Controversy in the Garden of Concepts: Rethinking the "Politicisation" of the EU

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Niilo Kauppi, Kari Palonen, Claudia Wiesner

Abstract

In this article, we suggest a novel conceptual framework for understanding and analyzing EU politicisation. Recent studies on EU politicisation argue that the post-Maastricht era led to the politicisation of EU integration via an increasing citizens' dissatisfaction. Until then, politics had played only a minor role. Contrary to this account, we argue that European integration has been from the beginning a political process, but an unusual one. To capture its uniqueness we introduce the concepts of politisation as a precondition of politicization and of politification as a depoliticised modality of politicisation. Politicisation is then not something new to EU integration but rather it is constitutive of EU integration itself. We further argue that understanding politicisation requires taking a closer look at its relationship to "politics" or "political", as it is essential to spell out the respective understanding of this key concept – Grundbegriff in Reinhart Koselleck's sense. The interpretation of what is considered as politicisation depends on the interpretation of what is politics/political. We argue in favour of rethinking the concept of politics and its relationship to politicisation in terms that avoid spatial and functional metaphors. To capture the power dynamics involved in European integration, we aim at an understanding of EU politicisation that is at once more historical and based on an actor-oriented perspective on the political. On this basis we discuss the main conceptual weaknesses of studies on EU politicization and conclude by developing some points of our alternative conception.

1.   Introduction

In this article, we suggest a novel conceptual framework for understanding and analysing EU politicisation. Recent studies on EU politicisation (de Wilde 2011, Green-Pedersen 2012, de Wilde and Zürn 2012, Statham and Trenz 2013, Zürn 2016) argue that after four decades of elite-driven integration, it was only the post-Maastricht era that led to the politicisation of EU integration via an increasing citizens' dissatisfaction. Until then, politics played according to this account only a minor role. Contrary to this account, we argue that European integration has been from the beginning a political process, but an unusual one. Politicisation is thus not something new to EU integration but rather it is constitutive of EU integration itself.

The initial politicizing momentum of integration consisted in opening up a new dimension on the agenda of politics, namely the possibility of Europeanisation and the denaturalisation of the nation state as a given and self-evident unit of politics (see Kauppi 2005, 2010). However, current social scientific vocabulary is insufficient to analyse this historically novel process. This possibility of engaging in creative political action beyond the nation-state will be described by distinguishing between three terms that refer to different faces of the concept, "politisation" as a passive form and precondition of politicisation, "politicisation" as rendering something political, and "politification" as politicisation through depoliticisation (for a slightly different understanding of the concept see Duclos 1961). The novelty of the initial politicizing momentum represents a radical break from doing politics at the "European" level or at the state level. It tears down the closed shop character of "national" politics as well as the traditional divide between foreign and domestic politics (politicisation). While EU integration thus has been political from the beginning, at all levels, many ministers, officials, ideologists and academics (included through theories like neofunctionalism) have presented it as being fundamentally non-political, for political reasons (politification). This is the second novelty of the process.

Our second core argument is that understanding politicisation and related concepts requires taking a closer look at its relationship to "politics" or "political". Even if the contributions in the recent discourse on EU politicisation have not spelled out their understanding of politics/the political as the key concept – Grundbegriff in the sense of Reinhart Koselleck (for his last statement see Koselleck 2006) – scholars should analyse the underlying conceptual commitments of this discourse. The interpretation of what is considered as politicisation crucially depends on the interpretation of what is politics/political.

The theoretical and methodological perspective of conceptual history maintains that key concepts can never be used without contributing to the controversies around them and to the different interpretations that are possible. Key concepts are thus always imminently controversial and contingent in their usage and normative colour or tone. In other words: there never is one single understanding of a concept, but always a variety of understandings. In particular when concepts aim at grasping complex phenomena or are subject to several interpretations, scholars should reflect on their own interpretations, as well as on those of the actors using these concepts and their academic interpreters. As scholars interested in conceptual and theoretical questions of politics we have noticed a strange autonomisation of the very expression "politicisation" in the debate on EU politicisation. It is as if "politicisation" would be a reality of its own.

