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**Constructing Monetary Union:
*Euro-Scepticism, and the Emerging European
Public Space***

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Constructing Monetary Union: Euro-Scepticism, and the Emerging European Public Space¹

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The single European currency is not only a technical matter facilitating economic exchanges but also a political symbol with relevance to citizens' everyday lives: "A currency produces global values of a society and at the same time is its expression"². As Murray Edelman noted, political symbols – such as flags or political terms like "unemployment" – are icons of mass culture that involve language and rituals, touch the experiences of people, and carry "a range of diverse, often conflicting meanings that are integral aspects of specific material and social situations"³. In this respect, national currencies have come to represent a multitude of everyday lives' frustrations and expectations. For instance in reference to the German Mark, Jürgen Habermas has used "DM-nationalism" as a term to describe how Germans of the Federal Republic in the aftermath of World War II have replaced obsolete national pride with a "substitute consciousness" based on their "libidinous occupation" of the *Deutsche Mark*⁴. Embodying ideas of stability and well-being, the *Mark* has infused Germans with a sense of security and trust, much in contrast to the former *Reichsmark* or a currency, such as the Italian Lira, which is seen as unstable and weak.

In the dynamics of European integration, the project founded on the Maastricht Treaty to launch the *euro* as the single currency of 12 member states in 2002 will certainly mark the most visible threshold toward an "ever closer Union", so far. However, although it is certain that from that year on, citizens in the "eurozone"⁵ will use the *euro* on a daily basis, it is less certain whether it will become a political symbol of European union, or will enhance European consciousness, a European identity and solidarity, as some of the most ambitious supporters of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) hope⁶.

We might expect difficulties in materialising such visions for several reasons. First, the launch of the single currency occurs in the aftermath of Maastricht, when the "permissive consensus" of mass public support for elite driven supranational integration policies has

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² European Commission, "Working Group on the Euro" no year, p. 3

³ Murray Edelman, 1988, p. 8

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, DIE ZEIT, 30.3.1990

⁵ Greece, the 12th euro-member joined in January 2001.

⁶ The Euro-MP Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Olivier Duhamel (1998) see the *euro* as a common measure, common instrument and political symbol for a European consciousness, a European identity and political union; cf. Cohn-Bendit/Duhamel 1998, pp. 96; 165; 257.

deeply eroded in EU-member states.⁷ Second, the legitimacy of the EMU is contested on most different principles and norms, from scepticism about abandoning a stable national currency to opposition against building the European Union around a Central Bank⁸. And, ultimately, even many of those political analysts and elites supporting the single currency, rationalise it through the lens of “European nationalisms”, taking for granted, hence, the conception of the EU as a political space fragmented by national identities, where citizens hardly communicate across national borders, rarely understand their neighbour’s languages, differ in their memories of the past, and diverge on norms and values they hold. The dilemma is obvious: how could, under these conditions of diverging norms and values, the *euro* ever become a symbol of European unity, let alone a European identity? As Amy Verdun and Thomas Christiansen argued, the EMU suffers from “dilemmas of legitimacy” insofar as it “rests on the creation of a set of powerful institutions with direct and executive authority in an area of policy-making...”, while their establishment “precedes the emergence of a political community in which such decisions, or, more significantly, the procedures for the taking of such decisions, can be grounded.”⁹

If we adopt a social constructivist perspective to the study of European monetary integration, crucial aspects of the process of institutionalising EMU-governance are opened up, namely the role that discourses, communicative interaction and ideas play in the framing of collective understandings, in the formation of attitudes and behaviour, and in the transformation of norms that can be considered as constitutive for a political community.¹⁰

Thomas Risse et al. in their comparative analysis of elite political discourses on the *euro*, have advanced such an analysis of the social construction of the EMU. They found that the EMU, despite major drawbacks since 1992, only survived because German, French and British policy-makers backed it with a “common vision of European integration”, but who, in order to legitimate the EMU vis-à-vis their electorates, used symbols of national identity as well as constructions of “European domestic interests” as powerful tools in domestic discourses.¹¹ What the authors leave open is how to account for the fragility of public support and the intense politicisation of the issue of EMU in mass publics. One might argue that precisely the frame of “European nationalism”, when adopted by domestic pro-EMU elites, might be conducive to scepticism and opposition against the *euro*, and, hence, promote *euro*-scepticism.¹² I will argue that an elite-centred approach, limited to the domestic level, and excluding mass publics, will miss an important mechanism involved in the social and political process of constructing the *euro*.

Adopting social constructivism as an analytical framework allows it to study mass

⁷ Eurobarometer 43, 1995, p. xi; Niedermayer 1995.

⁸ Joschka Fischer, Die Tageszeitung, 13.6. 1997.

⁹ Verdun and Christiansen 2000, p. 162.

¹⁰ Christiansen, Jörgensen, Wiener 1999, p. 540ff; see also Jepperson et al. 1996; Risse and Wiener 1999; Checkel 2000; Kohler-Koch 2000

¹¹ Risse et al., 1999, p. 175ff.

¹² “*Euro*-scepticism” is used here as a sub-specie of “Euro-scepticism”, conceived of to encompass “contingent or qualified opposition”, as well as “outright and unqualified opposition” to European integration, in the face of “an on-going de facto process” of integration, promoted at the institutional level by supranational elites, but restricted to the issue of European monetary unification; see: Taggart, 1998, p. 366.

public attitudes as an expression of - competing or hegemonic, supranational or domestic - political discourses. In their discourses, governing elites as well as opposition groups, frame the *euro* as a public object in ways to produce meanings, to attract feelings, to be valued, or to be judged on normative grounds, within or across national boundaries. The empirical question is then to identify the alternative frames that make the *euro* either become a political symbol of European unity, of collective identity, and social solidarity, or - by contrast - a scapegoat and symbol of European centralism and fraud, forced social and cultural homogeneity. In order to answer these questions EMU is explored as a contested public territory of domestic, transnational and supranational struggles about meanings. The tool-kit used for this study links the quantitative analysis of European public opinion data to the qualitative analysis of discursive “framing”, both inspired by the “constructivist turn” in EU-integration studies. While the former is useful for exploring cross- and intra-national variations in the distribution of preferences in mass public attitudes, the analysis of discursive frames provides a framework for studying the construction and change of normatively based attitudes.

In this chapter, I will argue that the complex process of the social construction of EMU can be better understood if three aspects of this process are taken into consideration.

First, the comparative analysis of public support for EMU should be matched by an analysis of *euro*-scepticism; with a particular focus not only on cross-national variation, but also on inner-national differences. In particular, this involves examining elite-mass disparities and gender gaps in order to capture domestic differences involved in the construction of EMU.

Secondly, quantitative opinion analysis can be best interpreted when linked to the qualitative study of political discourses about EMU, to explore ideas, feelings, and values projected on the *euro* more in-depth.

Third, discourse analysis includes domestic as well as supranational communication, to better understand resonance and interactions between both levels in the social construction of EMU.

In my conclusion I will describe the passage into the current stage of European monetary integration as a unique experiment, because, under the given constraints of the Euro-polity, the EMU is the most salient European issue so far with the potential to turn the EU into a sphere of divided publics.

Patterns and dynamics of *euro*-scepticism (1993-2000)

During the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty of the European Union, one of the crucial premises on which the “the European would-be polity” had rested, crumbled: the assumption of mass public “permissive consensus”¹³. Conventional wisdom since the beginning of the seventies had been that national leaders could “presumably call upon whatever reservoirs of support and solidarity exist within their polity to allow discretion to public authorities in the exercise of their governing responsibilities”¹⁴. In this view, public support for the EC could be conceived as a generalised and “passive condition” for elite action, and publics did neither impede nor activate “system growth and change” in European integration¹⁵. After 1990, the “erosion of the permissive consensus”¹⁶ became problematic. First, public support for the EU decreased by nearly one third. Second, the new mass public Euroscepticism was marked by a new gender gap¹⁷. Third, contentious movement activists mobilised mass constituencies to vote negatively in a series of domestic referenda on the EU, namely four times in Denmark (1992, 1993, 1998; 2000), and once in France (1993), as well as in Austria, Sweden and Finland (1994). This transformation of mass public attitudes indicated a shift of European integration from a neo-functionalist or inter-governmental elite driven project to a contested, politicised process of Europeanization. This shift also affected the EMU, given that the single currency soon turned into a hot issue of public debate in many member states.

