

The EU and Party Democracy: a Story of Incompatibility?

Based on an empirical assessment of Germany and Spain



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Abstract:

In this thesis, the cases of Germany and Spain are taken to show the effects that European integration, which was amplified after the economic crisis, has had on the systems of party democracy within its member states. In drawing from a combination of empirical and normative approaches, it is found that with increasing European integration, party systems in both countries have come under increasing strain. However, there is a discrepancy between member states – the Spanish party system is under significantly more pressure, with a strongly manifesting crisis in its party democracy and mounting dissatisfaction amongst its citizens.

It is found that this can be attributed in part to how European Integration constrains national governments and thus erodes the representative function of parties – and has done so more forcefully in Spain. Moreover, the increased prevalence of populism and technocracy is seen to add to destabilizing of party democracy, based on their normative incompatibilities. As such, it is concluded that caution is advised before further integration in the European Union is pursued, as long as it is unclear how democratic systems can be safeguarded or reshaped.

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1. Introduction

The year 2009 marked the start of the European Sovereign debt crisis, in the wake of the worldwide economic crisis that had been raging for nearly two years. With Greece threatening to go bankrupt, and fear of a domino effect affecting other vulnerable Eurozone members (Fabbrini 2013), the Eurozone faced an unprecedented existential threat. The crisis had brought to the surface large and destabilizing discrepancies between countries' fiscal affairs. In the pursuit of overcoming the Euro crisis, the following years saw a transformation in the shape of the European agreement to what Snell (2016) calls the 'Crisis-EMU'.

The fiscal framework of soft coordination, which led to divergences and incompatibilities between member states, was replaced by a system of strict surveillance of national budgets (Snell, 2016) with the possibility of imposing sanctions on non-compliant member states. This new emphasis on fiscal rules combined with more significant budget-controlling powers of the EU is often referred to by scholars as the beginning of the 'Age of Austerity' (Celi, Celi, Guarascio & Simonazzi, 2018; Schäfer & Streeck, 2013). The 'new' EMU prioritized economic integration and stability over national sovereignty and mass politics, limiting member states' capacity to decide on crucial matters independently and impacting how citizens can influence the outcome of national governance (Snell 2016, Schmidt 2016).

The policy response has been criticized from multiple angles. First of all, some argue that the policy response itself was undemocratic. Most decisions were made by the so-called 'Troika' of the IMF, ECB, and European Commission. None of these bodies are elected by citizens: the European parliament, the main representative body, was sidelined (Schmidt, 2015). Second, scholars have found serious side effects on national democracy. EU powers have increasingly extended into matters and issues that were before considered central to national sovereignty and identity. As a consequence, national politics in EU states have been reduced in bandwidth to what Laffan (2014) summarizes as a 'politics of constrained choice'. This has a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of mass politics on the national level (Mathijs, 2017; Snell, 2016; Schmidt, 2016). Voters are not oblivious to this development and are increasingly turning away from mainstream politics by turning to populist challenger parties or abstaining to vote at all (Schmidt, 2016).

Moreover, the effects of this framework of austerity, surveillance, and far-reaching mandates for the EU into national matters are not felt equally across member states. As pointed out by scholars, not only in socioeconomic terms (Celi et al., 2018) but also in terms of the ‘hollowing out’ of national democracies (Schmidt, 2015) some member states (especially economically vulnerable ones) have been affected worse than others. These countries have been faced with even more stark choices between satisfying their electorates, and the same time meeting European fiscal rules and constraints, making their democratic processes less effective.

This problem will be the central focus of this thesis; the (unevenly distributed) pressures ongoing European integration places on the performance of national democracies of European member states. More precisely, I focus on the traditional system of party democracy, which has been the dominant democratic model in Europe for decades. Henceforth, the goal of this paper is to explore the differences between the effects of the EU monetary policy on national party democracy between EU member states. It is hypothesized that in the process of European integration, some member states (especially those in the Southern Periphery) have seen their democratic systems (and thereby the ability of citizens to effectively influence government decisions on a national level) under more pressure than others, with corresponding side effects on civil society and social indicators such as social cohesion.

By zooming in on two countries from different regions of the EU and with distinctly different economic and political positions in the Euro crisis, I will seek to quantify and analyze the developments that the national democratic standards of both countries have faced. In doing so, the question *How have party democracies in the EU developed (differently) in the period since post-euro crisis economic reforms)?* will be answered.

1.2 Relevance

The implications and relevance of this question are hard to overestimate. The EU is already facing serious issues with the democratic legitimacy of its own institutions (the hotly debated ‘democratic deficit’, see Jensen 2009, Follesdal & Hix 2006) but if one adds on to this the issues that persist on the level of national democracies (Schmidt, 2016) it gives a concerning idea of how the democratic values are currently in decline on the continent that aims to be a

beacon of liberal democracy worldwide. Indeed, moving forward into the new decade, many argue that the EU in its current form is not functioning properly (Berend, 2006). Whether one is in favor of more European integration and an overhaul of democratic duties to the supranational level, as implicit in the European Commission's 'Blueprint for a deep and genuine EMU' (European Commission, 2012), or in favor of a looser union of states, it is crucial to ensure that the EU's stability is safeguarded and that all citizens and member states can reap the benefits.

This even more so the case since as inequality between and within member states persists, internal stability is threatened as member states are faced with rising populist and anti-European movements as citizens express their dissatisfaction (Bickerton & Acetti, 2017). Brexit served as an example of what a culmination of citizens' and member states' dissatisfaction with the European Union can lead to. This highlights the importance of mitigating the negative effects of European financial integration (Snell, 2016) to ensure that the European Union becomes one that works for all of its citizens and member states instead of just a few. If we can recognize and correctly describe the processes that have been taking place in European societies since the last large change in the shape of the EU, the tradeoffs that come with European decision-making, but also importantly the divergence between how member states are affected, we can make more informed decisions about the future.

1.3 The Interdisciplinary Approach

In this thesis, an interdisciplinary approach will be taken, integrating empirical political science with a normative discussion. There several reasons why this is a sensible choice. One is the scope and complexity of the problem; with as many interests at stake as there are in this, the situation could only be understood rigid and broad analysis. Politics will be the leading discipline not only since the problem mostly stems from the tradeoffs that are taking place in an international political and monetary union, but also because the bedrock theories are grounded in political science. However, the (normative) dimension of democratic values is not only supplemental but essential to include. First, for the sake of conceptual clarity since topics such as democracy and its dynamics often have different values attached to them. A discussion of the normative desirability of these values is only possible if there is conceptual coherence. Moreover, the desirability question is in itself a relevant one; in the words of Manners (2008:1), normative approaches to the EU should be promoted, built on the

assertion that ‘theory is always for someone and for some purpose’ - calling to resist the simple temptation of purely empirical analysis.

To illustrate this, consider multiple scholars (see Pasini, 2013 on the limits of European integration; De Grauwe, 2016 on post-Brexit reforms) who have written policy recommendations, evaluations, and other comparative studies in political science based on mainly economic and political concepts without addressing the underlying question of what the EU *should* pursue or *how and why* outcomes can be evaluated as bad or good. Their contributions, however valid, are in certain ways one-dimensional. Talking about the future and shape of the EU without addressing the core values of democracy such as legitimacy is like trying to build a cabinet without a manual: the result is likely to be fragile. Vice versa, discussing democratic values such as the legitimacy of the EU without critical and explicit regard for the other socio-economic and political interests at stake, as (albeit excellently) done by Weiler (2012) makes for results that hold less ‘substantive’ value, since they are drawn from ideals which might be incompatible with other important preferences. Examples of successful integration are Mathijs (2017) and Schmidt & Wood (2019), who show the benefit that an integrated approach can have.

Henceforth, the added value of an interdisciplinary approach utilizing theories grounded in both politics and philosophy is not only in the clarification of concepts and definitions. Nor does it stem purely from the aim to make a normative statement about the outcomes of the analysis. Indeed, it is an inherently more complete and thus useful way to describe the status quo; as it reflects not only *what is*, but allows for a deeper and critical consideration of how we might evaluate these developments. Therefore, the disciplines and the corresponding concepts will be intertwined throughout the paper to come to a more holistic understanding. Important to note is that still, this is by no means a full and perfect approach: to achieve this, other dimensions such as the historical and economic ones must be also understood in detail. However, spatial and temporal constraints on this project make it impossible to cover these disciplines extensively, thus the approach is limited.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the following section, I give a necessary overview of the context and conditions that have changed in the European Union in the response to the Euro-crisis. Next, I will turn to an

overview of the state of the art on the topic of national democracies in Europe, thereby focusing on how researchers have approached the impact of the changes in EU integration highlighted above, both in terms of empirical observations as in terms of normative implications. From this, I will draw the appropriate theories that I will use in this thesis.

2.1 The ‘Crisis-EU’: Integration & Austerity

First, it is important to ask: how has the response to the crisis reshaped the European Union? In the following section, I will sketch an overview of the background against which this paper is written, and what exactly is meant with the ‘crisis-EU’. The global economic crisis had mercilessly exposed the weaknesses of the EMU. Each member state had taken different approaches to managing budgets and trade flows, resulting in ‘unsustainable divergences’ (Snell, 2016). Multiple countries, most notably Greece, had let public finances get out of hand and were faced with bankruptcy. The survival of the Euro was at stake, and with it, the economic stability of the entire eurozone. This crisis cleared the way for a political and economic rescue plan of an unprecedented scale.

This was done through four rounds of ‘crucial decisions’ regarding the economic governance of the EU (Fabbrini, 2013). Implemented between 2010 and 2013, these rules were all aimed at safeguarding the euro to prevent or mitigate future crises. The combined force of these sets of rules became the development of a systematic process of EU coordination and guidance of member states’ fiscal policies. To support this policy coordination, the EU was given mandates for tighter surveillance and mechanisms of enforcement and penalization in case of dissent (Snell, 2016; Laffan, 2014). Scholars have but unanimously highlighted the extent and significance of the changes that took place. More than just a set of new policies, this was a fundamental change of the shape of the EU and the role of its institutions (Snell, 2016). Fabbrini (2013) speaks of an ‘extraordinary policy magnitude and complexity’, whereas Laffan (2014) describes it as a ‘quantum leap in economic governance’.

