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Time to go beyond interstate federalism - or something different? The response of new pro-European think tanks to the EU integration crisis

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Dieter Plehwe, with Werner Krämer, Moritz Neujeffski,
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TIME TO GO BEYOND INTERSTATE FEDERALISM – OR SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

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Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (2016)

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Abstract

Time to go beyond interstate federalism – or something different?

The response of new pro-European think tanks to the EU integration crisis

The European financial and economic crisis has shaken traditional beliefs and confidence in a one-directional move towards an ever closer union. Discussions regarding “Grexit” and the public vote in favor of “Brexit” have signaled strong anti-EU sentiment far beyond previous instances of dissatisfaction expressed by popular votes in France and the Netherlands opposing the European constitution, for example. Mainstream European integration scholars have started to seriously address disintegration theory; once a preserve of Marxist critiques of mainstream integration scholarship. European right-wing parties, foundations and think tanks openly advocate (partial) disintegration and, in particular, aim to interrupt centrist Social Democratic, Green, Liberal and Conservative cooperation in the European Parliament. What has been the response to these conceptual and political challenges from the pro-European political forces in European politics? In the shadow of Syriza’s anti-austerity campaign from Greece and Podemos’ grassroots mobilization in Spain, a range of new pro-European think tanks of different political-philosophical leanings have been founded after the crisis, or developed new activities in response to the crisis. The paper will examine the publications of organizations like European Alternatives, Project for a Democratic Europe and EuropaNova in order to observe if and how a new cross-cutting network of pro-European intellectuals, think tanks and ideas address the present crisis, and if and in which ways we can speak of new conceptual and political approaches to European integration that promise innovation and progressive (in the sense of pro-European integration) learning. Do they look beyond neoliberal restrictions to Europe’s “sui generis” Union (Hayek’s version of interstate federalism), something closer to real (fiscal) federalism – or something different? We will also examine if and how they differ from more centrist institutional efforts to envision the future, such as those uttered by Commission officials, MEPs of the Spinelli-Group, or experts like those assembled in the Glienicker Group. Last, but not least, we will try to establish if and to what extent new conceptual efforts reverberate in pro-European integration debating platforms like Publixphere, OneEurope or Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique), which are considered more likely echo chambers for pro-European integration think tanks than mainstream media.

Zusammenfassung

Ist es Zeit, über zwischenstaatlichen Föderalismus hinauszugehen – oder für etwas ganz anderes?

Die Antwort neuer pro-europäischer Think-Tanks auf die europäische Integrationskrise

Die europäische Finanz- und Wirtschaftskrise hat traditionelle Vorstellungen bezüglich der europäischen Integration und das Vertrauen in die Entwicklung in Richtung einer immer engeren Union erschüttert. Diskussionen über den „Grexit“ und das Votum für den „Brexit“ haben starke anti-europäische Stimmungen erkennen lassen, die weit über bisherige Unzufriedenheit, wie sie z.B. bei Volksabstimmungen in Frankreich und den Niederlanden gegen die europäische Verfassung zum Ausdruck kamen, hinausreichen. Der Mainstream Europäischer Integrationsforschung hat ernsthaft damit begonnen, Auflösungstheorien zu thematisieren, einst eine Domäne marxistischer Kritik an der etablierten Integrationsforschung. Rechtsgerichtete europäische Parteien, Stiftungen und Think-Tanks befürworten offen einen teilweisen Rückbau und beabsichtigen insbesondere, die Zusammenarbeit von gemäßigten Sozialdemokraten, Grünen, Liberalen und Konservativen im Europäischen Parlament zu beenden. Welche Antworten geben pro-europäische politische Kräfte in der europäischen Politik auf diese konzeptionellen und politischen Herausforderungen? Im Schatten der Syriza-Kampagne gegen die Sparpolitik in Griechenland und der Mobilisierung durch Podemos in Spanien wurden nach der Krise eine Reihe pro-europäischer Think-Tanks verschiedener politisch-ideologischer Ausrichtung gegründet oder haben neue Aktivitäten als Reaktion auf die Krise entwickelt. Der Beitrag untersucht die Publikationen von Organisationen wie European Alternatives, Project for a Democratic Europe und EuropaNova um festzustellen, ob und wie ein neues, übergreifendes Netzwerk pro-europäischer Intellektueller, Think-Tanks und Ideen die gegenwärtige Krise thematisiert. Dabei wird insbesondere gefragt, ob und in welcher Weise von neuen konzeptionellen und politischen Ansätzen zur europäischen Integration gesprochen werden kann, die Innovation und fortschrittliches Lernen (im Sinne von pro-europäischer Integration) versprechen. Gehen Beiträge über die neoliberalen Restriktionen der Europäischen „sui generis“ Union hinaus (Hayeks Variante eines zwischenstaatlichen Föderalismus), etwa in Annäherung an europäischen (fiskalischen) Föderalismus – oder etwas anderes? Zur Einordnung der Beiträge der Think-Tanks werden diese mit Aussagen zur Zukunft der EU aus Studien im Kontext der europäischen Institutionen abgeglichen, darunter Beiträge von Kommissionsbeamten, Abgeordneten der Spinelli-Gruppe zur Arbeit des Europäischen Parlamentes sowie Fachleuten und Beratern z.B. der Glienicker Gruppe. Last but not least wird versucht zu ermitteln, ob und inwieweit sich die konzeptionelle Arbeit der Think-Tanks in pro-europäischen Diskussionsplattformen wie Publixphere, OneEurope oder Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique) niederschlägt oder spiegelt. Diese kommen stärker als etwa nationale Printmedien als mögliche Echokammern der pro-europäischen Think-Tanks in Frage, weil Autorinnen und Autoren sowie Leser und Leserinnen als generell europainteressiert gelten können.

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1 Introduction: Does the struggle over the future of European integration generate new concepts?

Europe's financial and economic crisis followed the subprime market collapse in the United States. It will certainly be remembered as a – if not the – critical moment in the history of European integration. While there have been severe crises of European integration before, and scholars have come to regard crises as a normal (constitutive) element of European integration dynamics (Deppe and Felder 1993), it was, and remains, unclear if the subsequent events of 2008 will go down in history as seeds of reversal, setting off dynamics of disintegration. To mitigate this, the sovereign debt and euro crisis have been contained by way of creating new financial institutions like the European Stability Mechanism, and also by reforming the governing institutions of the European Economic and Monetary Union. Europe's new economic governance regime relies more heavily on ex-ante coordination (European Semester) and has introduced stronger compliance mechanisms. The Maastricht criteria stipulating a yearly deficit below 3 per cent, a debt to GDP ratio of less than 60 per cent, and a low inflation rate, have been fortified. At the same time, the new economic governance regime returned to inter-governmental decision making and control, rather than strengthening the supranational community mode of governance (Puetter 2012); this raises new doubts with regard to the prospect of Europe's post-national democracy. In socio-economic terms, post-Maastricht Europe has been stabilized at the expense of severe, permanent and “constitutionalized austerity” (McBride 2016), raising inequality both between and within EU member states and, as a result, increasing social instability and tensions. Indeed, in the face of mounting social insecurity and growing dissatisfaction with Europe's economic and social order, and in light of the Brexit vote, it is unclear if crisis containment amounts to a Pyrrhus victory.

A surge in right-wing Euroscepticism, and, to a much lesser extent, left-wing EU critiques in terms of the popular vote in European and national elections¹, has swept governments to power that advocate less, rather than more, European integration in EU member states; traditional nationalist opposition to the EU has been reinvigorated, such as in the UK, Poland and Hungary (Plehwe and Schlögl 2014). Other critics continue to support European integration, but object to the principle goal of an ever closer union. Right-wing anti-European and Eurosceptic parties have also gained a lot of support in countries where they are still a minority, no matter whether inside or outside government coalitions (Finland,

1 The 2.35 per cent increase of the European left in the EP from 2009 to 2014 is almost exclusively due to the strong results of Syriza in Greece. On the other side of the aisle in the EP, the membership in the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists faction has increased by 1.92 per cent with new members from different countries (including Germany's AfD); the newly formed European political party and EP group of Freedom and Direct Democracy (Le Pen etc.) gained 2.35 per cent, and the mostly right-wing non-aligned parties gained another 2.61 per cent. The total gain on the right of center parties thus amounts to about 7 per cent, compared with the 2 per cent gain on the radical left. Retrieved on 28th October: www.europarl.europa.eu/elections/2014-results/en/election-results-2014.html.

Sweden, Denmark, Austria, the Netherlands, Germany and France to name just a few). Even the scholarly debate has started to seriously discuss disintegration in light of strong centrifugal forces and open calls for exit in many member states (Vollaard 2014, Eppler and Scheller 2013).

The “Brexit” vote in the UK referendum of June 23, 2016 underlines the new sense of urgency with 52 per cent of the votes cast demanding to leave the EU. Even though slightly fewer than 50 per cent voted remain, it is hard to overlook the deep social divide on the question of Europe. What seemed like a distant conservative fantasy for a considerable amount of time has suddenly become real, with deeper European integration no longer taken for granted.

In the face of the crisis, a positive agenda for reversal of European integration or “partial disintegration” has been developed by the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists (and the New Direction Foundation, compare Plehwe and Schlögl 2014). Under leadership of the Tories and their “Open Europe” think tank (in London, Brussels and Berlin²), this agenda has been difficult to reconcile with a ‘pro-European’ vote championed by David Cameron. Brexit, of course, will lead to another version of partial disintegration since the British government will try to preserve many benefits of European integration in seeking a status similar to Norway or Switzerland. But no matter which way withdrawing countries and the remaining EU members choose, European integration will no longer be considered a one-way street. Metaphors of different speeds of integration and “Europe à la carte” of the 1990s expressed a need for greater flexibility, but still assumed universal progress towards an eventual deeper union. It is quite likely, if not certain, that the new discussion will be somewhat different. At the conceptual level crisis and social struggles at least have opened the venue for counter-proposals to the previously hegemonic narrative.

Under threat of (partial) disintegration it is all the more important to also observe and scrutinize more closely the other side(s) of the European integration debate. What do the pro-European forces discuss and propose as future options for Europe in the face of the neo-nationalist counter proposals? In which ways does the pro-European (center-)left respond to the threat of (partial) disintegration? Right-wing populism clearly is on the horizon not only for the European Commission and the technocratic pro-European officials; it is also increasingly regarded as a political challenge for the (center-)left spectrum of policy makers and activists. Pro-European foundations like the Friedrich Ebert Foundation or Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany have launched major surveys asking what European citizens think and want³; Soros foundation has already created a major funding line in 2011 on “reluctant radicals”⁴ to account for the popularity of right-

2 The German office enjoys strong support of prominent German ordo-liberal forces such as Otmar Issing and Michael Wohlgemuth. Wohlgemuth serves as Director. German neoliberals have long supported „Open Europe“ think tank perspectives as a cachet of de facto anti-European thinking (unless Europe is opening to the global market) now bundled under the title of this version of “European” think tank.

3 <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/12346.pdf>, (retrieved on 28th October 2016); <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de> (retrieved on 28th October 2016) “what-do-the-people-want”.

4 <http://counterpoint.uk.com/ideaslabs/reluctant-radicals-2/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

wing populism and to advance strategies needed to contain, if not re-integrate, supporters of the new right.

The growing reservations toward European integration by European citizens in many countries will undoubtedly require considerable efforts to counteract; pro-European rhetoric alone will not address current economic, social and cultural anxieties. Thus, a reinvigorated pro-European camp must seemingly confront a two-fold challenge: meet the growing discontent toward European integration on the one hand, while addressing the neoliberal economic integration bias of the EU mainstream in support of permanent austerity and intensified globalization on the other. Although the neo-nationalist challenge by the political right is considerable (partly due to the promise of social integration on nationalist, if not racist terms) the EU is also facing increasing hostility on the left due to the crisis of globalized capitalism and mounting social insecurity. Many on the left doubt that the EU can be reformed in a progressive manner, and, consequently, argue for European disintegration as well. Of course, in contrast to the right, the demand includes a call for a re-launch in favor of democratic politics and transnational solidarity (Wehr 2004/2016). In line with cold-war stereotypes regarding similarities of the left and the right, however, (radical) right and left-wing populism is frequently lumped together and evoked as equal dangers for the EU⁵. To this end, the free market right has developed a survey tool (authoritarian populism index)⁶. This presents the discussion over the future of Europe with some difficulty: Does the mainstream need to look at the left to find new inspiration for a future dictated less by the demands of corporate globalization and the influence of neoliberal ideology? Or should the mainstream avoid the (radical) left as much as the radical right in order to preserve an increasingly neoliberal European Union? Even progressive thinkers are in a quandary over ambiguous center-left positions with regard to the future of Europe, between moderate social reform and radical critique of neoliberalism.

In this research we will attempt to turn this most general concern into an empirical question: What do pro-European think tanks often created by young people discuss and propose for an alternative European future? Can we identify conceptual innovations and in which policy areas? Do they consider a new type of polity (e.g. European fiscal Federalism, or something else)? Can we speak about a new pro-European center-left in terms of think tanks? In which ways do their contributions differ from reflections we find in, or close to, the mainstream circles of policy making in Europe? Rather than examining the (in-)compatibility of left-wing or progressive proposals, it is considered more crucial to explore the impulses from the new pro-European think tanks in order to assess whether the

5 A common argument of the collapse of Weimar referred to the opposition against the Weimar Republic from the right-wing parties and Communists. The stereotype cannot account for the fact that the Weimar Republic was indeed destroyed by the radical right and not by the Communists, but cold war requirements of anti-communist alliances benefited greatly from the convenient myth of the left = right equation.

6 <http://counterpoint.uk.com/ideaslab/reluctant-radicals-2/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016); <http://www.epicenternetwork.eu/briefings/the-authoritarian-populism-index-main-findings/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

slate of pro-European forces has developed a new counter proposal to (partial) disintegration perspectives.

Based on expert interviews⁷ we have chosen a number of pro-European think tanks that have been founded around the time of the global financial crisis in order to see if, and, in which ways, a new wing of pro-European thought has emerged in general, and at the left, in particular. Rather than looking at the established European left of political parties and foundations (like Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation or the European transform network), this research will focus on civil society contributions that do not profess to a specific political party and major left-wing ideology (of socialist, communist or green orientations, for example). Since the new progressive movements of Syriza and Podemos were the only left-wing parties that managed to gain considerable support after the 2008 financial crisis, we are looking for clues about new (civil society) influences in the theoretical and discursive field.

Think tanks are interesting in this regard, since they are situated at the interface of the academic and philosophical field, the political field, the economic field and the media field (Medvetz 2012). Think tanks have been attributed the particular role and strength to develop important philosophical-political narratives that can become quite influential in the political discourse, namely, story lines that explain important aspects of the political and social reality in simplified ways (Hajer 1993, Saloma III 1984). This turns think tanks into para-political forces that have come to play an increasing role in contemporary “post-democratic” circumstances (Mair 2013). The decline of political parties, fragmentation of the public sphere, internationalization of political negotiations, decision making, and cross-border challenges are all difficult to manage in traditionally nation-state centered political systems (compare Plehwe 2015 on the role think tanks and policy networks have on modern neoliberal age governance patterns).

However, a sprawling pro-European movement across the member states is evident. In particular, many young people – “generation Erasmus” or the “EasyJet generation” – are now accustomed to the European reality of multiculturalism and open borders. Many within this highly mobile generation dislike political positions that attempt to roll back the achievements of the EU in terms of transnational civil rights, freedom and mobility. Although the new pro-European think tanks share many common values along these lines, they are certainly not a homogeneous entity; particularly, as they have been founded in different countries by different groups of people, while funded by various sources. Their activists and intellectuals are motivated by a range of different concerns, united only with regard to a clear pro-European integration perspective. Hence, we also expect a certain range of future thinking in the realm of their research and articulation. Both the spectrum of perspectives and the stage of development of new pro-European think tanks can be considered a strength and weakness at the

7 Thanks to Victoria Kupsch for participating in the opening workshop of the research project, and offering considerable advice on possible candidates.

same time: If pro-European think tanks are not united in their concerns, it is difficult to push or pull together in a similar direction. But if the spectrum of reflections is interesting and attractive, it may also generate a new discourse and debate that could militate against the (partial) disintegration narratives. Likewise, if a range of more radical ideas with regard to European integration are difficult to translate into concrete reform projects that reach and resonate with a broad audience, they might be considered simply irrelevant. On the other hand, the window of opportunity for concrete reforms can be short and narrow; strong concerns with practicality may hamper a more radical and demanding reform agenda that would arguably be necessary to overcome common concerns with the present stage of mostly neoliberal Europe. The choice may be somewhere between filtering new ideas that have a chance to be realized and generate an experience of successful reform, to more challenging ideas that may need dedication and patience in the longer run, while also providing a compass needed to develop a far-ranging European alternative. We will try to observe the range of perspectives, and find out if conceptual ideas circulate in pro-European debates generated by another slate of pro-European organizations, namely online platforms and online magazines.

First, we will introduce the organizations that we have examined in close detail, namely, five European think tanks and five debating platforms and their considerable output (of approximately 3000 documents) available on their websites (section 1). Each think tank will then be characterized in terms of this output. To this end, we have compiled and sorted the documents in a dedicated database on the basis of attributed keywords in the different spheres of political, economic, social etc. thought (section 2). On the backdrop of the descriptive statistical examination of the work of the think tanks, we have deepened the analysis of approximately 50 select (typically somewhat longer) documents produced by the think tanks, which qualified with regard to conceptual work. We present an examination of pro-European conceptual innovation in the following five areas: 1) European citizenship; 2) European democracy; 3) European public interest economy/economic democracy; 4) European civil society and public sphere; and 5) European foreign policy. In each of these areas we will look at, arguably, innovative elements of new or reconceptualizations of the EU on the one hand, and on the extent to which they are developed into concrete programs on the other hand. In each case we will use European mainstream (or near mainstream) reflections, such as the Five Presidents' Report, the Spinelli Report, and the Glienicker Gruppe work etc. to check if and to what extent the new Europe think tanks overlap with their reflections on the future of European integration (section 3). Last, but not least, we will look at the work of the second group of new pro-European debating organizations to see if and how the conceptual work of the new Europe think tanks is reflected in the (pro-)European online debates. Since such organizations are close to the pro-European think tank landscape examined here, we expect to find considerable attention to the conceptual work advanced by these think tanks, before they would possibly be taken up in the media and public at large (section 4). Our conclusions will address the general questions raised in

the beginning of this introduction, again, pointing to strength and weaknesses of the new Europe discourse emanating from these sources. We will also suggest ways to look and move forward the future of Europe think tank analysis in general and with regard to progressive Europe discourses in particular.

1.1 A brief word on methodology

We apply think tank analysis as laid out in the work of Medvetz (2012). According to this perspective, think tanks occupy a distinct space between and related to the political, academic, media and economic spheres. According to our think tank network analysis approach, we examine networks of intellectuals, organizations and ideas (Plehwe 2015). Individuals linked to think tanks (as staff or board members) are examined by way of situated group biographical research (compare Mirowski and Plehwe 2009/2016). The focus in this project is on the network of (conceptual) ideas, which we have established on the basis of a close reading of all documents published on the websites of the think tanks⁸ under examination. (Key-) concepts like (European) citizenship or (transnational) democracy are time and context bound semantic expressions, shaped by social struggles and subject to change over time (Koselleck 2002, compare Olsen 2012 for an introduction to conceptual history). Since the 2008 global financial crisis gave rise to considerable struggles around the European integration project, we can expect conceptual change and innovation with regard to political meaning and normative orientation. The rise of counter concepts like (partial) disintegration against prevailing understandings of an ever closer union trigger discursive and political struggles that take place in a new constellation of pro- and anti-European integration forces. (Political) Concepts overlap with ideology (normativity) since ideology is composed of (ordered, prioritized) political concepts (Freeden 1996). The conceptual position and innovation we attempt to observe is considered an indispensable dimension of the current struggles over the future of European societies and, possibly, society, over European class, civil society and state formation processes within and across borders. We attempt to identify the emerging semantic space characterized by contested European integration concepts. Contestation can be captured by specifying different understandings of contested concepts like citizenship (e.g. in the shape of re-nationalized or expanded European forms), and situate them on the wider map of pro- and anti-European integration perspectives. In this way, we also innovatively visualize the European conceptual debate as far as the findings from this empirical research are concerned.

