23

Ideologies of EU Democracy since 1950

CLAUDIA STERNBERG

Introduction

How democratic were the European Communities, and later the European Union (EU), how democratic did they *need* to be, and what would this *mean* in the first place? Throughout the course of European integration, none of the answers was self-evident, and all were the stuff of continuous discursive construction, reconstruction and contestation. In this chapter I trace shifts and clashes in collective imaginations of EU democracy since 1950, exploring how what it made sense to say about EU democracy changed over time. I analyse discourses, or ensembles of ideas, concepts, narratives or categories, through which meaning was given to 'democracy', for the case of the EU and its institutional predecessors (for the sake of better readability, I sometimes use the label 'EU' to refer both to the EU as such and to its institutional predecessors in this chapter).

Discourses around EU democracy shaped what was politically possible in designing and adapting the EU's institutional set-up, and in making it come to life through policies and politics. Conversely, what was politically possible, or desired, for example in negotiating the founding treaties, influenced which discourses gained dominance over others.[1] Either way, competing understandings around EU democracy functioned as ideologies; benchmarks to which different actors committed themselves and others, supporting endeavours to change and uphold, criticise and justify the emerging institutional, political and social arrangements.

1 See L. Rye, 'The Legitimacy of the EU in Historical Perspective: History of a Never-Ending Quest', *European Papers* 5 (2020): 191–207; A. Boerger-De Smedt, 'Negotiating the Foundations of European Law, 1950–57: The Legal History of the Treaties of Paris and Rome', *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 3 (2012): 339–56; A. S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945–51* (London, Routledge, 1984); S. Goetze and B. Rittberger, 'A Matter of Habit: The Sociological Foundations of Empowering the European Parliament', *Comparative European Politics* 8, no. 1 (2010): 37–54.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Like political philosophies, ideologies are configurations of concepts but, unlike them, they are not reducible to specific authors but rather are characteristic of certain forms of group thinking.[2] In this chapter, I tell a story of shifts and clashes in EU-official 'group thinking' around EU democracy.

More specifically, I tell the story of how the European institutions and their representatives spoke about EU democracy, what they said, what they took for granted, what they deemed generally plausible – and how this related to changes in embedding social imaginaries and understandings of the role of modern democracy at large, in the member state societies and beyond. The sources I analyse range eclectically from treaty preambles, official declarations and political speeches, via reports, strategy and policy papers, to newspaper articles. While my focus in this chapter is on the official discourses reflected in this corpus, I contextualise them in embedding debates and paradigm shifts in the wider public and academic public spheres, developing analyses presented elsewhere.[3] Importantly, I concentrate on overarching long-term collective patterns and developments rather than differences between the various EU institutions.

My aim is to analyse broad trends in official rhetoric and discourses in their interplay with broader, embedding evolutions in understandings of the role of democracy in European integration and beyond. To this end, I use interpretive non-quantitative textual analysis, by which I mean analysis concerned empirically with meaning, which works through the close reading of texts identified, in an iterative circle, as illustrating broader discursive patterns. In other words, rather than quantifying just how dominant which discursive patterns were compared with others at what point in time, I scrutinise their narrative and argumentative content; what they said and *how* they said it, on what grounds, and what they took for granted – and what sort of understandings of the EU and its democratic qualities this made emerge.

The chapter opens by briefly situating my analysis in the academic literature. This is followed by the chapter's core – a potted history of narratives

2 M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 8; K. Nicolaidis, 'Kant's Mantle: Cosmopolitanism, Federalism and Constitutionalism as European Ideologies', *Journal of European Public Policy* 27, no. 9 (2020): 1307–28; J. Komárek (ed.), *European Constitutional Imaginaries: Between Ideology and Utopia* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023).

3 C. Sternberg. *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy: Public Contestation, 1950s–2005* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

around EU democracy over time. Each subsection turns to a major shift in how EU democracy was understood: early apparent silences on the matter of democracy; a turn to the citizens from the late 1970s and the 1980s; the EU's 'crusade for democracy' following the Maastricht ratification crisis; and various assertions of sovereignty since then. The final fourth section concludes the chapter.

The State of the Art and Points of Reference

A common reading is that the democratic character of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and of the European Communities was not an issue of concern on their agenda for the early decades of integration. In this reading, democracy became an issue only as the Communities gained more and more competences, which brought questions of democratic representation, control and accountability to the fore, and eventually led the EU to entrench more democracy in its institutions, practices and rhetoric, mainly from Maastricht to Lisbon.[4]

With this chapter I join a historiography giving nuance to this narrative. On the one hand, there were voices that did indeed have something to say about EU democracy early on. On the other, if democracy did initially stay relatively out of the limelight only to then move right into the centre of attention, this raises the question of how this discursive dynamic *came into being*, of its genealogy.[5] What were the understandings of the nature of the integration project and of political life which underpinned both the early lack of concern and the subsequent 'democratic turn'?

What is more, early discourses may not have been silent on the matter of democracy but rather have worked on the basis of *different notions* of democracy – this 'essentially contested concept' if there is one; a concept for which there is no generally accepted standard use or

4 See, for example, Rye, 'The Legitimacy of the EU', 191; S. Smismans, 'Democracy and Legitimacy in the European Union', in M. Cini and N. Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (eds.), *European Union Politics*, 6th ed. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 127–40, 128–30; H. Schulz-Forberg and B. Stråth, *The Political History of European Integration: The Hypocrisy of Democracy-Through-Market* (London, Taylor & Francis, 2010).

5 See M. Bevir and R. Phillips, 'EU Democracy and the Treaty of Lisbon', *Comparative European Politics* 15, no. 5 (2016): 705–28. For further studies sensitive to the genealogy of European integration, see P. L. Lindseth, *Power and Legitimacy: Reconciling Europe and the Nation-State* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010); C. Parsons, *A Certain Idea of Europe* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2003); Goetze and Rittberger, 'A Matter of Habit'; M. Burgess, *Federalism and European Union: The Building of Europe, 1950–2000* (London, Routledge, 2000); Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

meaning.[6] 'Democracy' everywhere is subject to never-ending processes of social construction and contestation, collective meaning-making and knowledge production, in adaptation to changing circumstances. If we take into account these processes and how, over time, rival projections of the EU and the role of democracy in legitimating it played out against each other, emerged out of each other and became dominant or faded into the background, we discern much greater continuity than is implied by the simpler narrative that democracy was at first a non-issue and then became an issue.

