Article

Denouncing European integration: Euroscepticism as polity contestation

Pieter de Wilde
Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), Germany

Hans-Jörg Trenz
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Abstract
The spreading phenomenon of Euroscepticism is manifested in critical practices in discourse that oppose European integration. This paper explores Euroscepticism as an element of discourse, which cannot only be measured as party positions or individual attitudes. Based on this understanding, our argument is twofold. Firstly, Euroscepticism relates to the unsettled and principally contested character of the European Union (EU) as a political entity: its basic purpose and rationale, its institutional design and its future trajectory. It correlates with pro-European discourse and the attempts to promote the (democratic) legitimacy of the EU. Secondly, we argue that Euroscepticism unfolds primarily through mass media. As such, it is given public expression through general news values, drama and narratives that are targeted to draw the attention of the wider audience. Understanding this responsive and public nature of Euroscepticism leads us, in the end, to a comprehensive typology of six forms of polity evaluation of the EU.

Keywords
discourse, Euroscepticism, European public space, legitimacy, media

Corresponding author:
Hans-Jörg Trenz, CEMES Center for Modern European Studies, University of Copenhagen, Njalsgade 80, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark Copenhagen, Denmark
Email: trenz@hum.ku.dk

Introduction[1]

"EU only pseudo-democracy"; "Against EU-dictatorship"; "Against the Treaty of dishonour"[2]; "The representatives of the people and the traitors of the people"; "Millions of people defenceless against EU-paladins"; "People or Eurocrats?"; "inhuman EU." These slogans are not launched by a small minority party at the extremist fringes of the political spectrum, they are taken from the anti-European Union (EU) campaign fought by the *Kronen-Zeitung* and, as such, form the daily headlines of Austria's largest newspaper, which sells three million copies and is read by approximately 40% of the Austrian population.[3] Similar slogans are reissued in the daily news coverage of the Eurocrisis that has rocked the EU to its very core. Complaints about technocratic governance, the excess of executive power or the primacy of the economic over the political are linked in the daily media debates to more fundamental questions of the mandate of the European Central Bank and other supranational institutions, the continued membership of certain countries or even the dangers of a complete breakdown of the EU.

What we find here are the ingredients of 'Euroscepticism' (e.g. Leconte, 2010)[4], which we approach in this article as an element of political discourse on European integration based on propositions and arguments that contest the legitimacy of European integration or the EU. As the amplification of a mainstream newspaper voice indicates, Euroscepticism appears to be less marginal than is often assumed. It can take a prominent place in political debates, without necessarily being mobilised by political parties. It can express public opinion and identities without being itself rooted in individual preferences and attitudes.

The conceptual argument for approaching Euroscepticism as a quality of public discourse in this paper is twofold. Firstly, the paper highlights the responsive nature of Euroscepticism as polity contestation that correlates with ongoing integration and the initiation of a process of democratic legitimation of the EU. The existing body of literature on Euroscepticism is often biased, contrasting European values and normative positions on European integration against the alleged Eurosceptic threat. This has sometimes resulted in strong evaluative statements on the aggressive nature of Euroscepticism, which might corrode the European project, or even predict the end of European integration (Taylor, 2008). Instead of a normative assessment of the Eurosceptic challenge, this article takes a conceptual focus on the dynamics of polity contestation where varieties of Eurosceptic arguments meet with pro-European counterparts.

Secondly, we propose that Euroscepticism should be approached in terms of the scope and contents of public discourse that primarily unfolds through the mass media. The assessment of the legitimacy of European integration takes place through arguments and counter-arguments, which claim belonging and demarcate the boundaries of the emerging European social and political space. As part of this focus on public discourse, we draw attention to the media as one of the central players and amplifiers of Euroscepticism. In existing surveys, Euroscepticism is mainly approached in terms of party politics (Taggart, 1998; Ray, 1999; Marks and Wilson, 2000; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Marks et al., 2002; Hooghe et al., 2004; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008a, 2008b; Flood, 2009) or in terms of public opinion (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993, 2007; Niedermayer, 1995; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005; Hooghe, 2007; Hooghe and Marks, 2007; Boomgaarden

et al., 2011; Kuhn, 2011). Much less attention has been paid to public communication and media research as a necessary supplement to research on political parties and voters' attitudes. If it is, media coverage is seen as either a reflection of party positions and public opinion, or a causal factor in shaping these (De Vreese, 2007; Koopmans, 2007; Kriesi, 2007; Stratham and Koopmans, 2009; Koopmans and Statham, 2010). In contrast, we argue that a media perspective accounts for the public salience and resonance of Euroscepticism and for its cultural, ideological and historical specifics. Media coverage is not so much a reflection or antecedent of Euroscepticism, it is its primary locus.

