

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

5.3 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).