In the following, we will lay out our understanding of politics and the political, as well as of politicization. We will explain the conceptual cluster around politicization and the two other terms, politisation and and politification. We will then continue with a reading of some texts that summarize the main assumptions of the recent EU politicisation literature, and discuss the main conceptual weaknesses of these studies. This reading of the limitations of the field approach to politics and politicisation provides the point of departure for rethinking the concept of politics and its relationship to politicisation in terms that avoid spatial and functional metaphors. From our perspective, current accounts of politicisation are inadequate for capturing the power dynamics involved in European integration. We aim at an understanding of EU politicisation that is at once more historical and based on an actor-oriented perspective on the political. Finally, we will develop some points of our alternative conception of EU politicisation and illustrate it with concrete examples.

2. Politisation, Politicisation and Politification

How one understands politicisation depends on the broader understanding of the concept of politics. Roughly speaking, we can distinguish in both everyday and academic usage two different types of concepts: politics as a sphere and politics as an activity. In the former sense politics refers to a more or less stable order, and politicisation to the extension of the borders of this order, for example in the relationship to other sphere concepts, such as culture, law, economy or religion. Within this conceptual horizon 'politicisation' is more frequently used as an undue mixing of politics to phenomena outside the political sphere, but it can also be understood as a legitimate extension of the political sphere (see e.g. Maier 1987). Such views have been both conceptually possible and historically relevant, for example in interpretations of "the personal is political" as extending politics from the public to the private sphere. US feminists coined the slogan in the 1960s, and for example Mona Steffen blamed her male fellows in the German student movement for not doing enough for the "politicization of private life" (quoted from Studentenbewegung 1967-1969, 221-222).

If we, in contrast, understand politics as an activity, it is then something contingent – it is always possible to act otherwise, even if the results of the alternatives may be the same. Within this horizon we can define "politicisation" as an active use of contingency, of rendering something contested or controversial. These views may be evaluated either pejoratively or appreciatively. But here we can also detect a different relationship between politics and politicisation than in the sphere concept of politics. For the activity concept treating something as contingent or as controversial is not an extension of the margins of the activity of politics itself, but rather constitutive of politics. It refers to a marking or an opening up of phenomenon as contingent, a horizon for playing or debating that then consists in using or not-using this horizon in one way or another. In this sense politicisation constitutes politics, not vice versa. (see Palonen 2003)

Politicization in parliamentary debates (http://hansard.millbanksystems.com or http://pdok.bundestag.de) refers to two different types of phenomena: a "passive" form of a process of "being politicised", as an unintended result of some activities, and an "active" for of a demand "to politicise" something and a successful action to realize this politicisation. This semantics is fairly similar in English, French and German, although for the passive form it would be possible in German to speak of Verpolitisierung and reserve Politisierung to the active concept, although historically there hardly is such a linguistic separation. This distinction is clear in the Finnish politisoida for the active form and politisoitua for the passive verb. We propose to use the English verb politicise for the active form and politise for the passive form. Politisation is conceptualised as a form of "pre-politicisation", as a precondition for the politicisation of issues by social groups, an opening up of opportunities that can be seized to further political issues. Politisation refers to issues being "in the air of the times", discussed in public but not yet marked as being political, that is not yet politicised. Politification for its part refers to an asymmetry in which certain groups politicise issues, in this case EU integration, while presenting them as not being politicized.

The pejorative and appreciative uses of politicisation have to be separated from one another. It has been much more common, even in parliamentary debates, to blame others for having "politicized" something, either intentionally or unwittingly, to use the term for one's own activity, although also this possibility has existed at least in German already before WW I (see Palonen 1985 and 1989). In line with this strand of thought, some of the recent studies on EU politicization seem to imply that some political actors have contributed to the undue politicisation of the EU. The authors do not seem to be interested in the vocabulary and the activities of the political agents themselves, although it seems unlikely that for example Eurosceptic politicians or parties would have demanded a politicisation of the EU.

It would also be easy to assume that the passive form politisation as an unintended byproduct of actions and processes would be judged as something deplorable. In a formal sense this by no means is necessary. One can well understand politisation that has occurred as a Chance in Max Weber's sense, as a precondition for future action that should be used as an opportunity

rather than repressed, denied or ignored. Weber inverted the Bismarckian slogan of politics as the "art of the possible" to "art of the impossible", Kunst des Unmöglichen in the sense of setting goals that transcend the limits of what is considered as possible (Weber 1917, 514).

