability of relatively stabilised arrangement of human and non-human bodies systematically structuring relations of power inequality along the lines of some cultural

norms⁵, which Foucault coined as *dispositif* (Foucault 1980). Such cultural norms can then give rise to normative expectation towards the EU that are typically applied to other institutional contexts such as deliberative democracy, federation, or intergovernmental organisation.

(De)legitimation changes the relationship between a mode of governance and the individual. It refers to a specific kind of communicative and 'performative' action (Alexander 2006) shaping citizens' legitimacy assessments or salience of different cultural norms. The cultural norms themselves denote how the given mode of governance is normatively imagined and determine which principles are relevant for assessing its legitimacy. The scope of policy interventions that can be justified varies based on the cultural norms i.e. different ideational and material resources (see Swidler 1986; Thévenot 2002; Alexander and Jaworsky 2014) used to stabilise the given mode of governance. Probing the legitimation thus helps to identify dominant cultural norms and in turn delimit the changing territory of justifiable political action. Besides, it allows capturing any rise in the salience of alternative cultural norms.

Since (de)legitimation practices produce legitimacy changes, studying these practices should, in theory, expose any legitimacy change. The literature linking EU legitimacy changes with shifts in public legitimation (see section 1.1.2.2) examine legitimation change using three indicators: the degree of politicisation, tone of the media coverage, and

⁵ Drawing on convention theory, I understand cultural and social norms as conventions in the sense of 'collective cognitive devices' (Favereau 1989). No matter which form they take (e.g. legal norms, industrial standards, local customs, etc.), they normatively govern and make possible the always uncertain coordination of human action. More concretely, the conventions provide '[. . .] shared templates for interpreting situations and planning courses of action in mutually comprehensible ways that involve social accountability, that is, they provide a basis for judging the appropriatedness of acts by self and others' (Biggart and Beamish 2003: 444). As Reynaud and Richebé notices, the power of conventions '[. . .] arises from the mere fact of belonging to a group, or rather, from the will to participate in a collective action' (Reynaud and Richebe 2009: 7). By contrast to structuralist understanding, I do not see the conventions as transcendent and external to actors. Instead, I treat the conventions as internal to actors imbued with 'critical capacity' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999) to reflect upon them and potentially alter them. For more on convention theory, see e.g. Boltanski and Thévenot (2000), Diaz-Bone (2011), Jagd (2007), and Wagner (1999).

changes in the content of public justification/critique. The first two analytical dimensions signal a legitimacy change in degree captured on an imaginary scale spanning the space between the illegitimate and the legitimate. The third dimension addressed by scholars studying more qualitative changes in the content of public justification/critique is rarely used to assume on the impact these changes had on legitimacy.

If an institution, whose function used to be justified in light of its economic performance, faces legitimation issues, it can be justified by a reference to its democratic procedures or some alternative values. Schrag Sternberg (2013) documented that while the European Communities could in the early years rely on their functional justification in terms of the promise of European peace and prosperity, this discourse came under a pressure during economic difficulties in the 1980s. In order to manage these legitimation issues, the European institutions have re-imagined what EU legitimacy means by rooting its mission in the will of its citizens. The establishment of the EP has been a significant step towards making this legitimation plausible. However, such development begs the question of what consequences – both in terms of making the institution perceived as more or less legitimate and the actual scope of authority perceived as authorised, does this legitimation shift have for EU legitimacy.

The abundant research probing changing content of EU legitimation provokes interest in what these changes *mean* for EU legitimacy in the making. So far, this subject has been largely overlooked in the research working with the descriptive legitimacy definition. As a result, the legitimacy change in degree has received nearly exclusive research attention. Since this thesis has the ambition to explore various changes in EU legitimacy during the monitored time, all forms of legitimacy change must be theorised before we proceed with empirical enquiry. Once the link between legitimation change in the content of public justification/critique and legitimacy change is fully established, I discuss what analytical tools can support empirical research. Lastly, with the analytical framework in place, I discuss what conditions amount to a crisis of legitimacy, as the second research question of this thesis tests the EU legitimacy crisis hypothesis.

2.1 Towards a broader agenda for legitimacy research?

The reviewed EU research adopting a descriptive legitimacy definition (section 1.1.2.2) mainly investigates legitimacy change in terms of how much more or less legitimate the EU has become. Any alternative notions of legitimacy change than this change ‘in degree’ have been nearly absent. This situation can be attributed to the dominant reading of Max Weber’s (1964 [1947]) work⁶. Here, the legitimacy of an order is equated with social recognition ‘that its identity, interests, practices, norms, or procedures are rightful declines to the point where it [the institution] must either adapt (by reconstituting or recalibrating the social bases of its legitimacy, or by investing more heavily in material practices of coercion or bribery) or face disempowerment’ (Reus-Smith 2007: 157). Without any need to look into the moral principles legitimising the order, it is enough to know that ‘people have their reasons’ (Becker 2010; Rothstein 2009). Such a reading interprets legitimacy as an a posteriori justification of present relations of domination. Understood from this perspective, the main task of legitimacy research is to measure the effects of some event on the public support and compliance in order to assess whether the political action has been successfully justified or not. The legitimisation work is only important as a mean to secure political stability. Whether audiences start to perceive the EU as legitimate or not is regarded as more important than the normative grounds invoked during the legitimisation. Consequently, the impact of different kinds of justification on EU legitimacy has been left under-theorised.

In the available literature, scholars have gathered substantial evidence about the diversity in the content of justifications used for EU (de)legitimation. A large body of research examined various legitimisation narratives, discourses about the European integration, framing in the European media coverage, national legitimisation discourses, or claims. Its main focus has been documenting the most impactful justifications and critique in the public sphere to map shifting constellations of publicly expressed interests in regard to the EU. These shifts in interests are then

⁶The main exception can be found in Hennis 2009 [1975] and *Between facts and norms* (1996) by Habermas proposing reconstructive approaches relying on the history of ideas. The legitimacy is to be adjudicated by a scholar aware of different forms of rule found in the history.

assumed to translate into institutional change. However, the question of what these observed legitimation changes might mean for EU legitimacy has not been a part of the research agenda.

The value of such research seems to hinge on its ability to identify the most impactful content leading to an increase in citizens' compliance while decreasing opposition. Whether the EU ends up justified with reference to its internal procedures, environmental policies, or foreign aid is assumed to have no obvious effect on its legitimacy. By bracketing the politics out of political communication we risk being reduced to an evaluation of the EU's political marketing. However, assuming that legitimation can only lead to legitimacy change in degree, i.e. render the EU either more or less legitimate in the eyes of the audiences, the actual content of these narratives, frames, discourses, or claims, is of little relevance. Claiming otherwise would presuppose that the way in which the EU is legitimised somehow affects the resulting legitimacy beyond the impact on citizens' support alone. This reasonable suspicion is worthy of further exploration.

The idea that 'the normative' that founds (de)legitimation practices somehow matter for the resulting legitimacy can be found even in Weber's own account of the legitimacy concept. As Corcuff and Lafaye (1989) point out, Weber, in fact, presents two radically different conceptual definitions: besides the Nietzschean account highlighting persuasion and citizens' beliefs about past events, elsewhere in *Economy and Society* (Weber 1978 [1922]) Weber invokes a future-oriented notion of 'legitimate order'. Normative sustainability of this order is neither supposed to be fully reliant on the actors' self-interest nor the strength of the 'customs'. An order is valid and legitimate not because people grew used to it, but thanks to its relation to an ideal shared in common⁷. Furthermore, the normative expectations making some order more justifiable than others cannot be simply dismissed as an ideology or an artefact of 'uniformity of social action' (Weber 1978: 31). In fact, they represent the *good* people are moved by when engaging in a value-oriented (*wertrational*) action. This reading implies a connection between the norms invoked during legitimation and characteristics of the resulting legitimacy. By contrast, a legitimation that resonates with

⁷ See the full discussion in Boltanski and Thévenot (2000).

citizens' normative expectations utilising argumentative constructions that can be readily tested secure more leeway for future policy interventions. In other words, besides the legitimacy change in degree affecting the EU's institutional stability, a different type of change influences the qualities of the legitimacy in the making. Therefore, the accounts describing legitimacy change in degree should be complemented with inquiries into this more qualitative sort of change.

In the literature, I have found only a handful of original contributions proposing an alternative notion of legitimacy change. Indeed, this theoretical move was only made possible by the introduction of 'culturalist' neoinstitutionalism in EU studies that acknowledge the influence that structures of meaning exercise over the institutional reality (see March and Olsen 1989; 1995; DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Following this line of reasoning, Akman and Kasim (2009) studied the official 'mythology' used by the European Commission to justify its increased authority in the field of competition policy. Authors outline the limits these myths impose on the policy-making. Similarly, De Wilde argues that politicisation (2011) and mediatisation (2019) of the EU, which encompasses EU legitimation, had an impact on the course of European integration. Turning back to the early research, Jachtenfuchs, Diez, and Jung (1998) represents a remarkable work that can be read as one of the first attempts to expand the agenda of EU legitimation research beyond charting the publicly expressed interests and the most impactful justifications.

Jachtenfuchs et al. (1998) have engaged in a close reading of official documents to locate the 'polity-ideas' shaping conflicts over the form of European integration with the aim to generate important 'insights into stability and change of these institutions' (Idem: 412). The legitimacy change in the question was imagined as following the cultural change making certain understandings of the institutional reality and its future particularly salient. Such an approach stresses that the shape of the EU 'depends not only on interests but also on normative ideas about a legitimate political order' (Idem: 409). Similarly, it problematises the direct link between publicly expressed interests and institutional change.

When it comes to EU legitimation research, there are two kinds of meaning structures that are seen as relevant. Firstly, it is the publicly expressed interests, political preferences, or normative standards that

comprise the main focus of the available EU legitimation research. Secondly, Jachtenfuchs et al. argue that ‘individual beliefs are also the product of normative orders in a given [cultural] context, which enable actors in the political system, for instance, to reduce complexity when assessing the properties and outputs of the system’ (Idem: 413). The research into the interests, preferences, and normative standards should therefore be complemented with investigations into what I have earlier described as cultural norms or ‘ideational conditions’ (White 2010: 63). These cultural norms shape what interests, preferences, and standards meaningfully apply. Since each of the two meaning structures affect EU legitimacy in a specific way, the present thesis seeking to map the conceivable legitimacy changes must address both of them.

Amongst the available literature on EU legitimation, the full potential of the research direction can be seen in Schrag Sternberg’s (2013) book. Her study draws more generally on the ‘new institutionalisms’ that view institutions as embedded in and influencing culturally specific interpretive frames that guide human action by indicating what is appropriate in any context (Hall and Taylor 1996: 946). Following the ‘ideational turn’ (Blyth 1997) in comparative political science, discursive institutionalists (Campbell and Pedersen 2001; Schmidt 2008) assert that taken-for-granted ideas must be taken seriously because they influence the ways actors make sense of institutions and policies (e.g. Borrás and Seabroke 2015) and ultimately also political outcomes. The ideas are to be understood in the context of a broader cultural landscape as well as within a broader historical or social context. This combined with a more dynamic understanding of institutional change results in an approach that highlights how exactly the interactive processes of discourse formation matter.

Not unlike the discursive institutionalists, Schrag Sternberg wants to ‘capture the power of ideas and discourses in influencing creation, change, and persistence of institutions’ (Schrag Sternberg 2013: 231). Consequently, she aims to answer the question of what it *means* for the EU to be legitimate at different times. Her book captures the changing character of justifications mobilised to maintain EU legitimacy. Instead of ‘myths’ or ‘polity-ideas’ she documents discursive universes expressive of particular understandings of EU legitimacy. During the analysed period, EU legitimacy was understood as reflexive of the EU’s outputs, reliant on citizens’ direct support, dependent on its

transparency, accountability, and stakeholder involvement, or the ability to operate strictly within legal frames leveraging the best technical expertise (for a more in-depth presentation, see section 1.1.2.3). As new cultural norms shaping citizens' understanding of EU legitimacy become salient, the shift provides a concrete example of what I call legitimacy change in kind.

The discussed research inspired by the 'new institutionalisms' (Hall and Taylor 1996) suggests that legitimation can produce legitimacy with varying ability to stabilise a given institution. Legitimation change can then decrease or increase the likelihood of a legitimacy change in degree, as the institution becomes perceived as more or less legitimate. This argument needs to be nuanced to avoid giving a false impression that any legitimation change impacts the resulting legitimacy in the same way.

I distinguish between two types of legitimation practices that either a) call for (re)assessment of the EU in light of some new facts or normative standards but along the line of already established cultural norms; or b) challenge the relevance of these established cultural norms. The former type more concretely concerns public critique of the EU or its inefficient policies that fail to deliver the intended outcomes. For example, if the EU Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS) was designed to reduce greenhouse gasses produced by the member states, the measurements showing that too many emission allowances were issued for the system to be effective can be used to delegitimise the regime. When successful, such critique leads to a legitimacy change in degree, making the EU ETS less legitimate in the eyes of audiences. At the same time, the EU ETS might be attacked for reinforcing inequalities among the member states and undermining solidarity. If the expectation that the EU ETS should not hurt solidarity becomes established, we can talk about a legitimation change adjusting additional requirements that the EU ETS must meet to achieve legitimacy. The EU might now be exposed to criticism based on both environmental concerns and its impact on solidarity. Yet, if the regime manages to deliver, its legitimation becomes more robust. The first type of legitimation practices, therefore, can boost or diminish the perceived legitimacy while at the same time influencing how robust and well-founded the legitimation is and thus the likelihood of future legitimacy changes in degree in a concrete direction.

By contrast, the latter type of legitimation practices question appropriateness of the dominant cultural norms. In the example above, such critique might be marshalled against the current mode of governance preventing any reforms of the EU ETS, as the stakeholder involvement remains low and many non-governmental organisations decide not to participate. Furthermore, it might be argued that the environment is a common good and the EP elected by EU citizens should have more control over the EU ETS. If the critique succeeds, the legitimation leveraging the established norms loses its ground, and the regime as a whole will be perceived as unjustified and potentially unjust. Ultimately, what changes here is the recognition of one mode of justification grounded by norms of democratic representativeness at the expense of the other mode of justification based on depoliticised negotiations. Whereas both the legitimation practices following the established cultural norms and the practices challenging these norms influence the legitimacy in the making, it is the latter type that brings the legitimacy changes in kind. As the research examining the content of public justification and critique does not make use of this distinction, the legitimacy change in kind presents a blind spot in the literature on EU legitimation.

So far, we have seen that some of the legitimation research drawing on neoinstitutionalist thought acknowledges the distinction between legitimation practices leveraging the salient normative standards and those that challenge the established cultural norms. Each of the two supposedly has different effects on qualities of the legitimacy in the making. In the case when the justification/critique leverages more salient normative standards than the counter-discourses, the first type of legitimation change makes the institution perceived as being more or less legitimate. The consequences of legitimation change in terms of cultural norms are relatively less demarcated. There seems to be a consensus in the discussed literature that the most salient cultural norms are both an enabling and constraining factor in regard to institutional change. Ultimately, the different cultural norms stabilise legitimacy of concrete institutional reality to an unequal degree rendering the legitimacy change in degree more or less likely. At the same time, this relationship needs further clarification.

As we are forging the last link of the chain connecting legitimation change and legitimacy change in kind with the legitimacy in the making,

we have to make sure to avoid idealism introducing predominantly cultural explanations. When a mode of governance is legitimised, the raw power ends up transformed into rightful authority⁸. If different cultural norms vary in their capacity to stabilise institutional legitimacy, what concrete changes in the material context may cause its destabilisation? The current literature on ‘authority transfer hypothesis’ (e.g. Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi 2016; Statham 2010) assumes that an increase in EU authority triggers politicisation during which the new institutional design must be legitimised. Unless the EU authority is once again reduced, politicisation and the demand for legitimation are seen as inevitable (e.g. De Wilde and Zürn 2012). In short, in order to stabilise the legitimacy, the legitimation must be adequate to the scope of authority delegated to the institution.

As I have argued, the legitimacy change in kind might lead to a legitimacy change in degree, as the dominant cultural norms lose their salience. Similarly, when material changes increasing the scope of authority delegated to the EU lie beyond the boundaries of what can be justified in terms of the salient cultural norms, they may trigger the legitimacy change in degree. After all, the success of legitimation depends not only on communicative work but also on features of the institutional reality.

Arguably, no political authority is absolute and unlimited. The dynamics between a legitimation based on specific cultural norms and material changes forces the institution to regularly adapt the legitimation in line with changes in the scope of its authority or see its legitimacy contested. While the boundaries are usually codified in different sorts of legal documents, there is always a tension between the current state of affairs, what counts as legal, and what is perceived as justified and morally right. My theory presumes that there is an affinity between different cultural norms and the scope of policy interventions they can justify. If the discrepancies grow too big without provoking a legal change that

⁸ Some authors claim that ‘legitimate authority’ is a tautology. However, I am not referring to the legitimate authority only. In this thesis, I am referring to de facto authority, the ability to make others comply against their will irrespective of whether any acceptable normative justification was provided.

puts the law into accord with the cultural norms, the authority risks losing its legitimacy.

For example, a political decision legitimated based on the balanced representation of all affected stakeholders might hold only insofar as this balance remains unchanged. By contrast, a decision that was unanimously accepted as being for the benefit of all, does not rely on a particular constellation of private interests. Consequently, it can stand the test of time until the established link with the common good is problematised. Once the legitimacy becomes contested, the subjected might demand disempowerment of the authority. The constraining and enabling function of specific cultural norms can, then, be seen in their ability to pose limits to the scope of authority that can be legitimised. In other words, the legitimacy change in a kind redraws the territory of legitimate policy intervention.

Once an institution fails to justify its actions in terms of the current cultural norms by triggering a legitimacy change in degree, it might aim for a legitimacy change in kind. Since already the current cultural norms open up for too many legitimacy contestations, the institution tries to revert to some more constrained cultural norms. We can, for instance, think about the EU's efforts to prevent politicisation of concrete policy interventions by promoting 'elitist' cultural norms (Schrag Sternberg 2013). These cultural norms support justifications based on expert rationalities and legality and render democratic consent superfluous. Consequently, the scope of authority that EU citizens are willing to grant to institutions without democratic accountability is relatively limited. While the EU might, in theory, manage to justify its conduct in terms of alternative cultural norms, a reduction in its powers might still be required.

The available research shows that a change in dominant cultural norms can happen in response to an increase or decrease in claimed authority. This dynamic of an increase in competences and the scope of policy interventions justifiable given the dominant cultural norms was captured, among others, by Akman and Kasim (2010). They show how 'the realities of the conditions and constraints' on what powers the EEC Treaty could grant the EC hinged upon the successful propagation of legitimising myths. In this case, the unprecedented power transfer in the area of competitions policy to the EU level was not fully completed until

other actors such as the European Court of Justice, lawyers, and industry accepted the new cultural norms. Indeed, the ‘intergovernmental’ cultural norms were not able to justify such pooling of competences. Therefore, it was claimed that ‘competition policy delivers benefits to individual Europeans, demonstrating the value of European integration and thereby bringing ‘Europe’ closer to the citizens’ (Monti, XXIXth Report 1999, paras 7, 21 cited in Akman and Kasim 2010: 119). Thanks to the resulting legitimacy change in kind, the salient cultural norms allowed justifying the EU competition policy.

The alternative notion of legitimacy change in kind theorised throughout this section is distinct but complementary to legitimacy change in degree. Figure 2.1 demonstrates how these two types of legitimacy change interact. Since legitimisation practices cause legitimacy changes, I have distinguished between two types of legitimisation practices that either leverage the established cultural norms – pragmatic, or challenge them – meta-pragmatic. Each type has different consequences for the legitimacy in the making. The literature has mostly paid attention to the left branch of the diagram. It connects legitimisation practices leveraging established cultural norms with legitimacy change in a degree which makes the EU more or less legitimate in the eyes of citizens and, therefore, affects their support and compliance. Throughout this section, I have been exploring the right, under-theorised branch of the diagram. The legitimacy change in kind triggered by legitimisation practices aimed at altering the established cultural norms influences the boundaries of legitimate policy intervention. At the same time, the legitimacy change in kind renders the legitimisation that relies on the old cultural norms ineffective. Ultimately, the legitimacy change in kind might help the institution to trade an imminent decrease in its perceived legitimacy for curbing the scope of its authority.

The diagram in Figure 2.1 also makes apparent that both legitimacy change in degree and legitimacy change in kind have distinct temporalities and consequences. Whereas citizens’ support that closely follows momentary political controversies may be volatile, cultural norms are ‘extremely stable over time and resistant to change because they are linked to the identity and basic normative orientations of the actors involved’ (Jachtenfuchs et al. 1998: 409). Indeed, as Schrag Sternberg (2013) discovered: for decades, EU citizens’ democratic consent with EU governance was originally not seen as necessary.

Because of these differences in temporalities, the two kinds of legitimation practices have different consequences for legitimacy. The effects of a legitimacy change in degree can be immediate. By contrast, the discrepancy between the institution’s pragmatic legitimation, the authority justifiable in terms of the salient cultural norms, and the authority delegated to the institution, will erode its legitimacy over time. In the end, legitimacy change in kind will result in a legitimacy change in degree, thus negatively affecting the perceived legitimacy of the institution.

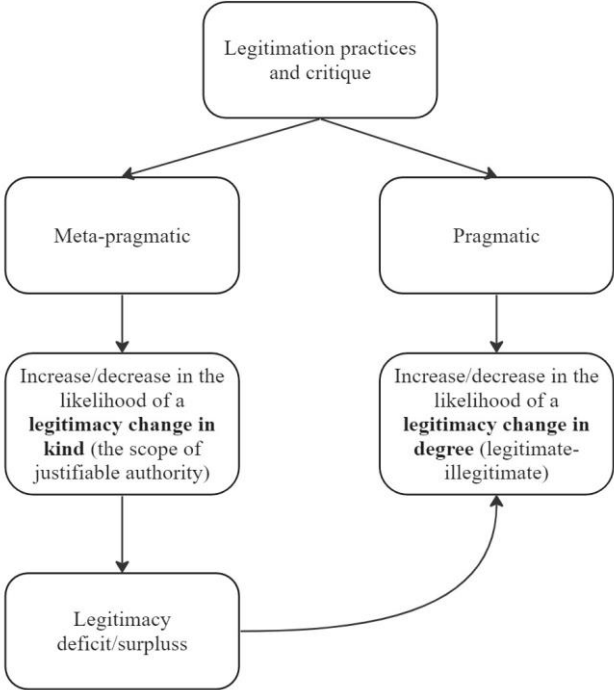


Figure 2.1: The diagram shows how the two different types of legitimation practices animate interplay between the two types of legitimacy change

Since the first research question of this thesis investigates the various types of EU legitimacy change, both the possibilities of legitimacy change in degree and legitimacy change in kind must be explored. Although the legitimacy change in kind only unravels over a longer *durée*, the chance that it has taken place during our period of interest cannot be ruled out beforehand. The presented model has been intentionally populated with rather underdetermined variables such as cultural norms or type of legitimation practices. This focus on abstract structures opens up the model for use with a broader range of existing analytical tools and consequently expands its applicability. Still, before it can be deployed to guide any sort of empirical enquiry, some of its

ambiguities must be resolved. In the next section, I introduce an analytical framework useful for distinguishing and exploring the two types of legitimation practices: the pragmatic ones leveraging the established cultural norms and the meta-pragmatic ones that challenge these very rules.

2.2 Pragmatic and meta-pragmatic legitimation practices

EU legitimacy, which lies at the centre of interest in this thesis, is moulded by legitimation practices. By legitimation practices I mean any performative action influencing citizens' legitimacy assessments or the salience of distinct cultural norms guiding these assessments. Whereas material conditions such as the institutional design and economic performance play a crucial role in supporting and undermining particular justifications of the EU, the importance of ideational means chosen for its public legitimation cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, despite the abundant research documenting changes in the content of legitimation, their impact on the resulting legitimacy is far from obvious. Trying to build the missing link between legitimation change in terms of the content of public justification/critique, legitimacy change, and its impact on institutional stability, I have distinguished between two types of legitimation practices: pragmatic and meta-pragmatic. The pragmatic legitimation practices leverage established cultural norms and result in legitimacy change in degree, while the meta-pragmatic legitimation practices attempt to alter salience of these very norms bringing forth legitimacy change in a kind. Ultimately, the pragmatic legitimation practices shape the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree affecting institutional stability. By contrast, change in cultural norms provoked by meta-pragmatic legitimation practices impacts the scope of authority that can be publicly justified. The outlined theoretical construction expands the agenda of legitimacy research by developing the notion of this distinct form of legitimacy change. The utility of the model hinges on the availability of adequate analytical tools capable of discerning different cultural norms, and distinguishing between pragmatic and meta-pragmatic practices. Identifying these analytical tools presents the main goal of this section.

Table 2.1: The dimensions of legitimation change explored in the reviewed literature, what is being recovered, and the corresponding type of legitimacy change

Dimension of legitimation change		Significance	Type of legitimacy change
<i>Degree of politicisation</i>		Indicate moments of high probability of legitimacy change	In a degree (legitimate-illegitimate)
<i>Change in the sentiment of coverage</i>			
<i>Content of justifications and critique</i>	<i>a) pragmatic legitimation practices</i>	Normative expectations	Likelihood of legitimacy change in degree
	<i>b) meta-pragmatic legitimation practices</i>	Cultural norms suggestive of the appropriate way of evaluation	In kind (the scope of justifiable authority)

The presented model encourages legitimacy research sensitive to changes in the normative expectations invoked during public justification and critique. Table 2.1 outlines the dimensions of legitimation change addressed in the literature, the relevance of these dimensions for legitimacy research, and the corresponding type of legitimacy change. The model builds on two central theoretical expectations: a) the type of legitimation practices determines consequences of the legitimation change for the legitimacy, and b) the meta-pragmatic legitimation change alters the salience of the cultural norms guiding legitimacy assessments and delimiting the scope of political intervention that can be justified. In what follows, I first introduce the conceptual tools that can be used to study these cultural norms based on empirical evidence. Next, I unpack in concrete terms the notion of meta-pragmatic legitimation practices. Lastly, I discuss what analytical toolkit offers the best analytical purchase regarding the pragmatic legitimation practices.

2.2.1 Cultural norms, modes of valuation, and the polity constructions

In this section, I introduce a conceptual toolkit that allows the mapping of various EU legitimacy changes. Legitimation, like any other communicative action, makes us wonder how understanding is possible in a situation where actors might evaluate EU legitimacy using very different criteria. If any critique of the EU, irrespective of its normative grounds, is equally likely to appear in the public debate, the continuity

of public debate would be unattainable, as incommensurable concerns cannot engage each other. Indeed, when one side is solely concerned with economic utility while the other worries about losing something of sentimental value, no resolution will be reached until common ground is found. What I mean by this common ground and what I have been referring to as ‘cultural norms’ has been coined as ‘mode of valuation’ (Eranti 2017) in the literature.

Since I assume that actors are imbued with capacity to criticise, challenge, and ultimately revise social and cultural norms (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999), the theoretical background of this project is in many ways indebted to neo-institutionalist approaches in general (Jachtenfuchs et al. 1998; DiMaggio and Powell 1991), and pragmatic sociology in particular (Tavory and Eliasoph 2013; Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Thévenot 2006; Luhtakallio 2013). These perspectives portray legitimation change primarily as a shift in legitimation practices reflecting the current landscape of relatively salient cultural norms. Therefore, these approaches are well-suited for capturing not only the invoked normative standards as the modes of valuation, but also the broader ideational condition.

Each mode of valuation defines what characteristics demarcate the worthy and the unworthy while designating how exactly valuable the assessed things are (Eranti 2017: 51). Actors engage in public (de)legitimation with a certain pre-understanding of the context and what is at stake. Based on this pre-understanding, they make a judgment regarding the appropriate mode of valuation. If the legitimation follows a mode of valuation contradicting one’s sense of justice, one can either problematise it or conform and raise her concerns within the constraints of this mode of valuation. The concept of cultural norms understood as a mode of valuation, therefore, helps to explain⁹

⁹ When introducing such an abstract notion, one risks putting too much analytical focus on the constraining function of the dominant cultural norms while neglecting actors’ attempts to alter these norms, that failed. Therefore, I do not suggest taking the structuralist side of the famous agent/structure debate (see Ritzer 2008). While I recognise that the mode of valuation regulates what concerns are seen as appropriate in the public debate, actors’ legitimation practices might result in changing these conventions. Such an approach is well aligned with the understanding of (de)legitimation as a performative action with potential to modify the relationship

the (dis)continuity of the public debate. Moreover, equipped with the awareness of various modes of valuation, we can resolve whether particular legitimization changes lead to legitimacy change in degree or in kind.

Since actors are seldom explicit about what is taken for granted, identifying the dominant mode of valuation depends on the way actors resolve which mode of valuation is appropriate. The appropriateness of the mode of valuation hinges on how the relevant polity is normatively imagined. Based on a shared pre- understanding of the character of the polity, actors arrive at a mode of valuation appropriate for regulating the form of (de)legitimation, concerns that can be publicly raised, or who can participate in the debate. As Schmitter rightly noticed, 'legitimacy always refers to some norms shared by some group, this group definition is, therefore, underlying the legitimacy claims' (Schmitter 2001: 3). In the same vein, Reus-Smith points out that 'a disjuncture often exists between an actor's realm of political action and the community in which they actually command legitimacy, deliberately or otherwise' (Reus-Smith 2007: 164). It is this discrepancy and actors' sense of injustice that opens up for public contestations of the salient mode of valuation. Paying attention to these shifts in the polity construction, which indicate a rupture in the mode of valuation, renders any potential legitimacy changes in kind more apparent.

Actors apply the mode of valuation that seems most appropriate given their understanding of a concrete polity. For instance, the task of justifying the social and political inequality produced in a theocracy is only feasible in terms of certain modes of valuation where one's religious identity determines the worth of an individual. However, the very same mode of valuation is unlikely to help justify a deliberative democracy where the quality of argument weighs higher than one's personal convictions. In reality, every change in the performative definition of the polity impacts actors' sense of what mode of valuation is appropriate for assessing legitimacy.

between an individual and the EU, as it places social ties into the centre of research attention.

Legitimacy change in kind makes an alternative mode of valuation relevant. It redefines the relation between the individual and the institution, including what sort of commitment and obligations can be demanded from the subjected. For example, members of an imagined community bound by ‘blood and soil’ evaluating legitimacy based on leaders’ origin are likely to be more open to long-durée political projects that will only benefit future generations than a community ‘united by diversity’. Arguably, while the former view one’s individual existence as an extension of the demographically, geographically, and seemingly intransient polity (e.g. *Tausendjähriges Reich*), the latter presents a polity where the bonds are forged by one’s preference that may change over one’s life course. Furthermore, the potentially disparate ways of construing the EU as a polity might give rise to conflicting pre-understandings regarding what is needed for its legitimation and which policy interventions cannot be legitimised at all. Consequently, what is at stake here cannot be grasped solely on the legitimate- illegitimate axis so critical for legitimacy change in degree. Instead, the rupture lies in the way each mode of valuation bounds the scope of justifiability.

In sum, the territory of justifiable policy interventions depends on the mode of valuation associated with the dominant understanding of the EU as a polity. Every mode of valuation invokes a different logic (e.g. nationality, ethnicity, chosen competencies) to justify relations of inequality. Insofar as the audiences share a pre-understanding regarding the character of the polity and the appropriate mode of valuation, the public debate remains rather streamlined. In such cases, legitimation practices leverage the dominant mode of valuation and potentially result in legitimacy changes in degree, making the EU more or less legitimate. However, in situations when the character of the EU as a polity appears ambiguous, the mode of valuation itself becomes uncertain and can be contested. If the contestation culminates in changing the salient mode of valuation, the legitimacy change in kind affects the justifiable authority. We ascertain the type of legitimacy change by keeping track of the dominant mode of valuation. I have distinguished between two different types of legitimation practices: the pragmatic, honing the salient mode of valuation, and the meta- pragmatic challenging it. In the next subsection, I introduce an analytical framework for analysing the meta-pragmatic legitimation practices.

2.2.2 Meta-pragmatic legitimation practices

Change in the mode of valuation indicates a legitimacy change in kind impacting what can be publicly justified on the new normative grounds. The contestations of what is taken for granted open the mode of valuation, upon which the EU's legitimacy emerges, to doubt, and exposes what was sacrificed. After all, its conventions inevitably install some sort of inequality, although justifiable under the original circumstances, into the centre of a legitimate order. Whether it is the invisible hand of the market, inherited qualities of some social groups, or the age, that legitimises dominant position of some in contrast to others, depends on actors' sense of justice and how the character of the polity is construed. Therefore, if we are to determine which type of legitimacy change a concrete legitimation change caused, we need to follow the mode of valuation governing legitimation practices.

The modes of valuation have a transitional quality, which implies a particular understanding of culture(s) as consisting of diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories, and guides to action (Swidler 1986: 277). Actors draw on these shared cultural 'tool-kits' to construct lines of action, make sense of the situation, and denounce or justify certain modes of governance (Silber 2003). At each encounter, actors do not have to develop the tool-kit anew, as they are already readily available. This lends these 'tool-kits' or 'cultural repertoires' their trans-situational quality. Based on their usage, these repertoires are stabilised into institutional forms understood as 'bodiless beings to which with falls the task of saying and confirming what matters' (Boltanski 2011: 75). By mobilising concrete empirical references, the institutions provide a relatively stable shared cultural frame of taken for granted knowledge. They do so by giving a specific societal form meaning. Consequently, they help actors to tell a state ceremony from a riot. However, such understanding also entails a strongly conservative bias:

Institutions not only have to state the what-ness of what is and what is valid, but also to endlessly re-confirm it, in order to try to protect a certain state of relationship between symbolic forms and states of affairs – a certain state of reality – from attacks of critique.

(Boltanski 2011: 99)

As long as the institutions – the temporarily stabilised ideational resources actors use to navigate in the everyday life – remain ‘objectively available and subjectively plausible’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 92), they are able to shield the dominant mode of governance from eventual radical critique and guidelines of action. By contrast, in times when the institutional context becomes unstable and the appropriate mode of valuation uncertain, an alternative mode of valuation might emerge as the dominant way of assessing legitimacy.

Although the cultural change we have in mind here might be relatively rare, its occurrence during the studied period cannot be ruled out. Moreover, taking the salient mode of valuation and the currently dominant polity construction as invariant might result in ignoring any legitimacy changes in kind. Bruno Latour reminds us that ‘social aggregates are not the object of an ostensive definition – like mugs and cats and chairs that can be pointed at by the index finger – but only of a performative definition’ (2005: 34). There is no obvious polity construction we could take as a self-justificatory point of departure for legitimacy research. Attempts to establish the polity construction before the actual empirical research takes place might result in cementing the status quo or contributing to methodological nationalism. Instead of presuming the existence of some social constituency relevant to all legitimisation discourses, one has to investigate how the particular collective is defined, composed, and stabilised via legitimisation practices. Following Latour, I propose to make one additional step in abstraction, as the concrete legitimisation practices are only meaningful against this backdrop of some performative (re-)definition of the community. The concrete polity construed in the public debate suggests what mode of evaluation apply for assessing the legitimacy of the political project.

The specific contours of modes of evaluation can arguably be best chiselled by drawing on the findings of French pragmatic sociologists¹⁰.

¹⁰ French pragmatic sociology can be accused of moral relativism and inadequate treatment of power relations, as the structural constraints on action coordination are bracketed out of the analysis (see Hansen 2016). Boltanski’s book *On Critique* can be read as an answer to these accusations. In his view, pluralism, critique and public deliberation are critical for any healthy society (Boltanski 2011: 116ff). Therefore, the pragmatic sociology of critique should empower the voice of critique in the face of unjustified domination. Boltanski and Thévenot achieve this by portraying ordinary

Similarly to Latour, Thévenot argues that reflexive social science must attempt to stop taking the momentarily stabilised collective for granted (Thévenot 2015: 82). Instead, the pre-understanding regarding relevant polity regulating public critique should be made explicit. Since not every polity has to align its common affairs around the idea of the common good, the specific construction of 'commonality' governing the legitimation disputes presents itself as a distinct analytical category. The focus on the commonality stresses the performative nature of any group definition. In practical terms, the actors' understanding of the commonality can be imagined as an overarching frame of concrete public discourse.

In his parlance, Thévenot refers to a mode of valuation as a 'grammar of commonality'. Like grammars of foreign languages operating in the background of any attempt to integrate individual concerns into common issues, each grammar of commonality introduces a distinct mode of securing social life. Furthermore, it reflects tacit knowledge helping actors embedded in variegated political cultures navigate towards the appropriate format of political reality, namely, the appropriate format of valuation. Consequently, each grammar presents a nexus where discursive demands of formulating what is at stake converge with demands of action coordination. As a result, the grammars represent modes of valuation denoting the legitimate format for voicing one's concerns publicly (Eranti 2018: 10) and what sorts of justifications are seen as relevant in the public debate.

The concept of grammars of commonality enhances our understanding of the way modes of valuation bound justifiability by making visible the

people as metaphysicians themselves capable of navigating normative and ethical dilemmas (see also Jensen 2018). While it can be argued that the approach does not use power to explain the observed relations in the data, it does not deny these power inequalities at play. Since its main focus is on a micro-sociological level of analysis, no reference to powers affecting analysed interactions could fully explain the outcomes of legitimation struggles. This angle opens up the space for highlighting the role of the normative in shaping institutional change. In other words, French pragmatic sociology holds that what mode of valuation or normative orientations prevails in the public sphere can never be fully established simply by looking at the power relationships or structural constraints without recognising the role played by the normative.

differences in what is demanded from an individual trying to communicate her concerns and compose them into a common issue and a public affair. A deeply personal and emotionally invested narrative about a common affair might be appropriate for the like-minded and those who possibly share the same experience. However, if the debate revolves around the good of the whole community, such contribution might be side-lined as *off the point*. At the same time, while in the case of communities where the commonality is constructed around deliberation favouring normatively-laden claims with general validity, more heterogeneous communities might prefer constructing commonality around the disparate preferences and opinions of their members.

Based on comparative studies mapping how actors work towards coordinated action, lessen tensions inside a community, reach an agreement, and draw symbolic boundaries between members and the Others, Thévenot (see Lamont and Thévenot 2000; Thévenot 2014) identified two distinct ways of composing a polity: one especially salient in but not exclusive to the US, and another prevalent in France. For our purposes, I build on the resulting typology of grammars of commonality representing two modes of valuation¹¹: the grammar of plural orders of worth or the grammar of individual interests (Table 2.2).

The mode of valuation related to the grammar of plural orders of worth relies on the concept of the general will. Here, the final decision must be unanimous, achieved through an informed deliberation of rational actors. The decision is justified by the salience of a ‘higher principle’ invoked to establish a link with the common good, which remains relatively stable over time. In the decision-making process, the identity of actors is not considered. Let us, for instance, imagine a group of environmental activists debating what position they should take regarding a new national transportation plan. The concern about environmental friendliness and sustainability will likely form the ‘higher principle’ according to which the proposed policy interventions will be

¹¹ Thévenot’s sociology of engagements also covers ‘regime of familiarity’ (Thévenot 2014) and ‘regime of exploration’ (Auray 2007; Auray and Vetel 2013). These modes of valuation dominate personal relationships and experiences. Since they are only seldomly applied to politics and the individual engagements cannot be communicated to the same degree using mass media, I focus on the grammar of plural orders of worth and the grammar of individual interests.

measured. During the evaluation, the interests or preferences of individual activists (or even smaller groups) should not be allowed to interfere, as the ultimate goal of the assessment is to arrive at the *common* good. No matter what justification will stabilise the final decision, every member of the community shall profit from it. This is true even in the cases where the private interests of all affected actors end up 'discounted' in favour of some transcendent, but equally salient, principle of justice (e.g. public health, ecosystem preservation, the prestige of the community, God's glory). The distance to the nearest planned cycling lane from the house of a group member is only relevant insofar it serves as a proof of the *generally* bad access to the infrastructure. Once a proposal is evaluated as 'worthy' in terms of the higher principle, it represents the common good for the whole polity sharing the same normative orientations and for as long as these normative orientations remain salient. This means that the grammar of plural orders of worth can only apply to polities whose members are assumed to share the most important normative orientations. Otherwise, there would be no hope of finding a good that is truly common.

Clearly, establishing the common good might be easier for a group of environmental activists than for a parliament of national representatives, or even members of the European Parliament. As the intra-group heterogeneity grows, the deliberation along the line of the grammar of plural orders of worth becomes increasingly more conflictual. On the one hand, once the common good is established, it justifies coordinated action of a scope extending far beyond the engagement of those involved in the deliberation. Indeed, in the name of the good that benefits all, even the fate of future generations can be tied to a concrete project. On the other hand, the attempts to locate the common good in the case of a highly heterogeneous polity can lead to conflicts threatening to compromise the very integrity of the polity (e.g. spark a civil war). Lamont and Thévenot (2000) found that while the exchanges in French public sphere tend to follow the grammar of plural orders of worth, the US public sphere is much less preoccupied with finding common good. While the so-called liberal grammar takes the critical edge and the ideological zeal off the conflict, the scope of the collective in the making ends up limited only to the stakeholders sharing some interest in the

controversial issue. Based on their findings, they describe the grammar of individual interests.¹²

Table 2.2: The two modes of valuation with their approximate theoretical models, mechanisms that stabilize the legitimacy of a mode of governance, and the limitations to what can be justified (Table source: the author)

Properties of each mode of valuation	Grammar of individual interests	Grammar of plural orders of worth
<i>Theoretical model</i>	Deliberative democracy	Aggregative democracy
<i>The appropriate legitimization practices</i>	Compromising between values recognised by the polity	Composing disparate stakeholders' opinions and interests presented during negotiation
<i>Bounds to the justifiability</i>	The suspicion from the power abuse and promoting particular interests; decision- making cannot address personal concerns	The suspicion that the general will or the common good does not exist; the decision- making cannot address the question of justice
<i>Validity of the valuation</i>	Valid for all members of the polity, questioned when the citizens' values change	Valid for those represented during the negotiation, questioned when the constellation of interests changes

By contrast to the other grammar, the grammar of individual interests takes incongruence of their private interests without saying and views all interests as relevant in themselves. As a result, it can genuinely include complete Strangers into the same polity. The decision is a composite of the collection of stakeholders' individual interests, which suggests a polity construction roughly resembling the interest-oriented democracy (Rossanvallon and Golhammer 2011; Young 1996). As Eranti (2018) rightly noted, such a construction is based on the 'liberal disbelief' about whether the general will can exist at all (see also Rosanvallon 2008). For this mode of valuation, it is of little importance whether a given solution was chosen based on one normative principle or another as long as an agreement between the stakeholder was reached. Furthermore, there is no place for emotions or moralising, and the language of interests denounces universalising statements as too abstract, ideological, or

¹² This grammar was originally coined as 'liberal grammar'. However, this has led to much confusion and the latest work on the theory (see Eranti 2018) argues convincingly for using the term 'grammar of individual interests', instead.

impractical. Instead, stakeholders must focus on choosing a common project and its 'objective objectives' considering the interests of all the involved parties.

In the light of Thévenot's work, grammars of commonality representing different modes of valuation vary based on the assumed degree of similarity between the members of the polity, the form of relationships, the dominant construction of 'general will', and attitudes towards newcomers. When trying to identify the dominant mode of valuation, I follow the ways actors communicate about what is at stake and converge on what is a just decision. Such a focus can resolve even a seemingly ambiguous case of a dispute where the democracy itself is seen as a common good. The arguments marshalled to underline that democracy is *in reality* a common good will likely refer to its procedural qualities. This emphasis on the proper procedures might thus resemble a typical delegitimation along the lines of grammar of individual interests. However, as long as the dispute revolves around the only form of governance representing the common good or alternatively whether a concrete institutional setup qualifies as democratic, the grammar of plural orders of worth appears to be the most salient. When the procedures are questioned in terms of the grammar of individual interests, the dispute centres on the legitimacy of concrete decisions. While the procedural qualities can be thematised in terms of both modes of valuation, the dominant grammar is identified once the crux of the issue becomes apparent. Whereas the first grammar asks for a form of governance that presents the common good for the whole polity, the other controls whether the model of transparent negotiation (which remains undisputed) is actually being realised.

While the dominant grammar cannot be changed without considerable effort, it is important to keep in mind the situationality and context-specificity of all public exchanges. Consider for example Rawls' idea of reasonable citizens who are deeply concerned about the common good but still capable of negotiating 'overlapping consensus' (Rawls 1996: 41) on certain questions. Such citizens are likely to insist on grammar of plural orders of worth in the questions directly related to their fundamental values, but they might agree to resolve issues perceived as less important in line with grammar of individual interests. As demographics change, citizens might grow considerably more concerned about some issues such as sustainability of pension system over time,

which might result in a change in the mode of valuation. In addition, in highly heterogeneous polities, the reasonable citizens realise that, in light of conflicting interests, there is no truly common good in some domains. If taking an action is preferable to non-action, opting in for the grammar of individual interests will secure the minimal overlapping consensus. Consequently, which grammar will be the most salient depends on the characteristics of a given polity as well as the ideational context.

The environmental activists from the example above might eventually realise that all their efforts to locate a good that could be recognised as a common good, fail. One activist might demand economic reforms to incentivise green growth, another might call for degrowth, and yet another argue for the need to let consumers decide about each of their individual transactions. Insofar as the group agrees that some coordinated action is necessary to address the climate crisis, its course might be decided by establishing a board of members representing irreconcilable perspectives. Since the attempts to persuade others about any particular solution did not bear results, the board that involves all the competing positions does not need to reason for the solution that was picked. In practice, any option that appeals to the most of its members, is assumed to be aligned with normative expectations of the majority of group members, will be chosen.

Above, I have argued that the grammar of plural orders of worth allows justifying ambitious political projects, because the argument linking a project with the common good is assumed to be valid in the eyes of all members of the polity (even those that were not born). As it eventually becomes a part of accepted traditions and heritage, the justification can withstand the test of time. By contrast, as soon as the balance of the represented interests changes, the legitimacy of the course of action chosen in line with the grammar of individual interests might be jeopardised. Without a tight and plausible link to some definition of the common good, the stability of the decision will always be temporary. The projects whose legitimacy hinges mostly on their acceptability by the majority of the involved stakeholders once again has to be pitted against the competing solutions, and a new board representative of the current demographic must revisit the decision. Alternatively, the group members might try again to find a common good to secure a more permanent form of legitimacy. However, that presupposes the

availability of some performative definition of the general will shared by the polity.

The two concrete modes of valuation allow interpreting what, if interpreted through the lenses of a single mode of valuation, might end up discarded as a non-sensical contribution to the debate as an act potentially changing the cultural norms. Let us now consider the relevance and analytical purchase of this framework in the case of the EU. Since even EU scholars are puzzled about 'the nature of the beast' (Sidaway 2006), we can expect actors to utilise both grammars when engaging in public legitimation of the EU. On the one hand, some might imagine the EU as a body composed of relatively similar Europeans in the same way as a nation is composed of relatively similar citizens. In their view following the grammar of plural orders of worth, the legitimacy of EU politics derives from 'general will', which crystallises during deliberation. In such a case, their normative expectations will likely be shaped by actors' experience with the parliamentary democracy of a nation state and legitimacy challenges take the form of accusations from power abuse. Should the European project emerge as legitimate, legitimation must engage the normative expectations shared by the majority of the citizens. For example, if the EU is perceived as predominantly economic cooperation, demonstrating the positive effect of the membership on members wealth will be key for success of the legitimation.

On the other hand, actors might imagine the EU as composed of nations trying to reach an agreement while each having incommensurable interests. Then, the grammar of individual interests will apply and the reasoning behind the concrete decisions becomes less important than the just procedure. Indeed, when no *common* good can be imagined, the key is to compose a balanced selection of stakeholders that will negotiate about the final decision based on their interests, preferences, and opinions. After all, this should have been achieved, for example, by the European council that allows both simple majority voting, qualified majority voting, and unanimity voting. While in the previous case, where actors were expected to abstract from their private interests and search for the good that benefits all, in this case, the private interests represent the building blocks of the general will. Justifying the European project based on this grammar of individual interests relies on whether the EU can dispel any doubts regarding its procedures and the prior that state

representative most authentically represent the people. Any confirmed suspicions regarding the corruption of the representatives or unjust mechanism of making a decision jeopardises its legitimacy. In an extreme case, EU policies might be seen as arbitrary domination installed in a disputable manner. A general referendum is therefore the ultimate tool for generating a legitimate decision in line with this grammar. That is also why it has been required both when a country applies for EU membership and during ratifications of important Treaty changes (e.g. the Lisbon Treaty).

While the question of dominant mode of valuation in the case of EU legitimation has been left largely understudied, a growing body of literature documents changes in the way decisions are made and legitimised. Similar to other international organisations (IOs), the EU draws its authority from effective international law such as formal terms treaties (e.g. the Lisbon Treaty), agreements (e.g. the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation agreement), or cross border agreements (e.g. the European Economic Area agreements). However, traditional forms of multilateralism seem to be in a crisis. For instance, one can observe deep divisions in the UN Security Council, the paralysis of the WTO, budget cuts and membership cancellation in a variety of other multilateral organisations (Brummer 2014). At the same time, scholars document new forms of law-making that can stabilise the legitimacy of the agreement in an unequal way.

Findings in the literature synthesised by Pauwelyn, Wessel, and Wouters documents that since 2000, formal international law-making has been in stagnation quantitatively, as judged by the number of new treaties, but also qualitatively, as it has become reliant on domestic rubber-stamping by parliaments (Pauwelyn et al. 2014: 762). Instead of the formal terms treaties, agreements, or IOs, cross border agreements involve new actors (see Berman and Wessel 2013) and take different forms, such as conferences of the parties, committees, or working groups. Scholars explain this prominence of informal cooperative for a, among other things, by the diversity of the involved interests and reluctance of states in the face of what they consider to be an 'invasion' of their domestic legal systems by international norms which, in some cases, take precedence even over deeply held constitutional values (Pauwelyn et al. 2014: 740).

In terms of the normative, the researchers distinguish between legitimacy achieved by ‘thin state consent’ or ‘thick state consensus’ (Idem: 734). The thin state consent is typical for traditional international law agnostic of how the agreement was reached, what stakeholders were involved, or what was actually agreed. All that matters for a law to be legally binding is that the state consent was given. By contrast, the thick state consensus often follows codes of good practice and new forms of cooperation with the aim to achieve more inclusive, transparent, and predictable process. Unlike the traditional law-making, it often results in non-legally binding instruments, which further reduces the demand for justification. According to the findings, the former has been increasingly superseded by the latter.

Seen through the lenses of our analytical framework, this development can be read as a response to legitimation problems of EU law. Traditional international law sanctioned by the thin state consent can be interpreted as a device of the grammar of plural orders of worth. As a result, the law is justified by whatever little good is common to all involved parties. At the same time, the ‘minimal common normative denominator’ might only justify a limited degree of action coordination. Therefore, the new forms of law-making legitimised by thick state consensus appear preferable. With attention paid to procedures, it can be interpreted as following the grammar of individual interests. Its increasing popularity documents that it is comparatively easier to guarantee fair procedures than to establish what good is common to all parties. Nevertheless, the fact that the resulting instruments are not always legally binding in the same sense as, for instance, a constitution, has very real effects for the scope of policy interventions that can be justified. All in all, whether the described shift to informalism will help infuse international law with more legitimacy ultimately depends on the citizens’ recognition of these tools as appropriate for fostering the given form of cooperation.

The discussed case of international law-making documents changes in the way decisions are being made and legitimised. Whether these changes amount to a legitimacy change in kind would have to be resolved based on a more in-depth empirical analysis (Figure 2.4). Nevertheless, the majority of legitimation changes does not take the form of a cultural change but leverages the established mode of valuation. The next sub-section, therefore, turns our attention to pragmatic legitimation

practices and presents an analytical framework capable of studying how legitimation leads to legitimacy changes in degree.

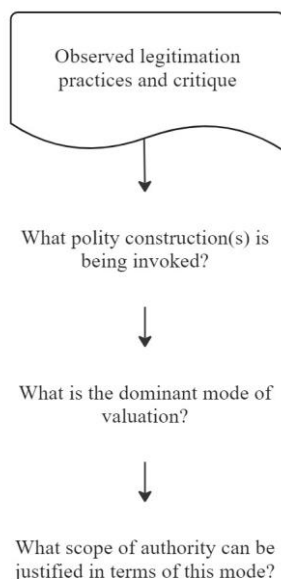


Figure 2.2: Based on observed legitimation practices and critique, a researcher can track changes in the scope of justifiable authority

2.2.3 Pragmatic legitimation practices

In the previous subsection (2.2.2.), I have outlined a typology distinguishing between legitimation practices leveraging the dominant mode of valuation (the pragmatic level) and legitimation practices contesting it (the meta-pragmatic level). Once it is clear that we are dealing with pragmatic legitimation practices, it is meaningful to proceed with an analysis of how these legitimation practices influence the composition of public justifications and the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. Like irony and coincidence, legitimation practices following different modes of valuation can be confused by an observer as they share some similarities. However, they are generated by different logics. So far, the majority of the available research has studied public legitimation rendering the EU more or less legitimate. Consequently, the main goal has been to map and explore the presented arguments and evaluations that express citizens' interests and preferences. However, by neglecting the other mode of valuation, legitimation practices leveraging the grammar of individual interests might be interpreted as irrelevant, bracketed out of the analysis, and their impact on legitimacy left unconsidered. Therefore, the interpretation of pragmatic legitimation

practices must follow the logic corresponding to the salient mode of valuation. Studying the content of pragmatic legitimation provides a ground for assessing stability of the legitimacy in the making, or, in other words, the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree.

In the cases when the first mode of valuation coined as the grammar of individual interests is dominant, the reasons actors have for supporting a given decision are of little importance for assessing its legitimacy. As the grammar of individual interests doubts the possibility of finding a common good in the situation of disparate interests, the legitimacy judgement follows principles of majoritarianism, and it is the qualities of the procedures (e.g. transparency, involvement of all affected stakeholders) that supports the legitimacy. Under the assumption that the stakeholders' interests are so disparate that no common good can be found, there is little point in attempting to persuade other parts to adopt any single perspective. Instead, the focus shifts to finding a minimum achievable consensus. Consequently, the legitimacy of final decision hinges on criteria such as whether all the involved stakeholders had a chance to voice their opinion publicly. Disputing the reasons behind positions of individual stakeholders would amount to misreading the situation and judging the legitimacy through lenses of the grammar of plural orders of worth. Critique that tries to discriminate between the 'worthy' and 'unworthy' *interests* inevitably proves ineffective, as it fails to engage the core principles stabilising the legitimacy. Indeed, when trying to problematise legitimacy of a decision following the grammar of individual interests, the critique must focus on the negotiation process.

Once we understand the logic of the grammar of individual interests, the methodological implications become apparent. Surveying the reasons that stakeholders present on demand of a researcher to explain their decisions, may facilitate understanding of concrete outcomes. At the same time, it tells us little about the causes of a legitimacy change. Indeed, in situations when the grammar of individual interests is dominant, legitimacy change in degree reflects the tension between justification and problematisation of the procedure leading to an outcome. If we are to understand how stable the legitimacy in the making will be, we have to move our attention from stakeholders' justifications towards how constituencies perceive the procedural qualities of a given decision-making. After all, even the harshest public disagreement with the reasons a stakeholder gives to explain his vote

cannot compromise legitimacy of the final decision. However, should there be a reasonable suspicion that stakeholders made a deal behind the scenes that benefits their private interests but not the represented groups, the legitimacy of such decision would likely be shaken.

By contrast, when legitimation follows the grammar of plural orders of worth, the stability of legitimacy relies on developing a salient composition of distinct worths valued by the polity. Should an outcome be perceived as legitimate, it has to be firmly linked to a composition that most members of the polity would recognize as a good that is *common*. At the same time, such a setting is relatively more demanding in terms of cognitive capacities required from the actors to participate in the debate. As Hannah Arendt artfully put it:

[. . .] even the greatest forces of intimate life – the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses- “are to be” transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance.

(Arendt 1958: 50)

Indeed, all claims must be comprehensible to all third parties and disagreements are customarily settled by engaging in operations of critical denunciation and compromising between competing forms of worth bound to a concrete sense of justice. Private interests of those who want to heed this grammar must be set aside or transformed in a way that makes clear how the proposal benefits the community in general.

More concretely, when one is worried about the extreme drought affecting vegetable production in one’s garden, one must be able to turn this personal experience into a general statement valid for the whole polity. The original concern may only be voiced as a call for policy interventions making the agricultural sector more resilient and sustainable and addressing the risks related to climate change systematically. In this case, the actor would try justifying the policy intervention by linking it to normative orientations such as sustainability that, if recognised by the polity, could serve to legitimise some concrete policy measures. Clearly, a portion of the polity that is incapable of making such generalisations end up excluded from the public debate, because their concerns are voiced in an inappropriate format and, thus, perceived as irrelevant.

Once we know that the grammar of plural orders of worth is the dominant mode of valuation, our focus should centre on the composition of distinct normative orientations invoked to legitimise a decision. The task of distinguishing between discrete normative orientations invoked to justify or criticise a cause, however, presents a methodological challenge. The inclination of scholars to always generate new classifications of these values has often been criticised (Hertog and McLeod 2001). While some scholars are studying legitimation work with the existing classification schemes¹³, most of them prefer developing their own typologies inductively. Although such strategies offer best fit for the data, the lack of standardised classification schemes makes comparisons across different cases difficult. Nevertheless, the choice of an existing framework is nontrivial.

In their seminal work *On justification* (1991), Boltanski and Thévenot strive to understand the dynamics of the critical moments when the definition of a situation becomes so problematic that it is no longer possible to sustain ordinary activities and routines. To prevent the situation from falling into disorder, actors must attempt to reach an agreement regarding an acceptable definition of what qualities define the situation (qualification), i.e. what is going on and what of a value is at stake (evaluation). These elementary operations of qualification and evaluation lie at the core of any (de)legitimation dynamics. Indeed, the act of qualifying what the EU *is* already predetermines what standards can be meaningfully applied for evaluating its legitimacy. The qualifiers help *trans-form* an unknown institutional entity into an instance of some known category and quality. In turn, they indicate what normative standards potentially could have been used for its evaluation. By contrast, the practices of evaluation give away what normative standards have been invoked for legitimacy assessments in a more direct manner. For instance, in the case that all of the media coverage of the EU focus on its economic and financial policy, such qualification shapes normative expectations of the audiences. Consequently, the EU policy interventions must be, first and foremost, justified in terms of their effect on national economy and citizens' wealth, whereas other qualities, such as its environmental impact, can be bracketed out. If we are to explore what it

¹³ See for example Van Inglegom (2014) building on the classification scheme developed in Medrano (2003).

did at different times mean for the EU to be legitimate, both qualifications and evaluations should be considered. Therefore, in the situations when the grammar of plural orders of worth is salient, I suggest using a categorisation of ‘worths’ developed by Boltanski and Thévenot.

The typology of ‘orders of worth’ (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991) identifies distinct registers, each referring to some socially recognised value, conventional formatting, relevant time-scope, space construction, and is anchored by concrete tests adequate for establishing relevant qualification and evaluation. Ultimately, the actor’s use of orders of worths when the grammar of plural orders of worth is prevalent determines *the normative sustainability of the regime in question* and the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. The framework distinguishes seven conventional¹⁴ orders of worth (Table 2.3) in the sense of established normative expectations which actors mobilise when testing if a concrete coordinated action serves the common good.

The market order of worth assesses an object in terms of monetary value delivered to the polity of consumers. The time scope of such evaluation is relatively short: the price must be right at the moment of assessment but can change in the future. Whether an object is ‘worthy’ can be tested by pitting it against the competing alternatives on the respective market. Seen through these lenses, the whole world can be imagined as an increasing flow of money and goods that fuels globalisation. By contrast, the industrial order of worth adopts a long-term perspective in which the assessed object must prove to be an efficient solution. The efficiency should be measured by the polity of experts using statistical data that shows the bigger picture. Once a particular unit of measurement is selected, the whole world then resembles this Cartesian space. Whether the object is ‘worthy’, can ultimately be resolved by testing the reliability with which it achieves the goal. The third civic order of worth evaluates the object based on its contribution to citizens’ welfare. Since no preferential treatment is allowed, the ‘worthiness’ must prove its

¹⁴ New orders of worth emerge in response to shared recognition of some previously unnoticed worth plausibly structuring hierarchical relations in the society, the framework of seven orders of worth shouldn’t be treated as ahistorical. How long these general norms of justice will be seen as relevant rely on the social structures’ resistance to change.

solidaristic effects on all members of the polity. The object must guarantee equal treatment over a delimited time period by a carefully chosen set of rules codified using formalistic, detached, official language. Next, the domestic order of worth evaluates the object in relation to the values and role models established in local traditions. Only if the object respects these values can it be claimed trustworthy and, therefore, respected by local authorities (e.g. elders). When it comes to the inspired order of worth, the object is evaluated based on how inspiring it is for the creatives. While the evaluation focuses on the present moment, the object must appear revolutionary and emotionally captivating. Its 'worthiness' can ultimately be tested by how passionate the creatives feel about it. Once the object is assessed in line with the renowned order of worth, its 'worthiness' in a given time period hinges on its ability to become known to as many audiences as possible. Its popularity can then be used to measure its renown. Lastly, the green order of worth assesses the object based on experts' claims about its environmental friendliness. Only the characteristics relevant for demonstrating its sustainability are relevant for this assessment. Unlike the other orders of worth, the green order evaluates the object's impact on the planetary ecosystem and its consequences for future generations. In sum, the classification captures what has been at stake across different public controversies.

Generally speaking, these orders of worth depict assorted interdependencies and material arrangements that help to align actors around questions of the common good. Contrarily to what might be assumed, they do not present a simple array of culturally available language games in the Wittgensteinian sense. Actors are not completely free to use whatever order of worth they please in some 'strange voluntarism' (Honneth 2010: 387). Which order of worth might best capture the controversial situation depends on the format of the material environment, actors' dispositions, access to means of symbolic production, and the power relations involved in a concrete (de)legitimation struggle. The social world is always incompletely structured, leaving space for doubt and alternative interpretations open (Bénatouïl 1999). Boltanski and Thévenot adopt pluralist ontology presuming the reality is animated by various modes of argumentation, 'institutional logics' (Walzer 1994), 'ways of thinking' (James and Sheffield 2019 [1907]), or 'styles of thinking' (Hacking 1992). Besides the hypothetical situation of complete domination (and subordination), the

plurality of orders of worth can never be fully reduced to a single, ultimate register of justification. Each order plays a vital role as a safeguard preventing the social world from falling into disorder with the first suspicion regarding abuse of power. Thanks to the detailed characteristics of each order of worth, the framework lends itself well to empirical analysis of concrete compromises between competing ‘worths’. It stipulates an understanding of the concrete conditions that make the EU legitimate or illegitimate.

Table 2.3: Typology of orders of worth (Adapted from: Lamont and Thevenot. 2000: 241)

Order of worth	Worth in question	Form of relevant proof	Reality test	Qualified actors	Qualified objects
<i>Market</i>	Price, cost	Monetary	Market competitiveness	Consumers, sellers	Wealth, goods, services
<i>Industrial</i>	Technical efficiency	Statistics, measures	Reliability, competence	Experts, professionals	Methods, tools, charts
<i>Civic</i>	Civic duty, collective welfare	Formal, official, legal	Demonstration, assembly, vote	Collective bodies, representatives	Rights, laws, rules
<i>Domestic</i>	Tradition, esteem, trust	Oral exemplary anecdote	Ceremonies, nominations	Authorities, subordinates, foreigner, child	Etiquette, ranks, manners, customs, traditions
<i>Inspired</i>	Creativity, inspiration	Emotional	Adventure, quest, journey	Visionaries, creatives, revolutionaries	Art, emotionally invested bodies
<i>Renown</i>	Fame, public opinion	Semiotic	Presentation, press conference	Celebrities, press, supporters	Media
<i>Green</i>	Sustainability	Ecological	Environmental impact	Environmentalists, future generations	Pristine wilderness, nature

Does the EU’s legitimacy rest solely on the market order of worth and its ability to bring prosperity to its citizens? If it cannot deliver and fails the reality test corresponding to market order of worth, it must attempt to regain its legitimacy based on some alternative conception of common

good recognised by the citizens. It is important to stress that success can never be guaranteed beforehand. All the factors influencing actors' engagement with their environment and third parties present sources of contingency reflecting ultimate indeterminacy of social life. The most salient orders of worth imply which reality tests support the resulting legitimacy. With the help of the introduced theory of orders of worth, it becomes apparent that the concrete compromise between the worths used to justify a mode of governance influences how easily the legitimacy of the EU can be challenged and the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree.