In the language of official EMU-documents, member states are classified in two groups: the “Ins”, consisting of those who fulfilled the convergence criteria and whom the European Council, at its May 1998 meeting, accepted for the third stage of EMU beginning on January 1st, 1999; the remaining states which either did not meet the requirements regarding debt, inflation and budget discipline, were named “Pre-Ins”¹⁸. However, if one substitutes official convergence criteria by indicators for the legitimacy which EMU enjoys, measured by mass public support for EMU and by *euro*-scepticism, a new classification emerges. For this purpose, in the following I will explore three different aspects affecting the legitimacy of EMU: elite-mass disparities; gender gaps; and the polarisation of the issue of the *euro* over time, all of which are covered by Eurobarometer survey data.¹⁹

¹³ Lindberg and Scheingold 1970.

¹⁴ *id.*, p. 121, 130.

¹⁵ *id.*, p. 121.

¹⁶ Reif, 1992.

¹⁷ Liebert 1997; 1999; Nelsen and Guth 2000.

¹⁸ “Pre-Ins” was the common label for a diversity of member states which did either not fulfil the criteria (e.g. Greece until 2000) or which opted out (e.g. UK), which opted against (e.g. Denmark) or which did not yet opt for joining EMU (e.g. Sweden).

¹⁹ Since 1973, the European Commission mass public opinion surveys in EC/EU member states provide, thus far, the most valuable source for quantitative comparative data and public opinion analyses on Europe. Since 1993, the item “public support for the *euro*” was included regularly in surveys, such as “Eurobarometer”, “Euro opinion special”, and the “Continuous Tracking Service”; a special survey on the EMU was also conducted in 1999.

Out of touch? EMU views, by top decision makers and publics

Elite-mass disparities in public attitudes toward EMU were explored by a study conducted by EOS Gallup Europe²⁰ in 1996. Then, in the EU-15, 85 p.c. of top decision makers supported the single currency compared to only 53 p.c. of the general public.²¹ Hence, among the 15 member states a gap of 32 p.c. between elites and publics in their views on EMU was found which varied considerably across member states. On the one side, the country where elites were most out of touch with mass publics on the issue of EMU was Germany: here, support scores between elites (90 p.c.) and general publics (40 p.c.) differed by 50 percentage points. On the other side, Italian elites appeared to represent mass public preferences relatively best: the gap between elites (88 p.c.) and mass public support (78 p.c.) was only 10 p.c. (see Table 1).

Mass-elite gaps on the issue of the EMU differed in the three most prominently euro-sceptic member states (Sweden, Denmark and the UK) as well considerably: while a majority of the Danish elite (74 p.c.) and of the Swedish elite (64 p.c.) favoured the single currency, they clearly departed from their general publics with a 38 p.c. and a 37 p.c. difference, respectively. By contrast, British top decision makers' attitudes tended to be more in touch with mass public preferences: the gap here was only 26 percentage points.

One would assume that top decision makers from industry favoured the EMU more than any other elite sector across member states. However, this was not at all the case. In Germany, civil servants were the strongest supporters of the EMU. In Italy, support by cultural elites was nearly as strong as by industry. Among the member states that did not join the EMU, the picture was not less complex. In the UK, civil servants were also the most in favour of EMU, industry and the media the least. Both, in Sweden and Denmark, industry was the most strongly in favour. But while in Sweden, cultural elites were the protagonists of euro-scepticism, with politicians following at some distance, in Denmark the reverse was true: here, politicians were much less in favour of the EMU than cultural elites.²²

²⁰ EOS Gallup Europe published "The European Union. A View from the Top. Top Decision Makers and the European Union" and is based on a 1996 survey among 22,729 holders of high office, in five *sectors* in the 15 member states: elected political office; civil service; industry; media; cultural and intellectual circles .

²¹ Eurobarometer surveys on the topic of the EMU are based on the question asked to respondents whether they are for or against the following statement: "There has to be one single currency, the euro, replacing the (National Currency) and all other national currencies of the Member States of the European Union".

²² EOS Gallup Europe 1996, p. 42.

Table 1: EMU from top and from below, 1996

Member state	TDM	public	Gap
EU 15	85	53	32
Germany	90	40	50
Belgium	98	53	45
Austria	78	34	44
Denmark	74	36	38
Sweden	64	27	37
Finland	68	35	33
Spain	95	62	33
France	90	59	31
Portugal	83	52	31
Luxembourg	93	63	30
Greece	92	64	28
UK	60	34	26
NL	91	66	25
Ireland	89	66	23
Italy	88	78	10

Source: EOS Gallup Europe 1996; p. 40/41. Note: Numbers in p.c. indicate the proportion of respondents who indicated to agree with the opinion that there had to be one single currency, the euro, replacing the national currencies

Women and euro-scepticism

The study of the gender gap in public attitudes toward European integration has developed traditional approaches to European public opinion analysis by integrating gender differences into the research design.²³ Using Eurobarometer studies from the 1980s and 1990s, results showed that women's support of the EU in most EU member states is lower than men's; that female Euroscepticism in a number of them is stronger than male Euroscepticism; that in a few cases these gender gaps have narrowed over time, while in others they have expanded further²⁴; and it was suggested that gender gaps in public support were a decisive factor which led the Intergovernmental Conference of 1996/7 to strengthen gender equality provisions in the Treaty reform.²⁵ The question is whether the findings of gendered patterns of EU support will also hold for opposition against the EMU. In the following, I will draw on Eurobarometer analyses to support the claim that this is the case.

²³ Liebert 1999; Nelsen and Guth 2000.

²⁴ Although gender gaps in EU-support have tended to diminish over time, in Denmark, Sweden and the UK they have increased during the past decade (cf. Liebert 1999).

²⁵ id.

In 1996, the gender gap in public *euro*-opposition across the EU-15 was at 5 percentage points. Within four member states, gender disparities were more than only significant: in Denmark (20 p.c.), in Sweden (13 p.c.), in Finland (11 p.c.) and in the Netherlands (10 p.c.). By contrast, in the UK, Ireland, Greece, Spain and Italy, gender gaps in opposition to the EMU were nearly non-existing. Germany-West was the only case, where male was stronger than female opposition, exceeding it by 6 percentage points (see Table 2).

The special report on “European Public Opinion on the Single Currency” documented this gender gap in public attitudes towards the *euro* for 1998: according to this study more men supported the euro (1998: 65 p.c.) than women (1998: 56 p.c.); and less men (1998: 27 p.c.) than women (1998: 30 p.c.) opposed it.²⁶ An examination of Standard Eurobarometer data from Spring 1996 and Spring 1998 shows that the gender gap had been increasing by 10 p.c. in this period. In 1998, the sole exception among member states was Finland and Germany, where male opposition was stronger, and Italy, where both men and women were at the same level (1998: 6 p.c.) (see Table 2). Between 1998 and 2000, gender gaps in public *euro*-support increased in most member states, except Belgium and Greece, further. They remained above 10 p.c. in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, and they stayed under 10 p.c. in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Portugal, while sometime during the period between 1998-2000 they increased in the UK, Ireland, Spain, France and even Italy. In this context, Sweden appeared as one of the most peculiar cases, given that between 1996-1998, the level of public support for the EMU had significantly grown both among men and women, while gender disparities had widened further. While Swedish opposition to the *euro* dropped by 5 p.c., the gender gap remained at 13 p.c. (see Table 2).