The recent scholarly work on the politicisation of the EU assumes that politicisation and, indeed, politics, are something well known and not especially problematic. This is clearly not the case if one considers the history of the concepts, the various meaning of "politicisation" and the actual use of the "polit-vocabulary" by protagonists and critics of European integration.

3.   Politics in the garden of concepts

To illustrate how conceptual controversies around politics can be analysed, we have chosen to focus on one contribution to this debate that has the merit of making explicit the underlying conception of politics of most studies on the politicisation of the EU. Michael Zürn in his article "Opening up Europe: Next Steps in Politicisation Research" (2016) presents this programmatic declaration:

> *Politicisation, in general terms, means the demand for, or the act of, transporting an issue or an institution into the field or sphere of politics – making previously unpolitical matters political. Functional differentiation is a necessary prerequisite for such a notion of politicisation. There has to be a differentiation of spheres or function systems in the first place, before it can be moved from one to the other. But how is the sphere of politics – the political, so to say – to be separated from other function systems?* (Zürn 2016, 167)

Unlike most other interventions in the EU politicisation discourse, Zürn thus gives us a clear indication of both what kind of entity "politics" is for him and that politicisation means "making unpolitical matters political". With these definitions he already commits to a certain view of politics and the political which is not historically obvious, although widely assumed in the contemporary public and academic debate.

The strongest commitment lies in claiming that politics is a "field or sphere" type of concept. In other words Zürn uses a spatial metaphor for it. With the agricultural connotation of "field" and the geometric figure of "sphere" he assumes that politics is an entity that has a special place of its own within a garden of concepts. More specifically, he justifies this with the conventional sociological scheme of speaking of "functional differentiation". Zürn makes the additional claim that politics is one specific "function" or bundle of functions that gives to it its specific place within the conceptual garden.

Without entering deeper into Zürn's spatial or functional metaphors, we can observe that "politicisation" is for him an act of "transporting" something, another spatial metaphor, which makes the boundaries between the field fluid or historically variable. In other words, politicisation marks the extension of the field of politics in the garden of concepts by transporting the boundaries to fields that were previously outside the old or perhaps "proper" sphere of politics.

This view presupposes that "politics" conceptually precedes "politicisation". In other words, "politics" is not a product of an original politicisation of a phenomenon, but politicisation is limited to the borders of politics, to the "margins" of the phenomenon of politics that is itself not touched by it, presupposing a conceptual realism. "Politics" is assumed to be already there, as something if not in the "nature of the things" at least as something that enables the interpretation of reality in the terms of functional differentiation. Or, to avoid such strong essentialistic connotations, agents have interpreted human reality in terms of functional differentiation and have constructed the sphere of politics. This is not necessarily to say that the construction of politics is only a product of sociologists who use the language of functional differentiation. Rather this language articulates human practices in corresponding spatial or gardening metaphors, which can be traced back for example to the thinking habits of more geometrico (see Palonen 2006, 54-61).

If we take the idea of functional differentiation between fields literally, politicisation means also something resembling the conquering of a piece of field for politics at the cost of other fields. Furthermore, Zürn's formulation, especially the word "making" gives a strong indication that politicisation is an "either or" matter. A phenomenon is political or not, tertium non datur. In the logic of differentiation between the spheres, phenomena are either political or not and when they are political, they cannot be simultaneously something else. They cannot be political to some degree, or in some respect, or to some agents.

4.   Accounts on EU politicisation

The view that politics is, following a spatial metaphor, a field clearly has influenced most of the current accounts on EU politicization. Moreover, these accounts elaborate a rather narrow view on politics and politicization, limiting it to institutions, parties, and the media.

An article written by Liesbeth Hooghe and Gary Marks (2009) stands as a prototype for a current, top-down account on EU politicisation, which also follows a rather restraint understanding of politicisation. Hooghe and Marks describe politicisation as a key mechanism that has changed public support for integration from "permissive consensus" to "constraining dissensus". They further argue that this change endangers the integration process, because parties and governments now tend to take into account their citizens' preferences and hence also their EU-critical attitudes. Hooghe and Marks depict a functional model of the related processes in which "public opinion" appears as one intervening variable that influences the ways parties and politicians position themselves with regard to the EU (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 9). The general story behind the politicization account as it is discussed in most of the recent contributions, including Hooghe's and Marks's, is the following one.

Since the beginning, European integration has been an elite project. Led by governments and EU elites, citizens largely supported it through what Lindberg and Scheingold have coined a "permissive consensus" (1970). The expression assumes that citizens did not ask too many questions and took their governments integration policies for granted, supporting them and EU membership in general.

