



Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

**Anti-Austerity Movements in the European Union.
Analysis of the Influence of Anti-Austerity Movements
on Political Discourse in the European Parliament**

Núria Suero Comellas

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Anti-Austerity Movements in the European Union

Analysis of the Influence of Anti-Austerity Movements on Political Discourse in the European Parliament

Núria Suero Comellas

PhD Thesis

Supervisor: Rafael Grasa Hernández

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

PhD in Politics, Policies and International Relations
Department of Public Law and Legal History Studies
Department of Political Science and Public Law
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*A les dones de la meva família,
a les espatlles de les quals he pogut créixer.*

Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of anti-austerity movements in the European institutions, analysing the case of the European Parliament. It focuses on the ideas of democracy espoused by the movements, based on a deliberative conception of democracy. The research builds on a qualitative analysis approach and uses frame analysis in order to observe to what extent the movements' ideas have had an impact on the European Parliament. Moreover, contextual elements are also taken into account, using a political and discursive opportunities approach. The thesis draws on the State of the Union debates from 2010 to 2017, seven debates on the Greek debt crisis from 2010 to 2015, and personal interviews with MEPs. Previous research on anti-austerity movements and documentary evidence from the movements have also been used. The debates in the European Parliament have been analysed using the austerity and democracy frames from the movements. In addition, interviews have been conducted to assess MEPs' conception of democracy and opinions about anti-austerity movements and their influence.

The findings show that even though the impacts in the EP have been limited, left-wing MEPs have replicated some ideas from the movements. Therefore, allies are found to be important in securing outcomes with the use of shared frames from the movements. Moreover, ideology has been detected as decisive in the movement's outcomes in that institution. Hence, the findings confirm that as previous research has shown, the EU is also a suitable arena for protest actions. In turn, the thesis raises more questions about the outcomes of the conception of deliberative democracy practiced by anti-austerity movements and their pressure for widening and deepening democracy in the long term. Eventually, a comparison between EU countries on the impact of the anti-austerity movements would further contribute to better define the influence of the movements in the EU. Future research should also analyze the influence of anti-austerity movements in other European and international institutions. Lastly, other aspects related to the changing global technological context and their relation to transformations in politics should be examined.

Resum

Aquesta tesi explora la influència dels moviments contra l'austeritat a les institucions europees, a través de l'anàlisi del cas del Parlament Europeu. Es focalitza en les idees de democràcia dels moviments que estaven basades en una concepció deliberativa de democràcia. La recerca es basa en una anàlisi qualitativa i utilitza l'anàlisi de marcs per tal d'observar fins a quin punt les idees dels moviments han tingut un impacte en el Parlament Europeu. D'altra banda, s'han tingut en compte elements contextuals seguint una aproximació d'estructures d'oportunitats polítiques i discursives. La present tesi utilitza els debats sobre l'Estat de la Unió des del 2010 fins al 2017, set debats sobre la crisi grega del deute des del 2010 fins al 2015, i entrevistes personals a eurodiputats. També s'ha utilitzat la recerca prèvia sobre moviments contra l'austeritat i evidència documental dels moviments. Els debats al Parlament Europeu s'han analitzat utilitzant els marcs d'austeritat i democràcia dels moviments. Addicionalment, les entrevistes s'han dut a terme per avaluar la concepció de democràcia dels eurodiputats i la seva opinió sobre els moviments contra l'austeritat i la seva influència.

Els resultats indiquen que tot i que els impactes en el Parlament Europeu han sigut limitats, els eurodiputats d'esquerres han replicat algunes idees dels moviments. Per tant, es confirma que els aliats són importants per assegurar impactes amb l'ús dels marcs compartits dels moviments. A més a més, s'ha detectat que la ideologia és decisiva en les conseqüències dels moviments en aquesta institució. Per tant, els resultats confirmen que tal com la recerca prèvia ha demostrat, la Unió Europea també és una àrea adequada per a accions de protesta. Aquesta tesi alhora obre més preguntes sobre les conseqüències de la concepció de democràcia deliberativa practicada pels moviments contra l'austeritat i la seva pressió per eixamplar i aprofundir la democràcia a llarg termini. D'altra banda, una comparació entre els països de la Unió Europea sobre l'impacte dels moviments contra l'austeritat contribuiria a una millor definició de la influència dels moviments a la Unió Europea. Futures investigacions també haurien d'analitzar la influència dels moviments en altres institucions europees i internacionals. Finalment, altres aspectes relacionats amb el canviant context tecnològic global i la seva relació amb les transformacions en la política haurien de ser examinats.

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Introduction

The thesis examines the influence of anti-austerity movements in the European Parliament. These movements are a part of the cycle of protest that started during the unfolding of the economic crisis of the Great Recession from 2008 onwards. The protest began in Iceland, then spread to the North of Africa with the events known as the Arab spring, then to Europe, to the United States of America with the Occupy protest, and still to Turkey, Bulgaria, Brazil and Bosnia. Mobilization flourished in many countries tied to their national context but with shared features regarding their claims and practices. The movements in this cycle of protest shared their discontent with existing democracy and they re-imagined and practiced with new forms of democracy in its deliberative conception.

Anti-austerity movements did not have a specific programme or demands and they did not ask any institution (local, national or European) for definite changes. Their claims were very broad. They were calling for real democracy, to end inequality and for justice. The anti-austerity movements that sprung up worldwide sought to transform society, to change existing values, and to organize societies in a completely different way. They started a global dialogue that caught people's attention everywhere, and become impossible to ignore. For that reason, even though they did not refer to institutions, they played a role and became a visible actor during the Great Recession. This thesis explores to what extent and in which aspects these movements have had an impact in the European Parliament. The thesis aims to trace the outcomes of anti-austerity movements in the transnational arena of the EU, focusing on the EP.

Research questions and hypothesis

The research will address the following question: How have anti-austerity movements influenced political discourse in the European Parliament? How have the movements' ideas of democracy (deliberative democracy) influenced political discourse in the European Parliament?

The research is based on several hypotheses that are used to create a guide to demonstrate its plausibility or not at the end of the thesis, in the conclusion chapter. The hypotheses are the following:

- 1) There is an (apparent) indifference towards anti-austerity movements in the EP but the movements have achieved a certain degree of influence at the level of discourse.
- 2) Left-wing MEPs are more receptive towards the movements and have been more influenced by them.
- 3) Left-wing MEPs from EU countries that have been more affected by anti-austerity policies and where the anti-austerity movements have been stronger and more present are more receptive towards the movements and have been more influenced by them. These countries are: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Ireland. Conversely, left-wing MEPs from countries that are less affected and with weaker movements may have been slightly less influenced by the movements.
- 4) Right-wing MEPs are less receptive towards the movements and less influenced by them.
- 5) Right-wing MEPs from countries that have not been affected (or less affected) by austerity policies and do not have strong anti-austerity movements are not receptive towards the movements and are not influenced by them. Two examples of this case are Germany and Belgium. Conversely, right-wing MEPs from countries that are more affected by austerity policies and have strong anti-austerity movements may have been slightly more affected by the movements.

The table below summarizes the hypothesis of this thesis taking into account the different elements of the research.