Intra-national divisions of public attitudes toward the EMU, hence, include disparities between elite views and mass public opinion, on one hand, and gender differences within the latter camp, on the other. The Report on “Top-Decision-Makers” and the “Special Report” by the European Commission on Public opinion, are the best data sources available so far to describe national patterns of gender-specific differentiation, and to examine and explain potential politicisation and conflict from a cross-country comparative perspective. But both leave many questions open. One of them is, whether member societies can be classified according to their internal, complex and dynamic patterns of how gender gaps and elite mass differences combine and vary in relation to support and opposition of the *euro*.

Observed variations within member states form clusters which help identify to four groups: (1) A first group comprises member states where gender differences and elite-mass divisions are both most pronounced: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Belgium; (2) a second group those members where disparities in both dimensions are relatively small: Italy, the UK, Greece, Ireland and Luxembourg; (3) a third group where elite-mass gaps are largest, with gender gaps being minor or absent: Germany and Spain; and finally (4) a group of member states where gender gaps are significant, but elite-mass disparities relatively smaller: the Netherlands, France and Portugal.

²⁶ See European Commission “European Public Opinion on the Single Currency”, 1999, p. 45-47.

Table 2: Gender gaps in euro-scepticism, 1996-1998

Member state	1996		1998	
	male	female	male	Female
DEN	55,7	75,1	41,2	50,3
FIN	61,1	72,8	48,9	45,9
SWE	50	63,4	45,1	58,2
UK	59,7	59,8	34,8	37,4
GER-E	47,8	51,3	19,7	18,5
GER-W	54,3	48,8	32,4	30,6
AUS	40,5	47,3	25,9	27,3
EU	35,7	40,9	28,2	35,6
FRA	27,8	35,1	14,7	21,2
BEL	27,2	33,9	23,7	27,4
LUX	27,1	32,1	8,3	12,1
NET	21,6	31,3	9,6	18,6
POR	21,4	27,9	11,1	19,5
GRE	19,6	20,6	14,7	23,4
SPA	20,6	20,6	10,9	15,6
IRE	19,8	17,6	16,9	17,8
ITA	12,3	12	6,3	6,3

Source: EB 49/Spring 1996 and EB 51/Spring 1998 Note: figures in p.c. indicate the proportion of those male or female respondents who were against the opinion there has to be one single currency, the euro, replacing the national currencies.

If the patterns of public opinion can be classified along these two dimensions, the question to be addressed in the next section is whether we can also distinguish between different dynamics of public attitudes towards EMU across member states. If after Maastricht, mass public opinion on the issue of EMU has left behind its earlier “permissive consensus”, and if patterns of domestic public opinion fall into such different clusters, we should also expect differences in the dynamics of how public opinion evolves: whether there is increasing polarisation or, rather, a trend toward homogeneity.

Polarisation of public attitudes towards EMU?

Public support increased between 1993 and 2000 from 52 p.c., by 8 p.c.. This can be considered a success for European elites promoting the EMU. However, while support for the *euro* remained fragile, *euro*-sceptic attitudes spread. This was the case not only for *euro*-outsiders, but also for a majority of *euro*-insiders.

First, following the inclusion of the issue of the EMU in regular EB-surveys in 1993, a cyclical pattern in the dynamics of public acceptance of the *euro* became evident. While from 1993 to 1997, the level of support shrank to 47 p.c. after the “Euro-11” had been officially established, it rose again to 68 p.c. in 1999. After having moved into the third phase of introducing the *euro*, citizens of the *euro*-zone, while still holding their national currencies in their hands, apparently turned sceptic again, and support faltered by 10 percentage points (to 58 p.c. in 2000).

Table 3:
Dynamics of public attitudes towards the EMU, 1998-2000

Level of <i>euro</i>-support* in 2000	stable or decreasing <i>euro</i>- scepticism* 1998-2000 (p.c.)	increasing <i>euro</i>- scepticism* 1998-2000 (p.c.)
Above 50	GRE (0) BEL (-5)	NET (+ 13) FRA (+ 11) IRE (+ 5) ITA (+ 8) POR (+ 7) SPA (+ 5) EU (+ 1)
Below 50 p.c.		UK (+ 25) GER (+ 20) AUS (+ 11) DEN (+ 5) SWE (+ 3) FIN (+ 1)

Source: Own calculations, based on EB 51/1998 and 53/2000.

*) Figures for “support” indicate the proportion of those respondents who agreed with the opinion that there had to be one single currency, the *euro*, replacing national currencies; figures for “*euro*-scepticism” indicate the proportion of those who were against it.

Furthermore, EU-members showed quite different constellations of strength between mass public *euro*-supporters, on one side, and *euro*-sceptics, on the other side. In 2000, *euro*-supporters enjoyed a majority in nine member states, with Italy (81 p.c.), Belgium (76 p.c.) and Spain (75 p.c.) leading this camp; in these countries *euro*-sceptics commanded no more than between 14 p.c. and 21 p.c. of public support. *Euro*-sceptics represented the majority, however, in three member states: in the UK (61 p.c.), Sweden (54 p.c.) and Denmark (51 p.c.). Finally, in the three remaining member states – in Austria, Finland and Germany – neither camp reached a majority,²⁷ though public opinion was polarised. Between 1998-2000, only three out of 15 ruling governments were confronted with stable (e.g. Greece) or even receding (e.g. Belgium) *euro*-scepticism. In contrast in the UK and Germany the number of *euro*-sceptics increased by 25 p.c. and 20 p.c., respectively.

Concluding, we can say that in six member states the EMU is lacking broad-based public support. In 2000 this not only applied to three of the four *euro*-outsiders (i.e. the UK, Sweden and Denmark) but also to three “euro-11”-members (i.e., Austria, Finland and Germany). In all of these countries support for the EMU remained under 50 p.c.. Although in some cases the share of sympathisers increased, without exception the proportion of *euro*-sceptics grew between 1998 and 2000 (see Table 3). A process of growing politicisation seems to have started. This is particularly apparent in those member states where *euro*-scepticism is on the rise, and especially when accompanied by a trend towards polarisation resulting in a drop of public support for the *euro*.

During the two years after the official launch of the *euro*, public attitudes remained polarised in Denmark, Sweden and Finland; and divisions became deeper in the UK, Germany, and Austria. On the other hand, in Italy where mass publics with their “permissive consensus” on European integration had continuously provided support to their domestic elites – especially during the hardships of fiscal adjustments under the convergence criteria discipline – *euro*-scepticism grew moderately (by 8 p.c.) only after 1999, while support remained at a high level.

The question is how these complex patterns and diverse trends in public attitudes towards the EMU can be explained.

²⁷ Eurobarometer 53, Spring 2000, p. 46.

Explaining public euro-scepticism: quantitative evidence

Quantitative opinion analyses have sought to identify the sources of citizens support for the EMU, by focusing on national interest and identity as well as on domestic gender differences.

Addressing the issue of national identity and interests, Anderson and Kaltenthaler suggest that EU monetary policy is more an “issue full of symbolism regarding the future of the nation-state”, than an object of individual cost-benefit calculations.²⁸ This observation holds for most member states, where *euro*-scepticism is associated not primarily with cost-benefit calculated expectations, but rather with the expectation to lose national sovereignty. However, with respect to this general claim, Germany is the most prominent exception. Following survey data, Germans are highly prone to “material calculations” and intensely sensitive to the costs of the EMU: for instance, negative expectations are concerned primarily with economic growth and employment opportunities.²⁹ To explain this German ideosyncrasy³⁰, an assessment of domestic impacts of the EMU appears of little help. A comparison of Italy and Germany shows that with the contrasting levels of *euro*-scepticism, such differences do not correspond to the hardships resulting from the strength of state fiscal discipline and restructuring policies in both cases. In their attempt to correct the “misfit” between Italian public finances and EMU-requirements, Italian political elites empowered by Maastricht, adopted more drastic measures of consolidation and expenditure cuts than most other member states, including Germany³¹. Contrary to all “rational” expectations, public *euro*-scepticism in Italy remained at an extremely low, and *euro*-support at an extraordinarily high level. The Italian case suggests therefore to conceive of public attitudes towards the *euro* not as an effect of domestic consequences of the EMU, but rather as a facilitating resource for or as a constraint on government action in response to monetary union. Hence, although comparative quantitative analysis cannot explain ideosyncrasies, such as of the German or the Italian cases, it is indispensable to identify them.