Finally, the collective imagination and re-imagination of EU democracy did not occur in isolation. This chapter puts them in dialogue with embedding broader understandings of political life, history, the state, its place in the world and the legitimacy of modern democracy, in the member states and beyond.[7] Academic debates on EU democracy too provided not only critical analysis, but also inspiration to EU-official imaginations of what democracy could or should mean in the case of the EU.[8]

A rich and vibrant scholarship has not only analysed the extent to which the EU suffers from a 'democratic deficit', and the nature of this defict, but also de- and re-constructed the normative standards for EU democracy, for which many of the nation-centric yardsticks were arguably unsuitable.[9] Unlike most of this literature, what follows offers neither an assessment of the EU's evolving democratic credentials, nor a discussion of what the standards for such an assessment should be. Instead, I trace *how what it made sense to say about EU democracy* changed over time. I chart the long-term production and contestation

6 W. B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1956): 167–98, 168. See also Y. Mény, 'De La Démocratie en Europe: Old Concepts and New Challenges', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 1–13, 8.

7 See J.-W. Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2013); M. Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945–1968* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2020); P. Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy: Impartiality, Reflexivity, Proximity* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2011).

8 See Chapter 24 by Wouter Wolfs in this volume. For excellent overviews of this debate, see, for example, H. Bang, M. D. Jensen and P. Nedergaard, '"We the People" versus "We the Heads of States": The Debate on the Democratic Deficit of the European Union', *Policy Studies* 36, no. 2 (2015): 196–216; T. Jensen, 'The Democratic Deficit of the European Union', *Living Reviews in Democracy* 1, no. 2 (2009): 1–8. For edited volumes representing the state of the art, see B. Kohler-Koch and B. Rittberger (eds.), *Debating the Democratic Legitimacy of the European Union* (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); S. Piattoni (ed.), *The European Union: Democratic Principles and Institutional Architectures in Times of Crisis* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015).

9 See, for example, Mény, 'De La Démocratie en Europe'; C. Lord and D. Beetham, 'Legitimizing the EU: Is There a "Post-parliamentary Basis" for Its Legitimation?', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 39, no. 3 (2001): 443–62.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of collective meaning – of the 'necessary fictions' that people rely on in making sense of their experience of collective life and the 'imagined democracies' that make political rule possible in the face of the inescapable contradictions, clashes and compromises involved wherever ideals are pursued.[10]

The Historical Narrative

Early Silences?

At face value, early official discourse was indeed strikingly silent on the matter of democracy. Neither the 1950 Schuman Declaration nor the Paris or Rome Treaties even contained the word 'democracy' or 'democratic'.[11] Many of those shaping the European Communities considered democracy not especially suited for legitimating the nascent European construct.[12] Jean Monnet, for one, felt that allowing too much popular input risked obstructing the integration process.[13]

And yet, the project of European integration was very much *about* democracy. It was about safeguarding democracy at the national, not the European, level; about making the *member states* 'safe for democracy', invoking Woodrow Wilson's phrase in asking the US Congress to support a declaration of war on Germany in 1917 on the grounds that 'The world must be made safe for democracy.'[14] Against the background of recent history and the ongoing communist threat, European integration was to lock in the liberal-democratic arrangements of the member states and prevent them from backsliding into authoritarianism.[15] Integration, according to this foundational storyline, would keep totalitarianism at bay at home as well as abroad, containing old demons and keeping the 'Eastern powers' from striving for 'the control of Europe and the continuation of the world revolution'.[16]

10 Y. Ezrahi, *Imagined Democracies: Necessary Political Fictions* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also C. Sternberg, 'Ideologies and Imaginaries of Legitimacy from the 1950s to Today: Trajectories of EU-Official Discourses Read against Rosanvallon's Democratic Legitimacy', in J. Komárek (ed.), *European Constitutional Imaginaries: Between Ideology and Utopia* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023), pp. 92–116.

11 R. Schuman, (1950), 'Schuman Declaration May 1950', https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en.

12 Burgess, *Federalism and European Union*, pp. 31–6; Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, p. 409.

13 J. Monnet, *Memoirs* (London, Collins, 1978), p. 93.

14 Schulz-Forberg and Stråth, *The Political History of European Integration*, pp. 4, 12.

15 Lindseth, *Power and Legitimacy*, p. 104; J.-W. Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2013), p. 149. See also Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*.

16 W. Hallstein, 'Auf dem Weg zur europäischen Einheit. German radio broadcast on the decisions taken at Messina in June 1955', *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der*

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

European integration was part and parcel of western Europe's post-war 'constitutionalist settlement'.[17] A deep distrust of popular sovereignty, mass democracy and unchecked majority rule underlay not just the beginnings of European integration but also the political reconstruction of western Europe after 1945, leading to an insulation of the emerging political systems from popular pressures. Constitutional courts were created and eventually accepted, and parliaments deliberately weakened to the benefit of strong national executives (Britain becoming an outlier in continuing to see parliamentary supremacy as legitimate).[18]

Democracy emerged as a key source of political legitimacy only over the course of the next decade-and-a-half.[19] The decades after the war further saw the building of strong welfare and regulatory states, and many of their functions were delegated to administrative agencies subject to robust judicial and administrative oversight and the 'plebiscitary leadership' of national chief executives over the administrative-technocratic sphere.[20]

Quite in tune with this expansion of administrative government across modern democracies, the member states delegated powers not only to unelected domestic institutions, but also to supranational bodies under the close supervision of national governments (rather than parliaments, again). Democratic legitimacy here rested centrally on the transfer of normative power to the European level through successive 'outline treaties', which fixed the general principles and objectives of common policies and the 'normative frameworks' and rules within which they would subsequently be worked out.[21] Insofar as the national context was concerned, it was the parliaments which effected such delegation in the first instance, but once legislative enactment was complete, the focus of legitimation shifted away from them.