As we are going to contend in the following section, it is precisely the unsettled nature of the EU as a political entity and its permanent constitutionalisation that opens up the possibility of a form of polity contestation that in many of Europe's established nation states would be considered as exceptional and, in some cases, even illegal (Mair 2007: 4).

In laying down the responsiveness of Euroscepticism as polity contestation, we argue, in the next section, that Euroscepticism is unfolding as the counterpart of EU legitimation discourse and its attempts to lay down the basic purpose and rationale for the Union (Section II). In Section III, we develop an analytical framework of the 'making of' Euroscepticism in the public sphere. This brings us back to the mass media as the main locus where Euroscepticism unfolds and becomes salient to the wider public. Finally, an adequate understanding of the responsive and public character of Euroscepticism will help us to propose a typology of six different forms of polity contestation within the broader discourse on European integration that vary in the degree of contesting European integration in principle, institutional form or project (Section IV).

Euroscepticism as polity contestation

Since the early 1950s, European nation states have increasingly pooled sovereignty in a process generally referred to as European integration. This process has currently taken the form of the EU, but is, arguably, still continuing. Particularly since the mid 1980s, the EU has taken substantial steps from market integration to political integration and has entered into a more or less continuous, and still unsettled, process of constitutionalisation. Although there is no agreement on what kind of political entity the EU is, it is now so complex and encompassing that it may be referred to as some kind of "polity" (Mair, 2005) or "political system" (Hix, 2005). Whether this polity should exist, what it should look like, how many competencies it should have and to what extent one wants to be a part of it, are questions of constant debate and controversy. In other words, the polity of the EU is an issue of political contestation throughout Europe.

This article argues that any conceptualisation of Euroscepticism has to be linked to this uncertainty of polity design that has marked the EU over the last two decades. Against the expectation of early functional theory, integration has not led to polity settlement. A legitimation process has been set in motion that has further raised expectations about the democratic legitimacy of the EU, but has thus far only come up with insufficient solutions. As this article will argue, the integration paradox needs to be understood partially as a 'public communication paradox', meaning that an increase in political communication and information is frequently found to generate less public trust

(Gaber, 2009). The promotion of the legitimacy of the EU through political communication and consensual politics has an ambivalent impact. Instead of being cast in a single integrated space for the advancement of rational arguments and justifications, the legitimacy of the EU is debated in a sphere of multiple and diversified publics, in which rationality and emotion, information and misinformation, justification and denunciation always co-occur (Schlesinger and Kevin, 2000).

As this article will elaborate, Euroscepticism needs to be understood as an element of public discourse denouncing the legitimacy of European integration. In this sense, its emergence correlates with the initiation of a process of democratic legitimation of the EU. The decisive difference to earlier decades is the leap into political integration and the accompanying public promotion of the EU's basic legitimacy since the early 1990s. The citizens of Europe have become more involved in issues of European integration, which are increasingly recognised to be of 'general interest' (Imig and Tarrow, 2001; Hooghe and Marks, 2005, 2009). This citizen involvement happens, most notably, through the increased use of popular referenda to decide on membership and treaty revision, but also outside these formal 'constitutional moments'. Citizens have often been a brake on further integration as treaty revisions and membership questions have been voted down in referenda. Rather than a 'permissive consensus' on the benefits of continuous integration, the political climate in Europe has more and more turned towards a 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

As a starting point, we want to provide a working definition of Euroscepticism as a discursive practice of political opposition to the EU polity. This definition stresses that Euroscepticism does not oppose particular *policies*, i.e. the contents of actions taken by the EU, but the *polity*, i.e. the competencies and constitutional settlement of the EU (Mair, 2007). Euroscepticism, in this sense, is different from 'normal' politics, understood as the regular conflicts among actors and institutions about the distribution of benefits and burdens *within* the political system. Euroscepticism, rather, affects the basic purpose or rationale *of* the political system, what sort of principles, procedures and institutions are seen as appropriate for it, or why we should (not) want to have it.[5] We do, however, recognise that the distinction between policy contestation and polity contestation is sometimes hard to make in practice. Indeed, it is one of the distinguishing features of the EU that opposition to certain policies regularly feeds into Euroscepticism. For instance, opposition to financial transfers to the EU has fostered Euroscepticism in the UK, The Netherlands and Germany precisely because the underlying conflicts could not be limited to negotiations of the amount of the national contribution but always incorporated arguments against the EU budget in general (Scheuer, 1999; Petter and Griffiths, 2005). Primarily, this definition of Euroscepticism as polity contestation covers arguments against the 'deepening' of the EU in terms of level and scope (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970) as well as the 'widening' in terms of people and nations affected by and influencing the EU. Euroscepticism can thus target the institutional and constitutional design of the polity and/or the project of taking further steps in European integration. Finally, Euroscepticism may also pose fundamental opposition against the principle of European integration, which would imply the plea for a radical opt-out or the reversal of previous steps in integration.