Many countries initially did not meet budgetary requirements and had to take drastic austerity measures. As such, the effect of the policy is often seen as creating an ‘environment of austerity’(Celi et al., 2018). Apart from creating an austerity environment, the policies also represent the next step in the European integration process (Schmidt, 2019). As Snell (2016) boldly claims: ‘International economic integration and nation-states have emerged as the winners (in the crisis response process.)’.

2.2 Democracy in the (crisis)- EU

To explore the effect that the fiscal policies described in the previous section have had, the main gist is perhaps best summarized by Schäfer and Streeck (2013) who in the preface of their book *Politics in an Age of Austerity* state the following: *'In a world of increasing austerity measures, democratic politics comes under pressure. With the need to consolidate budgets and accommodate financial markets, the responsiveness of governments to voters declines. However, democracy depends on choice. Citizens must be able to influence the course of government through elections and if a change in government cannot translate into different policies, democracy is incapacitated.'* (Schäfer & Streeck, 2013)

Indeed, the European Union's intensified European interventionism reduces the policy space for their democratic member states, and thus makes it more difficult for them to be responsive to citizens' preferences. (Ruiz-Rufino and Alonso, 2017). Schäfer & Streeck (2013) emphasize this lack of 'choice' that national electorates are facing. Other scholars have underwritten the notion of 'democracy without choice', in which different voter preferences are not translated into different policies. Laffan (2014) for example similarly considers the negative effect on the *responsiveness* to national electorates, and Schmidt (2015) highlights the loss of 'substance' in the national policy environment, with fewer policy fields left to national decision-making.

Moreover, some scholars have concluded that these effects are not distributed evenly between member states. Schmidt (2015) noted considerable differences between member states in how their democracy has been affected. Celi et al. (2018) observed how there are significant socio-economic discrepancies, with austerity measures forcing debtor states to cut education, healthcare, and welfare spending, thus being forced to abandon their roles as 'caretakers' of their citizens (de Grauwe, 2016). In this, a pattern emerges that the southern European countries (debtors in the crisis) are amongst the worst off.

With both democratic processes and economic circumstances being heavily affected, citizens have not failed to show their dissatisfaction. Populist parties and protest movements become increasingly successful, while other voters turned away from the electoral process altogether. Incumbent governments are punished with higher turnover. As Schmidt (2016) observes, governments are stuck between citizens' expectations and the EU's fiscal policy.

Another, relatively recent approach has been to look at the democratic developments in the EU through the conceptual lens of Dani Rodrik's Globalization Trilemma (Snell, 2016; Mathijs, 2017; Wiesner, 2019). In short, it rests on the premise that democracy, national sovereignty, and global economic integration are incompatible; you can only have two out of three simultaneously (Rodrik, 2011). He suggests that democracy can be compatible with deep economic integration only if democratic processes are overhauled to a supranational (global) stage – thus sacrificing national sovereignty. See figure 1 for a schematic display of the Trilemma.

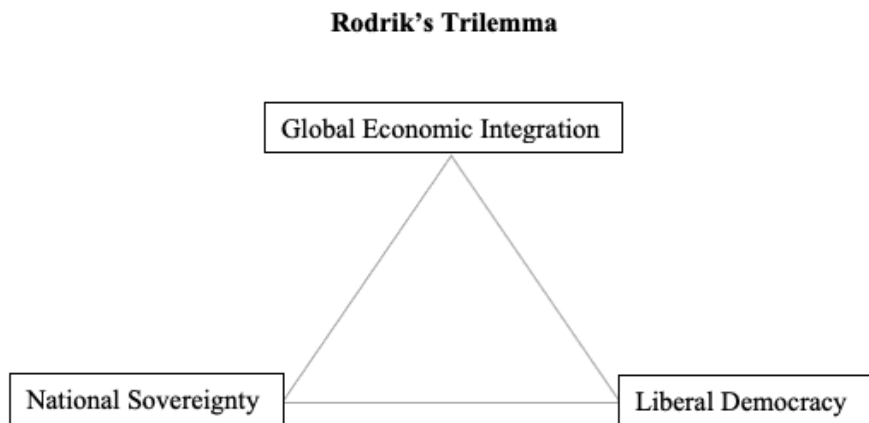


Figure 1: Rodrik's Trilemma of Globalization (Rodrik, 2011)

Wiesner (2019) and Snell (2016) give convincing arguments for the applicability of the trilemma to the EU. However, scholars have arrived at different conclusions about how the Trilemma developed in the EU. Snell (2016) argues that the early EMU, before 2008, attempted to achieve deep economic integration, while maintaining national sovereignty and domestic mass politics. In the new situation, mass politics have been constrained to favor national sovereignty and economic integration. Mathijs (2017) goes even further than Snell and claims that the European Core has been largely able to retain all three of Rodrik's pillars, whereas countries in the Southern Periphery have had to give up both national sovereignty and democratic politics, circling back to the previously mentioned inequalities.

An approach similar to Rodrik and often seen as an ‘early formulation’ of the Trilemma is ‘Dahrendorf’s Quandary’. Dahrendorf (1995) posed that the growing level of globalization in the world economy would put liberal democracies at a choice between adopting measures that damage the cohesion of civil society or restricting mass politics (Dahrendorf, 1995). This is due to the increased pressure of remaining competitive in the international market. Yet, in the context of the EU, the Quandary has been applied a lot less, while (as demonstrated by Buti (2019)) it essentially mirrors the Trilemma and presents tradeoffs that are no less relevant and interesting considering the state of democracies: the performance of populist parties, the pressure on social cohesion, and civil society.

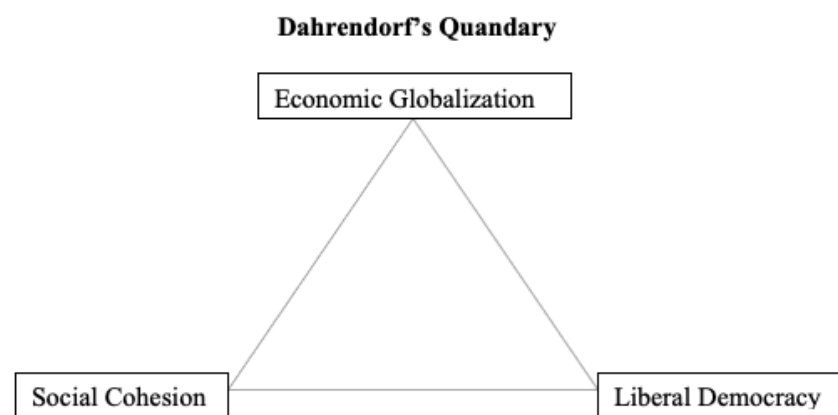


Figure 2: Dahrendorf's Quandary (Dahrendorf, 1995)

The shared perspective of the theories has considerable explanatory force, also in the European context. They describe how external pressures force states to make adjustments that are not necessarily based on democratic preferences. They also find that the state is increasingly forced to abandon its role as caretaker, and is no longer able to mitigate inequalities between citizens (Buti & Pichelmann, 2017). They recognize that these developments are inherently tied to socio-political processes as social cohesion and performance of anti-establishment parties, and thus have value in the holistic view they present.

Conceptions of democracy

Striking is the conceptual incoherence between what is understood as ‘democracy’ in the multiple attempts to understand the developments that have unfolded in the EU. Even in the

application of Rodrik's theory, scholars arrive at different terminology and normative definitions of democracy – Snell (2016) for example taking 'mass politics' as the conceptual equivalent, Mathijs (2017) focusing on various criteria of democratic legitimacy. Rodrik speaks of the 'liberal democracy' which has been seconded in most empirical assessments of his theory (see Anheier & Filip, 2021; Funke & Zhong, 2020). Dahrendorf also focuses on Western democracy, but holds representative standards and constraints on executive power in high regard (Dahrendorf, 2003).

An increasingly popular overarching way of looking at Western democracy is to take the conceptual lens of the 'party democracy' as has been the topic of the writings of Peter Mair (2002, 2006), Cas Mudde (2014), and others. In focusing on the specificities of the 'party system' as such, they diagnose how the traditional patterns of political participation and party representation in Europe are challenged by the 'crisis of representative democracy' (Vercesi, 2019). Mainstream parties lose voter share to new challenger parties; voter turnout is decreasing, and voters are increasingly dissatisfied with their political representation (Mair, 2002; Kriesi, 2014; Vercesi, 2019)

Bickerton & Acetti (2017) similarly focus on the 'party democracy'. Staying clear of the question of whether this is the most desirable form of democracy, they settle for the notion that it has certainly been the dominant political regime in western democracies. It is precisely this regime, they argue, which has come under attack in recent years from not one, but two sides: populism and technocracy. Often taken as opposites, they hypothesize a complementary relationship between the two – in their shared criticism of the party democracy.

While perhaps staying away from the critical question of desirability undercuts the profoundness of their findings in the broader context, their insight on party democracy, populism, and technocracy is interesting to apply in the context of Rodrik & Dahrendorf. This especially so since populism/anti-establishment movements were foreseen by both as a side-effect of integration. Applications of Dahrendorf and Rodrik find that pressures of integration have resulted in a situation that has undercut the performance of national democracies as a mitigating force against economic forces to such an extent that the dissatisfaction perhaps made the very notion of party democracy undesirable, and as such opposition is coming in multiple forms: populism and technocracy.

Conceptualizing party democracy

Henceforth, I guide the analysis based on the conceptualization of democracy known as ‘party democracy’. While Rodrik, and many accounts of the empirical applicability of his theory, have focused on the liberal model of democracy, I extend the existing body of literature in this conceptualization and explore how Rodrik and Dahrendorf as a theoretical lens apply to the ‘party democracy’ as well.