Bundesregierung no. 228, 6 December 1955. See similarly Schuman, 'Schuman Declaration May 1950'; EEC Treaty, Preamble.

17 Lindseth, *Power and Legitimacy*, pp. 130, 264; Müller, *Contesting Democracy*.

18 Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, pp. 146–50.

19 See M. Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age*.

20 Lindseth, *Power and Legitimacy*, pp. 130, 264; Müller, *Contesting Democracy*.

21 W. Hallstein, 'Address Given at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law', London 25 March 1965, Commission (1965) 3574/X/65-E. See also, for example, European Commission, 'Third General Report on the Activities of the Community (2 March 1959–15 May 1960)' (1960); European Commission, 'Report of the Working Party Examining the Problem of the Enlargement of the Powers of the European Parliament. "Vedel Report"', BEC Supplement 4/72 (1972); European Commission, 'First General Report on the Activities of the Community (1/01/1958–17/09/1958)'. On the treaties' affinities to a *loi-cadre* or *traité-cadre* on the national level, see Lindseth, *Power and Legitimacy*, pp. 2, 12, 51, 104; G. Majone *Dilemmas of European Integration: The Ambiguities and Pitfalls of Integration by Stealth* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

There were competing blueprints of where the delegated legitimate authority was to go. Jean Monnet's vision was to establish supranational technocratic autonomy: 'Once the institution is in place and the breakthrough consolidated, the moment of the technicians arrives.'[22] Counter to this ran what has been referred to as 'the establishment of national-executive leadership over the integration process', through the Council of Ministers and a dense bureaucracy of nationally dominated committees staffed by national civil servants to oversee the Commission's implementation of delegated acts, as well as through the crises of the 1960s, which further 'marginalised the Commission as an autonomous technocratic policy maker' (even if they resulted more in national executive oversight than in the kind of control Charles de Gaulle would have wanted).[23] All these steps and developments were embedded in discourses justifying them as well as criticising them, which constructed blueprints of democratic solutions for Europe.

In general, the democratic legitimacy of the European system of administrative governance was to an important degree borrowed from *national* mechanisms of legitimation, including legislative enactment and executive, administrative and judicial oversight.[24] A competing discourse, to be sure, aimed to establish that there was, and needed to be, a distinct and new democratic legitimacy specific to the nascent Community system. Commission President Hallstein, for example, referred to the Rome Treaty as reminiscent of 'the constitution of a modern State', constituting its very own 'separation of powers', with the Commission and the Council in charge of 'creating a European system of law and of bringing it into force', while the European Parliament and the Court of Justice undertook 'the task of control'.[25]

On the whole, as for this last quote, claims to the early Communities' legitimacy, even those that did not turn on the European Parliament and its role (on which more in the section after the next), played on a whole range of registers of democratic legitimacy: the electoral legitimacy of national parliaments and executives, the legitimacy arising from lawfulness and accordance with democratic and administrative processes, and constitutional commitments to collective democratic structures and individual rights. And yet, these registers arguably mainly only framed and complemented a largely overpowering different theme, that of the *bureaucratic legitimacy* of the European Communities.

22 Monnet, *Memoirs*, p. 321. 23 Lindseth, *Power and Legitimacy*, pp. 91, 100.
24 Ibid., pp. 86–90.
25 Hallstein, 'Address Given at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Bureaucratic Legitimacy and the European Common Good

Bureaucratic legitimacy claims had their heyday across Europe, and elsewhere, in the 30 years or so after the Second World War, when civil servants dedicated to an agenda of modernisation portrayed themselves as the representatives of a new type of legitimacy based on efficiency and competence, rationality and disinterestedness.[26] Good government in this imaginary was government that was effective in solving concrete problems, and did so in a professional, impartial and predictable manner, following clear procedures.[27]

This mode of legitimation, rooted in a cultural background of early-twentieth-century theories of scientific management and mystiques of rationality, was welcomed as a way to overcome the discontents of electoral and party democracy.[28] In contrast to the latter, public power was legitimated not so much by its origin but rather by the 'services' it rendered in furthering the general interest – and it is this orientation towards generality that arguably makes it a type of *democratic* legitimacy.[29]

The Communities' bureaucratic legitimacy was firmly implanted in a wider belief in progress, and in government intervention and an active, 'caring state', at the time widely considered the 'most suitable means for the promotion of "the good" of both the individual and the collective'.[30] Early Community-official rhetoric invoked hope, agency and the determination to bring about a better future through political action, hailing European integration as the 'greatest voluntary and purposeful transformation in the history of Europe'.[31] Integration featured as the apex and 'natural extension

26 Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, pp. 50–3. See also C. Sternberg, 'Ideologies and Imaginaries of Legitimacy from the 1950s to Today'.

27 W. Walters and J. H. Haahr, *Governing Europe: Discourse, Governmentality and European Integration* (London and New York, NY, Routledge, 2005), pp. 21–41; Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age*.

28 Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*.

29 Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, pp. 39, 45. See also Walters and Haahr, *Governing Europe*. On the theoretical concepts of 'input' and 'output legitimacy', and their roles in the discursive history of EU legitimation, see C. Sternberg, 'Political Legitimacy between Democracy and Effectiveness: Trade-offs, Interdependencies, and Discursive Constructions by the EU institutions', *European Political Science Review* 7, no. 4 (2015): 615–38.