Our definition further implies that Euroscepticism is not categorically linked to the expression of particular preferences of polity design for the EU. There are no substantive

features that turn Eurosceptics into unapologetic defenders of the nation or into intergovernmentalists. We recognise, however, that there is a qualitative difference in EU legitimation discourse between principled rejection of European integration, criticism of polity designs and projection of alternative paths of integration. Eurosceptic positions refer to a de-legitimation in one, or several, of these dimensions.

Why, and under what conditions, does EU polity contestation take place? Why do actors within the EU system of governance regularly opt for opposition *against* the EU and not for opposition *within* it? Why do they opt for principled opposition and not for regular politics? One explanation, favoured by Mair (2007), is linked to lacking opportunities for becoming committed to regular politics, which results in either acquiescence or revolt: *"if political actors lack the opportunity to develop classical opposition, then they either submit entirely, leading to the elimination of opposition, or they revolt"* (Mair, 2007: 6). Building on this, we propose an understanding of Euroscepticism as part of the more general practice of assessing the legitimacy of European integration. We expect denunciations to correlate with justifications of polity legitimacy. The EU is not only opposed in a particular way, it is also justified in a way that is different from the ways nation states are generally justified. The EU is neither an international organisation, nor a nation-state, and has therefore been regularly described as the intermediary result of a unique—*sui generis*—process, or as an "object politique non-identifié" (Delors, cited in Schmitter, 2000: 2). Does this also imply that the quality of discourse of defending and challenging its basic legitimacy is unique? Is there a correlation between the uniqueness of the integration project and the types of political contestation and justifications related to it? To approach these questions, Euroscepticism should be analysed as part of these basic operations of establishing the legitimacy of the EU against the relatively taken-for-granted reality of the nation state.

Denouncing EU legitimacy: The responsiveness of Euroscepticism

Understanding Euroscepticism as a type of polity contestation provides a stepping stone to emphasising the responsiveness of EU opposition to the ongoing attempts of promoting the legitimacy of the EU. In many cases, Euroscepticism is not singular, isolated and exceptional, but rather responsive. Eurosceptic opposition is expressed in response to both the continuing European integration process itself and the pro-European arguments employed by political actors—particularly member state governments and supranational institutions—to legitimise this ongoing process.

Euroscepticism 'responds' first of all to the substantial growth of powers and competencies of the EU. The decisions made at EU level have effects on citizens in the member states both directly and indirectly through transposition and enforcement of EU regulations at the national level, in what is generally referred to as a process of Europeanisation (Börzel and Risse, 2000; Olsen, 2002). This significant political influence of decisions made at European level inevitably provokes responses from affected citizens (De Wilde and Zürn, in press). It feeds national politics and new forms of transnational alliances. These forms of 'politicisation' of European integration may function to stimulate or inhibit particular policies, or they may result in more critical scrutiny of the performance of

political actors and institutions (De Wilde, 2011). In the unsettled constitution of the EU, public contestation is also frequently about the allocation of competences and legal authority. They are about institutional and constitutional design, about questions of membership and about the 'deepening and widening' of European integration. In its most general and accumulated form, Euroscepticism is bound to this contestation that goes beyond 'regular politics' to oppose the existence of the EU polity as such, or membership thereof. This implies that Euroscepticism is not a marginal phenomenon, but rather stands at the heart of the more recent dynamics of 'post-functional' integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Euroscepticism is referring to a kind of contestation that is only possible in absence of polity consensus. The unfinished nature of the EU makes Euroscepticism possible, and likely.