While our sample of think tanks (and debating platforms) has been assembled on the basis of expert advice and is certainly too small to be representative of the

8 Quoted documents published by the organizations under review are not included in the list of literature. Content published by think tanks is listed in annex 5.1 (table 24-28), for each conceptual dimension respectively. Articles on expanded European citizenship by debating platforms are included in table 20, chapter 3.1. As the other conceptual dimensions are covered more extensively by the debating platforms, they are listed in annex 5.1. as well (table 29-30).

new pro-European think tank and intellectual field at large, we are confident that we look at a significant and broad enough segment of this field stretching from more centrist (like French EuropaNova in the Gaullist tradition) to more radical left (like European Alternatives) perspectives. While the inevitable selection bias limits the conclusions we can draw, the data from the organizations selected is comprehensive. We have scraped all publications ranging from published papers to blog entries of the five think tanks and loaded them in a relational database which stores online accessible publications. Besides the text itself, we stored several information/entities on the text as well. These entities are:

1. Institutions (as think tanks or blog and journal sites under editorial control)
2. Individuals (as authors or leading personnel of institutions)
3. Date of publication
4. Link to the publication

The text of the publications was extracted and saved in the database for further analysis. Thus, we searched for n-grams⁹ and catchwords by frequency and assigned descriptors. The classification of publications by concepts rests partially upon the assignment of descriptors and n-grams. We attributed key words to each document, and concepts if appropriate (if we identified progressive pro-European ideas that would take the EU beyond the present configuration). Our detailed survey and deep examination of publications is backed up with interviews of four officials from three organizations (European Alternatives, PDU, OneEurope), which has helped us to consolidate and reconsider our examination of the publications.¹⁰ In a similar way, we dealt with the online platforms: Of 2,133 documents scraped from the sites of five blog or journal sites (which are) concerned with EU affairs we identified 111 (5.2 per cent) as associated with the conceptual work discovered at the pro-European think tank sites. We will discuss our method employed in this case in greater detail in section 3. Complementary efforts to automatically identify and sort documents with regard to the semantic code of the five new Europe conceptual ideas based on n-grams (frequency of co-occurrence of key terms) failed, by and large. At this point it is still difficult to distinguish the occurrence of words in general from the occurrence of words in regard to specific conceptual discussion, unfortunately. Much of the work presented in this paper is based on the close reading of the full output of think tanks and platforms (around 3,000 documents).

1.2 Pro-European think tanks

Since the crisis gave birth to a new partial disintegration perspective on the right in addition to full-fledged re-nationalization strategies, the pro-European camp also needed to develop a response to these challenges, and possibly establish its

⁹ A certain (not necessarily contiguous) sequence of two or more meaningful words, the frequency of which occurrences exceeds a chosen threshold.

¹⁰ References to the interviews mentioned in the text can be found in the list of interview (see 5.4.)

own sense of “new directions”. The most obvious need and activity rose in the crisis countries of the South: Both Syriza and Podemos were the only significant forces of the left that gained in or even won elections in Spain and Greece, respectively. But what happened in civil society? A number of new pro-European think tanks have been founded after the crisis, and some of them developed into permanent organizations. We also included two somewhat older pro-European think tanks, Friends of Europe and EuropaNova, due to significant new activities following the 2008 crisis. The following table displays the list of organizations selected for this study.

Table 1: Pro-European think tanks, locations, founding dates

Name	Orientation	Country/countries	Year
European Alternatives	radical left	UK, Germany, France, Italy etc.	2006/7
Project for a Democratic Union	liberal left	UK, Germany, Belgium, Greece, Romania, Czech Republic, Portugal	2013
Todiktio	moderate left	Greece	2013
EuropaNova	centrist	France	2003
Friends of Europe	plural/centrist	Belgium and across Europe	1999
European Alternatives	radical left	UK, Germany, France, Italy etc.	2006/7

Source: Own compilation

Another group of think tanks originally included in the sample has been excluded for different reasons. European Democracy Lab founded in Germany in 2014, European Way founded in Italy/Germany in 2016 and Eurobubble, founded in Berlin, Germany, in 2016 are too new to offer a broad range of documents. Major conceptual work has been published by the co-author of this report, Ulrike Guérot. The call for a new European Republic (Guérot 2016) also informs the work of European Way and Eurobubble. Rather than including the European Republic in our analysis, we can use this perspective as a vantage point for the discussion of the work of the five pro-European think tanks of the sample. We will now proceed to introduce the think tanks under investigation in somewhat greater detail.

a) European Alternatives (or Euralter)

Founded in 2006 by a group of people coming from different countries European Alternatives carried out first activities in the UK. The London festival of Europe was organized in March 2007 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of treaty of Rome. European Alternatives (EA) strives for culture, equality and democracy in Europe beyond the nation state. Motivated by the fading ambition for the European project and an apparently unchangeable agenda of European policies, EA wanted to offer a progressive alternative to existing European structures and, above all, approach the European project through culture and new, unconventional and nonconformist debating spaces. EA is a network of progressive artists, thinkers, scientists and activists across Europe who wanted a paradigm shift regarding what Europe is – a space beyond the nation state – and started off through artist activism, prior to becoming more institutionalized, as well as

involvement in EU programming and running workshops (e.g. on the refugees crisis and other matters). EA's central theme is the notion of a European citizenship, influenced first by the Czech philosopher Jan Patocka (Europe after Europe) and later by the philosophies of Jacques Derrida or Etienne Balibar, for example. EA is a well-known institution, especially in younger, leftist circles across Europe, which is also supported by EU funding, well connected to new party movements such as Syriza or Podemos and with a visible and strong reach in activists circles (e.g. refugee activists, social movements and the like). EA has offices in London, Paris, Berlin and Rome. About fifty per cent of the funding is project-based and comes from a variety of sources (EU, national, e.g. German federal agency for civic education, participation in Horizon 2020 research projects, Italian sources foundations¹¹).

b) Project for a Democratic Union

Founded in 2014, PDU is a European initiative focused on ideas from British historian Brendan Simms. Author of several books on European history, Simms eagerly promotes a unified and political Europe, but without the UK. To give his ideas a political underpinning in the real world, Simms launched PDU together with some of his students (e.g. Benjamin Zeeb, Munich), who, in various cities (e.g. Munich, Amsterdam, Cambridge, London, Vienna, home to a core team of six individuals), have non-institutionalized one-person "offices", serving as *pieds-à-terre* to PDU. PDU further gathered some quite prominent European VIPS (such as Javier Solana, Antony Giddens, Gesine Schwan) to its Board and has since attempted to work as a network structure to organize or co-organize European debates in several European towns, as well as publish policy papers. Funding of PDU is limited to partnerships for specific events and small donations. PDU does not have resources to fund permanent staff. The aim of the organization is threefold: Influence academic and elite discourse; develop a broader public discourse on what is regarded as the present dysfunctional European system; and, identify and move towards a new and viable framework for European integration. PDU does not emphasize conceptual innovation, but relies mainly on Anglo-Saxon precedence of union building, in other words, a common foreign policy and common debt.

c) Todiktio

Todiktio is a European project with a focus on social policy founded in 2012 in Athens by Anna Diamantopoulous, the former EU Commissioner for Social Affairs in the second Commission of Jacques Delors 1990-1995. Anna believed that the ardent social crisis in Greece during the peak of the euro-crisis years starting in 2008 needed a project to reconcile Greece youngsters with the European project. As an influential former politician in Greece (Socialist Party, Minister of Education etc.), she also held herself personally responsible and felt compelled to make a

¹¹ Compare EA accounts: <https://euroalter.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/EuropeanAlternativesaccountsfor2015approvedbymembers.docx.pdf> (retrieved on 28th October 2016), and a list of funders at www.euroalter.com/who-we-are/our-organisation/our-funders (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

contribution to alleviating tensions in Greece during the crisis and support a transition out of it. Todiktio organized youth meetings in Greece, attempted to raise funds for victims of the euro crisis and to mobilize public opinion for a more social Europe. The think tank lists partnerships with Friends of Europe, Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, Citizens for Europe and Notre Europe. It has a strong international board with members from various European countries, among them several ranking politicians.

d) EuropaNova

EuropaNova was founded in 2003 by Guillaume Klossa in Paris in order to revamp the European discussion in France. Mainly supported by young activists, EuropaNova has a highly political agenda and is close to the former UMP party (now: Les Républicains). In contrast to Euralter (more radical left), Todiktio (more moderate left) or PDU (liberal), EuropaNova (like Friends of Europe) can be considered more centrist. Guillaume Klossa has been invited multiple times to the Elysée during Sarkozy's presidency, was invited to draft policy papers and to give recommendations, especially on Eurozone governance. Most recently, EuropaNova launched a manifesto after Brexit, gathering hundreds of signatures by European VIPs. To a certain degree, EuropaNova is less 'new' in attitude or concepts with respect to concrete new thinking on Europe – such as EA – hence, it is arguably the youngest and most dynamic think tank in France in the field of European policy, in comparison to more established organizations such as the Institut Français des Relations Internationales (ifri), the Institut de Recherche Internationale Stratégique (IRIS), the Institute for Research and Innovation in Society (Ifris), the Center for International Studies (CERI), Notre Europe or the Fondation pour la Politique (Fondapol). Ifri, IRIS and CERI are the classical decades-old French research Centre's on European integration issues, with a strong focus on the external or foreign relations agenda of the EU and its geo-strategic impact. CERI, a research center attached to the famous Institut d'Etudes Politiques des Paris, strongly focused on "old paradigms" of European integration research – e.g. neo-functional method etc. – through quite prominent French academics, Renaud Dehousse and Christian Lequesnes. Notre Europe, founded by former European Commission President Jacques Delors in 1996, has a twenty-year-old history and has been doing comprehensive European analysis and studies related to nearly all policy fields of the EU, but with a strong focus on social policies. Despite a renewed team and a generational change with a new, young director, Yves Bertocini, Notre Europe however remained conceptually aligned to classical paradigms of EU integration thinking. This also pertains to La Fondation Robert Schumann, directed by Jean-Dominique Giuliani, which in essence resembles a French promotion center of the EU. Lastly, the Fondapol has been launched in the last decade and is less a non-partisan research institute, but closely aligned to the French UMP party (now: Les Républicains) and was meant to imitate the German structure of party-affiliated foundations (such as Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung or Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung). Thus, EuropaNova is, generally, the only new, dynamic and, over the past decade, active member in the French political arena with the self-declared aim to shake up European thinking in France. This is in an

environment that traditionally lacks a dense think tank community, as well as 'deep society' structures with respect to the organization of civil society, comparable to countries such as Germany with visible policy impact.

e) Friends of Europe

Friends of Europe (FoE) is – next to the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the European Policy Centre (EPC) – one of the oldest and most established Brussels-based think tanks in the field of European policy, but has undergone a change towards a more youthful team. Created in 1999, Friends of Europe aimed at a pan-European version of think tank vis-à-vis the perceived Anglo-Saxon (and Eurosceptic) scene of think tanks. The organization is much larger than the other think tanks in the sample; it reports an annual income of more than 2 million Euros, 33 per cent of which are from corporate sources. Most of the income is from public sources and the organization relies on half-a-million Euros from its members. Nineteen officials direct work in areas of the environment, knowledge, technology, and security policy. The well-connected board relies on ranking politicians from Brussels and the member states, covering a range of center-left and center-right perspectives. The think tank claims participation of over 5,000 speakers and participants, 60 events, 50 publications and over 200 op-eds every year. Their website has over 6M unique visitors, a 330,000-strong Facebook and Twitter community and 80,000 plus contacts, including senior decision makers from the EU, national governments and international institutions, NGOs, think tanks, universities, business and the media. Friends of Europe has merged with the Security & Defence Agenda in 2014, and recently created an online debating platform, thus combining the group of think tanks in this study with the group of debating platforms.

1.3 The links between pro-European think tanks and other think tanks

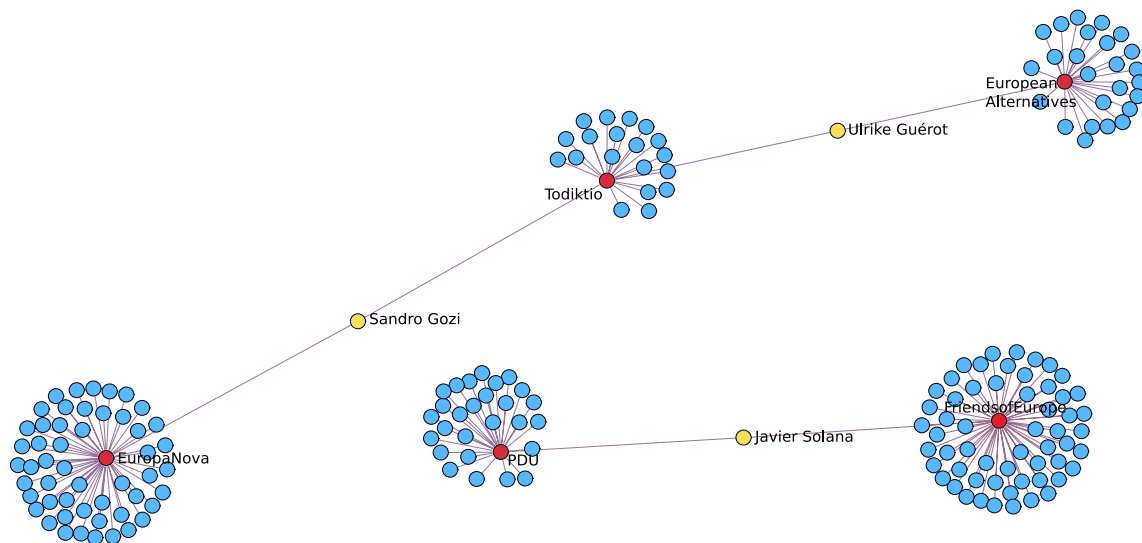
In order to analyze how these think tanks form a network, we conducted a social network analysis. This social science method is used to observe how close actors are positioned towards each other and in what way they have relationships with each other.

While such relationships can be of different character, we focused first on interlocking directorates of advisory and scientific board members of the five think tanks, as well as other think tank employees and activists. While working on joint projects might be of equal importance in determining a connection between two organizations, interlocking board membership can reveal a structural and longtime relationship. Having two positions in different organizations also indicates that such individuals have better access to information and resources. Therefore, it can be a strategic asset for organizations to coordinate their actions effectively.

Turning to the relationships formed by the five think tanks under analysis, we see hardly any interlocking directorates. As figure 1 reveals, only three individuals are in a position to bridge some of the organizations. While Mrs. Guérot has a board membership in both European Alternatives and Todiktio, the

Italian politician, Sandro Gozi, connects EuropaNova and Todiktio, while the Spanish socialist politician, Javier Solana, connects Friends of Europe and PDU. Thus, we observe two separate formations, but no interlock positions are visible that could connect all five think tanks. The new right-wing think tank networks advocating (partial) disintegration perspectives in comparison are closely integrated across borders with many interlocking directorates (Plehwe 2015).¹²

Figure 1: Social network of the five think tanks



Source: Own compilation

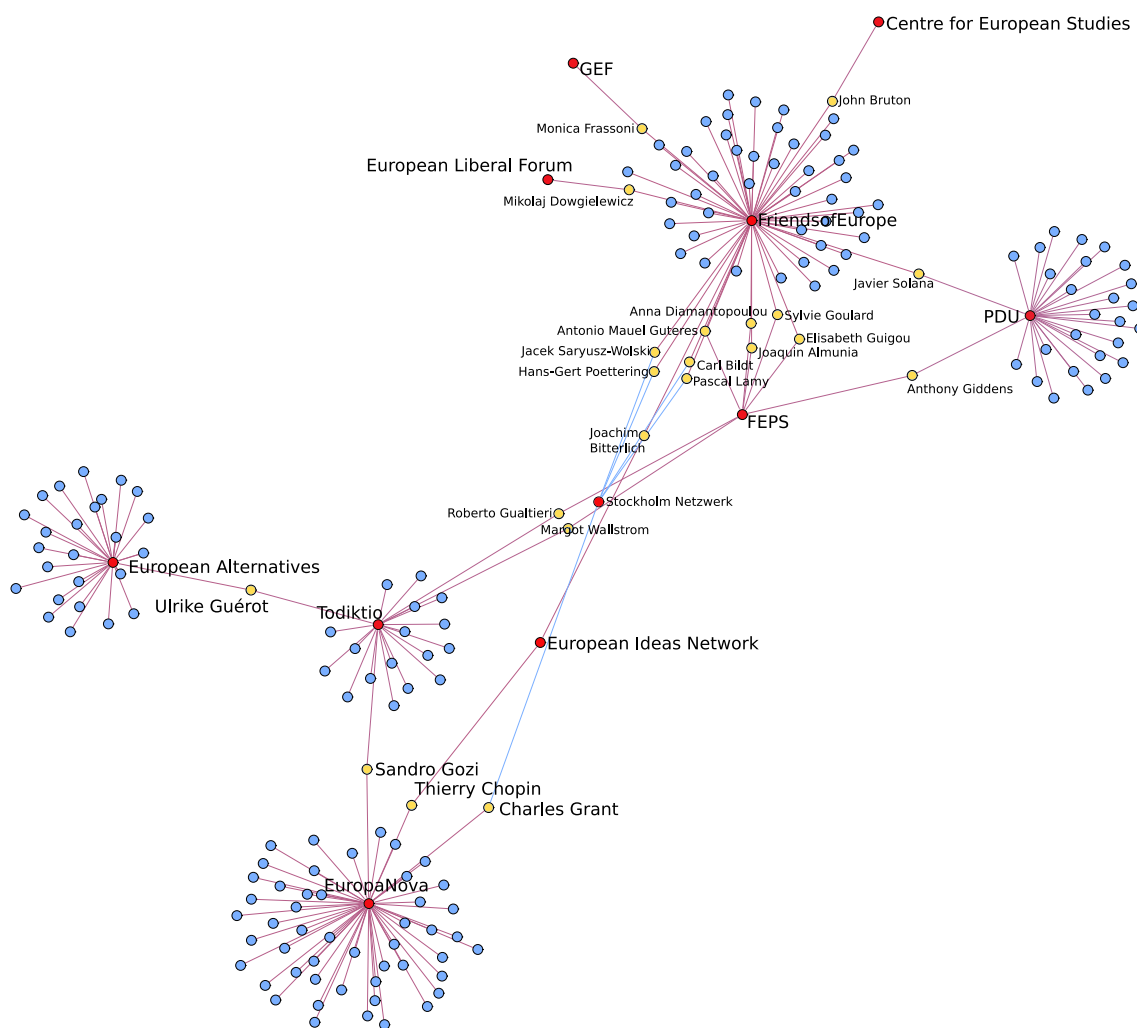
As these think tanks are concerned with Europe that entails a pro-European perspective for further integration, we also analyzed how far their individual members hold positions in think tanks that are organized in the European party foundation networks¹³. Also, we checked for membership in two neo-liberal and conservative partisan networks that are active on the European level. These are the Stockholm Network and the European Ideas Network (EIN). As figure 2 shows, we find several connections towards think tanks that are part of the European party networks. Eight individuals are also members of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) associated with the Socialists and Democrats party, which are formed by Friends of Europe, Todiktio and PDU. While a

¹² Short of institutional cross-linkages, several of the pro-European think tanks do collaborate. The joint petition for “Europe: a new version is available” was co-written by Daphne Bülsbach and Nora Rathje (EA), Benjamin Zeeb (PDU) and Victoria Kupsch of the more recently founded Democracy Lab.