A closer inspection of the stressors that many have developed on the party democracy and the stressors that Rodrik and Dahrendorf have advanced reveals that they bear resemblance to one another. The situation that is being described is how democracies come under pressure in different (global) socioeconomic processes, albeit from a slightly different angle and emphasis. What Rodrik calls ‘liberal democracy’ is based on a representation of popular preferences, while independent institutions uphold freedom and put constraints on executives (Rodrik, 2014). Dahrendorf emphasizes how mass politics (the people) are those that give legitimacy to a democratic system, and also the restrictions on sovereign power (Dahrendorf, 2003). While the ‘party democracy’ approach focus is on parties, challengers and electoral participation, it is in a sense merely another way of describing the status quo, having in common the importance of institutions of representation.

Following Bickerton & Acetti (2017) party democracy is a regime with two main features: first, it is based on the ‘mediation of social conflict through the institution of the political party understood as a means for the articulation of a particular interest into comprehensive – although competing- conceptions of the common good. Secondly, it is based on the idea that the notion of the common good that should prevail and therefore be executed in public policy is the one that is ‘simultaneously constructed and identified through the democratic procedures of parliamentary deliberation and electoral competition, which is often but not always based on majority rule.’

As such, the key features of a party democracy can be summarized as 1) political mediation and 2) a procedural conception of legitimacy (Bickerton & Acetti, 2017). The idea of political mediation has been described in a myriad of ways: where some scholars have referred to the parties as ‘transmission belts’ or the ‘bridge’ between the political and the non-political, it is clear that the parties are seen as the link between society and state.

However, recently scholars have stressed their role exceeds merely acting as a ‘transmission belt’ between citizens and government – they do not only ‘reflect’ social divisions, but they also ‘constitute’ a shared conception of the common good specific to their electorate and politically competitive with other parties’ conceptions of the common good. Thus, they can integrate the interests and preferences of a share of the population into an overarching idea, and institutionalize it at the level of government (Bickerton & Acetti, 2017).

The procedural conception of legitimacy reflects how the ‘output’ of the political process is not considered legitimate just because they are evaluated as ‘good’. The legitimacy is rooted in how the outcomes are generated: more precisely, they have to be generated through a process that is in line with freedom and equality as core values of democracy. These constitutive values are in contemporary party democracies usually anchored in the key features of parliamentary deliberation and a set of (democratic) decision-making rules (Bickerton & Acetti, 2017). This conception of legitimacy is in juxtaposition with ‘output legitimacy’ as advanced by Scharpf (1998) who found that the outcome can be evaluated solely by whether the result advances the common good or not.

The values of party democracy have been embodied in Western democracies for decades: and as Mair argues, their function makes parties an essential feature in a democracy (Mair, 2006). However, they stand challenged, as explained above. The features and pressures of party democracy will serve as the basis for the analysis, both from the empirical as the theoretical angle.

3. Method and Research Design

In the following section, I turn to the chosen research method in the operationalization of the concepts laid out above, as well as providing clarification of how the empirical analysis will be set up. Moreover, I will go into the chosen cases and timeframe for the empirical study.

3.1 The research Method

To the end of answering the research question, a qualitative approach will be taken. In this approach, I will draw on existing data sources to sketch an overview of the developments of several indicators that are relevant in the theories that I use. Moreover, I will draw from

normative literature to evaluate these developments, This method is appropriate firstly because it fits well the theories that (as explained above) will be used to answer the research question. In the operationalization of the Trilemma and Quandary theorems, similar approaches have often been chosen (see Anheier & Filip, 2021; Aizenman & Ito, 2020; Mathijs, 2017). Furthermore, in the context of a comparative study, the use of empirical data allows for a more accurate comparison, since the results are as objective as possible, and thus easily aggregated to give an overview of conditions in respective countries. The strength of the integrated approach has already been elaborated upon above, but I want to stress again how adding the normative evaluation is essential to fulfilling the goals of this thesis.

The Theoretical Model

As explained above, one part of the analysis will consist of an empirical observation using empirical data to explore the developments and tradeoffs hypothesized in Rodrik's Trilemma and Dahrendorf's Quandary in the case of the two countries of interest, In doing so, I will adopt an approach similar to Anheier & Filip (2021) in which both of the theories are merged into a single framework. In this framework, the authors distinguish between the components ('drivers') of economic globalization, the nation-state as a liberal democracy, and the social cohesion and civil society. For each of these drivers, they also develop a set of 'stressors' which are used to see how the development of each of the drivers might be negatively affected.

While drawing inspiration from this framework and in the model that I will apply, my final model differs from Anheier and Filip's model in two important ways: first, whereas they take a generalized approach to the problem and as such hold economic globalization as the independent variable against which developments in liberal democracy and civil society take place, I turn to the specific dynamic of European integration. As such, I replace the 'economic globalization component' with a component of 'Economic and Political Integration in the EU'. Second, where they focus on 'liberal' democracy and incorporate stressors related to each of the drivers, I choose to focus on the 'party democracy', and focus only on the stressors related to this.

Drawing from Anheier & Filip (2021)'s empirical assessment, and informed by the literature on party democracy the stressors associated with the liberal democracy indicator will be measured across three indicators:

- The dissatisfaction with democracy, signaling how current representative institutions are no longer deemed sufficient
- Legislative electoral turnout to demonstrate to what extent the national electorates turn their back on their national democratic practices
- The electoral performance of anti-system or disloyal opposition parties from the far right and far left (in other words, populist parties) to determine a turn away from traditional/mainstream parties

The drivers and stressors are presented in a combined model. A schematic depiction of the model of empirical analysis is displayed below in Figure 3.

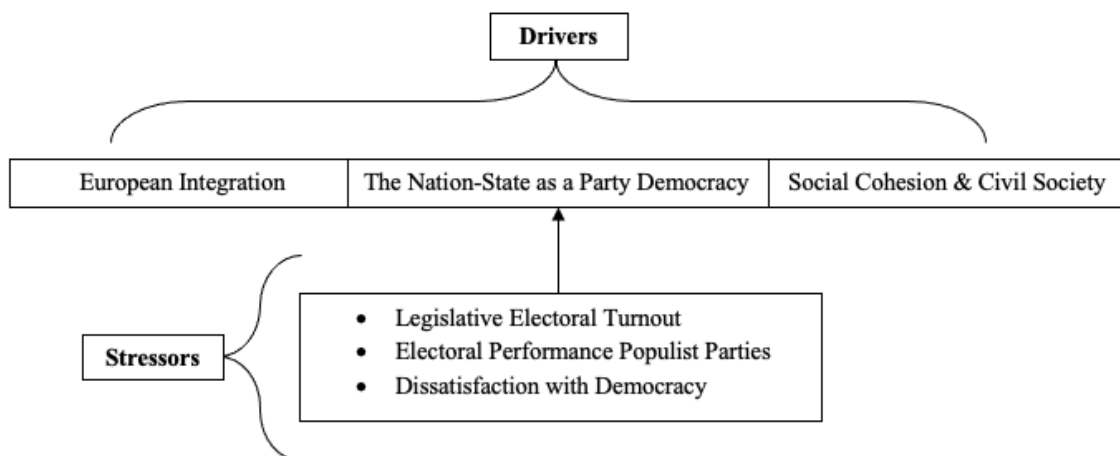


Figure 3: The model for the empirical analysis

This framework also allows for assessing the applicability of the theories for the ‘party democracy’ in the cases of interest: for Rodrik, this is done by looking at the developments of each driver and asking whether they can maintain high levels simultaneously – for Dahrendorf, the focus is on the development of stressors on democracy as integration and exogenous interferences increase.

Operationalization of the concepts

The ‘drivers’ that are put forward in the model will be operationalized as follows:

- *European Integration*

Quantifying European Integration is no easy task. The incremental process of European integration has taken place both in substantive economic terms as in terms of political interventions. Thus, to fully consolidate how the EU has impeded on the national policies, I conceptualized this variable two-fold: economic, using ECB data on the financial integration indicators; and political, using the main corrective instrument of the EU on national budgets, the Excessive Deficit Procedure, to illustrate direct intervention in the cases of interest.

- *The nation-state as a party democracy*

Following the indicated conceptualization of democracy as a ‘party democracy’ the chosen measure of democracy is the “Deliberative Democracy” index of the Varieties of Democracy. As described above, key features of party democracy can be summarized as 1) political mediation and 2) a procedural conception of legitimacy. Especially the procedural conception is underwritten in de deliberative democracy index, which focuses on ‘the process by which decisions are reached in a polity. A deliberative process is one in which public reasoning focused on the common good motivates political decisions—as contrasted with emotional appeals, solidary attachments, parochial interests, or coercion.’ (Coppedge et al. 2021). It focuses on the dialogue that exists at all levels – in party democracy, the parties are a key facilitator of this dialogue. As such, the deliberative democracy index comes closest to incorporating the values of the party democracy.

- *Social cohesion and civil society*

Based on Anheier & Filip, this is first by the Varieties of Democracy Core Civil Society index, which measures the robustness of civil society, understood as one that ‘enjoys autonomy from the state and in which citizens freely and actively pursue their political and civic goal’ (Coppedge et al., 2021). Moreover, to indicate social cohesion, I use the social ‘trust’ variable from the World Values Survey in which participants indicate whether they believe ‘most people can be trusted’ (Inglehart et al., 2020).

For the stressors, the information will be drawn from the following databases:

- *Legislative electoral turnout*

Using electoral data from parliamentary elections, compiled by ElectionGuide.

- *The electoral performance of populist parties*

This will be drawn from election results throughout the period that my analysis extends over, focusing on the performance of the most important populist parties in the cases of interest

(Electionguide, 2021). Note that due to spatial and temporal limitations, I am unable to delve into regional and municipal performance.

- *The dissatisfaction with democracy*

Taken from the World Values Survey, where participants were asked ‘How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?’ with a scale from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied) (Inglehart et al., 2020).

3.2 Timeframe and Cases of observation

The chosen timeframe focuses on the period in which the EU transformed into what Snell calls the ‘Crisis-Economic and Monetary Union’. As mentioned, this took place between 2011 and 2013 in the response to the severe economic crisis, which in the EU had led to a sovereign debt crisis. It was a turning point in the shape of the European Monetary Union and it is commonly seen as the next step in integration and central coordination in the European Union and especially the Eurozone (Snell, 2016). To properly assess the pre-2008 conditions and allow some time for the expected tradeoffs of interest to develop, the data analysis in this section will cover 2005 until 2020.