Besides substantive reactions to European integration that feed into Euroscepticism, we assume that Eurosceptic responses are often motivated by pro-European propositions found in the general discourse of debating the democratic legitimacy of the EU. Since continued European integration, and particularly the continuous formal constitutionalisation process in the form of treaty revisions, requires a change of the political status quo, advocates, including those responsible for the changes, need to persuade citizens to accept these changes (see Morgan, 2005). These pro-European arguments may provoke opposition in the form of Eurosceptic counter-arguments in quite a number of different ways. First, Euroscepticism can be responsive to the substantive arguments raised by pro-European actors. This opens the possibility of contesting the form and content of the EU constitutional settlement. Secondly, Euroscepticism can challenge the integrity of the political actors and institutions advancing pro-European arguments. This opens the possibility of contesting the attitudes and performances of European elites and asking for their possible replacement. Arguments against single politicians cannot be understood as polity contestation, but arguments against the entire (political) elite can, as they form a more structural part of the regime (Hurrelmann et al., 2009). Finally, but not less importantly, Eurosceptic arguments may be a response to the *lack* of justificatory arguments provided by European actors and institutions. Thus, a Eurosceptic performance may consist of a demand for accountability in terms of providing sufficient justification of further integration. European integration has opened a vicious circle in which the discursive building of legitimacy correlates with its own de-legitimation. This implies that Euroscepticism is not simply unfounded or unreasonable and, as such, could be defeated by arguments or overcome by more 'rational' forms of communication. Instead, we draw attention to the possible correlation between pro-European and Eurosceptic lines of argumentation. Attempts to forge rational debate and 'democratic justification' of the EU may create a favourable environment for the spread of Euroscepticism. In this last case, the constant and increased efforts to provide public justifications for European integration, would provide the breeding ground for Euroscepticism. Thus, we may see Eurosceptic arguments as a response—and thus inextricably linked—to the modes of arguing in favour of European integration and the EU. Pro-European and Eurosceptic arguments interrelate with each other and with actual developments in European integration and its effects on the nation-state through Europeanisation.

The rest of this article will focus on the interrelation between pro-European and Eurosceptic arguments in debating the legitimacy of the European integration. We first

present an analytical framework for Eurosceptic contestations as part of the discourse of European integration. In other words, rather than understanding the 'discourse of Euroscepticism' as separate and isolated, we understand Euroscepticism as an element of discourse on the legitimacy of European integration. We then map out the possible varieties of Euroscepticism through the dimensions of EU polity contestation.

The 'making of' Euroscepticism in the public sphere

We now argue, for three reasons, that there is a need for scientific research into how Eurosceptic elements of discourse unfold in the public sphere. First, the public sphere is relevant for public knowledge formation, because this is where attitudes are given expression, ideas and normative expectations are tested out, and collective identities are shaped. This first aspect refers to the cognitive and evaluative repertoire from which people draw in interpreting the EU. Secondly, the public sphere is relevant for issue salience and selection. The question of what kinds of issues are given public voice will largely influence the course of European integration and the scope of policies embraced by it. This second aspect refers to actors' performances and competitions in interpreting the EU. Thirdly, the public sphere is relevant for public opinion and will formation. The question here is how the performances of Euroscepticism resonate with particular publics (national or transnational). A focus on the resonating effects of debates is important to understand the legitimating or de-legitimating effects of public discourse of the EU. This third aspect refers to the normative evaluations, reflection and possible learning in the judgements that the relevant publics make of the EU and how these are ultimately transmitted towards policy formulation and decision-making.

Following this analytical matrix, research on Euroscepticism can be advanced in three directions: firstly, recall that Euroscepticism should be understood foremost as an element of *public discourse*. We speak of discourse in the sense of ideas, interpretations and narrative contents that are arranged around a common target—in our case around the the legitimacy of the EU. We therefore draw attention to the argumentative structure of Euroscepticism, its narrative contents and the variances of how it is given public expression (for instance, ideological, national, etc.). Secondly, we propose to shed light on the competitive field, in which Euroscepticism is 'performed'. This implies the need to relate the 'players' of Euroscepticism (the challengers of EU legitimacy) to the pro-European 'players' (the defenders of EU legitimacy). Thirdly, we assume that Euroscepticism is performed in public. It is expressed for others in a public forum and often with the explicit intention to draw media attention. We therefore sustain that these performances aimed at establishing the legitimacy of European integration can only be understood by taking into account the mediating effects through which actors' performances are interlinked and meaning is transmitted to the potential audiences that pay attention and that applaud or jeer such performances.

By applying public sphere research we thus arrive at an analytical framework of the 'making' of Euroscepticism in terms of contents, performance and resonance of public debates. In the tradition of cultural sociology, we propose to analyse:

- the narrative elements;
- the performance;
- the public resonance of Eurosceptic discourse.

In the following, each of these elements will be explained in more detail.

The narrative elements of Euroscepticism

To analyse the contents of Euroscepticism as discourse, we need to primarily understand the order and dynamics of public mediated debates and not simply the dispositions of political actors and publics. We therefore shift from actors' preferences and citizens' attitudes to media discourse where these preferences are expressed and amplified. As such, instead of measuring the latency of negative attitudes on European integration among the population, we argue in favour of measuring the extent and circumstances under which these negative attitudes become manifest and are given expression in public debates that potentially affect the EU polity and its legitimacy. In this sense, we primarily need to analyse the kind of media where Euroscepticism is developing.