The same applies to comparative gender gap studies based on quantitative data. Quantitative approaches have advanced explanations on the gender gap in EU support by analysing socio-demographic characteristics, utilitarian motives, political ideology, gender differentiated values and the institutional context of the democratic and the welfare state. In the testing of a large range of such alternative explanations, Nelson and Guth provide insights into which explanations do not hold to account for women tending to be more sceptical of European integration than men³². For one, in the assessments of the EU, a number of factors indicated by women are different from those indicated by men.

²⁸ Christopher J. Anderson and Karl C. Kaltenthaler (1998: 24f.), in an analysis based on EB 42, found that satisfaction with EU-institutions and materialism explained EMU-support, while national pride, domestic political satisfaction and postmaterialism explained its lack, and egocentric, self-interest based calculations did not matter.

²⁹ See: Euro opinion special, January 1999, B34; cf. Also Cautrès and Reynié 2000

³⁰ cf. Huffschnid 1998.

³¹ Sbragia 2000.

³² Among these “women specific” factors, with a positive relation to their pro-European attitudes, Nelson and Guth identify “knowledge about the EU”, “educational resources”, and number of children; while they find “ideology” to work differently for both genders; Nelson and Guth 2000, p. 279-282.

Second, they claim, contrary to traditional or to feminist expectations, that neither “women’s values”, such as those related to religion, nor the advantages available to women through the welfare state they live in are reasons capable of explaining women’s attitudes towards the EU. Finally third, the authors claim that much of the gender gap variance is due to “national idiosyncrasies”, and that in order to understand which national traditions matter, “we need further exploration.”³³

In order to understand patterns and dynamics of public opinion involved in the social construction of the EMU, quantitative approaches to public attitudes are hence indispensable for identifying contrasting cases. But in the context of the diversity of domestic economic and social structures and political institutions in EU member states, it appears dubious whether a single set of causes or motivations can be identified to explain *euro*-scepticism and to be generalised across the EU. Quantitative studies based on culturally unspecific questionnaires conceal the fundamental ambiguities of diverse meanings and language terms that are constructed to measure variables. To examine these ambiguities with their more deep-seated motivational bases, qualitative, language sensitive studies of the discursive frames used in domestic debates are needed to complement quantitative analyses.

In the next section, I will adopt such a qualitative approach to explore the patterns and dynamics of “ideosyncratic” cases more in detail. For this purpose, I will compare political discourses on the EMU, by focusing on the most contrasting cases, identified above: Denmark, Sweden, Germany, France, Italy and the UK. The comparative approach to political discourses on the EMU in these member states rests on a distinction between different types of “frames” for constructing the *euro*.

***Euro*-sceptic discourses in the social construction of the EMU**

Seen as a process of social construction, the introduction of the single currency into the fragmented polity of the EU could have been expected to provoke mass politicisation. Precisely because of the need to explore “national idiosyncrasies” that show up in the politicisation processes on the issue of the EMU, I suggest here to adopt a qualitative, interpretative framework for examining discursive strategies. This framework is based on a distinction between different types of cognitive and normative frames that are used in public discourses. A public discourse is conceived here as “the sum of political actors’ public accounts of the polity’s purposes, goals and ideals, while its function is to explain political events, to justify political actions, to develop political identities, to reshape and reinterpret political history, and, all in all, to frame the national political discussion.”³⁴ I will further distinguish between five types of discursive strategies to frame the domestic discussion of the EMU: the “Europe-nationalist” frame; the “cultural-nationalist” frame;

³³ Id., p. 286.

³⁴ Schmidt 1998, p. 3 ff.

the “social-nationalist” frame; the “euro-constructive” frame; and the “gendered” frame. These strategies shall be characterised by the particular frames on which they rely and which are based on more general rhetoric devices: ideas about whether and how the EMU will impact people’s social practices; ideological constructions of collective identities and expectations about how these will be affected by the monetary union; and evaluations of whether the norms on which the EMU is based will collide with certain normative principles that are taken for granted.

To illustrate these particular discursive strategies and how they shape frameworks of meaning for making the EMU intelligible to domestic publics, I will draw on empirical evidence from member states and illustrate (1) the “Europe-nationalist” framework by German debates; (2) the “cultural nationalist” by examples from Britain and France; (3) the “social nationalist framework” by examples from Sweden and Denmark; (4) the “euro-constructive” framework by French arguments and the (5) “gender framework” by feminist transnational debates. At the same time, this framework will serve to explore more in depth the most “ideosyncratic” cases among member states with regard to their patterns of public attitudes towards the EMU that quantitative analysis has helped to identify.

The “Europe-nationalist” frame and the German debate

In their attempts to persuade domestic publics that the monetary union and the ensuing domestic changes are, both, empirically desirable and normatively acceptable, political elites have built on a variety of ideas, languages and frameworks. Discursive frameworks that argue for the European Union because of national interests have been depicted as “Europe-nationalist”, as they emphasise not only the inevitability but also the necessity of European integration, by claiming that this was in the best national interests: by serving domestic preferences, and because of being basically shaped by domestic interests.³⁵ To succeed so convincingly, and to help effectively to change a country’s policy paradigm, elites must reconstruct the dominant discourse and change its underlying belief structures, by building at the same time on old understandings, while creating something new.³⁶

Amy Verdun and Thomas Christiansen have pointed to the dangers of output-oriented strategies for legitimating the EMU in terms of anticipated positive economic effects of the single currency.³⁷ In the perspective of self-denominated “Euro-constructivists” (see below), such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Oliver Duhamel, this strategy is furthermore handicapped by its Europe-nationalist rhetoric, stressing national interests and expectations that, in the short or long run, are likely to be frustrated. Thus, Euro-nationalism can be expected to ultimately feed into Euroscepticism.

³⁵ Cf. Moss and Michie, eds. 2000; on Italy and the UK: Talani 2000.

³⁶ Vivien Schmidt has developed this “dynamic capacity of a discourse to change a country’s policy paradigm”, see Schmidt 1998.

³⁷ Verdun and Christiansen 2000: 178.

By no way exclusive in that respect,³⁸ the case of the Federal Republic of Germany illustrates the paradoxical effect of Europe-nationalist frames paradigmatically. In their attempts to persuade Germans concerned about a weak and inflationary common currency, Europe-nationalists, had vowed the *euro* would be “Stark wie die Mark”³⁹, as sound as the D-mark, due to two devices: for one, the fiscal and budgetary discipline imposed by the “Stability and Growth Pact” on “weak currency” countries, and, secondly, the European Central Bank that would follow the model of the “politically independent” German Bundesbank.⁴⁰ Part of this strategic frame was Finance Minister Theo Waigel’s insisting critique of Italy and other “non-mature” and “less-disciplined” member states.⁴¹ Later on, when facing the devaluation of the *euro*, the Europe-nationalist argumentation switched to claims about the benefits which even a weak single currency was supposed to bring to the “export country Germany” as well as to its labour market.⁴² Paradoxically, this line of argument would imply that if the *euro* regained strength again, economic growth rates would have to be expected to decline, and unemployment to increase again. With such contradictory arguments in favour of the EMU, German Europe-nationalists unintentionally fed into Euro-sceptic arguments. The left-wing opposition, in their interpretation of EMU as an “as much anti-imperialist as imperialist project of a new type” picked this frame up and criticised EMU (1) of being constrained by insufficient measures of consolidation; (2) as a substitute for a political union that enhanced EU interventionism within member states and abroad; (3) because of the “mutual control of national interests” imposing sanctions on those who in their national interest “allow themselves too many debts”; and (4) because it was supported by a European Social Democracy that has abandoned “its image as a spokesman of the Social”⁴³.