30 D. Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 186.

31 P. H. Spaak, 'Discours à l'occasion de la signature des Traités instituant la Communauté Economique Européenne et la Communauté Européenne de l'Energie Atomique (25/03/1957)', Archives historiques des Communautés européennes, Florence, Villa Il Poggiolo CM/3/NEGO/091.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the processes of social and political rationalization already well advanced in the historical evolution of modern states'.[32]

Substantively, the central promises of integration, throughout the 1950s and 1960s and beyond, were, of course, peace and prosperity.[33] The declared motivation for European integration was to make war 'not only unthinkable, but materially impossible'.[34] Closely connected to this – and often with the subtext that one was not to be had without the other – was the other emblematic promise of integration, that of better living conditions and a 'higher standard of living', of 'economic and social progress'.[35]

A common pro-integration discursive technique framed European integration against the supposed alternative of war and economic destitution, as indispensable to achieving both peace and prosperity, and, given the absolute necessity of both, as simply indispensable. In this indispensability discourse, integration was a matter of 'no alternative' and even of survival. This discourse was used to give urgency both to the project as a whole and to specific measures and approaches. It was often grounded on the member states' increasing, inescapable *interdependence*, given international relations in the Cold War era as well as the inexorable evolution of modern technology and mass production – not to forget that the Europeans had sealed their already inevitably interconnected fate as a 'community of destiny' with the deliberate, functionalist 'fusion of their essential interests' in the integration project.[36]

Together, these patterns worked towards entrenching the notion that there was such a thing as a European 'common good' or 'common interest'

32 L. Hansen and M. C. Williams, 'The Myths of Europe: Legitimacy, Community and the "Crisis" of the EU', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 37 (1999): 233–49, 243. See also Walters and Haahr, *Governing Europe*; Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*.

33 See Claudia Hiepel's Chapter 19 in this volume.

34 Schuman, 'Schuman Declaration May 1950'.

35 The governments, 'Resolution Adopted by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the E.C.S.C. at Their Meeting at Messina (June 1 to 3, 1955)', www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/1c8aa583-8ec5-41c4-9ad8-73674ea7f4a7/41ec71a6-2eb5-43c7-97e2-75ca55472l7e/Resources#d1086bae-0c13-4a00-8608-73c75ce54fad_en&overlay; European Commission, 'First General Report' (1958), p. 9; W. Hallstein, 'Address Given by Walter Hallstein on the Schuman Plan (28 April 1958)' www.cvce.eu/en/obj/address_given_by_walter_hallstein_on_the_schuman_plan_28_april_1951-en-81868a56-1b45-446e-a572-f14085701773.html, p. 3; Spaak, 'Discours à l'occasion de la signature des Traités'; ECSC Treaty, Preamble. See also Ivan T. Berend's Chapter 20 in this volume.

36 J. Monnet, 'L'Europe unie sera démocratique', BEEC 03/1963(3); ECSC Treaty, Preamble. See similarly E. B. Haas, 'Technocracy, Pluralism and the New Europe. International Regionalism', in J. S. Nye (ed.), *International Regionalism* (Boston, MA, Little Brown, 1968), pp. 149–76, 456; European Commission, 'European Union. Report by Mr. Leo Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium, to the European Council, 27 December 1975', *Bulletin of the European Communities* Suppl. 1/76 (1976): 11–35.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(often used interchangeably); that this was furthered by integration in its emerging form; and that there was a broad consensus on this. A sort of Rousseauean 'general will' oriented towards the common good, in this discourse, arose not only from insight into integration's existential necessity, but also from moral rectitude and the willingness to leave behind the divisive passions, impulses and 'excited demands' associated with 'politics', in order to achieve social and economic progress, and peace for all.[37]

The notion of there being a readily identifiable and reasonably consensual common good was crucial to grounding claims to the bureaucratic legitimacy of the Communities. It allowed the framing of the emerging 'grand design for Europe' as a win–win enterprise, 'not a game in which one side wins and the other loses'.[38] This, in turn, justified the Communities' technocratic mode of operation on the grounds of the principle that 'government action follows the advice of experts' who furthered this European common good.[39]

The Commission, as the Communities' professional and merit-based civil service, had a particular interest in fashioning itself as the Communities' 'champion of generality', their 'initiator, planner and mediator for the common good', providing independent, impartial and technically sound proposals. It defined its role as giving concrete meaning to the supposed European general will and interpreting the general interest.[40]

The crucial weakness both of the technocratic modus operandi and of the underlying topos of a European common good was that they rested on depoliticisation. They glossed over the inescapably divisive and contested nature not only of the ends and goals of (any) governance, but also of how these should be pursued, not to speak of how the costs and benefits of common actions should be divided. They tried to move innately and undeniably political institutional and policy choices *out* of the realms of politicised

37 Haas, 'Technocracy, Pluralism and the New Europe', p. 159. See also European Commission, 'European Union. Report by Mr. Leo Tindemans', 11; Assemblée parlementaire européenne, 'Rapport fait au nom de la commission des affairs politiques et des questions institutionnelles sur l'élection de l'Assemblée parlementaire européenne au suffrage universel direct. Rapporteurs Emilio Battista, Fernand Dehousse, Maurice Faure, W. J. Schuijt, and Ludwig Metzger', *EP Session Documents 1960–61*, 30 April 1960, Document 22 (henceforth 'Dehousse Report'), particularly pp. 16–17.

38 'Une Europe empirique', *Le Monde*, 26 March 1957, 1.

39 K. Featherstone, 'Jean Monnet and the "Democratic Deficit" in the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 32, no. 2 (1994): 149–70, 150, 154.

40 European Commission, 'Vedel Report', pp. 17, 73.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

political will formation through the electoral process and wider public debate.[41]

For a while, in common with the climate in the member states, the ubiquitous anti-totalitarian imperative, and indeed the presence of a totalitarian alternative in central and eastern Europe, helped to downplay the existence of economic ideological choices, and even the possibility of a different political system and ideology of legitimacy. By the 1970s, however, this initial period of grace was over.[42]

European Electoral Democracy and Early Politicisation Strategies

Moreover, deliberate politicisation strategies had already been at work at least from the 1960s onwards. They had marked much of Community discourse and practice and met with important critical counter-efforts, aimed at politicising what the European Communities should be doing and how.

Advocates of a strong and directly elected European Parliament (EP), in particular, took the 'eminently political' nature of integration as the starting point for their demands. Not everyone, the argument went – fuelled forcefully by the crises of the 1960 – agreed on what the new political structure should be doing, how and why. The 'fundamental choices' that needed to be made both about the 'guiding goals' of integration and about its specific policies as well as the 'ways and means' of pursuing them were too 'far-reaching' and too existential a 'gamble on the future' of 'the whole economic life of our six countries' to be left to 'a handful of good experts' who would 'settle all problems to general satisfaction'.[43]

The only conclusion from this could be the need to give the Community 'its own democratic legitimation beyond that which can be transmitted to it by the governments responsible' or the national parliaments.[44] The campaign for European elections here revived and leaned on older federalist visions for Europe (overruled in the treaty negotiations), which had envisioned

41 Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*, pp. 14–44. See also L. van Middelaar, *Alarums and Excursions: Improvising Politics on the European Stage* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Agenda, 2019), p. 228.