As mentioned, the comparative study will focus on the cases of Germany and Spain. There are several reasons for this decision. First of all, given the previously highlighted core-periphery patterns and the hypothesized gap between ‘creditors’ and ‘debtors’ it makes sense to review effects on national democracy also in the context of one central European country and one country from the (in this case Southern) Periphery. Germany is a particularly interesting case, as an EU-frontrunner and arguably the most prominent economy in the Union it has been in a top negotiating position (Schmidt, 2015). Spain, another large country, has found itself in a less fortunate position and was one of the countries hardest hit by the crisis, needing financial assistance from fellow member states (Celi et al., 2018). There remains socioeconomic discrepancy, with Spain lagging behind. Thus, we have two countries with different regions and of different socioeconomic standing within the EU, which provides a sufficiently reason to hypothesize that there have been different effects of integration policies. This makes them interesting cases to study.

3.3 The Normative Discussion

Conceptualization of party democracy allows a normative discussion about the results drawn from the comparative case study, extending the empirical results into a broader debate about democratic developments. Moving from the general empirical overview, I will be zooming in, and highlighting specific dimensions to the empirical developments in national democracies that will be outlined in using Rodrik and Dahrendorf. Since the system of party democracy is taken as a starting point, we can explore on how the changing dynamics might influence this traditional model.

Multiple different aspects of this will be highlighted. First, to substantiate how European integration affects democratic processes, I elaborate on Schäfer & Streeck's (2013) notion of constrained choice – and the consequences of absence of choice in a democracy. Moving on, there is a discussion zoomed in on two major factors in the evolution of modern politics and democracy; populism and technocracy. Primarily informed by Bickerton & Acetti (2017) I explore further their notion of populism and technocracy as complements that both embody a critique of the specific system of party democracy. In order to do this, populism and technocracy are first conceptualized, and then different normative approaches are highlighted to how both might affect the system of party democracy, linking them back to the observations made in the empirical analysis.

In doing so, the understanding of the changes in party democracies is advanced not only from an empirical point of view, but also from a normative point of view. Thus, It is clear that this paper is making an attempt to integrate the normative debate about (the normative desirability) party democracy and its stressors, with the Rodrik/Dahrendorf approach to increasing European integration and its effects on democracy and society. These insights from different disciplines are integrated using a combination of Menken & Keestra (2016)'s techniques of 'Adjusting' and 'Adding' – by redefining the 'liberal democracy' variable as the 'party democracy' (adjusting the model), the insights that this normative discourse offers can be added to the discussion.

4. The Comparative Analysis

In this section, the integrated framework of Rodrik and Dahrendorf will be used to describe the developments in Germany and Spain in the last 15 years. As previously stated, the aim of this section is twofold. Firstly, it aims to ask whether or not Rodrik and Dahrendorf's theories are an accurate representation of the situation the cases of interest. For Rodrik this is assessed by looking at the developments of each driver and asking whether they can maintain high levels simultaneously – for Dahrendorf, the focus is on the development of stressors on democracy as integration and exogenous interferences increase. Secondly, this section aims to collect and comprehensively analyze empirical data describing the unfolding changes in European democratic societies – which will give a birds' eye view of major developments. these developments will be summarized and discussed to substantiate possible factors of interest.

4.1 Drivers

European Integration

'Integration' in Europe has multiple different effects. I make a distinction between two dimensions of integration: there is the economic integration, measured for example in trade and foreign direct investment, and the political integration, given by binding rules and treaties and the power of the EU to influence national policies. Of course, these concepts are very closely intertwined, and economic and political integration go hand in hand in many developments.

A general overview of how European integration has developed is given using price-based and quantity-based indicators, as displayed below. Price-based indicators use the law of one price: if financial markets are integrated, there is no space for large price variation of the same item in different states. The quantity-based indicator is based on stocks and asset-flows (Nardo, Ossola & Rossi, 2017).

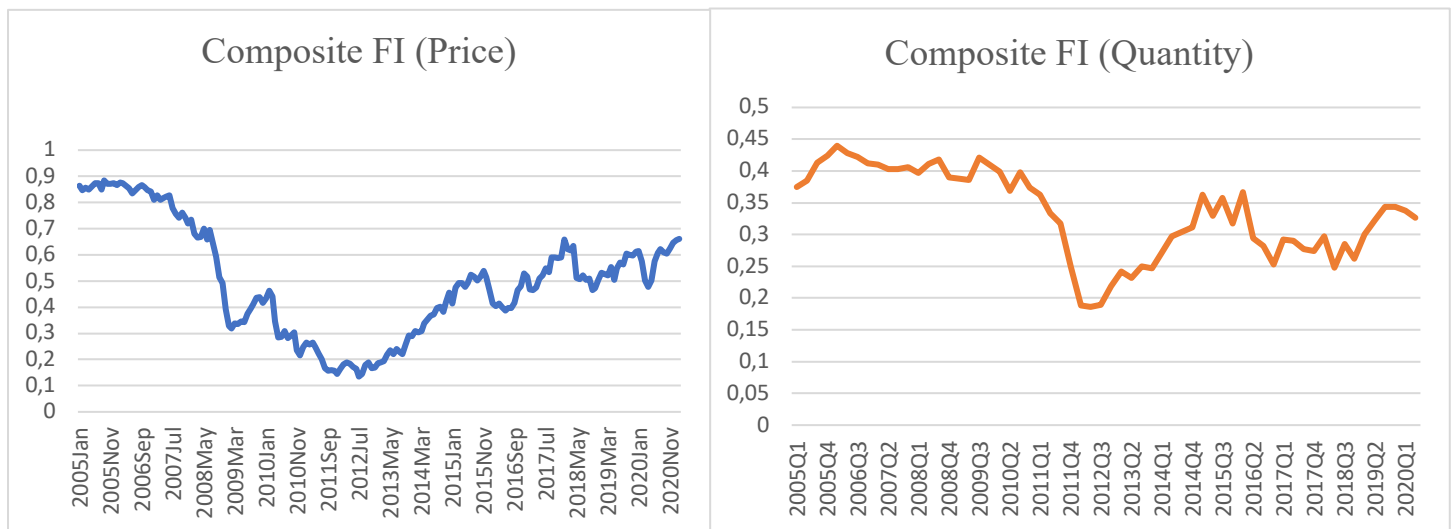


Figure 4: Price-Based and quantity-based indicators of financial integration, 2005-2020 (ECB, 2021)

Indeed, between 2005 and 2020, both indicators show a similar pattern; a steady decline between 2005 and 2010, an all-time-low between 2010 and 2012, and a general increase from 2012 on. The increase seen from 2012 on coincides with the enforcement of the fiscal compact and the recovery of the Eurozone from the Sovereign Debt Crisis. Thus, financial integration in the eurozone increased significantly from 2011 onwards.

Not reflected in these figures is the other dimension of interest: the political intrusion of the EU in member states. As discussed earlier, the Eurocrisis response saw a massive leap in European economic governance, and the introduction of an extensive framework of fiscal policy coordination and correction. This set of binding agreements is technically the same for every country, but as has often been hypothesized, the policy effects have been divergent between member states (see Schmidt 2016, Laffan 2014 and others).

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this for our cases is by looking at the corrective procedures that the EU has imposed on Germany and Spain. Being one of the countries hardest hit by the crisis, Spain was also one of the countries with the highest deficit rates (Hopkin, 2015). The main way in which the EU is able to take corrective action on the non-compliant member states is through the excessive deficit procedure. Official EC communication states that “The corrective arm of the Stability and Growth Pact ensures that Member States adopt appropriate policy responses to correct excessive deficits (and/or debts) by implementing the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP).” (European Commission, 2021)

Between 2009 and 2019, Spain has *continuously* been under Excessive Deficit Procedure. After finally exiting the corrective stage of the EDP, Spanish newspapers hailed the development as ‘the end to a decade of austerity’ (Pellicer, 2019). Germany, on the other hand, saw its EDP abrogated in 2012, and has not been in the corrective program since (EC, 2021). Under the EDP, countries stand at risk of a fine if they don’t manage to get their budgets in line – thus budget cuts and structural reforms are the consequence. In Spain, this has led to slower economic growth (Rosnik & Weisgroth 2015), whereas in Germany, economic recovery was able to start much sooner (Storm & Naastepad, 2015). In conclusion, European integration has deepened since the Euro crisis, both in economic and political terms: however, Spain has seen a much more direct corrective effect, whereas Germany was able to steer away from any direct corrective influence,

The nation-state as a party democracy

The deliberative democracy index is taken for both countries between 2005 and 2020 (see figure). As is evident, Germany has structurally performed better than Spain in this regard: however, both countries show a downward development from 2011 on (with a slight recovery for Spain since 2018). The development is symmetrical to when the crisis hit and when fiscal reforms started to be implemented.

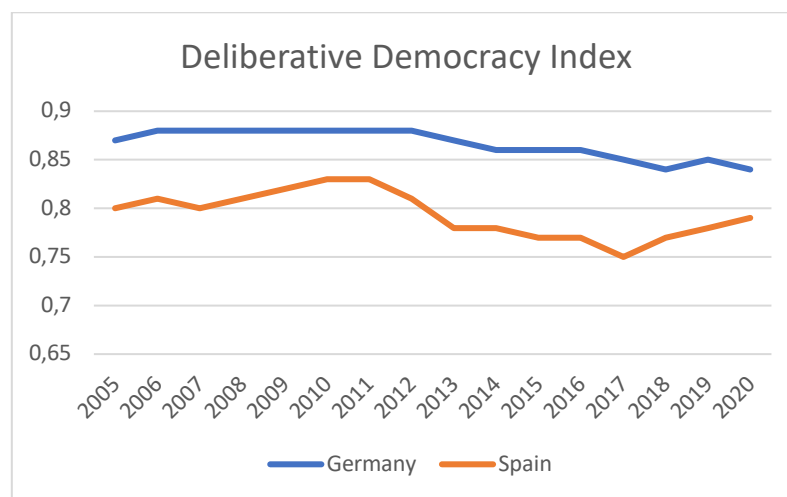


Figure 5: The Deliberative Democracy Index, taken from the Varieties of Democracy project (Coppedge et al. 2020)

These results can thus be interpreted as a general decline in the deliberative standards of both countries, albeit a more substantive one in Spain. A closer examination of the party politics in

both nations reveals that especially Spain has seen a major shift in its party system since the Euro crisis. Having been functionally a two-party democracy for decades, this structure collapsed in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, with new challenger parties Podemos (eurosceptic, anti-austerity) and Ciudadanos (centre-right, nationalist) rattling the establishment. The 2015 and 2016 election are often seen to mark a new stage in Spain's electoral politics, which Ciaramonte and Emanuele (2015) refer to as a 'regeneration'. Major shifts took place in multiple ways: high rates of party entrances and exits from the party system, decreasing stability of party-voter relationships, and an increase in personalized politics (Garzia 2014; Lancaster 2017). This has resulted in fragmented parliaments and stalled coalitions: in the 2015 elections, no party was able to secure a majority, and parliament was the most fragmented it had been since 1977. No stable coalition could be formed and elections were repeated the following year (Lancaster, 2017). Similarly, in 2019, coalition negotiations failed and a new election was called that same year.