Since the debates and referendums on the Maastricht Treaty, citizens no longer wanted to follow and support the elite project unquestionably. This is what Hooghe and Marks term "constraining dissensus". Consequently, citizens' tacit support for the integration process declined, and this decline was directly mirrored in empirical indicators like the Eurobarometer data that measure EU identification and support.

In recent years we have witnessed a growing citizen dissatisfaction with and contestation of EU integration. Citizens clearly no longer understand EU integration, and they mentally decouple from the EU. Consequently, they do not only seek justifications for integration, but also provoke political conflict about it. Eurosceptic parties gain in support, decisions in integration policy are made public and contested, political parties position themselves more publicly with regard to integration, and last not least, even EU institutions become internally politicised because the new cleavages are carried into what formerly was the realm of experts. In that sense, integration altogether becomes politicised.

According to Hooghe and Marks, elites have to deal with the growing dissatisfaction, which complicates their work. Politicisation may hence represent a danger for integration, as it limits the room for government manoeuver. Politicisation is thus is something the citizens want and EU actors as well as governments try to block. Possible consequences of politicisation that are discussed, finally, are differentiated integration, a breakdown of EU, or the enhancement of EU democratisation.

Hooghe's and Marks's perspective on politicisation is narrow and top-down-oriented. It only focuses on (cf. de Wilde 2011) 1) Political parties and parliaments, 2) EU institutions and 3) Mass media and the way the report on the EU. The perspective is also unidirectional. Politicisation

leads to top-down processes: from parties to citizens, parties to institutions, institutions to the media, the media to citizens.

In this top-down account of politicization, almost all contributors to the discussion on the politicization of the EU conceive citizens' dissatisfaction with the EU as the major triggering factor for politicisation. They do not take bottom-up activities to politicise the EU seriously into account. When political parties react to citizen´s preferences, the focus is on parties and how they position themselves. Institutions get politicised because their members no longer follow simply technocratic agendas, but agendas that are more oriented towards party-political cleavages. While the media increasingly report on the EU because there is more interest in the EU, the focus is still on what the media publish, not on how citizens receive it. With regard to a bottom-up perspective on politicisation, many authors do not even discuss opinion polls.

Hooghe and Marks define "dissensus" in a one-sided and pejorative way. It refers to a deviation from a norm that was widely shared among ministers, administrators, ideologists and scholars. It does not refer to the possibility of opening up a fair, parliamentary-style debate on EU politics. Moreover, those politicians (see Cohn-Bendit and Verhofstadt 2012) or intellectuals (e.g. Menasse 2012), who have been in favour of a federalist-type politicization of EU institutions, are passed over in silence.

However, while accounts in the politicisation debate related to the role of media and the opening of public spaces share the general perspective on politicisation just sketched, they also advocate a perspective on politicisation that is at once more optimistic and more horizontal and complex, and that also emphasizes its link to democratisation (Statham and Trenz 2014). In this account, politicisation can lead to creating new public spaces and enhancing public debate. These might lead, with the inclusion of civil society actors, to more transparent policy debates and decisions. The authors see public discourses and transparency as important means to create legitimacy for EU institutions and their decision-making (cf. Trenz and Statham 2013, 5). Trenz and Statham underline the possibility of a bottom-up dynamic that is linked to democratisation:

> *Our thesis is that an emerging European public sphere has a self-constituting dynamic that couples the unfolding of transnational spaces of political communication with the democratisation of the EU´s institutional system. The normative viewpoint is that public spheres can democratise institutions: the more political actors debate decision-making over European integration, the more this constitutes a Europeanized space of communication, and the better the chances are for supplying the important sources of critical feedback that enhance the democratic legitimacy of executive decisions.* (Trenz and Statham 2013, 5)

Politification has been the prototypical modality of legitimisation of European integration. As a new type of polity amidst nation states and international organisations, "innovating ideologists" such as Jean Monnet or Walter Hallstein viewed the EEC/EC as a fragile construction, without strong institutions or public support. It was seen as necessary to develop supranational institutions, procedures and practices behind closed doors and present the governments, parliaments and citizens with a fait accompli, or, as the present term is, an acquis communautaire. Politification was frequently contested. For instance the French government under De Gaulle boycotted EEC institutions in 1965/66. From such perspective the involvement of parliaments and citizens would have meant an undue politicisation of the process, which would have endangered the balance of powers in the EEC. Today politification is less credible, although some of the critiques of politicisation still can be understood from this point of view.