42 Müller, *Contesting Democracy*. See also Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*, pp. 210–24.

43 Assemblée parlementaire européenne, 'Dehousse Report', p. 17.

44 European Commission, 'Vedel Report', pp. 12, 32. See further, for example, EP, 'Résolution du Parlement européen, du 27 juin 1963, sur les compétences et les pouvoirs du Parlement européen', *Journal Officiel de la Communauté Européenne* 106 (1963): 1916–63; EP, 'Résolution relative à l'élection des membres du Parlement européen au suffrage universel direct (12 mars 1969)', *Journal Officiel de la Communauté Européenne* 41 (1969): 12; European Commission, 'Third General Report on the Activities of the Community' (1960), http://aei.pitt.edu/30806/1/67367_EEC_3rd.pdf, p. 19.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

European unity as resulting from the impetus of a directly elected European parliament – and which one may have expected to carry greater weight given their prevalence in the pre-Second World War period.[45]

Arguments for strengthening European electoral democracy notably rested *both* on claims about the feasibility or sustainability of integration *and* on normative claims about ideal conditions of democratic legitimacy. Its proponents canvassed for a strong, elected EP on the grounds that this would help to improve political representation in Europe in a whole range of the ideal-typical ways defined by Hannah Pitkin.[46] One such type of argument was that it would strengthen *formal* representation, 'free elections' being the only known means of 'expressing the will of the people' and doing them justice as 'not objects but subjects of the law'.[47] Another frequent case made was that such a parliament would promote what Pitkin termed *substantive* representation as in the Communities' responsiveness to citizen needs and preferences; a strong and elected EP would keep them 'in close and permanent touch with political and human realities'.[48]

Probably the most powerful and prevalent argument advanced in favour of European elections, however, appealed to what would become *symbolic* representation, whereby a political order or its elites are representative because the people believe in them and trust them to represent their interests. Pro-election advocacy rested prominently on the claim that elections were the way 'to associate the peoples with the building of Europe'.[49] European elections and electoral symbolism were argued to have the

45 See, for example, R. N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europa* (Vienna and Leipzig, Pan-Europa-Verlag, 1924); A. Spinelli, *The Eurocrats: Conflict and Crisis in the European Community* (Baltimore, MA, Johns Hopkins Press, 1966); M. Steed, 'The European Parliament: The Significance of Direct Election', *Government and Opposition* 6, no. 4 (1971): 462–76, 462; Burgess, *Federalism and European Union*, pp. 31–6; Rye, 'The Legitimacy of the EU'; Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, p. 409. On this ideal underlying the preferences of particularly the German delegation in negotiations around the Schuman Plan and the eventual founding treaties, see Goetze and Rittberger, 'A Matter of Habit', 44–7.

46 See H. F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles, CA, University of California Press, 1967).

47 Assemblée parlementaire européenne, 'General Report by Fernand Dehousse, Member of the European Parliamentary Assembly (20 April 1960)' (henceforth 'Dehousse Report'), www.cvce.eu/en/obj/general_report_by_fernand_dehousse_member_of_the_european_parliamentary_assembly_30_april_1960-en-89c2a74e-fb16-4b7f-b796-d3759876ddfe.html, pp. 16–17.

48 European Commission, 'Fourth General Report on the Activities of the Community' (1961)', http://aei.pitt.edu/30807/1/67557_EEC_4th.pdf.

49 Assemblée parlementaire européenne, 'Textes relatifs à l'élection de l'Assemblée parlementaire européenne au suffrage universel direct', *Journal Officiel de la Communauté Européenne* 60, no. 2 (1960): 834. See also Assemblée parlementaire européenne, 'Dehousse Report', p. 16.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

potential to help make 'triumph the European idea in public opinion'[50] and to forge a 'European consciousness' in people.[51] A strong and elected EP, so the argument went, would lead directly to public endorsement and make further steps of integration feasible and sustainable.

Of course, by the time the first European elections were held in 1979, with disappointing turnouts, the Communities were facing serious difficulties in delivering on their prosperity and peace promises, given the financial and economic crises of the 1970s and early 1980s combined with renewed international tensions. With the 'cake' no longer growing, narratives of integration furthering an uncontroversial or even indivisible common European good were crumbling. The fiction of the Community bureaucracy and its policies being apolitical or politically neutral was unravelling.[52]

The member states too experienced fierce social critiques and disagreements over economic ideology, and debates raged on the 'legitimation crisis' of the capitalist welfare state, with 'overloaded' government and administrative systems failing to cope with economic pressures.[53] All this manifested itself not least in a loss of confidence in the impartiality and rationality of the bureaucracy.[54] In depictions of European integration, 'Eurocracy' became a dominant emblem. Integration ground to a halt, with a real threat of disintegration of the Community looming.

The Turn to the Citizens and the People's Europe: 1976–1980s

Proposals regarding how to revitalise integration, and subsequently legitimate the ensuing revitalisation, with the 1986 Single European Act and the project of completing the Single Market by 1992, reflected a sea change in the discourses of the European institutions around EU democracy and legitimacy. They henceforth centred on the viewpoint of the European citizens, on 'what the citizens wanted': 'We must listen to our people. What do the Europeans want? What do they expect from a united Europe?'[55]

50 EP, 'Rapport fait au nom de la commission politique sur les compétences et les pouvoirs du Parlement européen. Rapporteur Hans Furler. Documents de séance 31, 14 juin 1983', *EP Session Documents 1963–64* no. 31, 14 June 1963, pp. 1–37, 25.

51 Assemblée parlementaire européenne, 'Dehousse Report', pp. 1, 16.

52 See M. Tsakatika, 'Claims to Legitimacy: The European Commission between Continuity and Change', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43, no. 1 (2005): 193–220; Featherstone, 'Jean Monnet and the "Democratic Deficit"'; Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*, pp. 69–71.