The ambiguities of this nationalist pro-euro discourse offered munition to fuel mass public *euro*-scepticism in Germany. Paradoxically, this happened after EU member states had adopted the “stability and growth pact”, under the pressure of the German ministry of finance and in order to appease German anxieties: between 1998 and 2000, German *euro*-scepticism increased by 20 p.c. Among all member peoples, Germans confessed to be most concerned about the issues of national economic growth and of employment perspectives.⁴⁴ Ultimately, following conventional German wisdom, growth as well as employment would be both negatively correlated with a strong Mark.

³⁸ For instance, Jacques Chirac is said to have claimed in public that he constructed Europe “because France could be the best in doing this”; quoted after Cohn-Bendit and Duhamel 1998, p. 101.

³⁹ German Ministry of Finance: Stark wie die Mark, Bonn, April 1992.

⁴⁰ Ironically, with this line of argumentation instances in which the German Bundesbank also compromised were brought to an end: for example, in 1990 in setting the conversion rate for the East- and West-German currency union, where the electoral logic of the German party government counted, despite economic concerns, as the ultimate “raison d’etat”. See Busch 1991. On the other hand, the Economist noted that since 1996 the Mark had turned into the “world’s weakest currency”, The Economist, April 11, 1998: 25.

⁴¹ “The stability of the EMU has to be secured against the failure of some to meet financial prerequisites. For this purpose, the membership criteria and the institutional safeguards of the Treaty have to be articulated and operationalised...” Press-communication of the Federal Ministry for Finance, Bonn, 10.11.1995; in: Deutsche Bundesbank, Auszüge, No. 77, 13.11.1995. I want to thank Uwe Puetter, Belfast University, for these indications.

⁴² “Zeitpunkte: Das neue Geld. Was uns der Euro bringt”; Zeitmagazin, 2/1998; Christoph Zöpel, “Der schwache Euro ist gut”, in DIE ZEIT, 14/9/2000.

⁴³ Gegenstandpunkte, 2000, p. 145.

⁴⁴ Regarding the effects of EMU on economic and job growth, 72 p.c. and 65 p.c., respectively, held pessimistic views; see

Thus, European-nationalists as well as *euro*-critics with their frames have interacted with a German public already sceptical about the *euro*. Both constructed high expectations based on nationally calculated costs and benefits which in one way or another necessarily had to feed into the fears of negative outcomes. This appears to be a typical dilemma of a pro-*euro*-discourse that is constrained by national frames: “Europe is reduced to a necessity, an unavoidable minimal organisation,instead of communicating it as an ideal, an innovation, or a new horizon”.⁴⁵

Cultural-nationalist frames, and the French and British EMU-debates

While Europe-nationalist strategies are based on sometimes quite sophisticated reconstructed frameworks to articulate old domestic and new European frames, cultural-nationalist frameworks revitalise the full symbolic repertoire of traditional unreconstructed nationalism. Their creativity is primarily in how they link empirical evidence to perceptions of threats to national sovereignty, with considerable variations in the level of dramatisation. On the one extreme, there are more moderate cultural nationalists who claim that monetary and economic integration would ultimately impose also cultural homogeneity on EU member states. The *euro* is, hence, constructed as a symbol for “unification from above” which would leave no space for heterogeneity, difference and cultural particularity. On the other extreme, there are cold warriors such as Martin Feldstein, former foreign advisor to Ronald Reagan, in an article against the *euro*, who invented the most threatening scenario of EMU: “The American Civil War shows that a formal political Union cannot impede an inner-European war. But even if one cannot know exactly whether the conflicts (which will derive from the introduction of the *euro*) will be conducive to a war, this is a possibility too real to discard it”⁴⁶.

Cultural essentialists are located between both extremes. For instance, French anthropologist Emanuel Todd predicted at the end of 1998, shortly before the official launch of the euro, by 2005 the EMU would no longer be able to survive. In his view, the EMU was based “on the false premise that European societies are similar and their various components are prone to convergence and harmonisation. It refuses to take into account the very real and inflexible cultural, traditional, ethical and linguistic differences”; therefore “...the whole thing will founder, the great myth will be debunked, and we will all rush back to create our national currencies and economies, the euro will be gone by 2005, or I eat my hat.”⁴⁷

Commission, Special Report, 1999.

⁴⁵ Cohn-Bendit and Duhamel (1988) pin a large range of such ideals on the horizon of the EMU: the *euro* as an instrument for dismantling national borders and as a unique measure advancing social and cultural integration; then, ultimately, as a symbol of European unification, consciousness and identity (1998, p. 101ff.).

⁴⁶ M. Feldstein: The case against EMU. In: *The Economist*, June 13th, 1992, p. 19-22; Cohn-Bendit/Duhamel 1998: 160

⁴⁷ Todd, in *The Economist*, December 1997, p. 32. In his book “L’illusion économique. Essai sur la stagnation des sociétés développées”, Todd further developed his argument based on national identities: contrary to national socio-cultural diversities, the Maastricht project with its combination of commercial openness and “monetary mysticism” pursued the aim of defining “a new, larger and more powerful nation of Europe” and that it was driven by a continental European and authoritarian strategy of “monetary fusion” from above, as Germany had already experienced it in its economic history

Following Eurobarometer-data, nationalist frames would have been relatively most successful in Swedish, British and Danish public debates, where the relatively largest proportions of mass publics ground their euro-sceptic attitudes on national identities and the perception that the sovereignty of the nation-state was under threat from the EU.⁴⁸ A closer scrutiny of the Swedish as well as of the Danish EMU-debates provides evidence that a quantitative account conceals profound differences between the discursive frames used in Nordic debates, and compared to British and French unreconstructed nationalist discourses. In the Nordic countries, frames are mixed, with ethnic-national identities being of minor importance, while “social-nationalist” frames can be found up-front.

Social-nationalist frames and the Swedish and Danish EMU debates

To Swedes, who are deeply split on whether or not to join the EMU, the “loss of national sovereignty” refers to the “Swedish model of society”, and its future in a uniting Europe. In particular, the “communal vision” of politics is emphasised on which this model is constructed and which a Swedish trade union newspaper described as the “soul” of the Social Democratic Party.⁴⁹ In this sense, Swedish social-nationalist frames rest essentially on social democratic norms and the complementary fears to lose social and political rights. A particular topic of Swedish Euroscepticism is the perceived insecurity deriving from the Single Market and European regulations which allow alcohol and drugs to sweep over the Swedish border.⁵⁰

Unlike Sweden, which did not get an official opt-out clause from the EMU and where the debate has been contained in the party political arena, in Denmark, the issue of EMU has provoked the most extensive and open public debates in the EU so far. Here, “nationalist” and “democratic” frames appear to be in competition and at the same time allied. In the referendum campaign on the EMU, in September 2000⁵¹, anti-EMU leftist and right wing forces struggled on contradictory meanings of the “no” which a majority of Danes had voted for. The Socialist People’s Party, on one hand, interpreted this victory according to its slogan “No to the *euro*, enhance the international solidarity”, and, in alliance with the “group for a Europe of democracies and differences”, called for an inversion of the trend towards a European federal state, in which the *euro* would serve as a motor, and for the launch of a new European debate⁵². On the other hand, the right wing populist Danish People’s Party called for a “no’ for the sake of national identity. *Euro-*

several times (Todd 1998: 195-218).

⁴⁸ Asked why they feared the EMU, 49 p.c. of all respondents across EU member states pointed to a “loss of national identity”, in the UK it was 64 p.c. (compared to 30 p.c.??), and in Sweden 54 p.c. (compared to 41 p.c. not), contrasting most with Italy, where the smallest proportion of respondents (21 p.c.) shared such nationalist concerns, and 67 p.c. did not; see Eurobarometer Special Report, 1999.