¹³ These are, namely: Foundation for European Progressive Studies (S&D); the Transform Network (GE/NGL); the Green European Foundation (European Green Party); the New Direction Foundation (ECR); the European Liberal Forum; the Liberal Democrats; and Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies (EPP).

connection with the social-democratic spectrum is not surprising, it is interesting to see that the Transform Network is not present within the network. And while the Green European Foundation forms one interlocking directorate with Friends of Europe, we see that the European Liberal Forum, as well as the Centre for European Studies, is equally represented at Friends of Europe. Friends of Europe thus appear to be situated squarely within the centrist spectrum of politics, which does not lead us to expect strong departures from mainstream positions on European integration. Possibly to the contrary, both Stockholm Network and the European Ideas Network, which feature partial disintegration perspectives, share personnel with Friends of Europe and Todiktio. However, the new right-wing network of the European Conservatives and Reformers, which calls for partial disintegration, is also not represented.

Figure 2: Social network analysis of five think tanks and European party foundation networks



Source: Own compilation

Importantly, the network analysis reveals that there are few interlock positions between the „old“ European think tank community (CEPS, EPC etc.) and the younger and more progressive one. This could indicate a lack of communication across the various communities and leads to assume a certain generational divide in the (pro-)European discourse coalitions.

Although many of the organizations under review are working across Europe, we can easily detect a certain bias of Western European home countries. Only Todiktio has origins in the European periphery (Greece) and, thus, we may miss some of the post-crisis developments in Central and Eastern Europe, for example. In this study we could only include English, French and German language publications due to time and capacity constraints¹⁴. A Polish organization has been included (Krytyka Polityczna) in the “echo chamber analysis” of debating platforms/magazines, which differ from the first group in that they are not publishing material in their own name. Political Critique offers English language material, fortunately. This second group of organizations was likewise founded after the crisis, however. We will examine these debating platforms in order to see if and to what extent the conceptual work on the future of Europe emanating from the group of think tanks listed above is taken up in a related (progressive, pro-European, online) media environment.

Table 2: Pro-European platforms, type, countries, founding

Name	Type of organization	Country/countries	Year
Eutopia (Eurozine)	journal	Germany, Italy, Spain	2015
Publixphere	collaborative weblog	Germany	2013
OneEurope	debating platform	Germany (and across Europe)	2011
Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique)	online magazine	Poland	2002
Future Lab Europe	online platform	Brussels	2011

Source: Own compilation

a) Eutopia

Eutopia was launched in cooperation with the publishing houses of Laterza (Italy) and Suhrkamp (Germany). Eutopia lasted until the end of 2015 at which point was then terminated due to budget constraints. The publishing houses failed to make a commercially viable endeavor out of the online magazine. The previously existing Eurozine platform remains as a link to cultural magazines.

b) Publixphere

Publixphere is a discussion network founded in 2013 by Mayte Schomburg, a European law student, who wanted to create an interactive European discussion forum, especially targeting young people who felt alienated with classical parties. Publixphere, who had to close their office at the end of 2015 due to lack of

¹⁴ We would like to gratefully acknowledge funding from the Think Tank Fund located in Budapest, Hungary. This funding enabled us to employ research assistants and to construct a complex database in support of our conceptual analysis of think tank output.

financing (the initial money came from the Mercator Foundation), considered itself as a neutral discussion platform with edited posts on a variety of themes, with no political agenda of its own. The goal was to promote a cross-border understanding and discussion and to pave the way for a European public sphere and space for common understanding and discussion.

c) Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique)

Krytyka Polityczna is a left-wing, progressive discussion platform in Poland founded in 2002 by Sławomir Sierakowski. The organization is now led by the Director Jarosław Stowiński. Funded, among others, by the Open Society Institution, Krytyka Polityczna is, altogether: a think tank; a platform for cultural events and policy debates in four Polish towns; a publishing house essentially translating books into Polish (e.g. Stiglitz, Piketty etc.); a policy institute publishing policy papers mainly on European themes (to a certain degree in the spirit of liberal arts in the US); and is expanding currently to Ukraine. Krytyka Polityczna is an institution in Poland, vigorously defending and securing open and rule-of-law based Polish public opinion.

d) OneEurope

Launched in 2011, OneEurope is an initiative by Cherian Grundmann. OneEurope has evolved into a network of students and young academics concerned with the current state of the EU. The OneEurope project is essentially feeding a European-wide online platform, allowing the exchange of cross-border information about what is happening in other countries (e.g. young Albanians report on policy initiatives, anti-corruption measures, visa policies etc.). The platform also serves as a contact base (e.g. for the search of internships etc.). Most OneEurope contributors endorse the need for one European government while the editorial board does not embrace any political stance towards the EU. It is registered as a non-profit association by German law. OneEurope has only recently started to organize teambuilding workshops funded by EU grants. OneEurope is visible in the European online sphere and runs on a basic level of donations. All activities are carried out by volunteers who form an inner circle of decision makers with regard to the direction of the platform. The organization aims to provide space for European debate and looks to expand critical European participation in order to improve the quality of the debate on important European issues.

e) Future Lab Europe

Future Lab has been created by the European Alliance for Democratic Citizenship, which is backed by a number of large (corporate) foundations including King Baudouin Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung and maintains a partnership with Süddeutsche Zeitung in Germany¹⁵. Approximately 100 participants below the age of 30 are selected yearly to contribute to the proceedings. The project is managed by the European Policy Centre on behalf of the Network of European Foundations.

The distinction between think tanks and debating platforms is not easy to discern in our case. Friends of Europe, for example, have also developed a debating

15 <http://www.FutureLabeurope.eu/partners.html> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

platform as part of the think tank, and Krytyka Polityczna maintains a range of think tank activities in addition to the maintenance of a debating platform. We consider the difference mainly to be of importance with regard to the question of identification of the organization with published statements. In the case of debating platforms, a publication cannot be attributed to the publishing site. In order to identify organizations with relevant conceptual work we are interested in concentrating on organizations that claim to provide direction for Europe in some way. The platforms are interesting to examine in order to see, if, and in which ways, new concepts and ideas find a sympathetic audience and reverberate in discussions maintained by a predominantly pro-European crowd, consisting mostly of centrist and left-leaning persuasions.

Alternatively, our sample can be considered the typical advocacy form of think tanks. Except for Friends of Europe, which commands considerable staff and resources devoted to research in a number of fields, the think tanks in our sample are relatively small, featuring a staff of two or three people (10 in the case of European Alternatives), small supervisory/advisory boards and limited transparency in terms of budgets and funding. Only European Alternatives provides full information on its budget of about 800.000 Euros.¹⁶ Even the left leaning think tank has considerable support from corporate foundations like Allianz-Kulturstiftung. Except for FoE, none of the think tanks has a strong membership base. In terms of finance, the organizations can, therefore, be considered limited. There are considerable constraints in terms of capacity and autonomy in carrying out activities as a result, particularly if one compares the organizations to (environmental) NGOs with a strong membership and donor base, such as Greenpeace.

Several think tanks work across Europe, whether it is transnational projects like the European festivals in 15 cities (European Alternatives), national member organizations (Friends of Europe), or informal offices (PDU). Even the debating platforms operate with transnational networks, such as over 200 former Erasmus students of OneEurope. There are few personal interlocks linking this group of organizations; Javier Solana is mentioned by PDU and Todiktio, for example. Few maintain official partnerships (like Todiktio and Friends of Europe), but many think tank officials in the sample know each other and have worked together on occasions in the past. Paradoxically, interlocking positions across borders appear to be far more common in the new right-wing think tank world advocating (partial) disintegration (Plehwe and Schlögl 2014).

Even though there are few formal links, we can observe intellectual and conceptual interconnections between pro-European think tanks, which claim to represent a new generation (generation Erasmus). In one interview, Benjamin Zeeb of PDU claimed that this new generation has to bridge a yawning gap between the young and the founding father generation (interview three).

16 Compare: www.euroalter.com/who-we-are/our-organisation/our-funders (retrieved on 28th October 2016), and www.euroalter.com/wp (retrieved on 28th October 2016), and <https://euroalter.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/EuropeanAlternativesaccountsfor2015approvedby-members.docx.pdf> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

To a certain extent, the fledgling pro-European think tanks seem to mutually influence each other with strong features of reciprocity and the common goal to shift paradigms in the current EU agenda. We will first try now to get a better sense of the scope of the work these center-left think tanks have conducted since the crisis. To this end we have examined a total of more than 1,328 documents published by the group of five think tanks. The following table provides an overview, ranked according to publishing activity.

Table 3: Pro-European think tanks, total output 2006–2016

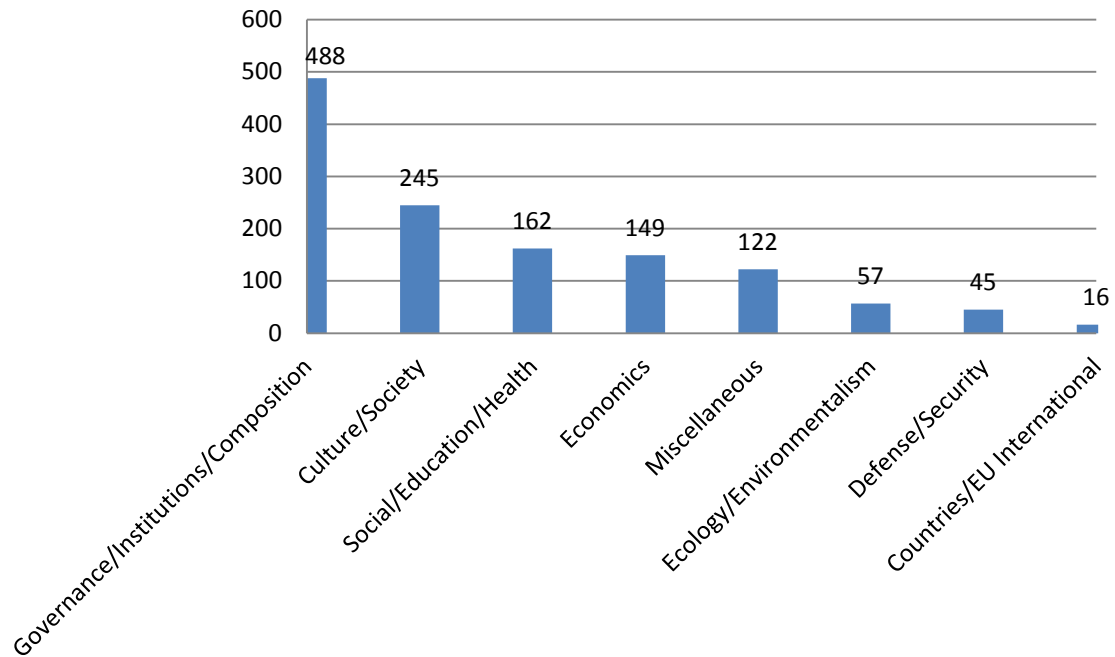
Name	Number of documents
European Alternatives	732
Project for a Democratic Union	387
Friends of Europe	182
EuropaNova	17
Todiktio	10
Total	1328

Source: Own compilation, publications before 2010 were no longer available on the websites.

The ranking should not be considered as a hierarchy. Most of the publishing is blog material with relatively short articles on a wide range of issues. The number of publications from EuropaNova and Todiktio is small by comparison, for example, but some of the publications are more substantial than many of the publications listed for the other organizations.

The pro-European think tanks cover a wide range of topics. Of course, there is a strong concern for the European dimension of democracy and politics in general, but it is quite interesting to observe the areas of concentration. We attributed about 100 key words to the individual publications and grouped the resulting list of themes in the clusters displayed in figure 3.

Figure 3: Number of articles in categories

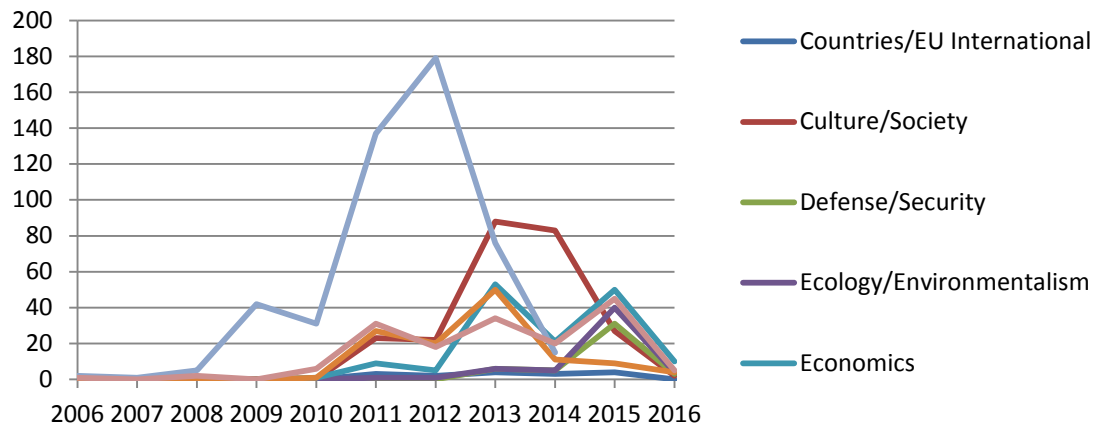


Source: Own compilation

Apart from the focus on issues of European governance, culture and society themes contribute highly to our sample, as well as social and economic themes. The miscellaneous category is a residual category of keywords we were unable to group together and naturally cover a wide range of themes and issues. Foreign policy and security themes do play a small role, and an even smaller role is played by, surprisingly, environmental policy issues.

Can we observe a shift in the concentration of themes? The following count in figure 4 looks at publications per year sorted by the major categories employed. The time span is short, of course. Only three organizations existed from 2010-2013, and data for 2016 is incomplete due to our cut-of point (in June). However, let us look at the data: Figure 2 shows a peak of publications in 2014, and an obvious increase from 2012 onwards. We can also see a decline in coverage of economic issues after a peak in this area in 2013.

Figure 4: Article topics per year



Source: Own compilation

The output by these think tanks is quite heterogeneous. Most publications in our database have been scraped from the website; most publications are blog entries and other short documents. In order to answer the questions raised in this paper, however, we need publications that engage topics in a rather detailed (philosophical-political) way. In fact, when looking for more profound conceptual work, only about 60 longer articles could be considered, since much of the work published can be qualified as reporting and commenting (although this does not diminish the importance of these activities). However, with regard to our key question, namely if and in which ways do these think tanks contribute to new conceptual ideas in relation to European integration, only a small part of the publications can be considered relevant. All the publications have nevertheless been attributed keywords in order to sort publications by subject matter. To get a better idea of each think tank's profile, we will display the distribution of publications across categories employed in figure 1 at the individual level. We start with European Alternatives.

Euralter has a strong profile in the area of governance, culture, society and social issues. The number of publications on economic subjects is considerably lower, including a marginal amount for other topics. The economic topic is interesting, however. Niccolo Milanese (interview one) explained that Euralter aims to overcome a reductionist perspective of economics. Economic topics are not isolated from other matters. Therefore, the categorization should be taken with a grain of salt; it serves the purpose only as a very general overview.

Table 4: Publications of European Alternatives

Thematic field	Number of publications
Governance/Institutions/Composition	216
Culture/Society	153
Social/Education/Health	150
Miscellaneous	112
Economics	76
Countries/EU International	10
Ecology/Environmentalism	10
Defence/Security	5

Source: Own compilation

The next organization is the Project of a Democratic Union (PDU). Again, we find the top activities in the fields of European institutions are democracy and governance on the one hand, and culture on the other.

Table 5: Publications of Project for a Democratic Union

Thematic field	Number of publications
Governance/Institutions/Composition	255
Culture/Society	84
Economics	20
Defence/Security	11
Ecology/Environmentalism	6
Countries/EU International	5
Miscellaneous	4
Social/Education/Health	2

Source: Own compilation

Our third organization, Friends of Europe, is the first think tank with quite a different publication profile.

Table 6: Publications of Friends of Europe

Thematic field	Number of publications
Economics	50
Ecology/Environmentalism	43
Defence/Security	30
Governance/Institutions/Composition	24
Social/Education/Health	15
Culture/Society	11
Miscellaneous	7
Countries/EU International	2

Source: Own compilation

In striking contrast to the previous think tanks, economics and environmental issues are most prominent in the FoE profile, followed by European security and governance issues. As a part of a new strategy, FoE embraced the policy journal *Europe World* and the *Security & Defence Agenda* in 2014, which helps to explain the relatively high number of publications in the field of defence/security.

What remains are the smaller organizations. Firstly, we look at EuropaNova.

Table 7: Publications of EuropaNova

Thematic field	Number of publications
Governance/Institutions/Composition	9
Social/Education/Health	5
Economics	2
Ecology/Environmentalism	1

Source: Own compilation

Again, European Governance tops the list, followed by social concerns. The last think tank is Todiktio.

Table 8: Publications of Todiktio

Thematic field	Number of publications
Economics	5
Governance/Institutions/Composition	4
Countries/EU International	1

Source: Own compilation

Thus, in all think tanks except FOE, European institutions, democracy and governance are the most prominent topics. The three most active think tanks in terms of number of publications are prominently featuring culture/society issues as well. Economic questions related to public services, economic democracy and alternatives to neoliberal single market/free trade presently focused on by the EU are in third place, although a range of European citizenship and social issues does not trail far behind. Environmental themes are not a major concern except for Friends of Europe, surprisingly. There is also quite a lot of attention on defence and security issues, as well as foreign policy in the work of Friends of Europe and Project for a Democratic Union in particular.

Based on the findings regarding the frequency of topics, we might suspect conceptual work and innovation in the fields of European democracy, civil society, economy and citizenship/social policy. What do we find reading the published papers closely?

2 Conceptual innovations for a new Europe?

Turning to the work done by the pro-European think tanks to develop new (political) concepts, we are dealing with a small portion of the total output, since many publications are reporting on events etc. To qualify as a conceptual effort, we need to find reflections on concepts that characterize the European polity, economy, society and so on, while developing a new aspect, not only reflecting certain concepts, which of course all publications do. In order to qualify as a potentially new conceptualization we also need to find statements subjecting available or existing concepts to critical scrutiny, in order to argue a new and different perspective.¹⁷

Figure 5: Depiction of conceptual development



Source: Own graphical composition

To deal with new conceptualization requires intellectual work beyond demanding a new policy, for example, although the demand for a new policy can be considered an operationalization of new concepts if abstract considerations are concretized this way. We follow an inductive approach since we do not know beforehand in which areas new European integration concepts are developed. Based on criticism of standing EU concepts (as laid down in the *acquis communautaire*, treaties, common or mainstream understanding of European integration) by think tank publications, we will attempt to clarify the distance of a new conceptualization to the present EU configuration on the one hand, and we will also see if and how the think tank conceptualization compares with mainstream thinking about the future (based on a number of reflections that can be considered close to the EU institutions (like the Five Presidents' Report, Spinelli Report by MEPs, and centrist expert/advisor circles like Glienicke Group).