2.2.4 The model's analytical purchase

So far, this section has introduced concrete analytical tools that could make the relatively abstract model of legitimacy, which varies both in degree and kind, more determined. I have noted that the available legitimisation literature (see section 1.1.2.2) investigated legitimisation changes using three indicators: 1) degree of politicisation, 2) tone of the media coverage and 3) changes in the content of public justification/critique. Whereas the first two dimensions of legitimisation change signal a possible legitimacy change in degree, the link between the third dimension and legitimacy change has been unclear. Therefore, I have distinguished between pragmatic legitimisation practices suggestive of the probability of legitimacy change in degree and the meta-pragmatic legitimisation practices that might lead to legitimacy changes in kind. The proposed model clarifies the relevance of changes in the content of public justification/critique for estimating legitimacy changes. Once the dominant mode of valuation is known, the appropriate logic for interpreting the content of a public debate becomes apparent. The model, therefore, encourages research sensitive to the actors' own pre-understanding of the situation and brings more clarity to the relationship between legitimisation change and legitimacy change. This sub-section discusses how the model can be used to guide empirical research.

Figure 2.3 depicts how the content of legitimisation should be interpreted and is implied by the proposed analytical framework. First, one has to determine whether the analysed legitimisation practices leverage the same mode of valuation or problematise it. If we are dealing with pragmatic legitimisation practices regulated by the same mode of valuation, then the dominant mode of valuation suggests how the data should be

interpreted. The outlined workflow shows in practical terms how changes in the content of legitimation inform our conclusions regarding the expected legitimacy changes. I will now discuss in more detail its individual steps.

2.2.4.1 Identification of the type of legitimation practices

Following the flowchart in Figure 2.3, the analysis starts with establishing which type of legitimation practices is prevalent. If only a single mode of valuation is invoked, we may conclude that we are dealing with pragmatic legitimation practices. In other words, we need to control for diversity in the applied mode of valuation. The analysis must be sensitive to different forms, conventions, or ways of communication that structures the public debate in the data. Table 2.4 outlines the main features of each mode of valuation. We must pay attention to the way polity is imagined.

If the polity is represented as a relatively homogeneous community reasoning about the shared motives of the members to locate the common good, the grammar of plural orders of worth might be dominant. By contrast, if we observe that ‘individuals take part in a legitimate dispute, without directly referencing a substantial conception of the common good, but by expressing in a certain format an individual choice’ (Thévenot 2019: 13), we might be dealing with the grammar of individual interests. In the former case, the actors are mainly concerned with the reasons used to justify a certain decision. In the latter case, the language of competing interests is foregrounded, and the debate itself revolves around negotiations between the decision-makers, stakeholders, or other choosing individuals. Consequently, the most legitimate decisions can be generated either in a public deliberation, in the case of the grammar of plural orders of worth, or in a general referendum, in the case of grammar of individual interests. Notice that the referendum here is interpreted as a device that allows expression of individual *opinions* without probing how well-founded one’s reasons for the choice are. Therefore, it presents a sum of individual interests rather than a ‘general will’, which, in my understanding, crystallises only in social interaction (but see cf. Beckman 2018). These discussed features of the two modes of valuation can guide our empirical analysis when establishing the type of legitimation practices.

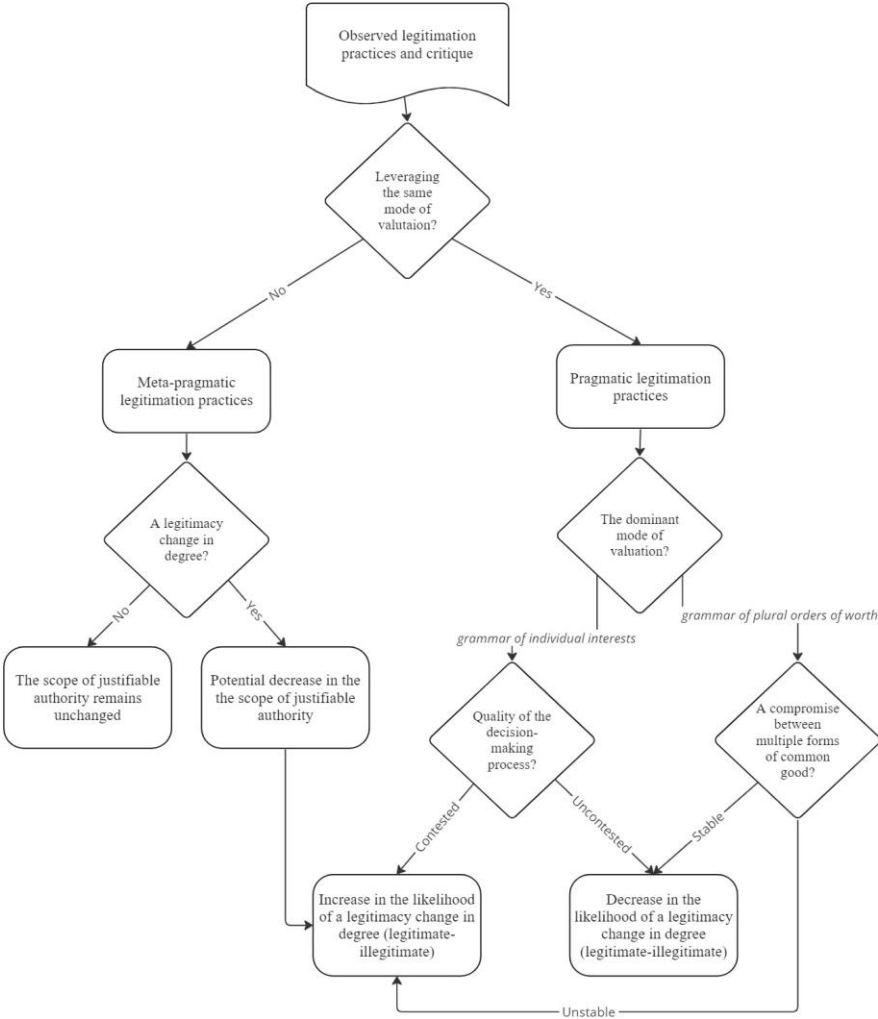


Figure 2.3: Flowchart showing the individual steps of the analysis

The outlined features should be assessed in totality. This becomes evident when we consider one particular boundary case, where the threshold between modes of valuation might seem less clear-cut. Earlier, I have claimed that in contexts where the grammar of individual interests is dominant, legitimacy is problematised by questioning the procedural qualities of the decision-making. In comparison, when problematising legitimacy in terms of the grammar of plural orders of worth, actors rely on recognised forms of ‘reality test’. For each order of worth, there is a corresponding measure valid for testing the connection between a policy and the common good (solidarity, security, equality, autonomy), which a *dispositif* must pass to forestall possible accusations of arbitrary domination. For instance, the legitimacy of an institution might hinge on its justification in terms of civic order of worth and must pass the ‘reality test’ proving that its outcomes contribute equally to the welfare of all the members of the polity. However, such reality tests

might easily focus on the procedures that supposedly guarantee impartiality and non-preferential treatment. Consequently, a researcher might be tempted to interpret such a challenge to institutional legitimacy as following the grammar of individual interests. Nevertheless, we have to remember that all of the features must be considered. At a closer look, the difference between the critique of manipulated negotiations and the criticism highlighting insufficient or baseless justification becomes more apparent.

2.2.4.2 *Analysing pragmatic legitimation practices*

When dealing with pragmatic legitimation practices, the analysis must follow the logic of the prevalent mode of valuation. When the *grammar of plural orders of worth* is prevalent, the content of legitimation hints towards a shared common good or a compromise between multiple forms of good. With the help of the introduced model of orders of worth, we identify the invoked orders of worth used to justify a decision. The durability of a concrete compromise between the worths influences how easily the legitimacy of the EU can be questioned and the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree.

It should be noted that even in situations where the compromise between the worths is relatively stable, the EU and its policies might be perceived as misaligned with these values. However, the critique will focus on scrutinising the EU's actions using these values rather than challenging them.

By contrast, when the *grammar of individual interests* is prevalent, the arguments actors use to explain their preferences do not claim universal validity. Indeed, these represent stakeholders' preferences and opinions. The stability of legitimacy in the making then hinges on the qualities of the procedure used to compose this constellation of individual interests into a final decision. As a result, an analysis investigating the force and truthfulness of the actor's arguments (like in the case of *grammar of plural orders of worth*) would tell us little about the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree. This assessment must be made by focusing on the actors' ability to decide in a way recognised as just by the audiences that make up the polity.

2.2.5 Summary

In the previous section, I have argued for extending the agenda of legitimacy research to include legitimacy change in kind. Therefore, in this section, I have discussed what analytical toolkit can be used to track changes in salient cultural norms. Drawing on the existing research of the pragmatic sociology of critique, the analytical framework of modes of valuation specifying how exactly the evaluated thing is worthy or valuable seems to capture the most important attributes of the cultural norms. Which mode of valuation becomes salient in a public debate depends on actors' pre-understanding of the character of a given polity. By resolving whether concrete legitimation practices leverage the salient mode of valuation or challenge it, I have distinguished between pragmatic and meta-pragmatic legitimation practices. Whereas previous legitimation research has often struggled with interpreting political claims that lack any explicit evaluations or justification, the proposed analytical toolkit links them to a particular mode of valuation and, thus, makes their effects on legitimacy apparent. The framework of modes of valuation underpinning the distinction between meta-pragmatic and pragmatic legitimation practices allows connecting legitimation with the concrete type of legitimacy change, either in degree or kind.

Although cultural changes might be relatively rare (see Jachtenfuch et al. 1998), their occurrence during the studied period cannot be ruled out. The main goal of the meta-pragmatic legitimation practices is to trigger such change. When we analyse the meta-pragmatic legitimation practices, we need to identify the salient mode of valuation: the grammar of plural orders of worth or the grammar of individual interests. The two modes differ based on how actors work towards coordinated action, lessen tensions inside a community, reach an agreement, and draw symbolic boundaries between members and Others. As a result, each mode of valuation constrains the scope of political interventions that can be publicly justified. By contrast, when we analyse pragmatic legitimation practices, the logic of the prevalent mode of valuation should guide our interpretation. While meta-pragmatic legitimation practices alter the bounds of justifiability under the given mode of governance, studying the content of pragmatic legitimation provides the grounds for assessing the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree. When the grammar of individual interests is dominant, actors' reasons for supporting a given decision are of little importance for legitimacy

assessments. In the situation of disparate interests, the legitimacy judgement follows principles of majoritarianism, and it is the quality of the procedures that stabilises the legitimacy. By contrast, the grammar of plural orders of worth justifies a given decision by linking it to the common good on the grounds of some socially recognised normative orientation. I have suggested using the typology of seven different 'orders of worth'. The quality of the compromise between these orders influences how easily legitimacy can be questioned and, consequently the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree.

In sum, the introduced analytical toolkit consists of the two modes of valuation addressing the meta-pragmatic level of legitimation and seven orders of worth useful for analysing the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree in contexts where the grammar of plural orders of worth is dominant. The invoked modes of valuation indicate whether we are dealing with legitimation practices at the meta-pragmatic or pragmatic level. Next, the dominant mode of valuation must be identified, which in the case of meta-pragmatic legitimation practices, suggests how the scope of authority that can be justified has changed. When dealing with pragmatic legitimation practices, the dominant mode of valuation guides our interpretation. The presented framework enhances the analytical purchase of our research, as it allows studying both legitimacy change in degree and legitimacy change in kind. In addition, by encouraging research sensitive to contextual variables taken for granted, the framework helps scholars to generate more robust interpretations. This can prove to be especially useful for analysis of informal genres such as populist discourses or truncated tweets.

2.3 Legitimacy crisis model

So far, I have introduced a conceptual toolkit that allows mapping multiple, qualitatively different types of legitimation changes and linking them to specific legitimacy changes. Once we have the full picture of how EU legitimacy changed during the studied period, we can zoom out from the debates in the public sphere and expose the consequences and relevance of these changes for European integration. Therefore, we turn to the second research question. In the monitored period of consecutive crises (2004-2016), did the EU experience a legitimacy crisis understood as a situation where the probability of disintegration can only be decreased at the price of substantial policy

reform? The scholarly debate about legitimacy crises of various sorts seems to be a never-ending story: the crisis has been proclaimed countless times. Yet, it seems that scholars do not relate to the same concept of a legitimacy crisis. No matter whether they attempt to prove or disprove its occurrence, most researchers fail to formulate a compelling conceptual definition and consequently present unambiguous empirical evidence for any crisis:

The legitimacy crisis has some of the characteristics of the Loch Ness monster: there are regular reports of sightings by villagers and tourists, but repeated scientific expeditions using the latest technology all fail to come up with solid evidence. Yet, the belief in the existence of the phenomenon is unaffected.

(Andeweg and Aarts 2017: 202)

Unless the distinction between legitimacy crisis and other neighbouring terms sharing the same semantic field, such as legitimation crisis or legitimacy deficit, is clarified, the ideal of cumulative knowledge production remains unattainable. I have earlier argued (see section 1.1.3) that the lack of a widely accepted conceptual definition renders the available research inconclusive. In fact, legitimacy research seldom elaborates on what consequences deficient legitimacy has for an institution. In such a context, every additional study is forced to develop a new definition and specify what indicators are of importance. As a result, there is little congruence between such definitions. Therefore, I will now engage in conceptual work synthesising the available theory into a coherent whole. The main aim is to arrive at distinct definitions that allow for the empirical investigation of public legitimation necessary in order to determine whether an institution suffers from a legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, or legitimacy crisis.

In the first step, I discuss what conditions would amount to a legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, or legitimacy crisis in the case of the EU, and how these differ from common legitimacy contestations. My conceptual work culminates in a model stressing the central importance of feedback loops via which any 'stock' of institutional legitimacy is depleted or replenished. The proposed model makes apparent that the three terms neither signify the same phenomenon nor are mutually exclusive but rather related. As they tend to compound, each term denotes legitimacy issues of different gravity.

2.3.1 Legitimacy deficit

In section 1.1.3, I have noted that the scholars adopting the normative legitimacy concept formulate the consequences of identified legitimacy issues in terms of legitimacy deficit. Within this strand of research, I distinguish between two strategies for constructing the legitimacy benchmark. On the one hand, we find scholars that establish the normative criteria based on democratic theory, which are then used to benchmark the EU's policy and institutional design. For example, in her book *Europe's crisis of legitimacy* (2020), Vivienne Schmidt uses the lens of democratic theory to study the EU's functioning to generate theoretical insights into EU's legitimacy. During the evaluation, citizens' own legitimacy assessments were not considered. As a result, in my reading the book studies the EU's legitimacy deficit rather than a crisis caused by its legitimacy or lack thereof. Since the degree of citizens' awareness of the identified legitimacy deficit is not considered, the link between this normative benchmark and institutional legitimacy is rather indirect.

On the other hand, we have a research strategy following Beetham's statement that something is legitimate not because people believe so but because it can be *justified in terms of* their beliefs (Beetham 2013: 11). By relying on citizens' own normative expectations, this strand of research can sustain stronger claims to social efficacy. Indeed, citizens are more likely to care about what contradicts their sense of justice. At the same time, there is a delay before the legitimacy assessment based on the benchmark becomes socially potent, i.e. the time before the citizens notice the discrepancy between their normative expectations and the current state of affairs. Being concerned with legitimacy as a stabilising and destabilising element of world politics, the legitimacy deficit concept drawing on Beetham's theory has a stronger claim to social efficacy. It is, therefore, better aligned with the research goals of this thesis.

Since the legitimacy deficit presents, first and foremost, a heuristic device designed to measure the correspondence of a normative ideal to reality, it should be interpreted in terms of potentialities. When an institution is fully legitimate, i.e. justifiable on normative grounds, 'what is' is aligned with 'what ought to be'. In practice, such a coincidence between an institutional reality and social norms rarely occurs. The misalignment between the two does not in itself lead to legitimisation problems. Unless actors are made aware of the identified legitimacy

issues and start recognising them as serious (and the corresponding increase in politicisation), there will be few consequences for institutional legitimacy. Therefore, the legitimacy deficit, understood as the discrepancy between normative expectations and institutional reality, does not directly threaten the institution's legitimacy. Instead, it expresses the increased probability that the legitimacy will become publicly contested.

Having clarified the conceptual definition of legitimacy deficit, let us now consider what variables determine its magnitude. I suggest treating the legitimacy deficit as a product of objective institutional outputs such as policy failures and citizens' normative expectations towards the institution. Figure 2.4 highlights the relationships decisive for the extent of the legitimacy deficit. In the format of the so-called causal loop diagram common in system dynamics, the diagram shows the dynamics in situations of sub-optimal institutional outputs. With an increase in sub-optimal institutional outputs, the discrepancy between the state of affairs and citizens' normative expectations grows. The increasing legitimacy deficit increases the probability that the discrepancy will be noticed and deemed problematic. This would spark a politicisation process that leads to debate in the public sphere that problematises the institution's agenda, behaviour and objectives. The institution, therefore, runs into legitimisation problems. Unless the institution manages to justify its outputs in terms of the citizens' normative expectations, the salience of delegitimation discourses rises. The growing public awareness of the poor results eventually leads to lowering the expectations towards the institution, as its ineptitude no longer holds any potential for further politicisation. Following this dynamic, the legitimacy deficit can be diminished either by fixing the failing policies, justifying these policies in terms of citizens' normative expectations, or lowering citizens' expectations. Yet, despite leading to a reduction in legitimacy deficit, the high salience of delegitimation discourses has its consequences. Over time, if the institution's successive attempts to justify itself keep failing, the situation can escalate into a legitimisation crisis.

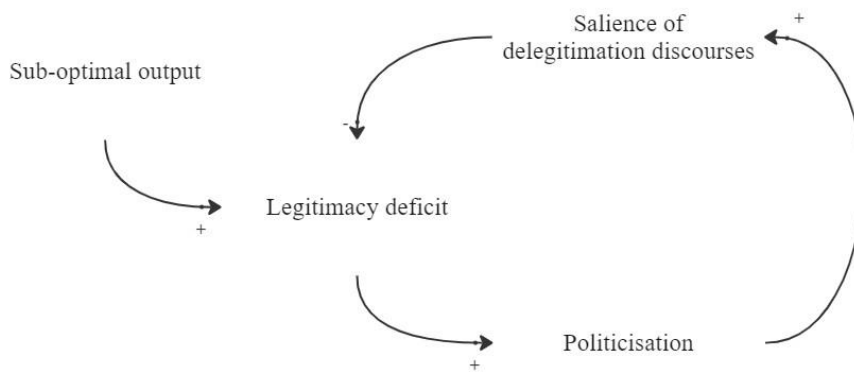


Figure 2.4: Causal loop diagram outlines the relationships determining the extent of a legitimacy deficit; plus signs indicate a reinforcing relationship while minus signs indicate a diminishing relationship, e.g. growing salience of delegitimation discourses leads

Whereas a legitimacy deficit resembles a ticking bomb, a legitimacy and legitimisation crisis directly threaten the institution’s functioning and require an apt response. The three concepts are not identical but related. In the following sub-section, I outline my understanding of the legitimisation crisis concept.

2.3.2 Legitimation crisis

Although a bit dated, the idea of a legitimisation crisis introduced by Habermas in the book *Legitimation crisis* (1975) arguably presents the most elaborate account of the phenomenon. The book can be read as a cultural history rectifying the traditional Marxist analysis of contradictions inherent to capitalism. It argues that while the risks of one ultimate crisis of capitalist economies have diminished, the crisis tendencies are still present in any class society. Since the market is always at risk of failing, the state steps in to quiet inescapable conflicts of interest, guarantees welfare provisions, and keeps the capitalist market’s negative externalities in check. It is no longer the ‘business cycle’ that is in charge of the citizens’ well-being: the nation state is now responsible for ensuring equal opportunities for all. As the normative resources cannot easily be crafted by the administrative apparatus, the state is forced to rely on values previously fixed by traditions and the protestant work ethic, which are nowadays being eroded by capitalist logic. Consequently, the state’s legitimacy now hinges on its ability to constantly seek new grounds for its justification. In the case of an exogenous shock, the state may find itself being plunged into a systemic

crisis: what originated as an economic crisis ends up as a legitimation crisis exposing the depletion of normative resources. These resources are crucial for moderating conflicts of interest inherent to any capitalist economy, and the crisis endangers the social order itself.

As discussed in section 1.1.3, despite being coined as a *legitimation* crisis, the state's legitimacy and legitimation capabilities only play a role of mediating variables. In fact, the core of the problem has less to do with the state's legitimacy than with its ability to deliver on citizens' expectations. Since the smooth functioning of other sub-systems determines the success of legitimation, the book disregards the influence that legitimation practices have on legitimacy. What really matters and ultimately causes the failure of system integration is the lack of robustness against shocks. Legitimation crisis, therefore, becomes a diagnosis of a nation state's situation within global capitalism, which becomes aggravated with each economic shock. Once the shock thwarts the economic system, the state has to come in despite having no effective measures against the capitalist cycles. Any legitimation of this practice can only delay the legitimation crisis temporarily. If we shift our focus from the systemic level to legitimacy, the book does not specify the concrete effects that the legitimation crisis might have. Therefore, I propose an alternative understanding of the phenomenon based on how the term legitimation crisis is used in the current empirical research. Firstly, following the above-discussed original contribution, the term 'legitimation crisis' as compared to 'legitimation problems' should be reserved for events curbing the functioning of the whole system in an important way. Since a legitimation crisis always precedes a legitimacy crisis, the analytical toolkits introduced in the previous sections are meant to shed light on the legitimation practices that potentially precede a legitimation crisis. The causal loop diagram in Figure 2.5 depicts how a legitimation crisis is brought about. As sub-optimal institutional outputs likely result in the rising salience of delegitimation discourses, the institution tries to resolve these legitimation problems by attempting to confine the breach of social expectations. Such a repair of meaning can be achieved either by demonstrating the validity of the original justifications (pragmatic legitimation) or by establishing a different mode of valuation that applies to the institution (meta-pragmatic legitimation). In addition, a plausibly independent, charismatic, authoritative, or disengaged actor can also help improve the institution's negative public

opinion. During the repair of meaning, what is perceived as these institutions' desirable, acceptable, and achievable performance is revised, and the institution might once again emerge as legitimate. Still, the success of legitimation practices can never be guaranteed beforehand, and the legitimation problems might develop into a full-blown legitimation crisis.

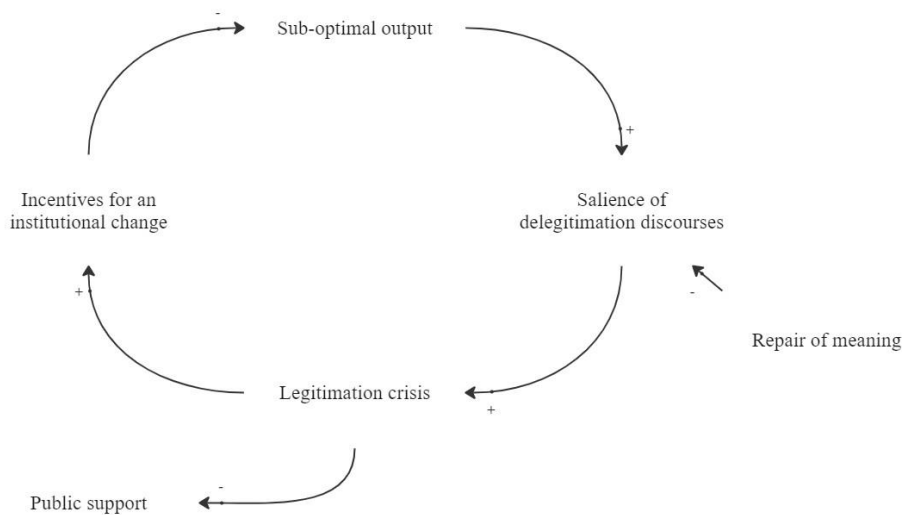


Figure 2.5: A causal loop diagram which outlines the mechanism generating legitimation crises and its impact; plus signs indicate a reinforcing relationship and minus signs indicate a diminishing relationship, e.g. growing salience of delegitimation discourses leads to a more serious legitimation crisis

Legitimation problems can be observed based on an increase in the salience of delegitimation discourses. While legitimation problems present a reaction to the sub-optimal outputs, a legitimation crisis is a result of the continuous state of high salience of these discourses. The legitimation problems and the degree to which the institution manages to justify its conduct tend to add up, gradually affecting the relative ease with which any future legitimation problems can be fended off. Once the institution experiences a legitimation crisis, purely communicative legitimation practices are likely to fail. Therefore, to escape the crisis, the institution must attempt to bring outputs back in line with the expectations by reforming itself. Such a move has a two-fold effect. Firstly, it might rectify failing policies and thus decrease the salience of delegitimation discourses, as critical claims no longer correspond to institutional reality. Effectively, the policy reform, once its effects become recognised by the affected, prevents further negative legitimacy changes in degree contributing to the perception that the institutions are less

legitimate. Secondly, the change might provide good support for meta-pragmatic legitimation, arguing that the established critique is no longer valid and a different mode of valuation should apply. If these meta-pragmatic legitimation practices manage to bring forth the legitimacy change in kind, the vicious circle of policy failure and critique will be short-circuited. In short, institutional change opens a window of opportunity to alter both valid qualifications and evaluations.

2.3.3 Legitimacy crisis

The state of a legitimacy crisis could be seen as the opposite of legitimacy. Such an interpretation would imply that legitimacy is a dichotomous variable, and each institution is either legitimate or illegitimate. The dichotomous legitimacy concept, however, suffers from rather limited explanatory power, as it could only be used to clarify two extreme forms of institutional change: maintaining the status quo or disempowerment. In order to capture more granular changes, I propose to treat the degree of legitimacy in the sense of morally justified citizens' support as a cardinal variable. In these terms, the legitimacy crises might vary in severity depending on how much or little legitimacy the institution possesses. The stock of legitimacy, in turn, delimits what course of action that could improve institutional legitimacy is still viable. Rather than an imminent terminal point, a legitimacy crisis presents a situation where the citizens' support is hard to achieve, while disempowerment becomes a real possibility. At a certain point, the institution will no longer have the public support necessary to implement much-needed institutional changes.

Zürn (2004) expects that progressing supranationalisation and transnationalisation give rise to normative problems, which in turn lead to growing acceptancy problems, resistance to global governance, and eventually also a legitimacy crisis (Zürn 2004: 260). Since legitimacy is elusive and its effects most notable in times of its scarcity, scholars customarily measure its stock by proxy of diffuse support defined as 'a reservoir of favourable attitudes or goodwill that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effect of which they see as damaging to their wants' (Easton 1965: 273). Whereas the majority of the empirical research interprets the legitimation crisis as a disturbance to the institution's public relations, the consequences of a legitimacy crisis are assumed to be fatal. Stark argues that while a

legitimation crisis is characterised by a lack of ‘specific support’ for particular policies or political arrangements, a legitimacy crisis results from a shortage of diffuse support (Stark 2010: 4-6). The public debate no longer revolves around the failing policies and possible remedies but around the inadequacy of the institution itself.

Zheng (2010) summarises the intuition behind the legitimacy crisis term as a situation when the audiences perceive an organisation as no longer conforming to social norms and expectations. Hurrelmann and Wagner (2020) see such a shift in attention as one of the two preconditions for a legitimacy crisis, the other precondition being the long-term persistence of delegitimation discourses, which in my terms, amounts to a legitimation crisis. Similarly, for Reus-Smith, an institution experiences a crisis of legitimacy ‘when the level of social recognition that its identity, interests, practices, norms, or procedures are rightful declines to the point where it must either adapt [. . .] or face disempowerment’ (Reus-Smith 2007: 158). Therefore, I suggest using the term legitimacy crisis for situations when a long-durée legitimation crisis has depleted diffuse support, and the institution comes to be seen not as a solution but as a part of the problem.

Compared to a legitimacy crisis, a legitimation crisis does not threaten the stability of the whole system, as it is usually restricted to an inability of concrete institutions to justify their actions. Stark (2010: 4-6) further develops this distinction: While in the case of a legitimacy crisis, we have to grapple with a shortage of diffuse support. In the case of a legitimation crisis, there is a lack of political support for particular political arrangements. While there is little controversy regarding the conceptual definition of legitimacy and legitimation crisis, it is less clear what indicators can be used for the diagnosis. Scholars have, for example, referred to a declining level of social recognition (Reus-Smit 2007: 161), ‘a breakdown of familiar symbolic frameworks legitimating the pre-existing socio-political order’ (Hart 1993: 40), or the erosion of the agreement regarding liberal-democratic principles (Statham and Trenz 2015: 301-302). Still, not all of these are easily measurable. Moreover, it is unclear where the boundary between a problem and a crisis lies. Nevertheless, there seems to be agreement that the conceptual threshold should be set rather high (Hurrellman and Wagner 2020). In the remainder of this section, I discuss how a legitimacy crisis can be identified.

Figure 2.6 illustrates the mechanics behind a legitimacy crisis. If sub-optimal institutional outputs are not properly justified, they eventually trigger a legitimisation crisis. The longer the legitimisation crisis lasts, the more sceptical citizens become towards the ability of the institution to deliver the expected outcomes. The focus of public debate starts steering away from particular policies and their respective specific support towards the institution itself. In turn, the critique directed towards the institution depletes its diffuse support. It marks the transition from a legitimisation crisis towards a legitimacy crisis, where the authority exercised by the institution is no longer seen as properly justified. Pippa Norris describes typical dynamics of political support as ‘a multidimensional phenomenon ranging on a continuum from the most diffuse to the most specific levels’ (Norris 2017: 23). As the specific support for certain policies wanes, the institution eventually becomes the point of contention. Therefore, the proliferation of polity-centred news coverage¹⁵ can be used as an indicator of the stock of diffuse support.

In principle, the described development can be caused both by legitimacy changes in degree and kind. When negative legitimacy changes in degree cause the institution to be perceived as less legitimate and its diffuse support is depleted, the legitimacy crisis can be imminent. These changes can be sparked by both institutional reform (see Hurrelmann, Krell-Laluhova, Nullmeier, Schneider, and Wiesner 2009) and pragmatic delegitimation practices.

Alternatively, when legitimacy change in kind has established an alternative mode of valuation as the appropriate way of assessing the institutional outputs, the institution might struggle to justify its

¹⁵ This approach is inspired by scholars investigating the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Europeanised political communication (e.g. Koopmans and Erbe 2004). The horizontal dimension refers to the public visibility of national issues, and the vertical dimension, then, focuses on the media coverage of the supranational, namely the EU and its institutions. While the main purpose of these studies was to evaluate the visibility of European affairs across the EU countries, changes in the structure of EU coverage can also indicate EU legitimacy. Harking back to Easton’s system theory and the concept of diffuse support, the studies can be read in the sense that as a mode of governance becomes more contested, the public attention shifts from domestic coverage and particular policy debate towards the debate about the political project itself. Such a discursive shift would then make the EU itself open for critique. However, this link remains largely unexplored.

performance. Consequently, the institution eventually experiences a legitimization crisis, which, if unresolved over time, causes the diffuse support to be depleted. In other words, both pragmatic and meta-pragmatic legitimization practices can, in theory, lead to a legitimacy crisis.

Similar to the case of a legitimization crisis, a legitimacy crisis can only be resolved at the cost of significant institutional reforms. In trying to break out of the deadlock, the institution must gather sufficient political will to change its structures fundamentally. Even if ultimately misguided, the disruptive change can buy precious time to consolidate the institution's public image. However, whereas during the legitimization crisis, the institution enjoys enough diffuse support and all the incentives to reform itself. As the diffuse support plummets, the institution might no longer have the sufficient mandate to introduce any of the needed restructurisation. In the case that the needed reforms cannot be realised, the diffuse support will continue to diminish, and the legitimacy crisis will cause further policy failures. As citizens are less willing to comply, keeping the policies going becomes increasingly costly. A radical critique might then suggest that the institution should be disempowered or its overall mission and authority limited significantly. However, the institution risks falling into disempowerment only insofar as there is a feasible alternative project in sight that could address the same challenges as the current institution. Unless such an alternative is available and perceived as realistic, the institution remains in a state of legitimacy crisis and further deteriorates.

2.3.4 Spotting the crisis

So far, I have clarified the distinction between legitimacy deficit, legitimization crisis, and legitimacy crisis. Since a legitimacy deficit does not necessarily translate into an immediate impact on the functioning of the institution, I focus primarily on formulating what conditions would, in the case of the EU, amount to a legitimization and legitimacy crisis. In this part, I focus on concrete variables indicating whether the EU has suffered from any crises in the monitored period and if so, identify the type of crisis.

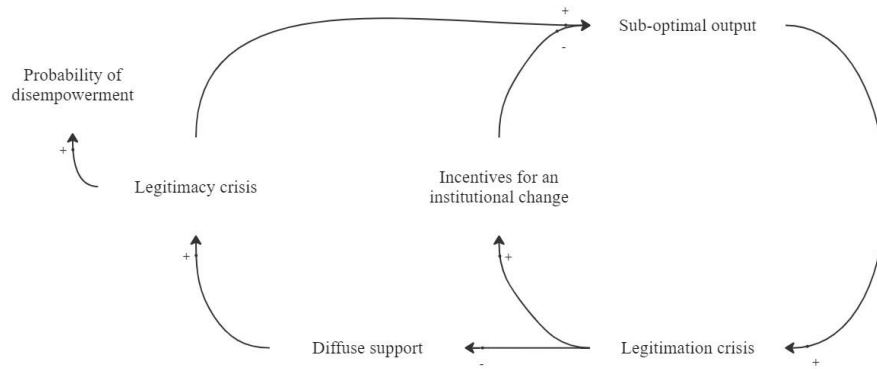


Figure 2.6: Causal loop diagram outlines how a legitimation crisis might eventually turn into a legitimacy crisis

In section 1.1.2, I have claimed that the available legitimation research maps legitimation changes along three main dimensions: politicisation, tone of the media coverage, and the content of legitimation/critique. We can now portray these variables and their mutual relationships thanks to conceptual clarification. Figure 2.7 features the resulting model. Equipped with this model, the crisis hypothesis can be turned into an empirical puzzle.

Before we make use of the model to test the crisis hypothesis, it is important to stress that a crisis is only apparent from time-series data, as the diffuse support as well as the salience of delegitimation discourses is volatile and oscillates based on the current agenda. At the same time, the diagram clarifies that politicisation and rising levels of public contestation alone do not mean that the institution suffers from a legitimation crisis. Such a diagnosis will only be warranted once the institution shows itself to be incapable of justifying its conduct in response to the delegitimation discourses. A legitimation crisis thus amounts to a condition where a high degree of politicisation translates into *highly salient delegitimation discourses* to which the institution struggles to respond.

All the variables used to diagnose a legitimation crisis: politicisation, tone of the media coverage, and salience of delegitimation discourses, track legitimacy changes in degree rendering the institution more or less legitimate. By contrast to my understanding, Beetham defined a legitimacy crisis as occurring ‘when there is a serious threat or challenge to the rules of power, or a substantial erosion in the beliefs which provide their justification’ (Beetham, 2013: 168). The presented model shows that the situation is more complex than that. Indeed, the

legitimacy change in kind highlighted by Beetham can shift the appropriate valuation mode. Consequently, the institution might experience serious difficulties when trying to justify its conduct on these new grounds. A legitimacy change in kind might affect the ability of the institution to justify its action publicly but does not threaten its legitimacy per se (see section 2.1.). While it could throw the institution into a legitimation crisis, it will not experience the crisis as long as it enjoys a stable level of diffuse support.

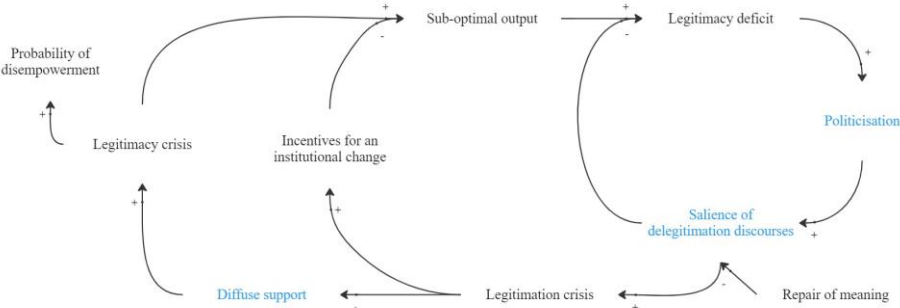


Figure 2.7: Causal loop diagram outlines the relationships determining the extent of a legitimacy deficit; plus signs indicate a reinforcing relationship while minus signs indicate a diminishing relationship, e.g. growing salience of delegitimation discourses leads to diminishing of the legitimacy deficit.

A legitimacy crisis is most evident from a decrease in diffuse support corresponding to changes in citizens’ attitudes. The change in attitudes could arguably be captured by tracking the relative visibility of polity-related media coverage. As the diffuse support is getting exhausted, the focus of the public debate shifts from specific policies and institutional arrangements to the institution itself. In the previous chapter (see section 1.1.1), I have clarified that diffuse support is a composite of legitimacy, trust, and citizens’ identity. This means that while a decrease in diffuse support might correlate with a legitimacy crisis, it can also be caused by changes in other components of the diffuse support (e.g. trust). Without deciphering the dynamics behind this fall, a legitimacy crisis diagnosis cannot be based on falling diffuse support. Therefore, whether an institution has suffered a legitimacy crisis should be concluded based on observed trends in the relative visibility of polity-related media coverage coupled with survey data showing trends in trust and attitudes towards the institution. The suggested triangulation leads to a more robust measure of legitimacy crisis than when the different data sources are treated separately.

2.3.5 Summary

Scholars have, on different occasions, diagnosed the EU as suffering from a legitimacy crisis, yet the relevant empirical research remains inconclusive. I have identified the main cause for this empirical inconclusiveness in the lack of a widely accepted conceptual definition of the different types of crisis. In the absence of such a definition, it is unclear to what extent scholars study the same phenomenon. The second research question of the present thesis examines whether the EU has, in the monitored period of 2004-2016, experienced a legitimation or legitimacy crisis. Therefore, in this section, I have started by clarifying the distinction between neighbouring terms sharing the same semantic field, such as legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy crisis. Based on this conceptual work, I have introduced a model identifying concrete variables that allow for distinguishing between different types of legitimacy change and legitimation crisis. As a result, the model (Figure 2.7) can guide an empirical investigation and answer the second research question.

The introduced model puts the most studied dimensions of legitimation, i.e. politicisation, the tone of the media coverage, and the content of justifications/critiques, into mutual relation to the three related concepts of legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy crisis. It presents a novel way of assessing the severity of the situation, testing the crisis hypothesis, and helping to re-establish the analytical power of the three concepts. By contrast to the alternative approaches, the model does not announce any arbitrary 'threshold' after which the situation could be declared as a legitimation or legitimacy crisis. Compared to such static definitions, the model resolves the crisis hypothesis by stressing the importance of reinforcing and balancing feedback loops. This central feature makes it obvious that a legitimacy deficit does not always lead to legitimation problems, which do not always escalate into a legitimation crisis. A legitimation crisis only erodes diffuse support over time, eventually resulting in a legitimacy crisis. In short, the model defines what conditions need to be fulfilled to warrant a crisis diagnosis and therefore presents an arguably more nuanced analytical framework.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the theoretical background and conceptual design underlying this thesis. The thesis has set out to examine broad variety of changes in EU legitimacy during the 2004-2016 period, and whether the EU has experienced any legitimation or legitimacy crisis in the monitored period. This requires making the author's theoretical expectations regarding the possible legitimacy changes explicit. Furthermore, the conditions that amount to the particular types of crisis had to be specified.

When addressing the question of legitimation changes, the available legitimation research uses three main dimensions: politicisation, the tone of the media coverage, and the content of justifications/critique. Whereas the first two dimensions indicate how much more or less legitimate the institution in question has become, the link between legitimation change in the content of justification/critique and the qualities of legitimacy in the making has been unclear. To resolve the conundrum of what it at different times meant for the EU to be legitimate, I have argued that legitimacy varies not only in degree, as the institution becomes more or less legitimate, but also in kind. The legitimacy change in kind adjusts the scope of authority that can be publicly justified as the salience of concrete cultural norms regulating the legitimation alters.

Next, I have discussed how the cultural norms operate and what their character is. The presented construction required specifying how legitimation practices leading to legitimacy change in degree differ from those causing legitimacy change in kind. The notion of legitimacy change in kind relies on the concept of cultural norms. The cultural norms I refer to regulate the appropriate way of public legitimacy assessments and bound justifiability of the institutional authority. The cultural norms can be approached as a mode of valuation defining what characteristics are relevant for distinguishing between worthy and unworthy while designating how exactly valuable the assessed things are (Eranti 2017: 51). Actors determine which mode of valuation is appropriate based on how the concrete polity is normatively imagined. By controlling for a change in the mode of valuation, one determines whether concrete legitimation practices might have resulted in a legitimacy change in degree or in kind.

Based on the type of legitimacy change they try to generate, I have distinguished between meta-pragmatic and pragmatic legitimation practices. Since the meta-pragmatic legitimation practices aim to change the salient mode of valuation, they might cause a legitimacy change in kind. Based on the available empirical research, I have proposed to distinguish between two modes of valuation, each related to a specific polity construction: the grammar of plural orders of worth and the grammar of individual interests. Once the perception of the polity and a just representation changes, the project in question must be re-negotiated. Any shift from one mode of valuation to the other entails different requirements for how the institution can be justified or criticised and the scope of political commitment that cannot be justified at all. The grammar of individual interests bounds justifiability to rather short-term projects. This means that a legitimation developed following the grammar of individual interests potentially provides less stability for long-term political projects than the legitimation using the grammar of plural orders of worth.

If no attempts to change the salient mode of valuation can be detected, we are likely dealing with pragmatic legitimation practices, which might result in a legitimacy change in degree. In section 2.2, I have shown that the available legitimation research investigates politicisation and the tone of the media coverage to find signals of the institution becoming more or less legitimate. In comparison to politicisation and the tone of the coverage, the content of justifications/critique gives away cues indicating the likelihood of a legitimacy change in degree and in kind.

Indeed, as actors leverage the dominant mode of valuation, their logic must guide the interpretation of the analysed legitimation practices. In concrete terms, the stability of the legitimacy forged according to the grammar of individual interests should be assessed based on citizens' perception of qualities and shortcomings of the decision-making procedure. In the case of legitimation practices utilising the grammar of plural orders of worth, the assessment is more complicated. Since the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree relies on the quality of the developed justification, I have suggested using a typology of orders of worth, each referring to a different value and logic of justification. The conceptual framework I have presented in this chapter allows linking all three dimensions invoked in the legitimation research with a concrete consequence they have for the legitimacy in the making.

Having discussed my theoretical expectations regarding the possible forms of legitimacy change, the chapter proceeded with the conceptual work necessary to address the second research question testing the legitimacy crisis hypothesis. While the EU has been repeatedly diagnosed with a legitimacy and legitimation crisis, empirical research findings are inconclusive. As there are no widely accepted definitions of legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy crisis, it appears that scholars are not studying the same phenomena. In order to turn the crisis hypothesis into an empirical puzzle, the distinctions between the three terms sharing the same semantic space must be clarified.

I have defined legitimacy deficit as the discrepancy between citizens' normative expectations and the institutional reality expressing the potential for politicisation. However, until the citizens grow aware of the identified issues, the legitimacy deficit has little effect on public support for the institution. By contrast, we have a legitimation crisis when an institution can no longer justify its conduct publicly and, consequently, its diffuse support is gradually eroded. A legitimation crisis might affect the capabilities of the institution to introduce new policies and can only be resolved with a substantial institutional change. Lastly, the institution experiences a legitimacy crisis when its diffuse support is depleted. Unless it manages to mandate the necessary reforms, keeping its policies in place becomes increasingly costly as citizens are less likely to comply. If an alternative project addressing the same challenges as the institution in question is both available and perceived as viable, the institution might face disempowerment. With these conceptual clarifications in place, in the next chapter I proceed to present the operationalisation of my legitimation/legitimacy crisis model.

Chapter 3

Research strategy for monitoring changes in legitimation and critique

The present study has set out to chart the EU's legitimacy changes (RQ1) with the aim of resolving whether the EU has, in the crisis-ridden period 2004-2016, experienced a legitimacy crisis or not (RQ2). For that purpose, I have developed an analytical framework (chapter 2) linking observable legitimation changes to changes in EU's 'legitimacy in the making'. Furthermore, I have presented a model clarifying which legitimacy changes present a condition that, in the case of the EU, amounts to a legitimacy crisis. In this chapter, I operationalise the analytical framework through a mixed-methods research design to answer the two research questions of this thesis.

In the literature, I distinguish between two main research strategies (see literature review in section 1.1.) based on whether legitimacy is treated as a benchmark of normative goodness or as a product of legitimation practices (e.g. Scharpf 1999, Schmidt 2013). Studies following the first research strategy use the normative criteria from democratic theory as yardsticks of legitimacy for assessing the institutional reality. This strategy usually relies on data from opinion polls (Gilley 2006), attitudinal research estimating citizens' political support. While providing an overall measure of citizen's support, the survey-based methods have limited analytical purchase when it comes to discriminating between perceived legitimacy and different considerations confounding the measured support. Other studies in this strand of research leverage behavioural indicators of citizens' support (Norris 2002; Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhardt 1999). Yet, the interpretations of protest behaviour and civil disobedience as indicative

of the regime's insufficient legitimacy leave us wondering about the underlying motivations that have fuelled the protests (Norris and Walgrave 2006). Protests can be equally triggered by lacking legitimacy as by other reasons for discontent. What connects all the different studies that adopt the first research strategy is reliance on the concept of diffuse political support (Easton 1965). Diffuse support correlates with legitimacy, understood as morally justified citizens' support. Measurements of diffuse support thus provide a reflection rather than a direct measure of legitimacy.

Research adopting the second research strategy moves away from measuring the level of citizens' political support composed of multiple considerations, to assessing legitimacy itself. Assuming that legitimacy is created rather than an innate property, this approach adopts discourse-analytical methods. The approach embraces a 'communicative turn' in the study of legitimacy, looking more closely into the practices of the constitution, legitimation, and de-legitimation taking place in the public (Hurrellman 2017; Banchoff and Smith 1999; Beetham and Lord 1998). The (de)legitimation dynamic depends on actors' competencies to elaborate diffuse ideational resources shaping trajectories of politicisation and rendering the EU not only meaningful but also legitimate, illegitimate, or 'a-legitimate'. In operational terms, a decrease in institutional legitimacy is inferred from indicators such as surges in politicisation, negative tone of coverage, and/or relatively high salience of de-legitimation discourses in public. While this research strategy can only roughly approximate how much more or less legitimate an institution has become, it presents a way of analysing the legitimacy alone without resorting to more abstract concepts such as diffuse support.

Rather than mapping broad trends in citizens' support, the present thesis paints a fine-grained picture of legitimacy, its various changes, and types. Answering the legitimacy crisis question requires a high level of granularity. As a result, I choose the second, practice-oriented research strategy, which is better suited for disentangling legitimacy from other forms of support rather than the approaches treating legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness.

I start operationalising the analytical framework by discussing where to look when investigating EU legitimacy. Following the research strategy

approaching legitimacy as a product of public legitimisation practices, in section 3.1, I discuss the questions of where these practices unravel. Then I justify the UK as a case that might be the most informative for the present study and delineate the data sample for this study.

The aims of this research and the choice of strategy require a large amount of data. This makes designing the research in a way that is complex but not overly complicated more challenging. I continue the operationalisation by selecting methods and tools, granting an adequate analytical purchase. Even relatively minor omissions in the early stages of data cleaning and pre-processing might create an impression of a legitimacy trend that, in reality, is only an illusion resulting from the original omission. Therefore, the process needs to be as transparent and replicable as possible. Section 3.2 presents in detail how I have collected and cleaned the data to facilitate the analysis.

Even by limiting the sample to media reports from the UK published between 2004 and 2016, the total count of relevant entries amounted to over two million. In order to make the workload manageable, I have relied on computer-assisted quantitative text analysis. By leveraging the newest insights from computational linguistics, I have used techniques from corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) (see Baker et al. 2008; Partington 2007, 2013; McEnery and Baker 2015; Ancarno 2020) to process quantitatively the large-N dataset that resulted from the sampling strategy. In Partington's terms: 'the aim of the CADS approach is the uncovering in the discourse under study of what we might call *non-obvious meaning*, that is, meaning which might not be readily available to naked-eye perusal (Partington 2013: 11, emphasis in the original). The statistical techniques in text analysis, such as those used in CADS, open up more complex and accurate probabilistic measures of pattern identification.

Whereas a more detailed description of the technical aspects is reserved for the appendices, this chapter engages with the substantial issues of the research design. In section 1.1.2.3, I have discussed the main indicators of legitimacy change: politicisation, tone of the media coverage, and content of the legitimisation. Table 3.1 connects each of the dimensions for the two research questions of this thesis. The chapter proceeds by operationalising each of the indicators: the politicisation of the EU (section 3.3), tone of the EU media coverage (section 3.4), qualifications

of the EU policy interventions (section 3.5) and changes in polity-centred discourses (section 3.6). After outlining how I have studied each of the indicators of legitimacy change, I discuss how I validate the findings of the analysis (section 3.6.4). In order to tackle all the different dimensions, I have developed a mixed methods research strategy.

Table 3.1: Indicators of legitimization change used to answer the two research questions (Table source: the author)

Relevance	Indicators	Legitimacy changes
<i>RQ1 and RQ2</i>	Politicisation of the EU	Periods with high likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree
	Tone of the EU media coverage	
	Content of legitimization: qualifications of the EU policy interventions	Likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree
	Content of legitimization: meta-pragmatic and pragmatic legitimization practices in polity-centred coverage	Legitimacy changes in kind and likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree
<i>RQ2</i>	Diffuse support: changes in the salience of polity-centred coverage	Likelihood that a legitimization crisis escalates into a legitimacy crisis
	Coverage of alternative political arrangements to the EU membership	Probability that a legitimacy crisis will lead to a dis-integration or disempowerment

Since qualitative and quantitative methods have distinct underlying logics of inquiry, how they were put in conjunction in this thesis must be made explicit. I use quantitative evidence to obtain a ‘thin description’ (Spillman 2014) of legitimacy changes, a background against which more granular shifts in legitimization practices materialise. The findings of quantitative methods, then, help to locate the periods during which important legitimization changes likely took place.

I then use the qualitative analysis of media coverage during these times to generate detailed picture of the normative concerns underlying these legitimization changes. While the quantitative macro-level analysis is used to track legitimization trends, the qualitative inquiry allows zooming in on the data to capture the specificities of legitimization changes that materialise on the macro-level.

The outlined way of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods provides a good analytical grasp of the data. This allowed me to answer the second research question asking whether the EU has experienced a

legitimacy crisis in the studied period. Taking the legitimacy crisis model (see section 2.3.4) as a point of departure, besides the four indicators of legitimacy change, I have assessed two additional variables: media coverage of alternative political arrangements to EU membership (section 3.8) and the EU's diffuse support (section 3.7). The code used for the analysis is uploaded to the author's public repository and appended to the thesis (see Appendices C, D, and E), to facilitate replicability.

I finish the operationalisation by discussing how I have dealt with analytical challenges such as finding a unit of analysis capable of representing the generated knowledge in a way that is consistent with theoretical assumptions (section 3.9.1). Lastly, I present practical considerations related to data procurement (section 3.9.2) and ethical considerations (section 3.9.3).

3.1 Research design: Locating the EU public sphere

In the present thesis, I investigate changes in EU legitimacy based on legitimisation practices in the UK public sphere, selected as the most informative case. I approach the UK media sphere as a proxy for the EU public sphere. The sample is constrained to text data published in the 2004-2016 period in various news media outlets and results in a large-N dataset. Furthermore, the chosen case selection and the sampling criteria determine the ability to draw conclusions about EU legitimacy. In the following sections, I present the reasoning behind these methodological choices.

3.1.1 Case selection

Having argued for approaching EU legitimacy as a product of public legitimisation practices, it must be specified what the public arenas are and where legitimisation practices take place. In its broadest sense, a public sphere is comprised of any civic-minded talk (Luhtakallio 2012). While it can be argued that many different arenas, such as cafés, bars, or local newspapers, contribute to public opinion formation, they vary in their publicity and the potential to affect ongoing debates. Since exhaustive data is not available, one has to find an adequate proxy for the civic debate about public affairs. According to Habermas (2016), arguably the most influential public sphere theorist, European public opinion is primarily shaped via national media informing national audiences about European affairs. Furthermore, as Hurrelmann and

Wagner (2020) note, news media bring positions of the EU, national elites, and citizens together with professional observers such as journalists and, therefore, represent a relatively open public arena.

Most of the time, scholars studying the public sphere have to make do with media data from the mainstream press, as these are most readily available. At the same time, the public debate that is not formalised within any institutional channels remains undocumented. Since the mass media pre-select the content for the public according to the dominant news values of proximity, consonance with existing stereotypes, eliteness, negativity, superlatives, timeliness, unexpectedness, and personalisation (Bednarek and Caple 2017), the media sphere should not be confused with the public sphere *per se*. Indeed, the interpretation of media data must take media-specific bias into account. Nevertheless, presenting a relatively available data source, media spheres form the major institutional arrangements facilitating the formation of public opinion. Given the influence of the mass media on public communication and taking data availability into account, I approach national media spheres as proxies for local public spheres.

The EU has 27 member states with 24 official languages. In geographical terms, scholarly literature shows that there is no single transnational European public sphere inclusive of all EU citizens outside or above the member states' public spheres (see section 1.1.2.1). Moreover, citizens seldom engage in discussion across the national arenas. The national public spheres have gradually become increasingly Europeanised as European issues became more visible in media coverage. When it comes to specific EU issues, a gradient can be observed in the coverage between EU and non-EU countries: the same transnational issues are being reported at the same time frame and from a similar perspective in EU member states (Kantner 2015; Koopmans and Erbe 2004). Comparative research indicates that citizens can learn about EU topics from their national mass media despite differences in focus, national interests, and positions on EU controversies. This allows me to investigate the EU's public legitimation based on the practices of EU's legitimation taking place in national media spheres.

As I have discussed (see section 1.1.2.1), the research has shown that no single unified EPS exists. However, developments in EU legitimacy can be examined by conducting case studies of individual national media

spheres of EU countries. Despite being progressively popular, the design of case studies is far from standardised (Gustafsson 2017). The main divide between various case study designs arguably runs between comparative case studies, often explanatory in nature, and exploratory single-case studies seeking to develop a more in-depth understanding of the concrete phenomenon (Flyvbjerg 2011; Stewart 2014; Yin 2014). While a comparative case study would be better suited to cover more of the variance that exists among the EU member states, focusing on a single case makes the amount of data more manageable and allows more in-depth analysis (Dogan 2002: 66). Based on additional considerations regarding the research questions, data availability, duration of the present project, the state of current statistical language models for individual languages, and the author's own language proficiency, a single case study design appears to be a better choice for this thesis.

As I have adopted a single-case study design, I study EU legitimacy changes based on legitimation changes in the media sphere of a single member state. It is, therefore, crucial to delimit the case in both geographical and temporal terms to locate the most informative case. Legitimacy and trust present the constitutive parts of an institution's diffuse support (see section 1.1.1.2). Change in institutional legitimacy is, therefore, most visible in the moments of its absence. Since the present study aims to explore changes in the EU's institutional legitimacy in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis in late 2008, I have chosen the case that makes these changes especially discernible: the UK.

Based on the typologies in the literature, the UK can be seen as an 'index case' (Gerring and Cojocaru 2016), a 'crucial case' (Eckstein 1975; Gerring and Seawright 2008), or an 'exceptional case' (Dogan 2002). The Brexit referendum on the UK's EU membership can be interpreted as an important clue about the state of EU legitimacy. Consequently, the study of legitimation dynamics in the UK can contribute to clarifying the importance that legitimacy has for institutional stability. This selection strategy corresponds to the choice of index case where the phenomenon of the EU withdrawal can first be observed.

The UK also represents a crucial case. The uniqueness of the British relationship with the EU is outlined in a plethora of studies on Euroscepticism (Usherwood and Startin 2013; Startin and Krouwel 2013; Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020; de Wilde et al. 2013), which document

how the EU has been consistently and continuously challenged in the UK public sphere. The public referendum on EU membership, the ensuing demise of David Cameron, the election victory of pro-Brexit Boris Johnson, and the ongoing struggle regarding the shape of EU-UK relations might be interpreted as a result of the EU's weakened legitimacy in the eyes of the British public. Since Brexit could be seen as the result of a legitimacy crisis (see section 2.3), the UK can be understood as a crucial case for the study of EU legitimacy changes.

In addition, from the perspective of mainstream integration theory, the UK represents an exceptional case. As I have discussed in the first chapter, it has been an established expectation that recurrent crises in the EU typically result in further integration between member states. Arguably, this theory has been well grounded in historical data. The UK's decision to leave the EU, therefore, represents the only exception.

Since the UK is not a 'typical' case representative of the 27 EU countries in the 'statistical' sense, legitimisation changes observed in the UK media sphere cannot be used for drawing conclusions about the state of EU legitimacy in general. Instead, the UK case provides a meaningful insight. As Teune points out, even single-country case studies, if theoretically framed, can be used to support generalisations (Teune 1990: 45). The in-depth study of the British case can prove to be especially illuminating when it comes to the effects that legitimisation/de-legitimation dynamics have on institutional stability. Furthermore, the UK case presents a well-suited opportunity for grounding the concept of legitimacy crisis in empirical research. In the next section, I discuss the parameters of the data sample I have used to study changes in legitimisation practices in the UK media sphere.

3.1.2 Defining the sampling criteria

I have defined sampling criteria for the current project with the aim of documenting (de)legitimation practices that enable and constrain diverse ways of qualifying and evaluating the EU. The present project seeks to investigate the 'ideational conditions' (White 2010: 63) of legitimisation rather than legitimisation trajectories advanced by concrete actors. As a result, I have decided to limit the sample to text data from professional news media, which continue to form the backbone of the public sphere and public opinion formation processes even in the digital era. The

sample includes routine coverage for the 2004-2016 period from various media outlets (e.g. regional press, broadsheets, online news). My goal was to generate a large-N sample to draw generalisations about the UK public sphere and EU legitimacy. In this section, I present the methodological choices that ensure the representativeness of my dataset and the feasibility of the project.

To generate a representative sample of UK news media as far as possible, I follow the first of Lijphart's approaches (1971: 686), which advises increasing the total-N media reports published in the UK. Furthermore, in line with one of the methods of securing representativeness discussed by Mair (1996), I have aimed to capture the majority of available public discourses on the EU by increasing the number of data points. As the size of the random sample approaches the size of the entire population, significant features of the sample are highly likely to be present also in the population. In practice, this has resulted in a large sample (millions of media reports) that could not be managed and analysed manually by a single researcher. Conventionally, this issue is solved by adopting some of three strategies: 1) reducing the studied time frame, 2) restricting the selection of included media outlets, and 3) opting for a single-modal dataset.

I have combined elements of the three strategies to generate a representative sample of a more manageable size. The first strategy relies on selecting a specific limited time period(s) for the sampling. When the focus is limited to media coverage during some selected events, we are forced to subscribe to an assumption that the important legitimisation changes must have taken place at the given time. However, legitimacy changes do not come in a mechanistic fashion immediately after an unexpected event. Instead, their start, direction, and amplitude depend on the legitimisation practices that are always contingent upon available ideational resources, actors' competencies, momentary agenda in media, and other situational factors. Consequently, legitimacy changes, whose origins might be traced to a policy debate, can materialise with a delay after the particular issue no longer receives much media attention. The contingency makes predicting the length of these delays close to impossible. For this reason, an event-centred, synchronic approach investigating only pre-selected time intervals risks that the event triggering legitimacy change will not be covered in the studied period. To mitigate this risk, I opt to analyse routine media coverage.

An analysis of routine media coverage does not require formulating hypotheses about periods when legitimacy changes have taken place. In order to capture the potential changes in the EU's legitimacy in response to the Euro crisis, the selected period has to stretch further back from the start of the crisis. I started sampling media data from 2004, as the EU enlargement presented a substantial change both to the EU's institutional structure and its social geography. In addition, digital media archives have only a limited selection of media outlets for the pre-2004 period available. Since we do not precisely know how long the actual impact of the Euro crisis could last, the whole period until the next 'crisis' broke out should be included in the sample. Since there has hardly been a more critical event than the Brexit referendum, I consider this to be the 'next big crisis' after the Euro crisis and have, therefore, collected data up to the pre-referendum debate of 2016. The final sample thus consists of 12 years between 2004 and 2016 of routine media coverage from UK news outlets. While the decision to analyse routine media coverage for the whole period helps to circumvent the validity threat that the decisive moments might be left out of the sample, it does not result in any sample-size reduction.

The second strategy achieves sample size reduction by adopting restrictive selection criteria when it comes to the media outlets included in the sample. However, the fewer sources included in the sample, the less variance is reflected in the collected data. While it can be argued that the most circulated news media have the biggest reach and consequently a higher chance to influence how audiences evaluate EU legitimacy, a legitimacy change can also be stipulated by legitimisation practices developed in some particular regional media outlets. In order to ensure the representativeness of my sample, I have included the most widely circulated outlets from each of the following categories: broadsheets, regional newspapers, news sites, tabloids, magazines, and transcripts of TV and radio programmes (see Appendix B).

The third strategy suggests selecting only specific data types to be included in the sample. At the same time, the resulting sample must still cover relevant content where legitimacy changes are most likely to be visible. Mass media coverage comprises press (text and picture data), radio (sound), and TV (video). Each data source requires a different analytical approach, while indications about a single legitimisation change are likely to be found across multiple sources. Since the press, radio, and

TV are not isolated but constitute the same media sphere, I assume that any impactful legitimation change, even if only developed in a specific media type, will eventually reverberate in the textual. Following this reasoning, the decision to focus on text guarantees that the most pronounced legitimation changes are included in the dataset. This strategy for reducing the sample size, therefore, presents a relatively small validity threat while resulting in a significantly smaller sample. In addition, some media types, such as radio, have rather limited availability of historical data. Consequently, I have decided to sample only data in text format. In the next section, I discuss the data retrieval and cleaning process.

3.2 Collecting and cleaning big data in legitimacy research

During data collection, I have downloaded all media reports containing keywords 'EU' or 'European Union' published in the period 2004-2016. The resulting dataset contained many irrelevant media reports and noise. I have therefore filtered the data by language and publisher to keep only English-written media reports published in the relevant media outlets. Next, I have removed all duplicated documents and media reports containing the keywords only by incidence. In the last step, I have filtered out the biggest part of the remaining noise in the form of words, phrases, tags, and individual characters in the full text of the documents. In what follows, I discuss the full process in more detail.

3.2.1 Data retrieval

The access to news media reports published during the 2004-2016 period was purchased from the news aggregator Lexis Nexis. The product offered by Lexis Nexis allows querying using keywords, date range, and publisher. I have identified relevant media reports based on the full-text search for keywords 'the EU' and 'European Union'. As a result, all articles mentioning the EU, even by incidence, were included in the retrieved dataset.