Influence of anti-austerity movements on MEPs

	Strong anti-austerity movements	Weak anti-austerity movements	Countries affected by austerity policies	Countries not/less affected by austerity policies
Left-wing MEPs	✓	-	✓	-
Right-wing MEPs	-	X	-	X

According to the initial expectations and the research hypothesis mentioned above, the strongest impacts of the anti-austerity movements will be on left-wing MEPs who come from countries that have had stronger anti-austerity movements and that have been more affected by austerity policies. Left-wing MEPs from countries with weaker movements and that are less affected by austerity are expected to have been influenced, but not at the same level.

On the other hand, the least impact is expected to be found on right-wing MEPs from countries with weak movements and that are less affected by austerity policies. Right-wing MEPs from countries with strong movements and that are more affected by austerity are expected to have felt less of an impact, but may have been affected by the context.

Origin and goals of the research

This research started with a personal interest in the interaction between civil society and international institutions. The events of 2011 in Spain, with the upheaval of the 15M movement in the context of the Great Recession, opened many questions in an environment of deep transformations at the European and international level. Thus, political events met with research interests and personal motivations that led to the start of the PhD and this thesis. During this process, I have participated in seminars like the CIS summer seminar at Real Colegio Complutense in Harvard University in August 2016 where I presented a paper that included some aspects that then were further developed in this thesis. I have also participated in the World Society Foundation conference *Democracy in the 21st Century: Challenges and Ways Forward* during summer 2018 and the IAPSS World Congress in Berlin in 2016, also presenting a paper

on the features of anti-austerity movements. Moreover, my visiting period in the Centre on Social Movement Studies at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence from January to June 2017, offered me the possibility to interact with social movements' scholars that made an outstanding contribution to my research.

The goal of this thesis is to analyse the impact of the idea of democracy expressed by anti-austerity movements on political discourse in the European Parliament. This research expects to contribute in terms of empirical knowledge, by analysing aspects of transnational politics that have been understudied. The thesis aims to contribute to shedding light on civil society actors that operate beyond the nation-state and to explain movement outcomes in the arena of the EU. The thesis seeks to examine the influence of social movements on European institutions that are sometimes very subtle or non-linear (in the sense that there are no clear causes and effects). This research aims to capture the complexity of these indirect processes that lead to an international impact; it expects to contribute to the understanding of how the interaction between social movements and the European institutions work. In addition, social movements play a role in international politics that may bring shifts in that realm. The thesis expects to shed light onto that aspect as well. More specifically, this research aims to explain which aspects have been influenced by the movements, which actors have been influenced by the movements and to what extent.

The thesis also aims to understand the processes of democratization from below. The anti-austerity movements with their ideas and practices of democracy pushed for deepening transparency and accountability in existing democracies. The widespread discontent with democracy expressed by the movements connects with the long debate on the democratic deficit in the EU and deeply transforms it. Moreover, distrust towards the European project increased during the economic and financial crisis of the Great Recession. The thesis seeks to explain to what extent the claims and practices from the movements had an impact in the EP. Understanding these impacts may shed light on the changes in the democratic European project.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the study of social movements within international relations theory, a field that has traditionally neglected these actors. The thesis draws on both disciplines and uses the tools employed by social movement studies. The interest

of this research is based on three main aspects. First, the consequence of social movements has been an understudied issue, although since the turn of the millennium it has increasingly gained scholarly attention with research developing on this aspect of contentious politics at quite a fast pace. Second, social movement studies is anchored at a nation state level. It focuses on national political opportunity structures, relationships with national political parties, etc, but much less on an EU and/or at an international level. And finally, the research has social relevance since the European project is currently contested and the problem of democratic deficit or the democratic functioning of the EU is one of the core elements of the economic and financial crisis of 2007-2008 that propelled mobilizations all over Europe and beyond. The research expects to shed light on the gap between citizens' expectations of the EU institutions and EU performance and understand the state of European democracy and governance.

In general terms, there has not been a clear reaction from European institutions to the claims made in the 2011 uprisings. European policies have not been redefined and no significant changes have been made although citizen support for the European Union has declined since the beginning of the economic crisis. This situation has deepened the long-lasting perception of democratic deficit in the EU. Nevertheless, we can observe some reactions at the national level in some EU countries, especially those that have witnessed stronger anti-austerity movements and have been more affected by austerity policies. In Spain, for example, new parties have emerged after the protests that have adopted the movement's ideas and discourses. These political changes have triggered questioning about how politicians should be, what politics means and how it should be transformed to be more responsive to citizens' needs. These changes can bring about transformations in the EU which may be inspired by the new environment created by the movements.

The European Parliament is selected for study because it is the only directly elected European Union body. It is often referred to as the "voice of the people" or the guardian of democracy, and it should guarantee the democratic legitimacy of the EU and supervise the EU institutions. For these reasons, it should be more sensitive to changes in the European citizen's perception of democracy. The European Parliament is also the European institution where debate and discourse should be richer and more diverse and, accordingly, where changes on discourse can be better assessed. Moreover, the

European Parliament is a European institution where debates are public and accessible. Thus, for practical reasons of transparency and accessibility the EP can be better assessed than other EU institutions.

The thesis builds on a qualitative analysis approach, uses frame analysis and the political and discursive opportunities model. Details about data, sources and methods can be found in chapter four that exposes the methodological framework for the analysis of the movements' influence in the EP. Moreover, as will be explained in the conclusions chapter, even though there is an apparent indifference the research finds a certain degree of influence from the movements to the MEPs. The impact is dependent on ideology (whether they are left or right-wing) and less dependent on the MEPs' country of origin. The results point out to the EU as an area of protests and to the importance of processes of democratization from below.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first part sets out the contextual and conceptual framework. Chapter one specifies the approaches in the literature of transnational collective action and differentiates the various categories of transnational actors. Chapter two focuses on the context of the European Union and the Europeanization of social movements, as well as the global transformations taking place at different levels (economy, state, democracy, etc.). Chapter three reviews the literature on anti-austerity movements, examining its main features and characteristics, the conception of deliberative democracy that was a feature of these movements and gives a brief review of the outcomes of social movements. The first part finishes with chapter four that discusses the methodological framework for the case study. The chapter exposes the data, sources and methods for the assessment of the influence of anti-austerity movements in the EP. The chapter contains an explanation of frame analysis methodology also taking into account political and discursive opportunities.

The second part of the thesis analyses the influence of anti-austerity movements in the EP. Chapter five includes the State of the Union debates from 2010 to 2017, differentiating democracy and austerity frames in each debate and separately for left-wing and right-wing MEPs. Chapter six examines the positions in the debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP, starting with the Presidents of the EC, Council and ECB and

then observing the democracy and austerity frames, differentiating left-wing and right-wing MEPs, as in the previous chapter. Lastly, the discourses from the Greek Prime Ministers Samaras and Tsipras are examined. Chapter seven analyses to what extent the ideas of the movements have influenced MEPs, by asking them directly with personal interviews. Again, the answers have been organized by left- and right-wing MEPs. Finally, chapter eight includes the conclusions of the research, signaling the implications of the results, their limitations and future lines of research. Six annexes are also included in this thesis: annexes 1 to 4 contain references from the debates from the empirical chapters, and annex 5 contains the list of interviews conducted with MEPs, with information about the dates that the interview was done, the political party and political group and the country of origin. Finally, annex six is the list of abbreviations.