Although the shocks to Germany's party system have not been as major, the country has not been spared similar issues. The coalition process after the 2017 elections was the longest and most complex in decades, with the highest parliamentary fragmentation since 1957 (Bräuninger, Debus, Muller & Stecker 2019). Traditionally well-established parties such as the SPD saw some of the worst results in the post-war period, while other established parties also saw their vote shares decline. In coalition-forming, more complex and flexible patterns are expected to arise, as the fragmentation in the party system is expected to persist. Again, a eurosceptic challenger party played a big role in the shifting party landscape, with the AfD winning 12.6% of the vote (Bräuninger, Debus, Muller & Stecker 2019).

As such, both countries are seen to fit in the wider trend of electoral instability and party system changes (Lancaster, 2017) in Europe. The results point in the direction of an incremental decline in democratic standards, while major shifts in the party system have put pressure on traditional government structures. The 'stressors' that are measured further on will provide a deeper insight into the pressures that are developing, such as the rise in populist challenger parties that is seen to be of notable influence.

Civil society and social cohesion

This driver is developed focusing on strong social bonds reflected by civil society & interpersonal trust. Civil society is measured with the V-Dem Core Civil Society index. The researchers define civil society as ‘an organizational layer of the polity that lies between the state and private life...composed of voluntary associations of people joined together in common purpose...’ in pursuit of their interests and ideals (Coppedge et al., 2021:51). Civil society is often conceived of as a crucial element in strong democracy by serving as a mechanism for expanding equality and liberty, while pressing to maintain democratic government (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

The results in figure 6 show that while civil society in Spain is traditionally performing at a higher standard than in Germany, it has taken a beating between 2011 and 2017, only to recover slightly after 2018. In Germany, while its civil society score is not as high as Spain’s, it has remained constant with some growth towards the end of the measured time period.

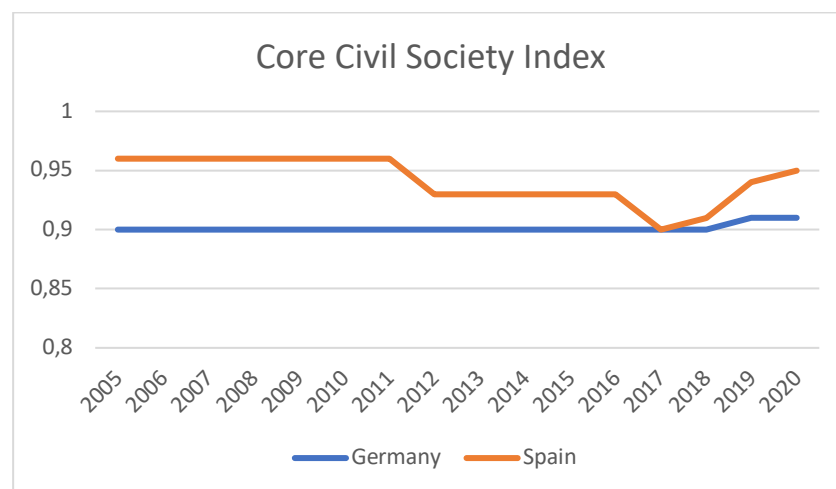


Figure 6: Core Civil Society Index, by the Varieties of Democracy Project (Coppedge et al. 2020)

The other positive indicator of social cohesion is trust; in a limited definition, trust can be taken as expectations of other members of society to act and behave in a way that is beneficial to these individuals or at least not detrimental to them’ (Coleman, 1990). The compiled data of trust is taken from different waves of the World Values Survey, showing the percentage of people who replied affirmatively to the statement ‘Most people can be trusted’.

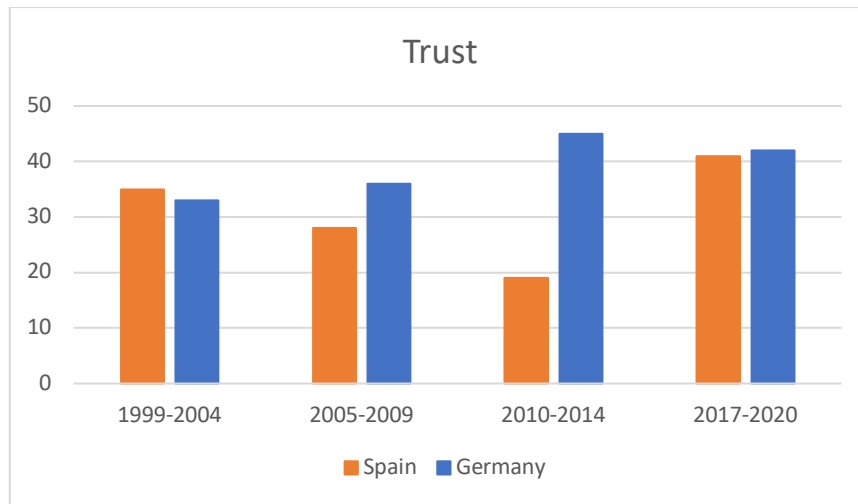


Figure 7: Percentage of people agreeing to the statement "most people can be trusted". (Inglehart et al., 2020)

Interpersonal trust in Germany has consistently remained high and has even kept increasing in the last waves of the survey. Spain, on the other hand, saw a dramatic decline and hit an all-time low in the 2010-2014 wave, only to recover slightly in the 2017-2020 wave. Knack and Zak (2003) claim that ‘trust is essential to myriad aspects of civil society’. High trust is fostered by the rule of law, reducing inequality, and facilitating interpersonal understanding (Knack & Zak, 2003). This makes it interesting that the development of the social trust for both nations is congruent with the development in the Civil Society Index – for Spain, decline followed by recovery, and for Germany, continuity and even growth.

As such, we again find different patterns in both cases: the data shows the (mutually dependent) variables of trust and civil society that in the post-Euro crisis and fiscal reforms era in Spain initially saw a (dramatic) decline. Germany, on the other hand, saw social trust and civil society values remaining stable, even increasing. Notably, Spain has seen some recovery in recent years.

4.2 Stressors

Parliamentary Electoral Turnout

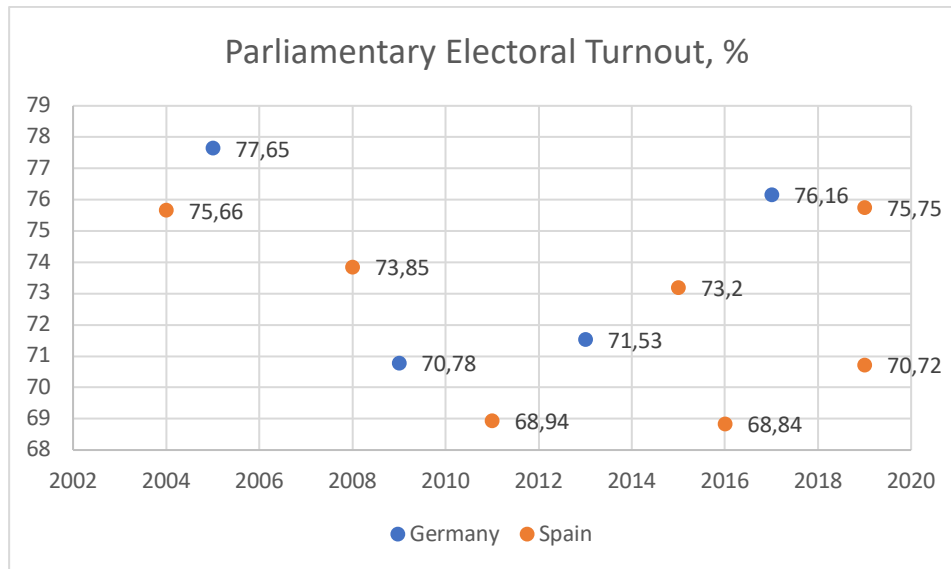


Figure 8: Parliamentary Electoral Turnout for Germany and Spain (Electionguide, 2021)

Figure 8 shows the voter turnout in parliamentary elections in Spain and Germany, in every election since 2004. Overall, legislative electoral turnout has declined (marginally) in both countries – while average turnout is slightly lower in Spain, with a minimal difference. The general trend of declining voter turnout is far from new (Gray & Caul, 2000) and has been explained as both based on indifference and alienation from the process (Adams et al., 2006). The declining voter turnout has been problematized for decades; Lijphart (1998) even proposed mandatory voting to ensure equal influence and representation between social groups. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, in the discourse of party democracy voter turnout is associated with the erosion of the representative function of parties (Kriesi, 2014).

Interestingly, turnout patterns are not equal between the cases. It is often hypothesized that voter turnout will decline first in economically disadvantaged groups in society. However, recent research has found that in times of austerity and constrained government, political participation is equally depressed in high-income citizens. Moreover, this effect was especially visible in countries hard-hit by the Euro crisis and the ensuing austerity regime – such as Spain (Häusermann, Kurer & Wüest, 2018). In Germany, on the other hand, these effects have not been observed, and inequality in participation between socioeconomic

classes is on the rise (Armingeon & Schädel, 2015). This shows that where in Germany, the pattern is likely caused by declining voter turnout in more disadvantaged groups, in Spain this declining voter turnout is found to be a much broader development in society.