During the search, media outlet can be specified using so-called constant source identifiers. This means that a search and download could only be conducted for a single media outlet at a time. Consequently, the process has turned out to be highly time-consuming. In order to cope with time

constraints posed by the purchased Lexis Nexis access, I have decided to use a pre-built group identifier that has included media outlets of interest alongside some outlets that were largely irrelevant. This strategy has been efficient, and I have used the saved time for curating the dataset. The size of the resulting dataset was over two million copyright-protected media records with meta-data. The dataset has been stored safely at a secured file transfer protocol server provided by the University of Oslo. Having collected the data, I have proceeded with their cleaning.

3.2.2 Data cleaning

When inspecting the retrieved dataset, I have noticed that it contained many media reports with nearly identical content, and some that were published in irrelevant outlets, or in a language other than English (Welsh or Irish). This presented noise in the data that could introduce bias into the analysis. I have therefore filtered the data by media source and language to remove all non-English media reports or reports published in scientific or industry-specific media outlets (see Appendix D.2).

The English-written texts published in the selected media outlets were then de-duplicated. However, getting rid of the duplicates without compromising the integrity of the sample has proven challenging. While excluding any entries with identical content (full-text) is rather straightforward, finding the right measure of text similarity that could be used for deciding whether two almost identical media reports should be treated as duplicates, is a non-trivial problem. Since the dataset included both very short and longer media reports, I have had to choose a similarity measure that is not affected by this variation. Therefore, I have decided to rely on cosine similarity (Salton and Buckley 1988), measuring the angle between two documents projected into a high-dimensional vector space. This has resulted in both shorter processing time and more sophisticated filtration.

The dimensionality of a vector space grows proportionally to the length of documents in the dataset. Distances between two data points in a high-dimensional vector space are enormous and time-consuming to calculate. By comparing the angle instead of the absolute distance between two document vectors, the problem is avoided. Consequently,

deduplication using cosine similarity is relatively fast. Moreover, unlike other metrics of edit distance (Jurafsky and Martin 2009: 107–111) that compute similarity based on how many operations are needed to turn one document into the other, cosine similarity reflects the semantic similarity¹⁶ between the documents. This is especially helpful if we want to also consider more abstract meaning structures than a lexical, word-to-word similarity.

I have used the cosine similarity calculated between each combination of documents as a measure of their similarity. In order to filter out the ‘duplicates’, I have chosen a decision boundary used for determining if two documents are to be treated as duplicates. If the threshold of cosine similarity is set up too high, even minor differences in the formatting of two texts will make the texts appear unique. Similarly, if the threshold is set too low, the two texts will be considered duplicates despite many differences. I have identified the optimal threshold by filtering samples drawn from the dataset using multiple different values of cosine similarity until no substantial differences between the two texts were ignored.

While two texts that only differ in a single sentence will still be assessed as duplicates, the difference in several sentences will make the filter treat these texts as unique data points. For more details, please review the Appendix D.3. Even though the duplicate data and texts by irrelevant publishers were filtered out, news reports containing the keywords only by incidence were still present in the dataset. By iterating over randomly drawn samples of the media reports, I have filtered out irrelevant data using distinct keywords from their titles (e.g. ‘What the papers say’) or phrases found in their full-text content (e.g. ‘Europa hotel’). The complete process for cleaning out the irrelevant content is described in Appendix D.

So far, I have conducted document-level filtration using language, publisher media, cosine similarity, and keywords. Nevertheless, some media reports still contained commercials and other noise irrelevant to the analysis. Consequently, I have proceeded with filtration at the level

¹⁶ While providing a reasonable measure of semantic similarity, the cosine similarity still cannot handle the semantic meaning of text perfectly (see Rahutomo, Kitasuka, and Aritsugi 2012)

of individual words. I have decomposed the document into a list of sentences to detect the noise dispersed across a text. The most frequent 5000 sentences in the dataset were then ranked by frequency and manually sorted. In the last step, I have tagged the sentences to be removed from the full texts (see Appendix D.2). The goal has been to keep only unique and topical content. As the noise becomes more difficult to detect by statistical method, the risk of it biasing the results becomes negligible.

Lastly, I have moved from filtering individual words and phrases to character-level filtration. Due to the predominantly computational treatment of the data, some undesirable elements (e.g. contained words clumped up together without whitespace, HTML tags, repetitive sections of the text, and interpunction without padding) can be introduced into the full texts and the meta-data. Following Jurafsky and Martin (2019), a content filtration tool known as regular expressions (Aho 1990) allows for capturing many of these patterns. Regular expressions can be used for removing Twitter handles, e-mail addresses, unwarranted whitespaces, leftover tags, and padding the punctuation (Idem: 2). A good practice preventing the proliferation of such elements consists of expanding clitic contractions of English verbs (e.g. you're, I'm). This practice produces consistent textual data across the whole dataset without compromising any important distinctions. Since the tags in Extensible Markup Language (XML) files retrieved from the database provider were inconsistent, I wrote a parsing script ensuring that all of the full text was included. Even though the individual data points still contain some noise, they could only be filtered out at a relatively high computational cost by implementing a solution for the so-called longest common subsequence problem (Maier 1978) studied by computer science. For the purposes of this thesis, the data was sufficiently clean for quantitative text analysis.

3.3 Charting politicisation of the EU

Changes in the politicisation of the EU are the first indicator of possible legitimacy changes. I conduct a quantitative analysis of the EU politicisation to identify times during which the EU has been a particularly salient topic in the public debate. This trend analysis highlighted periods during which legitimation changes in degree have likely taken place for further analysis.

In practical terms, I have focused on locating trends in the politicisation estimated by following changes in the total volume of EU media coverage over time. Since the number of news outlets represented in the dataset for each respective month varies, I have divided the volume of included media reports by the number of included outlets in a given month. Such normalisation has resulted in a measure of media reports published per outlet indicating how much attention was dedicated to EU affairs. I have interpreted any increases in the volume of EU affairs covered in the media as a rise in the level of politicisation.

Politicisation in the literature is captured in three dimensions: issue salience, actor expansion, and polarisation (Hutter et al. 2016). However, not all of the dimensions are equally informative for this study. Firstly, the amount of actors engaging in the debate and the polarisation varies strongly from one particular issue to another. More concretely, it is rather unlikely that media coverage of EU competition policy will arouse the same emotions as a migration-related policy. Yet, the discussion of both opens the space for critique of the political intervention. Similarly, while the range of actors involved in the debate of a concrete agenda can indicate the intensity of the debate, even a single actor receiving much publicity within the media sphere can influence the EU legitimisation. Therefore, I focus primarily on the salience of EU affairs within the media coverage as measured by the EU media coverage volume.

3.4 Unsupervised sentiment analysis of the tonality of the EU media coverage

In order to investigate changes in the second indicator of legitimacy change – the tone of the media coverage – I have deployed unsupervised sentiment prediction (USP) to capture the change of sentiment over time. Öhman (2021) shows that this is the most commonly adopted approach due to its high accuracy. Since USP uses models trained on an already annotated dataset (or several datasets), manual annotation of the data is unnecessary, making this strategy time-efficient. When it comes to interpreting the findings, an increasing trend in the proportion of positive media coverage indicates that the EU or its policies have become more legitimate; an increase in negative media coverage suggests the opposite.

To boost the validity of my findings, I utilise two distinct approaches. Firstly, I have selected a lexicon-based approach as implemented in the VADER library (Hutto and Gilbert 2014). Lexicon-based methods are one of the two most widely adopted approaches in interdisciplinary research (Öhman 2021). VADER predicts text sentiment by matching individual words of a text with manually attributed sentiment values¹⁷ in a lexicon. Each word in a text gets a value. All values in a document are then averaged. Such an approach is fast and easily interpretable but not very well suited for longer texts because of the issues related to semantic compositionality¹⁸.

Secondly, I have implemented a relatively more sophisticated approach based on transfer learning. The Core NLP model has been trained by Stanford researchers (Manning et al. 2014). In comparison to the lexicon-based methods, this machine-learning model is computationally expensive (Balakrishnan et al. 2022). Similar to the VADER, this model estimates the sentiment of each word and the scores are then averaged over the full document. Using the two models, I have followed the estimated proportions of negative and positive texts in the dataset to identify strong trends in the tone of the coverage.

It is worth noting that both approaches to USP come with various challenges in the field of computational linguistics (see Wankhade, Rao, Chandra, and Kulkarni 2022; Tubishat, Idris, Abushariah, and Mohammad 2018). When dealing with longer texts, the accuracy of sentiment prediction depends on how the particular method deals with the challenge of semantic compositionality. In other words, the way we attribute a sentiment to the whole sentence and not only its individual parts. Indeed, the sentiment of a sentence might not only change in accord with the words used but also based on their order. For example, we can think about contrastive conjunctions such as ‘but’ that have a varying effect on the overall sentiment, which is difficult to quantify. Although there are large statistical models capable of dealing with the

¹⁷ In the case of both models, I rely on their own scoring system without any re-coding of the results.

¹⁸ In a nutshell, the principle of semantic compositionality asserts that the whole text is more than a sum of individual words, as the concrete combination and ordering affect the overall meaning (see Haugeland 1985; Hirst 1987).

task with outstanding accuracy, they require enormous resources in terms of time and money. By implementing the two distinct models, I have arguably been able to achieve a compromise between analytical purchase and feasibility. While more subtle sentiment changes are unlikely to be predicted, the adopted approach can detect larger changes in the tone of the media coverage.

3.5 Classifying the qualifications of the EU policy interventions

The third indicator of legitimacy changes points our attention to the content of public legitimation. When studying legitimation, I distinguish between practices of qualification suggesting what qualities of the EU and its interventions are relevant and practices of evaluation raising concerns about what is being put at stake (see section 2.2.3). The explicit evaluations are to be expected mainly at times when the EU itself becomes fully politicised (see Luhtakallio 2019). By contrast, at a time when the EU is not controversial, the media coverage revolves mainly around its 'qualities' and the available qualifications. Furthermore, as the bigger part of EU media coverage discusses the EU's policy interventions, the EU is only occasionally qualified as a polity. Therefore, I started the investigation of changes in the content of public legitimation by focusing on how EU policy interventions were qualified over time.

All in all, my mixed methods research strategy consists of two steps: 1) manual coding of the data and its computer-assisted classification into EU policy area categories, and 2) qualitative discourse analysis of the individual categories coupled with a thematic analysis of the identified discourses.

I start by introducing my use of quantitative text analysis for classifying the EU media coverage by policy area. I briefly discuss my coding and sampling strategy (section 3.5.1), the chosen way of feature engineering and the type of data encoding (section 3.5.2), and how I have trained the statistical classifier (3.5.3).

In the classified dataset, I analyse trends in the composition of the media coverage to locate the most salient ways of qualifying the EU policy interventions and any abrupt shifts that might indicate changes in the likelihood of EU legitimacy change in degree. Next, I outline how I

conduct qualitative text analysis (section 3.5.4) to map various ways in which EU policy interventions are qualified for each of the EU policy area categories and identify more general themes appearing across the policy area categories that are likely to be appropriated for problematising the EU as a polity.

3.5.1 Data classification: Manual coding

To make text classification of the large-N dataset feasible within the time frame of this project, I have used computer-assisted text classification (Lucas et al. 2015) in the form of supervised machine learning. This approach builds on the intuition that there is a latent function that assigns category labels based on the text features and that this latent function can be approximated based on a sample of hand-coded data (training set). The more complex and non-linear this function is, the more hand-coded data is needed to achieve satisfactory accuracy of the category predictions. This means that supervised machine learning always starts with manually annotating the training set. There is a clear trade-off between the accuracy of the classifier and the time needed to generate more training data. Below I present my coding and sampling strategy in more detail.

I classify the documents into categories based on how the EU policy intervention is qualified to make apparent the changes in what the EU *means* in the media. For this purpose, I adopt the EU policy area taxonomy used on the EUR-Lex portal¹⁹ to classify EU legal texts. When testing the coding scheme, I have added two extra categories, as some media reports do not fit into any of the categories (Table 3.2). As a result, I coded all documents related to the Brexit referendum under a dedicated code. Furthermore, the documents about relatively minor policy areas or texts that do not discuss any concrete policies are grouped under the category *Other*. Since a single media report can mention several policy areas, the codes are not mutually exclusive. The complete codebook is included in Appendix A.

¹⁹ EUR-Lex: Access to European Union law. (01.01.2023). Retrieved from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

Table 3.2: Coded policy area categories (Table source: the author)

1) Policy-centred coverage	Common agriculture and fisheries policy
	Economy and Financial policy
	Foreign, humanitarian, and security policy
	Money transfers
	Environmental policy
	Social policy and human rights
	Customs union
	Public health policy
	Brexit
	Other

Having outlined my coding strategy, I clarify how the sample used as the training set for the machine learning algorithm is selected for hand-coding. In order to achieve a satisfactory accuracy of the machine classifier, the training set needs to cover as much of the variance in the dataset as possible. At the same time, a smaller sample size translates into a more time-efficient classification process. As a result, I have attempted to generate as compact a sample as possible that still contains most of the variance in the dataset.

In order to estimate the function generating policy area labels for our concrete dataset, the training set must present a balanced ratio between the positive examples of the text belonging to the coded category, accompanied by the examples of texts from other categories. When too few positive examples are included in the training set, the algorithm can achieve the best accuracy simply by classifying each document as outside of the category of interest because the probability of it being a positive example is low. In our case, every document can belong to one or more of the ten policy area categories. A stratified random sample would result in a higher volume of hand-coded negative examples for each category. Consequently, I have adopted a state-of-the-art technique known as ‘active learning’ (Yang, Sun, Wang, and Chen 2009) that relies on uncertainty sampling.

Active learning promises higher efficiency in the coding process by iteratively pre-selecting the most informative examples for the training set. This is achieved by using a statistical model that is continuously updated using the data that were just annotated. The statistical model computes probability scores for a batch of documents in the dataset.

Based on these scores, the algorithm presents the most likely favourable examples to the annotator. Once the annotator labels the examples as positive or negative, this new input is used to update the statistical model in the loop and produce more accurate probability scores for the next batch. By leveraging the active learning strategy, I was able to develop a balanced training set in a shorter time than what would be needed with random sampling.

3.5.2 Feature engineering and data encoding

In order to develop a statistical model with sufficient prediction accuracy, I pre-process the full texts. The goal is to keep only the most informative features of the documents. This can be achieved at the most basic level by paying attention to words that tend to appear together, filtering out informative words such as articles and prepositions, and normalising the word forms. Based on the findings of Chai (2022), text normalisation is highly likely to improve the quality of the text representations and performance in downstream tasks such as text classification.

Most of the computational methods used in text analysis operate at the level of individual words (tokens). Since the context of each word is stripped away, the words that often appear together (also known as collocations), such as the 'European Union', end up split into two separate tokens. To address this issue, I have recorded two subsequent words that often appear together as so-called bigrams into a single string connected with an underscore before full texts were divided into individual tokens. As a result, when tokenised, the string 'New York' no longer consists of two words: 'New' and 'York', but a single sequence `New_York`, and the unique meaning is preserved.

Furthermore, some words, such as definite and indefinite articles, contribute very little to the prediction accuracy while being very frequent. Therefore, I have used a curated stoplist to keep only the most relevant words in each document. Furthermore, since many statistical algorithms treat different word forms of the same word as completely distinct terms, this introduces an undesirable variance in the data. For this reason, I have reduced inflectional and derivative forms of all words turning them into their dictionary form. This process is called

‘lemmatisation’. After these transformations, I have decomposed the full texts into a list of lemmas and bigrams to predict the category labels.

The above-mentioned techniques for feature engineering work best in cases when single-word features are decisive for accurate classification. When there are no simple combinations of tokens that could help us determine the correct label, more sophisticated features must be developed for each text. Long texts containing a lot of irrelevant content are especially challenging for machine classification. Therefore, I have decided to keep only the sentences mentioning the EU together with one preceding and one anteceding sentence. Filtering out the additional content that might confuse the classifier helped to improve its performance.

At this stage, all of the text data is represented as sequences of characters. This kind of encoding limits the computational methods used for the analysis. The text needs to be represented in a numerical format to fully leverage the potential of available statistical methods. The choice of encoding has important consequences for what patterns of meaning will be detectable by the computer. I distinguish three kinds of text data encoding: bag-of-words (Zhang, Jin, and Zhou 2010), word2vec (Mikolov, Chen, Corrado, and Dean 2013), and context-aware embeddings (Miranda et al. 2022). Since the difference between two classified categories can be semantic, I have decided to encode the data in the form of context-aware embeddings. In comparison to the other types of encoding, context-aware embeddings can arguably better capture more abstract meaning structures.²⁰

²⁰ Traditionally, each document is recast into a document-feature matrix with lemmas and bigrams as columns and document identifiers in place of rows. The documents can, therefore, be represented as a vector in the space of as many dimensions as the total size of vocabulary used in our dataset. As both grammar and word order are disregarded, this encoding style is called the ‘bag-of-words’ model. Its underlying hypothesis assumes that a text is generated by its author by drawing words from different grammatical categories, step by step blending the final mix. Since this encoding style results in large and sparse matrices filled mostly with zeroes (each document usually contains only a fraction of all words used in the dataset), this results in big computational complexity. However, the simplicity of this approach makes it a good point of reference for drawing comparisons with other encoding types.

Trying to capture more semantic complexity, the contextualised embeddings usually encode documents as tensors (i.e. a matrix generalised to N-dimensional space). Consequently, the encoding is no longer forced to reduce the document meaning into one direction of some given magnitude. Instead, words suggesting different directions in the vector space can, at least in theory, be fully represented. While there are several models (e.g. the Universal Sentence Encoder (Cer et al. 2018)) that achieve comparable results in text classification tasks, I produce context-aware embeddings using the state-of-the-art model²¹, usually referred to as ‘Encode, embed, attend, predict’ (Honnibal and Montani 2017). The main innovation lies in the model’s deep neural network architecture allowing it to take both the ordering and identity of all tokens into account. Pragmatic considerations have also influenced my choice of the model. The ‘encode, embed, attend, predict’ model allows a

The bag-of-words model only captures word counts for each token. It provides a good measure of the lexical (surface) similarity measured by how similar one sequence of characters is to another but cannot convey much information regarding the semantic distance between terms. In this sense, the bigram ‘European_union’ and ‘Brussels’ has equally as much in common as ‘European_union’ and ‘cabbage’. For this reason, researchers have been working on developing word representations that also encode their local context. Famously, Mikolov et al. (2013) constructed a model based on the continuous bag-of-words model known as word2vec. The model no longer encodes words by their frequencies in the text. Instead, using a shallow neural network, each term is placed near other terms that often appear in the same contexts in a vector space. The resulting embedding is static, and vectors consist of coordinates in this N-dimensional space. While both the bag-of-words model and word2vec model rely on word co-occurrences, word2vec arguably opens up for numerical representation of more fine-grained semantic similarity at the word level than the bag-of-words model.

In practical terms, a co-occurrence matrix depicting the full vocabulary of a corpus is generated, and then, using a preferred dimensionality reduction method, the matrix is projected down to a lower-dimensional space. The resulting dense vector representations have lower computational complexity than sparse matrices of the bag-of-words model, which makes virtually all statistical operations more time-efficient. The word2vec model represented a breakthrough in terms of distributional semantics. Yet, unlike context-aware embedding, static word embedding still cannot deal with polysemy. The token ‘bank’ in a string ‘West Bank’ will have the same exact vector representation as ‘bank’ in ‘I have a bank account’.

21 For more technical details, see <https://explosion.ai/blog/deep-learning-formula-nlp>

considerably more streamlined workflow from data encoding to text classification and better integration with other tools used in the process.

As neural models are extremely costly²² to train, I have used a large model pre-trained on English language data from Wikipedia, web news, question-answering websites, and internet forums. The obvious shortcoming of this strategy lies in dealing with words in our corpus that are not a part of the model's training data. When the model encounters an unfamiliar word, its meaning is unknown. However, the resources saved by not having to re-train the model justify the potential loss in the performance of the final classifier. Since the news data consists mostly of natural language without too many highly specialised topics, it is reasonable to assume that the generated encodings capture the most-part of the variance. Once I have generated encodings for all the documents, I have proceeded by training the statistical model.

3.5.3 Training multiclass text classifier and predicting the document labels

In dealing with a supervised machine learning task, the ultimate goal is to infer how the text category was generated and dispersed throughout the dataset (i.e. a latent function predicting correct category labels) based on the document's features. The training process, therefore, relies on the volume and quality of the available hand-coded data. The model 'encode, embed, attend, predict' (Honnibal and Montani 2017) is optimised for dealing with relatively small and sparse training sets. This means that less hand-coded data is needed to achieve satisfactory results. It also provides a complete pipeline where all the training data, the pre-formatted snippets of texts with the manually coded assigned category labels, are encoded as context-aware embedding and then used to estimate the latent function.

²² The main reason why the training of a new model is so time-consuming lies in the prevalent architectures of the neural networks, which tend to compute word and/or sentence representation in a sequence. Put simply, the computer has to wait for other computations to finish before it can proceed further. By contrast, the chosen baseline model 'encode, embed, attend, predict' uses an alternative neural architecture (convolutional neural network), which allows parallelisation of the individual tasks. For more details, see Yin, Kann, Yu and Schütze 2017.

The model's predictions can be judged using the F1 score²³ (Van Rijsbergen 1979), which gives a weighted average between the precision (how much of all labelled data has been labelled correctly) and the recall (how much of the true positives is identified). The baseline model trained for 10 epochs with no additional hyper-parameter tuning achieved 88 per cent prediction accuracy with a 79 per cent F1 score, where both false positives and false negatives were relatively equally common. Although the model's performance could have been further improved using techniques of hyper-parameter optimisation, the achieved accuracy is sufficient for mapping the most pronounced trends. The statistical model trained on the manually coded data was then used to predict category labels for all documents in the dataset.

According to Partington (2013), computer-assisted text analysis almost always relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The mixed- methods design I propose leverages the quantitative text analysis to map macro- sociological trends, while utilising qualitative discourse analysis to zoom in on the identified legitimation changes and investigate their consequences for EU legitimacy. By mixing the two methods, the variance of the large-N sample can be explored without compromising the depth of the analysis.

3.5.4 Qualitative text analysis of the policy-centred media coverage

Media reports qualify the EU in a distinct way that highlights some of its qualities or actions, rendering the controversies in a given policy area meaningful. Using computer-assisted text classification, I have explored how the EU and its policy interventions were qualified in terms of policy areas in media coverage. Every media report shapes the common understanding of what is meant by 'the EU', which is necessary for any impactful justification or critique. The more differentiated the EU's media representation is, the more demanding it is for audiences to make sense of its character and scrutinise the EU's main activities critically. Therefore, I use the diversity of the policy-centred EU media coverage to gauge how much symbolic work is needed for raising system-level critique of the EU as a polity. The bigger diversity in the policy-centred

²³ Van Rijsbergen has called this test MUC-4 and it remains unclear how it became known as the F1 score.

media coverage then indicates a lower likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. Furthermore, I aim to identify any dominant ways of qualifying EU interventions, which are most likely to be appropriate for problematising the EU itself.

Using quantitative text analysis, I have mapped changes in the overall composition and relative visibility of individual EU policy areas to find trends in the ways of qualifying the EU and its interventions. While the EUR-Lex policy area taxonomy presents a reasonable point of departure for detecting shifts in the way the EU has been qualified, some particularly salient qualifications might have been developed across the different EUR-Lex categories and not in their terms. Therefore, I conduct a qualitative discourse analysis of media reports in the classified policy areas to map the internal heterogeneity of the EU qualifications for each category.

I analyse hierarchically stratified random samples of 350 media reports sourced from the whole studied period for each coded category. Each media report in the sample has an ID for easier differentiation and referencing in the text. In order to identify diverse qualifications, I code the various ways in which the EU policy is qualified in a concrete media report. For each policy area, several alternative discourses reflect the plurality of normative concerns of audiences. Each media report can be interpreted in multiple ways; this means that a single report can be read as an example of multiple qualifications. I continued categorising the media reports in each sample until the condition of data saturation (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 61), when no new qualifications were emerging, was reached.

For instance, in the case of EU's public health policy coverage, I recognise discourses qualifying the policy interventions as measures against the spread of diseases and other threats to public health, as a way to maintain some standards of health care, or a policy failure impacting the UK's sovereignty. Consequently, rather than providing a statistically representative snapshot of each category, I document the variety of readings for each (con) text.

Given the interpretive nature of the chosen approach, many alternative taxonomies of these themes can capture the variance in the data with similar ability to locate meaning structures of comparable construct

validity²⁴. The quality assurance in this interpretive work relies on transparent and systematic procedures (Meyrick 2006) to increase ‘interobserver reliability’ (Moret, Reuzel, van der Wilt, and Grin 2007). In other words, by being consistent with the documented steps in the research process, the coding of other researchers following the question of ‘what *is* the EU policy intervention to the reader’ for each (con)text will converge to comparable coding schemes capturing the observed patterns of meaning. The naming convention used to label each described discourse and the chosen level of abstraction affecting the final number of distinguished discourses is likely to vary from researcher to researcher. As we narrow down the analytical focus to the discourses found in multiple policy areas, the differences are likely to decrease.

The diverse qualifications of the EU policy intervention in each category are often closely related to a particular agenda within the given policy area. Therefore, I isolate the qualifications from the concrete agenda discussed in the given policy area and generate a more general taxonomy by grouping the qualifications into themes using thematic analysis. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke 2022). While some themes can only be found in a single EUR-Lex policy area, others are used across all policy areas. The relative visibility of a theme in the EU media coverage rises as it becomes relevant in debates about multiple EU policy areas. I use the differences in the themes’ relative visibility as a proxy for their salience to identify the themes likely to be used for developing a system-level critique of the EU as a polity.

I conduct the thematic analysis of discourses invoked in EUR-Lex policy area categories based primarily on the practices of qualification. This means that the discourses grouped under a single theme raise different normative concerns and refer to various normative criteria, which often are specific to the given policy area.

To further narrow down the list of themes that might likely be used to qualify and evaluate the EU as a polity, I investigate the practices of

²⁴ Construct validity is commonly used to discuss whether the measurements or findings in the data correspond to the theoretical construct we aim to study (see e.g. Bryman 2016).

evaluation within each theme to assess the uniformity of the invoked normative criteria. In concrete terms, the theme qualifying the EU as only one cog in the machinery of the markets might not be seen as relevant in the public health policy debate, where the EU is typically qualified as imbued with a much stronger agency. The act of making a theme general enough for use across multiple policy areas or even for qualifying the EU as a polity requires substantial symbolic work. As a result, I treat the themes invoking a uniform set of normative criteria across different policy areas as the best point of departure for further analysis of the polity-centred EU coverage.

3.6 Investigating the polity-centred media coverage

In the previous section (3.5.), I have presented a research strategy for investigating the third indicator of legitimacy changes, namely, changes in the content of public legitimation in the policy-centred EU media coverage. As I continue with the exploration of changes in the content of legitimation, I turn my attention to the polity-centred coverage.

After finishing the process of supervised text classification of policy-centred coverage, I have conducted a qualitative discourse analysis of samples drawn from each of the coded categories (section 3.5.4). The discourses were then grouped using thematic analysis into more general categories sharing similar ways of qualifying the EU policy interventions. Based on the thematic analysis, I have identified themes invoking a relatively uniform set of normative criteria, which present the most likely point of departure for problematising the EU as a polity.

I start this section by discussing the details of quantitative text analysis of the polity-centred coverage (section 3.6.1), where I follow changes in the relative visibility of individual polity-centred discourses in the media coverage that indicate periods with a higher probability of legitimacy change in kind. The macro-level analysis of the discourses also allows zooming in on their internal structure. Since the classified discourses and policy-area categories are not mutually exclusive, I present how I explore their correlations to distinguish legitimation changes driven by correlation effects from those reflecting possible normative changes (section 3.6.2).

Whereas the quantitative analysis of macro-level legitimation changes provides indices of potentially important moments of significant changes, it is not equally well-suited for exploring changes in more abstract concepts such as modes of valuation. Therefore, I clarify how I conduct qualitative discourses analysis (section 3.6.3) to control for both meta-pragmatic and pragmatic legitimation practices (Figure 3), examine any indications of legitimacy changes in kind, and estimate the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree.

3.6.1 Quantitative text classification of the polity-centred media coverage

I conduct quantitative text analysis to classify the polity-centred coverage into individual discourses raising distinct normative concerns about the EU as a polity. This allows me to track changes in the salience of these normative concerns indicating a possible legitimacy change in kind.

Computer-assisted text classification using supervised machine learning requires a manually coded training set used for optimising the statistical model. Based on the mixed methods analysis of the policy-centred EU coverage, I have identified the theme that presented the most likely point of departure for developing a polity-centred critique or justification of the EU itself. The theme qualifying the EU policies as a failure affecting the UK's sovereignty has been used across all policy area categories while invoking a single coherent set of normative criteria for evaluation. Since other scholars (Díez Medrano 2003; Van Inglegom 2014) have introduced alternative taxonomies of normative expectations raised towards the EU, I use these classifications to refine the results of my thematic analysis.

Díez Medrano (2003) has mapped and described the most common frames on European integration in Germany, Spain, and the UK. This comparative perspective makes apparent that the UK citizens are relatively more concerned about the Common Market, liberalisation, issues of governance, impact of the integration on the UK welfare state, sovereignty, and identity than citizens of the other two countries. In other words, these themes formed the core justifications

behind citizens' positive/negative attitudes towards the EU integration and appeared to be the most salient normative concerns of the time.

More recently, Van Inglegom (2014) has adapted Díez Medrano’s list of themes for her research based on focus groups with workers, employees, managers, and activists in Brussels, Oxford, and Paris. Across all the groups represented in the study, the UK participants have been the ones most concerned about issues of sovereignty and identity, benefits of the common market, and possible discord between member states. Similar to Díez Medrano’s study, Van Inglegom has concluded that all the other themes were equally common in all other EU countries. These findings shape my expectations about normative concerns raised using the theme of qualifying the EU as a source of policy failures affecting UK sovereignty. As a result, I have decided to code three polity-centred discourses preoccupied with 1) the topic of identity and the symbolic, 2) the quality of EU governance, and 3) UK sovereignty and democracy.

The first discourse concerns the effect that EU membership has on UK national identity and ‘symbolic autonomy’. It covers, for instance, debates surrounding public outrage when a local institution is fined for refusing to fly the EU flag. The second discourse thematises how efficient the EU is as a governing body and whether its governance leads to the intended outcomes. The third discourse highlights issues of national sovereignty and democracy and the consequences of pooling national competencies to Brussels. In the empirical data, the three categories are often used in combination. Therefore, they cannot be treated as mutually exclusive. Instead, each category indicates specific normative concerns raised concerning the EU as a polity.

I follow the strategy outlined in section 3.5.1 for the case of hand-coding policy areas in the EU policy-centred coverage. I start by manually attributing category labels to a sample of the documents to mark whether they contain any of the three polity-centred discourses (Table 3.3) or not. In order to generate the most informative sample in a time-efficient manner, I use so-called active learning for uncertainty sampling of documents in the dataset.

Table 3.3: Coded polity-centred discourses (Table source: the author)

1) Polity-centred coverage	Identity, the symbolic
	Quality of the EU governance
	Sovereignty and democracy

During the annotation process, it became apparent that the discourse on the EU as a challenge to the national identity and traditions is so marginal that developing a balanced sample of both positive and negative examples will not be attainable. Furthermore, the discourse on national identity is so rare that, given the 79 per cent F1 score of the trained statistical model (section 3.5.4), its occurrence could hardly be distinguished from ‘noise’ in the data. Its marginality throughout the whole studied period also means that it is doubtful that the discourse has caused any legitimacy changes. As a result, I have finalised a training set for two out of the three policy-centred discourses.

With the annotated training set for the two polity-centred discourses, I have trained the final version of the multiclass text classifier following the same technique as presented in sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3. The statistical model predicts labels based on the snippets containing only sentences mentioning the EU, ‘bigrams’, and where all tokens were turned into the dictionary form and were encoded as context-aware embeddings of the ‘encode, embed, attend, predict’ statistical model. For each of the classified policy area categories (Table 3.2) and the included polity-centred discourses, the model predicts a Boolean value (true or false) based on the classified content. This means that each of the coded categories represents a separate variable. I leverage the classified dataset to investigate further content of EU legitimation by zooming in on the two polity-centred discourses.

3.6.2 Quantitative exploratory analysis of the internal structure of polity-centred EU discourses

I have identified the polity-centred discourses by contrasting the findings of my qualitative discourse analysis of the policy-area coverage grouped by themes (section 3.5) with the available literature. Whereas the policy-centred categories reflect differences in the practices qualifying the EU and its policy interventions, I have developed the polity-centred discourses with a focus on the practices of evaluation. Consequently, the analysed polity-centred discourses suggest what normative concerns resonate with the audiences and changing trends in their salience indicate a possible normative change. At the same time, the classified categories are not mutually exclusive. This means that an increase in relative visibility of a polity-centred discourse can indicate a normative change but also an effect of a development in another

category it strongly correlates with. In order to disambiguate different drivers of observed development in the polity- discourses' relative visibility, I conduct an exploratory analysis of their internal structure using the findings from quantitative text analysis.

The documents that problematise the EU itself and contain one of the polity- centred discourses, in many cases, discuss agendas belonging to specific EU policy areas. I visualise the share of individual policy areas making up the internal composition of polity-centred discourses to detect any rapid growth that might explain the general trend in the discourse's relative visibility. I use this simple way of exploring correlation effects to distinguish temporary trends fuelled by a discrete topic or agenda in the media from developments driven by a more stable normative change, which might indicate a legitimacy change in kind.

Earlier, I have noted that in the data, all three polity-centred discourses often appear in combination. I explore the correlation between the two coded polity- centred discourses to estimate their independence. The discourse on national sovereignty and democracy overlaps with the discourse on the quality of EU governance in almost every other media report. By contrast, the national sovereignty and democracy discourse appears in the quality of EU governance data in one in four cases. Based on these observations, I have decided to focus on qualitative analysis of legitimisation changes in the discourse, raising concerns about national sovereignty and democracy, as the discourse largely correlates with the other polity-centred discourse.

3.6.3 Qualitative discourse analysis of the polity-centred discourses

In addition to legitimacy changes in degree, affecting how much more or less legitimate the EU appears to the audiences, the polity-centred coverage might contribute to legitimacy changes in kind, influencing what policy interventions can be publicly justified. I conduct an in-depth qualitative discourse analysis of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy to investigate the consequences of the observed legitimisation changes in the polity-centred coverage. I start by focusing on meta-pragmatic legitimisation practices and then move on to pragmatic legitimisation practices to investigate changes in legitimacy in the making.

Aiming to capture gradual changes in its content, I use the classifier's confidence score to draw three samples of the most typical media reports containing the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy. The samples correspond to

1) the baseline before the most drastic surge in relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses in 2014, 2) its peak, and 3) the new normal representing the point before the new drastic spike stirred by the Brexit debate (see the explorative trend analysis of the polity-centred discourses in section 5.1). I have chosen to sample February, March, April, and May of 2012 as the baseline sample. While there has not been any particular rise in the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage, the relative visibility of coverage of EU economic and financial policy was peaking at this time. As the relative visibility of the EU economic and financial policy coverage fell, the polity-centred coverage peaked in the period corresponding to January, February, May, and June 2014. Lastly, I sample the period of December 2014, January, and February 2015, representing the new normal that prepared the ground for the Brexit debate.

Firstly, I focus on changes in metapragmatic legitimation practices and the dominant mode of valuation to learn about legitimacy change in kind. At each step, I ask in the spirit of interpretive sociology: what was it like for the EU to be legitimate? A mode of valuation can be recognised by paying close attention to how actors are represented, the relevant *good* invoked in evaluative statements, the prevalence of either reasoning or opinion, or the implied normative ideal (see section 2.2.4.1). I identify the most salient mode of valuation (either grammar of plural orders of worth or grammar of individual interests) whose underlying logic will guide our interpretation of the observed pragmatic legitimation practices. In operational terms, the grammar of individual interests is characterised by a lack of deliberation. Calls to resolve a controversy in a public referendum, intergovernmental negotiations, or with the help of some other majoritarian voting mechanism, therefore, presents the typical traits that this grammar is prevalent. In short, this grammar generates legitimate decisions via votes, not arguments (see Eranti 2018, Rosanvallon and Goldhammer 2011, Young 1996). Legitimacy of decisions can be questioned by the problematising ability of the chosen procedure to generate 'common will' by aggregating representative preferences of individuals or collective actors.

By contrast, the grammar of plural orders of worth relies on the concept of the general will. Questioning of reasons behind a decision, the quality of a discussion, or the benefit that the decision brings to the common good are common topics that indicate the salience of this mode of valuation in the data. Legitimacy of the decision is established by presenting justifications drawing on publicly recognised values (see section 2.2.3). In addition, engaging in public deliberation with the aim to persuade third parties about one's preferences signals that this grammar is perceived as appropriate.

Secondly, once I have identified the dominant mode of valuation, I probe the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree over time. This calls for further examination of the way EU legitimacy has been stabilised. When grammar of individual interests is dominant, it means that the analysis must focus in particular on evaluations of the negotiations' procedural qualities. When the decision-making procedure cannot be justified as being in line with citizens' normative expectations, if this perception is shared by large audiences, the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree increases. When grammar of plural orders of worth is dominant, the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree depends on the developed justifications. Since a decision must be justified by linking it with the most salient normative expectation, I have analysed orders of worth (see section 2.2.3) invoked in each sample. The established discursive constructions are assessed by how easily the compromise between 'worths' can be problematised. In this fashion, I estimate how likely the concrete, pragmatic legitimation practices are to cause legitimacy changes in degree.

After examining how legitimacy was stabilised, I investigate whether the same orders of worth used for justifying the EU are also leveraged to develop a critique of it. The effect of different compositions and compromises between orders of worth on the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree is, however, not easy to interpret. A compromise based on many diverse worths is not necessarily more unstable than a justification based on a single value. Indeed, the single justificatory worth might only be recognised by a slight majority of audiences. As a result, the others would question the valence of the given decision. This tension can be found in any electoral struggle between a single-issue political party (e.g. the 'green' worth) and parties claiming ownership of multiple issues (e.g. social democratic parties). Since not all

constituencies have environmental issues as their main priority, they might choose to vote for other parties. At the same time, those who do have a particular issue as their main priority will hesitate to vote for multiple-issue parties as the compromise they will be forced to make will result in disappointment. As a result, what compromise is stable depends on the momentary political preferences of audiences. This means that the only valid way of assessing the quality of justification is to control for a public critique of the decision. Once the very same worths used for justifying a decision have been successfully deployed to question it, I conclude that the stability of the construction is not solid, and legitimacy change in degree is relatively more likely.

Table 3.4: Operationalisation of modes of valuation (Table source: the author)

Mode of valuation	Grammar of individual interests	Grammar of plural orders of worth
<i>Type of decision-making</i>	Finding the vector of stakeholders' individual interests	Finding the preference with the most solid link with the common good
<i>Appropriate format of contributions to the public debate</i>	Opinions	Preferences qualified and evaluated in line with some publicly recognised values
<i>Procedural logic</i>	Voicing particular interests in a negotiation	Persuading third parties in a deliberation
<i>Evaluative logic</i>	Majoritarianism	Quality of the argument
<i>Legitimacy of the decision</i>	Transparent negotiation, fair representation of the disparate interests	Informed and thorough discussion between rational actors open to all arguments
<i>Examples of lexical pointers in the data</i>	Public referendum, intergovernmental negotiations, voting, general elections	Rational debate, reasoning, justification, deliberation

3.6.4 Validating the analysis

In my analysis of polity-centred EU media coverage, I rely on measuring the relative visibility of the discourses to detect trends in their salience and potential normative change. The relative visibility is calculated in the dataset of all media reports covering the EU, where different media outlets make up different proportions over time. This means that specific legitimisation changes might be much more visible to some audiences than others. In this section, I present the validation strategy I use to better understand significance of the findings.

The observed trends in the coverage and the findings of qualitative analysis might be disproportionately more pronounced in some media outlets than in others. By controlling for the distribution of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy in different media outlets, I probe the generalisability of the findings of this thesis to the context of the UK media sphere. The aim is to assess whether the findings represent a general legitimisation change or a shift specific to selected media outlets. For this assessment, I rely on three variables: 1) volume of the total EU coverage per media outlet, 2) relative visibility, and 2) absolute visibility of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy.

Firstly, a highly unequal distribution of the EU media coverage between media outlets potentially has a large effect on audience exposure. A legitimisation change contained to the media outlet with the biggest volume of EU media coverage in the dataset will appear as strongly significant despite being contained only to the single media outlet. I counter this type of bias by visualising the proportion of EU media coverage published in individual media outlets.

Secondly, a legitimisation change palpable in a large volume of media reports in specific media outlets must be interpreted in relation to the total volume of EU coverage in these outlets, as its relative visibility might be relatively low. Therefore, I calculate the relative visibility by dividing the volume of media reports invoking the given discourse by the total volume of the EU media coverage in a media outlet.

Thirdly, how apparent a legitimisation change is depends partially on the average circulation rates of the outlet. Consequently, I calculate a 'visibility score' by multiplying the total volume of the EU coverage published in the given media outlet with its average monthly circulation in millions of copies.

In sum, I use the three variables to validate my findings that hugely rely on the quantitative analysis of trends in the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses. The results of the validation are presented right after the analysis in section 5.3.

Up to this point, I have clarified my research strategy for studying all indicators of legitimacy changes (Table 3.1) needed for answering the first research question of this thesis. In the following sections, I discuss

my analysis of the indicators needed to conclude the second research question, namely, the stock of diffuse support and the presence of alternative political arrangements to the EU membership in the polity-centred media coverage.

3.7 Estimating changes in the diffuse support

The second research question of this thesis leverages the answers to the first research question and investigates whether the EU has, during the studied period, undergone a legitimation crisis or legitimacy crisis. Since I have already discussed my research strategy for capturing all the variables needed to draw conclusions about the EU legitimation crisis, in the following sections, I describe in closer detail how I investigate indicators relevant to studying a legitimacy crisis.

Taking the results of the quantitative text analysis of both the policy-centred and polity-centred EU media coverage as a point of departure, I follow the changes in relative visibility of polity-centred coverage to estimate the EU's diffuse support (see section 2.3.3).

As discussed in chapter 2, diffuse support of an institution is unlikely to decrease as long as there is enough specific support for the particular political interventions. More concretely, as long as the public debate revolves around policies, the diffuse support will likely remain stable. When the relative visibility of polity-centred coverage increases, such development reflects that the institution itself is increasingly being perceived as part of the problem. The bigger the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage, the less diffuse support the EU has available. In order to achieve better construct validity, I triangulate the results of this rather rough heuristic with another data source on political trust or one of the other components of the diffuse support concept.

I trace changes in the estimated diffuse support to detect any significant decrease that might indicate that a legitimation crisis has escalated into a legitimacy crisis. In the next section, I discuss how I control for the media coverage of alternative political arrangements to EU membership in the data.

3.8 Qualitative content analysis: coverage of alternative political arrangements to the EU membership

In the case that the data indicate that the EU might have undergone a legitimacy crisis, I conduct qualitative content analysis to explore whether alternative political arrangements to EU membership are discussed as feasible in the media coverage. Following the theory outlined in chapter 2, an institution can remain in a chronic state of legitimacy crisis without having to face disempowerment or disintegration. However, if an alternative to the institution is seen as viable, the chance for its disempowerment or disintegration rises. I use this last indicator to conclude the severity of the legitimacy crisis.

I investigate alternative political arrangements to the EU membership discussed in the samples of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy generated for the qualitative discourse analysis (see section 3.6.3). The samples were drawn at times of likely changes in the EU's diffuse support and captured changes in the most critical voice in the public debate. Since the discourse qualifies the EU membership as a threat to national sovereignty, any proposed alternatives will likely be covered in the sample. Consequently, I consider these to present the most informative picture of the delegitimation coverage.

In the course of the qualitative content analysis, I note any mention of alternative political arrangements to EU membership that appear consistently in the coverage. I then focus on whether these are presented as a feasible solution.

Having outlined my research strategy for investigating all indicators necessary to conclude both of the research questions of this thesis, in the next section, I discuss some additional analytical, practical, and ethical considerations.

3.9 Analytical, practical, and ethical considerations

So far in this chapter, I have introduced my approach to studying the individual indicators of legitimacy change and legitimacy crisis. Although empirical research often works with theoretical concepts in a more eclectic way, potential unintended misalignments between different theoretical strands within a single project pose a risk of introducing inconsistencies to the inquiry. In other words, an

appropriate unit of analysis that is capable of capturing and representing the studied legitimation practices while, at the same time, being consistent with the theoretical framework introduced in chapter 2 must be selected. Therefore, I open this section by outlining the analytical considerations related to the question of how the mapped patterns of meaning could best be represented to support the reliable interpretation of detected legitimation changes. Next, I clarify the practical considerations regarding data procurement. Lastly, I introduce my strategy for dealing with the ethical challenges of conducting media research of this type.

3.9.1 The question of knowledge representation: from text to data, from data to legitimation discourses

The theoretical framework introduced in chapter 2 builds on four premises that I consider when choosing the unit of analysis. Firstly, at any point, there is a plurality of understandings of what the EU is and how it can be meaningfully evaluated. Secondly, the semiotics underlying practices of legitimation are shaped by the symbolic as well the material. Thirdly, practices of qualification and evaluation cannot be reduced to strategic action driven by instrumental reason. And fourthly, once the ways the EU is typically qualified and evaluated become established, they have transsituational character. In this section, I briefly explain each point and then reason about discourse as the appropriate unit of analysis. Since the EU is made available for actors' to grasp mainly via the mass media, one cannot presume a single coherent set of ideational resources shared among all actors trying to understand the EU. The collective representation of what the EU *is* to the audiences is never fully fixed and can become problematised (Mol 2002). Instead of an economic and political union, some audiences might recognise the EU as a 'dictatorship of Brussels', yet another as the Soviet Union, or a project of corrupt elites. In Mol's words, upon this realisation, the method 'no longer follows a gaze that tries to see objects but instead follows objects while they are being enacted in practice (Idem: 152). Instead of a single 'collective representation' (Durkheim 1915) of the EU, a plurality of 'ontologies' is constantly stabilised and destabilised in the public sphere(s). Consequently, diverse collective representations of the EU can coexist despite their mismatch with the knowledge that informs the actual procedures of the EU's functioning. Rather than studying the EU as a singular object given in the order of things, I shift the focus to the

'lived' EU, enacted based on ideational resources actors have at their disposal.

Audiences use their available ideational resources to make sense of EU media reports, as the meaning of the EU and its legitimacy is established via communicative action. Therefore, I draw on the knowledge of distributional semantics to study regularities in language use. My approach relies on Wittgenstein's idea of meaning as use: 'The meaning of a word is its use in the language' (Wittgenstein 1997 [1958]: 43). If a text mentions once that Rex is a dog, the reader expects Rex to have all the usual properties of dogs without inferring these from the name 'Rex' itself. Although the meaning of a term can be deduced from its use, it is not an outcome of self-referential symbolic exchanges established and practised in some sort of a vacuum. Such understanding leads to the exact type of 'anti-realism' for which social constructionism has been heavily criticised (Barad 2007; Bhaskar 1978; Porpora 2015). Although there is currently no consensus regarding how exactly 'the matter matters' in communicative action, the fact that it does is nowadays widely accepted. As a result, in this thesis, I follow the assumption that the success or failure of legitimation practices is conditioned not only by the rules of the 'language game', but also by audiences' experience with the material world.

When studying the use of ideational resources in legitimation, it might be tempting to view legitimation practices as strictly strategic actions. However, as Thévenot (2001) noted, this type of reductionism bears a liberal bias naturalising the notion of private interest as an anthropological constant, while it neither arises within a situation nor establishes any group membership (e.g. with the others sharing the same political culture and position in the society). In line with French pragmatic sociology (Frère and Jaster 2019), I hold that actors might have various motivations to engage in legitimation. Therefore, I view the studied documents as not exclusively intentional, strategic moves but rather as actions contributing to actors' understandings and shaping material as well as institutional bodies by establishing distinct symbolic universes.

As the present thesis examines changes in EU legitimacy rather than the legitimation practices of specific actors, I focus on the ideational condition that provides the resources for the EU to be rendered more or

less legitimate. Such an approach relies on the assumption that the symbolic universes and the plurality of more or less stabilised ontologies describing appropriate ways of qualifying and evaluating the EU remains salient across different situations. Having introduced the four premises of the thesis' theoretical framework that are of relevance here, I proceed by discussing what unit of analysis might be best aligned with these assumptions.

In the empirical studies investigating legitimacy, I identify the three most popular approaches to studying texts. They trace legitimation at the level of political claims (Hurrelmann and Wagner 2020; Koopmans and Statham 1999) and clauses (van Atteveldt, Sheaffer, Shenhav, and Fogel-Dror 2017), adopted frames (Pan and Kosicki 1993), and discourses (Wodak 2013; Partington 2004). The claims analysis is typically used for micro-oriented analyses when the researcher strives to extract detailed relationships about which actors said what about whom or which objects and when. Given the heterogeneity of our sample consisting of media reports gathered from all the various media, the systematic patterns of word use might not be apparent in a single claim's comparison. These only become visible at the document level of concrete media reports. I consider the individual claims to be building blocks grouped in a non-random way based on the broader political culture. While the claims allow for a plurality of collective representations of the EU, they are not particularly well suited for capturing the trans-situational character of the legitimation practices. In comparison to the claims analysis, frame analysis and discourse analysis allow an equal degree of capturing trans-situational meaning structures. In addition, both units of analysis can cope with the plurality of co-existing collective classifications of the EU. At the same time, I note the difference in how they relate to the second and third premises.

In my reading, the biggest difference between the two approaches lies within the broader theoretical traditions denoting the significance of the mapped patterns in each case. The frames can be easily (mis)interpreted as a means to an end, which rational actors deploy strategically. By contrast, the discourses refer to 'webs of significance' actors themselves have spun and in which they are suspended (Geertz 1973). This results in a distinct research focus. Whereas frame research is often actor-centric and follows which frames are used by whom, discourse research puts the ideational condition into the centre of attention. In other words, it

investigates what discourse *can* be used in the given conditions instead of who uses which discourse²⁵. Indeed, even though the discourses are man-made, as they become a part of political culture, they affect actors' actions and establish the frame of reference for any legitimation that should hope to succeed. Yet, the theoretical implications of both frame and discourse analysis need further unpacking.

The concept of a frame and 'framing' has been casually used to the degree where its meaning becomes obfuscated (Cacciatore, Scheufele, and Iyengar 2016). The considerable disagreement over what exactly constitutes framing leads to very different operational definitions. As a result, the framing analysis at times overlaps with claims analysis and discourse analysis. Borah (2011) provides an overview of the main conceptual issues of the framing theory as used in the literature. The sociological origin of the concept can be traced back to the theory of Erving Goffman (1974), where frames represent particular principles of organising knowledge. Disregarding the importance of trust and social norms recognised in Goffman's theory, framing research assumes that actors primarily deploy frames to create a certain impression or advance some goals. The strong focus on the dynamics of interests in frame-centred research is supported by the assumption that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and can easily be manipulated. However, that would mean that anything can be framed in any way actors want, as an abstract 'language game'²⁶ with little to no basis in material reality.

If the normative is to be reintegrated as a natural part of the social, I have to make use of a conception of human action that goes beyond rationalistic calculations (the second premise) and reflects the role materiality plays in shaping both actors' plans and their outcomes (the

²⁵This perspective has proved particularly fruitful in the studies of 'governmentality' referring to rationalities and technologies that largely determine how an institutionalised authority is organised (see Zimmermann and Favell 2011; Münch 2010; Walters and Haahr 2005; Larner and Walters 2005).

²⁶ Consider Wittgenstein's well-known language game of 'blocks and slabs' (Wittgenstein 1997: 2), two terms that can hardly be separated from actors' competence within the given situation. The words refer not simply to an object, but also to a practice. It is the language that promotes pragmatic approach to the materiality.

third premise). For this reason, the frame typically used in framing research appears not so well aligned with the theoretical assumptions of this thesis. By contrast, qualitative discourse analysis building on the works of Foucault (1972; 1980; 1990) treats discourses as conventional ways of talking that both create and are created by conventional ways of thinking, serving to circulate power in society (Johnstone 2002: 3). In Foucault's own words, discourses comprise of 'practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49). This conceptualisation is aligned with all of the four premises and resonates to a large extent with the theoretical assumptions of this thesis.

Having selected discourse as the unit of analysis for tracking changes in EU legitimation, I discuss what implications this decision has for the analysis. Based on the distinct research agenda, Wodak distinguishes between two strands of discourse analysis: critical discourse analysis (CDA) and discourse studies (DS) (2013: 2). While the DS are primarily interested in describing discursive practices, the focus of the CDA often lies on unmasking the power-relations operating behind actors' backs. The critical momentum of CDA relies on the assumption that social science is better suited to produce critical evaluations than the affected actors themselves. Sociology of critique sharing many points of reference with the present thesis finds this revisionist metaphysics hard to sustain. It claims that actors themselves are imbued with 'critical capacity' (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999). As a result, actors are capable of intuitively establishing the normative record of an institution. Since researchers do not enjoy any explicit authority in normative questions, which tend to be political in essence, the sociology of critique subscribes to 'descriptive metaphysics' (Strawson 1992). In this view, normative expectations towards the EU should be studied as they crystallise during communicative action. The research programme of discourse studies aiming for an accurate description of linguistic phenomena thus appears to have a better affinity with the chosen theoretical perspective. Next, I address the practical considerations related to accessing the relevant textual data in conditions of constrained availability.

3.9.2 Data procurement

In section 3.1.2, I have argued for a sampling strategy generating a large-N sample that is highly representative and allows fine-grained analysis. Due to the lacking availability, accessibility and other restrictions related

to the copyright laws, which apply to the media data, it has been necessary to purchase the data from transnational news aggregator Lexis Nexis ²⁷and develop a curated dataset from scratch.

In the scholarly literature, there seems to be a shared perception that large and complex datasets are nowadays more available than at any time before (e.g. Shah, Capella, and Neuman 2015). Yet, despite the growing availability of these datasets, their accessibility for research purposes remains rather constrained and under the firm control of private capital. As a consequence of the ‘marketisation of the public sphere’ (see e.g. Gastil and Richards 2017), publicly funded research is often forced to use a significant part of the project budget to order services of large companies that are already holding a disproportional market share (Seibicke and Michailidou 2021). In the current situation, these near-monopolies provide the necessary infrastructure for data collection and management. In the case of some disciplines, such as digital humanities, there is a public alternative (see DARIAH²⁸ network) providing a shared, pan-European infrastructure for digital humanities scholars. However, disciplines that fail to address the issue of access to data and computational resources have to grapple with additional costs for each project charged by the private data owners. While many academic journals have adopted clear data policies and initiatives such as open access, open data, and open code are generally embraced, Zenk-Moltgen et al. (2018) show that data-sharing among in sociology and political science research is still not a self-evident practice. In the tested sample of scholarly articles, about half of them stated that the data were available. When tested, only about one-third of the datasets could actually be accessed (Idem: 15). The research shows that the volume of open and reusable datasets remains limited.

Besides the barriers related to the required resources for storage, management, and sharing of research data, the differences in national legislation pose yet another challenge. Many PhD candidates do not have any legal assistance that would help them navigate the copyright laws concerning privately owned content. This issue is especially prominent in cases when the research data consists mainly of material

²⁷ www.lexisnexis.com

²⁸ www.dariah.eu

owned by media groups. Unless the rights holders provide explicit consent for archiving, the data can only be stored for a limited time period, which effectively prevents data-sharing practices. While public and university libraries usually provide limited access to media data, not all relevant media outlets are accessible in digital format. Moreover, university subscriptions for digital archives are primarily set up for browsing the content, not collecting it. If one is to analyse printed media, a complex set of copyright laws apply that makes working with already digitised data much more convenient. As a result, comprehensive media data can only be acquired from local (e.g. Atekst Retriever) or transnational news aggregators (e.g. Factiva, Lexis Nexis).

The limited accessibility of media data poses a barrier for researchers, who have to either make do with the freely available data or secure sufficient funding before proceeding with the empirical work. As I was in the privileged position to have funding available for these purposes, I decided to purchase the data from Lexis Nexis. The main result of this choice has been Lexis Nexis' superior coverage of the UK media market. While the range of media outlets accessible via Lexis Nexis is large, the main downside of using a content aggregator lies in the limited quality control of the media content. There is no robust way of validating the correspondence of my retrieved dataset against a list of articles published in the selected media outlets. Therefore, I treat the retrieved data as a large-N sample instead of a total-N dataset.

Lexis Nexis provides access to a wide range of UK media outlets. In this thesis, I base my analysis on findings from a sample of media data to learn about the UK public sphere. While the mass media arguably structure debates about public affairs, many gatekeepers regulate what content is published. By contrast, the public sphere, in its general sense, is inclusive of any civic-minded talk. This means that some more marginal normative concerns might get sidelined or silenced. Whereas the largest media outlets must cater to 'the general public' and exercise constraint when selecting what topics to cover, smaller media outlets can focus on more homogeneous audiences. To balance the risks related to the use of mass media data, I include smaller regional and online media outlets, alongside the most circulated media outlets, in the sample.

3.9.3 Ethical considerations

While doing media research using secondary data presents relatively few ethical challenges, in this section, I present my ethical consideration regarding the study of normative judgements on a highly polarised topic, drawing generalisations about a public sphere based on mass media, and barriers to Open Science in mass media research.

An ethical dilemma arises because of the character of media data and its procurement. The authors of the media reports pass the copyrights to the publishing houses, who open their archives with the news media aggregator Lexis Nexis. Since the data is purchased directly from Lexis Nexis, the authors of the analysed documents have no way of knowing about my analysis to give their consent. Moreover, the copyright on the analysed documents hinders me from sharing the dataset with the research community. As a result, the cycle of channelling funding from publicly financed research to private companies selling data continues. While I cannot release the analysed dataset, I choose to share the statistical model used for classifying the documents into different polity-centred and policy-centred categories. The model can easily be reused by other researchers working on the topic without purchasing an equally large-N dataset.

Social researchers contributing to social theory have a responsibility to avoid misrepresenting the social world. I take this ethical consideration especially seriously as I have been studying a public controversy, and the debate about the future of the UK's relationship with the EU was highly polarised both before and under the Brexit referendum. In this thesis, I aim for as much of an impartial representation of the media image as possible. By adopting the 'descriptive metaphysics' (Strawson 1992) of the sociology of critique, my own normative stance becomes of little importance. Indeed, once the researcher's position is viewed as having the same ontological status as the actors' judgements, the focus shifts to the overall diversity of the competing normative orientations. While I analyse the central tendencies in the media coverage, I am preoccupied with documenting the full spectrum of legitimation practices represented in the data.

3.10 Conclusion

I have argued that we can learn about the shift in EU legitimacy based on the observed developments in public (de)legitimation in the UK media spheres between 2004 and 2016. Given the Brexit vote, the UK case was chosen as a particularly informative case for studying EU legitimacy change. Provided the limited availability and accessibility of the media data, I have argued for collecting broadsheets, regional newspapers, news sites, tabloids, magazines, and transcripts of TV and radio programmes (see full list of media outlets in Appendix B) selected based on the circulation statistics. Given the ambition to account for the variance within the public sphere, I have suggested conducting a large-N study. For this purpose, using a news aggregator, Lexis Nexis presented the most pragmatic option. As a result, the present study investigates EU legitimacy changes as inferred from a large-N dataset documenting legitimation changes in the UK media sphere in the period 2004-2016 collected from the Lexis Nexis archive.

In order to investigate each of the six indicators of legitimacy change and legitimacy crisis, I have proposed a mixed-methods approach. Having collected the data, I have pre-processed the media reports to facilitate the quantitative analysis. I have then used changes in the volume of monthly published reports per total number of news outlets included in the dataset to infer trends in politicisation. Next, I have studied changes in tone of the media coverage by controlling the sentiment of each media report predicted based on a combination of the two most reliable unsupervised heuristics. While I am using quantitative computer-assisted text analysis to classify all the represented media discourses by the way the EU is qualified and highlight trends over time, the qualitative discourse analysis of the identified discourses links the legitimation changes with EU legitimacy changes. Consequently, the proposed research design captures the variance in data using the quantitative approach without compromising on the analytical depth gained by qualitative discourses analysis of the media reports. Since the legitimation practices comprise both qualifications highlighting some aspects of the EU and evaluation discussing the worthiness of the EU, the quantitative approach focuses on the EU's co-references. At the same time, the qualitative analysis stresses the normative evaluations and links the identified discourses back to the analytical framework. Having classified the polity-centred coverage, I chart changes in its relative

visibility to get an indication of changes in the EU diffuse support. Lastly, I conduct qualitative content analysis to trace any alternatives to EU membership debated in the critical stream of the EU media coverage. With this strategy, all variables necessary to conclude whether the observed situation can be said to amount to a legitimacy crisis have been covered.

Given the complex set of transformations applied to the data and the relatively abstract analytical framework, I have discussed the most appropriate way of representing the generated knowledge. The existing research tends to choose political claims, frames, or discourses as the unit of analysis. Since the present project is less interested in concrete trajectories of legitimation adopted by specific actors rather than in mapping the development of ideational resources that can be used for justifying and problematising EU legitimacy, I have argued that the explored patterns of meaning can be best represented as discourses. Next, I have discussed practical considerations behind the data procurement from the news aggregator Lexis Nexis and ethical considerations related to the present thesis.

I present the result of the outlined analysis in the following chapters. First, chapter 4 explores the macro-level trends in terms of politicisation, the tone of the coverage and the content of legitimation in policy-centred coverage. Then, chapter 5 focuses on the content of legitimation in the polity-centred coverage and trends in the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses. Lastly, in chapter 6, I resolve the second research question by combining the findings of chapters 4 and 5 with the analysis of changes in diffuse support and qualitative content analysis.

Chapter 4

Exploratory data analysis of macro-level legitimisation changes

In this chapter, I explore macro-level changes in EU media coverage against the events of the Euro crisis in late 2007 with the aim of identifying significant legitimisation changes. Based on the reviewed legitimisation literature (section 1.1.2), I expect the potential macro-level changes to unfold along three dimensions: politicisation, tone of coverage, and content of justifications and critique. Before the empirical analysis itself, let us recount which legitimisation changes can be expected in terms of these dimensions.

Firstly, when it comes to EU politicisation (section 1.1.2.2) understood as absolute visibility, the total volume of EU media coverage might increase at times when the EU is rendered controversial, politicised, and consequently more exposed for critical delegitimation discourses. In section 4.1, I identify moments of heightened politicisation, indicating time periods during which broader audiences were exposed to legitimisation changes. Consequently, these legitimisation changes have a bigger potential to affect political behaviour.

Secondly, as legitimacy changes are most apparent when legitimacy is lacking, the tone of EU coverage will arguably turn more negative (see section 1.1.2.3). In addition, shifts in tonality make us aware of potential legitimacy changes to a degree. Therefore, in section 4.2, I search for delegitimation practices characterised by negative tonality that might diminish EU legitimacy. Nevertheless, these clues should be cross-checked against secondary survey data on citizens' attitudes, as the observed trends might only be related to a particular agenda.

Thirdly, I focus on changes in how EU policy interventions have been qualified and evaluated in media coverage. Following the theoretical assumptions outlined in section 2.2, the lower the diversity of contexts in which the EU is represented in media, the higher the likelihood of a legitimacy change in degree. What interests us here is the changes in composition of policy-centred EU media coverage. I assume that the distinct contexts broadly correspond to EU policy areas as well as some relevant normative standards. For instance, in times when EU's economic performance binds the public attention, it is relatively easier to evaluate the benefits of EU membership than in times when media cover many different policy areas. Therefore, in section 4.3, I use quantitative trend analysis to survey shifts in the relative visibility of individual policy areas represented in EU media coverage.