Key concepts of course are the subject of study in conceptual history. The work done by Cambridge University and Bielefeld scholars in particular has yielded a detailed understanding of the formation and transformation of key concepts mostly since the enlightenment epoch, as a result of and subject to social struggles¹⁸. The recent and present struggle over European integration is a comparatively short period of time, of course. Yet we can assume that certain ambiguities in the traditional European integration discourse become clearer due to the crisis, and we expect to see efforts of reinterpretation on the left in reaction to both apparent weaknesses of EU status quo and the (partial) disintegration or re-nationalization challenge on the right.

¹⁷ Compare Freedon (1996, p. 48) on the analysis of political concepts.

¹⁸ For example, see: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geschichtliche_Grundbegriffe.

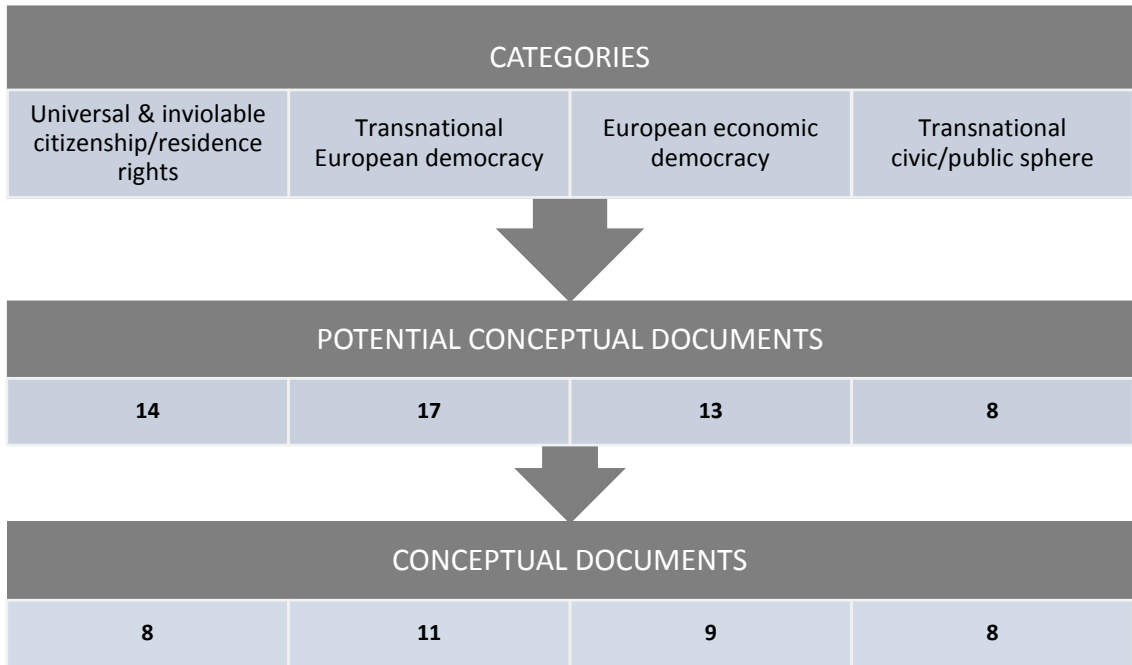
From all the documents we selected, 53 qualified for our key criteria: consciously discussing concepts and distinct ideas from prevailing notions (e.g. directing attention to the democratic deficit of the EU and proposing a real transnational democracy). Many of these documents also identify what could be considered increasing the comprehensiveness of, or adaptations to, core concepts like transnational democracy; we found efforts to operationalize concepts (e.g. more concrete political programs). The number of publications ultimately considered relevant for this study in any case is much smaller than the total number. The 53 (somewhat) longer publications (total of about 400 pages) seemed to meet the criteria, although we remained unconvinced of half of these cases if the criteria mentioned were fully met (e.g. clearly new concepts without discussion of status quo presents a problem because it is unclear if and to which extent we are really dealing with conceptual work). On the final count of qualifying material we established five areas of conceptual work evident in our sample:

- **Expanded European citizenship (universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights)**
14 of the publications suspected to contain conceptual work;
- **Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe**
17 of the suspected publications;
- **European public interest economy/economic democracy**
13 of the suspected publications;
- **Transnational civic/public sphere**
8 of the suspected publications;
- **Europe as central power in global political economy**
1 document¹⁹.

19 The total is more than the 57 documents as one publication clearly covers two (or more) areas.

Figure 6 depicts the process of finding text that entails new concepts on European integration.

Figure 6: Process of selecting texts entailing conceptual work



Source: Own graphical composition

At first glance it is interesting to observe a discrepancy between the focus of publication activities vis-à-vis the focus on reconceptualization. In terms of conceptual efforts, a clear priority is in the field of **European citizenship** and social policy followed by **transnational democracy**, which was by far the core area of publication activities. Efforts to reconceptualize Europe’s economy (**European public interest economy**) are more central again to the conceptual work than to the general publication effort. Instead, culture and society featured prominently in general publications, but play a minor role only in the conceptual effort. Europe’s position in the world was a minor concern in publication activity, but it does figure in the conceptual field unlike, for example, Europe’s ecological system.

The following sections will look at each of the five areas in somewhat greater detail to clarify if and in which ways the work published by this group of think tanks can be considered developing new ideas with regard to European integration.

2.1 Expanded European citizenship

The concept of European citizenship is presently considered as “additional” to national citizenship of member states. The European Commission Directorate-General for Justice clearly states that:

“Any person who holds the nationality of an EU country is automatically also an EU citizen. EU citizenship is additional to and does not replace national citizenship. It is for each EU country to lay down the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality of that country.” (European Commission n.d.)

Core rights include: free movement; non-discrimination on the basis of nationality where the treaty applies; voting for the EP; and, petitioning the EP and the European Ombudsman. Free movement and residency rights have been limited for new members for certain periods of time in the past and are currently subject to discussion by Eurosceptic forces who object to the labor migration from countries like Poland or Romania to countries like the UK, for example. Moreover, both the UK and Germany are currently considering a reduction of social welfare benefits for recent immigrants who did not (yet) contribute long enough to social security when they became unemployed. While not directly limiting free mobility and residency within the EU, such measures are intended to reduce incentives for migrating to better welfare regimes²⁰.

Other debates center on the limitations of citizenship rights; many who live in the EU are not citizens of member states and, consequently, not EU citizens despite possibly residing in Europe for a reasonable length of time. Debates regarding citizenship also include the issues on equality of different groups of residents, including migrant workers, war refugees and asylum seekers.

What are the positions we can find in our pro-European think tank sample on this conceptual field? The high number of publications containing conceptual work in this field certainly raises expectations with regard to the content. The following table provides a list of the source material for our analysis.

Table 9: Expanded European citizenship (universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights)

Think tank	Number of relevant publications
European Alternatives	5
EuropaNova	3
Friends of Europe	0
Project for a Democratic Union	0
Todiktio	0
Total	8

Source: Own compilation

²⁰ <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/andrea-nahles-will-sozialhilfe-fuer-eu-auslaender-einschraenken-a-1089731.html> (retrieved on 28th October 2016), and <http://www.euractiv.com/section/uk-europe/news/cameron-cuts-eu-migrants-unemployment-and-child-benefits/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

The key document in our sample clearly is the Citizens' Manifesto for European Democracy, Solidarity and Equality published by European Alternatives. We find a rather comprehensive reform idea regarding European citizenship and the social policy field. The authors emphasize that the present state of the European social system is highly fragmented and uneven and should be replaced by:

"... a European welfare system that ensures a set of social and economic rights which meet people's basic needs irrespective of their circumstances and place of residence, such as unemployment and pension benefits, minimum wage or basic income." (European Alternatives 2014, p. 8)

Several other documents of European Alternatives detail rights to be obtained for migrants, LGBT communities and ethnic minorities such as Roma²¹. This includes a higher harmonization for the protection of refugees with detailed recommendations stated in 2012, before the refugee crisis took place²². The manifesto clearly aims at expanding European citizenship to cover social groups in novel ways and to include residents who are not citizens. The reasoning aims at:

"... enabling all residents and citizens to become actors for change at EU level and enjoy adequate protection for equal access to fundamental rights, regardless of their gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, social or ethnic background, place of origin." (ibid., p. 10)

In a similar direction, EuropaNova calls for resident citizenship rather than member state citizenship in its publication "A Europe that dares ... in the interests of Europeans - 60 practical propositions to build a European power" (EuropaNova, 2010, p. 43). Also, we find strong support for strengthening minority rights, which goes hand-in-hand in reforming the educational system and mobility rights. Herein, they call for a European budget to better coordinate migrants coming from outside of Europe.

Beyond a more inclusive understanding of European citizenship we find a somewhat rudimentary conceptualization of a European social citizenship model, along the lines of TH Marshall's reflection on the "equality principle" of social citizenship (Marshall, 1949). In "Labour and Social Europe", European Alternatives (2011, p. 1) calls for social minimum standards, but they are still considered in a national framework (median income level as key to entitlements). European Alternatives also connects its conceptual notion of social minimum standards to the mainstream 'flexicurity' discourse (minimum standards are held to be part of it), but observes that there are still countries lacking social minimum wages, for example.

We thus find clear indications of new notions of Expanded European citizenship in two areas. Firstly, the exclusive character of national citizenship as

21 See for example; https://euroalter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Pamphlet_LGBT_for_print.pdf (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

22 European Alternatives (2011), Common Asylum Policy in the EU, <https://euroalter.com/-/2011/common-asylum-policy-in-the-eu> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

a basis of the added European dimension is challenged by way of promoting notions of resident citizenship and attention to discriminations that are presently not sufficiently addressed in the EU. Secondly, we find notions pointing to European social citizenship ideas at distance to the patterns of nation-state based minimum standards. However, we cannot detect a clear understanding of a principled or full-fledged European social citizenship, let alone roadmaps to move into such a direction. A possible exception in terms of relating social citizenship to the larger debate on the relation of capitalism and welfare is addressed by the European Alternatives publication “Decommodifying labor”, which draws on the welfare state literature, but limits the discussion to precarious work.

2.2 Mainstream analysis: Expanded European citizenship

How does the conceptual work exhibited by the group of pro-European think tanks in the area of European citizenship compare with mainstream reflections on the future?

Although the effects of the economic crisis on citizens are often referred to in the mainstream literature, the concept of European citizenship and a strengthening of it are, except for the Spinelli Group, not addressed in the mainstream documents.

Social concerns come into play in discussions related to labor markets and increasing internal labor migration. The Glienicker Group argues that “Germany should not have to complain about a lack of skilled workers when many skilled workers are unemployed in Spain” (Glienicker Group 2013). The group proposes language courses and the provision of additional training, but does not call for a fundamental change with regard to stronger social support for freedom of movement and residency. Although a recalibration of the EU labor markets and a concern for unemployment is high on the agenda in the Five Presidents’ Report, new ideas for more universal and social citizenship are not promoted by this group of European leaders (p. 8-9). Enderlein and Pisani-Ferry only call for a “rediscovery of European values”, (Enderlein and Pisani-Ferry 2014, p. 4) which includes the implementation of common labor and social security standards (e.g. minimum wage). At the same time, the authors see the need for convergence between German and French regulations in particular, including a reduction of wage levels in France. In the case of France, they suggest the adoption of a ‘flexicurity model’ in order to restructure labor-markets (p. 3). Furthermore, we see a promotion of active labor market policies and vocational training for both countries (p. 41). The Five Presidents’ Report expresses similar concerns for social policies calling for “effective social protection systems in place to protect the most vulnerable in society, including a ‘social protection floor’ (p. 8). In this way the report wants Europe to attain a ‘social triple A’ (ibid.). Especially in the area of labor policies, we again find references to the need of balancing between security and a flexibility of labor contracts.

Another important topic for the Five Presidents’ Report and Enderlein and Pisani-Ferry is the aging population in Europe and the resulting pressures on the

retirement models. Only a small acknowledgment of the dimension of demographic changes can be found in the Five Presidents' Report. "Major reforms, [...] aligning the retirement age with life expectancy" (p. 9) are the only idea in this area, which translates into a later retirement age. National solutions are proposed again by Enderlein and Pisani-Ferry for Germany: expanding the labor force (increasing net migration, retirement age and female labor participation) and increasing total factor productivity. This includes targeting specific, skilled foreign workers to improve the supply side of the German labor market. Instead of thinking about expanded social citizenship we thus find market-oriented ideas along the lines of the past decades.

Only the Spinelli Group devotes one chapter to progressive changes in European citizenship. The group claims that the power of federalism envisioned by the group comes from "its states and its citizens". The prospective upgrading of European citizenship includes easier access of individuals to the Court of Justice, the extension of voting rights to individuals living outside their country of origin and an extended mandate of the European Ombudsman to defend citizens (2013, p. 17). The Spinelli Group, thus, falls way short of the demands for expanded and social citizenship we find in the pro-European think tanks under investigation.

Contrasting the legal and social dimensions of the European citizenship discourse we can clearly see quite different concerns voiced by the authors of European Alternatives and EuropaNova in particular, and the mainstream conceptualizations. While the mainstream documents maintain a flexicurity model of social minimum standards at national levels mostly concerned with labor market needs, and a limited improvement of legal citizen rights (maintaining legal citizen exclusivity), authors from two of the think tanks studied move in new and generally more progressive directions: more comprehensive resident rights and rights for groups of people currently suffering from discrimination are conceptualized alongside a rudimentary notion of improving European social citizenship. Only the Spinelli Group linked to the EP overlaps with regard to notions of expanded European citizenship.

2.3 Transnational democracy

The European Union, arguably, is the first - if somewhat rudimentary - post-national democracy worldwide. Apart from national parliaments, European citizens elect members of the European Parliament, which has experienced a considerable expansion of power in European legislative processes over the years. The expansion of majority voting in the European Council has been accompanied with the expansion of the co-decision procedure, which enables the parliament to play a major role in the revision of proposed legislation. At the same time the debate surrounding the democratic deficit of the EU is legend. The EP does not have the classical right of initiating legislation. In many important areas, like competition law and foreign policy, the Parliament can only be consulted. The budget rights are quite limited, partly due to the relatively small budget of the EU. Moreover, the EP is elected on a strictly national basis and European political

parties are weak multinational groups, rather than real transnational party formations. The weakness of the Parliament, vis-à-vis both the Commission and the European Council, has been reinforced after the crisis. The new economic governance procedures are, again, subject to intergovernmental rule instead of the “community method” of sharing decision making power between Commission, Council, and European Parliament.

What do the pro-European think tanks address in this area? The following table contains the list of publications on which we can draw in the analysis:

Table 10: Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe

Think tank	Number of relevant publications
Project for democratic union	5
European Alternatives	4
Todiktio	2
EuropaNova	0
Friends of Europe	0
Total	11

Source: Own compilation

We can start once again with European Alternatives, which has a clear conception of transnational democracy. In its document “Towards a transnational democracy for Europe” we find considerations dedicated to the creation/deepening of transnational democracy. At the core of the concept stands a notion of equal access of each citizen to the resources of information and decision-making. Current circumstances are considered to constitute a crisis of European democratic structures and to undermine citizens' trust in European institutions. Instead of Europe's democracy being conducive to citizen interests and subject to transparent and open procedures, European Alternatives observes the dominance of economic interests and especially the power of the financial markets. The economic configuration results in national fragmentation and a more unequal development of nation states.

“So far citizens across Europe are only offered two perspectives to partake in this process: on the one hand a deeper integration of the EU on the basis of competition, deregulation and liberalization without democracy and on the other [hand] the threat of disintegration of the European space. Unless this dichotomy is opposed with positive counter proposals on a transnational basis, it is very difficult to see how any member state or minority coalition of the Union can break this logic which has enlisted the financial markets as its firepower. We need to struggle for the construction of a Europe where citizens, social forces, movements and associations return to have a say over their collective future; a Europe based on real democratic and political processes, able to interrupt the hegemony of austerity and reformulate the way out of our multiple crises.”
(European Alternatives 2013, p. 7)

Thus, the document clearly links democracy to economic power structures in contemporary capitalism (despite missing broader global influences on the European economy), and specifically identifies financial markets as a threat to democratic development.

Such arguments can also be found in “a tennis court oath for Europe”. Here European Alternatives links the ability of treaty changes to economic interests, including those of strong economic actors:

“We need to move beyond the collective hypnosis that European treaties cannot be modified. In principle there is a peculiar alignment of interests for institutional change. It is not just in the interest of the left, or of the most indebted countries, to democratise economic decision-making and open the door to common European economic and social policies. It is equally in the interest of the most economically successful sectors, which are jeopardizing their welfare by locking-in a system of governance that perpetuates bad decision-making for most.” (European Alternatives 2015)

Apart from the exploration of inter-class coalitions in support of democracy enhancing treaty changes, European Alternatives also claims that a deepening of transnational democracy cannot be realized by political elites only. According to European Alternatives, social movements of active and informed citizenry are required to achieve significant progress.

“Movements reacting to the economic crisis lack a developed proposal for a democratic institutional infrastructure in Europe: a democratic infrastructure which guarantees the common interest of Europeans at a continental scale, reinforces political agency of Europeans by empowering them to take part in European politics, and which restores democratic political control and oversight over financial markets and capital... Such a proposal for a democratic institutional infrastructure cannot be developed by a small number of experts or technocrats, but must be a broad and collaborative constitutional process involving the maximum of citizens” (European Alternatives 2013, p. 12–13).

EuropaNova supports such a position in writings on expanded social welfare, calling for stronger participatory elements in the formulation of social policies. This is especially true for recipients of social welfare provisions (EuropaNova 2010, p. 19).

Project of a Democratic Union emphasizes the imbalance between Germany and the European periphery, specifically demanding a move towards a federal system. In its statement of principles, PDU aims both at a more powerful and more democratic union by way of far reaching institutional reforms. Apart from a parliamentary system, PDU has clear ideas about strengthening Europe’s role in global institutions and international affairs. Current co-existence of national and European delegations in international organizations like the IMF or NATO are foreseen to be consolidated at the European level. PDU thus has a clear notion of centralization of European power in addition to reforming the democratic system of voting and decision making. The relationship between European domestic and

international reform requirements remains unclear. PDU's core idea with regard to historical success of Anglo-Saxon unification relates to common debt policies and common foreign policies (interview three). A more fully developed federal democracy can be considered a necessary pre-condition for both.

Yet another dimension of transnational democracy has been addressed by European Alternatives in the work on organized crime. A document titled "Legality and struggle against organized crime" conceptualizes a need to cope with the transnational phenomenon of illegal economy by way of setting up a transnational regime of persecution and confiscation. Confiscated assets are liquidated and the proceeds are dedicated to social purposes.

Todiktio's published work refers to its president Henrik Enderlein (and to Gerhard Cromme). The writing emphasizes risks that endangers the very existence of the EU (i.e. complacency, blame games against member states, muddling through). Greater risk sharing and greater sovereignty sharing are demanded as a lesson from the crisis management. The argument remains very much on the institutional dimension of EMU completion.

2.4 Mainstream analysis: Transnational democracy

How do the findings of the conceptual work of the pro-European think tanks with regard to transnational democracy compare with the mainstream efforts?

Except for the Spinelli Group, again, conceptualization of transnational European democracy and far reaching changes aiming at the primacy of EU institutions are not advocated by any of the authors in our mainstream collection, at least not in the sense of fundamental changes of the legal structure of the EU. Only the Spinelli Group calls on the EU "to reform fundamentally its constitutional architecture" (Spinelli Group 2013, p. 12) based on a "more federal structure" (ibid.) which is further defined as "[Not] centralized super state but, rather, a constitutional union in which different levels of democratic government are coordinated, not subordinated" (ibid.).