53 J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston, MA, Beacon, 1973). See also Held, *Models of Democracy*, pp. 190–6; Müller, *Contesting Democracy*.

54 Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, pp. 67–8.

55 European Commission, 'Report on European Union (29 December 1975)', www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff/63f5fc

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This discursive shift, making its first appearances in the mid to late 1970s, became policy in the European institutions' joint campaign of the 1980s to transform Community Europe into a 'People's Europe'. The aim of this campaign was to 'bring Europe closer to its citizens'[56] and to make it 'respond to the expectations of the people of Europe'.[57] This was to be achieved by appealing to people not just as 'market citizens' and consumers of security or energy, but as culturally embedded human beings, and as political citizens – 'Union citizens', who held rights *specific* to the European Community. The idea was to make Europe present and tangible in their everyday lives through symbols, material benefits and specific entitlements, and to actively forge a European identity through solemn declaration as well as, not least, by multiplying budgets for the communication and cultural policies, aimed at making people associate Europe with culture, and this culture with themselves.[58]

To be sure, the fact that the citizens and 'what they wanted' were now at the centre of official EU discourse did not necessarily mean that these people got more of an actual say. They remained objects, spectators and addressees, rather than authors, of EU action. The will of the citizens, with its echoes of the trope of the 'will of the people', had a double status; it was referred to *both* as an independent source of legitimacy *and*, at the same time, as an object of manipulation, through cultural and identity-building policies, as well as through professionalised communication and information policies guided by the Eurobarometer.[59]

Moreover, giving the citizens what they wanted remained a matter of efficient policy-making – only now this was framed in terms of citizens'

a7-54ec-4792-8723-1e626324f9e3/Resources#284c9784-9bd2-472b-b704-ba4bb1f3122d_en&overlay, p. 11

56 European Commission, 'Reports from the Ad Hoc Committee on a People's Europe, Brussels, chaired by Pietro Adonnino, 25 and 26 June 1985, and 29 and 30 March 1985', *Bulletin of the European Economic Community* Supplement 7/85 (1985): 2–33 (henceforth 'Adonnino Reports').

57 European Council, 'Conclusions of the Sessions of the European Council, Fontainebleau, 25 and 26 June', *Bulletin of the European Communities* no. 6 (1984): 10–11. See also European Commission, 'Tindemans Report', p. 13; European Commission, 'Adonnino Reports', p. 5.

58 See European Commission, 'Document on the European Identity Published by the Nine Foreign Ministers in Copenhagen on 14 December 1973, "Declaration on European Identity"', BEC 1973(12): 118–22 (henceforth 'Document on the European Identity'); C. Shore, *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London, Routledge, 2000); Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*, pp. 76–102.

59 See European Commission, 'Adonnino Reports', pp. 10–11, 20; C. Sternberg, 'Public Opinion in the EU Institutions' Discourses on EU Legitimacy from the Beginnings of Integration to Today', *Politique européenne* 54, no. 4 (2016): 24–56, especially 37–9; Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*, pp. 67–102, in particular pp. 80–2, 100–2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

expectations.[60] It was a matter of greater sophistication in mapping as well as tweaking these expectations: in other words, of bringing the citizens closer to the EU, rather than bringing the EU closer to them.

The Post-Maastricht Crusade for Democracy

The Maastricht Treaty's thorny ratification, combined with plummeting support rates, once again changed the landscape of what could plausibly be said about the EU's legitimacy. It became difficult to maintain that the EU reflected what the Europeans wanted. Political actors could no longer act on the assumption that the citizens would not interfere with the deepening and widening of integration. The 'permissive consensus' was dead.[61]

In discursively managing this crisis, the European institutions framed the EU's 'all of a sudden very visible and audible, real and evident' legitimacy gap almost exclusively in term of its 'democratic deficit'. In this, they responded to critiques in the intense member state debates on Maastricht, including to the 'no demos' critique, that resounded far beyond the German legal community, and 'national republican' discourses that limited the practice of democracy and 'politics' to the community of the French and other nations. But they also relegated at least as pressing public concerns with monetary union, or with the power balance in post-Cold War Europe, to the background.[62] EU democracy was now firmly on the agenda. The next chapter in this volume explores how EU initiatives to tackle this democratic deficit have evolved since Maastricht. Here, I shall single out three ways in which the EU institutions effectively stretched and redefined the meaning of 'democracy' in managing the Maastricht ratification crisis and the ensuing (arguably ongoing) crisis of the EU's legitimacy.

First, during and immediately after the ratification crisis, the 'crusade for democracy' declared by the Commission 'in close cooperation' with the EP

60 See, for example, European Commission, 'Document on the European Identity', Section 1; J. Santer, 'Déclaration de Monsieur Jacques Santer, Président du Gouvernement, Président en exercise du Conseil Européen sur la Session du Conseil Européen de Milan les 28 et 29 juin 1985', *Bulletin de documentation* 4 (1985): 14–18; European Council, 'Conclusions of the Sessions of the European Council, Fontainebleau, 25 and 26 June', BEC, 1984(6), 10–11.

61 See, for example, European Council, 'European Council in Edinburgh (11/12 December 1992). Conclusions of the Presidency and Annexes. The Ratification of the Maastricht Treaty' (henceforth 'Edinburgh Conclusions'), in F. Laursen and S. Vanhoonacker (eds.), *The Ratification of the Maastricht Treaty: Issues, Debates and Future Implications* (Maastricht, European Institute of Public Administration and Martinus Nijhof, 1994), pp. 411–41, 411; EP, 'Reflection Group's Report' (1995), http://aei.pitt.edu/49155/1/B0015.pdf, p. 2.

62 Eurobarometer 38 (December 1992), p. vi.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

centred on the openness and transparency of EU decision-making, as well as the principle of subsidiarity.[63]

Augmenting openness and transparency was hailed as a way to increase citizens' influence in that it would bring the EU's actions to greater scrutiny by the public as well as by the national parliaments, also 'ensur[ing] a better informed public debate on its activities'.[64] In effect, of course, the people's role in the logic of this transparency/openness discourse was limited to *observing* rather than sanctioning or actually deciding.