Another notable observation is the substantially higher number of elections in Spain, especially due to two instances of re-elections in the last five years. This reflects how, as discussed above, party democracy in Spain has gone through major changes which have made coalition forming extremely difficult. Where in Germany coalition forming has also become a significantly more complex endeavour, this has not yet resulted in a higher number of elections. The pattern shows that in the re-elections following a failed coalition, the voter turnout is consistently lower than in the 'original' election. However, overall participation in elections is seen to be under pressure in both countries, with only minimal differences in voter turnout in recent years.

The electoral performance of populist parties

This analysis will be guided by taking a closer look at the most successful populist parties in the respective countries: Podemos and VOX in Spain and the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany. I will track their electoral performance to draw conclusions about their popularity. Note that due to spatial and temporal limitations, I am unable to delve into regional and municipal performance.

Firstly, an overview of the ideological stances of these parties is given. Podemos ('Yes We Can') emerged in the context of the Indignados protest movement. This was a culmination of the widespread dissatisfaction and decline in confidence in the government, turning against austerity measures and corruption. Podemos was formed to close the gap between political institutions and the protest movement (Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio & Barberà 2016). Podemos' ideals reflect mainly leftist values, and traditionally, right-wing populism was a non-existent phenomenon in Spain. However, the sudden rise of VOX in 2018 changed this. VOX was founded by members of the traditional PP party, and many argue that it can be characterized as a populist radical right movement (Turnbull-Dugarte 2019; Dennison and Mendes 2019); promising to 'make Spain great again' combined with elements of nativist authoritarianism (which refers to nationalist, anti-immigration and pro-law-and-order attitudes).

In Germany, the AfD has been the most notable party of influence. the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) was first founded by members of the CDU. It adopted conservative stances on issues such as gender diversification, and a sceptical approach to the present form of the EU, but did not yet meet the criteria of a radical right populist party. However, scholars have observed a transformation in the party over the years – especially in the wake of the the migrant crisis, the party shifted to more radical stances, more hardline anti-immigration rhetorics and a stronger populist and anti-establishment character. This resulted in the AfD currently representing the ‘prototype of the West European populist radical right-wing voter’ (Arzheimer & Berning, 2019:8).

Where there are notable differences between the three parties, they also have some common characteristics. Especially VOX and AfD appeal to similar right-wing conservative ideologies., with strong anti-immigration stances (Gould, 2019). All three are a culmination of grievances (whether it be austerity, immigration, threats on national identity) and they tend to position themselves as ‘the voice of the people’ as opposed to the unresponsive elites (Rodríguez-Teruel et al., 2016; Gould, 2019). Finally, they are all critical of the current shape of the European agreement.

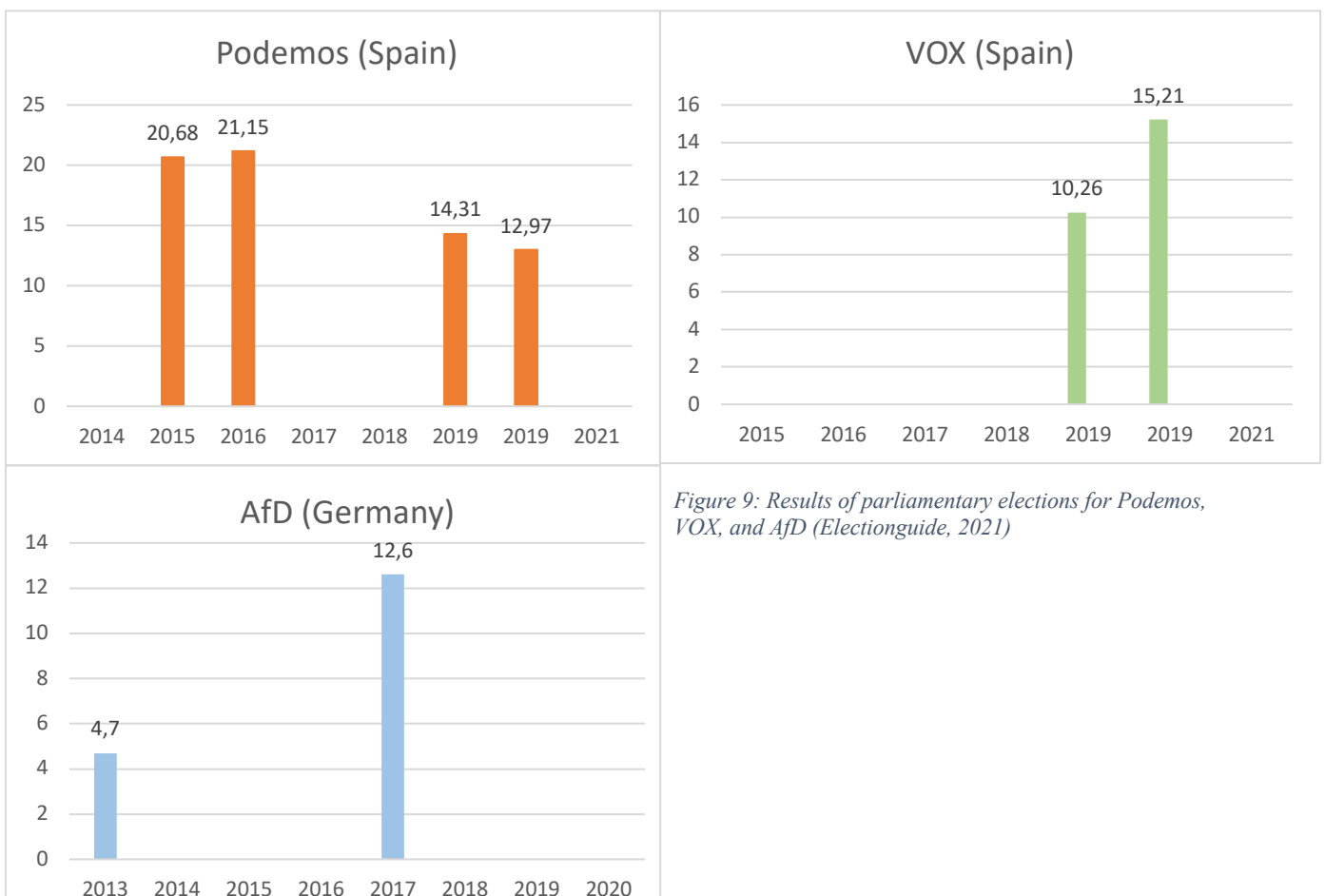


Figure 9: Results of parliamentary elections for Podemos, VOX, and AfD (Electionguide, 2021)

Figure 9 shows the the performance of the populist parties outlined above in the parliamentary elections since their establishment. The general trend for both countries shows that the performance of populist parties is on the rise. A salient feature is that all these parties rose formed after the Euro crisis, and they have amounted to significant changes in party systems in both nations. In Spain, the combined force of VOX and Podemos has amounted to a higher vote share than is observed in Germany; however, the 2021 Germany elections will show whether AfD can keep its momentum.

(Dis)satisfaction with democracy

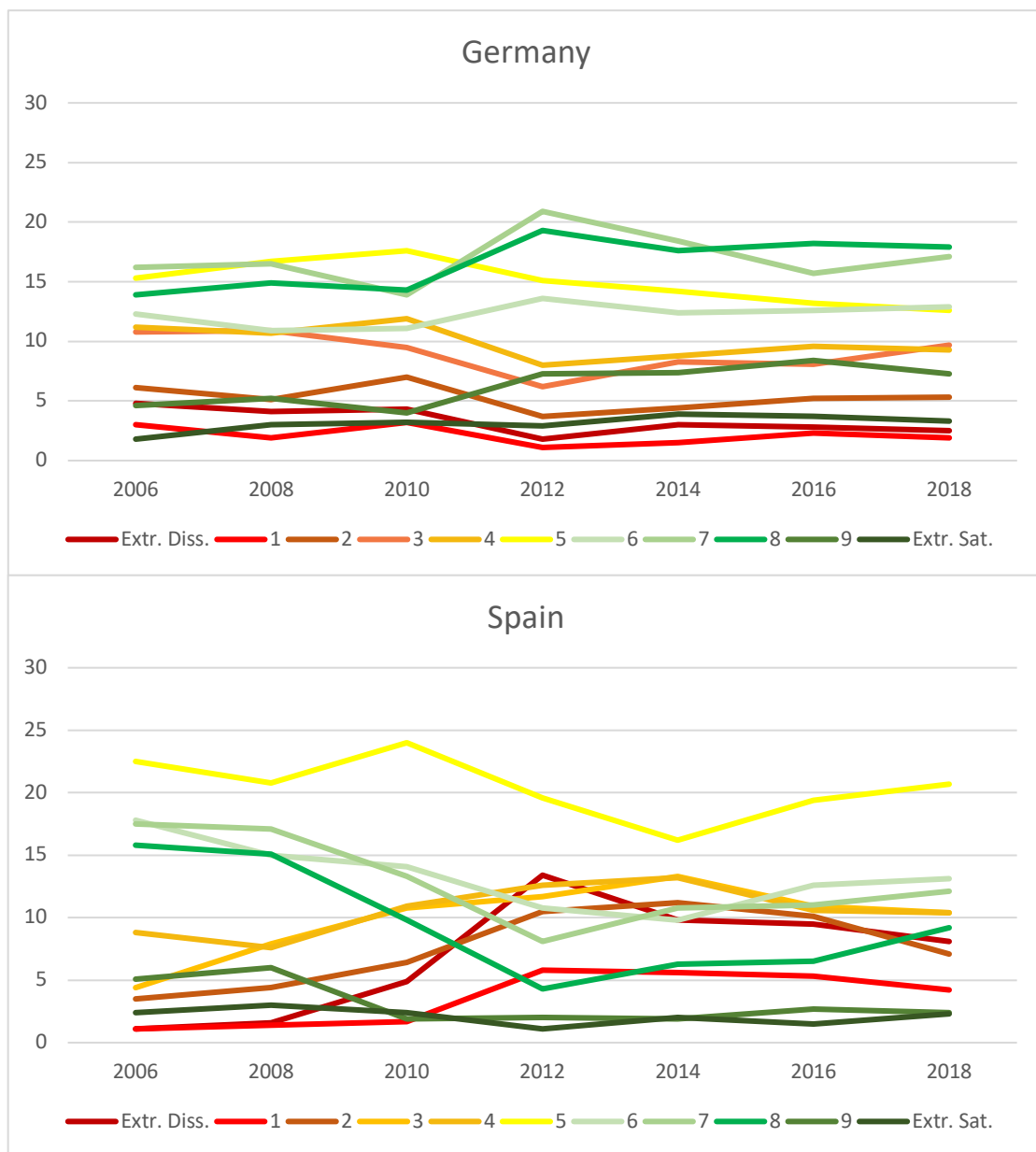


Figure 10: Satisfaction with democracy in Germany and Spain, taken from the European Social Survey (ESS, 2020)

Aggregated weighted data from the European Social Survey between 2006 and 2018 shows how attitudes towards democracy have evolved in the countries. Participants were asked ‘How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?’ with a scale from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). At a glance, it is clear that in Germany (moderately) positive attitudes are dominant, and extremely negative attitudes rare; in Spain, on the other hand, there is a surge in extremely negative attitudes in 2012, while average/moderately negative attitudes have the upper hand over positive attitudes.