**PART I. CONTEXTUAL AND CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK**

Chapter 1. Context and literature on collective action

1.1 Approaches to the literature on transnational collective action

Social movements have always occupied an uncomfortable position within international relations theory. Dominant perspectives in the discipline have had limited consideration for social movements. These actors have been underestimated and seen as a symptom of underlying structural transformations (such as democratization or globalization) or have been regarded as a consequence of geopolitical or intra-state conflict (such as economic crisis, terrorism, ethnic conflicts, etc.). As a consequence of this neglect, this discipline offers little explanations for the understanding of social movements contrary to other disciplines such as international sociology or world history that consider social movements as fundamental drivers triggering world political change (Davies and Peña, 2019: 2).

The main schools of international relations have had difficulties in engaging with social movements and its dualistic nature as collective actors and as social process. The hierarchical understanding of the relation between international politics and society lead to the discrimination of social movements as drivers of structural and institutional change in the international system. Social movements were seen as local social processes and actors or as low politics vs high politics (international politics) (Davies and Peña, 2019: 3).

International relations literature has historically focused on states as the main actors of the international system. International relations theory has been dominated by three main approaches: neorealism, constructivism and liberal institutionalism. The realist approach has been a dominant paradigm in international relations and has mainly been state-centric, focusing on the study of military power. According to realist scholars “regimes are created by powerful states protecting their national interests. In the realist view, states cooperate within the new regime only to the extent that they improve, or at least maintain, their relative position to other states. Realists assert that cooperation occurs only at the wish of strong states. Furthermore, they argue that changes in the underlying relative power capabilities result in regime change” (Alcalde, 2009:16). Thus, in the realist approach, transnational collective action does not play a significant

role in the transformation of international regimes or producing change in the international system. According to this paradigm, international organizations are merely instruments of governments and unimportant in their own right (Tarrow, 2001: 3).

Davies and Peña explain that realism has been accused of dismissal of social movements from international relations with its state-centric approach. However, a number of realist authors have paid attention to the consequences of social movements in world politics. Nevertheless, rationalist approaches dominating the field in the Cold War era focused in the state in their explanations about the functioning of the international system and paid no attention to other non-state actors like social movements (Davies and Peña, 2019: 4).

According to Tarrow, insights from the different approaches in International Relations can be useful for the study of transnational activism. As he points out, “like neorealists, I regard states as the enduringly major players in international politics, and the international system built on asymmetrical power relations among them. Like constructivists, I am interested how states’ norms and identities affect their international behavior and how global – or at least transnational – norms are shaping international and domestic behavior. And like liberal institutionalists, I believe that states create international practices, regimes, and institutions to solve their collective action problems and monitor each others’ behavior. But once formed, new norms, identities, and interests develop around these venues, attracting the attention of groups of states, nonstate actors, and other international actors. The creation of a distinct level of internationalism creates a triangular opportunity space in which nonstate actors can become active, form coalitions, and refract their activities back on their own societies” (Tarrow, 2005: 20).

Further developments in international relations theory come from the transnational school. The work of Keohane and Nye and their collaborators drew attention to transnational relations and stressed the importance of the role of non-governmental actors in international politics. To fully understand, explain and account the processes in the global arena, all actors are taken into account. Keohane and Nye’s work acknowledged the prevailing state-centric view of world affairs but signalled that states were not the only actors in world politics. The authors pointed out that “nonstate entities

are able on occasion to affect the course of international events. When this happens, these entities become actors in the international arena and competitors of the nation-state” (Keohane and Nye, 1971: 330). However, Keohane and Nye considered that the impact of these phenomena on world politics had been ignored until that moment.

Keohane and Nye’s contribution did not deny the place of governments as the most important players producing changes in world politics, even though transnational organizations were growing in numbers and influence. But according to the authors, “sophisticated proponents of the state-centric view have observed transnational interactions, and they have certainly not been blind to the fact that actors other than states exist. Yet, they have deliberately excluded transnational relations from the interstate system on the grounds that their direct political importance is small and that their indirect effects enter, along with domestic factors, into the formation of national foreign policies. Although this conclusion has partially relied on a definition of politics merely in terms of state behavior, it does contain a solid core of insight. States have been and remain the most important actors in world affairs, acting both directly and through intergovernmental organizations to which states, and only states, belong” (Keohane and Nye, 1971: 343). For these reasons, Keohane and Nye considered the state-centric paradigm as inadequate for analyzing world politics at that time and even more inadequate in the future, as changes in transnational relations were clearly leaving the state in a weak position. Furthermore, Keohane and Nye encouraged the study of transnational relations not only to improve the understanding of reality but also to help change reality by increasing the general welfare (Keohane and Nye, 1971: 349).

Keohane and Nye moved beyond transnational relations in their second book with the introduction of what they called “complex interdependence”. They introduced a more pluralistic model that appeared better fit to explain the post-Cold War world than the realist model. Keohane and Nye signalled realist’s paradigm limitations “when multiple channels connect societies; when there is no clear or consistent hierarchy of issues that relate states to one another; and when “military force is not used by governments towards other governments within the region in which it obtains” (Tarrow, 2005: 21). Keohane and Nye’s work paved the way for more pluralistic approaches like international political economy and constructivism.

The international political economy tradition introduced the study of domestic actors, mainly the institutionalized domestic groups of labour and business. In this tradition, domestic actors exposed to the international economy defend their interests with their national institutions. In this field the focus was mainly on transnational economic relations and especially on the multinational corporations. This had a narrowing effect on research of transnational relations that looked at contentious politics as the resistance to transnational economic penetration and studied states' internal politics mainly through foreign economic policy-making. The focus on political economy ignored the transnational organizing that deals with political and humanitarian issues (refugees, violence against women and children, or human rights) (Tarrow, 2001: 4). Moreover, there was no integration between the field of transnational politics and the growing field of contentious politics until the 1990s, and some IR specialists, despite their interest in "global social movements" barely draw on this literature (Tarrow, 2001: 5). It was constructivism, another approach in international relations, which paid attention to non-state actors in the international arena (Tarrow, 2005:21).

Constructivists focused on how international events shape identities and how these identities cross state lines. They built on the insights of Deutsch and Haas and used as examples the North Atlantic area or the European Union to examine interstate interests and identify norms. Constructivists focused on the role of non-state actors in transnational politics returning to the terrain of transnational relations analysed by Keohane and Nye but with a richer conception of transnational advocacy. They defined vertical and horizontal activism, directed towards international institutions and across borders (Tarrow, 2005: 22).

Thus, dominant theoretical perspectives on international relations had left limited scope for social movements. As Davies and Peña explain "the most explicit acknowledgment of civil society's role – and indirectly, of SM – proceeded from alternative liberal and constructivist perspectives, on the one hand, and from the critical, Marxist and feminist IR literatures, on the other" (Davies and Peña, 2019: 4). Moreover, some authors from the international relations field entered into conversation with authors from social movement studies in an attempt to explain normative transformation in the period after the Cold War. At the same time, "neo-Marxist, critical, and feminist IR authors, on the other hand, have stressed the emancipatory potential of SM as transnational forces

counterbalancing the technocratic, economic, patriarchal and hegemonic character of neo-liberal globalization and the classist and gendered orientation of world political institutions” (Davies and Peña, 2019: 5).