As an *element of discourse* consisting of narratives concerning the legitimacy of the polity, Euroscepticism takes on the function of a collective identity marker which re-establishes the social bonds, and controls the boundaries of social relations (Eder, 2011). We further assume that Eurosceptic arguments work better if they can be linked to a specific set of traditions, e.g. given expression through established narratives. Such narratives draw from a stock of knowledge, commonly held beliefs, or 'approved' interpretations of truth and value. This accounts for variances between, and within, nation states in the expression of Euroscepticism, but also for other possible variances, for instance, along ideological lines.

As an element of public discourse, Euroscepticism is different from other forms of discourses that can be identified more or less coherently by core ideas, justificatory principles and targets. As a result of its uncrystallised nature, the kind of arguments and justifications delivered in public discourse are more open. It is, for instance, still unclear whether democratic standards of justification need to be applied or whether transformative, reformative, transvaluative or reconciliatory arguments need to be put forward to legitimate the EU polity (Morgan, 2005). In contrast to the disciplined and rule-following patterns of 'arguing' in ideal deliberative settings, the arguments and narratives promoted in public discourse are also not systematically related to ordered justifications or proofs. Eurosceptic narratives are, rather, unfolding through loosely re-arranged signifiers, symbols and stories. They appear from the encounter of values that can be interchangeably used to either affirm or denounce the legitimacy of the EU polity. There is no single narrative to contest the legitimacy of European integration, but rather parallel and partially competing narratives that can be re-arranged in concrete performances. Contextual variables and momentary actor constellations account for temporal and spatial variances in the expression of Euroscepticism.

In this sense, we do not intend to provide a single definition of Euroscepticism but a comprehensive understanding of the particular constellation of Euroscepticisms (in the plural) as the variety of narratives that become salient and that are variably linked to the performances of collective actors within a particular context. This theoretical

understanding deviates from the common approaches, which treat Euroscepticism as a personal attitude or as strategic behaviour, in significant ways. The analytical task is to treat single expressions of Euroscepticism (for instance, as elements of an ongoing debate) as a performance, which is part of a more encompassing narrative that denies the legitimacy of the EU-polity. As such, it is intrinsically linked to the presence of other performances and can, in fact, only be made in direct linkage to the arguments and narratives mobilised to defend the legitimacy of the polity.

Euroscepticism as a public performance

The analysis of the contents of Euroscepticism is intrinsically linked to the analysis of the public performances of Euroscepticism. We argue that there is a need to understand the dynamic unfolding and the mobilisation of Euroscepticism. Eurosceptic attitudes are only relevant in so far as they are publicly performed, for instance, through a referendum, an election or even an opinion poll that is commented upon and evaluated in a way that changes the course of events. To put it differently, we are interested in the various *practices of expressing and amplifying* Euroscepticism, rather than its causes and origins.

As *performances*, the varieties of Euroscepticisms are turned again into social practices unfolding in a particular time and space, which compete with other performances in creating alternative narratives. In order to know what Euroscepticism is, we should not create an inclusive list of actors that we consider to be Eurosceptic. We should rather ask what kinds of practices are considered to be part of Eurosceptic performances. In this sense, anybody could be involved in a Eurosceptic performance, who positively or negatively relates to narratives of European integration (e.g. also social actors emphasising pro-European attitudes in arguing explicitly against Eurosceptic prejudices contribute to Eurosceptic narratives). Furthermore, such performances do not only need a particular content, they also need an arena. The question is thus how Euroscepticism is performed in a competitive organisational field in which actors build alliances and establish opposing factions. As we would like to emphasise, this relational component of Euroscepticism in structuring a field of social practice is not so much built through strategic interactions but through the combination and recombination of narrative elements. These performances bind together, and tell collective actors how to express their interests and sentiments in relation to European integration. At the same time, these narratives are constantly being reshaped through ongoing practice accounting for the variance of Euroscepticisms within and across national arenas.

In analysing the performance of Euroscepticism we therefore need to group arguments in support of polity transformation in relation to arguments opposing it. Legitimation and delegitimation of the EU-polity correlate in a particular way. Against Morgan (2005: 56ff) we would claim that this criticising character of Euroscepticism does not need to embrace an explicit project of its own that has to meet the requirement of sufficient justification and argumentative consistency. The legitimation and de-legitimation of the EU polity rather operate at different degrees; the first is a constructive operation that propagates a new value linked to a profound polity transformation. Faced with this progressive move, the Eurosceptic response is sufficiently expressed through a deconstructive operation: it can opt to remain simply passive and insist on the repudiation of

polity change. As such, it can operate, for instance, through irony or emotions. Eurosceptics may also explicitly block the 'progressive' move of polity transformation that is linked to federalisation, transnationalisation or constitutionalisation, and give support to more 'conservative' variants of intergovernmentalism, functional integration or market integration. Last, but not least, Eurosceptics can become transformative themselves and call for the withdrawal of their country from the EU.[6]

In all these cases, we will need to further qualify the particular performance of Euroscepticism along an evaluative continuum of EU polity contestation that ranges from principled rejection of European integration, via regime criticism, to acceptance of the status quo but opposition to further integration. In the last part of the article, we will therefore come up with a possible categorisation of the varieties of evaluations of EU legitimacy that include both Eurosceptic and pro-European performances. However, Eurosceptic performances are usually not to be understood as immediate and substantive responses to the type of justifications that are being provided in defence of European integration, particular regime types and future projects. The critical matrix of EU polity contestation is rather used as a pool of resources from which political actors can draw when performing in public and in the media.