Subsidiarity in turn was presented in part as an apolitical instrument of better law-making.[65] In addition, it was presented as the answer to a common political discourse, according to which the votes of individual citizens counted less the greater the overall number of voters. The suggestion was that decisions taken at the lowest possible level of decision-making (representing smaller pools of voters) would be taken under the citizens' critical gaze, scrutiny and control. The subsidiarity discourse implied a natural link between subsidiarity and transparency.[66] Often, moreover, it simply equated subsidiarity with 'nearness' or 'closeness' to the citizens.[67]

Both the openness/transparency discourse and the subsidiarity discourse evoked a strengthening of democratic accountability, but equally a transformational effect in mobilising lost popular support.[68] They neglected the fact that citizens' being able to better 'see' European decision-making and observe it from closer up did not necessarily give them influence over it.[69]

Secondly, in the medium term the paradigm of *governance* proposed nothing less than a full re-imagination of democracy: a superior, more genuine, 'complete and thoroughgoing' alternative to traditional

63 See, for example, J. Delors, 'Address to the European Parliament, 10 February 1993, on the Occasion of the Investiture Debate Following Appointment of the New Commission' (1993), https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/76643950-0a1d-4692-a384-3e97bf559309.

64 European Council, 'Edinburgh Conclusions', pp. 409, 412–13; R. Prodi, 'Speech by Romano Prodi, President-Designate of the European Commission to the European Parliament, Strasbourg 14 September' (1999), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_99_114.

65 S. Van Hecke, 'The Principle of Subsidiarity: Ten Years of Application in the European Union', *Regional and Federal Studies* 13, no. 1 (2003): 55–80.

66 European Commission, 'Report on the Operation of the Treaty on European Union (presented by the Commission)', SEC (95) 731 final, 10 May 1995, p. 5.

67 See European Council, 'Edinburgh Conclusions', p. 410; EP, 'Reflection Group's Report', p. 2.

68 For example, European Council, 'Edinburgh Conclusions', p. 410; EP, 'Reflection Group's Report', p. 4 and Section I.

69 P. Magnette, 'European Governance and Civic Participation: Beyond Elitist Citizenship?', *Political Studies* 51, no. 1 (2003): 144–60.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

representation – with which citizens across liberal democracies were becoming disenchanted.[70] Governance was 'the kind of democracy our fellow-citizens want'.[71] There is an abundant political science literature on EU governance.[72]

How was this supposed to work? 'Governance' focused attention on the top-down consultation of civil society organisations, as opposed to individual citizens or the people as a whole. As did the technocratic–bureaucratic mode of operation and legitimation, governance thus prioritised *responsiveness* to citizens' expectations over democratic control, representation or accountability.[73] It gave a voice to, and structurally favoured, organised and highly informed interest groups, explicitly pledging, incidentally, to raise popular 'confidence in expert advice'.[74] On these grounds, many critics regarded it 'as a restatement of the Technocratic Europe's *raison d'être* – "leave it to the experts"'.[75]

Another commonality with bureaucratic legitimacy, as well as with the turn to the citizens of the 1970s and 1980s, was that '[e]ffective action by European institutions' continued to be framed as 'the greatest source of their legitimacy', of higher priority than arguments about accountability or formal representation.[76] What had changed was that civil society consultation offered a new means of *identifying* citizens' preferences that could then be catered for. 'Participation is not about institutionalising protest. It is about more effective policy shaping.'[77] The governance discourse assumed that European citizens ultimately preferred entrusting civic participation in political decision-making and policy-making to civil society organisations over parliamentary representation.

Thirdly and finally, institutional discourses and policies projected Union citizenship and identity-building as solutions to the EU's democratic deficit. If there wasn't a European demos, the challenge was to forge one, complete

70 European Commission, 'European Governance. A White Paper' (2001) (henceforth 'Governance White Paper'), www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_6_raporlar/1_1_white_papers/com2001_white_paper_european_governance.pdf, p. 32.

71 R. Prodi, 'The European Union and Its Citizens: a Matter of Democracy' (2001), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_01_365.

72 See, for example, B. Kohler-Koch, *The Transformation of Governance in the European Union* (London, Routledge, 2002) and the references in what follows.

73 P. Magnette, 'European Governance'; J. Mather, *Legitimating the European Union: Aspirations, Inputs and Performance* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

74 European Commission, 'Governance White Paper', p. 19.

75 Mather, *Legitimating the European Union*, p. 85; Tsakatika, 'Claims to Legitimacy'. See also B. Kohler-Koch, 'Framing: The Bottleneck of Constructing Legitimate Institutions', *Journal of European Public Policy* 7, no. 4 (2000): 513–31, 522.

76 R. Prodi, '2000–2005: Shaping the New Europe' (2000), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_00_41. See also European Commission, 'Governance White Paper', pp. 2, 5.

77 European Commission, 'Governance White Paper', p. 15.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with constitutional patriotism. This was in continuity with earlier identity-building efforts touched upon above, and with efforts to naturalise European governance by positively affecting people's everyday experiences through symbols as well as policies.[78] These approaches culminated in the project of an 'EU constitution', which was designed to bring the EU 'closer to its citizens', in order to give birth to a constitutive constitutional moment, European constitutional patriotism and, indeed, a European people.[79]

Assertions of Popular Sovereignty and Redoubled Politicisation

Of course, the constitutional treaty's public reception in the member states, and later on the Brexit debate and campaign, may suggest that the official emphasis on EU democracy of the 1990s and early 2000s either backfired, or else failed to turn the tide of wider public understandings of integration and democracy at large. Democracy did play a key role in these debates, but *not* in the re-imagined senses advanced by official rhetoric in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The referendums on the Constitutional Treaty and on Brexit can be read as assertions of popular sovereignty and the voters' will to shape their countries' economic and social future – insisting on the means of electoral and competitive party democracy, as opposed to either outsourcing participation to organised professionals or reinforcing a technocratic and constitutionalising dynamics.[80] An important discourse in the 2005 French 'no' campaign cast the rejection of the constitutional treaty as a reclaiming of 'the political' – against these de-politicising tendencies. Democracy and 'the political' in this discourse were not only confined essentially to the nation, but also re-cast as being essentially about enabling and channelling contestation.[81] 'No' voters were asserting their right to fight and have a say over what the EU should be doing and how, and where it should stop.