⁴⁹ Reuters News Service, Swedish Social Democrats split over EMU decision; 7/3/2000

⁵⁰ id.

⁵¹ In the series of six European referenda held in Denmark since 1972, the Government and EU elites lost the last one most dramatically, against 53.1 p.c. of ‘no’ votes and with a high voter participation of 87.7 p.c.

⁵² Agence Europe: Hohe Beteiligung beim Referendum über den Euro, Argumente dafür und dagegen; 29/9/2000.

opponents could build a successful alliance by constructing the *euro* as a motor for a “European super state”, built on neo-liberal principles of less state and more market. This construct was an umbrella that equally served right-wing populists, for their nationalist and protectionist anti-immigration appeals, and also leftist and feminist forces, as advocates of the Danish successful model of a welfare state. State investment programmes since the beginning of the 1990s helped to build a social security net, with low unemployment, and generous public infrastructures, benefiting especially women and working parents. Hence, the idea that a combination of a transfer of state competencies to Brussels and Frankfurt with an increasing number of EU immigrants would undermine this national system, found much popularity for a nationalist alliance of left as well as right-wing forces⁵³.

“Euro-constructive” frames and the French EMU debate

“Euro-constructive” frameworks share with “social-nationalist” frameworks a basically critical approach towards the neo-liberal conception of the EMU. But differing from principled leftist critiques of the global capitalist economy, they take a pragmatic view and see opportunities for curing the shortcomings of a neo-liberal philosophy by strengthening the social dimension of the EU. Thus, the French Communists have described their supportive position in favour of the *euro* as “euroconstructive”: “Precisely because we are convinced of the necessity of a European Union and of the possibility to change it through intervention, we define ourselves without complexes as euroconstructive”.⁵⁴ More principled leftist *euro*-sceptics argue, on the one hand, that the convergence criteria, and namely the 3 p.c. tap on the budget deficit, would undermine social security systems. On the other hand, the intensification of economic competition is depicted as a threat to national economies, conducive to the growth of unemployment, and, as a consequence of labour market flexibilisation, to larger wage disparities. With respect to the issue of employment, euro-constructivists such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit, are sceptical, too. However, instead of rejecting EMU, they rather stress the need for active employment programmes. Their view is that the effect of the EMU on employment will vary, depending on sector, member state and region; but that, as a baseline, the Amsterdam Treaty provision on the coordination of national employment strategies is insufficient⁵⁵.

⁵³ Die Tageszeitung, 30/9/2000: 13.

⁵⁴ Secretary of the PCF, Robert Hue, in L’Humanité, Dec. 15, 1997, cited after Cohn-Bendit/Duhamel 1998: 81.

⁵⁵ Cohn-Bendit and Duhamel 1998: 27ff.

Gendered frames, the Nordic debate and transnational controversy

“Gendered” discursive frameworks for EMU use “gender” as an explicit analytical category, and thus depart from the majority of political discourses that rely on implicit normative assumptions on appropriate or “natural” gender roles. Some authors contend that all political discourses on the EU and the EMU are gendered, even if not explicitly, as social practices and institutions within which EMU is embedded are shaped by gender relations.⁵⁶ Here, I will limit my analysis to explicitly gendered discourses, only, and, hence, explore the social construction of the EMU through the lens which feminist analysts have developed. Depending on the situated knowledge they draw on, their discursive frames may build on ideas about the impacts of the EMU, regarding gender specific interests and gender relations. Feminist discourses that import gender into the constructions of EMU and of the EU, more generally⁵⁷ may draw on different cognitive frames, ideas and norms, but they all emphasise differential meanings of EMU for women, men or their relations.

For the Danish case, Chiara Bertone has demonstrated that “gender” since the 1970s has been a “hidden dimension” in the Danish ECdebate, but that the notion of a “women’s voting block” against the EU during the 1990s was paralleled by deliberate attempts to construct a specific women’s perspective; despite deep disagreements on its contents, these attempts were successful in creating space for gender perspectives in public debates.⁵⁸ Although not in all member states such space for women’s publics or opportunities for women’s groups, activists or scholars exists to the same degree to participate in domestic EUdebates, in recent years a transnational feminist dialogue has developed on issues related to the EU.

In domestic and transnational debates about the EU and EMU, feminist and gender frames have emphasised at least five major ideas. First, labour market liberalisation in the EU had gender biased unequal effects; and it was questionable whether EU gender equality policy was capable of correcting them. For instance, Anette Borchorst argued that EU regulations magnified differences between women: “..the highly monetarist character of the political and economic union... reinforces a dualism between workers with secure full-time jobs and workers outside or partly attached to the labour market. This dualism is heavily structured along gender lines”.⁵⁹ Second, they have pointed to the more specific negative effects of EMU policies on Nordic “women friendly” welfare states as well as on their opportunities for women’s employment and wage equality. In particular, feminist interpretations of the EMU have emphasised the negative implications of the stability pact and of the convergence criteria for women, depicting them as driving forces for national savings packages and welfare retrenchment policies. They point to several critical facts: that after Sweden’s entry in the EU, women experienced reductions in the level of parental leave payments from 90 p.c. to 75 p.c. of their income; that the Swedish labour market is gendered, with women finding work primarily in the public sector; and that

⁵⁶ See Barbara MacLennon’s chapter, in this book.

⁵⁷ See a discussion in Shaw, 2000.

⁵⁸ Bertone 1998, p. 108ff.

⁵⁹ Borchorst 1994, p. 40

economically vulnerable groups have hence either suffered from income reductions or are threatened by the expectation of unemployment.⁶⁰ Third, supporters of a critical view of the EMU as a predominantly market-driven and market expansion project and as a threat to domestic social welfare systems do not share the same view of the effects of EU gender equality policy. The case of unequal pay of a Swedish midwife which was presented in 2000 to the European Court of Justice indicated that women's economic citizenship even in a member state with advanced gender equality, such as Sweden, was constrained by gender segregated labour markets, and, hence, might benefit from EU jurisdiction.⁶¹ Others, like Brigitte Young or Susanne Schunter-Kleemann, would admit that the EU did not exclude measures for combating labour market inequalities between men and women, but they would insist that these should not be overrated vis-à-vis the progressive commodification of women. Reflecting the marginality of gender frames in the German EMU debate, Susanne Schunter-Kleemann argued that equal opportunity policies of the EU constituted "a small and relatively insignificant niche, isolated from the 'big power game' that determines the overall economic and political setting".⁶² Sylvia Walby claimed from a British perspective, on the contrary that vis-à-vis the EMU, EU laws on equality should not be undervalued as a means to enhance working women's rights in the private as well as the public sector.⁶³ Fourth, normative reflections on EMU that are informed by a gender framework see the EU gender policy approach as fundamentally ambiguous: on one hand, as too excessively oriented towards the market and women's employability, and, on the other hand, as still supporting an outmoded notion of maternalism⁶⁴. From the Nordic perspective, "maternity protection" that is the core concern of the 1992-EC-pregnant workers directive, is seen as "outmoded" and as an indicator of a dominant trend in the EU toward the male-breadwinner-femalecare-taker model⁶⁵. The EMU and the pressure it creates for a social and political union is seen as a motor promoting this trend towards a social policy harmonisation based on a German type insurance model and not the Danish model of a tax financed welfare system⁶⁶. These critical reflections on the impact of the EU on gender equality indicate that norms of a just and legitimate social order are still contested across the different gender worlds of the European Union. Although Northern enlargement in 1995 has made welfare and gender regimes within the EU more varied than ever before, precisely this diversity is perceived to be under threat by the EMU. In the aftermath of Maastricht, Anette Borchorst only wondered, whether it would be the conservative or the liberal welfare regime model that was going to win the race, at the expense of the social democratic regime.⁶⁷ The view that EU law did not attempt to strengthen the family should be corrected, at least in part, because the EU

⁶⁰ Ingrid Hedström, EU-correspondent of Dagens Nyheter, in an interview conducted by Milena Sunnus, University of Bremen, in April 2000 in Stockholm; for similar arguments, see Twaddle 1997, p. 189ff. I want to thank Milena Sunnus for providing me the transcript of her interview.