However, particularly salient ways of representing the EU policy interventions might develop, not in terms of distinct policy areas but across them. In order to control for this possibility, in section 4.4. I conduct qualitative discourse analysis mapping the ways in which EU policies are qualified within each of the policy areas. Since EU policy interventions are typically mentioned in contexts where several normative standards are relevant, the documented discourses are distinct but not mutually exclusive. After charting the full palette of discourses used to qualify EU policy interventions in the media, I use thematic analysis to identify qualifications invoked across multiple policy area categories. The themes invoked across the most policy areas indicate what normative concerns are particularly salient to audiences. Furthermore, following the same logic as in section 4.3, the more widespread a particular theme is, the easier it will be to develop a system-level critique of the EU as a polity.

Having outlined the three main analytical dimensions above, in what follows I examine each dimension using the collected, cleaned, hand-coded, and machine-classified data.

4.1 Politicisation

As discussed in section 1.1.2.2, an institution is neither legitimate nor illegitimate unless it has been politicised (see Steffek 2007). Politicisation, in general terms, means the demand for, or the act of, transporting an

issue or an institution into the field or sphere of politics – making previously unpolitical matters political (Zürn 2016: 167).

As discussed in section 1.1.2, unless the EU is a salient topic in the media during the studied period, we cannot meaningfully engage in an empirical investigation of its legitimacy. The available research (see section 1.1.2.2 for the literature review) shows that the EU has been increasingly politicised since the 1990s. In fact, despite fluctuations in politicisation and different trajectories found across EU member states, all member states show some level of politicisation. Therefore, I pay attention to any abrupt surges in EU politicisation estimated by the volume of media coverage dedicated to EU affairs. Changes in the volume can indicate legitimacy changes in degree, reflecting that the EU is becoming more or less legitimate.

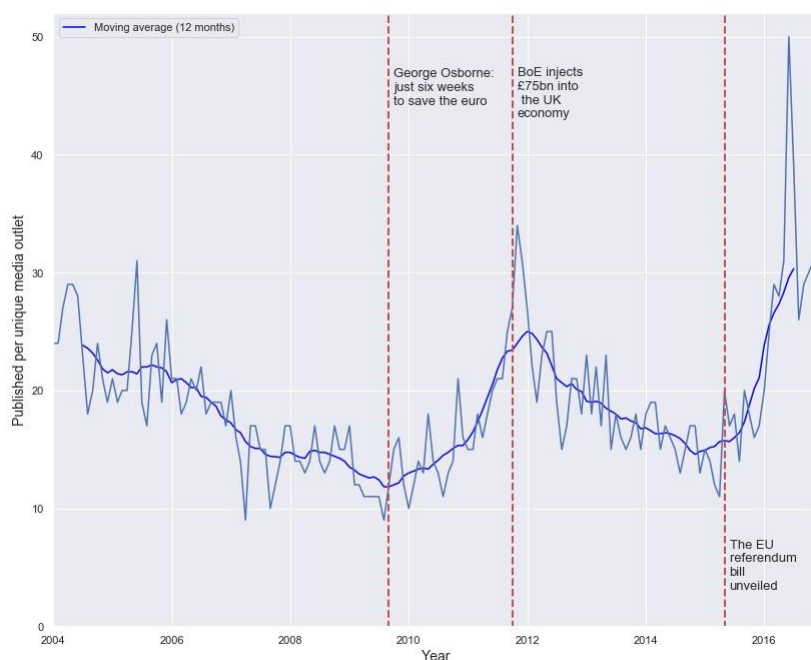


Figure 4.1: Monthly total of media reports covering the EU per a single unique media outlet included in the dataset for the given month (dark blue) and yearly moving average of the monthly totals (bright blue)

Figure 4.1 shows the development of the monthly total of media reports dedicated to the EU, adjusted for the number of unique media outlets included in the dataset for each given month. I have chosen this metric to compensate for the selection bias resulting from changing the collection of media available to the dataset provider at different times. The distribution of raw monthly total is, therefore, inevitably an effect of both the real publishing counts and the selection bias. Thanks to this normalisation, we can notice two upward trends in the absolute visibility

of EU coverage: one coinciding with the escalation of the sovereign debt crisis, the Eurozone crisis, and the Greek debt crisis, and the other with the EU referendum campaign.

Let us now place the trend into the context of crises events reported in the media. The start of the upsurge in the summer of 2009 roughly corresponds with the uncertainty in the wake of the Euro crisis when former Minister of Finance George Osborne claimed that there were only six weeks left to save the euro. The peak started to plateau after the Bank of England decided to ensure even more quantitative easing and injected an additional £75 billion into the British economy. Despite its political significance, what started the increase related to the Brexit referendum was not David Cameron's January 2013 speech proposing a referendum in 2017. We see that the timing of the increase coincides with the Queen of England unveiling the EU referendum bill that made the referendum legal. However, we need to bear in mind that the first surge, which might potentially be related to the EU's response to the crises, can partially represent an effect of oscillation in EU politicisation (see Grande and Hutter 2015; Rauh 2012). The volume of published articles about the EU evinces high volatility and changes swiftly from one month to another. A yearly moving average of the monthly total of articles per unique media outlet, therefore, provides a better indicator of the trend. I calculate this metric by averaging the monthly totals within a moving window of 12 months. As the upsurge at the end of 2009 is noticeable even in the yearly moving averages, I conclude that the increase cannot be fully explained by high volume volatility. The observed trend in this period has likely made any legitimisation changes relatively more visible than in the preceding periods.

4.2 Tone of EU media coverage

In the previous section, we have seen that events taking place after the summer of 2009 galvanised the media coverage of EU affairs. Etter, Colleoni, Illia, Meggiorin, and D'Eugenio (2016) suggest that 'positive judgments, can be considered as legitimising organisations, while negative judgments can be considered as delegitimising organisations' (Etter et al. 2016: 64). Following this line of reasoning, I use the sentiment of media coverage as a proxy variable indicating the direction of any legitimacy changes in degree.



Figure 4.2: Results of unsupervised sentiment prediction using the lexicological approach as implemented in the VADER library; Data: author, VADER library: Hutto and Gilbert (2014)

The sentiment prediction (see section 3.4) presents one of the most challenging tasks in the field of computational linguistics. To mitigate some of its challenges, I have decided to estimate the sentiment of the media coverage using two distinct methods, as implemented in the VADER library (Hutto and Gilbert 2014) and CoreNLP library (Manning et al. 2014). Figure 4.2 shows the results of unsupervised sentiment prediction using the lexicological approach implemented in the VADER library. Each news report was first decomposed into individual words, where the words were ranked, and the ranks averaged for each text. Next, the average scores for each media report published in a given month were again averaged to establish a measure capturing the monthly proportion of positive and negative coverage. The figure shows that no statistically significant changes in the sentiment were detected.

When it comes to the results obtained using the alternative CoreNLP library (see section 3.4). Figure 4.3 shows that this method predicts sentiment that is somehow more negative than neutral. Yet, this might be caused by selection bias, because the dataset does not contain media outlets usually identified as pro-European (e.g. The Times or Financial Times). No significant change in tone can be detected by using this method either. Consequently, as none of the two distinct methods found a sentiment change, this dimension of legitimation change provides no

evidence of legitimacy changes in a degree related to the EU crisis response.

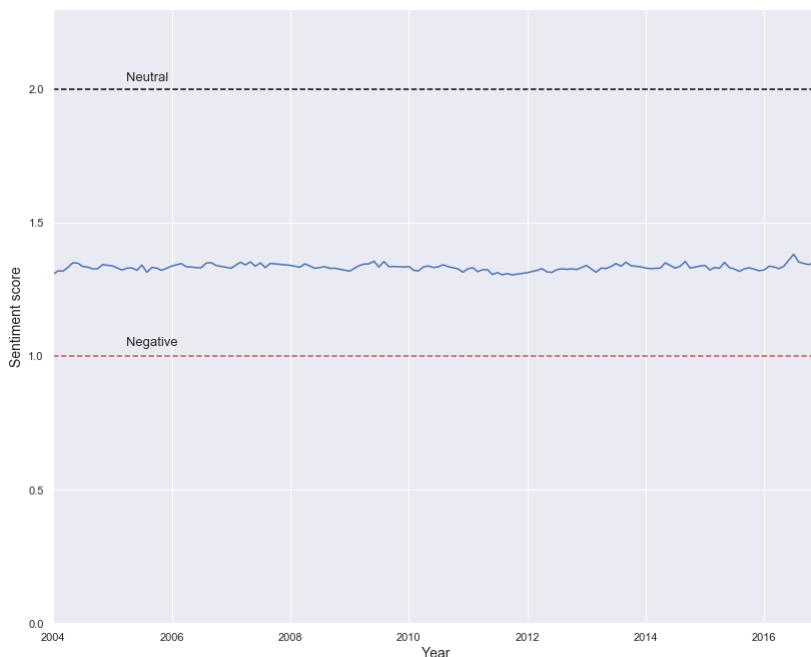


Figure 4.3: Results of unsupervised sentiment prediction using recurrent tensor neural network model as implemented in the CoreNLP library (Manning et al. 2014)

4.3 Mapping EU policy coverage composition

So far, we have explored two of the three main dimensions of macro-level legitimation change, namely politicisation (section 4.1) and tone of coverage (section 4.2). I will now turn to relevant legitimation changes in the content of justifications and critique with the goal to first scrutinise changes in the likelihood of legitimacy change at different times. Secondly, I will use this analysis to shed light on the type of coverage that has been driving the surge in politicisation observed in section 4.1.

As I have argued in chapter 2, the question of how the EU gets portrayed in public debate must be answered before we can investigate what normative expectations are bound to the EU.

This is needed because the media context defines the EU’s functions, competencies, and authority in the given area. Only once a shared context is sufficiently established does it become apparent what normative standards are relevant for assessing the EU as a polity. In this way, the media shapes EU public representation by dedicating more space to some policy areas than to others. Since most of the EU’s public

debate comprises mostly of policy focused coverage, I investigate changes in the composition of EU policy area coverage. Such analysis can pinpoint any periods where one policy area rose in its relative visibility at the expense of others. A more focused EU coverage makes it easier for actors to marshal critique. Such moments thus indicate a higher likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. Besides, by tracking changes in the relative visibility of individual EU policy areas, I can check whether any rise in the absolute visibility of the EU in media coverage (section 4.1) has been propelled by any momentary agenda.

As discussed in chapter 3, I distinguish between the following policy area categories: 1) Agricultural and Fishery policy, 2) Customs union, 3) Subsidies and other money transfers, 4) Public health policy, 5) Foreign, security and humanitarian policy, 6) Social policy and human rights protection, 7) Brexit referendum, 8) Economic and Financial policy, 9) Environmental policy and animal rights, and 10) Other, a category combining relatively rare policy areas such as energy policy as well as articles with no clear policy areas (e.g. coverage of politicians' actions or claims regarding the EU as a polity). The Other category can be used to approximate how much of the total coverage was dedicated to EU policies and how much addressed the EU as a polity.

Since an increase in relative visibility of one policy area at the expense of others makes a particular set of normative standards relatively more salient, it reduces the uncertainty associated with developing a public critique (see section 2.2). During such moments, a legitimacy change in degree is more probable. To detect any significant trends in how the EU was covered, I take a closer look at yearly moving averages of percentage shares of the EU coverage for each coded policy area. As Figure 4.4 shows, the composition of EU coverage varies starkly from month to month, similar to the politicisation analysis presented in section 4.1. However, by calculating yearly moving averages of the monthly values, more stable trends become visible.

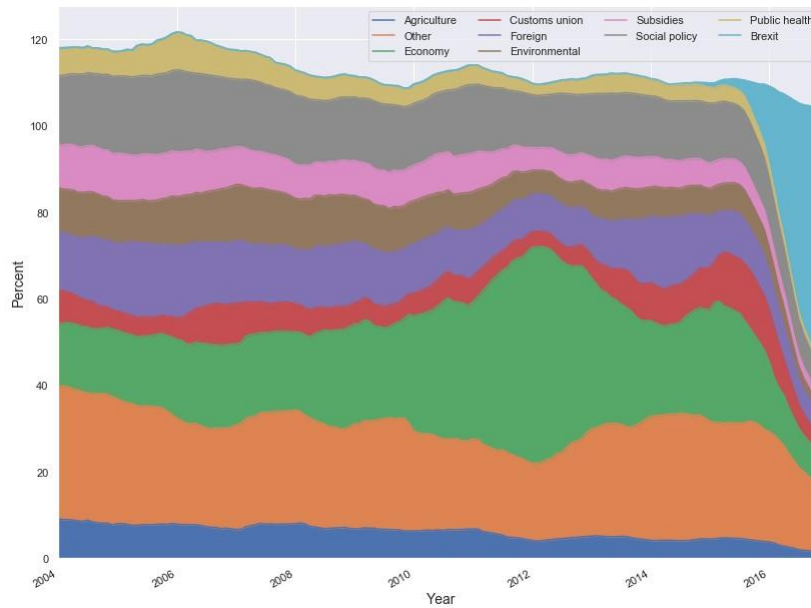


Figure 4.4: Stack area plot showing yearly moving averages of percentage shares of EU media coverage for each of the coded EU policy areas (non-exclusive categories)

The composition of EU policy area coverage (Figure 4.4) shows a solid degree of stability, and all policy areas remained present until the Brexit referendum debate expanded drastically in 2016. Despite the minor decline in relative visibility of all but the economic policy categories, all coded categories remain an integral part of the debate. As one category can refer to several policy areas, one article can be labelled under several distinct categories, the percentages on the y-axis thus do not add up to 100 per cent. If we look at the development in the yearly moving average of the economic policy coverage (Figure 4.5), the hypothesis stating that the first surge in EU politicisation (see section 3.3) can be related to the financial crisis, Euro crisis and sovereign debt crisis appear plausible. The trend observed in the total volume of EU coverage reflects the expansion seen in the economic and financial policy coverage. This ultimately means that the crisis coverage increased the absolute visibility of EU qualification as an institutional body affecting UK economic and financial policy. Nevertheless, the relative visibility of individual coded policy areas remained virtually unchanged. Consequently, the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree has likely remained the same throughout the period.

The biggest change in relative visibility can be seen in the category of economic and financial policy after the summer of 2009 with a simultaneous frequency drop of the category coded as Other. This could

be understood as EU economic policy becoming a hot topic also for domestic debate and local politicians. At the same time, the momentary rise in the relative visibility of EU economic and financial policy coincides with the observed peak in absolute visibility of the EU in media coverage (section 4.1). In other words, EU economic and financial coverage was featured in addition to, rather than instead of, the volume of media coverage dedicated to EU policy interventions. After the slow economic recovery in 2014, the composition of EU policy coverage returned to the pre-crisis stage. Therefore, I conclude that during the monitored period, we find no evidence of an increased likelihood of legitimacy change in degree.



Figure 4.5: Yearly moving average of the percentage share of economic and financial coverage from EU media coverage. Please note that the non-exclusive nature of the categories makes the total percentage over 100 per cent.

The findings presented in the quantitative analysis of EU policy coverage composition were to a large part determined by the chosen categorisation of EU policy areas adopted in EUR-Lex documents. This presents the main limitation of this approach. Therefore, a more fine-grained analysis of the content of each of the categories is needed to identify and describe how a concrete policy is qualified and evaluated in particular (con)texts.

4.4 Qualitative discourse analysis of the EU policy area coverage

As discussed in chapter 2, any justification or critique that resonates with a particular audience relies on a sense of common understanding of reality shared by the audience. This shared understanding (or lack thereof) becomes palpable when actors tend to qualify objects they want to justify or criticise in similar ways. Without agreement on what the character of these objects is, audiences would struggle to converge on normative criteria appropriate for developing the critique or justification. For example, if no audiences, however fragmented, share an understanding of what the EU is and its competencies, an agreement on what normative criteria apply is not likely to be found. Consequently, public (de)legitimation relies on pre-established ways of qualifying the EU.

Every qualification allows voicing a concrete type of normative concern (see subsection 2.2.3). Once the EU policy intervention is qualified, it can be evaluated with respect to these concerns. The EU policy qualifications with the highest relative visibility in media coverage give away which normative concerns are particularly salient among audiences. The most frequently used policy qualifications are also more likely to be developed further in a way that allows qualifying and evaluating the EU as a polity.

In Chapter 3, I have established that the degree to which these qualifications have been consolidated can be assessed based on the uniformity of the associated normative criteria across the policy areas. If we are to study practices aiming at public (de)legitimation of the EU, the operations of qualification make for a good point of departure. Since policy-centred news constitutes the biggest part of EU media coverage, they shape the typical ways of qualifying the EU. In section 4.3, I have used EUR-Lex policy area categorisation to map changes in salience of eight unique qualifications (Agricultural and Fisheries policy, Migration policy, Subsidies and other money transfers, Public health policy, Foreign, security and humanitarian policy, Social policy and human rights protection, Economic and Financial Policy, Environmental policy and animal rights protection). The analysis has shown that the relative visibility of these policy area categories in EU media coverage remained

largely unchanged for the observed period. This suggests that the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree has also remained the same.

While most qualifications of EU policy interventions follow the policy area categories, particularly salient qualifications might be developed, not along the lines of the EUR-Lex categories but across them (see section 3.5). Since the analysis in section 4.3 focuses primarily on changes in the relative visibility of the policy area categories, such cross-category qualifications might go unnoticed. Therefore, in this section, I complement the analysis in section 4.3 with an inquiry into the qualifications of EU policy interventions invoked in multiple EUR-Lex categories. As shown in Chapter 3, such research design combines the comprehensive overview of changes in the policy area coverage with a thorough analysis of their content.

One of the methodological assumptions made in this thesis is that the qualifications used across different policy areas have relatively high salience. This makes them more likely to be appropriate to qualify and evaluate the EU itself. How complicated such symbolic work is would depend on whether the qualification can be used with a uniform set of normative criteria across different policy areas (see section 3.5).

The analysis was conducted in three consecutive steps. Firstly, I mapped how the EU policy interventions are qualified in each particular EUR-Lex policy area. Secondly, I searched for common themes among the coded qualifications to identify particularly salient qualifications. Thirdly, I mapped the normative criteria used with a particular qualification in each policy area category.

Since the first step calls for a fine-grained description, I have explored the distinct qualifications using qualitative discourse analysis. The analysis was done on hierarchically stratified random samples of 350 media reports for each of the EUR-Lex policy areas sourced from the studied period. In order to identify distinct discourses in each policy category, I have coded the various ways in which the EU policy intervention is represented in a concrete media report. Following the logic of inductive research, I have developed a codebook of the discourses characterised by distinct ways of qualifying EU policy interventions using NVivo (see subsection 3.5.4).

To achieve better readability, each media report in the sample has an ID referring to Appendix F. Each media report can be interpreted in multiple ways; this means that a single report can be labelled with several non-exclusive codes. Consequently, rather than providing a statistically representative snapshot of each category, the analysis here captures the variety of readings for each (con)text.

Once the discourses qualifying the EU policy intervention in each EUR-Lex policy area categories were coded, I proceeded with the second step of analysis. In order to find which qualifications were invoked across multiple policy area categories, I have grouped the coded discourses into more general themes using thematic analysis (see sections 3.5 and 3.6). For example, a discourse focusing on the EU's role in delivering a harmonised common market for agricultural production (Agricultural and fisheries policy) and a discourse stressing the EU's role in preventing international conflicts (Foreign and security policy) can be grouped under a common theme approaching EU policy interventions as a solution to common problems.

By applying the two-step strategy to the samples from all of the EUR-lex policy area categories, I have found five themes qualifying EU policy intervention 1) as an outcome of political negotiations, 2) but one cog in the machinery of the market, 3) solution to common problems, 4) as a threat, 5) and as a policy failure impacting sovereignty. Once I established which qualifications are invoked across multiple policy area categories, I proceeded with the third step of analysis, where I mapped the normative criteria used with each theme in each policy area category.

I start this section by introducing each of the themes. Besides the EUR-Lex policy area categories, media reports that could not easily be assigned a policy area label in section 4.3 were coded as *Other*. As this category makes up 20 per cent of the total N, I explore the content of this category using qualitative discourse analysis. The aim is to control for the quality issues in the quantitative text analysis in section 4.3 as well as to discover any relevant meaning structures that might otherwise escape our attention. Lastly, I discuss the normative criteria each of the themes uses for assessing EU policies in each policy area with the goal of finding themes that are the most likely to be developed for evaluating the EU as a polity for further analysis in chapter 5.

4.4.1 The EU policy as an outcome of political negotiations

The first theme groups discourses qualifying the EU policies as an outcome of negotiations. These discourses are invoked in policy areas where the parameters of the policies are regularly re-adjusted: EU agricultural and fisheries policy, foreign and security policy, economic and financial policy, and environmental policy. The theme pits local authorities against the EC and other countries. For example, the discourse portraying the EU's foreign policy as an outcome of negotiations highlights the conflict of interests within the EU:

Some in Europe and elsewhere see the world changing and want to shut China off behind a bamboo curtain of trade barriers. Britain wants to tear these trade barriers down. [. . .] “Mr Cameron promised to “champion an EU-China trade deal with as much determination as I am championing the EU-US trade deal.

[ID 1]

In this view, the EU foreign policy is the vector of these positions. A good EU foreign policy is one which is best aligns with the UK's priorities. If the UK succeeds in negotiations with other member states, EU foreign policy can help secure the UK's position in the world.

The negotiations provide both an opportunity for securing a favourable position and a risk that the UK will be at a disadvantage. As long as the negotiations are perceived as impartial, the process and its outcomes are publicly justifiable. Nevertheless, having a tendency to prioritise negative content, the British media give space to discourses questioning impartiality.

The typical line of reasoning in the coverage suspects the EU of being a 'tool' serving other countries. The quote below is indicative of this perspective:

ONCE again it seems that Britain has been conned by the EU and most especially France. Readers will recall that Tony Blair, three years ago, gave up £7 billion of our EU rebate, in return for an agreement to have the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) changes and subsidies reduced to ensure an equal playing field for all farmers. We were assured this would ultimately benefit Britain in the long term. Now it seems that France is holding the

EU to ransom, over a call for an urgent decision of world trade tariffs.

[ID 2]

The quote assumes that the negotiation setup places the UK in a disadvantaged position in comparison to other EU member states. Should audiences accept this premise as valid, the EU policy originating from these negotiations will likely be seen as lacking a proper justification.

As the next quote on the EU's agricultural and fisheries policy shows, the negotiations are not a zero-sum game between individual nation states, but the countries can form coalitions:

Allies unite in demand to keep LFA support in reformed Cap France, Ireland and Finland emerged yesterday as allies in the battle to retain support for less-favoured areas in the new Common Agricultural Policy from 2014. They stressed its importance at the European Agriculture Council meeting in Brussels, where member states were asked to give their views on the future of the Cap's rural development programme.

[ID 3]

In this example, the policy negotiations are represented as an arena where risks and opportunities are distributed based on the skills of negotiating parties. The EU as an arena then makes this cooperation possible.

Even though the tension between the UK and other member states receives most of the media attention, the coverage is not constrained to these actors. In the following example, environmental policy is negotiated between the EU and the rest of the world. The EU's environmental policies present a progressive agenda, which meets little understanding from non-EU actors, yet ends up strengthening the international regulatory regime:

A senior French diplomat said: 'We are aware that the US has not signed up to Kyoto. This is a fact of life. 'We would like to see clear references to the Kyoto protocol in the communique. The EU has taken a very united stance on Kyoto. It was very influential in

getting Russia to sign up. ‘Mr Blair hinted yesterday that he would try to sidestep the issue by seeking agreement with the US on future action.

[ID 4]

Despite the broad international disagreement on the actual agenda, the discourse has a positive tone. The EU is viewed as a potent player capable of persuading other states to commit to its climate goals. While the media coverage grouped under this theme discusses details of the negotiated policy interventions, the following theme portrays the EU policies as of little significance in the grand scheme of things.

4.4.2 The EU policy as a single cog amidst the markets machinery

The second theme is visible in the context of the media debate concerning EU agricultural and fisheries policy. In its terms, the EU is represented as simply one of the distant actors in the power play affecting the everyday reality of UK nationals. It uses technical language and many references to EU programs, yet without explanation of their functioning. This contributes to an impression that the inner workings of the EU can hardly be affected. Media coverage in this group documents how EU policy co-constitutes market prices, as in the following excerpt:

Mr Whelan links the upturn in dairy market sentiment to a number of factors. These include the impact of the EU intervention scheme for skimmed milk powder, the recent devaluation of Sterling against the euro and the more positive economic signs coming out of China. “But we are not out of the woods yet,” he said. The EU has intervened the equivalent of 2% of total European milk output this year. But at some stage in the near future, this product will come back out on to the open market. What is more, the Russian import ban on EU food imports is still in place. And while this remains the case, it will continue to apply significant downward pressure on world dairy markets.

[ID 5]

While the EU’s policy interventions have made some positive impact on the markets, the development is contingent upon actions of non-EU

countries and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This places the policy decisions out of the reader's reach.

Alternatively, the theme attributes the blame for price developments to abstract market forces:

Prime cattle prices are down around 8% on the same time last year and have been steadily declining for a number of months. This has been blamed on the market, correcting itself post-horse gate when prices were said to have been artificially inflated, and the desire of processors to pull prices further towards the EU average has angered local beef producers.

[ID 6]

In comparison to the theme portraying EU policy as an outcome of negotiations, discourses highlighting the role of market forces seldom contain explicit evaluations of EU policies. Since the EU interventions present only one cog in the complex market machinery, it cannot be responsible for negative developments. In the cases when EU policies get the blame, there is a tangible link between policy and price changes, as the following quote shows:

Sugar prices have leapt 50 or 60 per cent in the past few months due to a worldwide shortage coupled with an overhaul of the EU's sugar regime according to Pieter Totte, chairman of the Real Good Food Company. In 2006, Brussels moved to demolish its sugar mountain by curbing production with new quotas.

[ID 7]

When the situation appears more transparent, the media are more likely to attribute responsibility for market developments to EU policy. Overall, media coverage on the theme of EU policy as another cog in the market's machinery has been constrained to the single policy area of the EU's agricultural and fisheries policies. By contrast, the theme introduced in the following subsection can be found in almost all policy areas.

4.4.3 The EU policy as a solution to common problems

The coverage grouped under the third theme highlights how distinct EU policies help resolve area-specific issues. For example, the coverage of

EU funds, subsidies, and money transfers presents EU funds as a solution to regional inequalities. In the case of EU environmental policy and animal welfare protection coverage, the coverage constructs the policies as a solution to climate change-related issues. The only category where this theme has little salience is EU economic and financial policy. Indeed, in this category, EU policies appear as rather abstract and the Eurozone, in particular, is viewed as the cause of economic turmoil, not its solution.

I divide the discourses into three types with different scopes of problems in question. The first type puts forward issues of a global scale, the second one highlights problems with (inter)national scope, and the last group focuses on local struggles.

Solving global problems

The discourses discussing EU policies as a solution to a global problem are salient in the coverage of the EU's foreign and security policy. What makes these events newsworthy is not the EU's actions but rather the EU's capacity to take some action:

Prime Minister warned the Sudanese government yesterday to protect the people of Darfur or face action. Tony Blair urged EU leaders to send a strong message to Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir to stop the rebel militia committing genocide. He said the 7, 000-strong African Union, currently failing to protect the population from attacks, needed to be replaced by 20, 000 UN troops.

[ID 8]

In this example, Tony Blair calls upon the EU, which appears as an external entity, to intervene in an armed conflict. This is done parallel to the government's warning, which evidently has less weight than EU action. This discourse, therefore, constructs the EU as a unitary, external entity that has more power in international relations than the UK. As such, the EU can receive awards, make statements, issue warnings, engage in climate diplomacy, provide humanitarian aid, or promote human rights:

EU defies Beijing warning to award dissident human rights prize
Hu Jia, one of China's best-known dissidents, was yesterday

awarded an EU human rights prize, despite a warning from Beijing that selecting the political prisoner would damage relations. His wife and supporters welcomed the news that MEPs had picked him for the Sakharov prize, worth euros 50, 000 (£39, 500).

[ID 9]

This type of discourse contributes to the EU's image as a resolute actor on par with superpowers such as China. The EU shapes world trade by raising tariffs on various imports from a country, granting trade concessions, or imposing economic sanctions. Having no military of its own, these measures give the EU capabilities beyond what is seen as soft power.

An alternative angle shows EU policies as devices facilitating cooperation between member states in crucial areas such as disease control. Since coordinated effort gives better chances to develop effective treatments and vaccines, EU public health policy is covered as a solution to control of outbreaks of bird-flu, swine-flu, Ebola, or airborne tuberculosis. The EU's agencies are attributed responsibility for licensing new medicaments available in the common market and regulating mandatory information that must be included on the labels of products such as food or toys. In order to regulate the risks to public health and safety, the EU develops safety standards:

Farmers pump up their use of growth drugs: FARMERS have massively increased their reliance on drugs to pump up chicken and pigs despite a Government pledge to curb their use. There is increasing concern that growth-promoting antibiotics encourage farm bugs to mutate, causing food poisoning in humans that becomes ever harder to treat. Official figures confirm that from 2002 to 2003 there was a 33 per cent rise in farmers' use of certain antibiotics to bulk up stock, despite a Government promise in 1999 to discourage their use. Worryingly, the three antibiotics concerned avilamycin, flavomycin and monensin are all due to be banned as growth promoters by the EU from next January.

[ID 10]

The ban appears as an effective measure justified by concerns about consumers' health. In addition, since the EU is portrayed as ready for action in time of disease outbreaks, the benefit of EU membership is made tangible. At the same time, the media gives a platform to discussions about the negative consequences bans might have for farmers and the industry but without implying that the farmers' interest stands above public health.

While the theme looks at EU policy as a solution to common problems, it does not always lead to success. When the EU policy fails to resolve the issue, it can be because of lacking cooperation and coordination between countries. The problem, therefore, is not a policy failure, but the unwillingness of other countries to work on a common solution. The most visible example has been the coverage of asylum policy during the refugee crisis (ca. 2013-2019):

Greece appeals to EU for more border guards Greece has appealed for the European Union to urgently send border guards to help control its maritime frontier with Turkey as well as tents, generators and first aid for arriving refugees. More than 50, 000 people have arrived in Greece seeking sanctuary or jobs in Europe in the last month, and EU partners are pressing Athens to control the influx.

[ID 11]

Greece and other member states repeatedly urged other EU countries to participate in finding a common solution, but these calls did not lead to more cooperation. As a result, the coverage has highlighted the case of EU policy failing, as countries forced to carry the burden alone cannot manage the pressure. The external threat is transformed into an internal risk, which problematises the EU's open doors policy. Having introduced discourses focusing on global problems, next, I discuss the discourses dealing with national problems.

Solving national problems

When it comes to problems of national scope, the media often adopt the perspective of citizens or aggrieved parties. One example is coverage which informs the general public about new studies of working conditions and social rights, comparing the UK with the rest of the EU countries and showing that the national legislature provides fewer social

rights and less protection for workers than the rest of the EU. Moreover, the local authorities appear to be against any policy changes and even actively undermine protections of employee and citizen freedoms. The media covers an increasing pressure for increased surveillance, authorities denouncing strikes, attempts to negotiate an opt-out from the EU Working Time Directive for the UK, or local government delaying implementation of pro-social EU policies. The value of EU social policies is stated repeatedly:

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the British trade union movement worked in solidarity with our European partners and fought hard to secure valuable working rights legislation at EU level. To this day these rights – including maternity and paternity rights, equal treatment for full-time, part-time and agency workers, and the right to paid leave – continue to underpin and protect working rights for British people. If Britain leaves the EU, we are in no doubt these protections would be under great threat.

[ID 12]

Since many rights are only guaranteed at the EU level, UK employees depend on the EU legislature to claim these benefits. In other words, these discourses construct EU legislation as providing a strong platform that can help UK citizens to hold local authorities and companies accountable for curbing their social and/or human rights. In a similar vein, the media highlights the discrepancies between UK and EU safety standards and the potential risks for consumers:

THE G-WIZ, an electric car billed as the environmentally friendly alternative for city drivers, may be banned after failing a basic crash test. The government said it was urgently seeking a review of the European regulations surrounding the sale of the car. The G-Wiz has become increasingly popular in the capital because it is exempt from the congestion charge and dozens of parking fees.

[ID 13]

In this case, local authorities were not following valid EU standards. As a result, the car, which had been sold and became popular, failed in security tests. When the discrepancy was found, EU standards were

questioned by authorities. EU standards, the cause of citizens and local interest organisations are pitted against local authorities, which appear too hesitant to act. This strain of the theme contributes to the image that EU policies empower citizen organisations in situations of power inequality. Media coverage of these cases makes the motive even more vivid, as the following excerpt illustrates:

High Court victory for campaigners in air pollution battle with Government Campaigners have won the latest legal battle against the government in a long-running action over harmful air pollution levels. [. . .] Supreme Court justices declared then that “immediate” action was needed to address the issue, and set a deadline for the government to produce new plans to comply with European Union (EU) law on limits for nitrogen dioxide in the air.

[ID 14]

EU policies intended to protect the environment and EU citizens allow locals to challenge government politics in court when it fails to comply with EU regulations. Media also cover various inspections and the resulting seizure of non-compliant products. Moreover, many public health initiatives promoted in the media call for EU-level action. Next, I introduce how the discourses grouped under this theme approach problems with a local scope.

Solving local problems

The connection with specific local problems is made especially tangible in the coverage of EU subsidies and other money transfers. While the final sum allocated to each country in different funding programmes is a result of budget negotiations, the process is seldom discussed. Instead, the media places stress on the beneficial effects of funding:

ALMOST £2 million has been allocated to help make public transport more accessible. Two projects in Glasgow and one in Dundee have received grants from the European Regional Development Fund. It is hoped they will boost economic, social and environmental regeneration by providing safer spaces for people to use.

[ID 15]

Thanks to the attention dedicated to a plethora of EU-funded projects, the EU appears as an available source of money that can be used for developing infrastructure, cities, neighbourhoods, and addressing local issues. We have seen that the effects of EU policies are discussed in relation to both global, national, and local issues. Unlike the present theme highlighting the EU's problem-solving capabilities, the next theme revolves around what might be lost because of EU policies.

4.4.4 The EU policy as a threat

Favouring timeliness, unexpectedness, and negativity in the coverage, the theme qualifying EU policies as a threat groups discourses from all EUR-Lex policy area categories. It places EU policies at the centre of attention and displays them as a threat to something of value to local businesses and citizens. In some cases, the policies are not a threat in themselves but the risk derives from the way government and local authorities implement them.

Given how little influence the UK has over decisions made in European court, it is often covered under this theme. For example, the European court is portrayed as imposing a policy which not only cannot be implemented in time but will also threaten the quality of public services. While the unions criticise the long working hours culture in the UK, the discourse makes it clear that the improved working conditions will affect service for the individual patients. Furthermore, the discourse adopts the side of employers and communicates the potential impacts of EU policies on their enterprises. Consider the following example:

Obesity could be a disability, European court determines: People who are obese could also be considered disabled, the European Court of Justice has ruled. The judgment comes after the landmark case of a Danish childminder who was believed to be so fat he was unable to tie his own shoelaces, and was sacked by his employers four years ago. [. . .] The ruling could force widespread changes across Europe in the way employers deal with obese staff and what support they might be legally required to offer. [. . .] The ruling has already raised serious concerns

about the immediate and long-term impacts on employers in the UK, who may now need to take extra steps to cater to the needs of obese staff.

[ID 16]

The discourse gives voice to employers and highlights the potential increase in expenses related to the discussed changes. By disrupting the status quo, EU policy introduces uncertainty that threatens to make existing businesses unsustainable. Once the final version of a policy is negotiated and binding for the member states, the media treats it as a legislature imposed on the UK. For instance, the theme highlights the potentially harmful consequences of EU environmental policies for local businesses:

The 17 native bat species in Britain which are known to be breeding and their roost sites are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981, and the Conservation Regulations of 1994, and more recently, conservation has been augmented by the Protection of Species Act of 1992, and crystallised by further Conservation of Habitats and Species rulings from the European Union. At no point in history has nature's bounty been so protected in the built environment of Britain, and while this seems eminently reasonable, it can create problems for builders with time and budget constraints. 'Many people assume that they can buy a property and start work straight away but they often do not realise that the presence of bats can halt or significantly slow down works,' says Suzanne Bowman, a property specialist at law firm Adams & Remers.

[ID 17]

The interests of builders are contrasted with the policies protecting nature and showcased as creating inconvenience. Since the discourse gives voice to those affected, EU environmental policies can be blamed. This pattern is most visible in discussions concerning 'green' taxes threatening to leave local businesses uncompetitive, hurting local airline operators, and leading to rising electricity prices. The value of environmental conservation and animal welfare is contrasted with other concerns.

Similarly, EU regulations are portrayed as threatening public services that have been privatised with the aim to comply with EU regulations, only to end up being unable to operate in the free market environment:

Labour has implemented a decadelong strategy to destroy the Post Office by removing benefits payments and opening up the general mail service to private operations that do not guarantee delivery to everyone. This has been done to satisfy the competition criteria of the EU, a monetarist organisation determined to asset-strip public resources to benefit big business.

[ID 18]

Since the mail service had a special role in facilitating UK governance and providing a guaranteed way of reaching UK citizens, it has enjoyed state benefits. Once the state aid was ruled illegitimate and removed, the Post Office, which provided valuable services, was no longer sustainable. Consequently, the public service that once was guaranteed fell under the threat of EU fines.

Another branch of discourses under this theme highlights the threats of systemic crises. In the area of EU economic and financial policy, the media present a fundamentally uncertain outlook for the Eurozone and the common market that cannot do without constant regulation by the EU. As a result, the member states might be forced to comply with damaging measures in the name of stabilising the single market. These consist of newly introduced taxes (e.g. carbon tax or planned financial transactions tax), regulation strengthening consumer rights, strict oversight over state aid cases, or protecting and encouraging competition. The monetary policy of the European Central Bank (ECB) presents the subtlest case of such regulation. While it is mostly only mentioned in relation to changes in the euro interest rate and inflation goals, the national actors at times stress its actions as a potential threat:

The European Central Bank must end its unprecedented stimulus measures in order to prevent a new financial crisis from erupting in the Eurozone, Germany's top economic advisers have warned. Berlin's Council of Economic Experts – known as the country's

five ‘wise men’ – said the ECB must consider tapering its bond-buying measures early to avoid dangerous imbalances from building up in the bloc.

[ID 19]

The ECB’s actions are more than a mere background against which markets operate, in fact, they might create a new crisis. Furthermore, the ECB conditions financial reliefs with concrete political measures. Consequently, it can force austerity politics on member states:

Pierre Moscovici said on Thursday that Europe must focus on promoting growth and less on tightening budgets to revive the bloc’s sluggish economy and avoid a deepening social crisis. He warned that continuing on a strict austerity course would only “nourish a social crisis that leads to populism”.

[ID 20]

In its most extreme form, the theme suggests that EU policies do not only threaten the national economies but might also jeopardise political stability and social peace. However, such non-economic factors are not considered.

Some of the policy areas such as immigration are covered as something threatening the orderly way of life:

1 IN 6 ROMANIANS BROKE UK LAWS’ UP to one in six Romanians in the UK has received a criminal conviction here, figures suggest. Over the four years since 2012 British police forces have notified their counterparts in Romania that one of their citizens has received a conviction 26, 870 times. In 2014, there were 170, 000 Romanians in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics. If they had all been in the country for the full four-year period this would mean the equivalent of one in six being convicted – although the true figure will be lower than this. Some of the convictions could have been picked up by seasonal workers who travelled back to their homeland and did not settle in the UK. Other Romanians who came to Britain could have received more than one conviction. Both Romania and Bulgaria formally joined the EU on 1 January 2007.

[ID 21]

Media commonly inform about schemes allowing for illegal immigration, such as fake marriages, human trafficking, or working without a permit. Similarly, the media cover episodes where UK citizens targeted immigrants. Since the EU migration policy is seen as responsible for immigration in the first place, it gets the blame for this negative phenomenon. Besides threatening the public order, it is feared that over time the policy '[. . .] could overwhelm public services already struggling to cope with more than 600, 000 arrivals from the eight Eastern European countries including Poland, which joined in 2004'

[ID 22]. The trope of an imminent threat is often accompanied by an emphasis on the costs that UK citizens will have to pay. According to this picture painted by the media, not only does the EU migration policy lead to more crime in the UK, but it also threatens public finances by introducing additional costs, as the following excerpt illustrates:

THE COST OF OUR OPEN BORDERS 611, 779 the number of non- active EU migrants in Britain – up 42 per cent in six years £1. 5bn estimated annual cost to NHS of treating non-active migrants 73% increase in the number of job- seeking EU migrants in Britain between 2009 and 2011 3. 7m increase in the population of England and Wales between 2001 and 2011, of which 2. 1million attributed to immigration £2bn Potential cost of EU bid to end curbs on migrants claiming benefits 67% of public want drastic action to cut immigration 52% of voters say they are more likely to back party promising to cut immigration significantly.

[ID 23]

Another kind of discourse grouped under this theme underlines the negative effects that EU policies cause when not implemented properly. The attention, therefore, shifts to the role of government, representatives, and local authorities. Local governance and particular implementation of EU policies present additional threatening elements:

COUNCILS cannot afford to hit the Assembly Government's recycling targets, a councillor claimed yesterday. Welsh Local Government Association waste chief Aled Roberts hit out at the Assembly's aim to hit 70% recycling. He said the ambition – which is above the EU target of 50% – was "clearly unaffordable". Councillor Roberts, the leader of Wrexham

council, is hoping to become an AM next year, He said: 'The cost of achieving an imposed 70% target will raise serious issues for local authorities which could be compounded by the imposition of financial penalties if targets are missed.'

[ID 24]

While it is the government that negotiates and commits to targets, the burden of reaching the goals is shifted to local authorities. Once these targets show themselves to be unrealistic, the councils have to face fines hurting their budgets and the quality of public services. As a result, although the EU policies might be targeting a desirable goal, if local authorities cannot be trusted with their implementation, they present an element of uncertainty and a potential threat.

Once negotiations are done, UK citizens cannot directly affect EU policies. The resulting powerlessness causes strong reactions and a search for who is responsible for the policy outcomes. Critical voices in the media include both those condemning the EU for either failing and/or unjust policies, those criticising the UK government for unwillingness to represent the districts, and those criticising local authorities for inability to secure a better deal for the UK or the way it has been implemented. At times, the EU has fined local authorities for failure to pay out subsidies to farmers, which made this strand of critique even more relevant:

As the WMN revealed last week, the newly created Natural England body has been restricted to conservation projects costing £5, 000 or less because Defra funds are so tight in the wake of the disaster. A staggering £130 million has been set aside to meet EU fines, likely to be imposed for the late payments. The countryside is suffering twice over as a result of Mrs Beckett's bungling, once because of late farm payments and again because projects are being delayed to ensure there is money in the bank to meet the fines.

[ID 25]

The coverage in this case creates an impression that citizens cannot rely on any of the involved actors. The outcome of EU negotiations shaping the final form of policy threatening the livelihoods of local farmers and

anglers depends on the UK government. However, in the regions, there is a strong suspicion regarding the government's commitment to representing other counties.

The EC can also bring to light the suboptimal way in which UK authorities are redistributing the money. The reader is then presented with a picture where each level of governance, regional, national, and European, adds to the uncertainty of the overall application for funding. Moreover, the EC brings forth the suspicion that UK authorities are not distributing the resources effectively, which leads to less development than what could have been achieved otherwise. The final recipients are forced to navigate this multi-layered system, where the required competencies and transparency are not necessarily present:

It said a whistleblower's concerns, which alerted Stormont's Enterprise Department to the true cost in 2008, were not brought to the attention of European funders until 2011. The project, approved in 2004, was to be funded by the EU. In the end Europe withdrew because of irregular expenditure and Northern Ireland's Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) lost two million euro of EU funding and the Republic's Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources lost 1.8 million euro, the audit office report said.

[ID 26]

Whereas the authorities managed to secure the funding, the lack of supervision from their side led to a situation where little value was realised, and EU funds, as well as taxpayers' money, were lost. While EU funds present an opportunity to fund beneficial projects, the different layers of administration render their allocation highly uncertain and in the end, pose a threat to public finance. Indeed, once any potential deficiencies in public management are uncovered, the refunded EU resource is likely to be covered by taxpayers' money.

All in all, this theme highlights a risk related to the workings of EU policies and/or their implementation by national and local authorities. Instead of warning about the consequences of EU policies, the theme introduced in the following section attributes the potential negative effects to the EU policies' flawed design.

4.4.5 The EU policy as a policy failure affecting the UK's sovereignty

The fifth theme on EU policy as a failure impacting UK sovereignty centres on a concrete policy, presents its aim and points out why the policy defeats its purpose. The risk of policy failure, in contrast to maintaining the status quo, is then made explicit. As this pattern makes it possible to abstract from concrete content, the theme overlaps with virtually all previously introduced themes. Typically, a motive of policy failure forms a red thread connecting the most critical media reports in all of the policy area categories. In some cases, the structure is complemented with a discussion about possible solutions for the situation. Since the EU legislature stands above UK law, the discourse claims that EU policies curb local sovereignty, as it blocks local authorities from presenting an effective alternative solution to the original problem.

In the area of EU economic and financial policies, EU interventions are portrayed as one cause of the problems. Instead of stabilising the market, they make the crises worse:

Because of the damage the euro has done to our economies. The low euro interest rates fuelled housing bubbles in Spain and Ireland that have burst and devastated both countries. Tax-takes were swollen by the property booms, but have now vanished with the bust. Italy, unable to devalue its currency to compete against other exporters, especially China, is now carrying a vast public debt 'a debt greater than its GNP' and business confidence has collapsed. Portugal has a huge current-account deficit. We and the PIGS are the countries The Economist means when it writes that, enthusiasts hoped that the discipline of living within a single currency would unleash a wave of bold supply-side reforms that would transform productivity. In practice, far from promoting reforms, the euro has offered weak governments like Italys protection against capital markets that might otherwise have punished their pusillanimity.

[ID 27]

In this example, the condemned logic of protecting the undeserving countries from capital markets while letting the North bear the burden is

even more explicit. Since the countries get the protection anyways, they are seen as unwilling to undergo the necessary reforms. As a result, instead of stabilising the Eurozone, policies merely redistribute the costs from the South to the North.

When it comes to EU public health policies, the media point out the grey zones that appear to be insufficiently regulated. The media provides reports about the concrete outcomes of each ban and the protests of vapers, farmers, whiskey producers, or supporters of the custom of holding funeral wakes. However, this type of argumentation, illustrated by the following excerpt, constitutes only a marginal strand of this discourse:

In 2007, Heatox scientists warned: Compared with many regulated food carcinogens, the exposure to acrylamide poses a higher estimated risk to European consumers. 'But just how grave is this risk? Well, the US Environmental Protection Agency considers acrylamide so toxic that it has set the safe level for human consumption at almost zero. Yet crisps, chips, crisp breads and breakfast cereals typically contain acrylamide at 4, 2.5, 2 and 1.6 milligrams per kilo. So what is being done to protect us from acrylamide in food? Not a lot. The European Chemicals Agency, which regulates the safety of chemicals in the European Union, has added the toxin to its list of substances of very high concern. In the UK, the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the body charged with overseeing the safety of what we eat, does not advise us to stop eating, or even reduce, our consumption of popular snacks and processed foods that may contain high levels.

[ID 28]

While the European Chemical Agency notes that the substance is of serious concern, this appears to be of no consequence for UK authorities. As a result, UK citizens are still exposed to a potentially toxic chemical. Yet, too little, as well as too much regulation, is seen as undesirable.

In the field of EU social-and human rights protection, some discourses interpret EU policies as a failure. While claiming to protect human rights and prevent discrimination, it is accused of promoting unacceptable cultural changes such as the right to abortion, gay marriages, sharia law, and advocating prisoners' right to vote:

HUMAN rights fall squarely into the category of motherhood and apple pie. Who could be against them? No one is going to argue, are they, in favour of oppression, tyranny or bigotry. that is what makes the problem of human rights law so difficult for politicians to deal with. And it is a big problem, because in practice it has turned our most fundamental values on their heads. It has stopped us from deporting terrorists and extremists, forcing us to accommodate people who are a danger to the state. It has tied the police up in knots and been on the side of those who do wrong, from illegal immigrants to criminals cocking a snook at justice and milking the system for compensation. And it has given the judges a licence to stray into the political arena and impose their own prejudices on a host of deeply divisive issues which they have no democratic mandate to decide. All this was given a tremendous boost by the Human Rights Act, which was sported as the brightest feather in the government's radical cap.

[ID 29]

This passage summarises why the EU legislation is perceived to be a policy failure. It is claimed that whereas the intent was to defend human rights, it is being used to protect criminals from getting a rightful sentence. In addition, human rights might be used to justify granting criminals compensation from UK authorities. The ECHR's interpretation of human rights is shown to contradict what UK audiences find just. Another point of contention is the EU legislature making positive discrimination illegal. This has become an issue in the case of offering scholarships reserved to students set in the UK or banning lower insurance prices based on one's gender, as women statistically cause fewer traffic accidents.

Some of the discourses grouped under this theme also accuse the EU policies of introducing openly nonsensical measures:

EU S HIGH HEEL BAN FOR HAIR SALON STAFF: HAIRDRESSERS will be banned from wearing high heels and jewellery under nanny state proposals being drawn up in Brussels. A health and safety directive orders stylists to wear non-slip soles when they are cutting hair and bans wedding rings and watches as unhygienic. The plans will see hairdressers told not to let staff do too many haircuts in one day to prevent emotional

collapses. And the bizarre rules will tell salon workers to have a regular social dialogue – code for gossipy chats – to encourage mental wellbeing in the workplace. The National Hairdressers Federation warns the plans will cost the UK industry £3million a year in wasted time and red tape.

[ID 30]

The discourse fosters the impression of absurdity by avoiding any discussion about the issues that are supposedly addressed by the directive. As a result, it appears both unnecessary and costly. Other media reports support the image of policy failure by covering the contradiction between the EU law and the way it is enforced, which arguably leads to infringements of human rights. The EU's Dublin III law on asylum claims is mentioned as the clearest example, as child refugees reaching the UK will likely end up separated from their families. The critical voice supplements the accounts of policy failure by stressing that EU courts can overrule even the UK supreme court. This grants EU judges the power to decide concerning many controversial topics, which might be assessed differently in each member state. As UK politicians gave in to the critical voices and promised to regain sovereignty by repealing the Human Rights Act, the present discourse gained more valence.

Once a policy is portrayed as a failure, the discourse highlights the injustice that stems from curbing UK sovereignty in the given policy area. Many of the criticised policies are not only seen as defeating their purpose. They are also beyond the control of UK citizens. Even if the UK would oppose the regulation, the discourse stresses that its leeway is very limited and getting even smaller, as in the case of EU economic and financial policy:

EU won't advise us – it will tell us; I have noticed that the 'Lib/Lab/Con' have been very quiet about what Eddy Wymeersch, chairman of the Committee of European Securities Regulators (CESR), said when he proclaimed that the harmonisation of European Union financial supervision is 'moving ahead at full speed, the autonomy of national supervisors will steadily be reduced'. In an interview with the Belgian business magazine Trends, Mr Wymeersch said: 'In future we will no longer give advice, but we will impose binding rules.'

‘In the long term there will be ‘gradual harmonisation [of EU financial supervision]’ and ‘the autonomy of the member states will steadily be reduced’.

[ID 31]

While this discourse stresses mainly policy failures, the sense of powerlessness related to EU policies is strengthened by raising concerns about the competencies delegated to the EU level. Not only do some of the EU policies seem to defeat their purpose, they also hurt the UK’s ability to act in the face of crisis and simply force it to follow suit with whatever direction will be decided at the EU level.

Under this theme, some discourses perceive EU environmental regulation as arbitrary domination introducing senseless bans on selling things people demand:

THE EU ruling regarding the mandatory phase-out of 100 watt and frosted incandescent light bulbs – sadly with no real UK challenge – is a classic example of a dictatorial directive from Brussels. These bulbs have been safely used for many decades. The EU continue to take away freedom of choice and democratic basic rights. Of course this will be welcomed by the global warming doom merchants who say that it is necessary to have ‘energy saving lamps’ to curb climate change. But it has been highlighted that there is now a concern on the lamps’ mercury content, resultant health impact, problems for partially sighted people, and safety requirements over the disposal of expired bulbs.

[ID 32]

It is argued that light bulbs have been safely used for many decades, whereas the environmentally friendly alternative raises concerns because of its mercury content. Moreover, the alternative light bulbs present a new challenge in the form of their ecological disposal that might offset any gains from the transition. Following the same script, the media covered, among other things, the ban on energy-inefficient hairdryers, vacuum cleaners, toasters, and washing machines. The EU environmental policies are blamed for UK citizens being stripped of their freedom to choose their preferred product and exposed to a new threat

without curbing climate change. As non-compliance with these policies would likely result in fines, UK sovereignty has been curbed to the degree where the failing policies cannot be challenged.

The discourse portraying EU public health policy as a failure is also strongly present in the coverage adopting strictly nationalist lenses. The policy is then seen to have negative effects as it blocks the possibilities of favouring UK citizens before other EU citizens:

UK TRANSPLANTED UP to 700 British donors gave their organs to foreign patients in the decade to 2008. There are 8, 000 Britons on the NHS organ waiting list. Tory MP Stephen O'Brien, who obtained the figures, said: 'When there is such a shortage of available organs we first need to ensure that we can provide for British patients. 'Prof Peter Friend added: 'While there is a surfeit of UK residents awaiting transplant it is correct that these patients have priority. 'British organs must be available to EU patients in order of need. Non-EU patients are entitled if there are no suitable EU patients.

[ID 33]

The organs present a scarce resource that is in line with EU policies being distributed among all patients irrespective of their citizenship. This is then perceived as a source of injustice because UK residents are assumed to be naturally more deserving than others.

In a similar vein, one of the discourses on Common Fisheries Policy seeks to prevent disregard for UK interests by moving the responsibility back to the national level:

[. . .] we could withdraw from the EU, hand the maintenance of our fishing back to our fishermen and let them look after our fish, as they did for centuries before our waters became an 'EU common resource'.

[ID 34]

By problematising the mechanisms used to assign the quotas, the discourse questions the policy as unjustified. For instance, just because an owner of two trawlers had two extreme catches at the right time when

the quotas are allocated, he can get a deal that puts other fishermen at a disadvantage until the next quota negotiations.

So far, I have introduced the five themes grouping discourses based on the way in which they qualify the EU policy interventions. We have seen that the themes vary considerably in terms of their relevance in public debates of the policy areas. Whereas most of the EU media coverage is dedicated to specific policies, the quantitative overview (section 4.3) has shown that approximately 20 per cent of the coverage during the whole monitored time deals with no particular policy area. In the next subsection, I explore the content of this residual category coded as *Other* to clarify its relevance for our analysis of EU legitimisation changes.

4.4.6 The Other: exploring the residual category

In section 4.3, we have seen that the computer-assisted classification of EU media coverage by policy area resulted in an overview, where up to 20 per cent of the coverage appears to be dealing with more than one of the EU policy areas. At the same time, up to 20 per cent of the coverage was not attributed to any of the coded policy area labels. In order to get a better understanding of how the EU is covered when no particular policy or set of policies is dominant, I will now present various discourses that make up this residual category. The main aim of this endeavour is to identify any discourses that were not present in the individual policy area categorisation, establish what makes them distinct, as well as their consequences for our analysis on how EU policy is qualified in the media coverage.

If we are to understand the character of the *Other* category, we have to ask about its origin. I have repeatedly coined this category as residual because, by contrast to the discreet policy area categories, it does not represent any meaning structure recognisable to the trained classifier (see section 3.5). Instead, the *Other* category was created by aggregating all the media reports that lacked assigned labels and did not explicitly deal with Brexit. This means that this category contains most of the noise that was not successfully filtered out from the dataset, such as advertisements or campaigns informing readers about how to vote in European elections or apply for a European health insurance card.

In addition, it combines all media coverage of concrete EU policy areas, where the classifier had too little confidence for it to assign the right

category. I suggest that such cases can be treated as outliers in the dataset. Arguably, by increasing the size of the hand-coded training set for the classifier, its ability to assign the correct label would get marginally better, which would then result in reducing the overall size of the *Other* category.

Leaving aside noise in the data and the coverage that was not correctly classified in any of the EU policy area categories, a closer look at the data in the *Other* category reveals systematic similarities between individual texts. What makes the coverage in this category stand out is its unique focal point. I distinguish between two broad themes. The first theme foregrounds politics at the expense of EU policies, while the second theme discusses the EU as a polity rather than specific EU policies.

Politics before policy

Instead of focusing on concrete policy interventions, the discourse highlighting EU politics rather than EU policies points readers' attention to concrete personas, politicians, and political parties. In other words, the EU acts only as a background for a discussion that ultimately revolves around politics. Consider the following example:

Even the more serious BBC political programmes, such as *Newsnight*, have been cracking juvenile jokes over the identity of the new President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy. Rumpy-pumpy! Rumpelstiltskin! Cue smirks in the studio, if not general hilarity. The BBC's political correspondents also joined in the view of the British press that Mr Van Rompuy is a 'nonentity' – apparently based on nothing more than the idea that anyone who happens to be the Prime Minister of Belgium must by definition be a nobody.

[ID 35]

Instead of discussing the actual EU agenda and changes in the EC, the personal focus of this type of coverage ridicules or praises concrete personas and their actions. Much of the argument consists of argumentation fallacies *ad hominem*, which avoid discussing the topic by turning attention to the qualities of the opponent. As a result, this coverage cannot be classified as policy-centred coverage because the EU policies receive only a minimum of the attention.

Similarly, the political debate dominates the policy debate also in coverage of specific groups such as activists, interest organisations, campaigners, political parties, or even regional governments. Indeed, before each upcoming election, much of the coverage is dedicated to party politics, yet the EU is seldom the dominant topic. Also, the coverage of diverse campaigns highlights the cause and calls for public support, whereas the EU is only mentioned as a potential political channel that can help to ramp up the pressure on local authorities. A significant portion of this type of coverage is dedicated to conflicts between different levels of UK governance, the prime example being the coverage of the Scottish independence referendum. While the main argument is constructed based on the British-Scottish antagonism, the feasibility of EU membership being granted to independent Scotland is mentioned only among many other considerations.

Despite its relative internal heterogeneity, the described part of the coverage classified as *Other* is characterised by its focus on politics that abstracts from policy-centred discussions. Since the main actors comprise concrete personas or political groups, this sub-category has only limited relevance for the study of how EU policy intervention is qualified. While EU policies are indeed present in the coverage, there is no space to problematise these qualifications established via different discourses.

Polity before policy

The second distinct discourse recognisable in the *Other* category displaces the focus on EU policy with a discussion about the EU as a polity. While the problematisation of the EU itself can, to some degree, be found in almost all of the policy-centred categories, the *Other* category debates more openly the benefits of EU membership, like in this example:

OUR European Union membership is a continuing disaster. Apart from sending billions every year to fund its chronically inefficient Common Agricultural Policy we have now been ordered to reduce the working hours of junior hospital doctors to no more than 48 a week from August 1. The president of the Royal College of Surgeons says there are not enough doctors to staff the rotas and that the health service will crack. The swine flu pandemic will

only make matters worse. At least we do not have the additional problem of being a member of the Single European Currency.

[ID 36]

This quote shows the typical style of a polity-centred contribution. Instead of developing a deeper argument about any specific policy area, the author tries to make a cumulative account of EU membership as a whole. This means that many different policy interventions are being qualified and judged, yet this discourse leaves little space for problematising the qualification of any of these. Indeed, the discourse shifts the focus of the debate towards the qualities of the EU as a polity. Unlike the discourse highlighting politics before EU policies, the polity-centred strand of coverage has the highest potential to influence the legitimacy of the EU itself. Therefore, it warrants a more systematic analysis presented in the following chapter.

4.4.7 Evaluating EU policies

In the first two analytical steps in this section, I have coded discourses characterised by the various ways in which EU policy interventions are represented in media reports and grouped these discourses into five distinct, but not mutually exclusive, themes. By investigating how and to what degree each of the themes has been used across the policy area categories, we got a first indication of their likelihood to be used to problematise the EU as a polity. Raising system-level critique requires not only a consistent way of qualifying EU policies but also a link to a coherent set of normative criteria applicable across diverse policy areas (see section 2.2). In the last step of the analysis, I now discuss the normative criteria that each theme uses to evaluate EU policies in each category and to what degree it fulfils this condition. The more uniform the evaluative criteria that a theme uses across the different categories are, the easier it would be to appropriate the discourses to (de)legitimise the EU itself.

The analysis has shown that some of the five themes qualifying EU policies as an outcome of negotiations, as another cog in the markets machinery, as a solution to common problems, as a threat, or as a failure affecting the UK sovereignty have been invoked across multiple EUR-lex policy area categories. Table 4.1 outlines the particular normative criteria that each of the themes use to assess a concrete type of policy. I now

provide a closer look at the evaluative practices of each of the five themes.

The first theme qualifies EU policy interventions as an outcome of negotiations between different interest groups or EU members or between the EU and other countries. Although the qualification has been invoked across half of the EUR-Lex policy area categories, there seems to be no single set of normative criteria applicable across the different policy areas. In each of the policy areas, specific criteria were chosen for assessing whether the EU policies actually contribute to solving given issues. The criteria might range from how large quotas for the agricultural sector and fisheries the government secured to whether Turkey – a country perceived as economically, culturally and socially incompatible – will be allowed to join the EU to the actual amount of CO₂ reduction achieved by the negotiated targets. The lack of a single set of normative criteria makes mounting a more general critique of the EU itself using this theme unlikely.

By contrast to the first theme, the theme qualifying EU policy as but another cog in the market's machinery has been predominantly used only in the coverage of EU agricultural and fisheries policy. Since the main stress of this messaging has been on the actual market changes, EU policies are then successfully depoliticised. The discussion in terms of this discourse revolves around measures that could help counter-balance global market forces that cannot be influenced. The theme utilises a single set of normative criteria assessing whether the policy successfully mitigated market forces. At the same time, the marginal use of the theme, which is mostly limited to a single policy area, suggests that this way of qualifying EU policy is not salient enough to be used for clarification and evaluation of the EU as a polity.

The theme portraying EU policy interventions as a solution to some common problem has been invoked across all but one policy area category. This broad applicability points towards the high relative salience of this perspective. At the same time, in each policy area, the theme uses a specific set of normative standards. Whereas in the case of EU environmental policy, the theme evaluates the policy intervention based on its ability to protect endangered species, in the case of EU foreign and security policies, it assesses the ability to prevent international conflict or protect human rights. Although this theme has

proliferated to a larger degree than the first theme, the potential for its appropriation to qualify and evaluate the EU as a polity is, in both cases, curbed by the low uniformity of the evaluative standards.

Similarly, the theme qualifying EU policy as a threat has been invoked across all of the policy areas, yet we find differences in normative criteria establishing what is threatened in each category. In the case of EU migration policy coverage, EU policy is constructed as threatening UK public services, whereas in the case of EU environmental policy, the threat is directed against the planetary ecosystem, and in the case of EU social policy, it threatens local businesses. This multiplicity makes elaborating a discourse that would set the EU as a polity against a concrete value or audience that is being threatened cumbersome. Even though the theme might contribute to audiences getting a more negative impression of EU policies, it provides only a rather diffuse idea of what the EU is threatening. Unless a more focused image of what is being put at stake is developed, this policy-centred theme is unlikely to be used to problematise the EU as a polity.

The last theme qualifying EU policies as a policy failure affecting UK sovereignty has also been invoked in all of the policy area categories. Unlike the previous theme elaborating on the motive of a threat in each category, the main normative concern highlighted by this theme remains the same across all of the policy areas. What is being problematised is the quality of governance. In the cases when the quality of governance appears to be inferior to any national solution, the lack of sovereignty in the given policy area presents another value that comes under stress because of EU policy interventions. This critical edge and relatively clear idea of what is being put at stake make this theme more likely to be developed into a form that problematises the European project itself. Therefore, this theme makes the best point of departure for the analysis of public justification and critique affecting EU legitimacy in the following chapter.