The remaining documents feature propositions for a deepening of the European integration process concerning the EU institutions, which is regarded as a means to fight the European crisis. The Five Presidents' Report dedicates one chapter to "Democratic Accountability, Legitimacy and Institutional Strengthening" (p.16) and calls for more "plenary debates between the European Parliament (EP) and the Commission [...] before the annual growth survey [and on] country specific recommendations" (p.17). Such instruments of inter-institutional dialogue are also seen as a way to increase the interaction of the Commission with national parliaments (ibid.). Quite vaguely, the report calls upon the EP to "organize itself to assume its role in matters pertaining especially to the Euro area" (ibid.).

A similar concern for democracy in Europe, yet more encompassing, is put forward by the Glienicker Group stating that "Democracy and the rule of law must be strengthened". With reference to Hungary, the plea sees a need to more effectively enforce community law in the face of "[...] breaches of democratic or

constitutional rules” (Glienicker Group 2013). The EU should be “equipped with a sanction mechanism” to ensure the rule of law in European member states.

On a more technical level, the Spinelli Group calls for an increasing role of the European institutions as they propose to transfer powers from the Council to the Commission. They also want to extend the ordinary legislative procedure to more policy areas and increase the qualified majority thresholds both in the Parliament and the Council. Within the streamlined legislative process the EP and the Council gain the right to initiate new policy proposals, which is currently only restricted to the Commission. This can be seen as a strong move for a possible strengthening of agenda-setting powers. Furthermore, they argue for establishing transnational lists for EP elections in order “to create the missing link between electorate and the elected” (Spinelli Group 2013, p. 17).

The Spinelli Group only thus features conceptual moves towards European federalism. All the other documents remain within the present framework, calling for soft measures mostly to increase the efficiency of the European institutions. Only with regard to community law enforcement are there calls for EU-level sanctions to ensure compliance in member states. The pro-European think tank debate thus appears to overlap to some extent with the (Spinelli group related) parliamentary debate, but is definitely going beyond the reform ideas presented in the mainstream documents by way of addressing the constraining relationship between the capitalist economy and the democratic aspirations of Europe.

2.5 European public interest economy

Since its foundation, economic development in the EU has always gained special prominence. The pooling of coal and steel production between Germany, France and Benelux Union was set up, as a clear statement to make war not only unthinkable but “materially impossible” (Schuman 1950). Peace in Europe was to be established through an economic integration following the old liberal claim that countries that trade with each other do not go to war with each other. The ideas about economic integration changed, however. In the 1960s and 1970s, a mix between negative and positive economic integration prevailed. The common agricultural policy was and remains a regime of regulated prices. European communities accommodated exemptions to competition policy in many state-related and infrastructure sectors like transportation, energy, or communication. Efforts to remove obstacles against cross-border economic activities coexisted with efforts to harmonize social conditions. Only in the course of the 1980s a decisive move was made to advance cross-border liberalization even at the expense of transnational harmonization. The move to complete the internal market by 1992 marked the breakthrough of the new era of deregulation based on claims of economic efficiency (Cecchini et al. 1988).

The course taken after the collapse of the Soviet Union and German unification reinforced the move towards a neoliberal integration path. The Maastricht Treaty codified the economic and monetary union based on austerity ideas. For the first time in history, countries committed to a general debt ceiling of 60 per cent of

GDP, a yearly maximum deficit of 3 per cent and low inflation rates as common goals. Even if the enforcement mechanisms were weak, the general orientation of macroeconomic policy making followed a clear supply side, austerity and financial stability agenda (Stützle 2014). Thus, long before the euro crisis, the EU consolidated a neoliberal integration path. The cross-border transfers available to meet the structural adjustments were lowered in the 1990s compared to the single market era. Eastern Expansion was to be accomplished with less compensation rather than more as might have been expected given the lower social standards across the Eastern European accession states. The southern periphery also had to share the structural funds with many new claims from the East (Berg and Gehrmann 2004). But the stability of the common currency helped to lower the pains since the public sector had access to cheaper funding due to the mechanisms of monetary union. While this benefited the members of the Eurozone, primarily, the whole of the EU prospered in the course of the 2000s until the 2008 crash²³.

Even though, civil society and political parties such as Podemos and Syriza did protest and called for a fundamental rethink of underlying growth models, economic developments till the present day are most strongly influenced by ideas of supply-side economics. Responses and measurements that had to be taken by European governments included measures of privatization of state properties, a decrease in minimum wages as well as a strong tightening of welfare measurements in general. Saving and cutting government expenditure as promoted by neoclassical and neoliberal actors such as the IMF was promoted by the center-right as the only way out, rather than Keynesian ideas based on deficit spending and international efforts to balance accounts (Blyth 2013).

The state nevertheless remains an important economic actor that can influence economic development in numerous ways. Unsurprisingly, the role of the state in economic governance is at the center of controversies and central to new European integration ideas. The following documents of pro-European integration think tanks were identified because they contain conceptual work regarding economic integration that seem to differ from prevailing ideas.

Table 11: European public interest economy

Think tank	Number of relevant publications
European Alternatives	4
EuropaNova	3
Todiktio	1
Project for a Democratic Union	1
Friends of Europe	0
Total	9

Source: Own compilation

²³ Statista, Wachstum des realen Bruttoinlandsprodukts (BIP) in der Europäischen Union und der Euro-Zone von 2003 bis 2013 (gegenüber dem Vorjahr). (Growth of real gross domestic product in the EU and Euro-Zone from 2003 to 2013 (compared to previous year).

European Alternatives again stands out in terms of publications that contain conceptual concerns in the field of economic integration and policy. The think tank does not publish too much that can be easily categorized as “economic” because the organization challenges the disconnection of economics from other social or political dimensions (interview one and personal communication). Regarding economic issues, European Alternatives can therefore be considered to radically challenge the status quo. It identifies the need for a new social model as a consequence of the interlinkage of member state economies. This is based on the concept of universal social rights amongst European citizens, as discussed previously. In order to be implemented, European Alternatives demands the EU to become “the guardian of basic social rights” (European Alternatives 2014, p. 41). Social protection is regarded as “an investment for society rather than a hindrance to growth” (ibid.). It follows that economic growth should be subsumed to social protection and not the other way around.

In another document, European Alternatives features a strong statement regarding the failure of traditional economic integration and predominantly neoliberal economic policy perspectives in the EU. The Manifesto of the Appalled Economists (2010) claims to debunk various myth like the efficiency of financial markets, the need to lower public deficits to lower the burden of next generations, austerity credos like the need to cut spending to lower public debt and the causal relationship between public spending and increasing debt, or the need to reinsure financial markets in order to procure sound public finance. The document displays a clear distance to prevailing ideas:

“Europe has been built for three decades on a technocratic basis which has excluded populations from economic policy debates. The neoliberal doctrine, which rests on the now indefensible assumption of the efficiency of financial markets, should be abandoned.” (p.31)

And a new understanding combines negative and positive dimensions of economic policy making:

“We must reopen the space of possible policies and discuss alternative and consistent proposals that constrain the power of finance and organize the ‘harmonisation while the improvement is being maintained’ of European economic and social systems (art. 151 of the Lisbon Treaty). This requires the pooling of substantial budgetary resources, which would be collected from the development of a highly downward redistributive taxation in Europe ...”(ibid.)

In “Eurocrisis calls for a new politics fit for the age” these ideas become connected to concrete forms of democratic control over the economic development in Europe. By critically reflecting upon the political events in the midst of the euro crisis, European Alternatives puts forward a cost-by-cause logic in arguing for higher citizens’ control. European citizens did not cause the debts banks took on, nor did German taxpayers cause the Greek sovereign debt crisis. From these observations, they deduce the need for a higher “democratic control over the shape of the economy” (2011). Due to the interconnectivity of national economies

in Europe, they dismiss the idea of higher control on national levels and see European economic governance as favorable. These ideas become operationalized through a “citizens’ agora” as a specific deliberation process in which considerations on a citizens’ level (through conventions) shall ultimately be discussed in the European parliament. This is a clear bottom-up process. Similar to previous considerations, the need for democratic elements is stressed here and a “rethinking of the bases of democracy in Europe” is advocated.

Different conceptions are presented by PDU, which stress the need for more sustainable economic systems in which the state need to take a more prominent role. By establishing a definition of what unsustainable growth means, they develop its antidote; “sustainable growth”. Besides, the environmental damage capitalism has brought about, PDU also identifies economic growth, as we know it, as a driver for social inequality and unrest that stands in contrast to ideas of trickle-down effects. In order to change that, the PDU sees a need for an “active government” which support a comprehensive welfare state “from cradle to grave” (2015) and fosters economic growth driven by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (ibid.). Yet, PDU remains rather vague on what that actually means and what the consequences of a more sustainable economic development would be so that “[The] EU can blossom as a world leader in a future-minded form of capitalism” (2015). This is due to the fact that PDU does not see its focus on developing policy proposals. Thus, they do not formulate concrete ideas on how the European economy should look like in the future (interview three). PDU rather sees it as their task to establish the general conditions on a European level to make meaningful democratic decisions on European economic questions such as economic inequality (ibid.). On one aspect PDU is very clear, however: Europe does have to assume common responsibility for debt. This would clearly mean a break with the present configuration and economic governance regime.

In the publication by DIKTIO (Network for Reform in Greece and Europe) entitled, “After the Greek deal: Three dangers and three opportunities - why it is urgent to complete EMU”, we are presented with ways to navigate the dangers and opportunities in strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). This paper emphasizes the necessity for a “true economic union” to be in place, in order for the currency union to remain sustainable. It is suggested that the cooperation and coordination of all member countries is impeded by complacency, blame games, and a lack of strategic vision. Solutions to these challenges are suggested, such as a comprehensive policy response to the ongoing crisis in Europe, ‘smart’ reforms (i.e. changes to economic policy that lead to a ‘plausible growth path’), boosting investment, and stronger Franco-German cooperation.

The responses proposed by DIKTIO appear not to address (directly) the global financial and economic factors that contributed to the current crisis of the EMU. As globalized economies increasingly deepen their interdependence, cooperation and coordination in the age of financialization needs to extend far beyond EU member states in order to tackle the toxicity of contemporary global financial crises. Thus, concepts on strengthening the EU’s capacity to manage the EMU, situated within the complexity of a globalized economy, will be vital. While

European Alternatives is explicit about the need to tame the power of financial markets, none of the organizations tackle the global dimensions. What do we find in the mainstream considerations?

2.6 Mainstream analysis: European public interest economy

In the report from Enderlein and Pisani-Ferry it is the member state (especially France and Germany) that shall act in order to overcome the crisis. Besides a European harmonization of economic areas to achieve predictability and to boost private investments (p. 4), means of deeper European integration processes are not seen as the ultimate measure to overcome the crisis. Enderlein and Pisani consequently refrain from discussions about European institutional configurations. Because public investment policies are regarded as a main driver of economic growth, however, both national and European investment plans are proposed by the authors. It is Germany, in particular, which is urged to increase its public investments in infrastructure, especially in times of such low interest rates (Glienicker Group).

Again, Spinelli Group is closer to the terrain of the progressive integration think tanks. In terms of the economic policies, it calls for “an economic government of the fiscal union” (p. 15), which would take the present EU in a new direction. In direct reference to the new intergovernmental economic governance regime, the group wants to bring legislation back into the realm of the community mode of governance: “The Fundamental Law codifies in primary law the key elements of the recent Six-Pack and Two-Pack legislation which strengthened EU surveillance and supervision of the individual state economies” (ibid.). From a legal perspective, this would strengthen the status of the Six-Pack and Two-Pack (essentially the Maastricht criteria and the surveillance mechanism) legislation by way of providing additional legitimacy, but would not change the criteria employed in these treaties as such. However, new dimensions of fiscal solidarity and a sharing of sovereign debts in special situations are proposed by the authors as well. Spinelli Group thus aims at mediating between present economic paradigms and moves towards fiscal federalism. But Spinelli Group appears to still shy away from a clear commitment. Prevailing notions of fiscal autonomy and self-responsibility are still evoked in contrast to both PDU and European Alternatives.

2.7 Transnational civic/public sphere

The public sphere is generally regarded as the place in which citizens can, through communication, mediate their interests in order to reach non-violent agreements. Gerard Hauser defined it as “a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them” (Hauser 1999, p. 61). With the coffee house often described as the ideal institutionalization in which public discourse could emerge in the eighteenth century, the concept of the public sphere has changed drastically

in recent times. With new communication devices at hand, discursive spaces are no longer bound to national and linguistic restraints allowing conceptualizations of the public sphere – in transnational terms – to gain increasing prominence.

Its relevance for the EU becomes apparent by taking the normative dimension of the concept of the public sphere into account. Regarded as the space in which public opinion emerges, the public sphere is seen as the pillar in society in which citizens (especially in mass states) can make their voices heard and enforce control over his or her political representatives.

Scholars, therefore, argue that the EU's democratic deficit could indeed be counteracted through the discursive engagement of European citizens in European legislations. Transnational public discussion could form a European public sphere in which public opinion not only influences decision-making on the European level, but also functions as a critical reflection and control mechanism for European politics. At the same time, there is considerable debate over the feasibility of a European public sphere (compare Risse 2010). Scholars have argued that it still does not and cannot exist due to limits of language and media, for example. Others have pointed to the coexistence of national and transnational identities and public spheres. Yet, others have pointed to the general fragmentation of the public sphere due to social inequality, individualization and media configurations to which the European public just adds another dimension. In contrast to the traditional concern with the colonization of the public sphere by government and big business²⁴, the contemporary debate in any case is focused on problems and limitations in terms of its democratic functions.

The following documents have been identified on the websites of our think tank sample that develop conceptual ideas with regard to a transnational public sphere.

Table 12: Transnational civic/public sphere

Think tank	Number of relevant publications
European Alternatives	3
Project for a Democratic Union	3
EuropaNova	2
Friends of Europe	0
Todiktio	0
Total	8

Source: Own compilation

“The public sphere ideally will be Europe’s real democratic glue and the source of its legitimation, above and beyond common history, values, and beliefs.” (PDU 2013)

²⁴ Habermas’ book on the structural transformation of the public sphere was originally published in 1962, but has only been translated into English in 1989.

With regard to a prospective transnational European public sphere, PDU, in particular, provides clear insights on the European public sphere's links to democratic deficits of the EU. PDU asks: "Is it enough to involve the European people in the institutional processes?" PDU denies such a limited procedural requirement and states instead "the EU has the responsibility to produce this public sphere where a European demos could display its richness and feel involved in the democratic process of the Union" (ibid.).

In the article "The Need for a European Public Sphere", PDU specifies what a European public sphere could actually look like. PDU conceptualizes a universal public sphere, which integrates both European national spheres, as well as European media projects that take a non-national, yet clearly European standpoint (as EurActive.de does, for example).

As PDU also sees a need for an institutional rearrangement of the EU, it develops a concept of the public sphere that is tailored against the backdrop of the EU in which the European Parliament already has a much stronger voice. This is because PDU regards a European public sphere as ineffective. "Creating a European public sphere artificially, especially in the way the European Commission is trying to do, will never work. A public sphere comes into existence when there is an authority, which, through its decisions, affects my daily life and where I have the ability to influence such decisions" (interview three).

This explains why PDU's conceptualization of the public sphere only materializes after the European institutions have a stronger role in politics. In this scenario, the media should focus more strongly on "deliberations in the European Institutions" (2013), and the European Parliament in particular. According to PDU, it shall communicate issues of all Europeans between the different nations and social groups in order to establish a communicative space in which the understanding for each other's needs increases. Besides the promotion of research, insights and debates, the European public sphere shall remind European citizens of the reason why the EU has been established in the first place. This shall foster the engagement of citizens in European politics, thereby mitigating nationalistic tendencies in Europe. In order to achieve this, the common language barrier is addressed through a stronger focus on English as a secondary language in school.

The absence of explicit concepts on a European public sphere by European Alternatives is explained by Milanese for two main reasons. First, he sees the traditional normative ideal concept of the public sphere by Habermas as problematic. With reference to Laclau and Mouffe, he criticizes the idea of a Habermasian public sphere for proceduralism and the absence of social struggle between antagonizing forces in society. Further, he criticized that a concept of the public sphere along Habermasian lines transcribes the ideal of a republic of highly educated intellectuals to other spheres of society such as politics and, thus, idealizes rationalism. Besides these conceptual problems, European Alternatives regards the existing European public sphere as quite advanced:

“If you doubt that the European public sphere exists, go to any café or bar anywhere in Europe you like and ask the people about the Greek debt crisis or the Brexit, for that matter, and everybody’s got an opinion. And if this is not the European public sphere, what is?” (interview one)

Here, we find conceptual disagreement with PDU, which in the interview argued that a European-wide discussion of events such as the Brexit or the Greek debt crisis is not an indication of a European public sphere. Rather, these are identified as national discourses which are different from each other.

However, Milanese of European Alternatives observes the absence of a communicative power at the European level and, alongside the lack of strength to hold decision makers accountable through a European public sphere, he argues that such a recognition of limits has been essentialized by right-wing forces for different purposes: “Because there is no European public sphere, we can’t have a European democracy” (interview one). Instead of such a denial, European Alternatives negotiates power relations in society and relates these to the public sphere.

Due to these reasons, we do not find concepts of a public sphere as such, but advocacy for a stronger involvement of journalists and civil society to overcome problems of intransparency and despotism in Europe. One problem European Alternatives identifies is the lack of information around deportation centers in Europe, for example. By calling for better access to detention centers by journalists and NGOs, European Alternative aims at strengthening the function of the media as a controlling mechanism, advancing the idea of the media as a fourth estate in the division of political power to the European level. Against the backdrop of a thorough analysis of the Italian media landscape and its strong monopolization by Berlusconi, European Alternatives calls for a “Europe-wide response” in order to save and guarantee freedom of the press in general, and to remove impediments in light of positive developments in Eastern Europe in particular. However, although the public sphere is advocated strongly, new concepts are not well explained in the case of European Alternatives. European Alternatives did help to establish a sense of Commission responsibility in this area backed by the European treaties, but this we learned in private communication (comment of Niccolo Milanese on our draft report), not from the website’s publications.

Moreover, according to European Alternative’s Niccolo Milanese they see the “Theatrical and artistic action of European Alternatives” as a core activity in order to establish European spaces in which individuals come together to reflect upon Europe. European Alternatives thus conceptualizes a European public sphere from below, dedicated to addressing pressing concerns like migrant rights and violations of freedom of the press.

EuropaNova instead has focused on dimensions of participatory democracy. The crisis of Europe’s regime of representative democracy is closely linked to the lack of a common European civic sphere. The European public sphere, therefore, has remained a sphere of experts (EuropaNova 2008, p. 43). EuropaNova demands a strengthening of complementary and more systematic forms of civic dialogue. The

document appears to be quite close to the design of the European Civic Forum, which was founded in 2005 to improve NGO participation. The concomitant demand of EuropaNova (2008, p. 44) for a European association statute no longer appears to be a part of the agenda to improve the European civic sphere.

In summary, we seem to find complementary notions of a need for a stronger transnational public sphere to be organized “from above” (PDU), “from below” (European Alternatives) and by way of better integration of NGOs (EuropaNova). It appears to be common understanding of the three organizations that a European public sphere largely limited to elites and experts will not be a sufficient basis to support European democratic development.