The public resonance of Euroscepticism

The understanding of public discourse as a medium of political reflection and evaluation also gives us a clue to the public resonance of Euroscepticism. To speak of the resonating effects of Eurosceptic discourse is to put into question some causal assumptions about how the political efforts to define the EU's democratic legitimacy direct European integration. The public sphere is not just an arena where pre-existing attitudes are mitigated towards political decision making. The public sphere is primarily an arena for the 'making of' public attitudes by giving them expression and form but also by transforming them through debates where arguments are confronted with counter-arguments. As such, attitudes on European integration do not exist independently from their public expression, they are not the raw material from which arguments are formed but they are themselves a product of discourse and may change with regard to the particular discursive constellation in which they find expression.

Moreover, we assume that the element of *publicness* is constitutive to these critical performances. The space in which Euroscepticism is performed is not only inhabited by those who are in dispute, but also by anonymous observers. By providing *public* justification, the legitimation discourse is not limited to the dispute of competing actors. It is not primarily aimed at convincing *alter* in a debate, but always includes an unknown audience. This anonymous public is included in the critical test of the legitimacy of the polity. The justifications provided by EU actors in defence of European integration are not simply evaluated (accepted or rejected) by domestic actors, they are observed and judged by an anonymous public. In a similar vein, Eurosceptic performances do not straightforwardly refer back to EU-actors, but take the public detour. It is only under this assumption of publicness that the common good rhetoric (i.e. something that is more than a contingent shared preference) can enter the scene as a way to forge agreement or compromise and to claim general validity.

By developing further this aspect of publicness, *mediatisation* and dramatisation need to be understood as important structuring factors of Euroscepticism (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Trenz, 2008). Euroscepticism is performed through mass media. Its performance is primarily targeted to draw media attention. To receive this attention, Eurosceptic performances must achieve *news value* and therefore dramatise and emphasise the threat to solidarity, or security, or wealth, or whatever is mobilised as a justification for reshaping the social bond. These narratives are typically constructed around the distinction between enemy and foe, between true and false friends, between assumed and real perpetrators which dramatise the performances, make them publicly salient, and provoke societal resonance.

The contestation of EU legitimacy is therefore inherently linked to the media logics of representing European integration to a wider audience. Instead of analysing communication strategies of particular actors (e.g. how Eurosceptic parties address their voters), we propose to investigate how established media reflect values and views on European integration, how particular performances and narratives unfold and resonate with the wider public.

A typology of EU polity evaluations

Moving away from the restricted use of the term Euroscepticism as a label in partisan competition, the operational task is to arrive at a more comprehensive categorisation of forms of EU opposition and defences through which the legitimacy of the EU polity is debated. We argue that the study of EU polity contestation needs to incorporate arguments challenging the legitimacy of the EU polity in relation to arguments defending it. We therefore propose a critical matrix for the analysis of EU justificatory discourse that takes account of this correlation between opposition and support.

In developing this critical matrix of polity evaluation, we start with specifying the requirements of justifications that promoters of European integration can meet to qualify polity worthy of the EU (Morgan, 2005: 17). The proponents of European integration can provide justifications with regard to:

- why we should support European integration in principle;
- what institutional and constitutional design should be given to the EU;
- what future trajectories of integration should be chosen.

Disagreements about the principle, polity and project of European integration run deep in contemporary Europe. Confrontations of polity worth do not only take the form of disputes over different ways of implementing shared values and principles (politics) but also the form of clashes over the very nature of the common good in question and the legitimacy of the setting (the procedures) through which it is implemented. We thus assume that the dimensions of support of European integration also mark the dimensions of possible resistance. The opponents of European integration can denounce:

- the underlying principle of integration;
- its concrete institutional/constitutional form;
- future integration.

Table 1. Typology of EU polity evaluation

		Principle of Integration			
		Positive		Negative	
		EU Polity			
		Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Project of	Positive	Affirmative European	Alter-European	–	–
Integration	Negative	Status Quo	Eurocritical	Pragmatic	Anti-European

Rejections of the principle of integration undermine, by its very nature, the legitimacy of the currently existing EU polity. If one understands integration as a more or less linear process of 'ever closer union', performances rejecting the currently existing EU polity are likely to denounce future plans for even more integration as well. However, as we will argue below, based on our typology of performances provided in Table 1, other 'non-linear' forms of EU polity contestation are possible. It is therefore necessary to distinguish two additional evaluative dimensions with regard to 'polity' and 'project' that interact with the evaluation of the principle of polity worth.