(Dis)satisfaction with democracy is often linked to economic performance. However, a study conducted in Spain found that, while economic grievances such as unemployment remain relevant factors of interest, there are also political (procedural) factors that play a role. In the case of Spain, some major corruption scandals in the early 2010s amounted to an all-time-low in democratic satisfaction (Cristmann & Torcal, 2017). Also, attitudes of trust in political representation are significant. In Germany, there are substantially less grievances that translate into high dissatisfaction. However, while general satisfaction remained high, the undercurrent of dissatisfaction is not insignificant; for example, a study found dissatisfaction with democracy in Germany has been a major determinant of AfD support (Hansen & Olsen, 2019)

In conclusion, while democratic dissatisfaction is a relevant force in both countries, Spain very clearly shows a pattern of higher dissatisfaction. Since dissatisfaction often translates into populist votes or abstaining to vote (Kitscheld, 2002), this fits into the observed pattern with declining electoral turnout and increased success of populist parties.

4.3 Empirical Results

Turning to the first dimension of our analysis, it is found that Rodrik’s trilemma hypothesis is only strictly confirmed in the case of Germany. Here, the social cohesion and civil society driver has maintained high levels congruently with increasing integration, confirming the hypothesized relationship that two out of three drivers can maintain high levels whereas the third (the party democracy) is compromised. Spain, on the other hand, has seen both a higher level of pressure on its party democracy as a negative development in social cohesion and civil society, indicating that with ongoing European integration not just one but both of the other drivers are compromised. On top of this, it must be noted that the crisis in Spain’s party

democracy is manifesting more severely than in Germany, with multiple unsuccessful coalition negotiations and more dramatically declining deliberative standards. Rodrik is therefore not entirely rejected, since in neither country all drivers have been able to maintain growth; however, the tradeoffs appear unequally in Spain and Germany.

For Dahrendorf, the stressors on party democracy have manifested in both countries, evident most vividly in the increased populism and lowering voter turnout. The largest divergence is observed in the stressor ‘satisfaction with democracy’ where Spain shows significantly higher rates of (extreme) dissatisfaction. However, there are some important limitations to the results above. Perhaps the main issue lies in the direction of causality, and the factors of causality, that are involved. While the application of Rodrik and Dahrendorf to both cases gives a substantial amount of information about the processes that are taking place, they are unable to reflect the exact causal mechanisms that are at work.

In using Dahrendorf and Rodrik, this paper put analytical focus on globalization, here translated into European integration, and the effects it has had on democracies in member states. In doing so, it has not explicitly taken into account the effect of another major shock: the economic crisis. It is however likely that the economic crisis has also contributed to the developments described. Indeed, other scholars have found evidence of this. For example, a generally consistent positive relationship between crisis severity and the manifestation of Dahrendorf’s tensions was found (Anheier & Filip, 2021). The rise of populist challenger parties has also been linked to the financial crisis (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016). As such, the stressors on party democracy are generally found to be affected by economic misery. Since the crisis and the crisis response of increased integration were congruent events, more work is needed to substantiate whether and how these external pressures have worked together.

However, one thing that the results do make clear is that there is persistent and even deepening divergence between member states in their post-Euro crisis development. Germany’s democratic crisis is less severe than Spain, which has felt the brunt of the fiscal coordination and austerity policies of the EU. While the crisis cannot be ruled out as a contributor, the results and the body of scholarly work presented in the literature, point in the direction of a presumable negative influence of the EU.

Inequality and the politics of constrained choice

To further substantiate how European integration might be a factor of influence, the notion of constrained choice, which has been elaborately discussed by Schäfer and Streeck (2013), is worth highlighting. Central to this approach is the perhaps intuitive assumption that political choice is key to a well-functioning democracy. The importance of choice is underwritten by many, like Scharpf (2011) who wrote ‘if elections and changes of government cannot make a difference, the democratic legitimacy of the political regime itself may be undermined’ (Scharpf 2011; 166). Citizens must be able to influence policy outcomes.

European integration can be counted as one of the various exogenous pressures to intrude on the choice of nations. Specifically, the attention of this paper was the political intervention on fiscal affairs. Through this, European Union (EU) is observed to have a constraining effect on democratic regimes – importantly, this is because the room of governments to be responsive to their citizens’ preferences is reduced (Ruiz-Rufino & Alonso, 2014). To understand how this affects the role of the parties, it is helpful to take further the idea of responsiveness. A fully responsive government makes policies that follow the preferences of its citizens. While the notion of pure and ideal responsiveness has been criticized for exacerbating inequality through a bias for majority preferences (Grimes & Esaiasson, 2014), it remains a central feature of the representative democracy.

In the party democracy, parties are trusted with the task of shaping policy in the direction that the public wants; fulfilling the key feature of mediation, and serving as the intermediary body between society and state (Bickerton & Acetti, 2017). If the bandwidth of political parties to make different decisions is constrained (for example by a commitment to a supranational authority) their ability to fulfill this function is eroded and parties are not able to instrumentalize their electorate’s preferences. Parties are meant to embody different conceptions of the common good; however, all of these ‘conceptions’ will start to look similar and lead to similar policy outcomes. Hence, as parties become constrained, electorates have fewer different output options to choose from. This is situation is shaping up in the EU; as Nanou & Dorussen (2013) found, in policy areas where the EU is a large factor of influence, the distance between the position of parties decreases, homogenizing the party landscape.

Voters are therefore increasingly under the impression that whatever party is elected will largely govern alike; with austerity, for example, not a policy choice but a given. In turn, they become alienated, and either turn away from the electoral process altogether (explaining the observed decline in voter turnout), or turn to challenger parties; the populists (Mair, 2002; Kriesi, 2014). Because of this, the erosion of the ability of parties to fulfill their representative function is a key concern to Mair; it undermines the entire system of party democracy. Taking this further, the often presented ‘doomsday scenario’ (Laffan 2014) is one where party differences no longer matter, and voting becomes obsolete.

The notion of constrained choice thus underwrites how European integration is a relevant factor of influence. Taking it back to the empirical work, in the context of the comparative analysis, this makes the question; ‘where has the political choice been more constrained?’ a relevant one. The evidence shows how Spain, through being in the Excessive Deficit Procedure, has come under strong exogenous pressure to implement austerity measures and structural reforms. Simultaneously, this is the country where democracy is seen to be under more pressure, supporting Schäfer and Streeck’s initial diagnosis.

On populism

As established in the previous section, various normative accounts state that the rise of populism can be attributed to the decline of the representative function of parties (Mair 2002; Kriesi 2014). Populism is observed to be increasingly present in both Germany and Spain. While in Germany the far-right AfD developed into a party of notable influence, Spain saw a wave of left-wing populism followed by the sudden rise of right-wing VOX. How can we conceptualize and approach populism and its relationship to the party democracy?

Many scholars have attempted to formulate a coherent definition of populism – and have found that it is no easy task. Mudde (2004: 543) even went so far as to characterize his attempt as ‘defining the indefinable’. However, his (minimal) definition of populism has become one of the most influential. At its core, he states, populism is a ‘thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people’ (Mudde, 2004: 543).

In the following section, I evaluate the empirical outcomes through highlighting (divergent) views on the normative and substantive implications of populism in relation to the party democracy. Starting point of this evaluation is Bickerton & Acetti's (2017) argument that while populism is often conceived of as a movement opposing technocratic tendencies in society, it is actually an opposition of the regime of party democracy itself. They base their work on Ernesto Laclau's (2005) theory of populism, and in dissecting this work find three ways in which populism is in tension with the features of party democracy.

In short, these tensions are as follows. First, he goes against the concept of 'mediation'. He rejects that it is possible to mould social conflict in an overarching unity which overcomes as well as preserves social conflict, the way parties in party democracy are found to do. Instead, he believes that what binds the 'people' together is in the end their common opposition to the 'antagonistic pole' (the idea of an 'other', usually 'elite') (Laclau, 2005; Bickerton & Acetti, 2017). This is consistent with Mudde's definition in which antagonism of 'the people' vs 'the corrupt elite' is central. The populist parties that have been observed above draw from this idea – especially Podemos is found to highlight the opposition to 'la casta' (the elite) (Rodríguez-Teruel et al., 2016).

The second tension is found in the centrality of 'hegemony' in his theory of populism. Hegemony is described as the process through which a particular social demand, or set of demands, succeeds in 'standing in' for a representation of the whole. This is in contrast with the concept of political deliberation and compromise between parties. Instead, it is an 'all-or-nothing approach' in which one conception of the whole prevails. Thirdly, Laclau's theory does not attach much value to the procedural conception of legitimacy – in fact, he contests whether there is such a thing at all (Laclau 2005; Bickerton & Acetti, 2017).