2.8 Mainstream analysis: Transnational civic/public sphere

In the case of the conceptual work we can keep the comparison of think tank output to mainstream documents short since none of the documents included in the report considers the issue of the European civic/public sphere. This is surprising since integrating civil society has been such a strong emphasis of the Commission in response to the legitimacy crisis since the 1980s. After the “no vote” against the constitution in France and the Netherlands, additional money was provided to fund European political party foundations. At this point it was recognized that civil society participation as such does not necessarily lead to the strengthening of pro-European attitudes (Gagatek and van Hecke 2014). The crisis of the EU has not led to a larger discussion of the dilemmas of the (limited and fragmented) European public sphere. Efforts to increase participatory and representative European democracy certainly continue to suffer from a lack of both consideration and means offered to pursue an increasing European public sphere.

2.9 Europe as central power in global political economy

The contradiction between Europe’s position in the global economy and its political role has been at the center of European debates for a long time; economically a giant, politically a dwarf. Europe was sandwiched by the two military superpowers in the cold war constellation. Since most EU members are NATO members as well, Europe was at the same time a part of the U.S.-led side in the confrontation. Since France and the UK gained their own status as nuclear powers after the war (unlike Germany), there was limited interest in developing a common foreign policy position, which would after all have meant sharing nuclear power with the former enemy villain. Europe’s nation states were torn between the need for cooperation to gain strength vis-à-vis both Russia and the United States, and limited inclinations to share military and other foreign policy powers. Only with regard to international trade, the European Commission was put in charge of international negotiations and treaties.

The feeble foreign policy position at the same time has been considered an advantage since Europe could not rely on military power. The experience of

negotiated orders internally guided Europeans to a certain extent to search for alternative solutions in the global context as well. The 2012 peace Nobel Prize was awarded to the EU in recognition of its contribution to reconciliation between previously bellicose nations (like Germany and France) and to peaceful and fraternal coexistence of nations.

The collapse of the Soviet Union changed the global constellation dramatically, and opened both new spaces and needs for common European foreign policy. The Maastricht treaty integrated the Common Foreign and Security Policy to the Community method and established the office of a high official in this area. But the wars in Iraq displayed the deep division with some countries following the call of the United States (notably UK and Eastern European member states) while others refrained from joining the invasion (notably Germany and France). Similar divisions characterize the Ukraine and Syria conflicts. What were the implications of the global financial crisis with regard to the understanding of the role of the EU in the global political economy and polity? There has not been much work at all in this area in the five think tanks under investigation. Most of their work is targeting the European domestic situation. Work by European Alternatives on open border conceptions of citizenship and the promotion of social cooperation across borders could be considered to belong to the foreign policy field,²⁵ but has not been translated into foreign policy perspectives of the EU so far. Only PDU in fact has invested time and energy on conceptual development in the field of foreign policy so defined.

Table 13: Europe as central power in global affairs

Think tank	Number of relevant publications
Project for a Democratic Union	1
EuropaNova	0
Friends of Europe	0
European Alternatives	0
Todiktio	0
Total	1

Source: Own compilation

PDU's core idea of a successful union refers to common debt and common foreign policy. Thus, it is obvious that PDU develops comprehensive ideas in this area. The statement of principles' paragraphs five and six unequivocally call for a centralization of authority in the field of foreign policy:

1. Some competences – such as foreign affairs, the armed services, and the common currency – which are now vested in the European Commission, the European Council, the Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and

²⁵ Compare work on Ukraine: <https://euroalter.com/2014/ukraine-a-struggle-for-the-rights-of-all-europeans>, on Egypt: <https://euroalter.com/2013/young-egyptians-are-reminding-us-what-democracy-means-2>, and on Turkey: <https://euroalter.com/2013/solidarity-with-the-uprisings-in-turkey>, as well as the idea of transnational dialogues: <https://transnationaldialogues.eu>, for example (all links were retrieved on 2nd November 2016).

Security Policy, the European Parliament, and member states, will henceforth be the sole preserve of the Union government. Other powers will be returned to national and regional level, including the setting of the minimum wage.

2. The Union should have at its command a single European army, with the monopoly of external force employment.

PDU thus infers that the EU replaces nation state membership in NATO. Apart from the clear statement of the need to overcome the divisions within Europe with regard to many foreign policy issues, PDU does not offer further consideration with regard to the policy orientation.

2.10 Mainstream analysis: Europe as central power in global political economy

When it comes to conceptions of the future of the EU's role in global affairs, Glienicker Group offers many insights, reminding us that "Europe ought to be able to defend her common interests effectively [and shall] pursue a joint strategy on global trade and finance legislation" (2013). Concomitantly, the group demands that the EU should attain a common seat in international economic organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank (Glienicker Group). China is referred to as the up-and-coming power, while the U.S. is seen in decline. The group is also calling for an independent strategy in outer space.

The Five Presidents' Report also supports such a unification of political representation internationally, stating that the "fragmented voice means the EU is punching below its political and economic weight [. . .]. This is particularly true in the case of the IMF" (2015, p. 17). Interestingly, although politics of defence and security are usually seen as core areas of national legislation, the survey of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation shows that a Europeanization of foreign defence and security policies has the highest popularity of six policy areas the participants responded to. Similarly, a Europeanization of the taxation of international enterprises in Europe shows equally strong support (2015, p. 16).

Both in PDU's work and in the mainstream documents, however, we only find an emphasis on a stronger external role of the EU in terms of common economic and security interests. Beyond global competition with major economic actors, the mainstream discourse exhibits very little in terms of exploring the EU's global role and vision.

2.11 Conclusion of conceptual development in pro-European think tanks

We have witnessed considerable efforts to develop ideas about an expanded European citizenship, though legal and political rights were stronger on the horizon of participating think tanks than social rights. In this area, the mainstream flexicurity model can also be observed in the group of pro-European think tanks. A notable difference between the conceptual work of pro-European

think tanks and EU institution mainstream is visible in the area of economic policy. A European public interest economy is considered to replace the still dominant focus on growth and competitiveness. In some ways, this finding qualifies the limited notion of social citizenship, though the conceptual work with regard to the European public interest economy remains vague. Considerable effort can be observed with regard to the advance of transnational democracy, which goes clearly beyond the EU institution mainstream except for the Spinelli Group, which shares the concern for a greater role of the European Parliament. Again, the operationalization remains relatively vague, as there is no consideration for the role of European political parties, for example. In the area of the European civic/public sphere, the group of think tanks differs whether it needs to be developed from above, from below, or by way of better integration of NGOs. But the link between a more fully developed public sphere and European democracy is clearly understood. In contrast, the mainstream documents included in this study do not waste time on Europe's civic/public sphere. The relationship is reversed with regard to the fifth and final conceptual efforts we detected: Europe's role in global affairs. While only PDU spends time to consider a common foreign defence framework, the EU mainstream documents display a strong focus on foreign economic and security policy efforts.

3 Conceptual work in debating platforms

In this section we will establish if and to what extent new conceptual efforts reverberate in pro-European integration debating platforms with the think tanks analyzed above; included in this analysis are Open Europe, Eutopia, FutureLab Europe, Political Critique and Publixphere. To recap, the debating platforms represent pro-European commentary and range in format from collaborative weblogs to journal type entries, as well as span geographically across Europe²⁶. Our five debating platforms have produced a total of 2,133 documents between 2011 and 2016.

We associated concepts and documents of the platforms via a multilevel process of filtering documents considered relevant for our purposes, namely identifying documents that reflect the conceptual innovations detected in the realm of the pro-European think tanks: Expanded European citizenship (universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights); transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe; European public interest economy/economic democracy; and transnational civic/public sphere. There is only one publication on the conceptual dimension "Europe as central power in global political economy". Interestingly, the larger theme was also not evident in the debating platform discussions.

²⁶ For further details on each of the debating platforms, please refer above to page 14.

In our work we proceeded as follows:

- Exclusion of all documents that are superficially connected with EU affairs.
- Identification of documents that by n-gram-extraction or presence of keywords exhibited the respective concept (e.g. “citizenship” for expanded European citizenship).
- Identification of documents out of the previous set, which dealt topically with the subjects (e.g. European citizenship/transnational democracy, financial sector, economic policy) and relationally by distancing from mainstream thinking on these topics (stressing, for example, the demands for, or conditions of deep democratization, civil interaction or the empowerment of public sphere in the economy).
- We excluded all documents that limited their discussion to factual political decisions, acts, events (as in reporting), as well as the great number advocating European common values, historical memory and cultural identity. Although they may be valuable as a basis of further European integration, they did not add to a progressive conceptualization that overcomes the current crisis of European integration.

There are other concepts of widespread public concern like climate protection, sustainable development and gender equality, which were considered for conceptual innovation. Surprisingly, there was little evidence for this in this selection of pro-European think tanks and debating platforms.

The following tables display the platform publications according to the conceptual area described previously:

Table 14: Total number of publications per thematic field

Thematic field	Number of publications
Transnational civic/public sphere	36
Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe	28
European public interest economy/economic democracy	25
Universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights (expanded European citizenship)	7

Source: Own compilation

The following tables show the contributions of each individual platform according to the conceptual area.

Table 15: Number of articles according to thematic fields by Eutopia

Thematic field	Number of publications
Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe	8
European public interest economy/economic democracy	6
Transnational civic/public sphere	3

Source: Own compilation

Table 16: Number of articles according to thematic fields by FutureLab Europe

Thematic field	Number of publications
Transnational civic/public sphere	4
Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe	2

Source: Own compilation

Table 17: Number of articles according to thematic fields by OneEurope

Thematic field	Number of publications
Transnational civic/public sphere	14
Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe	12
European public interest economy/economic democracy	8
Universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights (expanded European citizenship)	4

Source: Own compilation

Table 18: Number of articles according to thematic fields by Publixphere

Thematic field	Number of publications
Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe	4
European public interest economy/economic democracy	2
Transnational civic/public sphere	1
Universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights (expanded European citizenship)	1

Source: Own compilation

Table 19: Number of articles according to thematic fields by Political Critique

Thematic field	Number of publications
Transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe	12
European public interest economy/economic democracy	10
Transnational civic/public sphere	3
Universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights (expanded European citizenship)	2

Source: Own compilation

Most documents we found were written by Open Europe and Political Critique. Unlike the conceptual documents of the think tanks, we found few contributions in the area of expanded European citizenship. The focus is strongest on transnational democracy and public sphere followed by European public interest economy.

3.1 Limited interest in expanded European citizenship

Table 20: Articles on expanded European citizenship

Debate platform	Article title
OneEurope	Demanding the creation of a new State - Could this shake up one of the pillars of the EU?
OneEurope	European citizenship
OneEurope	Freedom of Movement as a Human Right
OneEurope	One Europe, One Citizenship
OneEurope	Harmonization of Salaries and Pensions within the Eurozone
Publixphere	Democracy under pressure in Europe – proposal for a solution
Political Critique	Rainbow Pride 2016: manifestation against illiberalism in Slovakia
Political Critique	What Europe does Ukraine need?

Source: Own compilation

The online magazines are surprisingly quiet in the area of expanded European citizenship. On two (Eutopia and FutureLab) of the five platforms we could not find any contributions that were considered close to the notions of expanded European citizenship discussed in section 2.1. Only **OneEurope**, with five articles, displays a somewhat stronger interest in this area.

OneEurope features a reflection on European citizenship as it has historically evolved, mostly on the European Court of Justice's activities. One author discusses freedom of movement as a human right, sharing experiences of Eastern Europeans during the time when they were excluded from travelling after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Another contribution discusses conflicting perspectives of European identity and citizenship – complementary or problematically undermining national identity – to be in favor of changing (Europeanizing) citizenship as enrichment. Yet another suggests that Europe's democracy is undermined if citizens do not share the same rights; recently increasing attacks on free movement and travel within the EU are regarded as seeds for destruction. Another danger is seen in attempts to use European citizen initiatives to support regional secession (of Catalans in this case), since they divert attention from the task of expanding European citizenship by way of reinforcing domestic conflict lines. In "European Citizenship: an appropriate citizenship or a simple breath of air?" it becomes clear that the contribution by OneEurope strongly considers a lack of specification of European citizenship rights and duties in the treaties.

OneEurope also features a publication titled "Harmonization of Salaries and Pensions within the Eurozone"; as described previously, it links the goal of harmonization to the inequality of minimum incomes in different countries (e.g. Greeks on minimum wages now receive 600 Euros per month – 700 before the crisis – compared to 1,200 Euros per month in Ireland, although prices for essential consumer goods are comparable). Thus, here we can detect a notion of social citizenship aiming at the reduction of inequality across countries.

Publixsphere re-published a contribution to a web-magazine in the Young European Federalist dealing with alleged violations of European principles in the East. The article identifies a limit of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. “The big flaw of the Charter is, however, that it only applies to member states ‘when they are implementing Union law’. The exact interpretation of this restriction is subject to debate among lawyers. However, the Charter does not apply to purely national acts of member state government bodies” (Krappitz, 2016). The author aims at reinforcing the rights of citizens to enforce their rights in front of the European Court of Justice.

Political Critique in turn features a claim for full-fledged European citizenship as a key to a functioning international democracy. Similar to the conceptual work discovered at the think tank sites we also find support for LGBT rights.

We thus can observe overlap with the conceptual work discussed in section 2.1: Authors’ pick up the thread of migrant and minority rights, and sometimes even develop ideas that go further than the conceptual work we examined previously (e.g. specifying the legal reform requirements with regard to the charter of fundamental rights). There is very limited discussion of social citizenship dimensions of expanded European citizenship, which is not surprising given the limited attention to this in the conceptual work.

Many contributions on the debating platforms, of course, touch on citizenship ideas in one way or the other (e.g. regarding minority rights in a specific country or migration problems in certain spaces, is commonly touched upon). However, relatively clear discussions about the (necessary or possible) expansion of European citizenship are far from common in the pro-European discussions. Thus, there is clearly room for clarification of agendas in the area of European citizenship.

Altogether we can observe a concern with expanded citizenship rights for migrants, and in one case, the reflection of a transnational social citizenship perspective. The focus on legal limitations in the EU and reform ideas with regard to the charter of fundamental rights take us beyond the work done by the think tanks we discussed in section 2.1. But in general it is quite obvious that debating platforms express fears and dangers with regard to citizenship rights, rather than promoting attempts to expand European citizenship perspectives. The small number of contributions discovered on the five platforms that relate to the conceptual work suggests there is a lot of room for a more focused debate in this area.

3.2 Significant interest in transnational democracy

Table 21: Transnational democracy-related documents

Platforms	Number of documents
OneEurope	13
Political Critique	13
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	10
Publixphere	5
FutureLab Europe	2
Total	43

Source: Own compilation

Eutopia embraces the radicalization of EU discourse and the breakdown of so-called consensus over the EU project as an opportunity to create political space for true contestation and a movement away from an elite-run body politic. During this time of upheaval in Europe, authors suggest that the distribution of wealth, power and privilege can be examined and reconfigured so that democracy can flourish. A new institutional architecture and system of decision-making processes for European governance is seen as necessary to increase citizen engagement, open up public discourse, and increase citizen control over EU rules and policies. EU solidarity is regarded as fundamental to the interests of all citizens in Europe and that the crisis the Syriza government faced is not isolated, and best addressed through cooperation with EU members. These conceptual details (opposing “elite governance”) resonate with European Alternative’s sentiments regarding deepening democracy and the inclusion of social movements and active citizenry as necessary ingredients for achieving transnational democracy.

Beyond the binary pair of Euroscepticism and Euro-unionism we find statements on Eutopia that there is a ‘third way’ they call Euro-federalism. This call for a move toward a federal system echoes the Project of a Democratic Union’s statements. However, Eutopia authors appear to go one step further by invoking a Kantian perspective to argue that a ‘United Europe of States’ provides far more effective options than the binary pair and is most important in maintaining peace between nations. Authors describe how the political fault lines revealed in the European Union, from events such as the European parliamentary elections held on 25 May 2014 to Brexit, cannot be addressed by the ‘grand coalition’ of the European Council and European Parliament. Politics, they say, must be front and center in the decision-making process of the Eurozone, not the technocratic process that is currently in place, allowing a union of states to support supranational democracy, rather than derail it.

Moreover, they describe how the politicization of EU politics has been emboldened by populist parties and that the EU’s complex intergovernmental and supranational structure is too abstract for citizens to engage and participate in (unlike national mechanisms). Yet, Eutopia notes that the fact the EU process has

become politicized with significant confrontation arising at the European level, is an achievement for democracy as it - through a republican perspective - illustrates a dynamic and open political process.

FutureLab Europe suggests that the citizen and decision maker gap in the European Union needs to be closed in order to develop a truly European culture; participation by citizens is desperately needed. They also feel that participatory democracy in Europe could be enhanced by leveraging technology and complementing this with scaling-up instruments of direct democracy. This would be supported with emphasizing the need by EU member states to invest in education that promotes informed participation.

Trust in European institutions is seen as another obstacle for European democracy and FutureLab suggests that corruption and transparency need to be addressed. Along similar lines to the narrative generated by European Alternatives, FutureLab Europe authors see current EU economic policy making as derisive to the development of a united and democratic EU. The integrity of EU citizenship should be upheld beyond all other matters. Moreover, the EU is described as an aspirational form of transnational democracy that must encapsulate a political community of equals.

Alternatively, **OneEurope** publications encompass ideas around reframing the political-philosophical concept of nation-state democratic structures in order to support transnational democracy. Issues around European cohesion are often raised and solutions suggested using federalist notions. We again see interconnections with European Alternatives on conceptual characteristics regarding democratic deficits and resolutions involving the “deepening” of democracy, thinking globally, while acting locally, as well as endorsement of the “The Citizens Manifesto”. OneEurope’s commentary on the Future of Europe Group report, released on September 17, 2012, describes notions of transnational democracy in support of a political union. Political union would help to advance EU foreign policy and improve representation of EU members in international organizations. To support the integrity of a political union, veto of member states would need to be curtailed. EU member states would have to be willing to adapt and function collectively.

Enhancing the representativeness of the EU to more aptly reflect civil society is often emphasized by OneEurope; specifically, increasing more direct forms of democracy in the decision-making process, such as utilizing internet technology. Yet, as acknowledged by Eutopia also, the concept of European citizenship is too abstract. European parliamentarians need to be more visible and transparent in order to successfully counter apathy toward EU politics and institutions. Once again, OneEurope draws interconnections with the concept of a transnational civic/public sphere in regards to importance of democratic instruments, such as the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI), to improve the democratic conditions and resolve deficits. Echoing Eutopia, a Kantian perspective is implied, in that to disregard a more representative EU exposes the Union to failure and the potential for pandering to nationalist rhetoric, possibly creating tensions between countries and the transition to violent conflicts.

Quite distinctly from the other discourse platforms, OneEurope draws interconnections between transnational democracy and the European public sphere (or transnational civic/public sphere), in truly fostering a European identity. Specifically, OneEurope sees the development of EU taxation as foundational for a European identity to materialize, as taxes create a more direct connection between people and authority; “Taxation with Representation”.

OneEurope also describes a conceptual element that inhibits integration and transnational democracy from flourishing in the EU; that of the disfunction of the European Parliament and its substantial focus on market and trade-based economics, including general support of austerity measures. This resonates quite highly with almost all debating platforms and think tanks. However, very little is said amongst any of the think tanks and debating platforms on the economic and political global dynamics that influence EU transnational democracy, such as the 2008 global economic crisis that, arguably, contributed to the ongoing Eurozone crisis.

In regards to situations of crisis, **Political Critique** sees the current refugee crisis in Europe as an opportunity for transnational solidarity and fostering understanding for a post-national European community. Political Critique contributions see the refugee crisis as a chance for transformative action in building the capacity of the European community to absorb the movement of people, coupled with principles of fraternity for all, freedom and equality. The increasing strength of the right in Europe on issues like the refugee crisis is considered to be partly a result of the failures of the left in ignoring populist defences of national identity and a welfare state for “natives only”²⁷. This aligns with Publixphere’s commentary on addressing the creditor-debtor relationship that the EU has imposed with repercussions to national social security, which the right-wing forces have effectively absorbed into their agendas. However, Political Critique writing sees a major factor contributing to populist parties absorbing their social agenda due to the left’s close alignment to neoliberal inclinations.