By combining principled evaluation of European integration with possible evaluations of EU polity design and the future project of integration, Table 1 provides six out of eight possible categories of EU polity evaluation.[7] We find *affirmative European* contributions that defend the principle of integration, the current EU polity, and further plans for integration on the one side of polity evaluation. On the other side, we find *anti-European* performances that denounce the principle, the polity, and the project of integration. In between these two poles, we find status quo performances in which the principle of integration and the current polity is defended, but further integration denounced on the more pro-European side, and *Eurocritical* performances supporting the principle of integration but denouncing both the current polity and further plans on the Eurosceptic side. These four categories of performances can thus be understood as scaled from complete legitimation of integration to complete de-legitimation. Two other categories of performances do not fit this linear scale. *Pragmatic* performances indicate the seemingly paradoxical position of supporting the current EU institutional set-up, while at the same time denouncing integration in principle (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002). In practice, these performances often understand the EU as a *fait accompli*, which might be undesirable in principle, but deserves support nevertheless, as other alternatives are either unrealistic or too costly. *Alter-Europeanism* is characterised by a denunciation of the current polity combined with a favourable stance towards further integration. These performances often criticise certain characteristics of the polity, while at the same time offering a pro-European 'solution' to perceived problems. Statements criticising the EU as neoliberal combined with an argument in favour of a European-wide welfare state would fit this category. Another example would be criticism of the EU as undemocratic, combined with an argument supporting the extension of European Parliament powers or a direct election of the President of the European Commission. Interestingly, alter-European—and, to some

extent, Eurocritical—performances reflect the discursive grey area between polity contestation and 'politics as usual'. Their criticism is often founded in ideologies well known from politics as usual, targeting 'neoliberal Europe', 'secular Europe', 'elitist Europe', 'socialist Europe', etc. (e.g. Crespy and Verschueren, 2009). However, as our typology aptly shows, these two categories differ fundamentally as alter-European performances portray a supranational solution to deficits of the EU polity, while Eurocritical performances do not.

The EU will, for the foreseeable future, remain a moving target of polity evaluation. Manifestations of EU resistance are frequently related to opportunities (e.g. referenda), constitutional moments (e.g. treaty reform) or particular turning points in history (e.g. enlargement) that prompt political entrepreneurs to both legitimate further steps in integration and to challenge elite choices and justifications. When attempts are made to settle the EU's constitution—or during enlargement—a struggle for the qualification of EU polity legitimacy is triggered, which may diminish again when major decisions on integration are removed from the political agenda. The analytical question is not how these conflicts can be settled, but rather how they are sustained over time. Studying the full range of polity evaluations, rather than just negative ones, enables us to put the responsiveness of Euroscepticism in context and thus enriches our understanding of the different driving forces of resistances to European integration.

Thus, we end up with a critical matrix of EU polity evaluation in which Euroscepticism is not fully idiosyncratic, but scaled. Contestation of EU legitimacy varies not only across time and space, but can also embrace several dimensions of this matrix. The conceptual task here is limited to pointing out the possible varieties of EU resistances. The question of how Euroscepticism is constructed in ongoing debates on European integration, i.e. the question of how principled evaluations of EU legitimacy are combined with possible contestation of the institutional design of the EU and of the future project of integration, is open to empirical research. By underlying this analytical matrix, analysts should be able to capture all performances of EU polity contestation, including wide ranging topics such as the bureaucratic nature of the European Commission, the EU's powers in the field of Justice and Home Affairs and possible Turkish accession. A better conceptual understanding of these varieties of EU resistances is not only helpful to pin down single performances of Euroscepticism but also to assess its differentiated impact on the process of European integration and the democratic legitimacy of the EU.

Conclusion

While Euroscepticism in the majority of European countries has been kept out of politics by mainstream parties (Mair, 2001; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004), it has, nevertheless, penetrated the public and media agenda as an expression of resistance towards European integration. In this last sense, we argue that European integration and efforts to legitimise this process have opened a public forum of polity contestation in which different actors compete for the hegemony of their readings of the EU and the public salience of their arguments.