5.   Politics is the result of politicisations

If politics is taken as an activity, "politics" or "political" must first be marked as such, and this activity of marking is what we call politicisation. In contrast to Zürn, for us politicisation does not concern the margins of the political but refers to an action that constitutes something as political by a speech act of marking or naming. This view is based on the nominalistic view of concepts,

inspired by the work of among others Max Weber and Ludwig Wittgenstein (see e.g. Skinner 1988). It allows us to understand that what is political is in itself a historical phenomenon and that politicisation is the action or the process responsible for all the historical forms of politics. As such it can appear in different forms.

To identify what can be understood as politicising or of the marking of a phenomenon as political, we need a minimal criterion for the activity of politicisation. This criterion can be connected to the very concept of action or activity, namely to its contingent character: we can only speak of action when it could have been different, when the persons could have acted otherwise. Politicisation in this sense is thus intelligible as an action of marking something as contingent, as something that is open to alternative forms of action, to politics, to making something "playable", involving time and space. Connecting politics with contingency is an important topos in the history of the concept, visible in the works of such authors as Max Weber (1919), Karl Mannheim (1929), George Catlin (1929), Hannah Arendt (1958), Bertrand de Jouvenel (1963) or Michael Oakeshott (1975) (see Palonen 1998, 2006).

Politicisation is thus a claim or an experience to understand a phenomenon in the plural world of human beings as contingent, as a subject matter for politics. This, then, refers to the next and more specific level of contingency (and of politics), to the possibility of controversy between the acting persons. What is regarded as controversial, must always be contingent, but not vice versa.

In this view politicisation is not exclusive: a phenomenon can be at the same time political and something else, for example a cultural, legal or technical phenomenon – but it is the political aspect that is interesting for a political scientist. Politicisation, understood in this manner, only renders or claims to make the political aspect of a phenomenon visible or present in the situation. To use Weber's terminology (Weber 1919, 1922), academic research is a struggle for power between scholars and they might use different power shares (Machtanteile) in this struggle – proposing a new perspective on a phenomenon marks always a politicisation through a marking of a new type of power share. Politicisation refers to different perceptions of the political that different agents have.

Politicisation can be either a claim or an experience. The passive form of politisation, either as an improper activity of political adversaries or as the unintended result of some processes of change, has been the most common dimension in the meaning of the concept. Nonetheless, the speech act of demanding to politicise something is even today less common than that of blaming sinister forces or anonymous processes for politicisation.

So far we have spoken only of the politicisation of "phenomena". In the history of concept, however, an important layer of meaning has concerned the politicisation of persons, the politicisation for instance of women, youth or the intellectuals for instance. Jean-Paul Sartre spoke (1964) of the political as a "dimension of the person", in a non-exclusive sense. Again, this process can be either passive or active, and it can be evaluated in negative, neutral or appreciative terms.

These are elementary aspects of the grammar of politicisation within the horizon of the activity concept of politics operating with the contingent and the controversial. They provide the starting point for a more nuanced approach to politicisation. For the moment we shall discard the term "depoliticisation", with the remark that it is not symmetrical to politicisation. What has once been marked and named as political cannot simply be forgotten or neglected, as it refers to an experience that has taken place. Of course some politicisations might fade away in the face with others, but nevertheless they do not mark depoliticisations of the phenomena in question (see Steinmetz 2013). While politicisation/politisation is always relative to some actors, the concept of politification refers to an asymmetrical process whereby some actors see actions as politicised while others see the same actions as being depoliticised, opening up a dynamic for further politisation/politicisation.

6. Aspects of politisation/politicisation/politification in the EU

EU integration has always been eminently political, and has been closely related to politicisation. The foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), European Economic community (EEC) and the Euratom in the 1950s can be regarded as a remarkable politicisation in the sense of opening up European politics to the practices of denationalisation and creating modestly supra-national European institutions, following the example given by international organisations like the predecessor of the OECD, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) that was created to managed the Marshall Plan. As a new type of polity amidst nation states and international organisations, 'innovating ideologists' (in the sense of Skinner 1974) such as Jean Monnet and Walter Hallstein viewed the EEC/EC as a fragile construction, without strong institutions. They saw the development of supranational institutions, procedures and practices behind closed doors as necessary to make them appear as a fait accompli.