The liberal and constructivist mainly focused on collaborations between the state, IGOs, NGOs and international norms whereas this other body of literature emphasized activities and discourses coming from grassroots movements in the periphery of the international order (such as movements from the global South, global justice struggles, etc.). Both literatures views movements as having a normative function in international politics “where civil society mobilization contributes either to promoting universal values and democratizing international institutions, or to generating emancipatory alternatives to the pathologies of modern society. Thus, while liberal and constructivist perspectives illuminate the way in which non-state actors associate with and influence the agendas of international organizations and states, critical scholars have explored symbolic aspects of social movement action, and the challenge they present to embedded ideologies and norms” (Davies and Peña, 2019: 6).

During the 2010s protest movements have appeared with a tendency to reject institutionalism and embrace illiberal political values. Some authors have stressed that “contemporary protest movements abandon the two basic ideals sustaining liberal and critical political projects – political reformism and revolution – as protesters may neither aspire to capture state power nor accept the gradualism of institutional politics, often rejecting democratic mechanisms as well as traditional issue-based movement identities” (Davies and Peña, 2019: 6). These contemporary social movements are characterized by a complex use of social media, the adoption of anti-establishment values and the establishment of synergies with what some authors label as “protest populism”, democratic destabilization processes, and ethno-nationalist conflict (Davies and Peña, 2019: 6).

Recent literature has focused on the limitations of NGOs or international activities from reactionary social movements, exposing the diverse roles that social movements can play at the international arena beyond promoting liberal norms and emancipatory struggles. However, international relations analysis has had a tendency to consider social movements as progressive actors. Liberal and constructivist literature has shown

a bias towards norms that function and critical literature has had a tendency to focus on principles of emancipatory politics. Thus, social movements in international relations discipline trends to fall under categories (global civil society, global public domain, globalization from below or global democracy) that overplay the potential of social movements to bring about change and minimize the possible negative developments (Davies and Peña, 2019: 6). This optimism when tackling social movements in the international arena involves the inability to capture the complex role that these actors play.

An important contribution in the discipline of international relations dealing with transnational relations was made by Risse-Kappen and his collaborators. They focused on transgovernmental politics including transnational economic relations and related transnational politics to international institutions. Thus, international relations scholars made the effort to deal with the intersections between transnational relations and domestic structure. Moreover, they advanced a more normative concept of transnational relations. Risse-Kappen observed the importance of non-state political variables and affirmed that “under similar international conditions [...] differences in domestic structures determine the variation in the policy impact of transnational actors [...]. In order to gain impact, transnational actors must, first, gain access to the political system of their target state and, second, generate and/or contribute to winning policy coalitions” (Tarrow, 2001: 6). Risse-Kappen and his collaborators’ approach developed predictions about how variations in domestic structure would alter or change the impact of transnational actors. According to their approach, decentralized and pluralistic political systems are more open to transnational penetration than closed and hierarchical societies.

Some weaknesses of Risse-Kappen’s argument were the use of generic elements (such as political culture or openness), the lack of predictability of success and failure of transnational actors in the same context, and the lack of a clear distinction between different types of transnational actors. Some answers to these problems were offered by the normative turn that focused on norms in the study of transnational activism. This was a constructivist turn by international relations scholars during the 1990s (Tarrow, 2001:7). According to these scholars, “if norms could be shown to have an autonomous role in structuring international debate irrespective of the policies of strong states, and if

it could be shown that interests are constituted and reconstituted around learning, norm diffusion, and identity shift, then nonstate factors in transnational space—not only hegemonic states—could be shown to have teeth” (Tarrow, 2001: 7). The focus on norms and identities in the international system produced a great amount of work. However, according to Tarrow, the “normative turn is better at mapping changes in world culture than in tracing the mechanisms through which transnational factors influence domestic politics” (Tarrow, 2001:8).

Constructivists drew on sociological institutionalism (with the work of John Meyer and his colleagues) to argue that “norms diffuse across state lines through institutional imitation [...]; they also applied constructivist thinking to nonstate actors, first in the form of epistemic communities of experts [...] and then in the form of advocacy groups acting in the name of ‘principled issues’”(Tarrow, 2005:22). Developments in the study of transnational politics coming from sociological institutionalism, transnational relations and the normative turn helped to build a common ground between the fields of international relations and contentious politics (Tarrow, 2001:8). Some events triggered the cross-fertilization between the two fields: grassroots insurgencies seeking international support (like in Chiapas), international protest events (like the protest against WTO in Seattle), the success of transnational activist coalitions (for example aiding the Brazilian rubber tappers), and the activism of INGOs directed at international institutions (Tarrow, 2001: 8). These events advanced the exchange between international relations specialists interested in transnational relations and social movement scholars studying transnational contention from the early 1990s on.

Some of these researchers studied the development of non-state actors organizing transnationally, others focused on movement families (peace movement, human rights, democratization, environment, etc.), others studied organizations, other scholars examined international treaties where non-state actors played a role, and finally some other scholars observed regional contention in the context of international agreements or institutions. These work on transnational politics overlapped significantly with the work on contentious politics. However, the two traditions used different terms and assumptions (such as the term globalization), the tendency to focus on good movements forgetting other type of transnational activism (such as militant fundamentalism), and the use of the category “social movement” to a wide range of activities, all these

producing confusion and misunderstandings (Tarrow, 2001: 9). The distinction between the different actors in the international space is described in the section below.

The three mentioned strands of International Relations theory (transnational relations, international political economy and constructivism) met to assign a place for non-state actors in the theory and blurred the distinction between domestic and international politics. However, the synthesis between transnational and constructivist strands had weaknesses in explaining the specificities of transnational collective action. As stated by Tarrow, these weaknesses could be overcome bringing the contributions of social movement theory in (Tarrow, 2005: 22).

During the 1970s social movement scholars rejected the “collective behaviour” approach that had dominated the field in the previous decades. According to this approach, social movements were considered abnormal politics and a product of irrational behaviour. After a decade marked by social movements, scholars focused on movements as a part of the political process, considering protest an act of normality and paying attention to its resources and opportunities. This determined the social movement paradigm. Research on contentious politics during these years focused on four concepts: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, collective action frames, and repertoires of contention. The political opportunity structure was central in the social movement paradigm and referred to dimensions of the political environment that encouraged or discourage participation in social movements. Political opportunity structures were “specified through a number of variables external to challengers’ own resources and claims: the opening up of institutional access, shifts in political alignments, the presence or absence of influential allies, and the prospect of repression or facilitation. Later work specified the effects of threats more distinctly from opportunities [...], and expanded the concept of opportunity structure to include ‘discursive opportunities’” (Tarrow, 2005, 23).

Developments in the field of social movement theory tried to overcome the limitations from the early social movement paradigm. Thus, the original tendency to study social movements at the domestic level was later overcome with the expansion of interest towards international forms of contention. In this process, the original focus on one

single actor (social movement) was broadened with the inclusion of NGOs and international organizations, activist networks, and transnational activism.

The role of NGOs on global politics is one important field of research in the literature on transnational collective action. Lipschutz (1992), Wapner (1995), Rustiala (1997), Princen and Finger (1994), or Smith (1997) have done empirical work on how NGOs have influenced negotiations, decision-making processes or elaboration of international agreements. Their findings have shown that NGOs have had an influence in international policies and a presence in transnational governance even though their weight and participation differs depending on the areas (Alcalde, 2009:14).