⁶¹ For a critical discussion, see Hobson 2000, p. 85ff.

⁶² Schunter-Kleemann 1997

⁶³ Young, 2000; Walby, 1999

⁶⁴ Shaw, 2000

⁶⁵ Hobson 1999; Shaw 2000.

⁶⁶ cf. Abrahamson and Borchorst 2000.

⁶⁷ Borchorst, 1994, p. 38.

adopted a “parental leave directive” in 1996, and inscribed the principle of “gender mainstreaming” into the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997⁶⁸. However, Nordic feminists continue to see EU law as a “logical trap” in which women are caught, given the negative position of the European Court of Justice regarding domestic affirmative action measures which, by adopting quotas in favour of women, seek to increase the share of women in certain labour market sectors.⁶⁹ It is rather uncertain, hence, whether these ambiguous developments will encourage *euro*-sceptical feminists to transform their normative frames and critical ideas, or whether they will rather enhance nationally situated discourses and the fragmentation of the European space.

Finally, only in some instances could more pragmatically gendered frames also be found, for example in the British debate. Quite unimpressed by more fundamental feminist concerns, gender sensitive politicians brought “gender-constructive” frames into the EMU debate. This was done to counter women’s *euro*-scepticism by responding to their special practical interests vis-à-vis the EMU. For instance, the British Guardian reported a “startling gender split on monetary union”⁷⁰, a few days after the start of the third phase and the introduction of the EURO in the 11 members of *EURO*-Land, with the “Anti-Euros” having a 32-point lead among women, compared to a lead of only 12 points among men. The explanation neither pointed to the popularity of the *euro*-sceptic “heroine” Margaret Thatcher, to the conventional wisdom of female conservatism, nor to “residual monarchism” among British women. Why did British women not like the Euro, then? The Guardian argued that the failure consisted in not casting the language of the debate such that women could see the advantages to themselves and their families: far more women than men fear the Euro would mean higher interest and mortgage rates (47 p.c. of women, 35 p.c. of men) and that it would be bad for the British economy (41 p.c. to 31 p.c.). Quoting Claire Ward, a Labour MP, “enthusiasts...bored on about macro-economics, (while) the assertions of the sceptics have concentrated on the home life of the British voter and gone largely unchallenged.” By contrast, women needed to show, by the transparency of the *euro*, that “a basket of goods from a British supermarket is more expensive here than elsewhere”; and that if Brits had the same rates as in *euro*-countries, this would mean a 70 p.c. off the average mortgages. A Labour party’s former Women’s Officer, having pioneered focus groups before the 1997 elections, reported that “women responded best to everyday implications”: “A lot of men like to think they understand the economic “big picture”, even when they don’t really, and women want to know what impact decisions will have on their own accounts at the end of the week”.⁷¹

Compared to the conditions under which the Werner Plan was drafted in 1970, gendered *euro*-scepticism indicates that the premises for a paradigm of social rationality beyond 2002 have changed. Women’s labour market activity rates and traditional gender orders have been transformed since the 1970s, when the Werner Plan was debated. As a

⁶⁸ Gender equality policy in the EU in 2001 includes nine directives, more than one hundred ECJ-decisions, anti-discrimination principles inscribed into the Amsterdam Treaty, policies for combatting trafficking of women, as well as “gender mainstreaming” to be generalised to all policies of the EU. Cf. Rossilli 2000; Hantrais 2000.

⁶⁹ Lundström 1997, pp. 74ff.; Hobson 2000, pp. 85.

⁷⁰ Guardian, 7.1.1999, p. 6.

⁷¹ id.

consequence, gender questions have taken on new meanings that need to be reflected in any attempt to renew the connection between the monetary issue of a political economy and a “Social Europe”. First, from multiple European gender perspectives, “Social Europe” should not compete with national welfare states, especially in Nordic member states, where they have institutionalised “women power” and high levels of gender equality⁷²: neither would a return to the traditional “male breadwinner family” ideology be accepted in Nordic member states, nor the imposition of an egalitarian “dual breadwinner” norm in continental Europe. Second, from the perspective of structural long-term mass unemployment, an exclusive or predominant focus on labour markets by linking social entitlements to individual achievements in paid employment appears anachronistic; and from the perspective of gendered notions of justice, the “basic income guarantee” would also not appear satisfying. Third, recent developments in EU gender policy have started to extend the labour market focus towards reconciling work and care for all individuals with care responsibilities, and without falling back into traditional ideologies of gendered divisions of labour. This resonates with the ideas which feminist welfare analysts have developed to re-evaluate, and at the same time to “degender” care, thus enhancing women’s economic freedom.⁷³ In how far have supranational elites developed frames of EMU responsive to the issues voiced by the diverse groups of euro-sceptics?

Supranational frames to construct public *euro*-support

The step-wise introduction of the single currency is arguably the first time in the history of European integration indicating that more than a European “issue community” began to emerge. The contours of a European public space became visible at a progressively accelerating pace.⁷⁴ At first in 1992, in the campaigns for the first Danish Maastricht referendum, the *euro* became salient as a European issue in a single domestic debate; other domestic publics followed becoming sensitised to the issue at different points in time. In a second step, in 1995, when faced with acute legitimacy problems of the EMU⁷⁵, supranational elites launched the most extensive and costly information and mass communication campaign ever conducted, since the inception of the EC, to be extended until - at least - 2002.⁷⁶ At a third stage, on January 1st, 1999, when the *euro* was officially launched, domestic debates on EMU had synchronised at a cross-national scale.

At a fourth and so far final stage, in September 2000, during the Danish referendum

⁷² Hernes 1987; Borchorst 1999, p. 161ff.

⁷³ Feminist political theorist Joan Tronto has suggested to redesign social citizenship rights such that individual social entitlements should primarily derive from *socially valuable care activities* and not (or only in a second place) from earned income and labour market performances; cf. Hirschmann and Liebert, eds. 2001.

⁷⁴ Analyses of the transformation of domestic public spaces suggest the emergence of transnational “issue communities” around European policymaking; see: Klaus Eder 2000.

⁷⁵ cf. Verdun, 1999, p. 212.

⁷⁶ These communication and information campaigns were developed to accompany the implementation stage of the EMU until at least 2002, when national currencies will be substituted by the euro. For that purpose, the Commission contracted groups of experts to define the conceptual terrain on which *euro*-campaigns were based; see European Commission, Euro-Papers, several numbers and years.

campaign on EMU, transnational communication across the Danish boundaries began to develop, with media transmissions of Danish debates into other member state publics.⁷⁷

Despite the embryonic condition of the European public space that is emerging around the issue of the *euro*, the paradox of EMU consists in the asymmetries it creates for the Euro-Polity, as long as EMU lacks a political union, and political unity is not grounded on democratised institutions.⁷⁸ Under the conditions of EMU resting on an independent ECB, and on intergovernmental institutions, such as ECOFIN, with weak competencies of the European Parliament and the Commission, supranational communication campaigners were not autonomous. If they would have wanted to bring the EU closer to its citizens⁷⁹, they were certainly restrained, on one hand, by national governments as well as by the ECB. But supranational elites were also dependent, on the other hand, on the legacy of the peculiar organisational culture of the proper Commission. Different from the Werner Plan language, in the negotiation of the Maastricht Treaty (1989-1991), a technocratic frame had come to prevail in the crafting of the formal framework for the EMU, where tripartite *Euro*-corporatism was abandoned and replaced by a neo-liberal discourse about the EMU, as a way to institutionalise a liberal market economy and to cope with global competition⁸⁰. Michele Cini has shown that under Jacques Santer as President of the Commission, this discourse of technocracy, elitism, and neo-functionalism continued to prevail, while its re-articulation and the integration of accountability, representation, and new government ideas for legitimising EMU proved quite difficult⁸¹. The Commission therefore restrained its role to specifically targeted actions towards enterprises and the general public. While the main task of reaching the general public remained a prerogative of member state governments, the Commission contributed to preparing publics for the *euro* by measures to stabilise citizen expectations.⁸² An analysis of the language which prevails in the Commission's public information and communication campaigns on the EMU, and in particular in those associated with mobilising help for "vulnerable groups", such as women or the blind, shows that the technocratic style typical of the Commission's organisational culture continued to prevail. A Commission Dossier framed women as "vulnerable groups", in the need to know "a variety of things but in particular they need to understand prices and values of the euro and become acquainted with the look of notes and coins". These frames obviously fail to resonate with the gendered patterns of public opinion and the gender frames which *euro*-sceptic discourses have articulated. Talking about the "need of