Table 4.1: The criteria of assessing EU policies for each theme used in distinct EU policy-area coverage category

Themes per EU policy area	Outcome of negotiations	EU as a cog in the markets machinery	Solution to common problems	Threat	Policy failure impacting sovereignty
<i>Agricultural and Fisheries policy</i>	Secure competitive advantage and/or support for the sector	Mitigating the market pressures	Delivering a harmonised common market for agricultural production	Implanting the policy in a way benefiting the UK industry	The policy serving its purpose and allowing for revisions or an opt-out
<i>Migration policy</i>			Providing effective allocation of human resources	Dealing with the challenge of integrating the 'flood' of immigrants	The policy serving its purpose and allowing for revisions or an opt-out
<i>Funds, subsidies, money transfers</i>			The ability to source the EU funds to deal with local problems	Achieving just distribution of the funds between member states and within the UK	The policy serving its purpose and allowing for revisions or an opt-out
<i>Public health policy</i>			Protecting EU citizens from the spread of diseases and other harm to public health	Keeping the high health safety standards	The policy serving its purpose and allowing for revisions or an opt-out
<i>Foreign and security policy, humanitarian aid</i>	Secure the best positions for the UK within the EU		Preventing international conflicts and overseeing the protection of human rights	Preventing individual member states from hijacking the EU for their interests	The policy serving its purpose and allowing for revisions or an opt-out
<i>Social policy and human rights protection</i>			Empowering EU citizens against authorities, granting rights not guaranteed by national law	Keeping the economy competitive despite increasing workers' demands	The policy serving its purpose and allowing for revisions or an opt-out
<i>Economic and financial policy</i>	Securing the most beneficial			Protecting the economy, strategic	The policy serving its purpose and

	budget for the UK, advancing liberalisation			industries, and important companies from the free market	allowing for revisions or an opt-out
<i>Environmental policy and animal welfare</i>	Securing pragmatic national targets		Managing climate change, protecting endangered species	Preventing economic damage	The policy serving its purpose and allowing for revisions or an opt-out

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the macro-level legitimation changes in the data. Based on the existing literature, I have defined three main dimensions of legitimation change: politicisation, understood as visibility, tone of coverage, and the content of public justifications and critique. Each of these indicators demarcated what kind of legitimation changes might have taken place during the monitored time period.

Since only a properly politicised institutional body can be assessed as legitimate or illegitimate, I have started with the analysis of politicisation which indicated that the EU had been a salient topic and identified two potential legitimation shifts. After a steady decline in the volume of EU coverage, the data shows two main surges: one related to the sovereign debt crisis in late 2009 and the other to the Brexit referendum. The findings of the analysis presented in section 4.3 indicate that the observed surge in the absolute visibility of the EU in media coverage has been driven by contributions discussing mostly EU economic and financial policy.

In terms of the second analytical dimension, the estimated tone of the coverage remained slightly negative during the whole monitored time, irrespective of the prediction method used. This result is in line with the study of Schmidtke (2019) introduced in section 1.1.2.3, who found that the media coverage of international organisations is generally rather negative. Given no significant shifts in the sentiment, we cannot assume any legitimacy changes based on this dimension.

Next, I surveyed relevant legitimation changes in the content of the justifications and critique with the goal of spotting any changes in the

likelihood of legitimacy change in kind at different times. Before any public critique of the EU or its policies can be mounted, a common context must be established via operations of qualification. By following the public debate dedicated to diverse EU policy areas, a reader develops an understanding of what kind of institutional body the EU is, what its competencies are, and what kind of consequences its policy interventions have. EU policy interventions in each specific policy area have been qualified from a slightly different position, with different normative standards in mind.

The quantitative content analysis in section 4.3 has searched for any periods where one policy area rose in its relative visibility at the expense of others. When the public debate is dominated by a narrow focus on some of the EU's agenda, the relevant standards for assessing its performance become more obvious. As a result, there is a higher likelihood that these particular standards will be used for problematising the legitimacy of the EU itself and potential legitimacy changes in degree. However, the analysis has shown that the composition of EU policy coverage remained largely unchanged with the exception of a temporary expansion in economic and financial policy coverage in late 2010 during the sovereign debt crisis. This implies that also the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree remained largely the same.

Since the analysis did not indicate any permanent increase in the relative visibility of a EUR-Lex policy area at the expense of others, I have investigated possible legitimation changes that cut across these individual policy areas. Using qualitative discourse analysis, I have tried to map the full variety of distinct (but not mutually exclusive) ways of qualifying EU policies in each policy area category. By abstracting from a policy-field-specific agenda of these qualifications, I have identified five more general themes. They qualify the policies as an outcome of the negotiation, as only one cog in the market's machinery, a solution to common problems, as a threat to something worthy, and as a policy failure threatening national sovereignty.

Since a substantial portion of the coverage is not dedicated to any particular EU policy area, I have decided to explore its content using qualitative analysis. I have identified two distinct themes: one, which focuses on politics before EU policies, and the other, problematising the EU as a polity rather than particular policies.

By comparing the use of these themes between the different policy areas, it became apparent that despite sharing the same qualification, the related normative concerns are often specific to a given policy area. This was especially the case with a discourse on EU policies as a threat. Even though the theme has been invoked in all of the policy areas, the normative criteria used to outline the character of the threat varied widely. I have concluded that the theme of qualifying EU policies as a failure affecting the UK's sovereignty presents a coherent way of both qualifying and evaluating EU policies. This makes it relatively more likely to be used for qualifying the EU itself and raising a polity-level critique.

As the polity-centred coverage has arguably the most direct impact on EU legitimacy, the next chapter will provide a more fine-grained investigation into legitimation changes in terms of these polity-centred discourses.

Chapter 5

Inferring EU legitimacy changes from polity-centred media coverage

Most of EU media coverage is dedicated to policy-centred news. In the previous section, we have seen that some ways of qualifying EU policy interventions can be found across multiple policy area categories. At the same time, the normative standards used to evaluate the policies are largely specific to the concrete policy area, with the exception of coverage qualifying the EU as a policy failure affecting the UK's sovereignty. As the discourses grouped under this theme leverage the same type of qualification and evaluation, they form the most likely point of departure for raising concerns about the EU as a polity.

Furthermore, the analysis in chapter 4 has shown that a substantial part of the coverage cannot be attributed a policy-area label (coded as the *Other* category). The investigation into the content revealed that this category consists of coverage dedicated to EU politics and the EU as a polity. Since polity-centred discourses can trigger legitimacy changes both in degree and kind, in this chapter I complement the macro-level exploration of the most salient ways in which the EU policy interventions were qualified (chapter 4) with a description of legitimation changes in polity-centred EU media coverage.

I break the analysis in this section into three steps. Firstly, I investigate the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage to get an indication of changes in the EU's diffuse support. A drop in the EU's diffuse support might suggest that there has been a legitimacy change in degree. Secondly, I examine what normative concerns were driving changes in the visibility of the polity-centred coverage by zooming in on distinct discourses. I start by comparing the normative concerns raised by the

theme qualifying the EU policy interventions as policy failures affecting the UK sovereignty with the available research. Based on this comparison, I distinguish between three polity-centred discourses focusing on issues of national identity, quality of EU governance, and the UK's sovereignty.

In this analytical step, I am primarily concerned with changes in normative expectations towards the EU affecting its legitimacy. However, the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage might temporarily change due to a current agenda in the news. Therefore, I proceed to unpack the dominant issues highlighted by each of the three discourses. As a result, we can distinguish between a normative change and an effect of agenda-setting in the media.

Lastly, I compare the proliferation of the polity-centred discourses across different media outlets to control for possible media source bias. Since we are using the UK media sphere as a proxy for the public sphere, assessing the absolute visibility of the polity-centred coverage allows for assessing the significance of the findings in previous sections. I use the changes in absolute visibility as a measure of audience exposure.

5.1 Estimating diffuse support to control for EU legitimacy changes in degree

This section estimates developments in the EU's stock of legitimacy based on legitimation changes in terms of polity-centred EU media coverage. The observed changes in the content of public legitimation cannot easily be used to infer the direction or the magnitude of the change in the stock of EU legitimacy. Therefore, I draw on the concept of diffuse support (section 2.3.4) that, in the scholarly literature (section 1.1.1.2), is used to estimate political support.

Even though particular policies might have negatively affected EU citizens, the diffuse support for the EU keeps the EU as a polity unproblematised. Yet, as a policy repeatedly appears as a failure and the public grows critical of it, specific support, which acts as a buffer for diffuse support, is depleted. Consequently, the probability that critique will be redirected towards the EU as a polity rises.

Although legitimacy comprises but one component of the diffuse support, I argue that trends in the amount of polity-centred coverage can be used as a rough heuristic for legitimacy changes in degree. In these terms, a sharp increase in polity-centred coverage indicates a legitimacy change in degree or even an onset of a legitimacy crisis (see section 2.3.4). Following this reasoning, I conduct quantitative text analysis to highlight the trends in polity-centred coverage.

The analysis of the composition of EU policy area coverage (section 4.3) showed that after the slow economic recovery, the composition of the EU policy coverage returned to its pre-crisis state, and the multiplicity of public representations of the EU was restored. The residual category coded as *Other* (section 4.4) can serve as a rough measure of the relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses. However, this category lumps polity-centred coverage together with other media reports that are of little relevance for this analysis. In order to get a more accurate estimate of the relative visibility of polity-centred coverage, I have coded and classified the polity-centred discourses in the total EU media coverage (see section 3.6).

Assuming that the public debate would not shift from a discussion about concrete policies towards scrutinising the EU as a polity until the EU's diffuse support starts to decrease, I control for swings in the volume of EU media coverage focusing on the EU as a polity. Figure 13 shows a gradual increase in relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage after Q3 2012. However, this trend might have been caused by a momentary agenda rather than by any substantial changes in normative expectations. For this reason, I interpret the trend against the background of changes in the composition of the media coverage.

When a particular topic gains salience, its corresponding policy area will likely get more public attention. The analysis in section 4.3 showed a temporary expansion of EU economic policy coverage accompanied by the increase in absolute visibility of the EU in the media coverage (section 4.1). Let us have a closer look at whether the increase in absolute visibility was accompanied by any changes in the volume of polity-centred coverage.

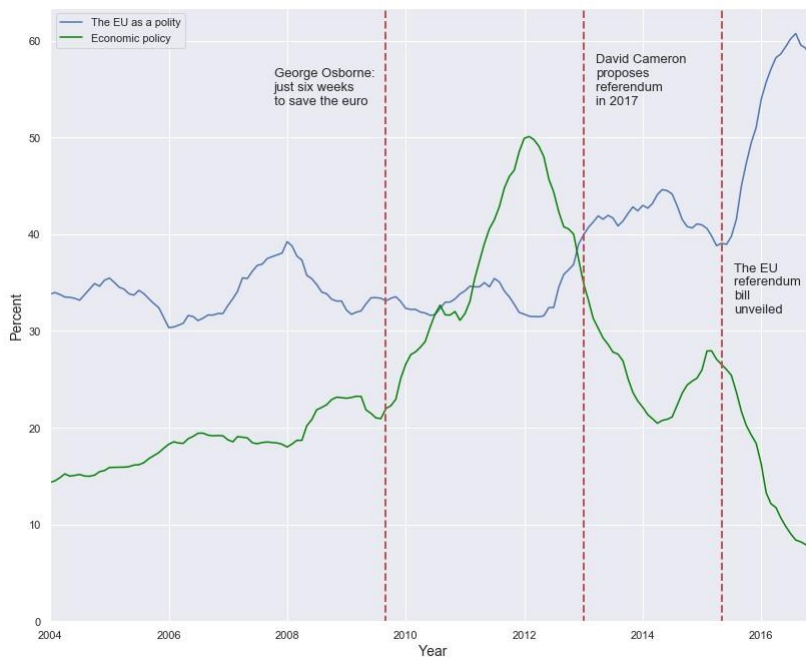


Figure 5.1: The yearly moving average of percentage share of EU coverage dedicated to the economic policy (green) and the coverage debating the EU as a polity (dark blue)

Figure 5.1 puts the yearly moving average of the percentage share of media coverage where the EU is thematised as a polity in relation to the yearly moving average of the percentage share of the EU economic policy coverage. We see that during the period of the biggest expansion of EU economic policy coverage right after the summer of 2009, there was not any immediate increase in EU polity coverage. At the same time, before the specific support for EU economic and financial policy is close to being depleted, the debate is unlikely to problematise the institutional framework itself (see section 2.3). It is possible that the increase in economic policy coverage did translate into a rise in the polity-centred coverage, albeit with a delay.

The surge in Q3 2012 indicates potential legitimacy changes in degree affecting the EU's stock of diffuse support. Despite the only temporary increase in EU economic and financial policy coverage, the collective representation of the EU as a polity might have been altered in a way that galvanised the unprecedented amount of polity-centred coverage (Figure 5.1). This expectation can hardly be tested without an in-depth probe into the content of legitimation dominant before the surge in Q3 2012. The following subsections, therefore, investigate legitimation changes in the polity-centred discourses that could have been driving the observed trend in the EU's diffuse support.

5.2 Zooming in on the polity-centred EU media coverage

Seeking to understand the drivers behind the observed rise in relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage (section 5.1), I break the polity-centred coverage down into discourses with distinct normative concerns.

I start subsection 5.2.1 by contrasting the theme qualifying EU policy as a failure affecting UK sovereignty (see section 4.4) with categories introduced in the literature, as this theme makes the most likely point of departure for developing a critique of the EU as a polity. The goal here is to locate the most fruitful analytical distinctions between various normative concerns raised by the theme.

Once the discreet discourses are identified, section 5.2.2 investigates how each of the discourses contributed to the surge in relative visibility of the polity-centred media coverage (section 5.1). However, changes in the relative visibility of these individual discourses can be driven by a momentary agenda rather than by a normative change. Therefore, I use quantitative text analysis to check for expansions of any particular topic at the expense of others thematised by each discourse. This way, I identify which normative concerns became relatively more salient during the monitored period, irrespective of the dominant agenda.

Lastly, having probed the structure of each discourse, I investigate changes in the normative expectations towards the EU raised by each of them at times of observed abrupt changes in the EU's diffuse support. I draw three samples: a baseline sample from Q2 2012, the second sample from Q1 2014, during which the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage was peaking, and the third sample from Q4 2016 and Q1 2015, representing the point of departure for the Brexit debate. I classify observed legitimisation practices in each sample using the introduced analytical framework (section 2.2). The framework helps us to disambiguate between changes at the pragmatic level affecting the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree and the meta-pragmatic changes leading to legitimacy changes in kind.

Since the polity-centred media coverage has the biggest influence on EU legitimacy, the three steps of analysis provide a full overview of the legitimisation changes indicating concrete EU legitimacy changes.

5.2.1 Evaluating the EU as a polity

In the previous chapter, I have identified the theme qualifying EU policy interventions as a policy failure affecting the UK sovereignty as the most probable resource for problematising the EU itself. To pinpoint normative concerns driving the surge in relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage observed in section 5.1, in this subsection I disaggregate the polity coverage into discourses. Since other scholars (Díez Medrano 2003; Van Inglegom 2014) have already developed taxonomies capturing normative expectations raised towards the EU, I contrast these taxonomies with the data. The aim here is to locate the most fruitful classification between distinct ways of evaluating the EU as a polity.

Taxonomies of normative expectations towards the EU

In the available literature, Van Inglegom (2014) found that UK participants were the ones most concerned about issues of sovereignty and identity, benefits of the common market, and possible discord between member states. Similar to Díez Medrano (2003), Van Inglegom found that other themes were equally common in all countries. Comparing the taxonomy developed in the literature with the content of the theme, it becomes apparent that only some of the normative concerns identified in the literature correspond to our data. Indeed, issues related to the common market, liberalisation, welfare policies, or international politics are easily voiced using the other, policy-area specific discourses that qualify EU policies differently. As a result, I distinguish between the discourse qualifying the EU as a source of policy failures affecting the UK sovereignty that 1) evaluates the EU based on its impact on national identity and traditions, 2) based on the quality of its governance, and 3) based on its effect on national sovereignty and democracy. In order to give the reader an idea of what normative concerns correspond to the three discourses, I now briefly introduce each of them.

The EU as a challenge to the national identity and traditions

The first discourse sees the EU as a challenge to national identity and traditions. Aiming to advance harmonisation of the single market, the EU continues with governance by standards. In order to be capable of regulating all goods in the market, the EU must develop a unitary standardised classification system. Yet, the diverse classificatory systems people use and are used to enable them to navigate their local markets.

From the perspective of the locals, their use-value is unquestionable. Furthermore, differences among national classificatory systems contribute to the distinctiveness and uniqueness of not only locally made goods but also local culture. It is therefore hardly surprising that the media reported about the outrage when the EU was debating mandatory use of the metric system of measurement. Since this system is adopted by most of the EU countries, such regulation was seen as directed against UK traditions, as it would mean the end of the imperial system. As a result, it was claimed that local pubs would not be allowed to serve pints of beer anymore. In this way, a proposed change motivated by primarily technocratic reasoning has been qualified as challenging the local way of life and thus evaluated as highly undesirable.

The discourse poses the EU and the national and local symbols strictly against each other. This strategy renders the issue of symbolic representation evident. Since the locals do not identify with the EU, its symbols appear as foreign, and their presentation is imposed on the UK. Consider the following quote:

[. . .] we are not Europeans, and never want to be. yes, we are a small part of Europe, and are happy to trade and maintain good friendly relationships with other countries, both in Europe and worldwide, but at the end of the day, it is vital that we keep our own identity as an independent island nation.

[ID 37]

Note that this discourse is not projecting the issue of symbolic representation as a question of identity but ultimately as a question of freedom. More concretely, what is at stake is the freedom to be different and recognisable. This ambition is evaluated as incompatible with the European project that is viewed as a quest for unification, as expressed in this short example: ‘Short points: Has he forgotten the commission for racial equality’s findings that multi-culturalism has failed? If we celebrate all cultures, the result will be the end of any UK identity – an EU aim’ [ID 38].By replacing UK passports with EU passports without any mention of the Queen, forcing the British merchant fleet to fly the European flag, and fining institutions in disadvantaged regions receiving EU funding that have omitted to display the EU symbols, the EU’s efforts to create a European identity leads to resentment:

We should resist the EU as often and as widely as possible. Demand pounds of carrots. Stick a union jack, or national flag of your choice, over the blue thing on car number plates. Stick posters over any sign that says 'this was funded by the EU', pointing out that for every pound of our own money they give us back, we paid – what? 60? wrecked lives. resist the EU!

[ID 39]

The discourse portraying the EU as a challenge to national identity and traditions highlights these changes and makes people aware of what is perceived as symbolic pollution that demands action. Despite its potential to provoke critical reactions, this discourse is seldom found on its own. This is also the reason why its visibility cannot be easily tracked using the adopted quantitative methods. Its usage is limited to momentary agendas, incidents, and politics. The question of the EU and local identity has been briefly mentioned by UK politicians without further elaborating on this discourse.

The EU's intention to avoid clashing with strong national identities by focusing on regions appeared problematic in the UK characterised by relatively strong regional identities:

[. . .] it is all part of the EU intention to achieve a break up of the UK into small regions and sub-regions so that we lose our identity as a country and are just the northwest corner of 'Europe', answerable only to foreign bureaucrats in Brussels and not to Westminster. [. . .] encouragement of Celtic language is par for the course.

[ID 40]

To the regional audiences, the EU was not necessarily clashing with their local identity. Instead, the discourse provided additional means for challenging the national identity. Consequently, British audiences might have perceived the issue of identity as extra valent.

The discourse on the EU as a source of erosion of national sovereignty and democracy

While the previous discourses raise concerns about symbolic representation, this discourse problematises the EU from the perspective of the political representation of UK citizens. Since much of the decision-

making at the EU level is done by elected representatives, the legitimacy of these decisions relies on their mandate and perceived trustworthiness. Consider the following quote:

The EU president, Jose Barroso, argues that because the British invented parliamentary democracy, and cut off the King's head to establish the sovereignty of Parliament, we should trust our elected representatives to ratify the proposed constitutional treaty (News & Business, April 29). It is precisely because the new constitution, however re-packaged, would further diminish the sovereignty of our Parliament that ratification should not be at the sole discretion of MPs. It is not their sovereignty to give away.

[ID 41]

The attempt of the EU president to legitimise the ratification of the constitutional treaty by referencing parliamentarism reaches its limits, as the current representatives are not perceived as having the mandate to delegate some of their powers to the EU level. Indeed, this step would also affect any MPs elected in the future and would ultimately be irreversible.

Once a certain competence is delegated to the EU, it cannot be reclaimed back by the national government. Moreover, the legislation passed at the EU level has to be implemented by the nation state without many chances to negotiate an opt-out. The discourse, therefore, applies a strict 'us against them' dichotomy, interpreting the EU decisions as a diktat. In turn, the UK representatives that sanctioned the EU policies are seen as traitors, which grants the narrative a hint of conspiracy:

Our once-great nation will be swallowed up into what is increasingly becoming the EU empire. A thousand years of democracy will have gone, along with 600 members of our Parliament. They will no longer be needed to represent us as just 50 will be sufficient to rubber-stamp the diktats of the EU bigwigs. Our history has shown this country fights against conquerors. Sadly, we are losing by stealth and politicians without backbones.

[ID 42]

This example shows a condensed form of the typical use of the discourse. The EU has been attributed an ambition to turn into a federal

superstate or an empire by claiming ever more power from nation-states. This hurts not only the prestige of the UK but also its democracy, as the national representatives are gradually rendered powerless. What is more, this process is enabled by the current elected representatives who sanction these changes. We see that there is no need to problematise the quality of EU governance, as the policy can be rejected as illegitimate simply with reference to its EU origin.

The discourse on the EU as a threat to the quality of governance

By contrast to the previously introduced discourse, the discourse on the EU as a threat to the quality of governance is substantially more elaborated and streamlined. As we have seen in section 4.4, the structure of this discourse has been elaborated in much of the policy-centred coverage. Once applied to qualify the EU as a polity, instead of problematising a concrete policy intervention, the EU is qualified as a source of burdensome regulation. As the discourse grew in popularity and became more common, the EU policies became dubbed as 'red tape'. This designation harks back to the tape that has historically been used to bind legal documents. The term is, however, only invoked when one criticises laws that are seen as unnecessary and/or damaging. As a result, this powerful and well-known metaphor enables actors to be abstract from concrete regulations and refer to EU regulation as a whole. Consider the following example:

European Union regulations cost more than twice as much to enforce as homegrown British laws, a report has found. Brussels legislation has cost the British economy £124 billion, accounting for 71 per cent of the total cost of all red tape, both national and European, implemented in Britain since 1998, according to a study by Open Europe. The think tank looked at thousands of official impact assessments and found that EU regulation was 2.5 times less cost-effective.

[ID 43]

Since the trope of red tape has been firmly established as a part of this discourse, the phrase suggests to readers which normative standards are relevant. The discussion in terms of this discourse then revolves around the degree to which the EU regulation presents an unnecessary burden damaging to the UK. In addition, the quality of the EU regulation can be

compared with the local regulation. Since the EU itself is qualified as a source of the red tape that the UK cannot dispute but is forced to implement, such comparisons lend themselves well to the purpose of enumerating the damage caused by the EU, as the Eurosceptic think tank Open Europe demonstrates in the quote above.

This discourse has been widely adopted in two main contexts. On the one hand, UK politicians on different occasions promise to cut red tape. By using the negatively laden trope, they create both a target that can be blamed for almost any negative event, and stronger engagement with responsive audiences. On the other hand, the discourse has been adopted by representatives of various interest groups who, instead of disputing a concrete regulation affecting their industry, choose to direct the critique against the EU as a polity. When successful, this tactic allows avoiding any deeper debate about the parameters of the proposed policy, as it can be evaluated as damaging and rejected purely on the basis of its European origin.

In the end, the EU can only be qualified as a source of red tape if the connection between its regulations and concrete negative impacts on UK citizens' lives is convincingly established. Since the amount of taxpayer money that has allegedly been wasted is easily understandable, the stress is placed on quantifying the costs of EU regulation. When compared to a corresponding local policy that appears more cost-effective, the benefits of EU membership become unclear.

In order to challenge the established representation of the EU as a source of red tape, some actors mobilise this discourse to recast the EU as responsible for peace and prosperity. The EU is portrayed as a source of these values, as they arguably have transnational character. By stressing the desirable impacts the EU brings what otherwise could hardly be achieved by any individual member state, the EU's quality of governance can be shown in a more favourable light. Nevertheless, the connection between the desired outcomes and EU governance has been strongly challenged:

Countries do not exist after the Maastricht Treaty – just regions which are easier for the EU to control. If we are so prosperous, why have we got an £18 billion trade deficit with the EU? Peace?

Soldiers do not start wars, politicians do. I think the little group called Nato had more to do with peace than the EU.

[ID 44]

In this quote, the unclear contribution of the two international organisations helps to question the original claim. While this attempt to defend the quality of EU governance shows that the discourse can be used both for criticising and justifying the EU as a polity, the association between the EU and red tape has over years been established by an eloquent carrier group of Eurosceptics. Nevertheless, the quality of its governance has been a highly salient normative expectation towards the EU.

Each of the three introduced discourses highlights different normative concerns about the EU as a polity: its challenge to the symbolic representation of the UK, its political misrepresentation of UK citizens, and its influence on the quality of local governance. It is, however, important to bear in mind that this distinction is analytical rather than empirical. In practice, actors qualify and evaluate the EU as a polity by combining and drawing on all the available ideational means. As a result, the three discourses appear intertwined. Nevertheless, this analytical distinction helps to identify changes in the relative salience of the specific normative expectations that the EU must navigate to emerge as legitimate. In the next section, I scrutinise the relationship between these polity-centred discourses and the increase in relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage (section 5.1).

5.2.2 Mapping composition of the EU polity-centred coverage

Changes in the relative visibility of the individual polity-centred discourses indicate a shift in the salience of concrete normative concerns. Using quantitative text analysis, I track trends in the relative visibility of the discourses to identify to what degree each of the discourses has contributed to the increase in the polity-centred coverage.

I distinguish between three polity-centred discourses (5.2.1), thematising the EU as a threat to national identity and traditions, quality of EU governance, and erosion of national sovereignty and democracy. The first of them, while clearly distinct, is too marginal (>4 per cent of total 612 590 N) to be used in quantitative analysis as an explanatory factor /

to allow us to infer statistically meaningful analysis for the sudden rise in the polity-centred media coverage. The remaining two discourses were significantly more common. Figure 5.2 shows yearly moving averages of the proportions that these two non-exclusive categories constituted in the overall EU media coverage. Their development varied until approximately 2010, after which they started to coincide, with both discourses contributing to the most significant hike in relative visibility of polity-centred coverage in Q2 2012.

At a closer look, we find more volatility in the national sovereignty and democracy discourse. Besides its rise in relative visibility in Q1 2010, it is fully responsible for the rise in relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage in the period from 2006 to 2008.

The observed rise in the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses can have different reasons. It could be caused by some momentary agenda (e.g. negotiation of a new treaty). Alternatively, it could have resulted from discontent with the EU's inability to meet the normative expectations of some audiences over a longer time.

As discussed earlier (see section 3.1.1), the media values timeliness. A temporary surge can be partly explained by the momentary agenda related to the EU. Once the matter is resolved, the topics will fade away from public attention. On the other hand, the media values proximity, stereotypes, negativity, and unexpectedness (Bednarek and Caple 2017). When the EU seemingly threatens something of value to the audiences, the media are then quick to report on the issue, which stays visible until the threat is averted. When the coverage is stirred by timeliness, the increased visibility of particular qualifications of the EU makes it easier to develop a critique. Consequently, the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree grows momentarily. In the other cases, the coverage is fuelled by the EU's actions running against audiences' normative expectations. What is at stake is then used to qualify and evaluate EU legitimacy. If we are to control for the effect of temporary agenda on the relative visibility, we need to investigate dominant topics in the internal composition of each of the polity-centred discourses (see section 3.6).

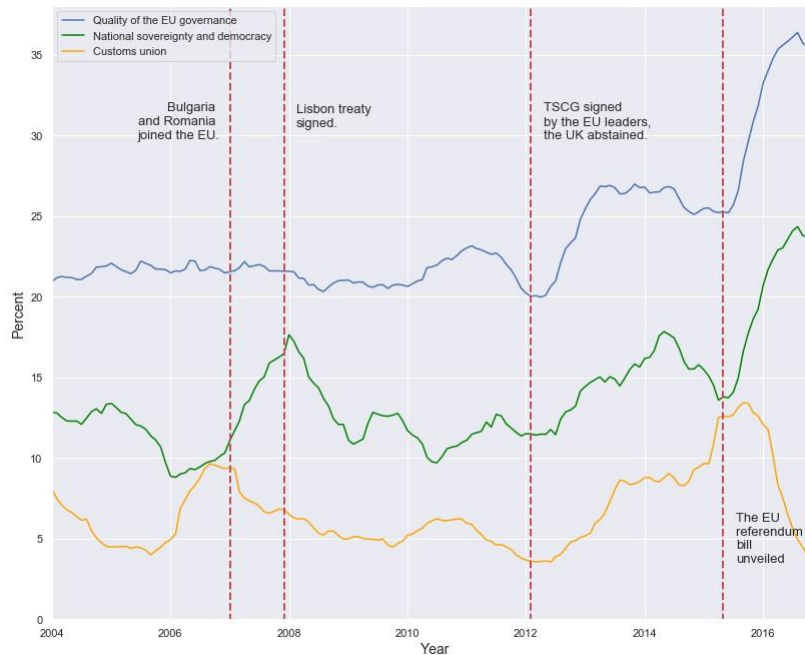


Figure 5.2: Yearly moving averages of percentage shares that the quality of the governance discourse, national sovereignty and democracy discourse, and customs union policy coverage (non-exclusive categories) constituted of the EU media coverage

We learn about the agenda that helped to elaborate and amplify a concrete polity-centred discourse by exploring what topics were covered and used in this discourse. In this way, I explore what role the concerns about EU economic policy played in driving the potential legitimacy changes in degree. First, let us investigate whether the rise in the total volume of polity-centred coverage (Figure 5.1) might be related to the observed temporary expansion of EU economic policy coverage (see section 4.3). This construction can be assessed by looking at Figures 5.3 and 5.4 showing the composition of covered topics coded by their corresponding policy areas in each of the two polity-centred discourses. While the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage reached its peak in 2014, the share of EU economic policy coverage comprised the biggest part of the discourse in Q2 2012. Its volume then normalised for both of the two discourses. Since the increase in the discourse’s relative visibility has continued past this focus on EU economic policy, I conclude that the observed surge was not related solely to the agenda related to the management of the financial crisis and the Euro crisis.

Similarly, searching for possible events that might have been driving the first sudden hike in relative visibility of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy, it might be related to the planned accession

of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU in 2007. However, the orange curve signalling the focus on topics related to the EU migration policy coverage (Figure 5.2) suggests that there has been a de-escalation of these issues right after the accession. An alternative explanation could be that the discourse was highly prominent in the debate on ratification of the Lisbon treaty. This assertion seems plausible also in light of the subsequent fall in its salience after the treaty was finally ratified in December 2007. Figure 5.4 shows that the peak in the relative visibility of discourse on national sovereignty and democracy corresponds to the increase in the proportion of news coded under the category *Other*. As we have seen in our earlier analysis (see section 4.4.8), the politicking surrounding the ratification of the Lisbon treaty has been coded under the category *Other*. The hypothesis that the first surge in the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses was caused by momentary agenda therefore holds.

Let us now consider in more detail the topics represented in each of the polity-centred discourses. Figure 5.3 shows that the discourse on the quality of EU governance has been invoked in the coverage of all the topics. This makes it the most visible polity-centred discourse adopted in over 20 per cent of the EU media coverage. The topics covered by the discourse correspond almost perfectly with the overall structure of the EU coverage. The quality of EU governance, therefore, can be used to problematise the legitimacy of the EU as a polity in the UK media sphere.

By contrast, the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy has been generally less salient and appeared mostly in coverage of a couple of topics. Figure 5.4 shows that at least 50 per cent of the EU media coverage that was classified by policy area as *Other* contains the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy. Interestingly, even though the coverage of the migration policy is characterised by isolationist calls for restricting immigration and the influence of outsiders on domestic affairs (section 4.4.2), yet this polity-centred discourse is seldom invoked. In fact, we have seen that the discourse on the quality of EU governance is more common even in the coverage of this particular topic than the sovereignty and democracy discourse. At the same time, the discourse is very present in the texts discussing social policy and human rights topics. The EU regulations affecting these

domains are at times perceived as illegitimate interventions. Similarly, the EU has been praised for introducing new employee rights.

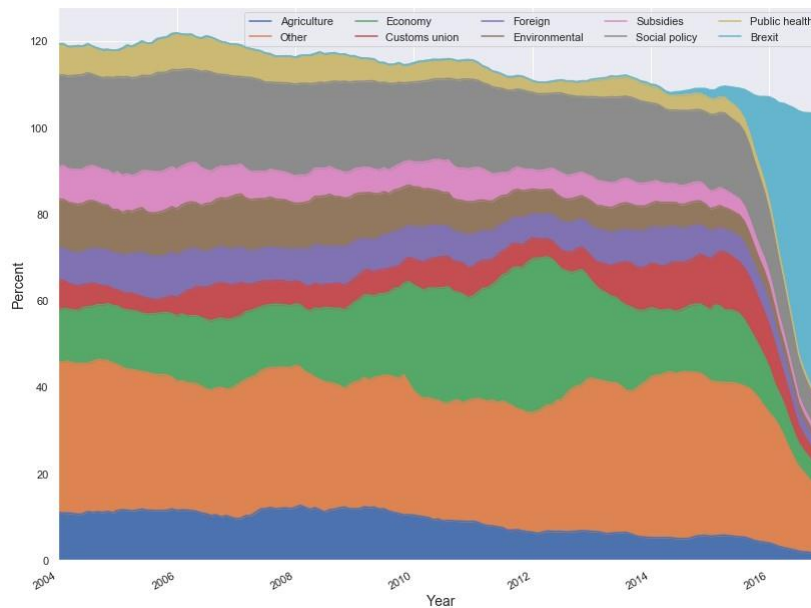


Figure 5.3: Stack area chart showing yearly moving averages of percentage shares for each of the topics coded by their corresponding EU policy areas in a given media report (one media report might contain several non-exclusive topics) constituting the quality of the EU governance discourse

The critical edge of most of the EU coverage mobilised primarily the discourse on the quality of the EU governance that has been mainstream throughout the whole monitored period.

Figure 5.4 demonstrates that the temporary upsurge in the relative visibility of the discourse observed in late 2006 (Figure 5.2) materialised in the coverage of social policy and *Other* topics. While this discourse has been less salient in policy-centred coverage, it has been significantly more commonplace in politics coverage.

All in all, neither figure 5.3 nor figure 5.4 show any decisive shifts in the composition of the two polity-centred discourses. This means that the observed surge in the relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses after Q2 2012 was not simply a reflection of some temporary media agenda. Instead, we have seen a normalisation of these discourses, as they are both used in discussions of most of the topics. In order to achieve such normalisation, the discourses must raise normative expectations about the EU that resonate with broader audiences. Since the wording of normative expectations has likely evolved over time, the next subsection follows shifts in how the EU was qualified and evaluated

over time in the polity-centred coverage using qualitative discourse analysis.

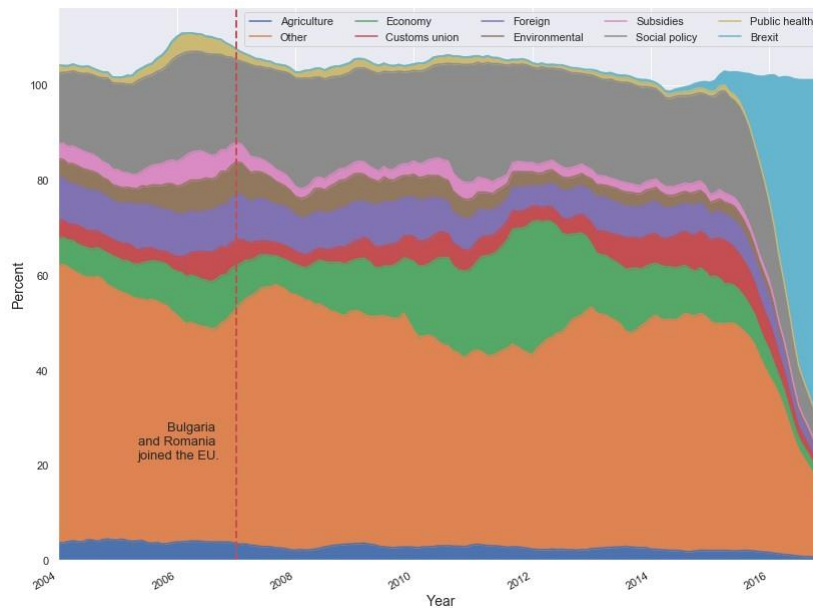


Figure 5.4: Stack area chart showing yearly moving averages of percentage shares for each of the topics coded by their corresponding EU policy areas in a given media report (one media report might contain several non-exclusive topics) constituting the national sovereignty and democracy discourse

5.2.3 Controlling for legitimacy changes in kind: qualitative analysis of legitimation changes in the polity-centred coverage

In chapter 2, I have theorised that EU legitimacy can change either in degree or in kind. So far, I have focused on the former type of legitimacy change, making EU legitimacy appear as more or less legitimate than before and is indicated by shifts in diffuse support (section 5.1). The analysis indicates a possible legitimacy change in degree after Q3 2012, as media coverage has increasingly started to problematise the EU as a polity. These observations can be explained by a temporary agenda that binds a lot of media attention or some more permanent change in the EU legitimation. In section 5.2.2, I have established that no temporary agenda can fully explain the surge in salience of polity-centred coverage. This means that it might have been caused by changes in the content of the EU legitimation, making legitimacy change in degree more likely than legitimacy change in kind. In this subsection, I start by investigating whether there has been a legitimacy change in kind. In the next step, I explore developments in the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree.

EU legitimacy changes in kind are palpable from meta-pragmatic legitimation changes (section 2.2.2) and unravel as a transition between two modes of valuation: the grammar of individual interests and the grammar of plural orders of worth (section 2.2.1). In the spirit of interpretive sociology, the analysis is guided by the research question: what normative expectations would have to be satisfied for the EU to be legitimate?

As I have discussed in section 3.2.3, once the dominant mode of valuation is identified with the help of lexical pointers, I probe the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree over time. Aiming to capture gradual changes in the content of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy, I draw three samples. I sample media reports from February, March, April, and May of 2012 *as the baseline sample*. As the relative visibility of the EU economic and financial policy coverage fell, the polity-centred coverage peaked. I draw the second sample for the period corresponding to January, February, May, and June 2014. Lastly, I sample the period of December 2014, January, and February 2015. The three samples represent a baseline before the surge in relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses (Figure 5.1), its peak, and the new normal representing the point before the new drastic spike stirred by the Brexit debate.

Using the three samples, I conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis of the legitimation changes in the discourse on the EU as a source of erosion of national sovereignty and democracy over time. I choose this discourse, as it overlaps in almost every other case with the discourse on the quality of EU governance (Figure 5.5). In this way, I ascertain whether the rise in the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage can be related to specific changes in the content of legitimation and/or an EU legitimacy change in kind.

The baseline sample: 'The EU needs to start doing less and doing it better

In the first step of this comparison, I have sampled usage of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy right before the observed surge in visibility in Q3 2012. While we have not seen any particular rise in the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage, the coverage of EU economic and financial policy was peaking at this time. Among the current agenda in the sample, we find Ireland's referendum

on the Fiscal Compact Treaty, the ECHR ruling on the deportation of radical preacher Abu Qatada, and the commonalisation of member states' debt using European institutions. As no single one of the topics is dominant, we can further investigate how the EU is qualified and evaluated the EU in the sample.

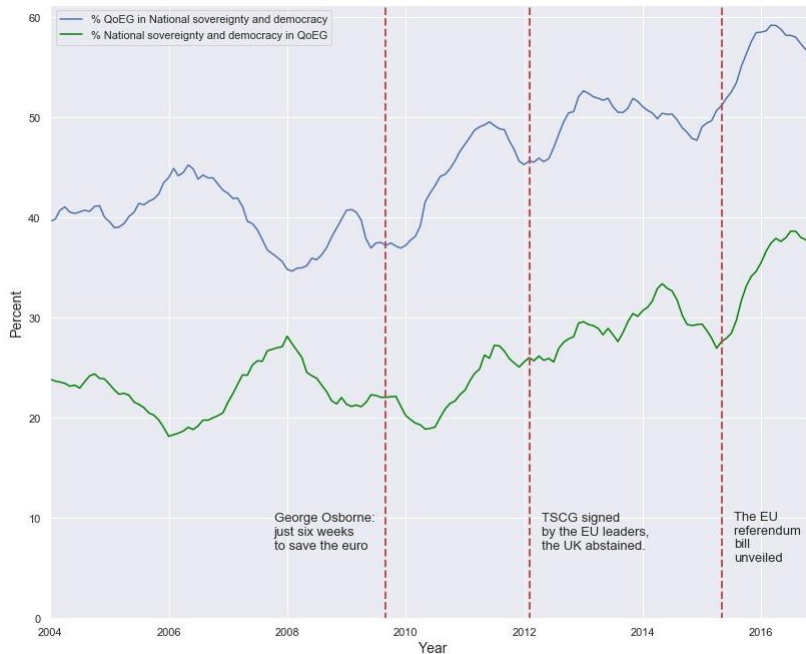


Figure 5.5: Yearly moving averages of percentage shares of data coded as the quality of EU governance discourse out of the national sovereignty and democracy discourse (dark blue) and vice-versa (green)

First, I identify the most salient mode of valuation. This requires unpacking how the EU is normatively imagined and, more concretely, what makes up a fair procedure for producing a legitimate EU policy and shaping the EU's institutional design. In the data, I have identified that one set of expectations was raised when negotiating membership terms for individual countries and another when EU policymaking was discussed. While the importance of democracy was stressed in both contexts, I make this analytical distinction to highlight the diversity of normative expectations underlying EU legitimacy.

The sampled media reports demand a referendum vote as the most rightful way of resolving conditions of UK membership in the EU. As the referendum presents the ultimate tool of presenting the sum of citizens' interests, it captures the essence of the grammar of individual interests. The grammar of individual interests rests on suspicion regarding the existence of a general will and consequently, about the possibility of finding a common good. This implies that valuation must move away

from conflicts about abstract principles to manage conflicts of specific interests.

However, this is not the rationale behind the referendum calls in the sample. Instead, we find that 'a suspicion of partiality amounted to a denial of legitimacy' (Rosanvallon and Goldhammer 2011: 80). Consider the following quote:

The lily-livered government has again bowed to the vociferous minority. However, when the majority wishes to voice its opinion on a subject which affects everyone every day (our continued membership of the EU) we are met with a wall of prevarication, deceit and downright lies.

[ID 45]

These calls for a referendum can be read as a direct expression of the suspicion that the elected representative is unwilling and/or incapable of representing the interests of the electorate. Should the inter-governmental negotiations appear as legitimate, the 'true' voice of people must be expressed via national referenda.

While media reports suggest that the negotiations are governed by the grammar of individual interests, this is not considered the most appropriate mode of valuation. This is notable from the open rejection of the majoritarian principle that decisions voted for by most countries end up implemented by everyone, even though some are unvoted. In the *baseline sample*, we find that the rightfulness of this process has been questioned: They included Harwich and North Essex MP Bernard Jenkin, who stated:

This [the decision to sign the Eurozone fiscal pact] nullifies the effect of the UK's veto in December and demonstrates how a subset of EU member states can hijack the EU institutions for their own purposes, bypassing any dissenting state.

[ID 46]

Since the vote does not have to be unanimous, its result depends on who manages to form the strongest coalition in the covert process. In such settings, the UK's interests might be overruled. Despite the dominance of grammar of individual interests, the distrust of the elected

representatives and scepticism regarding the fair procedure delegitimise the outcomes of the negotiations.

Besides evaluations of EU membership, the appropriate mode of valuation is in the case of particular policies derived from the EP. Consider this quote:

No democracy in the EU Parliament; Mark English, (the Head of Media, European Commission in the UK) has the gall to say that the EU is democratic. Talk about sycophancy and disingenuousness. The MEPs are, indeed, elected, as he says, but, unlike our Mother of Parliaments in Westminster, MEPs cannot initiate legislation – only the unelected European Commission can do that. If, as only rarely happens, the MEPs reject something, the Commission simply returns it to the EU Parliament until it is being passed. There are no proper debates. Criticism of the EU is not welcome in the chamber.

[ID 47]

While the EU is coined as undemocratic, this term is only seldom filled with concrete content. The normative expectations of a democratic process presented in the quote reveal the stress on public deliberation. This indicates the preference for the grammar of plural order of worth, which is the most public but also the most abstract mode of valuation. Indeed, Westminster is seen as a model for any other parliament. The same criteria used to assess the legitimacy of the national parliament are applied to the EU parliament. This means that the EU, on the one hand, has to formulate its policy based on deliberation. On the other hand, the elected representatives have to be trustworthy and willing to search for a good that benefits all social groups. Based on these normative expectations, the grammar of plural orders of worth seems relatively more salient than the grammar of individual interests. After all, the UK can question a decision on the basis that the good at stake is not common enough without the risk of being overruled.

Having identified the grammar of plural orders of worth as the most salient mode of valuation in the *baseline sample*, I examine how these qualifications and evaluations affected the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree.

When making an argument in terms of the grammar of plural orders of worth, actors have to establish a link between their claim of a common good or a compromise between several common goods. The introduced analytical framework relies on the classification of seven distinct ways to value something called orders of worth. In the sample, the EU has been evaluated using three orders of worth: civic order of worth, domestic order of worth and industrial order of worth. Consider this example:

YOU may have been under the impression that we live in a democracy where elected politicians make decisions about the laws governing our land. If only that were the case. We all know that the European Union has skewered the idea of true democracy and national sovereignty. [. . .] When it comes to the crunch politicians of any stripe have increasingly become an irrelevance. Real power is held not by politicians but judges. And not even British judges but foreign judges.

[ID 48]

The equal right of peoples to self-determination invoked by the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy presents the gist of the civic order of worth. In its terms, only collective actors such as states or nations and their representatives are evaluated based on their ability to voice collective concerns and express the general will. The normative expectations in the background of civic order of worth correspond to Rousseau's concept of the social contract, where individuals willingly consent to submit to an authority to achieve some common good. In the quoted example, the lack of consent is evident. Moreover, a foreign authority is perceived as exercising political power. As the collective has no opportunity to express dissent, the arrangement is qualified as non-democratic.

It can be argued that as a discourse becomes more established, it develops in a way that allows compromising between different orders of worth. The following quote shows the most prominent meshing between the civic order of worth and the domestic order of worth:

How dare they tell us what we should do – did our grandparents fight two wars against Germany, many losing their lives for our freedom just to be told now what we can and cannot do? It is time for a strong prime minister to say enough is enough and resign

from the EU completely. If Mr Cameron is not brave enough to do this, then let the people of this country decide what they want in that promised referendum.

[ID 49]

In this example, the domestic order of worth values the proximal. What is at stake is esteem, the reputation of a qualified object that is evaluated based on its trustworthiness. Whereas civic order of worth is directed towards the future, domestic order of worth invokes customary past and heritage. In its terms alone, the EU have to demonstrate respect for the established ways of doing politics. At the same time, civic order of worth appears more salient, and the question of sovereignty more pressing than the concerns with the UK's unique legacy. Civic order of worth forms the primary frame of reference for evaluating whether the EU is worthy as a polity.

Recognising the two components of the civic-domestic combination, the driving force behind the referendum calls becomes more apparent. Deliberation in line with the grammar of plural orders of worth appears as the appropriate mode of valuation at the EU level. Consequently, EU policy-makers (and ECHR judges), as well as UK representatives, are evaluated along the lines of civic-domestic construction as 'unworthy'. They are mostly presented as disconnected from the collective memory and, in the example quoted above, lacking personal attributes necessary to truly represent UK citizens.

The civic-domestic combination is at times dubbed with an argument invoking industrial order of worth:

And, since we joined the EU, our domestic taxes have doubled in real terms, while the quality of our infrastructure has collapsed. With the hundreds of thousands of petty regulations and the millions of miles of "red tape" imposed by idiotic Eurocrats from Brussels, we are better off 'out' than 'in'.

[ID 50]

While civic order of worth qualifies the EU as a polity and domestic order of worth qualifies it as a patrimony, industrial order of worth deals with plans and projects evaluated on the basis of their technical efficiency. The EU regulations are evaluated as burdensome 'red tape',

the Eurocrats as lacking competence, and its effects as damaging. When all three orders of worth are aligned, we are presented with a message that ‘The EU needs to start doing less and doing it better.’

[ID 51]. The EU needs to do less, as its competencies are portrayed as too intrusive, and do it better, as the media mainly discuss examples of policy failures. In order to justify itself in terms of the three salient orders of worth, the EU would have to convincingly demonstrate its responsiveness, its respect for local idiosyncrasies, and its ability to deliver the intended outcomes, as the three ‘worths’ are both well-established and salient in the eyes of the UK public.

The EU peaking on the political agenda sample: ‘There is life in Europe outside the EU.’

I draw the second sample for my comparative analysis here from the coverage in January, February, May, and June 2014. During these months, the relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses was nearly twice as high as during the preceding months. The EU stood high on the political agenda partially because of the Scottish independence debate and European election, but also national elections. The new all-time high in relative visibility can be partially explained by media attention to a momentary agenda.

In comparison to the *baseline sample*, we find more explicit normative expectations suggesting the most appropriate mode of valuation. Consider this example:

We think the current relationship does not work in the UK’s interest, but think we should negotiate with the rest of the EU first before deciding whether it is best to leave or whether there is a new relationship that makes sense for the UK. Labour largely accepts the current relationship, like the Liberal Democrats, and is not in favour of withdrawal.

[ID 52]

The quote reveals that while the actors understand the institutional context of the grammar of individual interest, this mode of valuation is not seen as appropriate. In the case when the grammar of individual interests appears as both dominant and appropriate, the result of negotiations is accepted as legitimate by all stakeholders. By contrast, the

example reveals the dilemma between either getting a favourable deal or opting out altogether. As the negotiations between nation-states do not require unanimity and allow for the imposing will of other countries on the UK, the decision is seen as violating the UK's sovereignty. Even though the deal for the UK is negotiated in a fair way, the result is not showcased as legitimate. The uncertainty about the institutional context and the most appropriate mode of valuation is condensed in this example:

If you think the way to make the EU more democratic is to give the biggest bloc in the parliament the right to nominate the Commission president, you will welcome Juncker's appointment. If, on the other hand, you think this is an even more undemocratic backroom stitch-up than the horse-trading that used to go on among EU leaders, you should welcome Cameron's stand.

[ID 53]

Here, the two modes of valuation are pitted against each other. The EP receives arguably less attention than the intergovernmental negotiations, which then shape normative expectations of the public. While the EP perceives the grammar of orders of worth as the appropriate mode of valuation, the negotiations between countries follow the grammar of individual interests.

Since the powers of the EP are not equal to the national parliaments, there is a perceived democratic deficit. Similarly, since the negotiations are not seen as transparent enough, the legitimacy of the decisions is perceived as questionable. Nevertheless, there has been no legitimacy change in kind. The EU institutional framework has still been recognised as following the grammar of individual interests, where the coalition-building and final negotiations decide the ultimate and legitimate outcome.

The EU as a polity is seen as in need of justification that should crystallise in 'a proper debate'

[ID 54]. The discourse, thus, utilises grammar of orders of worth. In the *baseline sample*, civic order of worth is invoked in combination with a suspicion that elected representatives are unwilling and/or incapable of

representing the will of the people. This connection has been further strengthened in this sample:

The 1975 referendum was on a trading arrangement which has now morphed into a political union with us becoming a member state of the Federal State of Europe. When a party is voted into government they are given a mandate to govern, not hand the sovereignty and governance to unelected bureaucrats in foreign lands. I would like my country back under British control.

[ID 55]

The example denounces elected representatives that have overstepped their mandate and the lacking democratic accountability on the side of the EU. This lack of mandate can only be offset by a new referendum vote on the political union. As the diverse actors (e.g. the House of Lords, Labour, Liberal Democrats) made attempts to block this referendum, this discourse is used to qualify and evaluate them as traitors denying people a say. Gradually, the referendum has been perceived as the preferred tool that should shape EU governance since the local representatives cannot be trusted. The EU's lack of respect for the results of national referenda is then used to evaluate its democratic qualities:

Perhaps he [Philipp E Slick] is so in love with the EU that he has simply never noticed that it is a profoundly anti-democratic organisation, clearly regarding the views of the population of EU states as, at best, an irritant. When an EU country votes against a new EU treaty, another referendum is held so that voters can get the 'right' result the second time round.

[ID 56]

It could be argued that this model suggests following the logic of the grammar of individual interests to render the EU treaties legitimate through referendum voting. If the audiences see the political representation as problematic, they are likely to question the legitimacy of any deal it has negotiated with the EU.

Moreover, the representatives did not have a mandate needed to seal this deal. As controversial competencies that were once transferred to the EU

level cannot be repatriated, this situation forces the discussion about EU membership and possible withdrawal.

In the *baseline sample*, we have seen a conspicuous domestic-civic-industrial discursive configuration. By contrast, in the *sample when the EU was peaking on the political agenda*, the domestic order of worth was relatively less pronounced, whereas the industrial order of worth became prominent. Thanks to the media focus on solving the Euro crisis – a concrete policy-design issue, the EU has been qualified and evaluated in relation to its ability to deliver jobs, secure growth, and prosperity. However, it appears that structural reforms at the EU level needed to deliver on this promise run counter to the civic order of worth:

A common currency covering a range of disparate economies can only succeed by having centralised economic and political control. This is the objective that Jose Manuel Barroso, the President of the EU Commission, has consistently espoused: an ‘ever closer union’. Whether people in the Eurozone understand the need to surrender much of their independence remains to be seen, but there could well be a lot of economic and civil turbulence on the way.

[ID 57]

This implies that the EU cannot provide beneficial outcomes unless the member states agree to delegate more of their competencies to the EU level. Such a proposition in a context where the loss of sovereignty was seen as problematic even before the Euro crisis was difficult to justify.

With civic order of worth and industrial order of worth emerging as the most salient standards of evaluation, EU membership could only be justified by finding a compromise between the two. This could be achieved by renegotiating the relationship between the EU and the UK in a way that pools the powers necessary to deliver desirable outcomes. Yet, under the existing legal framework, the agreement on recovering some of the controversial competencies back to the UK government was highly unlikely or very problematic.

Debates on the ‘two-speed Europe’ and the possibilities of the Swiss and Norwegian-like relationship with the EU directly respond to this challenge. Without the possibility of finding a compromise between the

two orders of worth, the EU can only be justified in terms of one of them. Whereas civic order of worth implies either a radical change in EU decision-making or an opt-out, industrial order of worth requires further European integration. Neither of the configurations could lower the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree.

All in all, when this *sample from the period where the EU was peaking on the political agenda* is contrasted with the introduced *baseline sample*, the (de)legitimation has undergone an evolution rather than a revolution. Given the suspicion towards political representatives, the inter-governmental negotiations following the logic of grammar of individual interests did not seem to produce decisions perceived as legitimate. In such a situation, the extreme form of participatory democracy where only national referenda decide about concrete negotiations might be required. At the same time, the deliberative logic of grammar of plural orders of worth has not been fully realised at the EU level, as the EP is seen as lacking power.

As the relationship between the EU and the UK proved hard to renegotiate, the debate revolved around qualifying and evaluating EU membership and pondering whether 'there is life in Europe outside the EU' [ID 58]. In order to justify EU membership, the industrial order of worth evaluating the EU by the quality of its governance and the civic order of worth valuing self-determination would have to be reconciled.

The referendum uncertainty sample: 'There can be no debate, dialogue or compromise.'

So far, our comparison of the *sample from the period where the EU was peaking on the political agenda* with the *baseline sample* revealed no legitimacy changes in kind. The next sample of discourses on national sovereignty and democracy was taken in December 2014, January, and February 2015, right before the Brexit debate took off. The chosen sampling can arguably help us separate the effect that the EU's crisis management had on its legitimacy from Brexit debates driven largely by issues of domestic politics. At this point, the debates related to the European elections or the Scottish independence referendum had already been resolved. Yet, the oncoming general election in May 2015, the promise of EU referendum, negotiations of Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the US and the EU, and the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)

contributed to relatively high visibility of the polity-centred discourses. By contrast to the previous two sampled time points, the EU migration policy has also been highlighted as one of the important areas.

In terms of the dominant mode of valuation, we have earlier seen the puzzlement created by the tension between the EC, the EP, and the intergovernmental negotiations. We see that democratic accountability is demanded by the audiences. In addition, the media deny the EC technocratic legitimacy. Since the EP does not have the same qualities as the national parliament, it is evaluated as unable to truly conclude on a common good in line with the grammar of plural orders of worth:

European legislation is prepared by EU bureaucrats (the more legislation each commissioner can dream up, the bigger their department becomes and the safer their jobs) and presented to the MEPs for a yes/no vote – unlike our parliament where there is full discussion. It is a rubber-stamp operation in Brussels and it deeply affects our lives.

[ID 59]

In order to arrive at a legitimate decision, actors must engage in public deliberation to construct a plausible link between a proposal and a common good. Justification of the proposal effectively happens during the deliberation. If there is no place for deliberation, the EP cannot sanction the decision by fully elaborating their justifications.

The grammar of plural orders of worth is only seen as appropriate in polities constituted by equal and similar citizens (see section 2.2.2). This is the main issue raised in this quote:

‘How can you have democracy in a country of a billion people?’ he snorted. No more is it possible in a country of 500 million, like the EU, particularly as there is no single European people or electorate – only French, Germans, Italians, Spanish and so on. [. . .] It is the Demos which is lacking from the EU – and always will be.

[ID 60]

Without ‘the Demos’, there is little chance of finding a common good that benefits all of the involved parties. Following this line of reasoning,

the EP, arguably the most democratic institution of the EU, cannot deliver legitimate policy.

Some audiences perceive the grammar of plural orders of worth as the most appropriate mode of valuation for the EU: 'We must leave the EU in order to start again and rebuild it under a just system for the common good.' [ID 61]. The existing institutional structures are seen as unable to produce policies benefiting the common good; a new start is therefore needed.

Lastly, the intergovernmental negotiations are seen as lacking in transparency, partial, and disregarding the sovereignty of national states. Those who perceive the grammar of individual interests as the best mode of valuation for the EU argue that a '[. . .] healthy competition between all nations is more constructive than deliberate destruction of all but the privileged' [ID 62]. Indeed, the grammar of individual interests requires equal treatment of all negotiating stakeholders. This expectation seems to clash with the perception that:

How is it that when David Cameron refuses to pay British dues to the EU, proposes to renegotiate our membership, and promises a UK referendum for withdrawal from the EU, all that is fine? But when a Greek politician promises his people something similar, he is described as threatening the EU and European civilisation? [ID 63]

Some countries are seen as receiving unwarranted preferential treatment, which raises suspicion about the partiality of the decisions generated in the negotiations. We have seen that additional doubts have been repeatedly raised about whether elected representatives are willing and/or capable of promoting the interests of their electorate. This suspicion might be, in an extreme case, resolved by means of a public referendum. In the light of failed referenda, this sample shows that the suspicion has been expanded to the EU as a whole: 'If the vote is for withdrawing and for us to get back our sovereignty, I do not doubt that the EU will ask us to vote again until they get the answer they want as they did in Ireland a couple of years ago.' [ID 64]. Once no representatives can be trusted, and there is a doubt whether the results of public referenda would be respected, the appropriateness of this mode of valuation can be questioned. Despite these issues, some audiences perceive the grammar of individual interests as the preferred mode of

valuation and wonder, 'I do not see the need to try to unify this many countries. What is wrong with being a different country? [ID 65]'. In contexts where all the involved parties are very different, there is no common good, and a fair negotiation presents the best way of settling a controversy.

If we are to fully understand what would make a legitimate mode of valuation at the EU level, we need to consider the complexities of how the UK is imagined as a polity. Provided the repeatedly expressed trust to elected representatives, European integration might be sanctioned using national referenda. The weakness of this participatory model is its assumption of relatively homogeneous nation states. However, in the case of transnational polities such as the EU, this homogeneity cannot be taken for granted. Consider the following example: 'Ms Sturgeon also repeated her call for the proposed in/out referendum on Europe to be subjected to a "double majority", where each constituent nation must vote Yes before a withdrawal is approved to prevent any part of the UK being taken out of the EU "against its will".'

[ID 66]. We might, therefore, question whether the model of national referenda would deliver legitimate outcomes, as the nation-centric design might be seen as oppressive to some audiences. An alternative could be a return to the idea of 'Europe of regions', where each region would have its say.

Besides the two modes of valuation, the data reveal an emergence of a third fuzzy model. In the *sample of referendum uncertainty*, it still has not been fully elaborated, and we can only gather fragments of the new notion. Consider this quote: 'The EU, I suggest, was not intended to be an exclusive club nor a closed shop. The idea is not to take as much and as many benefits as possible from member nations or outsiders, rather more a case of "All for one and one for all".'

[ID 67]. In my reading, a different implementation of the grammar of individual interests is preferred: instead of making the decision of the majority binding for all the stakeholders, it should follow the principle of voluntariness. At the same time, the negotiations should be carried out in the spirit of solidarity. This notion closely follows the following example:

There are powerful reasons that states of Europe should come together, working as a team, to tackle some of the major international problems like what is now happening in the Middle East. This is not the EU of today which is a monstrous bureaucracy behaving as an unelected dictatorship, exercising centralised control which is costly and grossly inefficient. If the countries of Europe are to **come together as a team** then the whole EU organisation needs drastic reform.

[ID 68, author's emphasis].

While the grammar of individual interests assumes insurmountable differences between the stakeholders, the metaphor of a team balances these differences with the focus on shared goals. The fruitful cooperation between the member states is currently blocked, not by diverging interests but by the illegitimate EC, which mandates future reforms. Such a solution would hardly satisfy all the audiences since the problem of finding trustworthy political representation for each country is not resolved.

Since the EU structures cannot stand any of the tests corresponding to the two established modes of valuation that could make them appear as a source of legitimate decisions, the recourse to national sovereignty appears as the only immediate solution, as expressed here: 'What I wish for is a UK exit from the EU and a return to accountable government of the people by the people by properly elected politicians in the UK' [ID 69].

The conflict between civic and industrial order of worth has become central to the critique of the EU. The EU's crisis management has been interpreted in a way that an optimal and stable Eurozone can only be achieved at the cost of more power being pooled at the EU level. The essence of this is captured in this zealous quote: 'The visionaries of a federalised Europe know that complete political and fiscal harmony is the only hope for it to succeed and whilst a UK vote to stay in would give added impetus to this objective, too many of the 500, 000 people would never accept a totalitarian state.' [ID 70]. The competencies being delegated to the EU have been problematised in all of our samples, and the civic order of worth has remained highly salient. At the same time, the EU's promise of prosperity relies on the industrial order of worth. In

the absence of a convincing justification, the calls for withdrawal from the EU appear more reasonable.

Since the civic order of worth had been so salient in all of the three samples, any attempt to justify the EU as a polity must address critique advanced from its position. I have encountered two distinct strategies aiming to deal with the critique buttressed in civic order of worth. The first strategy attempts to disrupt the connection between calls for opt-out and the idea of sovereignty:

National sovereignty is redundant in the modern world. A sense of 'sovereignty lost' pervaded much of the debate here during the troika years. Equated closely in the public mind with our dependence on funding from the IMF, EU and ECB, it is not surprising that the government and many commentators argued that a key motivation for striving to successfully exit our programme was that 'sovereignty' would be restored.