The course of integration has been political also in the sense that it has been marked by contingencies and manifold political struggles. The conflicts, first, concern the direction and the course of integration itself. Federalists and Unionists in the beginning of integration disputed on the question of 'what kind of Union do we want?' The Unionist movement, led by figures such ad Adenauer, De Gaulle and Churchill, aimed at safeguarding the nation states. Part of the leading Unionist ideologists of European integration tacitly assumed that integration was possible only if the democratisation and parliamentarisation of politics, could be kept out of the process. On the other hand, the Federalist movements fought for a supranational and democratic European federation. The Congress of the Hague in 1949 marked the Unionist victory, and this was a major political decision that opened the way to the politification of EU integration (Wiesner 2014b).

But the direction of integration was debated once more in the conflict over the European Political Community (EPC) and the European Defense Community (EDC) in 1954 marked another key conflict. Had the Treaty that was already completely done been ratified and not declined by the French National Assembly, the integrating Europe would have had a Constitution and a full-fledged parliament already in the mid-1950s.

Further conflicts occurred throughout integration between defenders of a free market liberalism (for instance most British governments) and state dirigisme (French governments), between proponents of parliamentary democracy (Members of the European Parliament, Federalists, or most German governments) and their opponents.

Depending on the respective interests, second, different coalitions emerged across all levels, e.g. the European Parliament and the European Commission are allies when it comes to defending supranationalism (head candidates), Germany and France supported more powers for the European Parliament while Great Britain did not, German, British, and Eastern European ministers support free market economy while the French do not always agree etc.

Actors also change their interests over time: while the Commission at first was slow to accept parliamentarisation and democratisation, and in particular Jean Monnet was in opposition to a powerful European Parliament (see Gehler 2014, 316), in recent years the Commissiom and the European Parliament became allies when the question was to name and elect head candidates for the commission presidency (Wiesner 2016a).

Until today the EU has been marked by such power struggles and conflicts on all levels, for example between member states (Great Britain against France on the course of integration, Eastern countries against Merkel-Germany in the refugee crisis, North against South in the sovereign debt crisis, etc.). But there are also conflicts between EU institutions (the European Parliament against the Commission and the Council) and within EU institutions (discussed e.g. in terms of a 'politicization' of the EU Commission), and last not least, numerous conflicts within member states have emerged (e.g. eurosceptics against pro-integrationists etc.; the general account on EU politicisation elaborated by scholars presented above has thematised the latter two conflicts).

This complex setting of interests, agents and conflicts across the EU also becomes visible in the EU's institutional system. While the Troika, the Directorate General Competition or the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU, formerly ECJ), for instance, tend to defend the principles of free market economy (cases at hand are Rüffert and Laval, *Court of Justice of the European Union* 2008 and 2008b, see in detail Wiesner 2012), the Council stands for intergovernmentalism and the European Parliament for supranationalism (Wiesner 2016b).

What does all this mean with regard to a conceptualisation of EU politicisation?

The EU multilevel regime is hence composed of different arenas, relationships and directions of political struggles, as well as different historical layers and modalities of politicisation – and they have been reality since the beginning of integration. But for many decades, as it is discussed fittingly in the accounts on politicisation sketched above, integration nevertheless proceeded silently and as something taken for granted. The muddling-through from one crisis to another was regarded, like the diplomatic negotiations between great powers during the Cold War, as being something normal. Citizens did not protest, partly because they were not even informed about what was going on, partly because they generally supported EU integration.

What the new level of integration after Maastricht made evident was that the EU had become a deeply integrated political entity. In legal terms it had been moved from the sphere of international law to that of constitutional law (see Clinchamps 2006). It also intervened more and more into citizen's daily life, for instance by liberalising public services. And slowly, citizens became more attentive to both integration and its criticism. One effect in the academic debates is that Maastricht als marked the start of the debate on the EU's democratic deficit.