Similarly to Publixphere, Political Critique suggests that the left should focus on endorsing European social protection of national welfare states – against the ills of globalization – by preparing the public for ideas regarding the transfer of large elements of economic sovereignty to supranational institutions. An alternative form of patriotism beyond the nation state is considered necessary, which integrates a defence of pluralism and diversity and the guarantee of social security and social justice. Processes of cultural integration are also deemed necessary, but controls over immigration will inevitably be part of this. Processes of democratization in Europe features prominently in much of Political Critiques posts and they show strong support for the Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25).²⁸ DiEM25’s focus on transnational cooperation of movements across

27 <http://politicalcritique.org/world/eu/2016/after-brexit-lessons-from-populists/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

28 This is true for the English website. It may be possible that Political Critique’s Polish language website displays different orientations.

Europe in order to transcend national boundaries, aligns with much of Political Critique's posts.

At times, there appears to be a convergence of agendas where Political Critique, in one instance, posted DiEM25's manifesto that promotes democratizing Europe through immediate measures, such as full transparency of decision-making to longer-term goals like the creation of a Constitutional Assembly with "representatives elected on trans-national tickets"²⁹. Political Critique's echoing and (general) endorsement of DiEM25's manifesto reflect sentiments shared by European Alternatives, particularly regarding issues over the power of economic interests and financial markets that dominate EU politics and addressing this with an influx of transnational democracy.

Along a similar vein of criticism, Publixphere views the Troika as extremely unaccountable and opaque in its decision-making as it essentially disempowers national parliaments. It is suggested that the Troika should be replaced with a European Monetary Fund and that countries heavily impacted by the euro crisis undergo a balance between structural and consolidated reforms. In collaboration with the European Democracy Lab, a European Republic is described that brings political equality for all, guided by election justice, equal access to social rights and tax equity. They acknowledge that there are many challenges to resolve in order for such a project to take shape, in particular how voting would be conducted, consideration over territorial delineations, preservation over cultural diversity and whether or not a European constitution is needed.

A single democratic government with a transnational system that ensures all citizens to receive social security is proclaimed as the way forward, rather than the creditor-debtor relationship that destroys the bonds between EU members. It is suggested that if this does not happen, populist and right-wing parties across Europe will continue to gain prominence and divisive actions against the EU project, such as Brexit, will result. For Publixphere, democracy and sovereignty need to be reconsidered beyond the nation state through a single European democratic government that has a separation of powers and a transnational ballot system. This could be seen as reflective of mainstream efforts described previously, specifically the Spinelli Group's call for EP elections in addressing the gap between the elected and the electorate.

The conceptual work discussed in section 2.1 is mirrored in the contributions to the debating platforms. We find a similar emphasis on anti-elitist conceptions of European governance, and clear notions of equality and citizenship rights as a basis of transnational democracy to be achieved. Clear limitations to democracy are identified that result from economic power, though this is not at the center of discussions. Cross references occur (from OneEurope to the Citizenship Manifesto of European Alternatives, for example), and links to European political movements (like DiEM25) are visible. But there are few ideas as to how to move toward a transnational democracy, and a surprising lack of reform proposals with regard to

29 <http://politicalcritique.org/world/eu/2016/a-manifesto-for-democratising-europe/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

European political parties, elections and European governance. OneEurope discussions overlap with the conceptual work on the transnational public sphere with a call for a “top-down” approach for common tax measures, seen as a prerequisite for a common identity by building bonds between citizens and European central authority. In general, ideas discussed remain vague and there appears to be a lack of common rallying points.

There also appears to be very little conceptual work describing, and reacting to, the growing interconnections between the global political economy and European transnational democracy. Undoubtedly, the lines between our analysis with Europe as a central power in global political economy and transnational democracy overlap, however, for simplicity's sake, it is felt that if think tanks, debating platforms and the mainstream overlook this interconnection they will fail to elevate a contemporary discourse on issues of transnational democracy. This is not to say that efforts to strengthen and reform EU institutions are not necessary for the realization of a truly European transnational democracy, but that concurrent efforts are needed to counter global economic forces that impede deepening EU democracy.

As so many of the contributors to this discourse focus attention on the adaptation of transnational democracy to the demands of economic interests, it is surprising that they typically do not take this analysis further by analyzing how elite actors impede democratic development (such as global lobby groups and networks); they also remain focused on European patterns of elite interaction and thus seem to ignore global dynamics. In other words, the conceptual work on European transnational democracy fails to address some of the macro factors that enable neoliberal economic hegemony and allied spoilers (such as financial elites) that undermine pan-European democratic aspirations. Otherwise, these efforts will arguably continue to result in an imported form of democracy, heavily defined by transnational industry and varieties of neoliberalism.

The irony is that, despite acknowledging how traditional concepts of sovereignty are not conducive to a European transnational democracy, the conceptualization of a European transnational democracy is antiquated in the face of increasing globalized economic interests.

3.3 European public interest economy: marginal interest

Table 22: Documents related to European public interest economy

Platforms	Number of publications
Political Critique	12
OneEurope	8
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	6
Publixphere	2
FutureLab Europe	0
Total	28

Source: Own compilation

The discussion related to a European public interest economy can be specified in the following ways: to contribute to public welfare as encoded in human and democratic rights; to reliably move towards the goal of sustainable development and recognize the insufficiency of the market process to address public interest; to advance a democratization of economic, financial, monetary policy and economic process (including centralization and democratic organization on EU level); to support an economically active state, public investment and efforts to reduce unemployment; and to place limitations on the financial sector and multinational corporations to mitigate impacts on autonomous democratically constituted public realms.

The conceptual element regarding public goods beyond the marketplace is mostly expressed by two documents. Jędrzej Malko, author of “Economics And Its Discontents”, republishes a chapter of his book with a political critique to unveil the seemingly neutral nature of money and market processes as an agent of social-power relations. Correspondingly, the markets are orthogonal and counterintuitive to democratic organization of the public realm.

In the Eutopia article “The Transatlantic Free Trade Negotiation: The Zombie Agreement” free trade is depicted as an imaginary panacea and the dominance of trade and the free market perspective leads to the evaporation of higher political aims. Moreover, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is assessed as disempowering national and the European parliament, as it upholds rights for corporations and punishes governments through corporate tribunals if regulations are deemed as hurting profits. It is concluded that free trade should be further developed as a strategy to attaining economic sustainability, while guaranteeing human rights. Along rights-based arguments, Eutopia’s article “The EU Year of the Citizens: What Does It Mean For The Citizens?” describes the interconnections between civic activities and high standard social welfare, and that social and economic exclusion and economic inequality endanger the formation of a vibrant civic sphere.

The next conceptual element drawn from these publications revolves around democratization processes of the economy, as well as financial and monetary policy. In the article “A European Ministry of Finance?” connections are made to

Sarkozy's idea of creating a European ministry of finance. Proposals are suggested that are in line with the established structures of the EU, but makes criticisms on the autonomy of central banks and, in particular, the European Central Bank (ECB). It is suggested that by developing a European ministry of finance that the ECB would come under democratic control, if only formally.

Publixphere's articles "Bullmann (SPD): Troika - Bürokratenherrschaft ohne Verantwortung" and "De Masi (Linke): Die Troika ist Gift für Europa" criticize the political irresponsibility of the Troika as symptomatic in not having democratic oversight. It is suggested that the European parliament shall gain authority over finance reform of member countries and management of reform programs. If not done so, it is argued, the potential disintegration of the EU will materialize, riding the anti-EU momentum of national elections in several member countries. These articles suggest that the Troika's policy of compulsory austerity is responsible for weak economic growth in the EU countries, and that the only alternative is democratization of economic decision-making and the prioritization of public welfare.

In reference to the Eutopia article "Alternatives to Atlantic trade agreements: Ethical trade and sovereign democracy" Christian Felber states that the TTIP trade deal will dominate democratic decision processes, but acknowledges that there is little alternative to expanding and organizing international trade. Of course, profit-motivated objectives of this form of trade should aspire to higher political aims, which contribute to human development and ecological sustainability.

OneEurope's "European Young Trade Unionists: 'We are not a Lost Generation'" article describes a coalition of young trade unionists who demand investments in quality jobs and public services. Moreover, this article highlights their demand for institutional efforts toward financial equalization between the member states in order to tackle the crisis of youth unemployment in the EU. The main argument of the article is that the democratization of economic decision-making and procedures will strengthen European citizen rights.

Ideas on developing an EU expert group that would set specific limits to risky financial transactions by banks have been articulated in the article, "Restraining the Dominant Financial Sector in the E.U." Although it is acknowledged that to outline the details of how this group operates is beyond the scope of the article, this modest proposal is seen as having only a slight chance of being passed. The author criticizes the convoluted and undemocratic decision-making process by the EU, and demands the democratization of EU structures. Specifically, the article suggests that strengthening the position of the EU parliament is necessary as well as the abolition of veto rights of the European national governments.

In the article "Tax-Havens - Europe's Hell?", OneEurope's Christos Mouzeviris describes how tax havens need to be controlled as they are largely eviscerating the coffers of public service provision. As a hive for tax haven, Christos sees tax evasion as a national business model promoted by the EU. He suggests stronger regulations for multinationals and the banking sector (who are responsible for the crisis).

Although ideas about a different European economic space, namely one dedicated to the public interest rather than to private gain, are present in the discussions of debating platforms, the number of articles dedicated to the various conceptual dimensions of interest is limited. Restraining the financial sector, restraining post-democratic austerity governance and advancing a different economic policy agenda in favor of public sector investment and employment are featured. But there are not many links to progressive economic actors and struggles (e.g. trade unions, or links to programmatic discussions of progressive economists like the organized effort of the Euro-Memo group). While there clearly is no support for growth and competitiveness agendas, there is also not much clarity about alternatives to be discussed, let alone pursued.

3.4 Varied perspectives on transnational civic/public sphere

Table 23: Documents related to transnational civic/public sphere

Debate platform	Number of articles
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	1
FutureLab Europe	4
OneEurope	11
Publixphere	1
Total	17

Source: Own compilation

Eutopia's Philippe Aigrain proposes that the transnational public sphere is integral to developing alternatives to the EU's evolution centered on "war-like economic competition"³⁰. Aigrain suggests that EU discourse is significantly focused on economics, largely influenced by small groups of individuals, and ignores ecological reform, as well as the potential for technology to provide a bridge between citizens and policy debate. This largely resonates with Jørn Loftager's chapter "Deliberative Democracy and Political Ideology: Social Liberalism vs. Neoliberalism" in the book "The Democratic Public Sphere", which articulates the tensions over competing narratives against the overwhelming tide of market-based sentiment.³¹

Beyond this, Aigrain warns against too much hope for technocratic fixes. He sees the development of a "digital sphere" not only useful in opening up opportunities for collaboration - through shared interests - on alternative pathways for EU development, but also considers it as a potential instrument of economically-driven elite forces. With this in mind, a general sentiment by Aigrain and fellow authors on Eutopia is that serious effort is needed to improve the relationship between citizens and politics through this space, both online and

30 <http://www.eutopiamagazinearchive.eu/en/philippe-aigrain/issue/can-bottom-actions-citizens-regenerate-democracy-europe.html> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

31 <http://www.unipress.dk/udgivelser/d/democratic-public-sphere,-the/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

offline. Such offline efforts are supported by Eutopia, in collaboration with European Alternatives, in events such as Transeuropa; a festival of politics, culture and art, providing a temporary space for exchange in various parts of Europe where people can find common interests and co-create ideas on culture, equality and democracy beyond state confines.

Much of **FutureLab Europe's** work under this category revolves around promoting and engaging in events with citizens across Europe. In "Self-organised European Citizens' Initiative against TTIP. Has the EU heard its citizens' voices?", Simona Pronckute describes the effectiveness of, essentially, a transnational public sphere, specifically the self-organized European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) against TTIP. Pronckute postulates whether or not the EU has "heard its citizens' voices" in regards to the TTIP negotiations and that bureaucratic proceduralism has impeded the ability for representatives of ECI to engage in this process. Despite these setbacks, she highlights that ECI has placed a spotlight on European trade negotiations by raising public awareness and could be considered "one of the most successful citizens' campaigns" in the European public sphere.³² As mentioned previously, FutureLab Europe complements these viewpoints with public events across Europe, such as focusing on ways to build trust in the European public sphere for the European project, specifically around European identity, equal opportunities and democratic values. They also promote the use of educational programmes throughout Europe to actively engage youth to spread awareness on the importance of the European Union.

OneEurope's Bella Felix, in what is arguably one of the more unique suggestions contributing to the concept of a transnational civic/public sphere in Europe, outlines the Netherlands' Poldermodel (OneEurope, 2015); a system of continuous political cooperation and dialogue between citizens and the state in tackling the constant threat of flooding. According to Felix, throughout Dutch history - due to the Poldermodel - there has never been a majority held by a single party and, as a result, cooperation has been a necessity. The Netherlands' relatively open society steeped in a "culture of conversation" represents a model that, in Felix's estimation, could be replicated throughout Europe to shorten the 'distance' between citizens and EU politicians. However, Felix appears to overlook what the common 'threat' to the EU is that all parties in Europe would feel compelled to address by embracing a cooperative mechanism like the Poldermodel.

In the book "The Democratic Public Sphere", Mark E. Warren questions whether public spheres can be made more democratic when relying heavily on institutional innovation (2016). Along these lines, no doubt, a common concern for pro-European integration actors is the development of a transnational European public sphere where EU politicians engage with citizens across Europe more effectively in order to mitigate anti-integration sentiment. However, what institutional arrangement would foster the imperative that compels anti-

32 <http://www.FutureLabeurope.eu/blog/self-organised-european-citizens-initiative-against-ttip-has-the-eu-heard-its-citizens-voices/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

European groups to cooperate with pro-European actors and embrace a Poldermodel?³³

In a more conventional, yet critical addition, Kwinten Lambrecht proposes how ineffectual digital media has been in expanding a transnational public sphere, in what he calls the “Online Brussels Bubble”. According to Lambrecht, in what could be described as an echo chamber, he suggests that myopic conditions are evident in online EU dialogue. He states that what is likely needed to bind the disparate groups of a “Brussels Bubble” and others is a stronger sense of common European culture. Moreover, as described by Volina Serban, the EU has increased its efforts in the cultural domain in regards to European “shared” values and traditions to invigorate the “masses” and foster a collective memory and consciousness. Along these lines, Christoph Kuehn in “The European Identity – Idealism, Implementation and Information” describes that in order for a “European identity” to be expressed, citizens need to be able to interact between member states, and this requires a more effective set of EU platforms and infrastructure. This is a common theme expressed by OneEurope; that a precondition for European democratization is an effective European public sphere, requiring new tools (such as crowdfunding) and social media platforms.

Moving to the offline realm, moreover, Ignasi Mesa suggests that the EU focuses on “glocalization” in order for more concerted effort toward acknowledging and utilizing local knowledge that connect to macro levels of policy-making in solving intractable problems. The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) could be described as an effort in glocalization as it deals with various issues, such as the euro crisis, which obviously impact local communities, while cultivating “the development of the European public space”.³⁴ This could be considered an example of bridging the gap between the ephemeral public sphere with, arguably, more pragmatic elements of civil society; in other words, how the European project can be “put into practice by the majority of the European citizens”, as Paul Hahnenkamp states.³⁵

Finally, OneEurope describe bottom-up processes as integral to developing European identity to support a democratic European project. Echoing discussions at the 2013 Conference of the European Year of Citizens, a new participatory strategy is considered vital for a European identity as well as rights to equal citizenship, more effective communication and increased mobility. This resonates with European Alternatives and the debating platform Political Critique, which both suggest the need for more bottom-up approaches in developing a sense of European belonging and more strongly linking this to support of European

33 The growth of European-wide inequality and destabilizing effects to nation states could be considered. Simona Pronckute sees social exclusion and inequality as a threat to equal EU citizenship. <http://one-europe.info/the-eu-year-of-the-citizens-what-does-it-mean-for-the-citizens> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

34 <http://one-europe.info/europe-s-first-citizens-initiative-to-start-collecting-signatures-in-august> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

35 <http://one-europe.info/a-european-civil-society-on-the-way> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

movements and representatives elected through an enhanced transnational system.

As is evident, much of the conceptual characteristics regarding a European public sphere connect with various forms of defining a European identity and increasing a sense of “belongingness”, shared European culture and values.

Political Critique’s interview by Slawek Blich with professor Panagiotis Sotiris of the University of Aegean in Greece, had many questions focused on how elements of “social forces” are unleashed as a result of political conflict, in this case the rise of Syriza and the issues they faced. Specifically, a common theme from this interview relates to the common interests of Europeans and their rejection of neoliberal EU policies and austerity.³⁶ It could be intimated that these common interests across Europe could liberate social forces in a democratic struggle faced by all Europeans. Along these lines, an article by Dawid Krawczyk entitled “Rudan: Working people must achieve unity with the migrant workers” resonated with particular characteristics of the transnational civic/public sphere concept. From the angle of workers’ rights and labor union struggles across Europe, Krawczyk describes how a transnational social strike could be organized by “building bridges between workers” and collaborative efforts with grassroots labor unions.³⁷

Publixphere produced one article that met the criteria for the transnational civil/public sphere concept, entitled “Activate Europe. Online Only?”. Written by Publixphere’s editorial team, findings of workshop activities focused on how to more effectively use digital technology are described to connect Europeans at a transnational level. The report also explores methods beyond digital technology. Publixphere acknowledged that a “Europe of citizens” exists, to a certain extent. To develop a culture around this requires more digital forums that enable a sense of European belongingness; social media are, of course, suggested as useful in building personal relations and communities that can foster this. Although not tapping into a broader audience due to its strong pro-EU stance, OneEurope’s website is described as being an important platform for the development of European belongingness.

Through these workshops, Publixphere also found that civil society initiatives should be more concerned with seeking financial sources through a more professional manner and recognize the recurring issue of temporary funding, as most funds typically come from foundations and are short-term. Language barriers were also recognized as an impediment to the development of the transnational civic/public sphere, but that English should be embraced as the default for discourse, while maintaining respect for other languages.

Some of the contributions on the platforms resonate with the conceptual work discussed in section 2.4. An emphasis by Political Critique on the relation between identity building and social struggles can be regarded to concretize ideas

36 <http://politicalcritique.org/world/eu/2015/sotiris-ready-for-a-rupture/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

37 <http://politicalcritique.org/world/eu/2015/rudan-working-class-unity-with-migrants/> (retrieved on 28th October 2016).

developed by European Alternatives regarding a public sphere from below. The confrontations with neoliberalism and austerity or TTIP likewise seem to add a concrete dimension to such ideas. OneEurope contributions also emphasize bottom-up approaches, though we referred to another OneEurope contribution stipulating a top-down dimension (European taxes precede identity) in section 2.2. However, there seems to be little concern for reforms regarding NGO participation or a more general top-down approach to the formation of a transnational civic and public sphere. The debating platforms regard themselves as a bottom-up contribution to the development of a European public sphere, which may preclude a critical reflection on the feasibility of this endeavor without having the necessary groundwork in place. As stated previously, Milanese of European Alternatives emphasizes that the Habermasian idea of a public sphere is problematic in that it replaces social struggle between antagonizing forces in society – which is foundational to emboldening a public sphere – with proceduralism. Also, again, as PDU state “... A public sphere comes into existence when there is an authority, which, through its decisions, affects my daily life and where I have the ability to influence such decisions” (interview three).