[ID 71]

This example strives to redefine what is meant by 'sovereignty'. The proposed withdrawal is portrayed as an illusory solution that will fail to deliver 'real' sovereignty because sovereignty depends on international arrangements. Instead of re-evaluating the current EU membership as in line with national sovereignty, this strategy transforms the meaning of sovereignty by stressing the transnational character of national governments' problems. Should the re-qualification succeed, the existing civic-industrial contradiction would be resolved. Once sovereignty and the ability to address national problems appear to rely on international influence, pooling more competencies for transnational governance goes hand in hand with delivering the intended outcome. Still, the dominant line of reasoning in the *referendum uncertainty sample* referred to sovereignty as antithetical to EU membership.

The second argumentative strategy addressing the civic-industrial contradiction introduces the idea of renegotiating the UK-EU relationship to get it in line with the normative expectations of the public. The political elites have promised to gain more autonomy over the most controversial areas, such as migration policy or protection of human rights while keeping all of the benefits of remaining within the European Economic Area (EEA). This quote captures the core of this

strategy: ‘ “The benefits of staying in the EU completely outweigh the drawbacks. What we need to do is redefine the club rules”, said Mr Malcolm, who nevertheless believed the EU had lost sight of its original purpose to promote free trade within its borders.’ [ID 72]. Hence, even the advocates of remaining in the EU agreed that the conditions should be renegotiated. However, the credibility of this promise has been questioned until the point when it became clear that there is little hope for any change: ‘ “There can be no debate, dialogue or compromise”, announces Jean-Claude Juncker, as he yesterday ruled out any substantial change in Britain’s relationship with the European Union.’ [ID 73]. In the end, the attempt to counter the open calls for the UK exit building on the civic-industrial contradiction served as an example that the EU bureaucracy stands in the way of the UK national interests.

5.2.4 Summary

In this section, I have presented an in-depth analysis of the polity-centred EU media coverage aiming to map legitimation changes that might have caused the legitimacy changes in degree observed in section 5.1. By contrasting empirical findings with the available literature, I have distinguished between the discourse thematising the EU as a threat to the quality of governance, the discourse viewing it as the source of erosion of national sovereignty and democracy and the discourse on the EU as a challenge to the national identity and traditions.

Next (5.2.2), I have established that the discourse thematising the EU as a threat to the quality of governance and the discourse viewing it as the source of erosion of national sovereignty were responsible for the surge in relative visibility of polity-centred discourses. After controlling for media attention dedicated to specific topics in the EU coverage, I have concluded that the increase in relative visibility was likely caused by a more substantial legitimation change leading to legitimacy change in kind or increasing likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree.

In subsection 5.2.3, I have conducted qualitative discourse analysis to investigate shifts in the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree and locate any possible legitimacy changes in kind. The media image of the EU as a polity has been shaped by intergovernmental negotiations the grammar of individual interests appears to be the most appropriate mode of valuation. Since the processual qualities of the negotiations

were perceived as poor, the negotiations were publicly delegitimised as ‘horse-trading’. As a result, all of the three samples showed that normative expectations towards the EU as a polity were not met, despite remaining invariant. Similarly, when it comes to assessing the legitimacy of EU membership, all of the three samples showed that a justification in line with the grammar of plural orders of worth is expected. By questioning the quality of deliberation taking place in the EP and pointing out its limited competencies, legitimacy of EU membership has been repeatedly questioned. I have concluded that the increase in relative visibility of polity-centred discourses was not caused by a legitimacy change in kind.

I have established that the EU’s institutional design relies on both modes of valuation but did not manage to fully satisfy the demands of neither of them. Having ruled out the chance of legitimacy change in kind, I have explored developments in the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree. The EU membership has been publicly assessed following the grammar of plural orders of worth by invoking some common good corresponding to an order of worth. Most palpable legitimisation changes have taken place on this plane.

The first sample evaluated UK membership by combining civic order of worth with domestic order of worth, and by drawing on industrial order of worth. None of these have been completely dominant. In the second and third sample we have seen that while the media coverage of the EU’s crisis response did not have an immediate negative effect on its diffuse support and legitimacy, it has reinterpreted over time as a materialisation of the irreconcilable conflict between the EU’s promise of prosperity and national sovereignty. With a slight delay, this contradiction has been fully elaborated into the form of the studied discourse and its relative visibility has increased. In the end, the observed change in pragmatic legitimisation practices made EU legitimacy more likely to undergo legitimacy changes in degree. This means it has been more likely for EU membership to be perceived as less legitimate or, if a compromise between civic and industrial worth is found, more legitimate.

Next, if we are to understand the significance of the observed legitimisation changes, we have to examine the absolute visibility of the

discourse on national sovereignty and democracy in different media outlets.

5.3 Validating the findings

In section 5.1, we have seen a gradual increase in the relative visibility of the polity-centred EU media coverage. While our analysis describes the body of all EU-related media reports published in the period, media informs about many other topics. In addition, the volume of EU-related coverage varies between media outlets. This means that the observed changes in relative visibility might be especially palpable to consumers of some media outlets, while others might hardly see any difference. If we are to get a better grasp of the significance of our previous findings, we have to control for this type of bias. Therefore, I supplement our study of changes in the relative visibility of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy with an analysis of how different media outlets contribute to the discourse's absolute visibility. In this way, we learn about audience exposure to the legitimization changes observed in the previous sections.

5.3.1 Diffusion of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy in the UK media sphere

As we have seen in subsection 5.2.2, the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses in the dataset aggregating media reports from all media outlets grew over time. At the same time, only a handful of media outlets producing most of the coverage might be responsible for the trend. While such a finding would have no consequences for our descriptive analysis of EU media coverage, it has implications for audience exposure and, thus, the effect of the studied polity-centred discourses. That is why studying the absolute visibility of these discourses is instrumental for assessing the potential impact of the legitimization changes.

Since the polity-centred discourses overlap to a large degree (see section 5.2.3), I focus on the diffusion of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy. I track the absolute and relative visibility of the discourse using quantitative text analysis in different media outlets. In practical terms, whereas relative visibility captures the visibility of the discourse for the consumers of a given media, absolute visibility indicates its visibility on the newsstands and its reach.

Figure 5.6 presents the volume of EU media reports invoking the discourse in different newspapers. While the Daily Express and the Daily Mail show the most aggressive development in the volume of the monitored kind of articles, the rest of the media outlets can hardly be distinguished from each other. To assess how each media outlet contributed to the discourse's absolute visibility, the volume must be interpreted with the circulation of these outlets in mind. Figure 5.7 shows that the most circulated newspapers: the Sun, Daily Mail, Mail on Sunday and Daily Mirror, have experienced a fall in sales over time. By multiplying the data on absolute volumes of EU coverage invoking the discourse in the individual media outlets with the information about the monthly circulation, I calculate the visibility score (see section 3.6.4) for each media outlet (Figure 5.8). We see that Daily Express has published the most articles invoking the discourse in comparison to all other outlets in our dataset. Even though it has relatively low circulation rates, it has contributed significantly to the absolute visibility of the discourse. This is in particular true for the period after October 2010. A similar pattern can be seen in the case of the Daily Telegraph, where large amounts of the media reports invoking the discourse make up a large contribution to the discourse's absolute visibility, despite its modest average circulation rates. By contrast, whereas the volume of EU coverage invoking the discourse in Daily Mail has been in line with many other media outlets in our dataset, its relatively high average circulation means that its contribution to the absolute visibility of the discourse has been substantial.

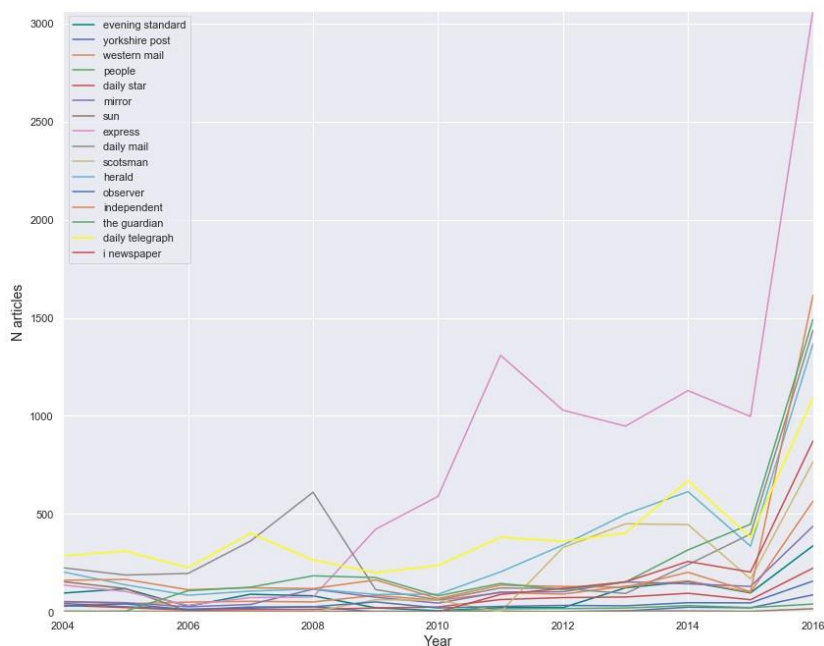


Figure 5.6: The number of articles propagating the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy published in the selected news outlets

For the purpose of assessing audience exposure, I assume that audiences do not choose consumed media outlets randomly but develop a taste and preferences for particular type of media. I categorise media outlets by media types (broadsheets, tabloid) and political bias (right-leaning and left-leaning media).

Firstly, I divide the press between broadsheets (the name refers to their larger size), sometimes dubbed as the quality press and tabloid press. The coverage in tabloid press has more focus on celebrities and personal stories. Table 5.1 shows the overview of sources selected based on circulation and data availability.

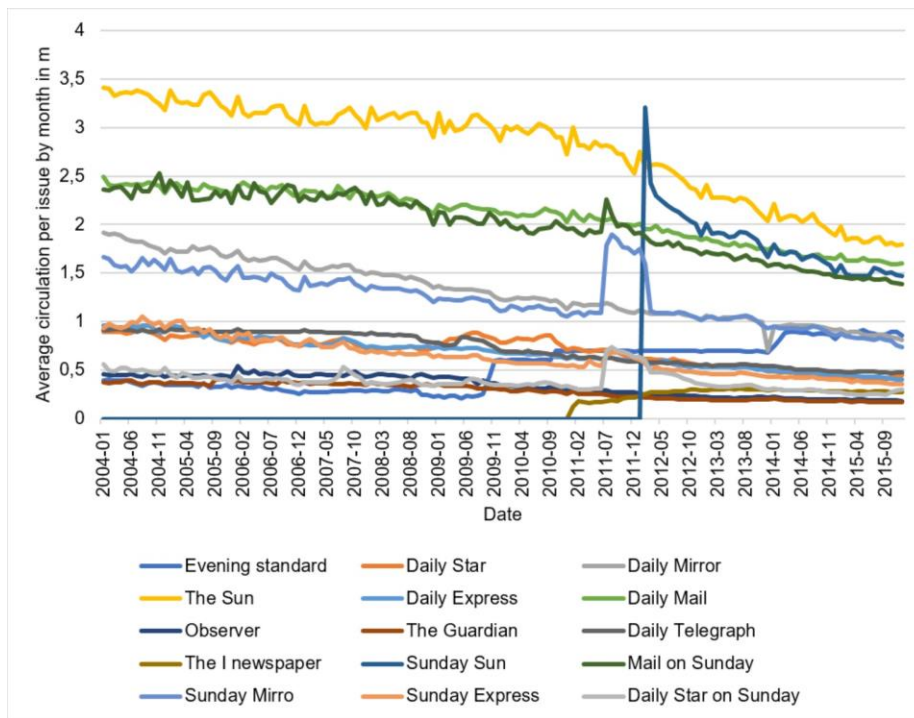


Figure 5.7: Average circulation per issue by month (m) for the most popular press. Given the limited access to the circulation data, the independent and the regional press such as Scotsman and Herald are unfortunately not included in the analysis. Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations

In terms of absolute visibility of the discourse in broadsheets and tabloids, Figure 5.9 shows that the tabloids have contributed most to making the discourse visible on the newsstands throughout the whole period. This is hardly surprising, as the tabloids have higher average circulation rates than the broadsheets included in the comparison. In addition, many tabloids also publish Sunday newspapers.

At the same time, the difference in absolute visibility between broadsheets and tabloids has likely been smaller than figure 5.9 indicates. While Scotsman, Herald and The Independent have published a relatively high number of articles about the EU using the discourse, circulation data for the three broadsheets are unavailable. As a result, the contribution of broadsheets to the discourse’s absolute visibility appears somewhat smaller.

In the total EU media coverage, we see that there are no stark differences between tabloids and broadsheets. There has been an increase in the produced amount of media reports invoking the discourse (Figure 5.10) in both categories. Different trends can be seen in its relative visibility within the EU coverage published in each media category (Figure 5.11). At the beginning of the monitored period, in 2011, there was a palpable

increase in the relative visibility of the discourse in each of the categories. The discourse usually comprised 7-15 per cent of the EU coverage in each category. Therefore, I conclude that the rise in absolute visibility of the discourse has been accompanied by an increased visibility of the discourse for consumers of both tabloids and broadsheets.

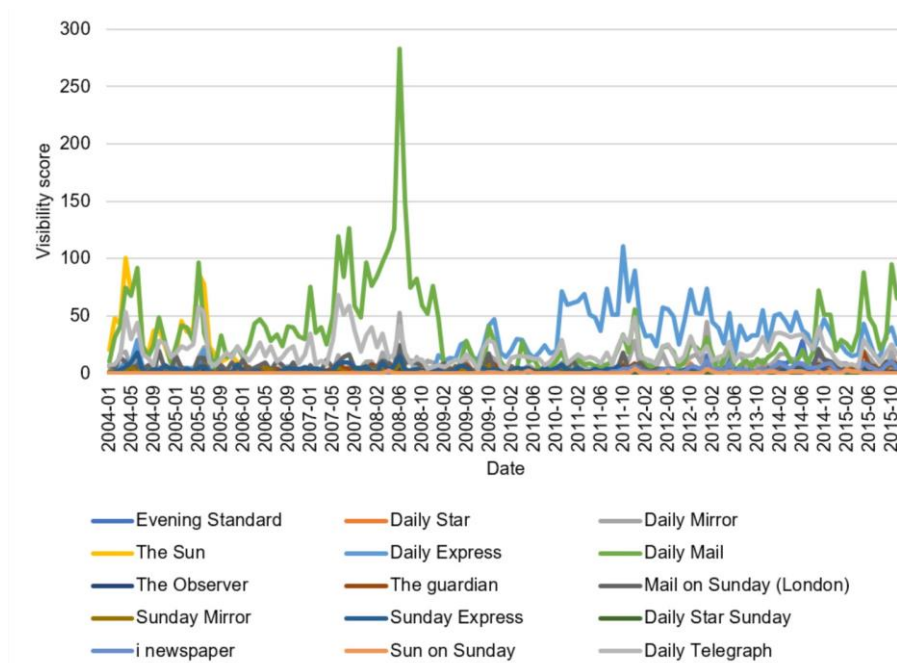


Figure 5.8: Absolute visibility of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy in different media outlets: Visibility score for each of the media outlets captures the combined effect of the volume of articles invoking the discourse in a media outlet and its average monthly circulation

Another way media outlets can cater to specific audiences relies on having a recognisable political orientation. When categorising media outlets (Table 5.1), I draw on the political bias ranking developed by the website mediabiasfactcheck.com. For easier interpretation, I have decided to only distinguish between left-leaning and right-leaning media. More fine-grained classification would lead to very small sample sizes in each category.

In the UK media sphere, there are more media outlets with right-wing political bias. Right-leaning media outlets have higher average circulation rates than left-leaning media (Figure 5.7). During the monitored period, the right-wing media have also published a higher volume of articles invoking the discourse (Figure 5.13). This can be explained by the predominantly right-wing bias of the tabloid media. As a result, the right-leaning press has contributed relatively more to the absolute visibility of the discourse (Figure 5.14). The left-leaning media

outlet the Independent was excluded from the analysis because of lacking availability of its circulation data. Consequently, the difference between the absolute visibility of the discourse in the left-leaning and right-leaning press is likely to be marginally smaller than the figure suggests.

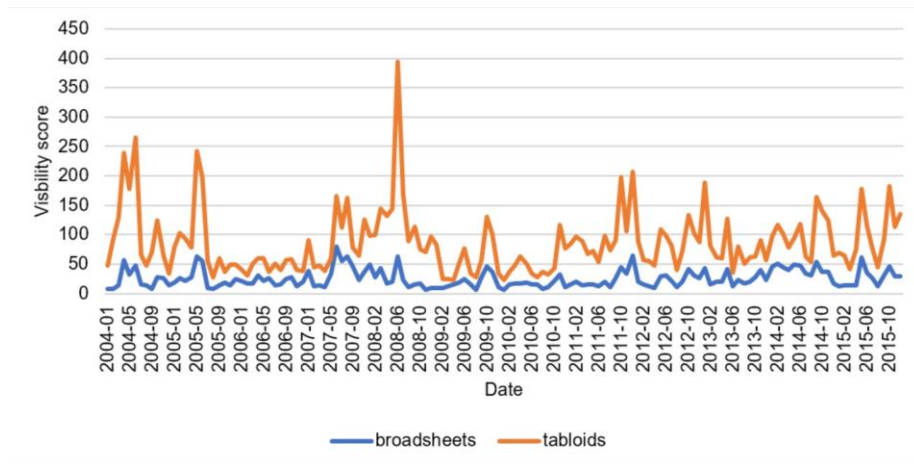


Figure 5.9: The absolute visibility of the discourse compared between broadsheets and tabloids

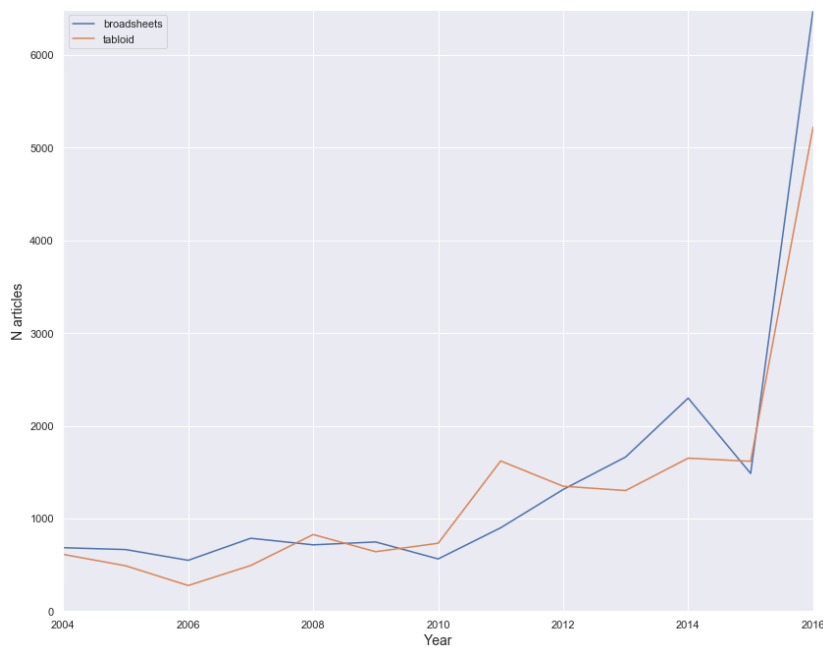


Figure 5.10: The number of articles invoking the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy for each media type

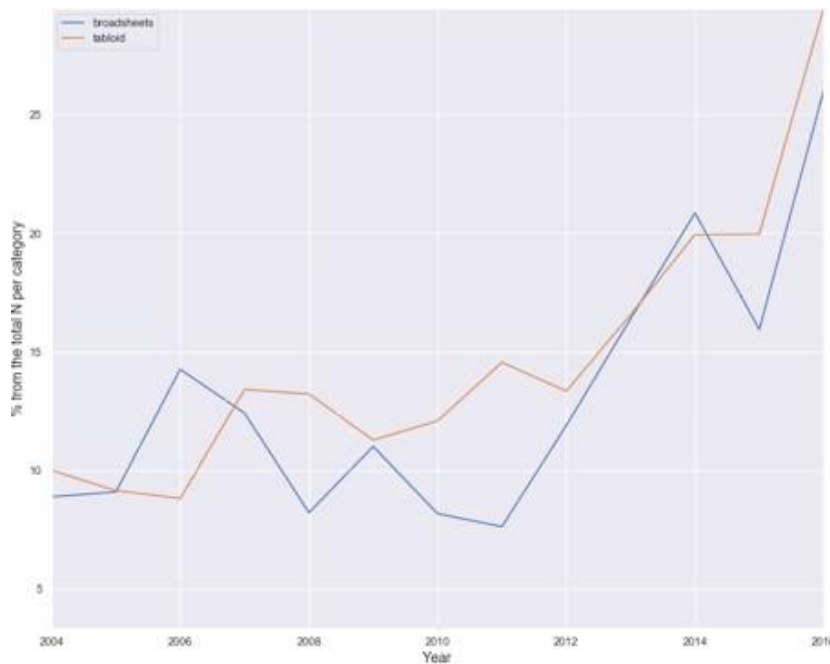


Figure 5.11: Development in percentage shares of the yearly coverage in tabloids and broadsheets category that adopted the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy

Similarly, Figure 5.12 shows a higher relative visibility of the discourse among the right-leaning press. There has been a sharp hike in the relative visibility of the discourse in 2006 in the right-leaning category, after which the percentage share fell back to the previous values. The left-leaning press gradually adopted the discourse, eventually reaching almost the proportion typical for the right-leaning press. While the portion of content adopting the discourse of national sovereignty and democracy might rise sharply, it later returns back to the previous values. This is not the case when we observe the left-leaning press. Once the left-leaning press starts producing more content that invokes the discourse, the discourse becomes an established part of the coverage. Its relative visibility never really fell back to the original values. At any point, the discourse has been more visible to the audiences of right-wing media both in total numbers of EU media reports and in relative terms. This means that consumers of the right-wing leaning press have been relatively more exposed to the discourse than readers of the left-wing press. These results are in line with the findings of other media research (e.g. Hawkins 2012).

Table 5.1: Selected media outlets classified by media type and political bias

Media type	Broadsheet	Tabloid	Right-leaning	Left-leaning
The Evening Standard		x	x	
Daily Star		x	x	
Daily Mirror		x		x
The Sun		x	x	
Daily Express		x	x	
Daily Mail		x	x	
Observer	x			x
The Guardian	x			x
Daily Telegraph	x		x	
The I newspaper	x			x
The Independent	x			x
Scotsman	x			
Herald	x			
Sunday Sun		x	x	
Daily Star on Sunday		x	x	
Sunday Mirror		x		x
Sunday Mail		x	x	
Sunday Express		x	x	

To sum up, we have seen that the diffusion of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy varied based on media type and political bias of media outlets. The discourse has increasingly been made visible to the audiences of the tabloid press, promptly adopting the discourse in its EU coverage. The tabloid press has enjoyed the commercial effect of presenting a controversial and relatively marginal discourse. At the same time, the relative visibility of the discourse in the EU coverage rose only moderately until the discourse has become mainstream. In the grand scheme of things, the total volume of articles adopting the discourse published in the tabloid press rose fast and soon plateaued. While the broadsheets adopted the discourse only gradually, it became a normal part of their repertoire. Nevertheless, given the higher average circulation rates of the tabloid press, it has contributed relatively more to the absolute visibility of the discourse during the whole period.

The spread and consumption of EU-related news invoking the discourse are indicative of legitimation changes affecting the normative expectations of audiences towards the EU. Effectively, since the

mainstream press took over the discourse normalised by the tabloid press, the debate on EU affairs as a whole has been transformed. As the absolute visibility of the discourse mapped in this subsection increased and the discourse became more mainstream, it has been relatively easier to challenge the EU itself as a polity. The gradual normalisation of the discourse provided a window of opportunity for legitimacy changes in degree.

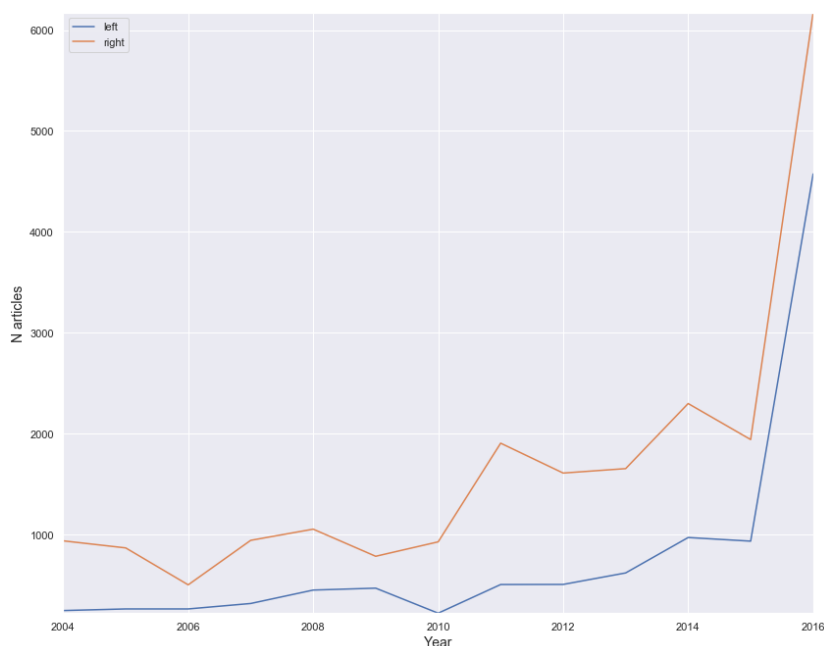


Figure 5.12: The number of articles propagating the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy published in the left-leaning media and right-leaning media

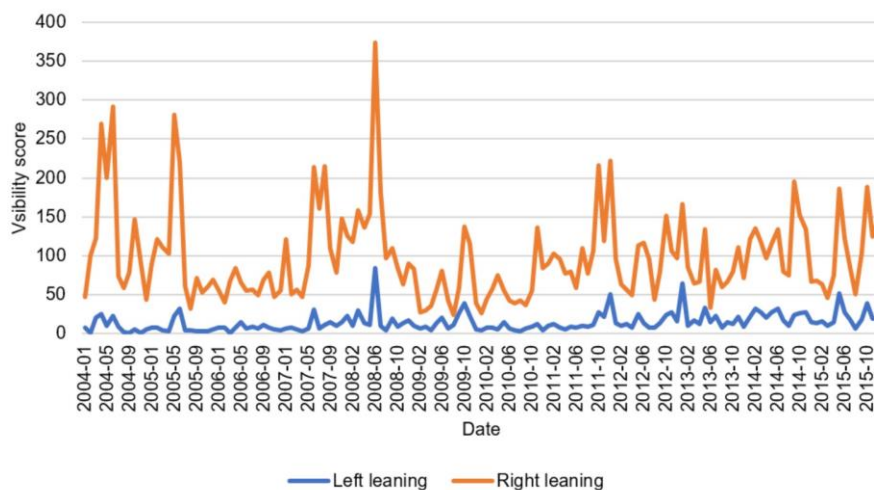


Figure 5.13: The absolute visibility of the discourse comparing left-leaning and right-leaning press

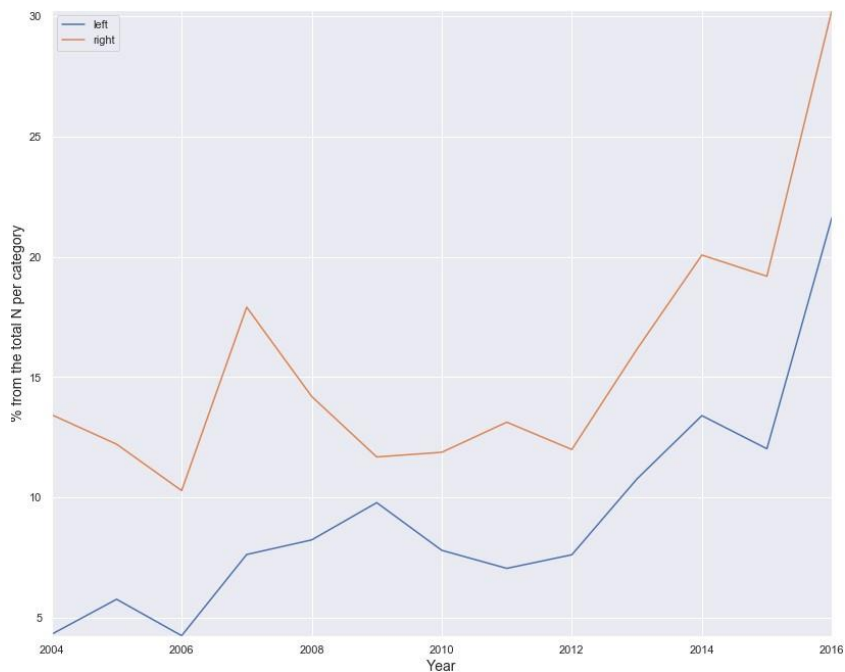


Figure 5.14: Figure shows development in the percentage shares of the yearly coverage in each category that adopted the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy

5.3.2 Summary

In this section, I have investigated what the changes in relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses observed in section 5.2 meant in terms of audience exposure. Since different audiences tend to follow specific subsets of UK media outlets, I have investigated the spread of the discourse in tabloids and broadsheets. In addition, I have explored differences in its diffusion between the right-leaning and left-leaning press. The analysis was focused on the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy because of its large overlap with the discourse on the quality of EU governance.

The findings show that there has been a gradual increase in the total volume of coverage invoking the discourse since 2010 that has been driven by tabloid media.

Given the higher average circulation rates of tabloids in the UK, they have contributed most to the discourse's absolute visibility on newsstands. As the discourse became more widespread, the broadsheets have started producing more media reports invoking the discourse than the tabloids. In 2014, the discourse has been invoked in up to 20 per cent of all the EU coverage in both categories.

When it comes to the influence of political bias, right-wing news outlets have published more media reports invoking the discourse, and these media reports have made up a bigger portion of the EU coverage in the right-leaning press. Furthermore, as the right-leaning press has relatively higher circulation rates, it has contributed more to the absolute visibility of the discourse than the left-leaning press. In turn, audiences consuming right-wing news were relatively more exposed to the discourse than others.

5.4 Conclusion

The polity-centred coverage has the potential to bring forth EU legitimacy change in degree and/or in kind. In this chapter, I have, therefore, started by investigating trends in relative visibility of the polity-centred EU coverage using quantitative text analysis. The findings in section 5.1 have shown that the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses has been increasing gradually since Q3 2012. Such development might indicate a decrease in diffuse support for the EU and a legitimacy change in degree. Because of its timing, the observed development cannot be directly related to the rise in relative visibility of EU economic and financial policy that started in 2011 and peaked in Q1 2012. In fact, the increase in relative visibility might have been driven by a change in normative expectations towards the EU and/or a legitimacy change in kind. Aiming to better understand what made the polity-centred coverage more prominent, I have argued for the need to zoom in on the particular discourses that make up the polity-centred coverage.

In subsection 5.2.1, I have contrasted the findings of chapter 4 against the classifications of the EU as a polity developed in the scholarly literature. Based on this comparison, I have decided to distinguish between a discourse thematising the EU as a threat to the quality of governance, a discourse viewing it as the source of erosion of national sovereignty and democracy, and a discourse on the EU as a challenge to the national identity and traditions. Each of the three discourses highlights distinct normative concerns about the EU as a polity.

In subsection 5.2.2, I have investigated to what degree these discourses have contributed to the observed increase in the relative visibility of the polity-centred media coverage. Whereas the last of the three discourses has been shown to be very rare, the other two have been equally

represented. Since the increase could potentially be explained by media attention to a momentary agenda rather than normative changes, I have explored the composition of the topics covered using the two discourses. The analysis has shown that the steady rise cannot be explained by any momentary topic, and we have to proceed with a more fine-grained analysis of the legitimation changes.

The observed increase in the relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses could have been stirred by a legitimacy change in kind. In subsection 5.2.3, I have controlled for changes in normative expectations towards the EU as a polity and a potential EU legitimacy change in kind. I have analysed three samples of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy drawn before, at the peak of, and after the rise in relative visibility selected because of the discourse's substantial overlap with the discourse thematising the quality of the EU governance.

While the qualitative discourse analysis has shown that no legitimacy change in kind has taken place, the misalignment between the EU institutional design and the audiences' normative expectations has been noticeable. The data from all three samples suggests that the EU institutional framework shaped by intergovernmental negotiations was justified following the mode of valuation of the grammar of individual interests. Yet, the outcomes of these negotiations were not perceived as legitimate because of the seeming lack of transparency, veto votes for national parliaments, and suspicion regarding the willingness and/or the ability of elected representatives to act in the interests of their electorate.

The EU policy-making in the EP has been recognised as following the grammar of plural orders of worth. However, the quality of deliberation taking place in the EP appeared questionable in contrast to the EC's strong mandate. In addition, the EP does not have the same competencies as the UK parliament, and the EU policies ended up being portrayed as not sufficiently justified. As these legitimacy contestations have been visible in all three samples, I have concluded that they were not the cause of the observed increase in the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses.

Whereas the mode of valuation of the grammar of individual interests was clearly perceived as dominant when it comes to forming the EU

institutional framework, analysed media reports express a strong preference for the grammar of plural orders of worth. Indeed, while the former mode of valuation produces decisions by majority votes, the latter requires justifying the decisions to the subjected. The quality of these justifications, in turn, determines the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. We have seen that the public debate revolved around whether EU membership is justified in light of the most salient orders of worth. Each order of worth represents a concrete normative concern. Civic order of worth, industrial order of worth and domestic order of worth had the highest salience. The civic order of worth assesses the EU as a polity by its effect on collective welfare and self-determination, the industrial order of worth is concerned with the EU's ability to deliver the intended outcomes, and domestic orders of worth evaluates esteem and trustworthiness of political representatives, judges, and other actors.

In the first sample, orders of worth were invoked on their own or in civic-domestic combination to assess the EU as a polity. Yet, as the relative visibility of EU economic and financial policy coverage was decreasing, the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy has developed a powerful trope used to evaluate the EU as a polity. In the second and the third sample, we have seen that the EU's crisis management was translated into a contradiction between civic and industrial order of worth, where the desired economic performance can only be achieved at the price of giving away more national sovereignty. Despite some attempts to change the meaning of sovereignty from its strictly national notion towards a quality achievable only by international cooperation, the civic- industrial contradiction was not resolved. Consequently, I have argued that the focus on only two forms of worth led to an increased likelihood of legitimation changes in degree, which allowed for the observed increase in relative visibility of polity-centred discourses.

Recognising the possibility that the changes in relative visibility might have been limited only to a specific subset of media outlets, which would then affect audience exposure, in subsection 5.3.1 I have controlled for both relative and absolute visibility of the discourse in different media outlets. Since audiences tend to consume only specific types of media, I have segmented the media sphere into broadsheets and tabloids. In addition, some consumers might prefer media outlets with a particular

political bias. Therefore, I have compared right-leaning and left-leaning media outlets.

When investigating the volume of media reports invoking the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy within the respective categories, it became visible that while the tabloid press was quick to adopt the discourse in 2010, the broadsheets gradually incorporated the discourse into most of the EU polity- centred coverage by 2014. When controlling for the effect of the political bias of media outlets, we have seen that the right-leaning media have published more media records invoking the discourse, and they were relatively more visible in their overall coverage than was the case for left-leaning media. Furthermore, right-wing media have had a relatively higher average circulation and, thus, contributed significantly to the absolute visibility of the discourse.

All in all, the findings in section 5.1 suggest that the EU has experienced a legitimacy change in degree, losing part of its diffuse support. However, this change was not stirred by a legitimacy change in kind. The EU institutional design does not appear aligned with audiences' normative expectations. Once the EU's Euro crisis response has been elaborated by the media into the civic- industrial contradiction, the very focus on only two possible forms of worth made problematising EU legitimacy easier and consequently increased the likelihood of legitimacy changes in kind. In the next chapter, I address the significance of these legitimisation changes for EU legitimacy in more detail.

Chapter 6

Discussion: what crisis?

In this chapter, I go back to the research questions of this thesis and discuss the answers presented in the preceding chapters. I start with the first research question addressing EU legitimacy changes. Public legitimization practices may change along multiple dimensions, such as the degree of politicisation, tone, or the content of the actual justifications and critique. Chapters 4 and 5 have systematically investigated developments for each of these dimensions to paint a comprehensive image of legitimization changes in EU media coverage. In this chapter, I take these findings as a point of departure for the discussion of what legitimacy changes these legitimization changes indicate. When it comes to the second research question, I discuss whether our findings suggest that the EU has, in the studied period, experienced any legitimization or legitimacy crises. In the third subsection, I discuss how my proposed analytical framework supported the empirical analysis and where the findings challenged my expectations. Lastly, I review the fit of the selected methodological approach for the present project.

6.1 Estimating the EU legitimacy change

The first question inquires how EU legitimacy construed in the UK public sphere changed against the backdrop of the financial crisis (2008), the sovereign debt crisis (late 2009), and the refugee crisis (2015) – the three crises hitting the EU's foundational arrangements, namely, the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Schengen area of unrestricted movement. In this subsection, I retrace the lines between our findings and the research question.

In chapter 4, I started by mapping the most macro-level legitimisation changes in policy-centred as well as polity-centred media coverage. In the very beginning, I investigated how legitimisation practices have changed in terms of politicisation (section 4.1) – a dimension prominent in the literature. Striving to assess the legitimacy of an institution, I started by inspecting whether the institution has been an object of public debate. In the cases when an institution has not been politicised, there might be a shared perception that its functioning is governed by non-political logic that does not require public legitimisation. Therefore, politicisation is a precondition that must be checked before the question of legitimacy can be meaningfully posed.

The analysis of politicisation (section 4.1) in the UK public sphere has shown that the EU has been thoroughly politicised, as the EU and its policy interventions have at all times been a stable part of the media coverage. The volume of EU coverage, however, has varied significantly. We have seen one steep increase in late 2009 during the climax of the Euro crisis and another one in 2015 preceding the Brexit referendum. This finding is in line with previous works documenting a peak in EU media coverage related to the crisis (Kriesi and Grande 2016; Hutter and Kriesi 2019). Yet, while the observed surges indicate periods of legitimisation change, the varying levels of politicisation alone do not warrant drawing any conclusions regarding legitimacy changes. For that, additional dimensions of legitimisation changes must be included.

Next, I have investigated changes in the tonality of the coverage (section 4.2) to estimate legitimacy changes in degree. As the media coverage, on average, becomes more negative or positive, it can be assumed that the EU was perceived as more or less legitimate in the specific period. Despite using two different methods for sentiment estimation, the EU media coverage has scored slightly negative throughout the monitored period. This conclusion resonates with the conclusions of Schmidtke (2019), who documented that the media coverage of international organisations tends to be slightly negative. Similarly, Hurrelmann and Wagner (2020) analysed the tonality of the EU media coverage in Germany, Spain, Austria, and Ireland at times of the regular June and December meetings of the European Council between 2009 and 2014 and observed fluctuations in the tonality, but no clear trends (Idem: 720).

Since automatised sentiment estimation presents one of the most complicated tasks in the field of natural language processing (Wankhade et al. 2022), some methodological limitations are unavoidable. The accuracy of sentiment prediction depends on how the particular method infers sentiment from individual words to a whole sentence. I have decided to implement the two distinct methods that arguably represent the best compromise between analytical purchase and feasibility. The first chosen method of sentiment estimation generalises on the sentence level by averaging the sentiment of individual words in a sequence. The other method draws on the Stanford Sentiment Treebank containing sentiment values not only for single words but also for phrases. Dealing with sentiment prediction at the level of the whole paragraph or text requires calculating an average of all the sentiment scores for individual sentences. While the two methods are still capable of indicating stronger trends, they cannot capture more granular changes in the tonality of the coverage. Consequently, the analysis of the tonality of EU coverage did not provide any cues of legitimacy change.

6.1.1 Changes in the content of public legitimation

While there has been an increase in politicisation in Q4 2009, the tonality did not point to any specific legitimacy changes. The findings must be accompanied by an inquiry into the third dimension of legitimation changes, namely, changes in the content of public legitimation. The logic behind the inquiry has been fully unpacked in section 2.2. Given their prevalence, the policy-centred debates shape the understanding of the EU that audiences use to orient themselves in the political landscape. In other words, audiences interpret the role and import of EU policies in the context of the most visible policy areas. Based on these common understandings, audiences form their normative expectations and select relevant criteria for evaluation. Such a 'map' should not be confused with the territory. Yet, as it spreads, the territory is terraformed. The fewer alternative normative criteria that audiences see as appropriate in public debate, the higher the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree. Therefore, the analysis of the content of the public legitimation in section 4.3 has investigated changes in the composition of the EU media coverage over time.

In section 4.3, more than ten policy areas have continuously been present in the EU media coverage. The overall composition has remained stable

over time, with the exception of the temporary expansion of the coverage of the economic and financial policy. However, the expansion of the EU economic and financial policy coverage did not come at the expense of other policy areas. The interest in this particular topic was driving politicisation measured by the total amount of published media reports, as shown in section 4.1. After the slow economic recovery in 2014, the composition of the EU policy coverage returned back to the pre-crisis stage. The multiplicity of alternative understandings of the EU as presented within each policy area remained stable over time. Consequently, there were no changes in the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree, as no policy-area-specific set of normative criteria became dominant.

The main limitation of the chosen approach springs from the assumption that audiences form their understandings of the EU based on the specificities of each individual policy area. Indeed, while public health policy is likely to give rise to very different normative expectations than, for example, economic and financial policy, some discourses might appear equally appropriate in both policy areas. This is because a discourse voicing some especially salient normative concerns is likely to become more generalised to allow use in various contexts.

For the purposes of our analysis in section 4.3, the quantitative content analysis has proven to be an efficient approach capable of dealing with large amounts of data. Such an approach can benefit strongly from clear distinctions between the coded categories. This means that even if the taxonomy of the discourses would have been built inductively based on exploratory analysis, the boundaries between categories, although clear to the coding researcher, might not be statistically significant. I balance the quantitative analysis requirements and the need to separate distinct understandings of the EU using the EUR-Lex categorisation of EU policy areas, which arguably presents the best compromise.

In order to mitigate the limitations following my choice of the taxonomy of EU policy areas, section 4.4 presented an in-depth qualitative analysis of discourses within each policy area category. The main goal was to identify themes used across different policy areas. The qualitative analysis cannot capture macro- level trends in the relative visibility of the themes that can be found across different discourses. However, the themes that have been applied across multiple contexts are the most

likely to become repurposed for raising system-level critique of the EU as a polity. Such discourses warrant extra attention as they present the most obvious point of departure for advancing a legitimacy change in degree (see section 2.2).

The analysis has shown that discourses grouped under the theme of the EU policy as a failure impacting UK sovereignty can be found in any policy area category. Since the EU policies intervene with UK law, the theme claims that the EU policies threaten local sovereignty. Since it has been used across all policy area categories, this theme appeared as the most likely to be used for problematising the legitimacy of the EU itself. This finding directs our analytical gaze towards its potential sources of legitimacy change.

6.1.2 Legitimizing the EU as a polity

So far, none of the legitimization changes could be connected with any concrete EU legitimacy changes over time. While the public critique in the policy-centred coverage investigated in chapter 4 has, for the most part, dealt with the legitimacy of specific policy interventions, only once the EU itself becomes publicly problematised can its legitimacy be questioned directly. Moving away from the more general policy debates, Chapter 5 presented a deep dive into the media coverage thematising the EU as a polity. As large audiences become sceptical regarding the legitimacy of the EU policy interventions, their attention moves towards the European project itself. I have, therefore, argued that an increase in the volume of coverage dedicated to policy coverage towards polity-centred coverage indicates a dip in the EU's diffuse support and possible legitimacy change in degree. The analysis in section 5.1 showed two such developments: one upsurge in Q3 2012 following the increase in the Euro crisis coverage and another in Q2 2015 during the Brexit referendum debate. These two time points indicate periods during which a legitimacy change in degree has likely taken place. Our findings from the UK media sphere contrast starkly with the analysis of Hurrelmann and Wagner (2020), who found 'no pronounced shift from policy debate to legitimacy debates' (Idem: 725) in German, Spanish, Austrian, and Irish EU media coverage between 2009 and 2014. I, therefore, suggest exercising caution when generalising the observed fall in the EU diffuse support to other national public spheres.

As discussed in section 3.3.1, the developments in polity-centred media coverage provide a rather rough heuristic. This is because it can easily get affected by a momentary agenda. Typically, as national elections where the EU is high on the political agenda become more visible in the media coverage, the relative visibility of the polity-centred coverage might then indicate possible legitimacy changes in degree. Furthermore, while the media might be highlighting the EU as the main actor, the audiences might still be mainly focused on concrete policy priorities. Consequently, I have argued that the trends in the relative visibility of polity-centred media coverage should always be complemented with other indicators measuring the same construct, namely, the EU's diffuse support.

The concept of diffuse support defined by Easton as 'a reservoir of favourable attitudes or goodwill that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effect of which they see as damaging to their wants' (Easton 1965: 273) is often used as a proxy for measuring legitimacy (see section 1.1.1.2). Since the diffuse support depends both on legitimacy and trust, the increases in the relative visibility of polity-centred media coverage should be seen against the background of measured institutional trust in the EU. Figure 6.1 shows that during the first surge in polity-centred coverage in 2012, only 16 per cent of respondents answered that they tend to trust the EU. At the same time, 75 per cent of respondents answered that they tend not to trust the EU. The year 2012 thus presents the lowest measured values of the 2004-2016 period. Since 2014, the measured institutional trust in the EU has once again started to converge to its mean. When it comes to the second increase in the relative visibility of the polity-centred media coverage in 2015, no similar trend in the measured trust is apparent and can likely be explained by the agenda effect. Indeed, the public debate about the Brexit referendum posited the EU as a polity against the UK, which translated into a higher volume of polity-centred coverage. In light of this triangulation, I conclude that the observed surge in Q2 2012 with a high likelihood corresponds to a legitimacy change in the degree during which the EU has become perceived as less legitimate.

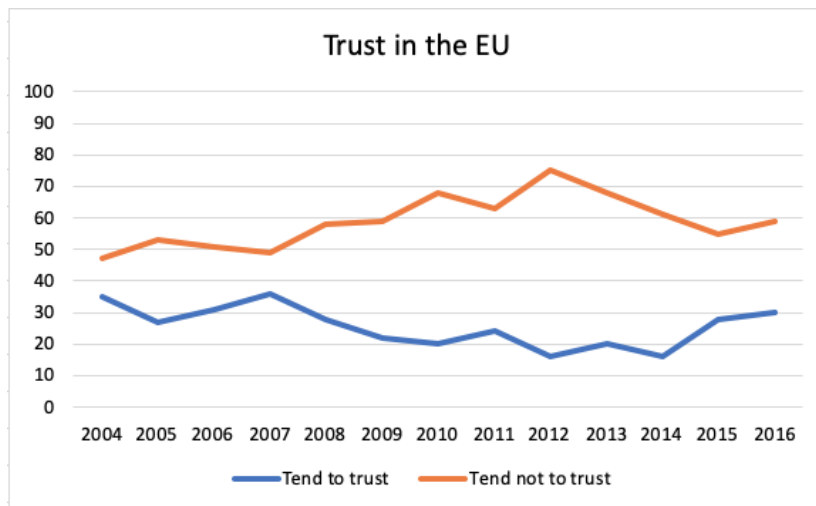


Figure 6.1: The graph shows percentual developments in trust in the EU measured in the UK using survey question: 'I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, , please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it: The European Union'; Data: Eurobarometer survey

6.1.3 Legitimation problems but no legitimacy change in kind

Up to this point, I have presented a descriptive account of legitimacy changes in degree, making the EU appear more or less legitimate. By contrast, legitimacy changes in kind highlight how EU legitimacy has been (de)stabilised in practice and the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. Striving to learn more about the potential legitimacy changes in kind, section 5.2 has zoomed in on the individual polity-centred discourses. The discourses grouped under the theme of the EU policy as a failure impacting UK sovereignty have been particularly salient (section 4.4). When contrasted against the audience's normative concerns described in the literature, I have decided to break the theme down into three discourses. The first one evaluates the EU based on its impact on national identity and traditions, the second one is based on the quality of its governance, the third one focuses on the EU's effect on national sovereignty and democracy. While the first discourse has been only marginally represented in the media coverage, the second one can be found throughout all policy areas and has become a part of the mainstream coverage of the EU. The preliminary analysis in section 5.2.3 has shown that the third one strongly overlaps with the second one. Given its more radical criticism of the EU project, developments in the third discourse appeared as potentially more revealing regarding normative changes in general and legitimacy changes in kind, in particular.

In order to capture any normative shifts accompanying the observed legitimacy change in degree in Q3 2012, I have compared three samples of the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy. One has been drawn before, the second during, and the third after the surge in legitimacy change in Q3 2012. Two possible types of legitimation change have been at the centre of attention: pragmatic and meta-pragmatic (see section 2.2). While the former refers to changes in the normative concerns used to justify or criticise an institution, the latter disrupts the established mode of valuation. The meta-pragmatic change also leads to a legitimacy change in kind. As the institution invokes a new compromise between some normative values to ground in an attempt for legitimation, there is uncertainty about whether the new legitimation will resonate with audiences' normative expectations. Its overall persuasiveness then affects the likelihood of legitimacy change in degree, making the institution perceived as either more or less legitimate than before the pragmatic legitimation change. The ambition has been to illuminate not only how much more or less legitimate the EU has become in the monitored period but also what normative changes were underlying the observed trends.

The grammar of individual interests has been the dominant mode of valuation of the EU qualified as an intergovernmental project both before, during, and after the surge. The nation-states were seen as stakeholders in intergovernmental negotiations that must be transparent, and the states should be free to opt out or participate in each concrete round of the integration process. As a result, the EU's institutional design was not perceived as in line with these normative expectations. A different mode of valuation has been invoked when assessing the UK's membership in the EU. In this case, the grammar of plural orders of worth has been dominant in all three samples. In concrete terms, this means that the legitimacy of EU membership was assessed based on their posited links to some definition of the common good in a deliberative setting. This normative expectation repeatedly collides with the technocratic legitimacy of the EC. What's more, the EP, which is supposed to be the main arena for deliberation, was not recognised as a 'true' parliament because of its limited competencies in comparison to the UK national parliament. All in all, since no meta-pragmatic legitimation changes were detected, I conclude that the EU has not experienced any legitimacy changes in kind before, during, or after the

legitimacy change in degree. The analysis in section 5.2.3 has shown that the EU has been steadily experiencing legitimation problems, as its institutional design did not conform to the normative expectations.

Given that there is much less research dedicated to legitimacy changes in kind than to legitimacy changes in degree, there is no golden standard in terms of which reliable methodologies research could follow. The adopted research design encountered tangible limitations related to our choice of data type. Firstly, the content produced in the media sphere does not perfectly reflect the audiences' own judgements and perceptions. This means that while some audiences might have changed their perception of the most appropriate mode of valuation in the case of the EU and its actions, this shift did not forcefully materialise in the media coverage. Nevertheless, such a shift would most likely affect audiences' political behaviour. Secondly, the very genre of media reports decides what part of audiences' perceptions will remain implicit. Indeed, only a message that can be communicated effectively to broad audiences will end up being published, which limits the available platforms for expression. Unless the specific normative expectations can be verbalised in a highly understandable format, they are unlikely to receive much space in the media. The use of media research for this purpose appears justified mainly because of our interest in larger and more pronounced changes over time.

Since the data indicated no legitimacy change in kind, the observed legitimacy change in degree must have been driven by pragmatic legitimation changes. The grammar of plural orders of worth, which was dominant when the EU membership was evaluated, pointed the attention to shifts in the salient orders of worth and their combinations. As discussed in section 2.2.3, the pragmatic legitimation change in this mode of valuation consists of forging a new link between EU membership and a recognised kind of common good. Should the legitimation or critique be successful, actors must relate to the most salient orders of worth corresponding to concrete types of the common good. The likelihood of legitimacy change in degree then depends on actors' ability to elaborate a compromise or combine the most salient orders of worth. We can think about the case of legitimising the marketisation of welfare services. In this case, the worth created by the expected increase in efficiency of resource allocation (market order of worth) must be aligned with the worth of solidaristic and equal

treatment of all beneficiaries (civic order of worth). The problematic arrangement of the two is then denoted by the term 'welfare profiteering', expressing scepticism about their compatibility. Similarly, the attempts to find a compromise between the market order of worth and environmentally-conscious green worth, and promote 'green capitalism', often end up denounced as mere greenwashing. In short, at the pragmatic level, the likelihood of the EU becoming more or less legitimate (legitimacy change in degree) depends on how persuasive is the combination or compromise between the most salient orders of worth.

The analysis in section 5.2.3 showed that the legitimacy change in degree in Q3 2012 had most likely been set in motion by the inability of the EU to publicly legitimise itself in terms of the most salient orders of worth. Before the observed legitimacy change, the EU membership has been evaluated either against a combination of civic and domestic orders of worth or along the lines of industrial order of worth. This means that the focus has been, on the one hand, on its impact on collective welfare, democracy, the right to self-determination, and its respect for local traditions and historical heritage. More concretely, the EU has been criticised for its democratic deficit disregarding the general will of UK citizens and the asserted lack of respect for established traditions. On the other hand, the debate problematised the EU's ability to deliver intended desirable outcomes, such as an increase in trade, has been put in question. The two ways of evaluating EU citizenship remained separate while the civic-domestic compromise has been relatively more elaborated. In practical terms, a critique utilising the civic-domestic compromise could be countered by a legitimisation based on the EU's contribution to industrial worth. This plurality has, therefore, contributed to a relatively low likelihood of legitimacy change in degree.

During and after the observed legitimacy change in degree, the debate has become more streamlined. In light of the EU's crisis response, a new standard of assessment based on the civic and industrial orders of worth has been formed. Its success can be attributed to presenting the highly salient normative concerns about the right to self-determination as antithetical to the EU's ability to deliver the intended desirable outcomes. In other words, should the EU deliver on its promise of prosperity, more competencies would have to be delegated to the EU level. In the last sample drawn after the legitimacy change in degree,

there have been no coherent attempts to address this critical discursive construction. However, even these attempts to legitimise EU membership largely acknowledged the normative concerns as well-founded and demanded substantial changes in the conditions of UK membership. All in all, the second analysed sample has shown less plurality in the way EU membership was publicly assessed, and, therefore, a higher likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. The third sample then showed tangible legitimation problems, as there were no visible attempts to legitimise EU membership in terms of the most salient normative concerns expressed via the civic-industrial construction.

Turning back to our first research question inquiring how EU legitimacy as construed in the UK public sphere changed against the backdrop of the financial crisis (2008), the sovereign debt crisis (late 2009), and the refugee crisis (2015), the data presents a clear story. During the monitored period 2004-2016, the EU has not experienced any legitimacy changes in kind. While the EU, when qualified as a project resulting from intergovernmental negotiations, has been evaluated in line with the grammar of individual interests, the EU, when qualified as UK membership in the union, has been assessed according to the grammar of plural orders of worth. In both of the cases, the EU has been criticised for not conforming to the normative expectations of the respective modes of valuation. This presented a constant source of legitimation problems. Furthermore, the analysis has shown that the EU has experienced a legitimacy change in degree in Q3 2012 that has rendered it relatively less legitimate than before. Our in-depth inquiry into pragmatic legitimation practices has revealed a decrease in the plurality of ways in which the EU has been publicly evaluated, which implies an increase in the likelihood of legitimacy changes in degree. Moreover, the observed legitimacy change in degree has been advanced by a creative combination of civic and industrial orders of worth. As the discourse on the EU as a source of erosion of national sovereignty and democracy has managed to present the EU's ability to deliver intended desirable outcomes as antithetical to citizens' right to self-determination, its relative visibility has increased. This discursive construction has left the legitimation unable to adequately address the critique until the Brexit referendum debate in 2015. Indeed, the Brexit referendum debate has meant a dramatic increase in the volume of media coverage dedicated to

the EU. Thanks to this new space, both legitimation and critique could be fully developed.

6.1.4 Legitimacy changes and audience exposure

So far, I have treated the media sphere as a relatively closed and largely self-referential system. Yet, being interested in legitimacy mainly for its social efficacy, here I discuss the significance of the findings. I have identified the legitimacy change in degree in Q3 2012 by triangulating the relative visibility of polity-centred coverage and citizens' trust in the EU as measured by the Eurobarometer survey. The relative visibility of the polity-centred discourses in Q3 2012 increased rapidly from around 35 per cent to 45 per cent of the EU media coverage. While this unprecedented surge can by no means be interpreted as a result of volatility, only one in ten media reports that usually focused on EU policy interventions have now started to problematise the EU itself. Zooming in on the critical discourse on the EU as a source of erosion of national sovereignty and democracy, it is notable that its relative visibility increased over time from 10 per cent to 17 per cent. In order to understand what political consequences this magnitude of change can have, I have complemented the analyses of relative visibility of distinct discourses with an analysis of absolute visibility. Even though this project has no ambition to measure the media effects of the observed legitimation changes, section 5.3 has outlined the expected reach of the polity-centred discourse on the EU as a source of erosion of national sovereignty and democracy.

The main purpose of tracking the absolute visibility of a concrete discourse is to estimate audience exposure. Since media outlets vary in the size of their circulation and viewership, even a small increase in the relative visibility of discourse in a media outlet with the highest circulation translates into a big increase in its absolute visibility. In other words, when it comes to estimating audience exposure, one must consider both the volume of the coverage invoking the discourse in the total EU media coverage and the average circulation rates of the individual media outlets. The analysis in section 5.3 has revealed that the discourse on national sovereignty and democracy has been promptly adopted by the tabloid press. Over time, it has become normalised and equally as common in broadsheets. Given the higher circulation rates, the audiences of the right-leaning press, such as the Daily Telegraph or

Daily Express, have been more likely to be exposed to the discourse. While the format of media reports in the Daily Telegraph and Daily Express varied, the normative concerns encapsulated in the discourse remained the same across different media outlets. The legitimisation changes observed in the whole dataset were not equally pronounced in all media outlets. Our analysis suggests that audiences following the right-leaning tabloids were relatively more exposed to these changes than others and, therefore, potentially more likely to change their political behaviour accordingly.

The analysis in section 5.3 explored the internal heterogeneity of our dataset in particular and the UK media sphere in general. At the same time, the chosen approach has its limitations. A project seeking to address media effects in a more elaborate way could benefit from taking data about audience segmentation as a point of departure. Having only the media data at my disposal, I have assumed that audiences rarely switch between media outlets they follow. However, this assumption should be treated as a hypothesis to be tested empirically. Moreover, our dataset does not contain media reports from all media outlets throughout the whole monitored period. This makes drawing comparisons between media types less reliable. Last but not least, social media, which was not included in the analysis, play an important role in news dissemination. All in all, the presented broad analysis sets our findings into a context, yet, those who are especially interested in the media effects of the observed legitimisation changes should keep these limitations in mind.

The EU has at times been perceived as relatively less legitimate, but did the observed legitimacy change in degree amount to an actual crisis? Having summarised what our findings mean in terms of EU legitimacy changes, let us now answer whether the EU has undergone a legitimisation or legitimacy crisis by confronting our findings with the analytical framework developed in section 2.3.

6.2 Anatomy of the crisis

In section 2.3, I have argued that the term crisis should be reserved for serious events during which there is a particularly high probability of institutional disintegration. While a series of legitimisation problems can publicly problematise an institution's legitimacy, such coverage in itself

does not indicate a crisis. Similarly, a legitimacy deficit representing a discrepancy between 'what is' and some normative ideal of 'what ought to be' does not equate to a crisis. Indeed, should the legitimacy deficit threaten the survival of the institution, it would have to be recognised by large constituencies. At the same time, I have claimed that a crisis does not necessarily have to lead to an immediate disintegration, as a crisis might, in the first instance, cripple the ability of the institution to function properly. As a result, the crisis might cause a substantial increase in the probability of institutional disintegration in the long run. This project is primarily concerned with the role that legitimacy plays in stabilising and destabilising political institutions. Therefore, I have introduced an analytical distinction between legitimisation crises and legitimacy crises.

6.2.1 Legitimation crises and legitimacy crises

A legitimisation crisis amounts to a situation when an institution can no longer justify its mission and conduct in a convincing way using purely communicative legitimisation practices (see section 2.3.2). Legitimation problems arise on a regular basis, as there are often complex and conflicting understandings of the momentary situation at play. The legitimisation crisis is a result of these legitimisation problems that were not resolved successfully. The institution might end up paralysed in the state of legitimisation crisis, as its inability to justify its policy response appears to corroborate the public critique. Ultimately, without the necessary public support or political will, the institution cannot undergo the structural changes necessary to offset its failing policies and manage the crisis.

In operational terms, the legitimisation crisis can be identified by the prevalence of delegitimation discourses in the media sphere. To test whether an institution experiences a legitimisation crisis, measuring the tonality of its media coverage provides a rough metric for negative sentiment in the data. In addition, the visibility (or lack thereof) of justificatory discourses addressing the normative concerns raised by the critique can be telling. In the case that the critical discourses have been left without a justificatory discourse that would balance out the critical accounts, I conclude that the institution has been experiencing a legitimisation crisis. A more in-depth exploration of the data that goes beyond the measuring of the tonality in the data is therefore needed.

Although a legitimisation crisis prevents an institution from improving its reputation with purely communicative means, it does not threaten its existence directly. Its indirect effects can, however, be seen in undermining citizens' compliance with its policy interventions. More importantly, if the negative evaluation of the institutional performance prevails over time, audiences grow sceptical about the very possibility of improving the criticised political arrangements, and the legitimisation crisis starts depleting the stock of public support for the institution itself. As public support keeps dropping, media attention shifts from policy-centred discussions to problematising the legitimacy of the institution itself. Consequently, the long-term legitimisation crisis will, over time, lead to a legitimacy crisis.

In section 2.3.3, I have defined a legitimacy crisis as a situation in which the legitimisation crisis has caused a depletion of diffuse support, and the institution is seen not as a solution but as an integral part of the problem. Based on the degree to which the authority exercised by the institution is perceived as properly justified, legitimacy crises vary in severity. Similar to the case of a legitimisation crisis, the legitimacy crisis can only be resolved at the cost of significant institutional reforms. If the needed institutional change does not take place, the institution might remain in a state of paralysis. The legitimacy crisis will continue to inhibit its capability to undergo the reforms necessary to produce optimal outputs and regain its legitimacy. Furthermore, public support for the institution continues to decrease, causing further policy failures and a corresponding increase in the cost of maintaining the policies in question. Ultimately, if there is a recognised alternative political arrangement designed to address the very same issue as the criticised institution, the legitimacy crisis might result in institutional disintegration.

When assessing whether an institution has experienced a legitimacy crisis, the introduced analytical framework suggests controlling for two necessary conditions. Firstly, an institution will not undergo a legitimacy crisis unless it has already experienced a legitimisation crisis. Indeed, I have defined the legitimisation crisis as an inability to justify the conduct and mission of an institution using purely communicative means. Insofar as the institution is capable of public justification, it is perceived as serving its purpose, and hence its existence will not be questioned. Secondly, a legitimacy crisis is always preceded by a decrease in public

support, conceptualised as diffuse support. As the legitimisation crisis depletes the diffuse support, the focus of public debate moves away from concrete policy topics to the institution's role. Once the critical discourses proliferating in the policy-centred debate are appropriated for raising normative concerns regarding the institution's mission, they start driving down the stock of the institution's legitimacy making the legitimacy crisis more severe. And thirdly, an institution, although suffering from a legitimacy crisis, is unlikely to disintegrate unless plausible alternative arrangements are discussed in the public sphere.