Wapner details how NGOs were originally ignored in international relations and international law due to their consideration as peripheral to world affairs by these state-centric disciplines. During the 1970s and 1980s NGOs grew in number, strength, budget and prominence in world affairs and that made them gain scholarly attention. Moreover, states opened to NGOs and the United Nations included them in its forums. As NGOs played a major role in world affairs there was a growth in the literature focusing on changes in the global system produced by NGOs. The capacity and international tasks of NGOs grew and that made them be considered by states and international agencies as partners in global governance. A phase of celebration of NGOs, when they assumed many of the state's tasks and were considered as a promise, gave way to growing criticism with scholars and practitioners questioning their legitimacy (as unaccountable and unelected actors), political efficacy and lack of democratic qualities (Mertus et al., 2003: 305).

Regarding activist networks, there is the important work by Keck and Sikkink. Their book *Activist Beyond Borders* exposes one of the most sophisticated analyses in the field of transnational collective action (Keck and Sikkink 1998). According to the authors “the success of transnational advocacy networks derives from the ‘boomerang effect’ of issue networking. Thus, international norms are advanced through national NGOs and international media networking with international NGOs, which exercise more effective persuasion within the former host country, at times inducing Western governments to take punitive action” (Alcalde, 2009: 18). The “boomerang” pattern of influence is characteristic of transnational networks that target with their activity a state

that has violated or refuses to recognize rights. Domestic groups and individuals cannot advance their claims at the national level and look for international connections and allies to pressure their state from outside. The boomerang strategy is politically sensitive and can be considered foreign interference to domestic affairs. However, international links are positive for both sides as networks provide access, leverage and information to sometimes weak domestic actors (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 93).

Other work from Sikkink and Risse exposed that “in some cases, international criticism set in motion a ‘spiral effect’ in which norm-violating states were induced to make democratic concessions from which they could not easily extricate themselves” (Alcalde, 2009: 19). Sikkink’s research highlighted the need to explain how advocacy networks contribute to building legal norms. She explained how networks first call attention to issues; second, they provide information to be available for public debate and persuade for the need to create new norms; and third, networks help drafting legal rules. Once the rules are created, advocacy networks ensure the compliance with the norms (Mertus et al., 2003: 302). Sikkink also stressed the importance of the interaction of national and international context in explaining the differences in the relationship between social movements and international institutions. Activists in repressive political contexts or very democratic contexts face very closed or open political opportunity structures. Similarly, some international institutions are open to activists (such as human rights institutions of the United Nations) while others are closed (such as the World Trade Organization or the International Monetary Fund). These different contexts will determine and explain the diverse interactions between these actors (Mertus et al., 2003: 303).

Another important field in the literature on transnational collective action is composed by debates on global governance and civil society from a normative perspective. This literature focuses on the transnational sphere and the dynamics of civil society (Held 1995, Held et al. 1999, Salamon et al. 2000). For these scholars, “the key motivating force of global civil society is its moral concern to create a better world by advocating a fairer, freer, and more just global order –whether it be with regard to economic, political or social issues” (Alcalde, 2009: 18). This approach has received many critics for the assumption that a global civil society is positive and desirable.

In order to tackle the gaps in the social movement paradigm, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly proposed a mechanism-and-process approach in their book *Dynamics of Contention* (2001). The authors included a wide range of contentious politics from protest movements to strike waves, ethnic conflicts, nationalist episodes, and revolutions. They also observed contentious politics in a broad time and space frame (from the eighteenth to twentieth century and from Western liberal systems to the global South). Some scholars adapted and translated to the international level the opportunity structures analysed in domestic politics. In *Dynamics of Contention*, the authors tried to avoid the static variables of previous approaches and build a dynamic model based on key mechanisms and processes that constitute contentious politics (Tarrow, 2005: 24).

For the present thesis it is also important to briefly mention the literature on globalization which documents the threats that internationalism (understood as a variety of regimes, treaties, conventions, and informal networks) offers to non-state actors. As some scholars have stated, “internationalism also offers an opportunity space into which domestic actors can move, encounter others like themselves, and form coalitions that transcend their borders, and this process has been less well understood” (Tarrow, 2005:25). According to Della Porta and Tarrow, “the expansion of international institutions, international regimes, and the transfer of the resources of local and national actors to the international stage have produced threats and opportunities for transnational activists, which develop different strategies to challenge but also to collaborate with insiders. Activists have overlapping memberships linked within loosely structured, polycentric networks” (Alcalde, 2009:22).

International institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and even the European Union) have been labelled as agents of globalisation by transnational activists but at the same time they “offer an opportunity space within which opponents of global capitalism and other claimants can mobilize. Although these institutions are less susceptible to popular pressure than (democratic) national governments, in many ways domestic actors and institutions can shape and, to some extent, cushion the impacts of their policies [...]. International institutions are created by states to satisfy state interests but, once created, become focal points for contention” (Tarrow, 2005:26).

Some scholars have looked for a synthesis of the fields of international relations and social movements. This thesis builds on this synthesis to understand, explain and analyse the links between non-state actors that operate at the local and national level, with connections at the international arena, with institutional actors at the international stage, in this case, the institutions of the European Union.

1.2 Categories of transnational actors

Authors in the transnational contention field have used a vast array of concepts to refer to non-state actors operating at a transnational level which has produced confusion and misunderstandings. The different categories lead to difficulties in understanding how change occurs in world policy. For this reason, this section defines the different forms of transnational collective action proposed by the literature and finalizes with the definition of social movement that will be used for the present thesis. The main categories of actors are the following.

First, **transnational advocacy or activist networks** are the most informal configuration of non-governmental actors. Constructivists in international relations theory and social movement theorists have focused on the complex interactions among actors. These traditions help to explain how these networks act in domestic and international politics and affect the world of states and international organizations constructed by states (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 90). In the study of transnational advocacy networks, the work of Keck and Sikkink is very relevant. These networks are defined by these authors as “actors, working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services” (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 89). The organizational forms are voluntary, reciprocal and based on horizontal patterns of communication and exchange. In these networks, actors are related in open relations working around specific issues and organized around causes, ideas and norms. Many of these networks involve individuals advocating policy change in areas such as human rights, environment or women, where these networks have been particularly important. These issue areas around which networks are created are characterized by high value content and they draw on the normative turn in international relations theory mentioned above (Tarrow, 2001:13).

Advocacy networks are not traditional actors in the international system. They use persuasion and may gain leverage over powerful organizations and governments through the creation of new issues mobilized around the diffusion of certain information. The networks frame issues to attract attention and encourage action. By doing this, they bring new ideas, norms and discourses into the policy debates. Besides policy outcomes, advocacy networks transform the debate. Needless to say, these actors are not always successful but their growing presence has made them important players in policy debates at the regional and international levels. Networks serve as sources of information and they are communicative structures that influence discourse, procedures and policy. They shape shared understandings of the world and contribute to change the perception of the state and of different actors in the society regarding their identities, interests and preferences (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 90). Advocacy networks often reach beyond policy change and instigate changes in international interactions. When the networks are successful, this involves transformations in world politics (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 91). According to Keck and Sikkink, the study of networks is valuable in order to track the emergence of shared norms and cultural meanings supporting processes of regional and international integration. They can also provide explanations for transnational change (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 100).