Against mainstream literature and its focus on partisan conflict and public opinion, we have operationalised Euroscepticism as an element of public discourse on

European integration —consisting of a constellation of arguments, performances and resonance—challenging the legitimacy of European integration, i.e. negatively characterising European integration in *principle*, the currently existing *polity*, or the continuous *project* of integration as advanced by the EU (Morgan 2005: Ch. 3).[8] In other words, the evolving elements of public discourse may contain opposition to any form of transnational cooperation, the currently existing EU or plans for deeper and wider integration in future. By analysing how these discursive elements are arranged within particular arenas of debate and grouped into relatively stable narratives we would further be able to account for the historical or cultural specifics of Euroscepticism or for its (transnational) reconfiguration.

By highlighting this 'constructive' role of public discourse, a different understanding of the EU's official discourse of legitimation has been developed as not different from, but deeply involved in, the making of Euroscepticism. The efforts of European actors and institutions to provide public justifications and to set the standards of legitimacy for the EU are not simply responsive to increasing negative attitudes of the public, but also provoke particular responses by making new conflicts salient and compelling political actors and the public to take position on European integration. Constitutional designing of the EU, i.e. the attempts to forge polity agreements and to deliver justifications about the worth of European integration bring Eurosceptic counter-discourse to the fore and partly account for its public salience. The EU has assumed the duty to engage in a discussion about the design of the polity. It is this engagement in pro-European discourse that enables Euroscepticism to unfold.

Euroscepticism is, in this sense, part of the democratisation of the EU. It results from the uncertainty about the quality and scope of the EU-polity and the fuzziness of the underlying demos. Euroscepticism often provides possible answers to the question of how to apply the principle of popular sovereignty to the EU, and locate its demos. As such, it points towards the emergence of elements of popular democracy in a system that is not fully reached or accessed by conventional procedures of representation. The efforts that are made to arrive at a democratic settlement of the EU will continue to nourish popular discontent and scepticism. The problem is not only that this space of popular discontent is easily exploitable by populist parties of the right or the left; the problem is that this space still needs to be filled with narratives that help Europeans to make sense of themselves and of their collective project. It is for this reason that we cannot simply discard Euroscepticism as irrational, emotional or marginal. Euroscepticism is not something to be overcome by more rational ways of communicating with the public, or by giving EU citizens the electoral possibility to 'throw the rascals out' at EU level. It is something that will remain prominent for as long as the EU seeks to consolidate its future.

Notes

2. 'Schandvertrag' was the wording used by the political right in the Weimar Republic to blemish the Treaty of Versailles.

3. The *Kronen-Zeitung* can be considered as Europe's most influential newspaper in terms of opinion-making. Our thanks to Christian Schwarzenegger (2008) for providing these insights.

4. The term 'Euroscepticism' itself is the target of considerable controversy. Crespy and Verschueren, (2009) argue in favour of alternative concepts such as 'resistance to European integration', partially because Euroscepticism is used by supporters of European integration as a derogatory label to discredit their political opponents. In turn, critics of European integration have already started to label themselves positively as 'Eurocritics' or 'Eurorealists'. In the following, we still use the term 'Euroscepticism' precisely in its quality as a 'label' or as a 'frame' that denotes a negative or hostile position in EU legitimation discourse.

5. For instance, an argument that the Common Agricultural Policy is not fair, not efficient or not environmentally friendly enough would not be counted as contributing to Eurosceptic discourse. However, an argument in favour of re-nationalising agriculture, i.e. decreasing EU competencies in this field, would.

6. In a slight variation of Morgan (2005), Euroscepticism would, in this sense, be considered as the regressive variant of transformative polity justifications and, as such, it needs to be distinguished from a progressive variant of EU-polity denunciation (for instance, by calling for a more radical change of internationalism and solidarity against liberal market Europe or Fortress Europe and its protective character of welfare and security).

7. Two categories are ruled out, because, for logical reasons, integration cannot be rejected in principle, while at the same time supporting further steps in the project of integration.

8. In contrast to Morgan (2005, Ch. 3), we exclude from this definition of Euroscepticism as 'polity opposition' all aspects related to the policy-formulation *process* within the EU, i.e. opposition to the contents of EU-policies. This should be considered as a form of established 'politics as usual' within the polity.

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About the authors

Pieter de Wilde is Senior Researcher at the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). His research interests include European integration, political conflicts about European integration and

globalization, representative democracy and political communication. Address: Dr. Pieter de Wilde, Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), Reichpietschufer 50, 10785 Berlin, Germany [email: dewilde@wzb.eu]

Hans-Jörg Trenz is Professor in European Politics at the Center for Modern European Studies (CEMES) at the University of Copenhagen and Research Professor at ARENA, Center for European Studies at the University of Oslo. His research interests include sociology of the European Union, political communication, European public sphere and democratic legitimacy of the European Union. Address: Prof. Dr. Hans-Jörg Trenz, CEMES Center for Modern European Studies, University of Copenhagen, Njalsgade 80, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark [email: trenz@hum.ku.dk]