In the crises since 2008, the limits of a narrowly market-economy-centered integration became apparent, which triggered citizen's dissatisfaction some more. The member state 's leaders as well as the EU politicians and officials today often seem to be headless, which enhances citizen dissatisfaction and contestation still more, and also creates the need to legitimise EU politics anew and more publicly. At the same time, the crises as well as the dissatisfaction build a fertile ground for EU-critical parties and movements. As a consequence, several of the struggles sketched above that beforehand were not obvious to a broad public, and several of the decisions that formerly were tacitly negotiated and accepted behind closed doors, today are publicly discussed and criticised, i.e. politicised.

One important effect of this development is that citizens and their dissatisfaction are today 'hard facts' of integration. Citizens do not only vote for EU-critical parties in the European Parliament. They also have the possibility to hinder integration, even block it. The 'No' votes in the French and Dutch referenda blocked the Constitutional Treaty for some years (Wiesner 2014b), and when it was finally ratified (once again by heads of states and governments except for a referendum in Ireland) it had been stripped of all constitutional symbols (Lietzmann 2014).

To sum up, today, European integration itself is a widely discussed issue and citizen 's ballots have at least a certain effect on the course of integration. But, and this is another core point of our argument, this development does not describe phenomena that are altogether so new or extraordinary: European integration now is becoming a subject of party-political cleavages – so what? Issues such as social policy, tax policy, abortion, education, marriage laws etc. have been discussed that way for decades, they have been related to and/or creating party political cleavages, and they have resulted in protest and contestation. Ever since the development of representative democracy it has been the case that the objects of political discussions and law making have been changing (see for example the works of Pierre Rosanvallon 2008, 2010, 2015 or Richard Bellamy 2007). Issues that once were deeply controversial (such as women 's rights or homosexuality) no longer are in many Western countries, and in exchange new conflicts and cleavages have been developing. It is also not a new phenomenon that institutions evolve, from being more and less technocratic and expert-oriented; and neither is it new that media react and transmit discussions, debates and reactions to new accounts of what is politically significant. The development described by the current 'politicisation' accounts could simply be termed a regularisation. European integration has become a 'normal' issue of political life and decision making in representative democracies.

The conditions of financial help for Greece are a prime example: the first memoranda of understanding had been negotiated from 2010 onwards between the Troika Institutions and the Greek governments without any public discussion and behind closed doors. The 2015 negotiations became quite public: for the first time, the Commission made its proposals public by putting them on its website, there were debates in the European Parliament even if it did not have a formal role in the policies of financial aid, and there was a large mediated debate on the issue. The main reason behind this public and politicised conflict was the strategic interest of the new Greek Syriza government, who wanted its conflict with the Troika and the Eurogroup to become public, and to draw it out into the open, as EU-wide as possible, public space – and it is hence debated and controversial just as issues such as education and social policy.

Politicisation, then, refers to the activities and actions of naming questions and topics on all the levels sketched, all the actors named, and in all the possible arenas, as political. In Skinnerian terms (1998) European integration has offered and still offers to the citizens new possibilities to dispense with many dependencies that are based on old arbitrary powers connected to the naturalization of the nation state. This 'revolution' requires coping with new political languages, institutions, and practices, evaluating critically the existing forms and practices of the EU, and seeing them as a chance to initiate something new. Politicization is a necessary step in this process whose institutional objectives could be the democratisation and parliamentarisation of the EU.

7.   In conclusion

From our perspective, the term "politicisation" means more than an increased party-dependence or the polarisation of conflicts on EU policies. It cannot be reduced to a process that transports non-political issues into a presumed political field that would already be constituted. It cannot be isolated to a phase of EU integration. This apolitical conceptualisation is too narrow to take into account either the profoundly political character of the EU polity or the opportunities presented to politicisation, which we have sketched using the terms politisation as the precondition for politicization and politification as a form of politicization through depoliticisation. The latter has been the dominant modality of integration since the 1950s.

Our view on politicisation is considerably broader and more dynamic than what is currently discussed in the scholarly literature. It is not limited to top-down politicization, but includes bottom-up and sideway developments. It does not engage only government institutions, parliaments, parties and the media as the classical channels of representative democracy. It crucially involves political contestation and protest, citizen and NGO activity, and in a general sense the development of political awareness, the marking of issues as political, and the opening up of new political spaces through creative political action. It also engages ideas and proposals connected to democratization and parliamentarisation for the further expansion of the EU's agenda-setting. Politicisation thus creates spaces and issues for political action, turning Issues into political stakes, and creating alternative power resources. It aims to transform so far uncontested assumptions, identities and principles into objects of political controversies.

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