Advocacy networks include international and domestic NGOs, research and advocacy organizations, local social movements, foundations, media, churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, intellectuals, and it may also include parts or regional and international intergovernmental organizations as well as parts of the executive or branches of governments (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 91). Transnational advocacy networks contain all these different actors in an informal structure where they can interact and help resource-poor domestic actors to gain leverage in their societies and put pressure on target state. The boomerang effect described by Keck and Sikkink explains the potential of these networks (Tarrow, 2001: 13). The tactics of transnational advocacy networks are based on information politics (move credible information, testimonies and attract media attention); symbolic politics (framing of issues in order to be convincing and be able to persuade); leverage politics (call upon powerful actors); and accountability politics (oblige powerful actors to act on principles they endorse) (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 95).

Networks involve a small number of activists, rarely involve mass mobilization, and they seek to bring issues to the public agenda. Advocacy networks share values (they are motivated by values rather than material concerns) and exchange information and services (such as training). These networks also create categories of frames on which to base their campaigns and create common discourses. Advocacy networks contribute to “blurring the boundaries between a state’s relations with its own nationals and the recourse both citizens and states have to the international system” (Keck and Sikkink, 2002: 89). These links among actors in civil societies, states and international organizations multiply the opportunities for dialogue and exchange.

Second, **transnational social movements** are the most difficult and rare form of transnational collective action. They are defined by Tarrow as “socially mobilized groups with constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interaction with powerholders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor” (Tarrow, 2001:11). The targets from transnational social movements can change from time to time and they can be private or public, national or international. According to Tarrow, “challengers are rooted in domestic social networks and politics, and are connected to one another across borders through common ways of seeing the world, informal or organizational ties, and contentious relationships with their targets” (Tarrow, 2011: 241). In Tarrow’s definition, contentious politics means an “episodic, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants” (Tarrow, 2001:11).

Transnational social movements are composed by actors that share common purposes at a transnational level and they maintain a sustained and coordinated social mobilization in more than one country to publicly influence social and political change. Some examples are the campaigns launched by the environmental movement against radioactive waste, the defense of the Amazonia, or the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. Regarding the differences between transnational advocacy networks and transnational social movements, Diani points out that “transnational advocacy network differs from a transnational social movement in that the former lack the embeddedness in dense networks of face-to-face and daily interaction” (Alcalde, 2009: 42).

Transnational social movements are a rare form of transnational collective action because it requires that at least three countries engage in joint and sustained mobilization and, moreover, are supposed to have a high level of collective identity among the transnational organizations (Alcalde, 2009: 44). However, social movements have long extended their reach beyond national borders promoting transnational causes, developing cross-border structures and processes of mobilization. Transnational movements have been historically influential in promoting social and political change in many different objectives such as anti-colonial, democratic, feminist, human rights, environmentalist, peace, etc. However, transnational processes do not only promote progressive causes. Racist, fundamentalist groups or the “global right-wing” also operate beyond transnational borders (Davies, 2018: 1).

Another aspect that has gained growing attention is the transformation of the technological context with the internet and social media. The debate and research on the extent to which it has facilitated mobilization at the transnational level has been growing. New technologies have produced new opportunities and they are a central and influential element in the analysis and understanding of transnational contention.

Third, **International non-governmental Organizations** (INGOs) are a type of actor that has grown rapidly and produced a multiplicity of definitions. Boli and Thomas identify as INGOs “the entire population of INGOs classified as genuinely international bodies by the Union of International Associations” where they include all “not-for-profit, non-state organizations” (Tarrow, 2001: 12). Boli and Thomas consider INGOs as “the primary organizational field in which world culture takes structural form [...], as transnational bodies exercising a special type of authority we call rational voluntarism [...] [and groups whose] primary concern is enacting, codifying, modifying, and propagating world-cultural structures and principles” (Tarrow, 2001: 12).

Tarrow proposes a definition of INGOs as “organizations that operate independent of governments composed of a membership base coming from two or more countries, and are organized to advance their members’ international goals and provide services to citizens of other states through routine transactions with states, private actors and international institutions” (Tarrow, 2001: 12). Tarrow’s definition tries to include

different types of organizations under the label INGO and also distinguish them from social movements. Concerning the differences between INGOs and transnational social movements, according to Tarrow, “transnational social movements engage in sustained contentious interaction with states, multinational actors, or international institutions, whereas INGOs engage in routine transactions with the same kinds of actors and provide services to citizens of other states” (Tarrow, 2001: 12).

INGOs are different from social movement but interact with them in different ways. First, many activists come from social movements. Second, NGOs make social movement’s ideas more accessible to ordinary people and more acceptable to authorities. Third, they provide a mechanism for diffusion of collective action to domestic actors that lack resources and contribute to building domestic movements. Fourth, NGOs sometimes collaborate with social movement in specific campaigns. Differences are mainly on their goals (INGOs with more moderate goals than social movements), on repertoires of action and cultures making them preferred actors to international institutions and governments than social movements (Tarrow, 2011: 242).

Fourth, **transnational coalitions** are actors that work internationally, beyond state borders, coordinating transnational campaigns to publicly influence social change. They are a form of transnational collective action that work with a coordinated strategy or sets of tactics. Some examples are the cluster munitions coalition or the child soldiers coalition (Alcalde, 2009: 42). When movements join together to form transnational coalitions, there is an upwards scale shift. That means transnational contention shifts in scale in order to change the level to a different focal point. The change can be also downward, when movements form sub-regional groups (Davies, 2018: 2).

Fifth, some authors use the category **Social Movement Organizations** (SMOs). The category SMO has been very ambiguous in the literature with the adoption of very different meanings between the authors. It is considered as an actor that is equivalent to NGOs by some authors. Then, according to this perspective, domestic NGOs are equivalent to social movement organizations and transnational NGOs are equivalent to transnational SMOs (Alcalde, 2009: 45). McCarthy and Zald use the concept of social movement organization to refer to the combination of direct participation of constituents in actions with an organizational orientation to making claims on authorities (Parks,

2008:7). They developed a conception that fits with structured and formal organizations. McCarthy and Zald defined SMO as a “complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement those goals” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 140).

Other authors, as Lofland, defined SMOs as “associations of persons making idealistic and moralistic claims about how human personal or group life ought be organized that, at the time of their claims making, are marginal to or excluded from mainstream society” which may define only strong organizations such as Greenpeace (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 140). Still, other authors such as Rucht differentiated SMOs from parties and interest groups as their power and legitimacy comes from different sources: the capacity to mobilize vs votes. This differentiation didn't mean that these actors had distinct organizational forms (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 140).

Sixth, some authors use the category **Transnational Social Movement Organizations** (TSMOs) to define SMOs operating in more than two states and whose “transnational structures [...] provide them with the resources essential for addressing interdependent global problems and allow them greater access to intergovernmental institutions” (Parks, 2008:7). Some authors, like Della Porta and Kriesi, consider that TSMOs are easily co-opted as they become tamed in order to receive funding and lose their conflictual and protest component. On the other side, Smith considers TSMOs contain protest elements. According to Smith, there is a division of labour with national level groups and they adapt their tactics at the different levels according to the diverse political opportunity structure. Moreover, they also adapt their tactics depending on the target of the organization. Tactics such as lobbying or monitoring activities will be used when dealing with international institutions, while protest and petitions will be more present at the national level (Parks, 2008:7).