The analytical framework distinguishing between legitimisation crisis and legitimacy crisis allows for assessing the severity of a crisis and its potential consequences. Yet, this understanding of legitimisation and legitimacy crises presents several empirical challenges. Whereas the identification of a legitimisation crisis based on changes in the tonality of the EU media coverage, the predominance of critical discourses, and the qualitative analysis of the salient normative concerns is relatively straightforward, the boundary between a legitimisation crisis and a legitimacy crisis is rather fuzzy. Instead of a sharp threshold, it should be understood as a continuum. In practical terms, an observed decrease in the diffuse support estimated based on measured citizens' trust towards the institution and the relative visibility of discourse problematising the institution itself in the public debate needs to be corroborated by a more in-depth qualitative inquiry. The main aim of such inquiry is to examine whether the most salient normative concerns about the institution have been persuasively addressed by justificatory discourses. In addition, the qualitative inquiry is necessary to explore whether any alternative political arrangements to the institution in question are presented as a remedy to the normative issues thematised by the most salient critical discourses. This additional variable indicates the potential consequences of the hypothesised legitimacy crisis.

6.2.2 Legitimation crisis hypothesis

Having recapitulated the main differences between the two types of crisis, I now turn back towards the findings of chapters 4 and 5 and discuss to what degree the data suggest that the EU has, in the monitored period, experienced legitimisation or legitimacy crisis. I have argued that a legitimisation crisis always precedes a legitimacy crisis. Therefore, I follow the logic of counterfactuals and examine whether the

data give any support to the hypothesis that the EU has not experienced a legitimisation crisis. Such a conclusion must be based on observed changes in the two main indicators: the tonality of EU media coverage and the presence of a justificatory discourse capable of addressing normative concerns raised by the most salient critical discourses. In the case that no significant change in the tonality can be found and there have been visible discourses justifying the EU by countering the most salient critical discourses, I shall conclude that the EU has likely not experienced a legitimisation crisis.

As discussed earlier, the analysis of tonality of EU media coverage in section 4.2 has not shown any significant changes. However, this finding might have been caused by the choice of an approach lacking the required degree of sensitivity, specific logic of the media sphere where the institutional coverage on average tends to be slightly negative, as by the lack of any changes in tonality. Reflecting this uncertainty, this discussion will primarily revolve around the degree to which there have been justificatory discourses capable of countering the most salient critical accounts. These justificatory discourses must be capable of legitimising the EU as a polity in all its respective qualifications, i.e. both as an inter- governmental political project and as the set of practical consequences produced by the UK's membership in the EU.

When it comes to the media coverage of the EU as an intergovernmental project, the grammar of individual interests has been perceived as the most appropriate mode of valuation (see section 5.2.3). The dominant mode of valuation gives away what makes up a fair procedure leading to a legitimate EU policy and institutional design. In this case, the grammar of individual interests demands decisions to be made based on negotiations between independent stakeholders where all the possible choices and their consequences are transparently laid out to all the affected. Since the EU has been qualified as an inter-governmental project, the national governments are seen as stakeholders representing the audiences of their countries. Yet, as there have been strong normative concerns regarding politicians' willingness and/or capability to represent the audiences' interests, the possibility that this institutional layout will generate legitimate decisions was questioned. In order to prevent the national politicians from ignoring (aggregated) preferences of the majority of citizens, the discourses demand holding a referendum as the best solution to generate a legitimate decision.

However, even if the UK's position in the inter-governmental negotiations would in each case be determined by a public referendum, another critical discourse problematises the very setup of the negotiations. Whereas the first critical discourse draws on the suspicion that elected officials do not act in the audiences' interest, this discourse suspects that other governments in the negotiations will always form a coalition voting against UK interests. Moreover, some member states, such as France or Greece, have been repeatedly portrayed as receiving preferential treatment in the negotiations. Yet, since the decisions are binding even for those countries whose governments have voted against them, the situations are interpreted as being overruled in the name of foreign interests. Without the possibility to opt out from arrangements that may contradict the audiences' normative expectations, inter-governmental negotiations fail to produce legitimate decisions.

In order to deal with the normative concerns of the first critical discourse, the government, unable to regain audiences' trust purely by communicative means, has responded with a promise of a general referendum about EU membership. The attempts to justify the inter-governmental project against the second type of critique were significantly less coherent and mainly limited to symbolic action. Instead of a unitary discourse justifying the EU negotiations, the UK government repeatedly attempted to demonstrate that British national interests could be heard and pushed through. This strategy had a variable success both in terms of the outcomes of the intergovernmental negotiations and audiences' recognition of the EU as an arena where each country has equal opportunities to engage in coalition-building to promote its national interests. By contrast to the two critical discourses, these justificatory responses were never successfully developed into a discourse that could be deployed irrespective of a momentary agenda. As a result, the decisions adopted by the EU qualified as an intergovernmental project were not perceived as properly justified.

In addition to being approached as a project resulting from intergovernmental negotiations, the media qualified the EU as UK membership in the union. Unlike the debates about the EU as an intergovernmental project, this qualification has been evaluated in line with the grammar of plural orders of worth. This means that the consequences of EU membership for the UK must be justified by linking the concrete realities with some common good or a compromise between

several common goods. Such a justification must be developed in the course of public deliberation, which in the EU context takes place in the EP. The main critical discourse, therefore, draws attention to the quality of deliberation taking place in the EP, which appears insufficient when compared to Westminster. Moreover, as some of the competencies of the UK national parliament are not delegated to the EP but to the EC, the EC's claims on technocratic legitimacy clash with audiences' normative expectations. Since the EU as an actor has been largely absent from the public debate, and none of the UK actors tried to justify the institutional setup, the critical discourse has been dominant. All in all, both ways of qualifying the EU were perceived as contradicting audiences' normative expectations. This allowed problematising the legitimacy of the EU's political interventions simply on the basis of its institutional design.

So far, I have focused on how the EU and its institutional setup have been normatively imagined as a polity in the public sphere. Since the EU has been evaluated against some salient form of common good, the grammar of plural orders of worth has been perceived as the most appropriate mode of valuation. A concrete political arrangement can be justified by drawing a link with something that audiences at large find worthy. The analysis in section 5.2.3 has identified two normative concerns that have emerged as the most salient in the period preceding the Brexit debate (Q4 2014, Q1 2015). On the one hand, the normative concerns were voiced in line with the industrial order of worth considering the prospects that the EU membership will deliver the intended desirable outcomes. On the other hand, civic order of worth was used to assess the impact of EU membership on UK sovereignty and the corresponding audiences' right to self-determination. In light of the EU's crisis management (the debate peaking in Q1 2012), a new critical discursive construction was developed. It has leveraged the Euro crisis experience to argue that the industrial worth of intended desirable outcomes cannot be realised unless more of the civic worth of national self-determination is sacrificed. No coherent justificatory discourse visible in the media sphere was able to resolve the underlying normative concerns, as the attempts to justify EU membership have exclusively focused on the industrial worth and the jobs created thanks to UK membership. Consequently, the newly developed discursive construction portraying industrial and civic worth as antithetical did not

find its justificatory counterpart in the media sphere. We may conclude that the delegitimizing discourse has been prevalent.

In this subsection, I have started by formulating the hypothesis that the EU did not experience a legitimation crisis which could be retained under the conditions that 1) no significant changes in the tonality of the coverage can be detected and 2) the delegitimizing discourses in the media sphere were not prevalent, as they have appeared alongside their justificatory counterparts. Since the chosen approach did not identify any changes in the tonality of the coverage, the hypothesis must be retained. Yet, the investigation into the legitimation changes has shown that the delegitimation discourses were in the period corresponding to the detected legitimacy change in degree (Q3 2012) prevalent, as no coherent justificatory discourses addressing the most salient normative concerns could be found. The institutional design of the EU has been perceived as contradicting the normative expectations of audiences, which allowed problematising the legitimacy of the policy decisions. In addition to this source of constant legitimation problems, EU membership has been evaluated with respect to the most salient forms of worth. As the critical discourse managed to construe the two most salient forms of worth: the industrial and the civic worth, as impossible to achieve at the same time, the legitimacy of EU membership has been successfully problematised. Since neither the delegitimizing discourses problematising the EU's institutional design nor the discourse problematising EU membership because of its consequences for the UK found a justificatory counterpart, the hypothesis must be rejected. I conclude that the EU has likely experienced a legitimation crisis during the observed legitimacy change in degree.

The main limitation of the presented analysis lies in its exclusive focus on the period selected by its proximity to the observed legitimacy change in degree. Any legitimation crises that might have taken place before and/or after this chosen time frame, therefore, go undetected. At the same time, the present project is interested in legitimacy primarily for its consequences for institutional stability. While there might have been several legitimation crises during the 2004-2016 period, unless their underlying normative changes translate into a legitimacy change, they are only of minor importance for our project. Furthermore, an analysis striving to identify every single legitimation crisis, irrespective of its severity, requires an alternative research design because of the

challenges related to interpreting public delegitimation practices. Indeed, drawing the fine line between a long series of legitimation problems and a full-blown legitimation crisis calls for a fine-grained qualitative analysis that could support the work of interpretation. For our purposes, I have decided to limit the focus only to the examples of legitimation crises that have translated into legitimacy changes (see also section 3.7).

6.2.3 Legitimacy crisis hypothesis

Having concluded that the EU did experience a legitimation crisis, I proceed by discussing whether the legitimation crisis has escalated into a legitimacy crisis. Following the same reasoning as in the case of a legitimation crisis, I am mainly concerned with a severe type of legitimacy crisis rather than with the liminal states when a legitimation crisis starts expanding into a legitimacy crisis. As discussed in section 2.3.3, the main consequence of a legitimacy crisis in these liminal stages is a higher chance of policy failure as the citizens' willingness to comply wanes away and a decreasing chance to conduct an institutional reform. By contrast, a severe legitimacy crisis might threaten the very survival of an institution as audiences demand its disintegration. In order to identify a legitimacy crisis, I follow the development of diffuse support for the institution and alternative political arrangements discussed in public. In the case that no significant change in diffuse support has taken place and there are no alternative political arrangements discussed in public, I shall conclude that the EU has likely not experienced a severe legitimacy crisis.

In the previous section, I have suggested triangulating measurements of citizens' trust in the EU with observed changes in the relative visibility of polity-centred media coverage to arrive at a more reliable gauge of diffuse support for the EU. Based on the two respective indicators, I have concluded that there has been a decrease in diffuse support in Q2 2012. Looking closer at the respective changes, the relative visibility of polity-centred discourses increased from 32 per cent to 42 per cent, and trust dipped from 24 per cent to 16 per cent. While the detected changes point in the direction that a legitimacy crisis might have taken place, it is difficult to assess how severe the potential crisis was based on the magnitude of these changes. Therefore, the analysis must be supplemented with a more in-depth qualitative inquiry into whether the

salient critical discourses formulate any alternative political arrangements.

In section 5.2.3, I have discussed legitimation changes during the period corresponding to the legitimation crisis. Whereas the EU's institutional design seems to be perceived as not properly justified, the most common targets of the critical discourses have been issues related to concrete competencies delegated at the EU level. The controversy surrounding the question of whether prison inmates should be granted voting rights presents a prime example. Indeed, the vast majority of the coverage argued in defence of the status quo, denying prisoners the right to vote because it was their dubious moral compass that caused them to end up as convicts in the first place. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) did not share this normative judgement. Since EU membership gave the UK no chance to decide on this contentious question, it has been perceived as overly oppressive. Similarly, the limited possibilities to regulate immigration have been repeatedly mentioned as one of the main reasons for considering leaving the EU. My interpretation is further corroborated by David Cameron's not particularly successful attempts to justify the membership. Instead of stressing the benefits of the EU membership as a whole, he promised to renegotiate its terms to regain control over these controversial areas. Since the most visible critical discourses problematised not the EU membership itself but rather discreet transfers of competencies to the EU level, there are no additional indications of a severe legitimacy crisis.

A legitimacy crisis is unlikely to result in the disintegration of the institution in question unless there are alternative political arrangements available that are capable of performing the same function (see section 2.3.3). In our case, this would mean that the same forms of common good ascertained by EU membership were perceived as attainable by different means. In the public debate, there has been scattered and relatively seldom suggestions that the UK should strive to achieve the same kind of relationship with the EU as Norway, Switzerland, or Iceland. The justificatory discourses addressing these suggestions were typically arguing that the UK is unlikely to negotiate the same conditions as these countries in the case of its exit. Moreover, many such debates remained rather technical. As the UK's ability to change between these arrangements remained uncertain, the proposal was not particularly popular and remained on the margin of the debate. It was not until the

Brexit debate that the public imagination of life outside of the UK was fully developed. Yet, even at that point, the alternative arrangement represented, first and foremost, the necessary step to regaining control over the most debated competencies pooled at the EU level.

All in all, while there is a moderate decrease in diffuse support for EU membership, most of the critical discourses have thematised specific problematic competencies delegated to the EU level. EU membership was only problematised as the hindrances preventing the UK from resolving the issues perceived as pressing or even outraging. When looking closer at the most salient discursive construction criticising the EU, the narrative recognises the legitimacy of EU membership when one considers its industrial worth. In the case of a legitimacy crisis, the industrial worth of EU membership would arguably be seen as negative when compared with exit. Instead, the audiences believe that EU membership can still serve its function, albeit at the price of civic worth. Moreover, no alternative political arrangements serving the same functions as EU membership were covered and/or perceived as feasible before the actual Brexit referendum. I therefore conclude that while the legitimisation crisis has already depleted a portion of the EU's diffuse support, the EU has not experienced any severe legitimacy crisis in the monitored period.

6.3 Reflections on the theoretical framework

To answer the research questions, I have used the theoretical framework presented in chapter 2 to cultivate my sensitivity to diverse forms of legitimacy changes. Since the available empirical legitimacy research focuses mostly on the shifts making an institution more or less legitimate (see section 2.1), I have introduced a new dichotomy differentiating between distinct types of legitimacy changes and their effects on institutional stability.

I have defined two types of EU legitimacy changes: legitimacy changes in degree and legitimacy changes in kind (section 2.1). The legitimacy changes in degree can be registered on a one-dimensional scale from completely illegitimate to fully legitimate and stand in the centre of legitimacy research attention. By contrast, the legitimacy changes in kind have received only very little scholarly attention and impact the scope of political interventions that an institution in question can publicly justify.

A legitimacy change in kind is likely to result in legitimation problems as the institution is no longer capable of justifying its actions. If unresolved, the legitimation problems concerning specific policy interventions might eventually render the legitimacy of the institution itself problematic. In other words, legitimacy changes in kind disrupt what policy interventions are justifiable and can set in motion legitimacy changes in degree affecting the governing body.

Both types of legitimacy change are brought about by legitimation practices in the public. That is why I have focused on tracking shifts in public legitimation in UK media coverage of the EU. As the policy-specific debate tends to precede system-level critique, I have started by investigating policy-centred legitimation practices (chapter 4) and then moved to polity-centred legitimation (chapter 5). While the research methodologies aiming to capture legitimacy changes in degree are well-developed, the few studies thematising legitimacy changes in kind are explorative in nature and rely on qualitative inquiries into relatively constrained topics. Whereas controlling for legitimacy changes in degree requires tracking many complementary variables with no established quantitative indicators of legitimacy changes in kind, I have had to fully rely on the in-depth qualitative inquiry of my own design. Although the data did not substantially challenge the introduced theoretical framework and the available literature, they have tested my intuition on two points.

Firstly, based on the theoretical framework, I have assumed that both critique and legitimation will be present in the public debate at most times. Since actors develop their ideational means and competencies in practice, the all too evident lack of attempts to legitimise the EU and its policy intervention resulted in a disparity between the critique and justification. More concretely, those attempting to legitimise EU membership were almost exclusively deploying a discourse drawing on the industrial order of worth and stressing the number of jobs created thanks to EU membership. However, the critique of the membership relying on civic-industrial construction did not deny the possibility of desirable outcomes per se. Instead, its strength lies in outlining these benefits as contingent on the willingness to pool more competencies at the EU level. Effectively, it may be argued that the justification did not fully compensate for this shortage of EU legitimation until 2015. At that point, EU membership has been a widely debated part of the political

agenda. This increased public attention has then likely contributed to the justification discourses finally closing up the disparity. To amend my original expectations, I assert that in the well-documented atmosphere of Euroscepticism, it becomes more demanding for actors to fully develop a justificatory answer to a critique. This results in periods where the critical discourses are highly visible and salient.

Secondly, since actors' critical capacity is always constrained by the available ideational means they use to make sense of reality, developing a novel interpretation is highly demanding. Also, in hindsight, figure 5.1 in section

5.1 can be interpreted as a display of the delay before the reporting of the EU's crisis response has been integrated into the proliferating discourses on the EU as a polity. Nevertheless, against my expectation that the EU would be evaluated predominantly in terms of market order of worth alone, there have been several lines of reasoning. While the performative effect of what is measurable, like, for example, the costs of EU membership, the received funds, or the value of the working places, should not be underestimated, an argumentation based solely on market order of worth caters only to some audiences. As we have seen, the critique has managed to combine the two most salient orders of worth in a highly creative way. It can be argued that the resulting discursive construction has included market order of worth together with industrial order of worth, as both were uncovered to depend on further integration. Although I have expected the evaluative practices to unravel in a much more mechanistic fashion, the introduced research design allowed me to capture and retain their dynamic properties.

6.4 Multidisciplinary approaches to dealing with large datasets

The introduced theoretical framework has proven useful for pointing the analytical gaze to all the different indicators of legitimacy change. Given the focus of this thesis on the whole crisis-ridden period 2004-2016, I have proposed a comprehensive research design adjusted for dealing with large amounts of unstructured data. Whereas legitimacy changes in degree can be traced using several quantitative indicators, legitimacy changes in kind require a more in-depth qualitative analysis. At the core of the selected research design, there has been the aspiration to utilise

quantitative methods to achieve the same result as using qualitative content analysis. Discreet discourses in the data should have been coded in the whole dataset. While unsupervised machine learning presents a powerful solution for datasets where the distinctions between categories are rather clear-cut, I have attempted to classify discourses that are not necessarily mutually exclusive (see also Waggoner 2020). Since fine-tuning the clustering algorithm in similar cases is extremely time-consuming, one of the potential benefits of the automated solution in comparison to the qualitative approach is lost. I have, therefore, decided to try to attack the task using supervised machine learning instead.

In contrast to unsupervised machine learning, the supervised method requires a hand-coded representative sample of the data to 'learn' about the boundaries between each category. The algorithms then proceed to apply the very same pattern and ultimately attribute a category label to all data points in the dataset. Although the requirement of hand-coded data made the process more time-consuming, I have leveraged uncertainty sampling to generate a sample that only comprised the most informative unlabelled data points. More concretely, I have used a technique called active learning (in the statistics literature, also called 'query learning' or 'optimal experimental design', see Settles 2009) to decrease the size of the hand-coded sample required to achieve good performance of the trained classifier. Using the hand-coded sample as the input for supervised machine learning, I was able to classify all my data points without having to resort to recruiting an additional human coder.

Since the rationale behind this step of analysis has been to detect trends and macro-level legitimation changes, the chosen approach is less well suited for tracking marginal discourses such as the discourse on UK national identity and traditions. At the same time, when provided with a sufficient amount of hand-coded data, a much more detailed picture could be generated. Indeed, the used size of the hand-coded sample improves the achieved precision and recall of the fully optimised algorithm. Yet, this relationship is not linear but follows a logarithmic function: additional hand-coded data points bring potentially big improvements in the classifier's precision and recall only up to a certain point (in our case, approximately $N = 250$) after which adding more hand-coded data led only to marginal improvements. For the purpose of my analysis, 88 per cent prediction accuracy with a 79 per cent F1 score

was deemed sufficient because its potential further improvements could not justify the additional time needed for its statistical optimisation.

While many steps of the presented analysis followed established approaches with very little innovation, we can draw some important lessons from the qualitative analysis of media data used to identify the newly introduced notion of legitimacy changes in kind. As Marshall McLuhan famously stated, 'the medium is the message' (1967). This means that when aiming to detect the less explored type of legitimacy change in the EU media coverage, not all public arenas are equally open to all kinds of utterances. In the course of the qualitative analysis, it became apparent that the media favour contributions following the grammar of plural orders of worth. After all, this mode of valuation allows communicating the worth of the EU to any third party irrespective of their engagement (or lack thereof) with the topic. By contrast, the grammar of individual interests makes the worth apparent mainly for the audiences who already understand what stakeholders and on whose behalf are involved in the decision-making. Because of this observed bias in the media sphere, the contributions following the grammar of individual interests were much less pronounced. Consequently, I have had to mitigate this property of the data by conducting a much more in-depth qualitative analysis than what is necessary when dealing with data from other sources.

Concluding remarks and the ways ahead

At the beginning of this thesis, there was an intellectual curiosity provoked by the Brexit referendum. Despite numerous crises, the European integration process appeared unidirectional and nearly irreversible. This has been reflected in the literature by the growing prominence of theories that interpret crises not as a threat but as a potential catalyst for ever-closer integration. Indeed, the idea of integration through crisis seemed to be corroborated by the EU's historical record with the single exception: Brexit. Trying to understand what makes this crisis special, scholars presented various explanations finding domestic causes in UK party politics, social polarisation, or aggressive media campaigning that has misled the voters. Yet, being primarily concerned with the process of European integration, the domestic factors must be complemented with an analysis of EU-level causes. Arguably the most compelling hypothesis states that Brexit can be related to developments in EU legitimacy. This suspicion is hardly surprising as scholars have been reporting that the EU has been suffering from various legitimacy deficits, legitimisation crises, or even legitimacy crises since the early 1990s. Nevertheless, the link between these phenomena and concrete political outcomes has never been convincingly established. Against this background, the UK case presented itself as a unique opportunity to empirically examine the importance of legitimacy for European integration.

I have decided to break the outlined research problem down into two discreet research questions. First, the question of how EU legitimacy changed against the backdrop of the three crises hitting its central

arrangements – the Economic and Monetary Union and the Schengen area, in the period between 2004 and 2016. The goal has been to control for the full variety of legitimacy changes. Since legitimacy is established mainly via communicative processes, I have studied changes in legitimation practices taking place in the UK media sphere. The goal has been to pinpoint what it would mean for the EU to be legitimate at different times. Having established what significant legitimacy changes preceded Brexit, I have moved to the second research question. It has inquired whether there are any indications that the EU has experienced a legitimacy crisis in the monitored period, understood as a situation where the probability of disintegration can only be decreased at the price of substantial policy reform. Whereas the first research question adopted a largely explorative focus mapping any legitimacy changes, the second research question scrutinised their magnitude and consequences for European integration. Together, the two research questions were formulated with the aim of enhancing our understanding of the relationship between legitimacy changes and Brexit events.

After reviewing the available literature, it became obvious that the present project required additional theoretical work. The vast majority of the existing empirical research is concerned with legitimacy changes in spite of which an institution ends up perceived as more or less legitimate than before. This is, however, only one of the thinkable types of legitimacy change that I have coined as legitimacy change in degree. Aiming to capture the fullest variety of EU legitimacy changes, I have presented the distinction between legitimacy change in degree and legitimacy change in kind, which affects the scope of political intervention that can be publicly justified. With its help, I was able to construct a detailed picture of legitimacy change covering changes in the stability of legitimacy in the making and the normative concerns driving the changes. The broadened analytical framework of legitimacy changes builds sensitivity towards the micro-dynamics of public legitimation and delegitimation. Such sensitivity is crucial for understanding the implications of changes in normative expectations for institutional survival in general and European integration in particular.

Another issue posed by the existing legitimacy research has been the lack of clear distinctions between neighbouring concepts of legitimation problems, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy crisis, sharing the same semantic space. In fact, many scholars choose to use either the term

legitimation or legitimacy crisis without properly discussing this decision. In other cases, the terms have been used to create a dramatic arch supporting one's interpretation rather than as analytical concepts. Therefore, I have argued for the need to establish a clear distinction between the concepts. For this purpose, I have developed a model that makes the differences between legitimation problems, legitimacy deficit, legitimation crises, and legitimacy crises explicit. Besides providing a convenient analytical framework, the model presents an important contribution that brings clarity to the theoretical debate that has been haunted by confusion fuelled by conceptual disagreement. The legitimacy crisis hypothesis can thus be treated as an empirical question.

Equipped with all the analytical tools needed to probe our two research questions, I have proceeded with outlining concrete research design and operationalisation. This required specifying where to look when investigating EU legitimacy, what methods will grant a reasonable analytical purchase, and how could the gathered evidence best be represented for it to support reliable interpretation. I have decided to study legitimation practices taking place within the UK media sphere because of their importance for public opinion formation and the relative availability of large volumes of high-quality archive data. The large dataset containing over two million media reports offered supreme detail and granularity while at the same time posing the challenge of having to process and analyse the data in a cost-effective way. In order to track macro-level trends, the data must be classified into relevant categories. This can be done using machine learning, but this technique requires a sample of the data hand-coded by a researcher to establish the pattern that will then be applied to the rest of the dataset. While this challenge is commonly resolved with the help of crowd coding services such as Crowdfunder or Amazon Mechanical Turk, the downside is higher costs and limited options to control quality. Consequently, I have used uncertainty sampling called 'active learning' that has decreased the required size of the hand-coded dataset. Ultimately, the introduced approach allowed processing and analysing the large dataset without any additional financial costs and in a significantly shorter time than expected based on experiences from other projects of similar scope.

The quantitative analysis has provided an overview of macro-level legitimation changes that give away possible legitimacy changes in degree. However, in order to capture the various types of legitimacy

changes, the quantitative analysis had to be complemented by an in-depth qualitative analysis of normative changes. When choosing our unit of analysis, I have argued for the need to go beyond the plain mapping of EU's media representations in lexical terms. By choosing to focus on legitimation and delegitimation discourses loosely defined as relatively stable and distinctive ways of public expression, the approach has mapped how the territory of the EU's legitimate political action was shaped. Furthermore, I have chosen the method of discourse studies. By contrast to the more widely-known critical discourse analysis, it acknowledges actors' critical capacity. As a result, the EU's normative record presented in this thesis is not an outcome of the author's own critical judgement but a direct reflection of actors' own assessments. Given the concern with legitimacy for its social efficacy, this nuance is of crucial importance for the validity of our findings. After all, the aim was to scrutinise the link between normative change as echoed by audiences' normative expectations, public support, and, ultimately, institutional legitimacy. Therefore, it had to be ensured that the actors' own work of critique would not be overshadowed by the author's evaluative statements. The proposed mixed methods research design has proven adequate for addressing our research questions.

The results of the empirical analysis interpreted against the measured UK citizens' trust have shown that since Q3 2012, the EU has likely become perceived as less legitimate than before. This shift has taken place despite its likelihood remaining virtually unchanged and presents the single most pronounced legitimacy change in degree in the monitored period 2004-2016. When investigating possible drivers behind this change, there has been no indication of a legitimacy change in kind altering the scope of policy intervention that could be publicly justified. Instead, legitimation problems have repeatedly arisen because of the EU's institutional design, which has been perceived as not fully justified. This has been the case irrespective of whether the EU is understood as an intergovernmental project or whether it is approached as EU membership.

The most likely cause of the observed decrease in perceived legitimacy has been the legitimation change that has unravelled in 2013. During this time, the industrial worth of evaluating the membership based on its ability to bring the intended desirable outcomes and civic worth stressing the value of national self-determination has become more

prominent. As a result of this heightened focus on the two particular worths, it has become relatively easier to problematise the legitimacy of the EU and possibly achieve legitimacy change in degree. A new construction portrayed industrial worth as antithetical to civic worth. Following the reasoning, the intended desirable outcomes of the EU membership are to be contingent upon giving up more national sovereignty. In addition, this discourse did not find any equally salient counterpart capable of justifying EU membership in terms of its benefits and respect for UK sovereignty. I have, therefore, concluded that the critical discourse has likely contributed to the observed fall in perceived EU legitimacy.

Up to this point, I have been describing legitimacy changes that have taken place. When it comes to the second research question examining the importance of these legitimacy changes, I have started by investigating whether the EU has, in the monitored period, experienced a legitimisation crisis. Indeed, the theoretical model (see section 2.3) clarified that a legitimisation crisis always precedes a legitimacy crisis. A legitimisation crisis amounts to a situation when the institution can no longer justify its mission and conduct using purely communicative means. In operational terms, the legitimisation crisis is characterised by the prevalence of delegitimising discourses. Although no indication that EU media coverage has become considerably more positive or negative could be found, the critical discourses have risen in salience since Q3 2012 and have become relatively more visible. With the help of qualitative discourse analysis, I have shown that the critical discursive construction pitting industrial worth against civic worth was not met with a counter-discourse that could, in its spite, justify EU membership. Furthermore, the EU's institutional design has been a cause of recurrent legitimisation problems that have never been fully resolved. The inability to maintain its legitimacy in terms of the two most salient forms of worth suggests that the EU has likely suffered a legitimisation crisis.

Once I had established that the EU has likely experienced a legitimisation crisis, I investigated whether the legitimisation crisis over time escalated into a severe legitimacy crisis that would threaten institutional survival. As the dominant critical discourses continue to deplete diffuse support for the EU and problematise its legitimacy, the transition from legitimisation crisis to legitimacy crisis generates a continuum of liminal stages. Although there have been indications of the diffuse support

falling by circa 10 per cent, such a change on its own can hardly be interpreted as a radical drop. After all, it could be partially explained by the standard deviation of the measurements. Therefore, I have made use of qualitative discourse analysis to better understand what has been the main point of contention highlighted by the public critique.

The qualitative analysis made apparent that the specific arrangements introduced by the EU, such as inmates' voting right, has been the main target of criticism. What has been widely disputed is the loss of control over discreet domains where the audiences' normative expectations differ most from the EU policy interventions. Even though these issues demonstrated that EU membership had not been properly justified, its value in terms of industrial worth has still been acknowledged. In fact, even the discussed discursive construction arguably recognises the value of EU membership in terms of industrial worth. Besides, no alternative political arrangements have received much attention in the public debate. While the proposals calling for negotiating a deal with the EU similar to what was achieved by Norway, Iceland, or Switzerland can occasionally be seen, they have gained relatively little visibility, and their feasibility has been questioned. During a legitimacy crisis, the institution is perceived more as a part of the problem than its solution. Since EU membership has still been perceived to perform a function invaluable in terms of industrial worth, and no alternative arrangements were portrayed as feasible, the EU has likely not experienced a severe legitimacy crisis.

The conclusion that while there has likely been a legitimisation crisis, no indications of a severe legitimacy crisis can be found might seem both anticlimactic and counterintuitive. After all, the referendum vote made the UK leave the EU. Yet, a legitimacy change has been but one of the probable causes shaping the Brexit reality. The presented findings document a crisis of the paradigm taking European 'integration' through crises where grave circumstances push member states towards an ever-closer union. Closer integration is typically presented as the only answer to the crisis, but at what cost? Once some of the countries regard the price of pooling more power at the EU level as too high, this uncompromising attitude might backfire and force an opt-out. Indeed, EU membership could have been justified if the terms of the EU-UK relationship in concrete points were renegotiated. However, such revisionist initiatives were outright rejected by the EU, forcing the UK to

either stay in the union, where most of the Eurozone was open to further integration, or leave. The story of this thesis could, therefore, be read as an apt example showing why research investigating the effects of legitimacy changes on institutional survival should always be interpreted in the context of other variables affecting public support.

If we briefly review the achieved trade deal between the EU and the UK, the priorities of the EU seem to contrast starkly with its categorical stance before Brexit. In terms of industrial worth, the trade deal arguably deflected the threat of an economic Armageddon foreseen by the Remain campaign. No tariffs or quotas on wholly British export goods were introduced. At the same time, very little about the service economy that requires significant harmonisation and where the UK has a large surplus was included in the agreement. As a result, the trade deal will likely translate into lower economic growth, but whether the Brits end up considerably poorer remains to be seen. The biggest disagreement during the negotiations regarded fishing. Since this industry is only responsible for about 0.5 per cent of GDP, its value lies in the register of civic worth. Having control over its waters plays more on the strings of British patriotic symbolism painting the UK as an independent coastal state, than on the logic of economic rationality. Furthermore, the important decisions in areas such as prisoners' voting rights will now be judged by UK courts (with the exception of trade disputes in Northern Ireland), and a new points-based immigration system has replaced the free movement policy. Whereas some of the much-debated arrangements, such as the working time directive, are unlikely to be repealed, the trade deal has formally returned many of the controversial policy areas back under the control of national authorities, which lends it primacy over the full EU membership valued in terms of civic order of worth.

Although the trade deal brings indisputable civic worth to the UK, both the EU and the UK are likely to bear its negative economic consequences. The EU negotiators remained adamant in questions of industrial worth but surprisingly acquiescent in questions of civic worth. In hindsight, rather than a legitimacy crisis, Brexit emerges as a crisis of political imagination. By denying the chance to renegotiate some of the aspects of the UK's EU membership, which nonetheless turned out to be of lesser import to the EU's trade deal negotiators, the political elites managed to create a situation in which the only way of improving the civic worth of

the arrangement was an actual opt-out. At the same time, without the observed legitimization crisis, arguing for a radical change would be more challenging, as the EU membership would have to be evaluated using a larger plurality of normative criteria.

Throughout this thesis, I have introduced the contributions in theoretical, methodological and empirical terms. In the rest of this chapter, I discuss what implications these contributions have for future research in each of the three domains.

From legitimization crisis to crisis of legitimacy

The present project has resulted in two main theoretical contributions. Firstly, I have outlined a theoretical approach that broadens the agenda for empirical legitimacy research by introducing a novel notion of legitimacy change in kind. Secondly, I have developed a model providing conceptual clarification of neighbouring concepts sharing the same semantic space, such as legitimization problems, legitimacy deficit, legitimization crisis, and legitimacy crisis. This theoretical work has laid down a stepping stone for future inquiries into institutional legitimacy.

In the first chapter, I have pointed out the divide in the available legitimacy literature, separating research approaching legitimacy as a benchmark of normative goodness from research portraying legitimacy as a product of legitimization. This divide has, over time, established an informal division of labour where the empirical research tends to focus on measuring diffuse support or mapping the hottest topics of the public debate while the normative philosophy reasons about the normative goodness of the institution. Consequently, whereas the former accounts bracket out the normative grounding needed to distinguish legitimacy from mere social acceptance, the latter accounts lack a direct connection to public support that could lend social efficacy to their philosophical assessment. Arguably, the main theoretical contributions of this thesis lie in developing an approach that bridges this divide. It does so by acknowledging the normative as an innate part of the social. This, in practical terms, implies that empirical legitimacy research should focus on the relationship between the measurements of citizens' support and citizens' normative concerns rather than any of the two individually. As a result, the proposed approach not only accounts for an institution

becoming more or less legitimate but provides additional insight into the normative shifts driving these changes.

By expanding the agenda of empirical legitimacy research to include changes in both citizens' support and normative concerns, the thesis achieves a broader analytical purchase. In order to account for the increased variety of investigated legitimacy changes, I have developed an analytical distinction between legitimacy changes in degree and legitimacy changes in kind. The legitimacy changes in degree can be marked as shifts on a uni-dimensional scale from illegitimate to fully legitimate that are assumed to affect the stability or even survival of an institution. This type of legitimacy change can be addressed by various methodologies measuring legitimacy by the proxy of citizens' support for the institution. By contrast, this thesis' notion of legitimacy changes in kind highlights shifts in citizens' normative expectations towards the institution. These normative changes might result in a misalignment between the institutional reality and the scope of authority that the institution can publicly justify, which over time undermines citizens' support. In comparison to the body of research dedicated to legitimacy changes in degree, legitimacy changes in kind have received very little attention and were seldom studied in relation to the other type of legitimacy change. As I have rendered the connections between the two distinct types of legitimacy changes explicit, future research might use the developed theory to progress towards a more holistic approach to studying legitimacy.

In particular, the proposed approach encouraging research sensitive to changes in the mode of valuation can prove instrumental for scholars struggling to interpret legitimization practices such as 'diffuse Euroscepticism' haunting the online public sphere (de Wilde et al. 2013; Michailidou 2014). The defining feature of claims characteristic of diffuse Euroscepticism is the manner in which they ostensibly give up on elaborating any coherent line of argumentation denouncing the EU based on the broken link with the common good. Instead, they present negatively laden, truncated, and under-specified statements that might lack explicit evaluation. By treating the mode of valuation underlying the debate as invariant, they resemble shouting in the wind, fruitless complaining, which does not contribute much to the constructive debate about the EU's future. However, equipped with the outlined analytical framework, the meta-pragmatic legitimization practices become

intelligible. By simply stating one's preferences and opinions without any additional clarifications, actors also indicate what format of settling a disagreement they see as appropriate. The surplus of meaning encapsulated in these speech acts can only be grasped by adopting a more encompassing analytical framework that registers not only shifts in salient cultural norms but also ruptures with how politics is done and expected to be done (change on the meta-pragmatic plane). Any such change is highly relevant for research on the EU's legitimacy, as it affects not only the format of politics and structure of legitimation but potentially also the justifiability of EU policy intervention.

The introduced theory can further benefit the scientific community seeking to explore the widest variety of legitimacy changes. Since the legitimacy change in kind is less palpable in media data, other researchers might consider collecting data at the level of concrete constituencies. Organising focus groups seems especially well suited for this purpose as it allows researchers to engage the respondents directly while collecting group-level data emerging from the discussion between participants. By contrast to the media data, group discussions might present a context that is significantly more open to a wide variety of utterances than a media report. As a result, the data will contain more obvious traces of any potential legitimacy changes in kind.

Besides, the theory can be used to further investigate relationships between institutional legitimacy and diverse forms of citizen political engagement and belonging. Indeed, Easton's diffuse support, often used for estimating institutional legitimacy, can be understood as an overarching concept encompassing not only legitimacy and trust but also identity. Such reading then invites the question of whether my theoretical approach that covers the descriptive and the normative dimensions of legitimacy changes should not be enhanced with a third dimension addressing the affective. Somebody better equipped than the author is free to fully spell out what type of legitimacy change the affective change could generate and with what consequences for institutional stability. Such an enterprise will likely enhance our understanding of legitimacy as a concept dependent upon citizens' (pre)understandings and engagements with the institutional reality.

In order to assess the severity of the various legitimacy changes mapped using the introduced theoretical framework, I have developed a model

contextualising the various terms, such as legitimacy deficit, legitimation crisis, and legitimacy crisis, that share the same semantic space. This provides an important conceptual clarification allowing scholars to evaluate the significance of the concrete state of institutional legitimacy. Yet, the model still builds on the assumption that the two conditions rendering legitimacy research meaningful (see section 1.1.2) are met. I have argued that any mode of governance whose authority depends on legitimacy built through democratic consent requires a public arena where public affairs could be politicised. In other words, unless there is a public sphere where people can get informed and ideally engage in the debate, the question of legitimacy is not fully meaningful. Indeed, in such cases, the link between citizens' perceptions and institutional stability is incomplete. In addition, there must be a public with its own integrity that authorities can address and which conceives of itself as a relevant political actor. Provided the changing media landscapes affecting the integrity of public spheres and the consequences of new technologies for the authority of citizens' electoral choices, future legitimacy research might choose to investigate whether both conditions are still met.

When it comes to the existence of a public arena, I have relied on the vast body of existing literature documenting the state of the European public sphere. The described media landscape changes fast in response to technological innovation and new virtual public spaces. Since the business model of social media companies generates profit by monetising users' attention, the goal is to increase screen time by any means and irrespective of the effect on public deliberation. Future research might, therefore, choose to investigate how the new virtual public spaces affect the existence of a relatively shared reality in which mutual understanding is possible. Arguably, once the public sphere is constituted predominantly by social media, discourses unfold in parallel, intersecting only seldom. One can get lost in self-confirmatory narratives that denounce the other side and appear psychologically overwhelming, as the newsfeed is always incomplete. Moreover, this reshapes any attempt for deliberation to an exchange where the participants are talking past each other without really listening. As a result, it can be argued that some of the new media produce vastly separate political realities. A high degree of fragmentation of the public spaces could make one wonder whether and how an impactful public legitimation is at all

possible. In such contexts, the shift in research focus from legitimacy crises to a crisis of legitimacy may be warranted.

However, technological innovation challenges not only the existence of a public sphere where deliberation is possible but also the very authority of the public. Indeed, the social efficacy of the legitimacy concept relies both on citizens' responsiveness to public legitimation and delegitimation and the authority of their electoral choices. At its core, this humanistic model assumes that a voter knows best. It builds on trust and respect for voters' preferences irrespective of the way they are formed and shaped. Since the new technologies have enabled the manipulation of voters' emotions, we have to ask about the possible consequences of this development for the very relevance of the legitimacy concept. Thanks to social media generating individual and personalised public spheres, voters' can be targeted and manipulated with surgical precision. Existing research has shown that a user's personality type can be estimated based on the movement of her cursor. Such an estimate can then help to select the political message exploiting one's respective fears and anxieties. As emotions have proven to be rather malleable, the humanistic model, where political authority follows the integrity of citizens' electoral choice, comes under pressure. All in all, whereas a legitimacy crisis assumes that legitimacy built via public legitimation practices is both achievable and sufficient to secure institutional stability, the notion of a crisis of legitimacy questions these very assumptions. It forces us to examine to what degree the preferences of a pliable citizen can provide the legitimacy authorising the exercise of political power under these conditions. Future legitimacy research might, therefore, argue for the need to focus on the crisis of legitimacy rather than a legitimacy crisis.

From hand-coding to transfer learning

When it comes to the methodological contribution, the present thesis has proposed and tested an innovative research design that makes use of advanced techniques from the field of natural language processing. The current state of the art in social- scientific research of coding large datasets utilises mostly so-called crowd coding. It relies on commercial services such as Crowdfunder or Amazon Mechanical Turk, which makes recruiting big teams of coders from around the world easy and relatively cheap. Nevertheless, this convenience comes at the price of

limited options to control the quality of the job and money corresponding to the total amount of coded data points. By contrast, I have proposed to use supervised machine learning to classify the data into relevant categories. However, in order to optimise the algorithm, a researcher must provide a hand-coded sample of the data of sufficient size to achieve the desired precision and recall. By making use of uncertainty sampling, also known as active learning, I have managed to decrease the needed amount of hand-coded data points. As a result, I was able to achieve the goal of classifying my big dataset without any help from other coders. The proposed research design, therefore, represents a proof of concept demonstrating how advanced quantitative approaches can help scholars manage and analyse large text datasets with limited financial resources and a strict timeframe.

My experience with the selected techniques from the field of natural language processing in social research, however, documents the enormous potential of this approach. All of my statistical language models were developed with the aim of classifying the EU media coverage and taking into account their re-usability for future research with comparable research goals. Whereas I had to build the models from scratch, other scholars might use the results of my efforts and use them as a point of departure for their own analysis. In other words, the parameters of my models may be used as the initial state of a model to be optimised for dealing with different classification tasks, which will likely lead to better results in terms of precision and recall in shorter times than when random initial states are used. This way of cumulative knowledge production has been known in computer science as transfer learning (Hosna et al. 2022). If social scientists are to take full advantage of transfer learning, future activities should focus on exploring best practices for sharing and re-using the statistical models as well as for developing the needed competencies. In the absence of a common infrastructure developed with the intent of sharing the data and code, I make available both the code and the models optimised with weights tuned to my dataset via public repositories of the University in Oslo. Besides the ambitious goal of developing a multi-purpose classifier of media content, transfer learning can also benefit more constrained tasks. In its current state, none of the two chosen methods of sentiment estimation was able to detect more fine-grained changes in the tonality of EU media coverage. Taking the findings of this project as a point of

departure, future research attempting to infer legitimacy changes based on changing the tonality of media coverage might achieve better results by combining the Stanford Sentiment Treebank with a custom-made dictionary of issue-specific terms and phrases such as dictatorship. However, the improvements can also be achieved by following the logic of transfer learning and developing a more comprehensive classifier that has been exposed to the larger phrase bank.

From media representations to institutional reality

The empirical analysis in this thesis has reconstructed a detailed picture of legitimation changes in the UK public sphere that have likely translated into EU legitimacy changes indicating that the EU has, in the period 2004-2016, likely experienced a legitimation crisis. Given the bold ambitions of the project, its focus had to be constrained to the UK media sphere to make the analysis feasible. Such a move draws on the assumption that media representing the central infrastructure of the public sphere are shaping the audiences' understanding of reality and, consequently, their political behaviour. However, the assumed connection between the media representations and the institutional reality in itself points towards a highly relevant agenda for future research.

A map is not the territory. As the presented analysis laid down a fine-grained overview of the most salient discourses that makes up the EU media coverage in the UK, it opens up the opportunity to test to what degree these discourses are grounded in reality. For example, the critical discursive construction managed to portray the EU's ability to deliver desirable outcomes as antithetical to the UK's right to national self-determination. This discourse has, over time, become very salient and aggravated the legitimation crisis. When probing the relationship between the symbolic and the material, future research can test whether the main claim of the discourse, stating that the Euro crisis could not be resolved without further European integration, holds under scrutiny. What alternatives to delegating financial politics to the EU level and debt mutualisation might have been used to manage the crisis without forcing the member states to sacrifice more of their sovereignty? And does the discourse, in fact, focus on the description of political reality where alternative solutions to the crisis were not feasible or on issues of mainly economic and financial character? By investigating to what degree

narratives presented by the most salient discourses correspond to empirical evidence, future research can enhance our understanding of what has lent these discourses their 'performative power' (Alexander 2006) to persuade broader audiences. In the so-called post-truth era, where the understanding of reality is no longer shared but fragmented, the need to develop better models of meaning-making becomes ever more urgent.

Recognising the influence of public interpretative practices on political reality, this project has focused on legitimation taking place in the public sphere. Since only a fraction of exchanges taking place in the public sphere are well documented and accessible, I have limited the analytical focus to the collective representations of the EU in traditional media. While the media landscape is in flux, traditional media provides an apt format with large visibility where discourses can be gradually developed. However, not all citizens are equally exposed to all the discourses, which lowers the chance of their political behaviour being affected by the messaging. What is more, social media has become increasingly important when it comes to the spread of these discourses and, therefore, also for estimating the media effects of discourses mapped in this thesis. As a result, other scholars might choose to use the findings of my descriptive analysis to trace the dissemination of the individual discourses and estimate their media effects in concrete audiences. Furthermore, a more in-depth analysis of how the discourses were disseminated can elucidate what kind of messaging is likely to be used as computational propaganda. Such research might bring important insights into how specific legitimation changes observed in traditional media have influenced meaning-making processes shaping citizens' attitudes and their political behaviour. The analysis presented here can, in future research, be complemented with a systematic inquiry into how the proliferation of the specific discourses and audience exposure corresponds to changes in political behaviour, thus allowing for estimation of actual media effects of the analysed discourses further enhancing our understanding of the importance of institutional legitimacy for European integration.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Content analysis codebook

The media reports were analysed at two distinct levels: EU policy coverage (see section 3.5.1) and EU polity-centred coverage (see section 3.6.1).

The manual annotation was conducted using Prodigy, a scriptable tool developed by Explosion AI for machine learning and natural language processing. Prodigy offers seamless integration with machine learning workflows, facilitating a significant acceleration of the annotation process. The tool features a user-friendly web interface and supports "active learning" (Yang et al. 2009).

A.1 Selecting the articles for manual annotation

The primary objective of manual coding was to create a collection of examples for training a statistical model that would enable text classification throughout the dataset. To expedite this process, articles can be pre-selected for manual annotation based on their information value for the model. Prodigy's continuous active learning system was configured to identify articles that the model is currently unable to classify. These articles were then prioritized for hand-annotation. As more articles were hand-coded, the model in the loop was updated, and Prodigy selected a fresh batch of articles for manual annotation.

Before the annotation process begins, the model has no prior exposure to manually coded data. Consequently, the model's predictions exhibit similar levels of uncertainty for all articles. To initialize the model, I have

provided keywords (see in the table below) that served as indicators for a specific code. This strategy aids in expediting the annotation process. Manual annotation proceeds until the model achieves the desired precision and recall for data classification.

The Python function employed for binary classification with the model in the loop is known as *textcat.teach*²⁹.

A.2 Coding EU policy interventions

In the first step, I have coded how the EU policy interventions, mentioned in the media report, are thematised in terms of the EUR-Lex³⁰ policy areas classification. Additionally, I have included two codes to encompass the mediacoverage of Brexit, and a category labeled 'Other' for any media coverage that does not focus on specific policy areas.

In order for a policy area to be marked, a simple mentioned was not sufficient. The particular policy area must be the central focus of the media report.

Given that each media report may encompass multiple distinct themes, the codes in this codebook are not mutually exclusive. For each code, a binary classification was performed on a sample of media reports. During the binary classification, the text has been labelled as either 1) belonging to the coded category or 2) not belonging to the category.

The table below provides an overview of the coded categories, including their descriptions, relevant keywords, and an example. Please note that the examples provided are not exhaustive, as there may be variations within each coded category.

²⁹ For more technical details, please refer to Prodigy product documentation at the following url: <https://prodi.gy/docs/recipes/#textcat-teach>

³⁰ EUR-Lex: Access to European Union law. (01.01.2023). Retrieved from eur-lex.europa.eu

Table A.1: Overview of the coded policy area categories

Code name	Keywords	Code description	Example
<i>Common agricultural and fisheries policy</i>	CAP, CFP, catchquota, fishermen, quotasetting, horticulture, overfishing, food production, undergrazing, herds, sheep farming, milk production, harvest, eartagging, poultry, livestock	Media coverage discussing the impacts and negotiations of the EU's common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy.	He [Jim Portus, of the South Western Fish Producers' Organisation (SWFPO)] said fishermen from the beam trawler and stern trawler fleet from Shoreham to Plymouth were warning fisheries minister Huw Irranca-Davies that unless he fought hard for them at the December EU Council, their businesses might quickly collapse.
<i>Economy and financial policy</i>	ECB, assets, inflation, equity, dividend, investor, stock market, securitization, selloff, depositors, macroeconomic, subprime, Eurobonds, competitiveness	Media coverage discussing the impact of EU policy interventions on the UK budget, economy, and financial policy.	An awful truth: we don't know how much the EU costs How much does the EU cost the taxpayer? We all know it costs us a lot, and that the amount keeps going up. But exactly how much of our hard-earned dosh does each of us fork out every year to retain Britain's status as a full and proper member of the EU? The short answer seems to be: no one knows.
<i>Foreign, humanitarian, and security pol.</i>	war, humanitarian aid, retaliation, military, diplomacy, NATO, UN, troops, resolution, deescalating, intifada, multipolar	Media coverage discussing the EU foreign, humanitarian, and security policy.	EUROPE IS IN DANGER:THE French have been the most enthusiastic supporters of the European Union. But now they have said "Non" to the new constitution. The Dutch are certain to follow suit and reject the EU "rule book" at their referendum tomorrow. This is not just a disappointment for Brussels it is a full-blown crisis.
<i>Money transfers</i>	Erasmus, Europeaid, Comenius, EU funding	Media coverage discussing the EU money transfers, subsidies, and funding.	Aberdeen City Council has been successful in its application to be considered for participation in the European project HEATNET. Europe will fund 60% of the scheme, around £520, 000, while the council will contribute around 40% (£365, 000) of match funding.
<i>Envi. policy</i>	pollution, climate, conservation,	Media coverage	BRITAIN wants to buy its way out of its promise to cut CO2 emissions, a

	co2, recycling, landfill, habitat, wildlife, biofuel, footprint, extinction, wastewater, invasive species	discussing the impact of EU policy interventions on the UK environmental policy.	leaked Whitehall document shows. Half our EU target should be met by investing in 'green' projects abroad instead of making cuts here, it says. At the moment, countries are allowed to 'trade away' only 30 per cent of their obligations. The plans would allow companies and countries to offset an extrabillion tonnes of CO2 by buying more carbon credits generated by schemes outside the EU than proposed in Europe.
<i>Social policy and human rights</i>	retirement, disability, pension, glass ceiling, unionisation, underpaid, exploitative, social dumping, gender quotas, gay marriage	Media coverage discussing the impact of EU policy interventions on social policy and human rights protection.	A PENSIONER who lost his retirement savings when the company he worked for went bust is taking his fight for compensation to Brussels tomorrow. Maurice Jones, from Heywood, has joined forces with pension crusader Dr Ros Altmann to lobby the European Parliamentary Petitions Commission. They want Brussels to force the government to accept responsibility for its badly flawed pension policies and compensate victims.
<i>Customs union</i>	smuggling, migration, influx, Interpol, Schengen, expulsion, asylum seekers, residency, razorwire, diaspora	Media coverage discussing the EU customs union, migration, and the refugee regime.	Other EU states whose citizens may enter the UK with only an ID card do not follow biometric standards; in Italy for example, cards consist essentially of a computer print-out with name, job, residence and photograph on official paper, accompanied by a stamp and signature, often illegible. Forgeries are not difficult to obtain, and I doubt if many British officials could pick out even a second-rate forgery among the myriad foreign documents that constitute valid ID in the UK.
<i>Public health policy</i>	influenza, bloodstream, epidemic, pathogen, toxin, infective	Media coverage discussing the impact of EU policy interventions on public health.	One major issue is the delay between new-generation drugs being licensed by the EU, and Nice or in some cases the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group deciding whether they should be available on the NHS. This delay can be as long as 18 months. If the EU thinks a drug is safe, why is there a long delay before the UK authorities feel able to

			confirm this? There are also wider questions about the way the pharmaceutical industry operates, and perhaps it is time for a brave politician to order a review of costs, charges and profits in that area.
<i>Brexit</i>	Brexit, remainer, remoaner, no campaign	Media coverage mentioning Brexit referendum or its results.	Sturgeon says Brexit does not mean Yes vote NICOLA Sturgeon has said she does not want Scotland to become independent because the UK has left the European Union. The SNP leader said that having its nearest neighbour outside the EU would be bad for an independent Scotland. In a speech in London she called for an "overwhelming" vote to stay in Europe come June's referendum. But she admitted she did not know how her appeal to English voters would be received. Earlier, the First Minister suggested that there could be a "clamour" for a second independence referendum if Scots were taken out of the UK against their will.
<i>Other</i>	politicians, EU as a polity	Media coverage that does not discuss any EU policy intervention.	Even the more serious BBC political programmes, such as Newsnight, have been cracking juvenile jokes over the identity of the new President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy. Rumpy-pumpy! Rumpelstiltskin! Cue smirks in the studio, if not general hilarity. The BBC's political correspondents also joined in the view of the British press that Mr Van Rompuy is a "nonentity" apparently based on nothing more than the idea that anyone who happens to be the Prime Minister of Belgium must by definition be a nobody.

A.3 Coding EU polity-centred discourses

In the second step, I assess the coverage pertaining to the EU as a polity and classify it based on the three polity-centred discourses categories identified in previous stages of the analysis. Based on the thematic analysis, I have identified themes invoking a relatively uniform set of normative criteria, which present the most likely point of departure for problematising the EU as a polity. The findings were then contrasted against the taxonomies in the literature (Díez Medrano 2003; Van Inglegom 2014). I have coded three polity-centred discourses preoccupied with 1) the topic of identity and the symbolic, 2) the quality of EU governance, and 3) UK sovereignty and democracy.

Given that each media report may combine multiple discourses, the codes in this codebook are not mutually exclusive. For each code, a binary classification was performed on a sample of media reports. During the binary classification, the text has been labelled as either 1) belonging to the coded category or 2) not belonging to the category.

The table below provides an overview of the coded categories, including their descriptions, relevant keywords, and an example. Please note that the examples provided are not exhaustive, as there may be variations within each coded category.

Table A.2: Overview of the coded polity-centred discourses

Code name	Keywords	Code description	Example
<i>Identity, the symbolic</i>	Britishness, tricolour, Englishness, tradition, dialect, patrimony, Anglosphere, ancestral, foreignness, heraldry, heritage	Media coverage concerned with concerns the effect that EU integration process has on UK national identity and 'symbolic autonomy'.	We should resist the EU as often and as widely as possible. Demand pounds of carrots. Stick a union jack, or national flag of your choice, over the blue thing on car number plates. Stick posters over any sign that says "this was funded by the EU", pointing out that for every pound of our own money they give us back, we paid - what? 60? wrecked lives.
<i>Quality of the EU governance</i>	wasteful, Kafkaesque, efficiency, bizarre, bureaucratic, burdensome, superfluous, excessive,	Media coverage discussing how efficient the EU is as a governing body and whether its governance leads to the	And, since we joined the EU, our domestic taxes have doubled in real terms, while the quality of our infrastructure has collapsed. With the hundreds of thousands of petty regulations and the millions of miles of "red tape" imposed by idiotic

	overregulation, red tape, dysfunctional	intended outcomes.	Eurocrats from Brussels, we are better off "out" than "in".
<i>Sovereignty and democracy</i>	superstate, unelected, override, subjugate, dictate, democracy, supreme court, override, federalism, technocracy, interfering, serfdom, autonomy	Media coverage discussing the impact of EU membership on UK democracy.	FUEL FOR BNP I hope your readers will take letter on the European Union's interference in Britain's internal affairs (Postbag, February 21) very seriously. The constant erosion of our sovereignty is fueling the growth of the British National Party, a development our political leaders are quick to deplore but slow to address.