While Laclau poses his work as a struggle between two rival political 'systems' that are implicitly understood as populism and technocracy, Bickerton & Acetti (2017) find that it can be understood as a struggle between populism and a 'very broad alternative that is characterized by mediated political divisions and by conceptions of legitimacy that are 'merely' procedural'. As such, this alternative can be understood more accurately as party democracy than as merely a technocratic system.

The rise in populism that has been observed can thus be interpreted as a manifestation of critique on the specific system of party democracy. The critique becomes more salient, and thus attractive to voters, as a decline in the representative function of parties takes place (which can be in part attributed to European integration).

As a manifestation of criticism, populism is also seen as a challenge to the party democracy. The populist parties in the cases of interest are already putting the party systems under pressure. Where Mair predicts that this will lead to a situation where populism shapes the system twofold: as engrained in the mainstream parties as well as with ‘protest populism’ by challenger parties outside of the mainstream realm (Kriesi, 2014; Mair, 2011). Kriesi (2014) extends this suggestion with three forms in which ‘protest populism’ can eventually end up ‘transforming the West European party systems’. This transformation, he argues, might eventually bring the systems more in line with the new conflict structuring society: the conflict between ‘winners and losers’ of globalization.

The above shows that populism is not only a critique of the party democracy, but also way in which the party system is challenged and possibly reinvented. As mentioned, the start of this development is already observed in the empirical model. The normative desirability of this has, however, divided scholars. Laclau’s theory is understood as a defense of populism, while others like Mair express their concern for the implications it might have. As such, the rise of populism has been both problematized and vindicated; seen a threat to democracy, or a solution in the form of a more authentic political representation. Seeking to converge these opposing views, others propose an ambivalent categorization as either threat or corrective to democracy, depending on the case (Kaltwasser 2010).

In the conception of populism as a critique or threat, whether one characterizes the party democracy as normatively desirable or not seems to be an important factor of influence – an affair that is in itself worth writing a book about. The results of the analysis are not extensive enough to draw further conclusions about this. Thus, I resort to taking the very minimal assumption that the rise of popularity of populist parties that has been observed will eventually reshape democracy *either for the better or for the worse*. However, I argue that this assumption still warrants caution and a reason to be concerned with the populist success. They (increasingly successfully) challenge and thus destabilize the status quo – while the

alternative to this status quo is not yet taking shape as something that can be considered as better.

On Technocracy

This leaves one other development undiscussed; technocracy. This is especially relevant to discuss in congruence with populism as Bickerton & Acetti (2017) see in populism and technocracy a complementary relationship, with overlapping elements in their rejection of the specific idea of party politics. Notably, every development within the cases of interest has been held against the independent variable of European Integration, which both politically and economically has reshaped Europe. These policies themselves, however, have been made not through channels of democratic deliberation, but through channels of undemocratic decisionmaking: as such, scholars have signaled a turn towards a technocratic form of European governance (Habermas, 2015).

Technocracy is defined by Centeno (1993: 314) as ‘the administrative and political domination of a society by a state elite and allied institutions that seek to impose a single, exclusive policy paradigm based on the application of instrumentally rational techniques.’ Using Bickerton & Acetti (2017), this section will evaluate the empirical results focusing on the relationship of technocracy and the party democracy. Where they draw from Laclau’s work in their approach to populism, they draw in the discussion of technocracy from Rosanvallon (2011)’s *Democratic Legitimacy*.

To begin with, Rosanvallon (2011: 5-11) maintains that democratic legitimacy is based on the notion of ‘popular sovereignty’, thus, the will of the people. Furthermore the concept of ‘the people’ is seen as an abstraction that is never concretely materialized – it is not static, but fluid and undefineable. From these assumptions, he infers that democratic regimes should therefore make use of a multitude of different ways of representing ‘the people’. These different ways can be combined in a way that results in a more accurate formation of the common good than when reliant on only one.

After this, Rosanvallon lists a plurality of alternative representative mechanisms, two of which are explicitly linked to the notion of technocracy. Bickerton & Acetti draw from two of these mechanisms to show how Rosanvallon’s text can be interpreted as an argument for

technocracy. First, there is ‘legitimacy of identification with generality’. This refers to how an independent bureaucracy can function as another agent holding democratic legitimacy. Through this, experts can manage the nation’s affairs and resources for the common good. This is seen as a ‘pillar’ of democratic legitimacy apart from the process of electoral representation (Rosanvallon, 2011; Bickerton & Acetti, 2017). Secondly, he highlights the ‘legitimacy of impartiality. Here, Rosanvallon explicitly highlights how non-elected and independent institutions such as ‘central banks’ and ‘expert commissions’ can a useful mechanism in guiding policy to represent the common good more accurately. This signals a direct link to the European institutions that shaped the crisis response; more specifically, the so-called ‘Troika’ of the ECB, IMF, and European Commission (Cohen, Guillamón, Lapsley & Robbins, 2015)

Similar to the case of Laclau, Bickerton & Acetti find that Rosanvallon criticizes not just populism (just like Laclau does not just criticize technocracy) but a specific conception of democracy that resembles the party democracy. Instead, he proposes of a multitude of other ways in which the ‘general will’ or the ‘common good’ can be created that exceed the electoral system based on parties and the idea of majority rule, amongst which technocracy can be found. Technocracy thus alternatively embodies a critique of party democracy (Bickerton & Acetti, 2017).

Looking at the situation in the comparative empirical analysis it is clear that a decision was made prioritizing pragmatism in the crisis response – instead of deliberation with national and EU parliaments. The system of party democracy was deemed an insufficient response mechanism. Through the lens of Rosanvallon, this turn to technocratic governance in the crisis can hold legitimacy and even come to a better conception of the common good than the processes of the party democracy. To test whether this is the case, one must face the incredibly complex question to compare the current scenario to a host of other ‘what ifs’ including ‘what if the decisionmaking processes had been purely based on popular sovereignty’.

While being aware of this difficulty, and thus cautionary with my conclusions, I do find elements of the crisis response that have not represented the common good optimally. A main source of tension is found in the inequality of the effects that the fiscal policies have had. As observed, these brought on a situation where in Spain party politics have come under

significantly more pressure, with citizens feeling increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of responsiveness of their government. My interpretation of the issue of inequality is that a response was drafted in seeking to represent the common good of an entity stretching across widely differing structural circumstances. The technocratic response, in bypassing (national) representative organs, was not able to take into account the specificities of the national circumstances in the way that the conceptions of the common good formulated by party mediation could have.

Thus, while technocracy (as a critique of party democracy) might be normatively defensible, it is argued based on the empirical evidence that it has seen some serious shortcomings. In being an opposing force for party democracy, it is seen to contribute to limited governmental responsiveness, and as such to the increasingly destabilizing processes of the party democracy crisis in member states. Furthermore, this exacerbates or at least maintains inequality between member states.

5. Conclusion

This thesis set out with the goal to answer the research question *How have party democracies in the EU developed (differently) in the period since post-euro crisis economic reforms?*

It was hypothesized that in the process of European integration, some member states (especially those in the Southern Periphery) have seen their democratic systems (and thereby the ability of citizens to effectively influence government decisions on a national level) under more pressure than others, with corresponding side effects on civil society and other indicators such as social cohesion. To test this, Spain and Germany were taken as exemplary cases.

Using an especially developed integrated model of Rodrik's Globalization Trilemma and Dahrendorf's Quandary, in which a distinction between 'drivers' and 'stressors' was made, the empirical analysis shows that party democracies in the EU have generally come under pressure – with manifestations of the 'crisis in party democracy' in both cases. However, the empirical assessment has confirmed that these developments are not evenly distributed. In Spain, a more significant decrease in the driver of 'party democracy is found', as well a more severe manifestation of democratic 'stressors' – with high dissatisfaction, and multiple increasingly successful populist movements.

Another contribution that is taken from the application of the integrated model is to show how the concept of ‘party democracy’ can extend the framework of Rodrik and Dahrendorf, and whether the theories are empirically confirmed in this form. The results indicate that Rodrik’s theory is not rejected nor confirmed, since Spain and Germany show different results; however, Dahrendorf’s stressors have manifested in both countries. Thus, these theories are found to be fitting or at least supplemental to the discourse about party democracy.

Key in explaining the inequality observed is the notion of constrained choice – the EU’s tendency to impose policies on its member states is seen to serve as the basis of the hollowing out of the representative function of parties, and thus stimulates populist reaction. Further evaluation of the results showed that the pressures on party democracy that were seen to unfold in the can be attributed to at least two opposing organizing pillars of democracy; technocracy and populism. Following Bickerton & Acetti (2017) in the notion that these concepts share an inherent critique of the system of party democracy, the results were evaluated in terms of their normative substance. For populism, I conclude that it is a factor that is reshaping the party democracy, while it is unsure whether this is for better or worse. Similarly, it is found that technocracy contributes to limited democratic responsiveness and inequality between member states. Thus, while both populism and technocracy can be normatively defended as sound alternatives or supplements to the party system, empirical results show that their destabilizing effects lean towards negative ‘real-life’ consequences.

A reversal of national democratic capacities is perhaps inevitable in the process of European integration – and something that must be accepted in the name of progress and economic stability. However, I argue that the findings of this paper serve as a warning against pursuing further steps of integration. A combination of empirical and normative work has showed that there are serious consequences in European democratic societies. Before further steps of deep economic integration can be taken, the EU must come to terms with how to consolidate its form with the democratic requirements of its citizens.

As such, the EU is faced with a task resembling Dahrendorf’s fundamental challenge: that is, the challenge to unite deep economic integration, democratic standards of representation, and civil society. Only time can tell whether the EU will turn out to be altogether incompatible

with the party democracy – thus far, the prospects point in the direction of at least significant tension.

However, this project was not without limitations. As discussed, in focusing on the effects of European integration, other possible explanatory mechanisms for the results are not taken into account; for example, the economic crisis and globalization effects. Moreover, the discussion on populism and technocracy in relation to the party democracy can be elaborated upon to take further the implications that both of these will have in European society.

Therefore, recommendations for further research are to extend the knowledge on to what extent ‘European integration’ as such can be held responsible for the observations. Moreover, more work is needed to get a clearer account of whether and how the notions populism and technocracy will reshape the democratic system in the EU.

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