The idea of shared understandings or frames mentioned in the category of transnational advocacy networks is also present in TSMOs. Here, again, the groups with scarce resources work to create common frames that are able to achieve wide cultural resonance through solidary networks. The TSMOs are a structure or vehicle for the “dissemination of values, frames, tactics, and practices [...], as has been empirically proved in further work on the particular subject of collective identity in TSMOs by

Smith” that seek to engage with international governmental organizations (Parks, 2008: 8). According to Parks, the concept of TSMOs contributes to the literature on transnational social movements in terms of organizational factors and their functions and enlarges Tarrow’s definition of transnational social movement “in terms of their target with some organisational assumptions, namely the form of a network stemming from a centre situated close to the target international organisation which gathers the expertise necessary for engaging with that particular institution, and serving as a centre point through which framing and dialogue may take place between the various components of the movement in order to (hopefully) achieve some degree of solidarity” (Parks, 2008: 8).

Some authors include states or parts of states, intergovernmental organizations, or other nongovernmental actors (foundations, research institutes, epistemic communities, corporations, domestic interest groups, etc.) as actors of transnational collective action, using an expansive definition, while others use a more restrictive definition including only domestic and international NGOs and social movement organizations (Alcalde, 2009: 43). However, this differentiation is not relevant for the research purposes of the present thesis.

This thesis deals with the anti-austerity movements that appeared during the Great Recession in different parts of the world. They are locally embedded but globally linked, creating a global protest cycle. The concepts mentioned above are forms of transnational collective action but are not suited to refer to the movements we are dealing with. For the present research, the concept of social movement will be used to explain these actors. Even though, the concept of social movement has been developed to explain domestic actors acting within national borders, in this thesis it will be used bearing in mind the global dimension that the wave of protest against austerity policies and for a real democracy had.

The concept of social movement is contested and different authors have emphasized various aspects of these actors. Della Porta and Diani have offered a synthetic definition taking into account the diversity in the conceptions of social movements. This research draws on the concept of social movement used by Della Porta and Diani (2006: 20) according to which “social movements are a distinct social process, consisting of the

mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; share a distinct collective identity” (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 20).

The first feature, conflictual collective action, means that social movement’s engagement in political and/or cultural conflicts is directed towards the promotion or opposition to social change. For a social movement to exist, however, there needs to be an identification of targets for collective efforts, articulated in social or political terms. The second characteristic, dense informal networks, is necessary for a social movement to be in place. It means that individuals and organized actors engage in continued exchanges of resources in pursuit of common goals. Finally, collective identity is a necessary feature of social movements. Collective identity goes beyond specific events, initiatives or protests. It refers to the existence of a common purpose and shared commitment to a cause that links individuals and the different actors in a collective mobilization. Collective identity plays a key role in the emergence of collective action. (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 21).

The defining aspects of social movements reinforce each other. Informal interaction networks permit mobilization and the creation of collective identities, collective identities, in turn, allow collective action with the activation of solidarity; and protest and conflict consolidate networks and identities are strengthened (Parks, 2008:5). The definition from Della Porta and Diani corresponds to a pure type. Nevertheless, when analyzing empirically the different episodes of collective action, there is not a full correspondence to these characteristics as there normally is more than one process that interacts with each other.

Some actors such as coalitions of charities or practice of alternative lifestyles would not fall under the category of social movements, as they do not have opponents defined in social and political terms. The presence of conflict and adversaries is a distinctive trait of social movements. Furthermore, we identify a social movement when the collective action has a long activity rather than single episodes or discrete events. In this long-lasting collective action, individuals and actors are bond together through solidarity ties. The collective identities developed during these periods can facilitate the development

of new movements and new solidarities in the long run (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 23).

Sometimes social movements are compared with interest groups and political parties as different types of political organization. However, social movements are not organizations, even though they may include formal organizations. They are informal networks, with different organizational principles than formal organizations. Social movements are fluid phenomena composed by participants (not members) that share a feeling of belonging or identity. Individual participation is an essential aspect for social movements (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 25).

Traditionally, social movements have been considered political actors that are differentiated from others by their unconventional forms of political participation. They use protests vs conventional forms such as voting or lobbying political representatives. However, public protest is not necessary the core feature of social movements where personal and cultural change plays an important role. Furthermore, protest is increasingly considered as part of the repertoire of collective action of a wide range of actors and less seen as an unconventional form of action or restricted to radical sectors. Nevertheless, protest still differentiates social movements from actors such as epistemic communities that involve actors with decision-making power, knowledge and sometimes electoral accountability. On the other hand, social movement's actors are in a peripheral position in decision-making processes and seek to influence public opinion in order to maintain their pressure capacity (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 28).

Social movements are composed by a diversity of types of organizational models. They can be broadly classified between two types: professional social movement organization and participatory movement organization. Professional movement organizations are constituted by a leadership involved full time to the movement and a very small or non-existent membership base. This type of organization tries to transmit the image of "speaking for a constituency" and influence policy towards this constituency (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 145). On the other hand, participatory movement organization can be divided into mass protest organizations and grassroots groups. Mass protest organizations combine a model based on participatory democracy and a formal organizational structure. On the contrary, grassroots organizations are based on a strong

participatory model and low levels of formal structure (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 147).

Social movement's organization changes over time and their evolution differ from one another. Some of them become institutionalized and turn into political parties or interest groups; others are radicalize and turn into violent forms of action; others involve themselves in the market becoming commercial; and still others become religious sects. The main factors that define the organization change in social movements are mainly the opportunities defined by the configurations of the political system, the organizational cultures, and the role of technological change (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 150).

Particularly relevant for this thesis is the cross-national diffusion of protest. Social movements are influenced and inspired by activist's actions taking place elsewhere. Diffusion is produced by the conscious or unconscious imitation and when "ideas concerning organizational structure, strategies of action, or definitions of the world "travel" from movement to movement, sector to sector, city to city, center to periphery, and, on occasion, periphery to center. Diffusion can be either direct or indirect depending on whether it comes about through unmediated contacts between movement members or is mediated by the mass media" (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 186). Processes of diffusion, extension, imitation, and reaction are triggered by early risers and have effects on groups which are not active or engaged in collective action. Diffusion processes reaches the antagonist provoking countermovements that are a frequent reaction at the beginning of contentious episodes. Another property of diffusion is "scale shift", which refers "not only of the spread of contention, but of its shift to levels of the polity in which new opponents, new potential alliances, and different institutional settings shape its progress" (Tarrow, 2011: 205).

Diffusion has attracted attention in the field of social movements as it helps explaining how movements evolve, expand or engage with the political arena. Social scientists have used the concept to refer to "the spread of some innovation through direct or indirect channels across members of a social system" (Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010: 1). Diffusion processes are multidimensional as they reflect actors, networks and mechanisms that are involved in the spread of social movements. Diffusion involves the

spread of collective action repertoires and interpretative frames. It takes place through mechanisms that give a diffusion process its dynamic properties. Mechanisms of diffusion identified in the literature are classified in three categories: relational (include a variety of direct, interpersonal networks between individuals and organizations), nonrelational (include a variety of indirect ties), and mediated mechanisms of diffusion (actors are not directly related but are connected to a third actor who is able to facilitate the diffusion of information and actions) (Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010: 9). Diffusion has impacts on organizational forms and associational networks of civil society as well as it can also foster institutional change. Moreover, diffusion also plays an important role in changing the scope and scale of contentious politics (Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010: 13).