Nonetheless, if such an attempt to develop an EU authority of this nature is truly undertaken, the proliferation of a European public sphere will inevitably require an environment of access to information. Ultimately, this depends on a strong yet neutral fourth estate. As PDU suggest, the media should focus on “deliberations in the European Institutions” (2013), and the European Parliament in particular. Also, more efforts where Europeans have physical spaces to engage each other are deemed necessary and the artistic and theatrical activities by European Alternatives do present potential opportunities for this engagement, beyond the heavily relied upon online dimensions of a European public sphere. It is clear, however, that this will not fundamentally change the limited and fragmented character of the European public sphere, as it coexists with technocratic and elite spheres.

4 Overall conclusion

Reading through the collective output of five pro-European think tanks provided us with some clarity about their contributions to the debate on the future of Europe. The strongest and clearest effort was detected in the area of an expanded notion of European citizenship. Pro-European think tanks want to overcome the legal and political restrictions attached to the national citizenship base of European citizenship. Resident and migrant rights are high on the agenda, and some efforts are made to strengthen European social citizenship. In this area it is most obvious that pro-European think tanks beg to differ from what we read in the documents on the future of Europe that emanate from circles closer to the official institutions. Interestingly, the contributions to online platforms are less

numerous, but can be regarded as adding to the work done by our slate of advocacy think tanks (e.g. bringing in concrete ideas about necessary reforms of the European charter of fundamental rights).

The related conceptual innovation of a European public interest economy adds another dimension to the social citizenship agenda, in principle. But the conceptual ideas in this area remain exceedingly vague. It is clear that mainstream agendas of growth and competitiveness are fully rejected in favor of goals that relate to public interests, the fight against austerity and unemployment, the rejection of corporate economic power in general, and the power of the financial sector in particular. It is clear that democracy cannot be advanced under the prevailing conditions of neoliberal economic policy orientation. But what kind of alternative economy and economic policy are proposed remains unclear. In this area, the online platforms reflect the lack of perspective rather than adding to the drive. There appears to be a great distance between the pro-European think tanks and platforms to traditional actors like trade unions, at least in terms of what we can find as written output. In 3,000 plus documents examined, trade unions and progressive economic forces were hardly mentioned. The battles against the dominance of private capital, deregulation, privatization and financialization are hard to win if the Europeans in favor of a regulated market order, mixed economies and a clear priority of specific social objectives and public interests remain relatively unfocused and isolated.

The conceptual innovations in the areas of transnational democracy and civic/public spheres are interlinked as are the areas of social citizenship and public interest economy. The pro-European think tanks are passionate in support of a true transnational democracy, which is a clear counter-narrative to the denial perspective of the old and new right-wing forces that claim that it is impossible to develop democracy beyond the nation state. Democratic rights of Europe's citizenry are considered to be severely constrained by the weight of the corporate sector in preference formation and decision making, as well as the lack of dedicated efforts to constrain private economic forces and the power of economically strong member states in relation to the weaker parts of the EU. Since the role of democratic institutions of the EU, namely the European Parliament, has been weakened by the new economic governance, there is a clear notion of a backlash and an uphill battle for European democracy. Yet, there are surprisingly few notions as to how to react to these challenges. The Spinelli Report arguably provides more clarity with regard to the task of overcoming the constraints of the Parliament in the new economic governance regime than the voices from the pro-European think tanks. Surprisingly, little work is devoted to key actors in democracy, namely political parties and efforts to transcend a nation-state centered mode of democracy.

Only in the sharp focus on the necessary conditions of transnational democracy, namely a more strongly developed European civic/public sphere, the pro-European think tanks have an edge, this time in strong contrast to the perspectives voiced in documents closer to the EU institutions (of the Commission, EP and experts close to certain council members), which are surprisingly quiet in

this regard despite the efforts undertaken to strengthen European participatory democracy (citizen initiatives etc.) and political parties (by way of financing weak European political party foundations). Pro-European think tanks argue in favor of strengthening the European public sphere from below (in struggles), from above (by way of demands on the European institutions) and integration of civil society organizations. Debating platforms in turn mostly feature contributions reflecting the bottom-up perspective, which can be regarded as the reason for their existence. But neither the pro-European think tanks nor the pro-European debating platforms seem to pursue a common agenda with regard to what should actually be achieved in this area. No common demands on common European media and other dimensions of a less fragmented and temporary European public sphere is visible so far. It is not clear if there is potential to develop a common European civic and public sphere, even if there will be instances of devolution and (partial) disintegration. Even if the UK is leaving the EU, there continues to be a strong need to overcome national barriers of communication of the people if corporations, trade regimes and monetary orders exert power across borders in a systematic and sustained way. It seems prudent to combine the conceptual discussions in this area: complementary notions of a transnational public sphere should be organized “from above” (PDU), “from below” (European Alternatives) and by way of better integration of NGOs (EuropaNova). These organizations share a common understanding that a European public sphere is complementary to European democratic development, and must not be limited largely to elites and experts. Much more effort in any case has to go into the building of lasting independent forces and permanent communication across borders if we are to observe a continuous and defragmented European public sphere.

In general, it appears that both the conceptual efforts of the pro-European think tanks and the contributions to the pro-European debating platforms lack clarity with regard to the character of the main social struggles and challenges of the present time: Who are the forces that drive Europe apart and how can they be countered? What are the key projects in the areas of European citizenship, transnational democracy, public sphere and a different economy dedicated to advance public interests that citizens can rally around? There is no lack of goodwill in the quarter of pro-European think tanks, their constituents and contributors. But a lot of work remains to be done to sharpen the debate and provide more focus for the broader public. Most conceptual efforts for a different and closer European Union appear to come from the left; European Alternatives in the case of the sample we studied. Perhaps it is not unimportant that this group is less integrated with the mainstream institutions, but perhaps it is also not unimportant that the left-wing pro-European forces display a strong lack of integration with progressive forces in economy and society. Certain ambivalence in the fight for Europe and against neoliberalism and austerity can be easily detected; it is a necessary fight, but it cannot be fought without closer approximation of pro-European forces with regard to a common project.

While the center-left pro-European forces might be united with regard to a common social model, the center-right pro-European forces are united with

regard to the foreign policy dimension; each European member state alone is weak in comparison and in relation to major world powers. While the documents we studied to obtain contrast from more official future perspectives of EU institutions were weak with regard to expanded European citizenship, transnational democracy and the European public sphere, let alone the concept of a European public interest economy, they are very vocal about the expanded foreign policy role of what remains of the EU. The relative weakness of each European nation state (including Germany!) is reason enough to temper inclinations to disintegrate. But foreign policy strength must be grounded in domestic realities, as we can now see very clearly in the British case. If Europe fails to turn left in an effort to increase social cohesion and solidarity across the border, it is likely that not much will be left of Europe in today's hyper-competitive global economy.

5 Annex

5.1 Tables

Table 24: Articles on expanded European citizenship (universal and inviolable citizenship/resident rights)

Think tank	Publication	Year
EuropaNova	A Europe that dares, in the interests of the Europeans. 60 practical proposals to build a European Power	2010
EuropaNova	L'Europe c'est nous! Synthèse des seconds états généraux de l'Europe	2008
European Alternatives	20. June - Join the World Refugee Day	2015
European Alternatives	Citizens' Manifesto for European democracy, solidarity and equality	2014
European Alternatives	Citizens' consultation on LGBT rights in Europe: findings for the Citizens' Manifesto	2013
European Alternatives	Citizens' consultation on work, welfare and precarity in Europe: findings for the Citizens Manifesto	2013
European Alternatives	Common asylum policy in the EU	2011

Source: Own compilation

Table 25: Articles on transnational democracy/institutional primacy of Europe

Think tank	Publication	Year
DIKTIO - Network for Reform in Greece and Europe	After the Greek deal: three dangers and three opportunities - why it is urgent to complete EMU	2015
DIKTIO - Network for Reform in Greece and Europe	The evolution of the EMU and the balance with countries outside the Eurozone.	2015
European Alternatives	A tennis court oath for Europe	2015
European Alternatives	Towards a transnational democracy for Europe	2013
European Alternatives	Euro crisis calls for a new politics fit for the age	2011
European Alternatives	Legality and struggle against organized crime:	2011
Project for a Democratic Union	It's all or nothing: how to make the EU more democratic, transparent and efficient	2015
Project for a Democratic Union	Centralization and democratization can go hand in hand!	2013
Project for a Democratic Union	Democracy in Europe - its origins and its future	2013

Project for a Democratic Union	Statement of principles	UNK
Project for a Democratic Union	The 1st principle: a more democratic and more powerful Europe	UNK

Source: Own compilation

Table 26: Articles on European public service economy/economic democracy

Think tank	Publication	Year
DIKTIO - Network for Reform in Greece and Europe	After the Greek deal: three dangers and three opportunities - why it is urgent to complete EMU	2015
EuropaNova	Un pacte européen pour le prochain président de la République	2012
EuropaNova	Pour une gouvernance économique européenne au service de la croissance	2011
European Alternatives	Citizens' Manifesto for European democracy, solidarity and equality	2014
European Alternatives	Euro crisis calls for a new politics fit for the age	2011
European Alternatives	Labor and social Europe	2011
European Alternatives	Legality and struggle against organised crime	2011
European Alternatives	Manifesto of the appalled economists	2010
European Alternatives	The state of the media in Italy: a European problem	UNK
EuropaNova	Le nouvel impératif industriel	2012
Project for a Democratic Union	The 10th principle: the Union should be committed to sustainable growth - project for democratic union (PDU)	2015

Source: Own compilation

Table 27: Articles on transnational civic/public sphere

Think tank	Publication	Year
EuropaNova	L'Europe c'est nous! Synthèse des seconds états généraux de l'Europe	2008
EuropaNova	Peut-on encore faire l'Europe sans les Européens? Recommandations de la société civile au Conseil européen	2006
European Alternatives	When in Rome -- transnational dialogues 2014	2014
European Alternatives	Migrants rights: open access for civil society and journalists to detention centres for migrants	2011
European Alternatives	The state of the media in Italy: a European problem	UNK
Project for a Democratic Union	The need for a European public sphere	2013
Project for a Democratic Union	Statement of principles	UNK
Project for a Democratic Union	The 13th principle: the importance of a European public sphere	UNK

Source: Own compilation

Table 28: Articles on Europe as central power in global political economy

Think tank	Publication	Year
Project for a Democratic Union	Statement of principles	2015

Source: Own compilation

Table 29: Articles on transnational democracy in Europe by debating platforms

Think tank	Publication	Year
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	Machiavelli in China, or, European democracy and the return of conflict	2016
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	The sunset of sovereign powers over the European Union	2015
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	Active solidarity with Greece as a condition for democracy in Europe	2015
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	A United States of Europe	2014
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	The cracks in Europe	2014
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	In elections we trust	2014
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	Social movements in neoliberal Europe	2014
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	The European Constituent Assembly. Episode 3	2014

Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	The European Constituent Assembly. Episode 2	2014
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	The European Constituent Assembly	2014
FutureLab Europe	FutureLab Europe's Manifesto 2016 - Reviving democracy for a citizens-led Europe	2016
FutureLab Europe	Manifesto: choose European democracy, abandon the politics of numbers!	2015
OneEurope	The Nation State	2015
OneEurope	Connect with the Commission via the European Citizens' Initiative	2014
OneEurope	Shaping Europe from the bottom up	2014
OneEurope	A federal Europe - but what kind?	2013
OneEurope	Busting the democratic deficit	2013
OneEurope	Integration, austerity and democracy	2013
OneEurope	National politicians versus European ones	2013
OneEurope	The crisis of representative democracy in the EU - The European year of citizens	2013
OneEurope	Bazaar "L'Europe"!!	2012
OneEurope	European identity: taxation with representation	2012
OneEurope	Participatory democracy in the European Union: the European Citizens' Initiative	2012
OneEurope	Report on the future of Europe: federalism and democracy	2012
OneEurope	European complexity affects democracy	2012
Political Critique	Equality, freedom, and fraternity for all	2015
Political Critique	What after Brexit? Let us learn from the populists while fighting them	2016
Political Critique	Marsili: remain to change is DiEM's message [interview]	2016
Political Critique	Time to dream big dreams about the Central-European Federation	2016
Political Critique	Horvat: there is no messiah	2016
Political Critique	Announcing DiEM 25 – the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025	2016
Political Critique	TalkReal webshow: Varoufakis, Matias, Sierakowski, Orazzini, Marsili	2016
Political Critique	A manifesto for democratising Europe	2016
Political Critique	Stokfiszewski: the demand for democratization is a reaction to the EU's original sin [interview]	2016
Political Critique	Can you eat dDemocracy?	2016
Political Critique	Brexit threatens Europe's mission	2016
Political Critique	Feinberg: an austere place of refuge	2016
Political Critique	A message from Prague [Open letter to Yanis Varoufakis]	2016
Publixphere	Der Brexit als Chance für Europa?	2016

Publixphere	Europa: Eine neue Version ist verfügbar	2016
Publixphere	#eu2020: Workshop "Europäische Republik"	2015
Publixphere	Europe: a new version is available	2015
Publixphere	Bullmann (SPD): Troika - Bürokratenherrschaft ohne Verantwortung	2014

Source: Own compilation

Table 30: Articles on varied perspectives on transnational civic/public sphere

Think tank	Publication	Year
Eutopia (ideas for Europe magazine)	Can the bottom-up actions of citizens regenerate democracy in Europe?	2014
FutureLab Europe	FutureLab Europe's fifth generation will investigate active citizenship for their spring publication	2015
FutureLab Europe	Self-organized European Citizens' Initiative against TTIP. Has the EU heard its citizens' voices?	2015
FutureLab Europe	Bringing Europe to schools? Still a worthy cause!	2014
FutureLab Europe	Europe@debate: new social and digital Media in the European Public sphere	2014
OneEurope	To polder or not to polder? That's the question	2015
OneEurope	Building European civil society - New tools and social media platforms	2014
OneEurope	Inventing Traditions for Europe – Part Two	2014
OneEurope	Shaping Europe from the bottom up	2014
OneEurope	The European identity – idealism, implementation and information	2014
OneEurope	The crisis of representative democracy in the EU - The European year of citizens	2013
OneEurope	Europe and the old nationalisms - Part 3	2013
OneEurope	The EU year of the citizens: what does it mean for the citizens?	2013
OneEurope	Europe's first citizens' initiative to start collecting signatures in August	2012
OneEurope	Keeping the Brussels bubble closed	2012
OneEurope	Participatory democracy in the European Union: the European Citizens' Initiative	2012
Publixphere	Activate Europe - Online only?	2015

Source: Own compilation

5.2 Description of debating platforms

European Democracy Lab

The European Democracy Lab was founded by Ulrike Guérot in 2014, together with Victoria Kupsch, in order to shift the debate from a “more/less-European integration” paradigm in European debates to consideration a different Europe. The core project of the EDL in the beginning was entitled “National Parliaments and European Democracy”, looking at the so-called democratic deficit and the flawed input legitimacy of the EU. EDL challenged national deputies on European democracy and asked how they see their influence on European decision making as well as their relationship towards the EP. The goal was to make a comparative study on whether national deputies of different EU countries think similarly – or differently – about how European democracy should look and function (project achievement and final report are targeted for the end of 2016). In addition, the EDL, through an interactive, multilingual website (<http://www.european-republic.eu/>) as well as intensive media work and a variety of publications, tried to sketch out a completely new political and institutional narrative and design for Europe under the notion of “Europe as Republic”. This has struck a chord and has become a sounding board in recent months, arguably shaping the European debate in Germany to some extent. Initial funding of \$200,000 for two years (2014–2016) had been provided through grant by the Open Society Foundation.

European Way

European Way is the youngest of all European networks or think tanks that were observed in this study. Founded in 2016 – in the midst of the research – European way is considered too new to have been fully integrated into this analyses and has, other than on its website, not yet published studies, papers or other written material. It operates primarily as a network and has obtained funding of €10,000 by the German Hans Böckler Foundation to pursue further institutionalization. Its young members and activists come mainly from a trade unionist background, or have a stipend from either the Böckler or Ebert foundation. Their thinking is channeled into a politicized European project, with a strong focus and emphasis on the role of trade unions, wages, and workers’ rights (“Mitbestimmung”) in a transnational European economy, within Eurozone governance. European Way has been inspired by the European Democracy Lab and the idea of Europe as a republic, with a mission statement that focuses on the realization of Europe as a Republic. This shows the conceptual linkages between this new generation of European think tanks, which in itself is interesting in terms of cluster theories, system theories of “creative innovation” and network analysis.

Eurobubble Berlin

Eurobubble Berlin is a new Facebook Group with a collection of people who “feel European” in Berlin. Eurobubble is not institutionalized, has no funding, and does not pursue activities (workshops, seminars or publications) nor does it have strategic goals. But it is another indication that suggests that young people are uniting, forming or gathering in whatever way through a European format.

OneEurope

The following distribution of activities characterizes the work of this think tank.

Thematic field	Number of Publications
Governance/Institutions/Composition	313
Culture/Society	234
Economics	106
Social/Education/Health	85
Countries/EU International	73
General	43
Defence/Security	29
Ecology/Environmentalism	9

Source: Own compilation

OneEurope thus has been most active on topics related to European institutions, democracy and governance followed by cultural issues, economics, social and foreign policy issues.

5.3 Literature*

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* Documents published by think tanks and online debating platforms are not included in the following list of literature. Sources by think tanks can be found in annex 5.1 (table 24-28). Articles by debating platforms are listed in annex 5.1 (table 29-30), except for articles on expanded European Citizenship which can be found in chapter 3.1 (table 20).

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5.4 List of interviews

Interview One:

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Interview Two:

BÜLLESBACH, Daphne (European Alternatives); interviewed on July 28th 2016

Interview Three:

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Discussion Papers of the Research Area Education, Work, and Life Chances
2014-2016

Research Unit **Inequality and Social Policy**

Anja Hirsch, Moritz Neujeffski, Dieter Plehwe **SP I 2016-201**

Unternehmensnahe Stiftungen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Gemeinwohl
und Partikularinteressen. Eine Exploration im Bereich Wissenschaft

Sujoy Dutta **SP I 2015-201**

An Uneven Path to Accountability: A Comparative Study of MGNREGA in
Two States of India

Research Unit **Skill Formation and Labor Markets**

Heike Solga **SP I 2015-501**

“A Fault Confessed is Half Redressed”

Review Essay on Low-achieving School Leavers’ Access to Apprenticeships
and their Returns to Participation in Prevocational Training Measures

Jan Paul Heisig, Heike Solga **SP I 2014-503**

Skills Inequalities in 21 Countries
PIAAC Results for Prime-age Adults

Heike Solga, Paula Protsch, Christian Ebner, Christian Brzinsky-Fay **SP I 2014-502**

The German Vocational Education and Training System: Its Institutional
Configuration, Strengths, and Challenges

Jonna M. Blanck **SP I 2014-501**

Organisationsformen schulischer Integration und Inklusion
Eine vergleichende Betrachtung der 16 Bundesländer

Project Group **National Educational Panel Study:
Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning**

Annika Grieb, Cornelia Gresch, Reinhard Pollak **SP I 2014-504**

Ehemalige Schülerinnen und Schüler von Förderschulen und Menschen
mit Beeinträchtigung auf dem Arbeitsmarkt
Erste Auswertungen und Analysepotenziale der Erwachsenenkohorte des
Nationalen Bildungspanels

All discussion papers are downloadable:

<http://www.wzb.eu/en/publications/discussion-papers/education-and-work>