78 See K. McNamara, *The Politics of Everyday Europe: Constructing Authority in the European Union* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017).

79 European Council, 'Laeken Declaration on the Future of the European Union (15 December 2001), Presidency Conclusions of the Laeken European Council', *Bulletin of the European Union* no. 12 (2001): 19–23.

80 C. Sternberg, 'The French and Dutch Block the Constitutional Treaty', in J. E. Smith (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of European Referendums* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), pp. 583–600; Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*, pp. 145–86. See also C. Sternberg, 'What Were the French Telling Us by Voting Down the "EU Constitution"? A Case for Interpretive Research on Referendum Debates', *Comparative European Politics* 16 (2018): 145–70.

81 See Sternberg, *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy*, pp. 145–86.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

If the 2005 referendums were resounding statements against the 'unwillingness' on the part of Europe's political and administrative elites 'to subject the question of integration to meaningful political contestation in domestic politics',[82] then the later critiques of the EU's handling of the euro crisis as well as the Euroscepticism rising in many member states[83] drove this message home with even greater force. The euro crisis at the latest made it undeniable that the stakes of EU politics were inescapably conflictual and controversial, the challenge being how to democratically negotiate, channel and mutually recognise clashing interests, needs and concerns.[84] Brexit campaigners, in turn, took this one step further, to questioning, or politicising, the legitimacy of supranational integration as such, under the banners of 'taking back control' and reclaiming 'sovereignty'.[85] Only the British people, through Parliament, could legitimately decide over Britain's social and economic future and its boundaries. A new type of British Euroscepticism was centred on the claim that, given shared interests, the benefits of supranational cooperation could be had without compromising sovereignty.[86]

Concluding Remarks

Where does this run-through of major shifts in official imaginations of EU democracy leave us? On a first level, playing different imaginations against each other defamiliarises us from any teleological understanding that may underpin the term 'democratic deficit', of the 'EU as a project of progress towards a predetermined goal, as a self-propelling engine towards a European democracy'.[87]

Just as the EU has many democratic deficits, it has also had a range of possible democratic futures over time. Maastricht was indeed a turning point in the evolution of discourses on EU democracy over time but, as we have seen, democracy was not a non-issue before. Rather, it was imagined in a variety of ways.

82 A. Glencross, 'The Difficulty of Justifying European Integration as a Consequence of Depoliticization: Evidence from the 2005 French Referendum', *Government and Opposition* 44, no. 3 (2009): 243–61.
83 See Chapter 24 by Wouter Wolfs in this volume.
84 C. Sternberg, K. Gartzou-Katsouyanni and K. Nicolaïdis, *The Greco-German Affair in the Euro Crisis: Mutual Recognition Lost?* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
85 See B. Martill and U. Staiger (eds.), *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the Futures of Europe* (London, University College London Press, 2018).
86 S. Usherwood, 'The Third Era of British Euroscepticism: Brexit as a Paradigm Shift', *The Political Quarterly* 89, no. 4 (2018): 553–9. On the rise of Euroscepticism more broadly, see Chapter 24 by Wouter Wolfs in this volume.
87 Schulz-Forberg and Stråth, *The Political History of European Integration*, p. 4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The changing imaginaries of EU democracy, moreover, communicated closely with broader shifts in the social imaginaries of modern democracy. European integration was part and parcel of Europe's post-war constitutional ethos, and the Communities' nature as a top-down enterprise in social engineering lent itself to the bureaucratic mode of legitimation characterising the 1950s and 1960s more broadly, all the while being framed by embedding discourses on delegation and the need for a strong and elected EP. The turn to the citizens, the 'People's Europe' discourse and the redefinition of EU democracy in the EU institutions post-Maastricht underline how constructions of EU democracy provided a 'laboratory' for experimenting with alternative modes of legitimation emerging also at the national level, while simultaneously feeding on them for their own rationalisations, directive utopias and pragmatic critiques of the EU's legitimacy.[88]

Particularly the search for more 'genuine' alternatives to electoral democracy underlying the governance discourse was in sync with a general disillusionment with democracy starting in the 1980s; with what Pierre Rosanvallon has called the 'de-sacralisation' of elections and 'collapse of democratic legitimacy'. The discourses on closeness to the citizens, openness and transparency, likewise, read almost as if taken from the playbook of the 'revolution in the conception of legitimacy' and 'decentering of democracy' that he describes (and proscribes), whereby democracy became 'something more than merely electing representatives'.[89] And yet, the debates and votes on the Constitutional Treaty and on Brexit can be read as an assertion of the will to exercise popular sovereignty through the classic means of electoral competitive democracy.

Finally, in common with modern democracy at large, the discursive history of ideas around EU democracy can be told as a history of progressive politicisation, of how it became increasingly implausible to take for granted any consensus on the guiding goals of integration and policy, or on how to pursue them. It is a story not least of how it increasingly became undeniable that virtually any choice in integration politics creates winners and losers, of how any discourses glossing over this and instead emphasising harmony effectively became counter-productive. The challenge for democracy in the EU is to provide mechanisms, and norms, for collective and representative decision-making under conditions of essential disagreement and difference.

88 Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, pp. 232–4; Sternberg, 'Ideologies and Imaginaries of Legitimacy'.

89 Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, pp. 69–79. See also Sternberg, 'Ideologies and Imaginaries of Legitimacy'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Any exercise by the EU institutions to strengthen the democracy narrative in any reforms to its policies and institutions, including most recently the Conference on the Future of Europe, must take this into account.

Recommended Reading

Bang, H., M. D. Jensen and P. Nedergaard. '"We the People" versus "We the Heads of States": The Debate on the Democratic Deficit of the European Union', *Policy Studies* 36, no. 2 (2015): 196–216.

Kohler-Koch, B. and B. Rittberger (eds.). *Debating the Democratic Legitimacy of the European Union* (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

Piattoni, S. (ed.). *The European Union: Democratic Principles and Institutional Architectures in Times of Crisis* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015).

Sternberg, C. S. *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy: Public Contestation, 1950–2005* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108781480.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press