⁷⁷ For instance, the daily "Berliner Zeitung" titled an article that Danes gave "a democratic, no nationalist No" (30/9/2000:6), while the daily "Süddeutsche Zeitung" calculated "the price of the Danish No" (30/9/2000). For the "Scotsman, the Danish rejection of the euro was significant for the Scottish political debate" and for "fighting for an alternative vision of Europe" (30/09/2000: 3). The Austrian Minister of Finance showed sympathy with the decision of Danes which he saw as a consequence of the sanctions against Austria - as an expression of the "fear of a super-Europe" (Die Presse, 30/9/2000).

⁷⁸ Philippe Schmitter suggests as a solution to the "embarrassing" issue of nondemocratic, but autonomous institutions such as the European Central Bank, to establish a permanent oversight function within the committee structure of the European Parliament; cf. Schmitter 2000, p. 87-8. However, other member states than Germany have remained reluctant so far towards "superimposing a political union on the single currency", cf. The Economist: Ever closer union? April 11th, 1998: 25

⁷⁹ Schlesinger and Kevin 2000, p. 206ff.

⁸⁰ see Strath/Magnusson, in this volume; Verdun, 2000, p. 2f..

⁸¹ Cini, 2000

⁸² Reich 2000

women”, responsiveness is suggested. But in order to reassure female publics of the benefits of the single currency, acquaintance with the look of notes will hardly be sufficient. By renouncing to a more responsive policy language, as well as to a language richer of political symbolisms,⁸³ Commission public relations experts forewent appeals that would have touched the real life world experiences of their target publics. By “outsourcing” the task of building public support for the common currency to commercial agencies, supranational elites could not convert mass public indifference, let alone mass public *Euro*-scepticism into more stable support. To the extent to which these communication campaigns for the Euro were conducted like advertisement spots based on beliefs that the social construction of the euro could be made from scratch, independently from cultural, normative and institutional foundations, the symbolic politics of monetary union did not resonate with *euro*-sceptic discourse and those constituencies’ concerns reflected by it.

In contrast with the Commission, the European Parliament developed a more responsive language, in particular from a gender perspective. In its resolution on the “Commission Communication on Mainstreaming” in 1998, the EP claimed that “women’s position and situation in society should be taken more into consideration when advancing policies to support the internal market, and not least policies to support EMU”. All necessary steps should be taken to ensure that EMU and fiscal consolidation had a positive impact on equality between women and men. An effort was needed to ensure that the establishment of a single market that “boosts growth, competitiveness and employment” is not hampered by inflexibility caused by the entrenched patterns of job segregation in the labour market. Dedicated measures should be taken to speed up the desegregation process, in particular promoting diversity and the full use of women’s capacities and potential in management positions and decision making in the public and private sectors. In view of the demographic changes associated with the ageing of the population in Europe, the future labour supply would become increasingly important. As women were increasingly equal, or even better qualified compared to men, this would increase the pool of qualified labour supply and could enhance the smooth functioning of the Single Market.⁸⁴

Hence, despite its limited role in EMU policy, the EP and particularly the Women’s Rights Committee used its prerogative vis-à-vis the Commission to promote an innovative policy idea: to apply the procedure of gender impact assessments to all EMU supporting policies. The principle of “gender mainstreaming” could thus serve as a general supranational policy device that would not ignore locally specific differences in gender relations, but rather require systematic comparative research to integrate them into policy making.

⁸³ cf. “Commission Staff Working Paper”; “Euro Made Easy program” etc.

⁸⁴ COM 1998, 122 final; Rubery/Smith: The future of European Labor supply, European Work and Employment Research Center, Manchester School of Management, UMIST, Nov. 1997.

Conclusion and further perspectives

In this chapter, I have described how, after Maastricht and the end of the permissive consensus, the EMU can be studied as a complex process of social construction, involving social practices, ideologies and identities and norms. For an analysis of European monetary integration, I have suggested to distinguish three distinct dimensions that are involved in this process: patterns and dynamics of public (elite and mass) attitudes towards the issue of EMU; different types of domestic discourses; and supranational communication strategies with mass publics and specific “target groups”.

My intention was to demonstrate that the analysis of three dimensions of the communications involved in the construction of EMU, are a necessary condition for assessing the legitimacy problems that invest the *euro* as a political symbol with a multitude of different and contradictory meanings: from peace to war, from a European identity to a neo-imperialist project, from social justice and solidarity to domination. In this framework, one can assess EU communication strategies for building public support, identify those domestic discourses that resonate with patterns of public attitudes and behaviours, describe how legitimacy gaps widen or narrow over time, and show how similar discursive and practical devices function differently in different contexts, depending on specific cultural and institutional connotations⁸⁵.

More in particular, three findings shall be highlighted: first, supranational discursive frames which the Commission employed in its mass public and targeted communication campaigns on EMU were less responsive and symbolically “thin”, and that this was the case because they rested, among others, on social psychological premisses developed by a group of experts that the Commission had contracted.⁸⁶ Second, it was argued that the Commission campaigns started in 1999 for targeting “women as a vulnerable group”, can be expected to have little effect on gender gaps especially in Nordic contexts where feminist frames prevail in EMU-debates. As the third, and possibly most important result, it was emphasized that in view of the multiplicity of diverse *euro*-sceptic discourses and despite the relative lack of political responsiveness of supranational communication campaigners, the issue of the EMU has turned the EU gradually into a sphere of publics that interact across national boundaries. To explain these dynamics, *euro*-scepticism, although an expression of different ideas and collective identities and shaped by contrasting norms, paradoxically has served as a crucial mechanism in this process: by stimulating mass public interest in issues linked to EMU and by promoting transnational communication about these issues. Whether, as a consequence of these interactions,

⁸⁵ Info Frauen Europas, Nov. Dec. 1998, no. 83, Brussels, p. 4

⁸⁶ DG24 commissioned an interdisciplinary group of psychologists, economists, lawyers, and sociologists from France, the UK, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands to produce a number of reports, as the basis for a comprehensive “Information Programme for the European Citizen” on the single currency. Given the psychological perspective, these did not take socio-economic, identity based or normative concerns seriously into account.

sticky domestic norms will change, depends not at least on the further evolution of dialogical public spheres towards a “Europe of multiple voices”.⁸⁷

Any attempt to address the dilemma of legitimation of EMU needs to communicatively integrate *euro*-scepticism and, for that purpose, would require arenas for communication and institutionalised channels of access for public constituencies to transmit more actively and successfully their concerns to EU policy makers. It would require to incorporate into the “currency of ideas” (Kathleen R. McNamara) that currently promotes EMU also some ideas relevant to public interests in European civil society. Among these ideas, gender frames have not yet lost public interest, as some modernisation theorists expected. From the perspective of gendered *euro*-scepticisms in the EU, the legitimacy of the EMU would, hence, not only depend on matching it with a political union but more specifically also on embedding it in the emerging European public space.

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⁸⁷ Nanz 2000.

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