Appendix B

Media outlets in the dataset

Table B.1: Time period for each media outlet in the dataset

Coverage	Name of the media outlet
From September 03, 2006 through May 27, 2007	ABC Magazine
From March 10, 1998 through current	Aberdeen Evening Express
From March 10, 1998 through current	Aberdeen Press and Journal
From May 16, 2007 through September 10, 2008	Abingdon Herald
From February 02, 2011 through current	Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser
From May 05, 2007 through current	Andover Advertiser
From August 18, 2011 through December 15, 2011	Anglia Afloat
From May 12, 2009 through current	Antrim times
From April 30, 2009 through May 29, 2017	Arbroath Herald
From July 18, 2012 through current	Ardrossan Herald
From May 15, 2007 through current	The Argus (Newsquest Regional Press)
From February 13, 2002 through April 24, 2018	Ashbourne News Telegraph
From June 13, 2008 through June 05, 2011	Ashford Adscene - Archive
From May 16, 2007 through current	Asian Image
From July 20, 2012 through current	Ayr Advertiser
From May 11, 2009 through current	Bakewell Today
From February 09, 2009 through current	Ballymena Times
From May 01, 2009 through current	Ballymoney Times
From May 01, 2009 through current	Banbridge Leader

From May 17, 2007 through May 13, 2013	Banbury Cake
From February 12, 2009 through current	Banbury Guardian
From May 11, 2011 through current	Barking & Dagenham Post
From August 06, 2012 through current	Barrhead News
From May 17, 2007 through current	Barry And District News
From October 03, 2013 through September 26, 2016	BASILDON RECORDER (NewsQuest Media Group Limited)
From May 16, 2007 through current	Basingstoke Gazette
From April 01, 1998 through May 24, 2018	Bath Chronicle
From February 13, 2009 through current	Batley News
From July 29, 2011 through current	Beccles and Bungay Journal
From February 09, 2009 through current	Bedford Today
From January 30, 2007 through August 03, 2014	Bedfordshire on Sunday
From February 11, 2009 through January 31, 2011	Belfast News
From January 13, 1997 through September 29, 2006	Belfast News Letter
From January 01, 1996 through current	Belfast Telegraph
From August 31, 2006 through December 14, 2017	Belfast Telegraph Home Finder
From August 29, 2006 through August 12, 2011	Belfast Telegraph Job Finder
From September 02, 2006 through August 11, 2007	Belfast Telegraph Saturday Magazine
From May 10, 2012 through October 11, 2017	Bellshill Speaker
From February 04, 2009 through current	Belper News
From May 02, 2012 through current	Berkhamsted & Tring Gazette
From September 16, 2008 through current	Berwick Advertiser
From February 11, 2009 through current	Berwickshire News
From February 12, 2009 through current	Beverley Guardian
From February 10, 2009 through current	Bexhill Observer
From March 10, 2011 through July 05, 2012	Bexley Times
From May 17, 2007 through current	Bicester Advertiser
From February 03, 2009 through current	Biggleswade Today
From September 29, 2013 through current	birminghammail.co.uk
From September 29, 2013 through current	birminghampost.co.uk
From May 16, 2007 through June 19, 2008	Bishop's Stortford Citizen
From January 22, 2014 through March 28, 2018	Black Country Bugle

From June 13, 2008 through May 25, 2018	Blackmore Vale Magazine
From May 15, 2007 through December 23, 2008	Blackpool Citizen
From February 11, 2009 through current	Blackpool Gazette
From May 10, 2012 through October 11, 2017	Bo'ness Journal
From February 12, 2009 through October 28, 2010	Bognor/Chichester & Midhurst Observers
From May 09, 2012 through current	Bognor Regis Observer
From May 15, 2007 through current	The Bolton News
From August 16, 2015 through current	Border Telegraph
From May 16, 2007 through current	Borehamwood Times
From February 10, 2009 through current	Boston Standard
From February 13, 2009 through current	Bourne Local
From May 15, 2007 through current	Bournemouth Echo
From December 08, 2015 through current	Bracknell News
From May 15, 2007 through current	Bradford Telegraph and Argus
From May 16, 2007 through current	Braintree and Witham Times
From August 15, 2007 through current	BreakingNews.ie
From February 12, 2009 through May 29, 2017	Brechin Advertiser
From September 15, 2010 through September 28, ...	Brentwood Gazette
From May 17, 2007 through current	Brentwood Weekly News
From May 16, 2007 through current	Bridgwater Mercury
From June 12, 2008 through January 01, 2012	Bridgwater Times - Archive
From February 11, 2009 through current	Bridlington Free Press
From May 17, 2007 through current	Bridport and Lyme Regis News
From February 12, 2009 through current	Brighthouse Echo
From January 14, 2014 through November 28, 2017	Bristol Observer Group
From July 01, 1997 through May 28, 2018	Bristol Post
From February 02, 2011 through July 12, 2012	Bromley Times
From May 16, 2007 through current	Bromsgrove Advertiser
From May 05, 2009 through current	Buchan Observer
From May 02, 2012 through current	Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser
From May 16, 2007 through current	Bucks Free Press
From February 12, 2009 through current	Bucks Herald
From May 22, 2007 through current	Burnham & Highbridge Weekly News

From June 13, 2008 through November 24, 2011	Burnham Times - Archive
From May 10, 2012 through current	Burnley Express
From July 17, 2014 through December 18, 2014	Burton Advertiser
From August 03, 2001 through May 03, 2018	Burton Mail
From February 05, 2009 through current	Bury Free Press
From May 17, 2007 through current	Bury Times
From May 02, 1999 through February 16, 2008	The Business
From January 25, 2008 through December 10, 2010	Business 7 (UK)
From May 09, 2012 through current	Business Matters
From September 04, 2006 through current	Business Telegraph
From June 01, 2004 through current	Business World (Digest)
From February 12, 2009 through current	The Buteman
From February 12, 2009 through current	Buxton Advertiser
From June 28, 2002 through September 04, 2014	Cambridge Evening News
From March 24, 2011 through March 29, 2012	Cambridge First
From March 25, 2011 through current	The Cambs Times
From May 16, 2007 through November 26, 2018	Campaign Series
From June 13, 2008 through September 29, 2017	Canterbury Times (series)
From May 09, 2012 through current	Carlisle Gazette
From February 17, 2009 through June 24, 2011	Carlisle & Lanark Gazette
From September 15, 2010 through March 19, 2014	Carmarthen Journal
From April 30, 2009 through current	Carrick Gazette
From September 07, 2015 through current	Carrick Herald
From April 23, 2009 through current	Carrick Times
From June 13, 2008 through March 19, 2010	Caterham Advertiser
From June 12, 2008 through September 05, 2013	Caterham Mirror
From October 15, 2015 through current	Central Fife Times
From June 11, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Central Somerset Gazette
From June 26, 2013 through current	Chard & Ilminster News
From June 11, 2008 through January 01, 2012	Cheadle Post and Times - Archive

From June 11, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Cheddar Valley Gazette
From May 16, 2007 through current	Chelmsford Weekly News
From April 11, 2008 through current	Chester Chronicle
From September 29, 2013 through current	chesterchronicle.co.uk
From February 11, 2009 through current	Chichester Bognor Regis and Midhurst & Petwort...
From May 09, 2012 through current	Chichester Observer
From May 16, 2007 through current	Chorley Citizen
From May 10, 2012 through current	Chorley Guardian
From October 13, 2010 through current	City A.M.
From May 16, 2007 through current	Clacton and Frinton Gazette
From June 12, 2008 through February 10, 2011	Clevedon Mercury
From May 09, 2012 through current	Clitheroe Advertiser and Times
From July 16, 2012 through current	Clydebank Press
From February 11, 2009 through current	Coleraine Times
From March 24, 2011 through current	The Comet
From September 03, 2006 through September 21, ...	The Compact Traveller
From April 07, 2010 through current	Cornish Guardian
From January 16, 2014 through current	The Cornishman
From May 16, 2007 through current	Cotswold Journal
From September 05, 2008 through October 12, 2012	Coulsdon and Purley Advertiser
From May 16, 2007 through current	Craven Herald
From June 11, 2008 through October 27, 2016	Crawley News
From February 09, 2009 through current	Crawley Observer
From May 21, 2007 through September 16, 2018	Crewe Guardian
From June 09, 2008 through current	Croydon Advertiser Series
From May 16, 2007 through September 26, 2018	Croydon Guardian
From May 09, 2012 through current	Cumbernauld News
From February 12, 2009 through January 05, 2011	Cumbernauld News & Kilsyth Chronicle
From July 18, 2012 through current	Cumnock Chronicle
From May 15, 2007 through current	Daily Echo (Newsquest Regional Press)
From January 01, 1992 through current	The Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday (London)
From July 31, 2001 through current	Daily Post (North Wales)
From January 01, 1994 through current	Daily Record and Sunday Mail

From April 09, 2008 through August 01, 2012	Daily Record (PM) - UK
From September 15, 2002 through current	Daily Star Sunday
From October 30, 2000 through current	The Daily Telegraph (London)
From September 29, 2013 through current	dailypost.co.uk
From September 25, 2008 through current	The Dartford Messenger
From February 12, 2009 through current	Daventry Express
From February 12, 2009 through current	Deeside Piper & Herald
From October 20, 2010 through current	Derbyshire Times
From July 28, 2011 through current	Dereham and Fakenham Times
From February 12, 2009 through current	Derry Journal
From February 05, 2009 through current	Dewsbury Reporter
From February 13, 2009 through current	Dinnington Guardian
From February 12, 2009 through current	Diss Express
From July 28, 2011 through current	Diss, Wymondham and Attleborough Mercury
From May 11, 2011 through November 02, 2011	The Docklands
From November 11, 2010 through current	The Docklands and East London Advertiser
From February 06, 2012 through current	Doncaster Free Press
From February 19, 2009 through September 26, 2010	Donegal on Sunday (including Sunday Journal)
From May 06, 2009 through current	Donside Piper & Herald
From June 12, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Dorking Advertiser
From October 10, 2013 through September 28, 2018	Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser
From May 15, 2007 through current	Dorset Echo
From June 12, 2008 through September 28, 2018	Dover Express Series
From December 03, 2008 through current	Driffield Times & Post
From May 16, 2007 through current	Droitwich Advertiser
From February 17, 2009 through current	Dromore Leader
From May 16, 2007 through current	Dudley News
From July 16, 2012 through current	Dumbarton Reporter
From January 28, 2011 through current	Dumfries & Galloway Standard
From October 15, 2015 through current	Dunfermline Press
From March 24, 2011 through current	The Dunmow Broadcast
From May 02, 2012 through current	Dunstable Today
From May 16, 2007 through current	Ealing Times
From October 07, 2006 through current	East Anglian Daily Times

From January 02, 2014 through October 27, 2016	East Grinstead Courier and Observer
From March 24, 2011 through June 16, 2017	East Herts Herald
From June 11, 2008 through December 07, 2011	East Kent Gazette - Archive
From September 25, 2008 through current	East Kent Mercury
From October 15, 2015 through current	East Lothian Courier
From February 12, 2009 through October 12, 2017	East Lothian News
From May 01, 2009 through current	Eastbourne Herald
From June 10, 2003 through current	Eastern Daily Press
From May 01, 2000 through current	Eastern Eye
From January 19, 2007 through current	Eastwood Advertiser
From May 15, 2007 through current	Echo (NewsQuest)
From December 18, 1997 through current	Edinburgh Evening News
From May 22, 2009 through current	Ellon Times
From January 22, 2013 through July 15, 2014	Elmbridge Guardian
From March 24, 2011 through current	Ely Standard
From June 04, 2007 through current	Enfield Independent
From August 16, 2007 through July 26, 2012	Enniscorthy Echo
From May 17, 2007 through September 26, 2018	Epsom Guardian
From May 09, 2012 through current	Epworth Bells
From September 16, 2010 through September 28, ...	Essex Chronicle
From May 16, 2007 through August 30, 2013	Essex County Standard
From October 03, 1996 through December 14, 1998	The European
From June 27, 2003 through current	Evening Gazette
From October 07, 2006 through current	Evening News (Norwich)
From January 02, 1992 through current	The Evening Standard (London)
From October 07, 2006 through current	Evening Star
From May 02, 2012 through current	Evening Telegraph
From July 10, 2000 through current	Evening Times (Glasgow)
From May 15, 2007 through current	Evesham Journal
From October 01, 2013 through September 19, 2018	examiner.co.uk
From September 16, 2011 through October 06, 2017	Exmouth Herald
From September 15, 2011 through current	Exmouth Journal

From February 12, 2009 through current	Falkirk Herald
From May 15, 2007 through current	Falmouth Packet
From May 10, 2012 through current	Farming Life
From June 11, 2008 through June 11, 2014	Faversham Times
From February 12, 2009 through May 12, 2018	Fenland Citizen
From February 11, 2009 through October 15, 2010	Fife Free Press
From May 09, 2012 through current	Fife Today
From May 30, 2009 through current	Filey & Hunmanby Mercury
From October 20, 2010 through current	Fleetwood Weekly News
From June 10, 2008 through March 24, 2009	Focus
From January 22, 2014 through September 28, 2018	Folkestone Herald Series
From August 02, 2017 through current	Folkestone & Hythe Express
From June 12, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Folkstone Herald
From June 12, 2008 through January 01, 2012	The Forester - Archive
From May 11, 2012 through May 29, 2017	Forfar Dispatch
From February 13, 2009 through December 01, 2010	Forfar Dispatch & Kirriemuir Herald
From June 13, 2008 through April 29, 2011	Fosse Way Magazine - Archive
From April 29, 2009 through current	Fraserburgh Herald
From May 15, 2007 through current	Free Press Series
From June 12, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Frome and Somerset Standard
From June 05, 2009 through current	Future News - Media Planner
From January 29, 2009 through current	Gainsborough Standard
From February 12, 2009 through current	The Galloway Gazette
From February 06, 2009 through current	Garstang Courier
From June 20, 2007 through current	The Gazette
From May 16, 2007 through current	Gazette (Essex)
From May 16, 2007 through current	Gazette Series
From September 29, 2013 through current	gazettelive.co.uk
From February 13, 2009 through January 21, 2011	Glasgow East News
From May 10, 2012 through current	The Glasgow South and Eastwood Extra
From July 16, 1999 through current	Global Capital Euroweek
From February 12, 2009 through December 05, 2013	Goole Courier

From August 16, 2007 through July 26, 2012	Gorey Echo
From September 01, 2006 through current	GP Magazine
From January 28, 2009 through current	Grantham Journal
From September 25, 2008 through current	The Gravesend Messenger
From June 13, 2008 through October 12, 2012	Great Barr Observer
From July 29, 2011 through current	Great Yarmouth Mercury
From August 22, 2007 through current	Greenock Telegraph
From July 14, 1984 through current	The Guardian(London)
From April 23, 2009 through May 29, 2017	Guide and Gazette
From November 11, 2010 through October 11, 2012	Hackney Gazette
From May 16, 2007 through current	Halesowen News
From May 09, 2012 through current	Halifax Courier
From May 15, 2007 through current	Halstead Gazette
From May 16, 2007 through current	Hampshire Chronicle
From November 11, 2010 through current	Hampstead and Highgate Express (Ham and High)
From February 12, 2009 through current	Harborough Mail
From January 01, 1998 through October 22, 2015	Haringey Independent
From March 24, 2011 through June 16, 2011	Harlow Herald
From February 22, 2005 through current	Harlow Star Series
From February 13, 2009 through current	Harrogate Advertiser
From May 16, 2007 through current	Harrow Times
From February 11, 2009 through current	Hartlepool Mail
From May 17, 2007 through current	Harwich and Manningtree Standard
From February 10, 2009 through current	Hastings & St. Leonards Observer
From February 12, 2009 through current	Haverhill Echo
From March 10, 2011 through November 08, 2012	Havering Post
From February 12, 2009 through current	Hawick News
From February 12, 2009 through current	Hayling Islander
From February 12, 2009 through current	Hebden Bridge Times
From July 16, 2012 through current	Helensburgh Advertiser
From February 04, 2009 through current	Hemel Today
From February 12, 2009 through current	Hemsworth & South Elmsall Express
From May 16, 2007 through July 17, 2007	Hendon Times
From January 01, 1992 through current	The Herald (Glasgow)
From May 15, 2007 through current	Hereford Times

From June 12, 2008 through June 11, 2014	Herne Bay Times
From March 24, 2011 through current	Herts Advertiser
From March 03, 2005 through current	Herts and Essex Observer Group
From January 11, 2005 through current	Herts Mercury
From May 15, 2007 through current	Hillingdon Times
From June 12, 2008 through December 08, 2011	Horley Mirror - Archive
From February 09, 2009 through current	Horncastle News
From May 18, 2007 through October 17, 2007	Hounslow Guardian
From April 24, 2009 through current	Hucknall Dispatch
From April 09, 2008 through current	Huddersfield Daily Examiner
From January 17, 2014 through December 20, 2017	Hull Advertiser Group
From April 20, 2011 through current	Hunts Post
From June 12, 2008 through January 09, 2014	Hythe Herald
From January 01, 1900 through current; Varies ...	Iliffe News and Media publisher's group file
From February 07, 2009 through current	Ilkeston Advertiser
From September 25, 2013 through current	Ilkley Gazette
From May 10, 2011 through current	Illford Recorder
From July 15, 2012 through current	Impartial Reporter
From 2006 through September 21, 2008	The Independent - Business & Money
From September 03, 2006 through July 01, 2010	The Independent Education
From August 22, 2006 through October 10, 2011;...	The Independent Extra
From September 04, 2006 through September 29, ...	The Independent Media Weekly
From September 05, 2006 through January 08, 2008	The Independent Motoring (UK)
From August 30, 2006 through September 17, 2008	The Independent Property
From September 02, 2006 through August 09, 2008	The Independent Save and Spend
From September 19, 1988 through current	The Independent (United Kingdom)
From March 22, 2009 through current	Inverurie Herald
From August 17, 2007 through current	Irish Examiner
From July 02, 2001 through current	Irish News
From August 15, 2007 through August 17, 2011	The Irish Post
From September 09, 2015 through current	Irvine Times

From May 09, 2012 through January 29, 2017	Isle of Man Today
From June 13, 2008 through October 03, 2018	Isle of Thanet Gazette
From November 11, 2010 through current	Islington Gazette(Archant)
From May 09, 2012 through May 24, 2017	Jarrow and Hebburn Gazette
From May 16, 2007 through current	Keighley News
From April 24, 2009 through current	Kenilworth Weekly News
From August 26, 2010 through October 23, 2018	Kent and Sussex Courier
From September 19, 2008 through current	Kent Messenger
From September 25, 2008 through current	Kentish Express
From September 25, 2008 through current	Kentish Gazette
From February 02, 2011 through current	Kentish Weeklies
From May 03, 2007 through current	Kidderminster Shuttle
From May 09, 2012 through October 11, 2017	Kilsyth Chronicle
From February 12, 2009 through current	Kincardineshire Observer
From May 17, 2007 through June 2016	Kingston Guardian
From February 12, 2009 through current	Kirkintilloch Herald
From May 11, 2012 through May 29, 2017	Kirriemuir Herald
From May 16, 2007 through current	Knutsford Guardian
From February 17, 2009 through January 04, 2011	Lakeland Echo
From May 09, 2012 through current	Lanark Gazette
From February 08, 2009 through current	Lancashire Evening Post
From May 15, 2007 through current	Lancashire Telegraph
From May 16, 2007 through December 23, 2008	Lancaster and Morecambe Citizen
From February 12, 2009 through current	Lancaster Guardian
From July 18, 2012 through current	Largs and Millport News
From February 18, 2009 through current	Larne Times
From February 11, 2009 through current	Leamington Courier
From June 12, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Leatherhead Advertiser
From May 16, 2007 through current	Ledbury Reporter
From December 18, 2009 through June 23, 2010	Leeds Weekly News
From June 11, 2008 through March 28, 2018	Leek Post and Times
From January 03, 1998 through current	Leicester Mercury
From May 16, 2007 through current	Leigh Journal

From May 09, 2012 through current	Leigh Reporter
From August 11, 2011 through April 08, 2013	Lets Talk
From February 12, 2009 through current	Leyland Guardian
From June 12, 2008 through March 30, 2018	Lichfield Mercury Series
From September 11, 2010 through current	Lincolnshire Echo
From May 10, 2012 through current	Linlithgow Gazette
From February 13, 2009 through January 15, 2011	Linlithgowshire Journal & Gazette
From May 02, 2012 through current	Littlehampton Gazette
From August 01, 2001 through current	Liverpool Echo
From January 19, 2012 through December 19, 2013	Liverpool Post
From September 29, 2013 through current	liverpoolecho.co.uk
From September 15, 2010 through March 08, 2017	Llanelli Star Series
From May 02, 2008 through November 13, 2009	London Lite
From February 11, 2009 through current	Londonderry Sentinel
From February 12, 2009 through December 07, 2015	Longford Leader
From May 05, 2009 through current	Longridge News
From April 11, 2008 through current	Loughborough Echo
From January 29, 2009 through current	Louth Leader
From July 29, 2011 through current	Lowestoft Journal
From May 16, 2007 through current	Ludlow Advertiser
From February 12, 2009 through current	Lurgan Mail
From February 03, 2007 through August 05, 2014	Luton On Sunday
From April 20, 2009 through current	Luton Today
From May 02, 2012 through January 26, 2017	Lutterworth Mail
From February 10, 2009 through current	Lynn News
From May 09, 2012 through current	Lytham St Annes Express
From June 12, 2008 through April 09, 2009	Maidstone Adscene
From March 06, 2012 through current	MailOnline
From April 01, 2007 through current	Maldon and Burnham Standard
From January 28, 2009 through current	Malton & Pickering Mercury
From May 15, 2007 through current	Malvern Gazette
From March 01, 2000 through current	Manchester Evening News
From February 13, 2009 through current	Mansfield & Ashfield Chad

From February 10, 2009 through current	Market Rasen Mail
From February 12, 2009 through current	Matlock Mercury
From February 13, 2009 through current	Mearns Leader
From September 05, 2006 through November 30, 2009	Media Week UK(Haymarket)
From September 19, 2008 through current	Medway Messenger (Friday)
From June 13, 2008 through December 08, 2011	Medway News - Archive
From June 10, 2008 through January 06, 2009	Medway Standard
From February 12, 2009 through current	Melton Times
From May 16, 2007 through current	Messenger Newspapers
From December 05, 2007 through current	Metro (UK)
From January 07, 2014 through current	Mid Devon Gazette Series
From May 15, 2007 through November 29, 2016	Mid Devon Star
From February 27, 2014 through May 24, 2018	Mid Somerset Series - Local World
From June 02, 2009 through current	Mid Sussex Times
From February 05, 2009 through current	Mid-Ulster Mail
From May 21, 2007 through November 13, 2018	Middlewich Guardian
From May 01, 2009 through current	Midhurst and Petworth Observer
From February 12, 2009 through current	Midlothian Advertiser
From September 14, 2011 through current	Midweek Herald
From May 17, 2007 through current	Milford Mercury
From February 12, 2009 through current	Milngavie & Bearsden Herald
From February 11, 2009 through current	Milton Keynes Citizen
From April 30, 2009 through current	Mirfield Reporter
From May 29, 1995 through current	The Mirror (The Daily Mirror and The Sunday Mi...
From November 29, 2006 through August 13, 2014	MK News
From September 22, 2008 through current	The Monday Messenger
From February 12, 2009 through May 29, 2017	Montrose Review
From February 11, 2009 through current	Morley Observer & Advertiser
From July 02, 2001 through August 27, 2013	Morning Star
From February 05, 2009 through current	Morpeth Herald
From February 19, 2009 through current	Motherwell Times
From February 22, 2015 through current	The National (Scotland)
From February 12, 2009 through October	Nationalist

14, 2015	
From June 13, 2008 through June 06, 2014	New Addington Advertiser
From July 08, 2016 through current	The New European
From August 16, 2007 through July 26, 2012	New Ross Echo
From October 16, 2015 through October 21, 2016	Newbury and Thatcham Chronicle
From November 17, 2010 through current	Newham Recorder(Archant)
From February 10, 2009 through current	Newmarket Journal
From April 22, 2009 through current	The News
From February 16, 2009 through current	News Guardian
From May 09, 2012 through current	News Letter
From February 16, 2009 through current	News Post Leader
From May 15, 2007 through current	News Shopper
From May 07, 2009 through current	Newtownabbey Times
From September 14, 2011 through current	North Devon Gazette
From March 06, 2013 through current	North Devon Journal
From March 10, 2011 through October 04, 2012	North London Journal
From July 28, 2011 through current	North Norfolk News
From September 14, 2011 through current	North Somerset Times
From February 02, 2011 through current	North West London Times
From May 09, 2012 through current	The North Yorkshire News
From April 28, 2009 through current	Northampton Chronicle & Echo
From February 12, 2009 through January 24, 2011	Northants Evening Telegraph
From January 02, 1995 through current	The Northern Echo (Newsquest Regional Press)
From February 12, 2009 through current	Northumberland Gazette
From May 15, 2007 through current	Northwich Guardian
From December 04, 2013 through June 28, 2017	Nottingham and Long Eaton Topper
From July 07, 2006 through March 30, 2018	Nuneaton News
From February 13, 2009 through current	Observer & Citizen
From October 07, 1990 through current	The Observer(London)
From January 12, 1995 through October 28, 2011	Off Licence News
From January 28, 2009 through November 25, 2015	Offaly Express
From May 15, 2007 through current	Oxford Mail
From May 08, 2007 through current	The Oxford Times

From April 10, 2008 through current	Paisley Daily Express
From May 01, 2009 through January 21, 2011	Paisley & Renfrew Extra
From October 12, 2015 through current	Peebleshire News
From June 13, 2007 through September 01, 2008	Pembrokeshire Farmer
From May 17, 2007 through current	Penarth Times
From May 09, 2012 through current	Pendle Today
From January 02, 1994 through current	The People
From January 30, 2009 through current	Peterborough Today
From April 28, 2009 through current	Peterlee Mail
From February 11, 2009 through January 22, 2014	Petersfield Post
From January 06, 1992 through current	The Pharma Letter
From February 05, 2009 through current	Pocklington Post
From February 05, 2009 through current	Pontefract Express
From February 13, 2009 through current	Portadown Times
From May 18, 2007 through current	Prestwich and Whitefield Guide
From May 10, 2012 through October 11, 2017	Queensferry Gazette
From December 10, 2015 through current	Reading Chronicle
From May 16, 2007 through current	Redditch Advertiser
From May 16, 2007 through July 13, 2015	Redhill And Reigate Life
From December 27, 2001 through June 25, 2012	Regional Independent Media
From June 12, 2008 through current	Reigate Mirror
From May 10, 2011 through August 21, 2012	Reigate, Redhill and Horley Post
From May 09, 2012 through current	The Reporter
From June 12, 2008 through current	Retford Times (Local World)
From February 12, 2009 through current	Retford Trader & Guardian
From May 16, 2007 through current	Richmond and Twickenham Times
From February 12, 2009 through current	Ripley & Heanor News
From May 09, 2012 through current	Ripon Gazette
From March 04, 2011 through current	Romford Recorder
From June 12, 2008 through January 02, 2014	Romney Marsh Herald
From May 18, 2007 through current	Romsey Advertiser
From November 01, 2015 through current	Royal Borough Observer
From March 24, 2011 through current	The Royston Crow
From February 12, 2009 through current	Rugby Advertiser
From May 16, 2007 through current	Runcorn and Widnes World

From May 02, 2012 through current	Rutland Times
From February 12, 2009 through current	Rye and Battle Observer
From July 07, 2011 through current	The Saffron Walden Reporter
From May 15, 2007 through current	Salisbury Journal
From February 12, 2009 through current	Scarborough Evening News
From September 14, 2008 through current	Scotland on Sunday
From January 01, 1993 through current	Scotsman
From November 2008 through current	Scottish Business Insider
From August 29, 2014 through current	Scottish Daily Mail
From November 28, 2010 through current	Scottish Express
From November 02, 2007 through current	The Scottish Farmer
From September 07, 2014 through current	Scottish Mail on Sunday
From January 04, 2011 through current	Scottish Star
From February 12, 2009 through December 05, 2013	Selby Times
From February 12, 2009 through current	Selkirk Weekend Advertiser
From January 22, 2014 through December 21, 2017	Sentinel Advertiser
From September 25, 2008 through current	Sheerness Times Guardian
From April 29, 2009 through current	Sheffield Telegraph
From June 11, 2008 through December 07, 2011	Sheppey Gazette - Archive
From June 11, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Shepton Mallet Journal
From February 11, 2009 through current	Shields Gazette
From May 02, 2012 through current	Shoreham Herald
From September 16, 2011 through current	Sidmouth Herald
From September 05, 2008 through current	Sittingbourne and Seppey Adscene
From August 02, 2017 through current	Sittingbourne News Extra
From February 02, 2009 through current	Skegness Standard
From February 10, 2009 through current	Sleaford Standard
From May 26, 2015 through current	Slough Observer
From May 16, 2007 through current	Smallholder
From April 11, 2008 through current	Solihull News
From May 15, 2007 through current	Somerset County Gazette
From June 12, 2008 through May 24, 2018	Somerset Standard and Guardian
From May 09, 2012 through March 07, 2014	South Tipp Today
From May 15, 2007 through current	South Wales Argus
From January 01, 2001 through current	South Wales Echo

From May 16, 2007 through current	South Wales Guardian
From May 16, 2007 through current	South West Farmer
From April 28, 2009 through current	South Yorkshire times
From February 12, 2009 through current	Southern Reporter
From February 12, 2009 through current	Spalding Guardian
From February 12, 2009 through current	Spenborough Guardian
From May 16, 2007 through current	St Helens Star
From September 27, 2001 through March 28, 2018	Staffordshire Newsletter
From September 10, 2009 through current	The Stage; London
From May 18, 2007 through March 12, 2009	Staines Guardian
From February 12, 2009 through May 13, 2018	Stamford Mercury
From July 22, 2013 through current	standard.co.uk
From February 10, 2009 through current	The Star (Sheffield)
From October 15, 2015 through current	Stirling News
From January 28, 2011 through current	Stirling Observer
From February 12, 2009 through current	Stornoway Gazette
From May 15, 2007 through current	Stourbridge News
From October 16, 2015 through current	Strathallan Times
From May 17, 2007 through November 25, 2014	Streatham Guardian
From November 23, 2011 through October 04, 2017	Stroud Life
From May 17, 2007 through current	Stroud News and Journal
From February 05, 2009 through current	Suffolk Free Press
From January 09, 2007 through June 08, 2018	Sunday Business Post
From June 14, 2008 through March 06, 2009	Sunday Essex
From October 10, 1999 through current	The Sunday Express
From February 07, 1999 through (No Date)	The Sunday Herald (Glasgow)
From October 08, 2000 through current	Sunday Life
From March 02, 2008 through current	Sunday Sun (UK)
From November 05, 2000 through current	The Sunday Telegraph (London)
From February 11, 2009 through current	Sunderland Echo
From June 19, 2008 through September 28, 2018	Surrey Mirror
From February 13, 2009 through current	Sussex Express
From June 13, 2008 through June 06, 2014	Sutton Advertiser

From January 16, 2014 through March 30, 2018	Sutton Coldfield Observer
From May 17, 2007 through September 26, 2018	Sutton Guardian
From June 13, 2008 through June 06, 2014	Sutton Observer
From May 15, 2007 through current	Swindon Advertiser
From June 11, 2008 through March 30, 2018	Tamworth Herald Series
From June 11, 2008 through June 11, 2014	Target series
From August 15, 2007 through September 04, 2012	TCM - Carlow Nationalist
From August 14, 2007 through June 30, 2009	TCM - Down Democrat
From August 16, 2007 through September 04, 2012	TCM - Kildare Nationalist
From August 15, 2007 through September 04, 2012	TCM - Laois Nationalist
From August 15, 2007 through September 04, 2012	TCM - Newry Democrat
From August 15, 2007 through September 04, 2012	TCM - Roscommon Herald
From August 16, 2007 through January 20, 2011	TCM - The Kingdom
From September 26, 2006 through March 08, 2011	TCM - The Sligo Weekender
From August 10, 2007 through July 25, 2012	TCM - Waterford News & Star
From August 15, 2007 through September 12, 2012	TCM - Western People
From August 16, 2007 through July 26, 2012	TCM - Wexford Echo
From March 22, 2006 through current	telegraph.co.uk
From January 01, 1999 through current	TES
From May 16, 2007 through current	Tewkesbury Admag
From April 30, 2009 through current	Thame Gazette
From November 20, 2008 through October 29, 2009	Thanet AdScene
From September 19, 2008 through current	Thanet Extra
From June 10, 2008 through October 02, 2012	Thanet Times
From July 27, 2011 through current	Thetford, Brandon and Watton Times
From May 15, 2007 through October 07, 2013	This is Local London
From April 30, 2009 through current	Thorne and District Gazette

From May 15, 2007 through current	Thurrock Gazette
From October 28, 1994 through current	Times Higher Education
From May 16, 2007 through current	Times Series
From May 16, 2007 through current	Tivyside Advertiser
From February 12, 2009 through current	Todmorden News
From May 02, 2012 through current	Tring Today
From December 10, 2015 through current	Troon Times
From February 09, 2009 through March 14, 2016	Tyrone Times
From August 11, 2000 through current	UK NewsQuest Regional Press
From January 07, 2003 through July 28, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Buckingham...
From January 07, 2003 through July 28, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Cheshire
From January 07, 2003 through July 28, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Dorset
From January 06, 2003 through September 21, 2004	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Eastbourne
From January 07, 2003 through July 28, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Essex
From January 08, 2003 through July 28, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Gwent
From June 12, 2001 through July 28, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Hampshire
From January 08, 2003 through August 31, 2006	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Hereford...
From January 07, 2003 through July 16, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Hertford...
From January 08, 2003 through August 31, 2006	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Ludlow
From January 07, 2003 through September 21, 2004	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Mid Sussex
From January 10, 2003 through April 20, 2006	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Ryedale
From January 09, 2003 through February 25, 2005	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Stratfor...
From January 08, 2003 through July 21, 2006	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is The Blac...
From January 09, 2003 through August 31, 2006	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is The Cots...
From January 07, 2003 through June 20, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is The Lake...
From January 07, 2003 through July 28, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is The Nort...
From January 07, 2003 through July 23, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is The West...

From January 07, 2003 through August 31, 2006	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Trafford
From January 06, 2003 through August 31, 2006	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Wirral
From January 07, 2003 through September 21, 2004	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is Worthing
From January 07, 2003 through June 29, 2008	UK Newsquest Regional Press - This is York
From February 11, 2009 through current	Ulster Star
From February 26, 2002 through April 25, 2018	The Uttoxeter Advertiser
From June 13, 2008 through January 08, 2016	Uttoxeter Post and Times
From May 09, 2012 through current	The Visitor
From February 06, 2009 through current	Wakefield Express
From January 07, 2001 through current	Wales on Sunday
From September 29, 2013 through current	walesonline.co.uk
From June 12, 2008 through March 30, 2018	Walsall Advertiser
From May 17, 2007 through current	Wandsworth Guardian
From May 15, 2007 through current	Warrington Guardian
From May 02, 2012 through current	Warwick Courier
From May 16, 2007 through current	Watford Observer
From June 11, 2008 through June 05, 2014	Wells Journal
From April 20, 2011 through current	The Welwyn & Hatfield Times
From March 25, 2010 through current	West Briton
From May 10, 2012 through October 11, 2017	West Lothian Herald & Post
From October 20, 2010 through current	West Sussex County Times
From April 30, 2009 through current	West Sussex Gazette
From July 01, 1997 through May 28, 2018	Western Daily Press
From June 11, 2008 through May 24, 2018	Western Gazette (Local World)
From January 01, 2001 through current	The Western Mail
From May 16, 2007 through current	Western Telegraph
From May 16, 2007 through current	The Westmorland Gazette
From September 15, 2011 through current	Weston and Somerset Mercury
From June 12, 2008 through January 12, 2009	Weston and Worle News
From September 14, 2011 through current	Weston Midweek
From May 09, 2012 through current	Wetherby News
From May 17, 2007 through current	Wharfedale Observer

From February 13, 2009 through current	Whitby Gazette
From June 12, 2008 through June 11, 2014	Whitstable Times
From July 24, 2009 through current	Wigan Today
From May 20, 2007 through current	Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard
From May 15, 2007 through current	The Wiltshire Gazette and Herald
From May 15, 2007 through current	Wiltshire Times
From May 17, 2007 through current	Wimbledon Guardian
From May 18, 2007 through current	Winsford Guardian
From May 15, 2007 through current	Wirral Globe
From February 02, 2011 through current	Wishaw Press
From May 16, 2007 through current	Witney Gazette
From May 15, 2007 through current	Worcester News
From January 15, 2009 through current	Worksop Guardian
From February 06, 2012 through current	Worthing Herald
From May 15, 2007 through May 11, 2017	Yeovil Express
From May 15, 2007 through current	York Press
From December 31, 2001 through current	Yorkshire Evening Post
From January 01, 2002 through current	Yorkshire Post
From June 02, 2008 through December 09, 2010	Yorkshire Post Newspaper
From May 16, 2007 through current	Your Local Guardian

Appendix C

Collecting the data

In order to collect the data from the LexisNexis WSK API, I have utilised an open-source tool called Cloacina³¹, which was developed by Assistant Professor Andrew Halterman from Michigan State University.

The data consists of media reports that include the terms "EU" or "European Union". Therefore, it comprises both the actual hits where these query terms appear and incidental mentions.

The queries were constructed across over 600 media outlets (refer to Appendix B) accessible through the content-specific identifier compiled by LexisNexis. It was not technically feasible to conduct a more specific search at the provider level, and additional filtering had to be done as part of the pre-processing steps.

All in all, the UK dataset consists of total 2 172 306 retrieved news reports. Figure C.1 shows that the distribution of the data over time varied to a large degree.

Similarly, the number of unique media outlets available under the Lexis Nexis licence varies for each year. Figure C.2 shows the changes in number of unique media outlets included in the dataset over time. No data was collected for the year 2017. The year 2017 was excluded because

³¹ Available at url: <https://github.com/ahalterman/cloacina>

of the immense volume of media reports discussing the Brexit, which is not the main focus of this project.

In order to assess the extent to which an increase in the amount of media coverage can be attributed to this variation, I scrutinise the number of articles published per unique outlet over time. Figure C.3 illustrates that the level of coverage that the EU has received in the most recent documented years was exceptional and cannot be solely attributed to selection bias.

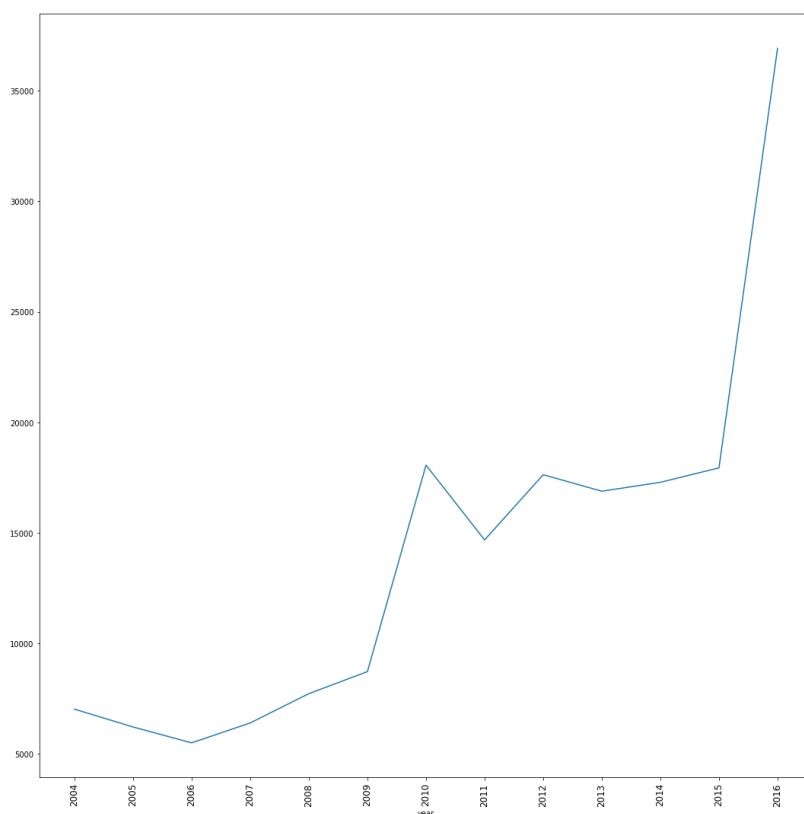


Figure C.1: Number of collected media reports per year

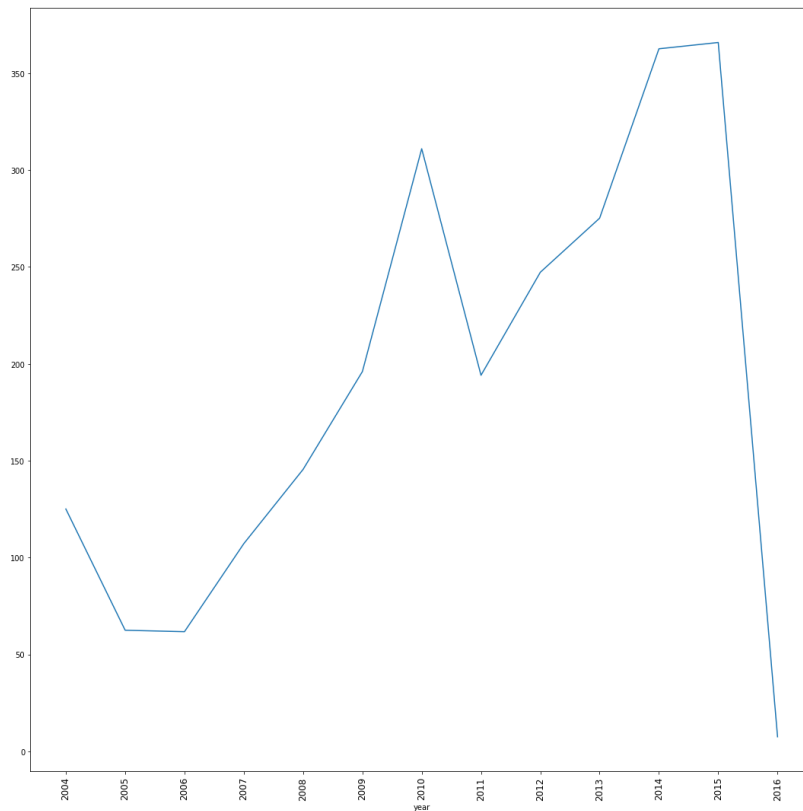


Figure C.2: Number of unique media outlets in the dataset per year

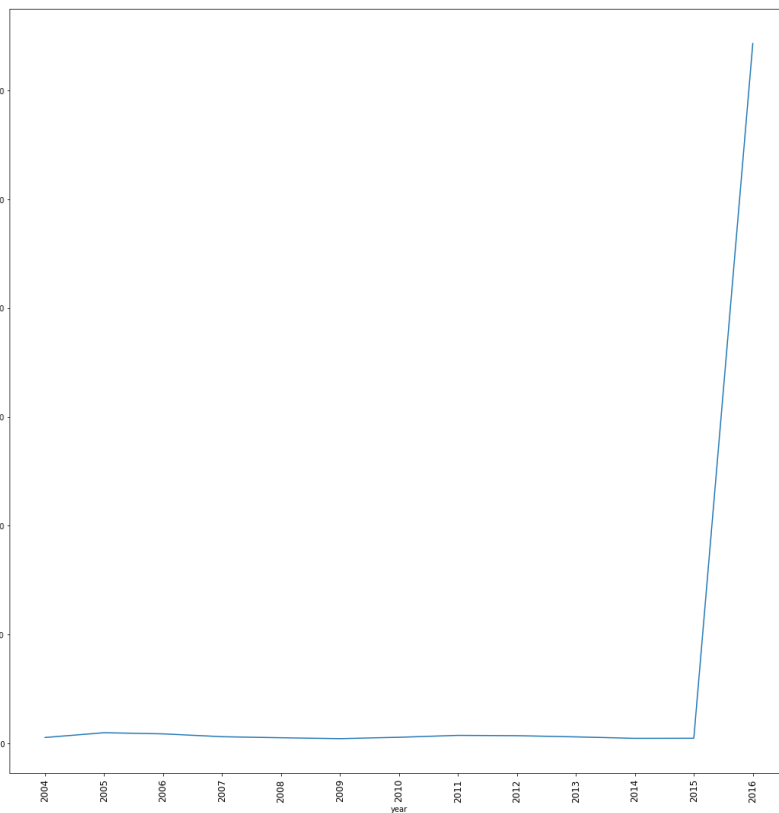


Figure C.3: Number of articles published per an unique media outlet

Appendix D

Parsing and cleaning the data

D.1 Parsing the downloaded data

The raw data was retrieved in json format. The metadata and the text of a media report was provided in XML format. I have written a simple tool that parses the data, extracts only the information relevant for the analysis, and returns it in the form of a dictionary (Listing 1).

Listing 1: Python code for the Parser class

```

from pathlib import Path
from dataclasses import dataclass, field
from bs4 import BeautifulSoup

@dataclass
class Parser:
    """
    Behaviour-oriented class for parsing a text file on a given
    location containing a list of json files retrieved from LexisNexis.

    Args:
        filepath: A filepath to the retrived LexisNexis datafile
        that is to be parsed.
    """

    filepath: str: Path
    -soup: bs4.BeautifulSoup = field(init=False)

    def post_init(self):
        xml = open(str(filepath)).read()
        self._soup = BeautifulSoup(xml, "lxml")

    def get_doc_headline(self) -> None:
        headline = " ".join(
            [
                str(tag.text)
                for tag in self._soup.find_all(
                    "div", {"class": "HEADLINE"}
                )
            ]
        )
        if headline == None:
            print("! error parsing headline")
        else:
            return headline

```

```

def get-doc-length(self) -> None:
    exists = doc-soup.find("div", class=="LENGTH")
    if exists != None:
        length = " ".join(
            [
                str(tag.text)
                for tag in self.-soup.find-all.find-all(
                    "div", {"class": "LENGTH"}
                )
            ]
        )
        return length.split()[
            0
        ] # don't need the word 'words'
    else:
        print("no length")

def get-doc-loaddate(self) -> None:
    loaddate = " ".join(
        [
            str(tag.text)
            for tag in self.-soup.find-all.find-all(
                "div", {"class": "LOAD-DATE"}
            )
        ]
    )
    if loaddate == None:
        print(" ! error parsing loaddate")
    else:
        return " ".join(
            i for i in loaddate.split()[1:4]
        ).replace(",","")

def get-doc-pub(self) -> None:
    pub = " ".join(
        [
            str(tag.text)
            for tag in self.-soup.find-all.find-all(
                "div", {"class": "PUB"}
            )
        ]
    )
    if pub != "":
        return pub
    else:
        for tag in self.-soup.find-all.find-all(
            "meta"
        ):
            if tag.get("name", None) == "sourceName":
                return tag.get("content", None)

def get-doc-pub-date(self) -> None:
    date = ""
    date = " ".join(
        [
            str(tag.text)

```



```

        for tag in self._soup.find_all.find_all(
            "div", {"class": "DATE"}
        )
    ]
)

if date == "":
    date = " ".join(
        [
            str(tag.text)
            for tag in self._soup.find_all.find_all(
                "div", {"class": "DATE0"}
            )
        ]
    )

if date == "":
    date = " ".join(
        [
            str(tag.text)
            for tag in self._soup.find_all.find_all(
                "div", {"class": "PUB-DATE"}
            )
        ]
    )

if date == "":
    print("problem parsing date")
else:
    return " ".join(
        i for i in date.split()[:3]
    ).replace(", ", "")

def get-doc-body(self) -> None:
    body = " ".join(
        [
            str(tag.text)
            for tag in self._soup.find_all.find_all(
                "div", {"class": re.compile("BODY.*")}
            )
        ]
    )

if body == None:
    print("problem parsing body")
else:
    return body

def to-dict(self) -> dict:
    """This function returns a formatted dictionary with the parsed
    ↪ attributes
    as its keys.

    """
    formatted-dict = {}

    formatted-dict["article-title"] = get-doc-headline(
        self
    )
    formatted-dict["news-source"] = get-doc-pub(self)
    formatted-dict[
        "publication-date"
    ] = get-doc-pub-date(self)
    formatted-dict["loaddate"] = get-doc-loaddate(self)
    formatted-dict["article-body"] = get-doc-body(self)
    return formatted-dict

```

Using the Parser, the a json file containing the data can be transformed into a dictionary containing all of the releavnt variables.

D.2 Cleaning the data

During the qualitative exploration of the downloaded data, it has become evident that the media reports contained a considerable amount of noise. Consequently, I have filtered the dataset at three levels: 1) media reports, 2) sentences, and 3) individual words (tokens) and characters.

At the level of a media report, I have made efforts to eliminate as many media reports included in the dataset incidentally as possible. This was achieved by filtering out media reports written in Welsh and Irish, identifying patterns in the article titles (e.g., 'Brainteasers') or phrases mentioned in the text (e.g., "lastminute") that were common among many irrelevant data points.

To further enhance the data quality, filtering at the sentence level was performed. Each document was initially converted into a list of individual sentences, from which the 5000 most frequently occurring sentences were selected. The resulting ranking was then reviewed by the author to identify any false positives. A final blacklist for sentence-level filtration was created, excluding sentences that were solely considered as noise. Listing 3 shows the media report level and sentence level filtration was conducted.

Moreover, any duplicated text passages generated during the parsing of XML files were filtered out by breaking the text into an ordered list of sentences and retaining only the first occurrences. This method heavily depends on accurate punctuation and text formatting. The selected sentence segmentation technique, known as Punkt Sentence Tokenizer, was trained on a corpus of 400,000 tokens, primarily composed of newspaper texts converted to Unicode encoding. The tokenizer is implemented in the NLTK library and represents a reliable unsupervised solution for identifying sentence boundaries.

At the token level, I have removed superfluous whitespaces, punctuation, Twitter handles, email addresses, remaining markup language tags, and all non-ASCII characters using regular expressions, spaCy and the unicode library (Listing 4).

For a full list of the patterns used during the filtration please refer to Pesl (2023b) and the archive accessible at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7977226>. This collection of stoplists was developed by iterating over the most frequent strings in the dataset.

To identify the English language, the Python port of Google's language detection library was utilized in conjunction with a language processing pipeline built using the spaCy library (Honnibal and Montani 2018).

Listing 2: Filtering based on language

```
import spacy
from spacy_langdetect import LanguageDetector

nlp = spacy.load("en")
nlp.add_pipe(LanguageDetector(), name="language-detector", last=True)

# identify the indices of non-english articles loaded in a Pandas dataframe
and remove these articles

non-eng = [
    dataframe-of-articles.index[dataframe-of-articles["article-body"] ==
    c→ item][0]
    for item in dataframe-of-articles["article-body"].tolist()
    if nlp(item)._.language["language"] != "en"
]

for indx in sorted(non-eng, reverse=True):
    dataframe-of-articles = dataframe-of-articles.drop(indx)
```

Listing 3: Filtering out media reports based on patterns in text and article titles; conducting a sentence-level filtration based on the developed stoplist

```
import stoplist # python file containing the variables used for filtering

for pattern in stoplist.media-report-level-removal:
    df["lc"] = df["c1n-txt"].apply(lambda x: x.lower())
    df = df[df["lc"].str.contains(pattern) == False]

for pattern in stoplist.article-title-level-removal:
    df = df[df["article-title"].str.lower().str.contains(pattern) == False]

filtered-sentences = [sent for sent in sent-tokenize(text)
                      if sent not in sentence.sentence-level-removal]

text = " ".join(filtered-sentences)
```

Listing 4: Token and character level filtration

```

import string import nltk
import unicodedata import re
from nltk.tokenize import sent_tokenize
import collections

def clean_text(text: str) -> str:
    # remove superfluous whitespaces
    text = re.sub(r"\s+", " ", str(text))

    # get rid of leftover markdown language tags
    text = text.replace("&", "and").replace(">", ">").replace("<",
    c-> "<")

    # remove twitter @mentions
    mention_finder = re.compile(r"@[a-z0-9_]{1,15}", re.IGNORECASE) text =
    mention_finder.sub("@MENTION", text)

    # remove email addresses
    text = re.sub(r"\S*\S*\S?", "", str(text)) # remove email addresses

    # pad punctuation
    for char in [".", ",", "(", ") ", "!", "?", ";", ":"]:
        text = text.replace(char, char + " ").strip()

    # filter at the sentence level: remove repeating passages
    sentences = list(collections.OrderedDict.fromkeys(sent_tokenize(text))) text = "
    ".join(sentences)

    # filter at the tokens level
    text = "".join([i for i in text if not i.isdigit()]) # filter out numbers
    tokens = [t for t in text if t.isalpha()]

    pnctn = " ".join(string.punctuation).split(" ") + stoplist.pnctn_list tokens = [tok for tok in
    tokens if tok not in pnctn]

    # filter out nonascii
    ascii_toks = []

    for tok in tokens:
        ascii_toks.append(unicodedata.normalize("NFKD", tok).encode("ascii",
        c-> "ignore").decode("utf-8", "ignore"))

    return " ".join(ascii_toks)

```

D.3 Filtering out duplicate media reports

After cleaning the data, I have loaded all media reports into a Pandas dataframe and removed articles with 100 % identical body text (Listing 5).

Listing 5: Removing duplicated from the Pandas dataframe

```

dataframe.drop_duplicates(subset=['article-body'], keep='first')

```

However, there were still media reports that were extremely similar or nearly identical. These differences could be attributed to variations in metadata or minor details possibly resulting from glitches in the data submission process to LexisNexis. Therefore, I have chosen to proceed with the deduplication process. To identify these “duplicates,” I have

computed semantic similarity estimates for all pairs of media reports in the dataset. These estimates have been calculated as cosine similarities using spaCy, which computes the cosine similarities over an average of word vectors (Listing 6). The resulting scalar similarity scores indicate the extent to which the pairs of texts were similar. Through a process of trial and error, I have determined a threshold of 0.998 and subsequently discarded one of the media reports in each pair that scored above this threshold. The permitted difference of 0.002 can be attributed to artifacts arising from minor text formatting changes, repeated paragraphs resulting in noise within the database, and similar factors.

Listing 6: Deduplication using semantic similarity estimates

```
import spacy
from tqdm import tqdm
from itertools import combinations

nlp = spacy.load("en")

docs = [doc for doc in nlp.pipe(list-of-media-reports, batch-size=500,
                               c→n-threads=-1)]

combinations-of-texts = list(combinations(range(0, len(docs)), 2))

# identify the indices of the documents
# with the cosine similarity over the threshold
indices-of-duplicates = []

for cmb in combinations-of-texts:
    cosine-similarity-score = docs[cmb[0]].similarity(docs[cmb[1]])
    if cosine-similarity-score > 0.998:
        indices-of-duplicates.append(cmb[1])

indices-of-duplicates = [i for i in indices-of-duplicates if i is not None]

# delete the documents using their indices
for i in sorted(indices-of-duplicates, reverse=True):
    lst-indx = lst.index(docs[i].text)
    del list-of-media-reports[lst-indx]
```

After cleaning and deduplicating, the dataset has consisted of 612 590 articles.

Appendix E

Feature engineering, the descriptive analysis, and text classification

In this technical appendix, I first describe the feature engineering that allowed the analysis. Then I discuss how the analysis of politicisation, sentiment of the media coverage, and the text classification were conducted.

E.1 Feature engineering

The objective of any supervised machine learning classification is to infer a function capable of assigning the correct category to each data point. In our case, this implies that the full-text data represents the independent variable (x), and the labels represent the dependent variable (y). To achieve reasonable precision and recall, a larger amount of manually annotated data will be necessary as the independent variable exhibits greater variability.

Normalizing the text data aids in reducing variance caused by inflected word forms and commonly occurring words with little informative value (e.g., definite articles). Consequently, it promises higher precision compared to using raw text with the same amount of labeled data. This process, known as feature engineering, involves extracting the most informative features from the full-text. However, the resulting features still contain raw text that needs to be encoded into a numerical representation while considering the resulting computational complexity. The full-texts were transformed into lemmas (Listing 7) and

bi-grams (Listing 8). The standard english stopwords (refer to the variable `stoplist.english_stopwords`) were removed during the process.

Listing 7: Lemmatization and stopwords removal

```
def lemmatize(doc: spacy.language.Doc) -> str:
    """This function lemmatizes the full-text
    of a media report. Standard english stopwords
    are removed during the process.

    Args: doc: a spaCy Doc object generated
           using the spaCy english language model

    Return: lemmatized text
    """
    lemmas = [t.lemma_
               for t in doc
               if not t.is_punct | t.is_space | t.is_stop]

    return(' '.join(lemmas))
```

Listing 8: Generate bigrams based on a lemmatised article text

```
from gensim.models.phrases import Phrases, Phraser

def get_bigrams(filepath: Path) -> pd.core.frame.DataFrame:
    """This function generates bigrams based on lemmatised
    full-texts of media reports.

    Args: filepath: a system path to a pandas dataframe
           with a column named 'lemmas' that contains the
           lemmatised full-texts

    Return: An instance of pandas dataframe with the
            bigrams stored in a new column 'lemmas-bgram'.
    """
    df = pd.read_csv(filepath, index_col=False)

    df['lemmas-bgram'] = df['lemmas'].apply(lambda x: re.sub("[^A-Za-z]+", ' ',
                                                             str(x)))
    sent = [row.split() for row in df['lemmas-bgram']]

    phrases = Phrases(sent, min_count=30, progress_per=10000)
    bigram = Phraser(phrases)
    sentences = bigram[sent]

    df['lemmasBgram'] = [" ".join(sentence) for sentence in sentences]
    return df
```

The dataset contains media reports of varying lengths. While computer-assisted text classification can handle shorter texts effectively, longer texts often need to be truncated to ensure a reasonable precision and recall for the trained model. After testing various strategies, I have written a function (Listing 9) that retains all sentences containing the string “EU” or “European Union,” along with two preceding and two subsequent sentences. Such snippets can then be used for training the classifier.

Listing 9: Extracting snippets containing all sentences referencing the EU padded with two preceding and two subsequent sentences

```

def extract_snippet(text: str) -> str:
    snippet = []
    EU_idx = []
    sents = sent_tokenize(text.lower())

    for x in range(len(sents)):
        if "european union" in sents[x]:
            EU_idx.append(x)

    for x in range(len(sents)):
        if "eu" in sents[x]:
            EU_idx.append(x)

    for i in EU_idx:

        if i >= 2:
            snippet.append(sents[i-2])
        if i >= 1:
            snippet.append(sents[i-1])

        snippet.append(sents[i])

        if i+1 < (len(sents) - 1):
            snippet.append(sents[i+1])
        if i+2 < (len(sents) - 1):
            snippet.append(sents[i+2])

    return(" ".join(list(set(snippet))))

```

E.1.1 Tracking the politicisation

The indicator used to track the politicization of the EU has been calculated by dividing the monthly totals of media reports in the data by the number of unique media outlets included for the same month. The resulting measure represents the total amount of media reports published per an unique media outlet in the given month. The monthly numbers were then averaged by calculating a rolling mean with window size of 12 months.

$$\text{Politicisation} = \frac{\text{TotalN}}{\text{UniqueOutlets}}$$

E.2 Unsupervised sentiment prediction

To predict the sentiment of each media report, I utilized the Valence Aware Dictionary and Sentiment Reasoner (Hutto and Gilbert 2014) as well as the sentiment annotator provided by Stanford CoreNLP (Manning et al. 2014).

VADER is a rule-based library designed specifically for analyzing social media texts (Listing 10). It performs well in handling non-standard use of punctuation and short texts. However, it may struggle to capture

subtle meanings that require understanding word context. The complete lexicon, containing sentiment scores for each entry, can be accessed at github.com/cjhutto/vaderSentiment/blob/master/vaderSentiment/vader_lexicon.txt. VADER's output measures sentiment across three dimensions: positive, neutral, and negative, representing the relative proportions of each sentiment throughout the entire text.

Listing 10: Calculating sentiment scores using VADER

```

from nltk.sentiment.vader import SentimentIntensityAnalyzer sid =
SentimentIntensityAnalyzer()

def vadersentPos(text):
    scores = sid.polarity_scores(text)
    return(scores['pos'])

def vadersentNeg(text):
    scores = sid.polarity_scores(text)
    return(scores['neg'])

class Article(object):
    """ A class representing a full text article """
    def __init__(self, text): self.text = text
        self.neg = vadersentNeg(text) self.pos =
        vadersentPos(text)

def calculate_sentiment_scores(text_of_a_media_report: str) -> None: """This function
    prints out the positive and the negative VADER sentiment score.

    Args: text_of_a_media_report: a string containing a text """
    article = Article(text_of_a_media_report)

    print(f"""The negative sentiment score for the article was {article.neg}.
        Meanwhile, the positive sentiment score is {article.pos}.""")
    )

```

Listing 11 shows a Python code for sentiment prediction using CoreNLP. In contrast to the relatively simple approach used by VADER, Stanford's CoreNLP sentiment annotator employs a deep neural model (Socher et al., 2013) that has been pre-trained on the Sentiment Treebank dataset, which can be accessed at <http://nlp.stanford.edu/~socherr/stanfordSentimentTreebankRaw.zip>. The recursive neural tensor network, as described by the authors, demonstrates good performance even when applied to longer texts. To prioritize efficiency, the core components of the CoreNLP library are implemented in Java.

Listing 11: Calculating sentiment scores using CoreNLP

```

from pycorenlp import StanfordCoreNLP

core_nlp = StanfordCoreNLP("http://localhost:9000")

def calculate_sentiment_scores_coreNLP(
    text_of_a_media_report: str, core_nlp: StanfordCoreNLP) -> None:
    """This function prints out the positive and the negative
    VADER sentiment score.

    Args: text_of_a_media_report: a string containing a text

           core_nlp: an instance of StanfordCoreNLP object connected
                    to a running server
    """
    scores = []
    result = core_nlp.annotate(
        text_of_a_media_report,
        properties={
            "annotators": "sentiment",
            "outputFormat": "json",
            "timeout": 5000,
        },
    )

    # the sentiment is estimated for each sentence
    # the function then calculates a mean for the whole media
    # report

    for s in result["sentences"]:
        scores.append(s["sentimentValue"])

    scores = list(map(int, scores))

    print(
        f"""The CoreNLP sentiment score
        for this text has been
        {sum(scores) / int(len(scores))}."""
    )

```

The sentiment scores of media reports published each month were averaged to calculate monthly values.

E.3 Supervised text classification

The data coded using Prodigy were exported in a JSONL format. For each code, all datapoints were assigned a label and an “answer”: either “accept”, “reject” or “ignore”. The hand-coded data were then used to train a multiclass classifier.

The training process was done using spaCy train command (please refer to <https://spacy.io/api/cli#train>). The command was used to train a NLP pipeline consisting of a sentencizer and a classifier, which expects training data and a config file with all settings and hyperparameters.

The pipeline saves out the model with best precision and recall scores from all epochs, as well as the final pipeline.

The resulting multiclass text classifier (Pesi 2023a) is available under Creative Commons licence at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7950396>

Listing 12: Loading the trained model and classifying text data

```
import spacy

nlp = spacy.load(system-path-to-the-model)

def classify-the-media-report(
    text-of-a-media-report: str, nlp: a spacy model) -> None:
    """This function prints out all labels relevant for the
    given media report separated with semicolons.

    Args: text-of-a-media-report: a string containing a text

        nlp: a classifier model
    """
    all-relevant-labels = ''
    doc = nlp(text-of-a-media-report)

    for key in doc.cats:
        if doc.cats[key] >= 0.5:
            all-relevant-labels = all-relevant-labels + str(key) + ';'

    print(all-relevant-labels)
```

The media reports that the model could not classify under any label were placed in the category 'Other'.

Appendix F

Media reports referenced in the text

Table F.1: Media reports referenced in the text with their corresponding IDs

ID	Title	Date published	Media outlet
1	No soft-pedal on China rights - PM	December 3 2013	standard.co.uk
2	Letter from Robert Feal-Martinez	November 27 2008	Swindon Advertiser
3	Allies unite in demand to keep LFA support in reformed Cap	December 16 2011	Aberdeen Press and Journal
4	LIVE8 DAY: G8 SUMMIT: BLAIR PRESSED TO ISOLATE US OVER CLIMATE CHANGE	July 2 2005	The Independent (London)
5	Dale Farm set to pay milk top ups	September 17 2016	Farming Life
6	Challenging times for the local beef industry	March 17 2014	Farming Life
7	Worldwide shortage of sugar will lead to a rise in food costs	December 12 2010	Sunday Express
8	BLAIR PLEA ON TROOPS FOR SUDAN	October 21 2006	The Mirror
9	International: EU defies Beijing warning to award dissident human rights prize	October 24 2008	The Guardian - Final Edition
10	Farmers pump up their use of growth drugs	January 19 2005	DAILY MAIL (London)
11	Greece appeals to EU for more border guards	December 4 2015	Belfast Telegraph Online
12	Trade union members	June 5 2016	The Guardian

	should vote to stay in the EU		
13	G-Wiz fails crash test and faces safety ban	May 15 2007	The Evening Standard (London)
14	High Court victory for campaigners in air pollution battle with Government	November 2 2016	Belfast Telegraph Online
15	£2m EU boost	October 27 2012	Daily Record and Sunday Mail
16	Obesity could be a disability, European court determines	December 19 2014	News Letter
17	IT'S ENOUGH TO DRIVE YOU BATTY;	December 9 2010	The Independent (London)
18	Post offices have been diminished for many years	May 15 2007	The Herald (Glasgow)
19	QE has paved the way for a new financial crisis, warn Germany's 'Wise Men'	November 11 2015	telegraph.co.uk
20	French minister warns austerity fueling 'social crisis'	March 7 2013	telegraph.co.uk
21	1 IN 6 ROMANIANS BROKE UK LAWS'	February 16 2016	DAILY MAIL (London)
22	Will Romanians be given free access to British jobs?	June 22 2007	Daily Mail (London)
23	THE COST OF OUR OPEN BORDERS	October 13 2013	DAILY MAIL (London)
24	Council concern over 70% recycling target	October 28 2010	South Wales Echo
25	Rewarded for their blunders	October 19 2006	Western Morning News (Plymouth)
26	Auditor slams broadband scheme cost	March 3 2015	Belfast Telegraph Online
27	Happy birthday to the euro. Lord knows it won't last 10 more years	January 5 2009	Daily Mail (London)
28	COULD EATING BURNT TOAST STUNT YOUR UNBORN BABY'S GROWTH?	October 22 2012	DAILY MAIL (London)
29	Yes, the Human Rights Act should go. But Dave's alternative won't save us from the tyranny of lawyers; THE 'Melanie Phillips COLUMN	June 26 2006	Daily Mail (London)
30	EU S HIGH HEEL BAN FOR HAIR SALON STAFF	April 9 2012	DAILY MAIL (London)
31	EU won't advise us - it will tell us;	August 19 2009	Western Morning News (Plymouth, UK)

32	It seems as if the EU will never see the light	September 9 2009	The Express
33	UK TRANSPLANTED	January 26 2009	The Mirror
34	A simple solution to cod problem	November 10 2006	Western Daily Press
35	Europe will always be a foreign land for the British	November 23 2009	The Independent (London)
36	European Union	August 4 2009	The Northern Echo (Newsquest Regional Press)
37	We need answers	March 11 2006	The Sentinel (Stoke)
38	Letter: You say- Short points	December 12 2006	Liverpool Daily Echo
39	Resist ridiculous rules from Brussels	September 22 2004	Western Morning News (Plymouth)
40	We need campaign to keep Kernow	April 21 2006	Western Morning News (Plymouth)
41	Only an earthquake will get us out of EU	May 6 2007	The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)
42	EU empire is just trying to swallow up this country; Letters	April 14 2011	The Express
43	EU law twice as costly to enforce; World Bulletin	March 30 2010	The Daily Telegraph (London)
44	Politicians start wars, not soldiers; Letters	January 7 2011	Western Daily Press
45	Minister's vow is victory for a vociferous minority; Letters	March 16 2012	The Express
46	Cameron has a change of heart since his EU veto	February 1 2012	Eastern Daily Press
47	No democracy in the EU Parliament; Letters	May 19 2012	Western Morning News (Plymouth, UK)
48	Prisoners voting: Time to show who governs Britain; 'Real power is now held by foreign judges'	May 24 2012	The Express
49	Time for Cameron to get [...]; Letters	April 30 2012	Scottish Express
50	I don't believe these figures on Europe; Letters	May 3 2012	Western Daily Press
51	Union has drifted away from its original course; Opinion	March 29 2012	Lincolnshire Echo
52	John Redwood MP: Why I want to see major change in our membership of the EU;	August 27 2014	getreading.co.uk
53	Cameron's defeat has set Britain up for a post-referendum win; The Europeans - led by Germany	June 28 2014	The Independent on Sunday

	- who don't want the UK to leave, ought to be more accommodating next time		
54	'We'll soon be answering to brussels'	April 17 2004	Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph
55	EU referendum	May 21 2014	York Press
56	Trade would not suffer; yourview	January 15 2014	South Wales Evening Post
57	Cameron must do more to convince his supporters on Europe; TO THE EDITOR	May 18 2014	The Sunday Telegraph (London)
58	We can leave EU and still have prosperity; Letters	May 6 2014	Scottish Express
59	EU legislation must affect every facet of life in the UK	December 2 2014	Daily Echo (Newsquest Regional Press)
60	Would it be worth it to make EU democratic?	December 2 2014	Derby Telegraph
61	We should be running EU not doing as we are told; Letters	December 17 2014	The Express
62	We should be running EU not doing as we are told; Letters	December 17 2014	The Express
63	The one policy of leaving the EU draws votes equally for Ukip or Syriza; Letters to the Editor	January 26 2015	The Daily Telegraph (London)
64	Major parties should no longer be trusted on EU	February 2 2015	Grimsby Telegraph
65	IT doesn't sound as if [...]; HICKEY	January 8 2015	The Express
66	Nicola Sturgeon: SNP a progressive force' in UK	January 25 2015	Scotsman
67	Generation of children have been affected by our system	February 6 2015	East Anglian Daily Times
68	Hot air and rubbish is the legacy of a failed campaign	December 8 2014	East Anglian Daily Times
69	EU exit would give UK accountable politicians	December 3 2014	Somerset Standard and Guardian
70	Harmony will never happen	December 20 2014	Grimsby Telegraph
71	National sovereignty is redundant in the modern world	January 12 2015	Sunday Business Post
72	Quitting EU would be 'business suicide' says Teesside manufacturer	February 11 2015	The Northern Echo (Newsquest Regional Press)
73	Jean-Claude Juncker isn't	January 19 2015	telegraph.co.uk

	alone in not taking David Cameron's Euro reforms seriously; Where prime ministers once overruled Eurocrats, Eurocrats now veto prime ministers		
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