Cross-national diffusion is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the revolutions of 1948 or the anti-slavery movement spread in different continents. Moreover, historic social movements such as the feminist movement in the 1970s or the peace and environmental movements in the 1980s can also be considered another example. These cases show how movements developed all over the world with similar elements even though the exchange is not always equal in the territory. Neighboring countries or similar social and political structures constitute some elements that may determine the degree of diffusion (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 186).

The mobilizations where the anti-austerity movements take part occurred in different times and places. They spread from the Middle Eastern and North African countries to Europe (Spain, Greece, Portugal, etc.), to the United States of America, and later to other places like Turkey, Bulgaria, Brazil and Bosnia, to name some examples. Their similarities and linkages are easily identified. They all involved mass protest composed by autonomous political actors with some grassroots groups that had participated in the previous wave of protest. The mobilization used social media and other internet tools for their activities that enhanced participation through the internet as well as they organized assemblies with face-to-face debates. They used the same repertoires of contention with the deployment of quite radical contentious performances including the physical occupation of the public squares. Thus, these mobilizations had a clear transnational dimension. Activists felt connected to others participating in different countries. The practices, ideas, discourses and actions travelled from one country to

another and at different points in time through mechanisms of diffusion that included many sources of inspiration and adaptation to different sites (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014: 1).

According to Della Porta and Mattoni, traditional models of diffusion are questioned by the wave of contention we are observing. The traditional conceptual framework about diffusion should be redefined in three main aspects. First, according to the authors, literature on diffusion focuses on cases where diffusion was successful with the spreading of protest actions and frames but says little about cases when despite the existence of a wave of mobilization and favorable condition, diffusion does not occur. This is the case of the anti-austerity protests that spread successfully to some countries like Spain and Greece but not to others like Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy or Czech Republic. Even though in some of these countries protest did happen, they took different forms or remained localized. Diffusion did not take place in countries less hit by the economic crisis. Other explanations could be the opening or closing of political opportunities or specific movement's cultures and traditions. There were *acampadas* in Brussels, Berlin, London or Amsterdam but their mobilization remained limited. Research on the negative cases of diffusion should be conducted in order to better assess these processes (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014).

Second, another aspect pointed out by Della Porta and Mattoni is the cross-time dimension of protest. Considering this dimension increases the explanatory capacity of traditional diffusion theories. As they remark, diffusion of protest happens in space but also in time and this has been another neglected element in the literature. Della Porta stresses the diachronic diffusion that takes place between the two waves of contention (the Global Justice Movement and the anti-austerity protest). In this case, she observes the diffusion of ideas and practices of participatory and deliberative models democracy. There is a mechanism of adaptation taking place when ideas and practices travel from one protest wave to another. Activists experiment with these ideas and experiences from previous mobilizations in a learning process and relocated them in a new context. This learning process requires processes of deliberation and memory of past events (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014).

Third, another important element to be taken in to account and that is not considered in traditional theories of diffusion is the role of social media in the processes of diffusion. It is evident that social media connects. However, it is not known to what extent it facilitates diffusion and this is also an issue that needs further research (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014). According to some authors, social media played a role in the diffusion of imageries, ideas, symbols, frames across countries and through different protest sites within countries in the wave of protest under consideration. Some examples are the creation of injustice symbols in the global public sphere and the quick dissemination of memes beyond national borders through new technologies. These are the cases like Khaled Said, the Egyptian blogger that was killed by police in 2010 and Mohamed Bouazizi who self-immolated and rapidly became a symbol that triggered action against injustices and the uprising in Tunisia (Olesen, 2014: 71).

Social media also facilitates the diffusion of protest frames and actions. Contemporary protests are also characterized by more circular or rhizomatic patterns of diffusion that is linked to the role of the new technologies and their use. An example is the use of smart phones to disseminate protest materials, frames or actions that were common during the mobilizations we are analyzing. The new information and communication technologies urges to the need to revise traditional diffusion processes based on mass media as brokers of diffusion. Today mass media is not the only source for diffusion of protest and social media platforms may work as broadcasting media that helps to disseminate content. These platforms facilitate that this content travels quickly across individual users and collective groups. The use of these new technologies also transforms the traditional distinction between relational and non-relational diffusion that was a characteristic of diffusion of protest frames and actions from one movement to another. This differentiation has been blurred in the new technological context. Usually, literature has pointed to language as a barrier for diffusion. New information and communication technologies seem to have helped to overcome this limitation. During the wave of contention of the Great Recession, the diffusion of a common language took place (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014).

Della Porta and Mattoni also observe that in order to understand the processes and mechanisms of diffusion in the wave of protest against austerity and for democracy it is necessary to understand the transnational dimension in the social movements from this

wave of contention. The previous wave of protest, the Global Justice Movement, had an evident transnational dimension that was easily observed in the social forums and counter-summits. However, assess the transnational dimension of the new mobilizations is more difficult. The processes of diffusion in the two waves of protest can be distinguished as thick and thin diffusion. The Global Justice Movement would be an example of thick diffusion based on a global organizational network where social movement organizations and grassroots activists groups had a role in spreading the transnational mobilization in counter-summits and social forums. On the other hand, the wave of protest against austerity and for democracy would be an example of thin diffusion where information travelled among individuals through social media. Therefore, the diffusion of information was characterized by a weak organizational process of transnationalisation. The protests repertoires, the *acampadas*, became visible worldwide but they were local (and national) in their nature and the people involved. Besides the understanding of diffusion processes, the transnational dimension of social movements can be observed in two other processes in transnational contention: domestication/internalisation, and externalization. In the case of the Global Justice Movements another process of transnationalisation can be observed: transnational collective action (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014). These processes of transnationalisation will be further developed in the following section.

On the other hand, to understand and analyze the evolution of social movements over time we need to take into account the concept of protest cycle. As defined by Tarrow, a cycle of contention is a “phase of heightened conflict across the social system, with rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors, a rapid pace of innovation in the forms of contention employed, the creation of new or transformed collective action frames, a combination of organized and unorganized participation, and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities. Such widespread contention produces externalities, which give challengers at least a temporary advantage and allow them to overcome the weaknesses in their resource base. It demands that states devise broad strategies of response that are repressive or facilitative, or a combination of the two. And it produces general outcomes that are more than the sum of the results of an aggregate of unconnected events” (Tarrow, 2011: 199).

The cycles or waves of protest are composed of interrelated campaigns and they describe periods of intensified protest. They follow a pattern based on a period of mobilization (with early risers creating and opening opportunities for others), an enthusiastic peak when movements gain victories that in turn provoke countermobilizations and ultimate collapse with the initiative shifting to elites and parties (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 189). As movements organize, risks, personal costs, disillusionment, etc., results in a decline in participation of less motivated sectors. Those most motivated are likely to continue with more probabilities to support radicalization of contention. This leads to a polarization between those who seek to compromise with the authorities and those seeking confrontation which leads to institutionalization or radicalization. Mechanisms of institutionalization or radicalization can occur at the same time in a cycle of protest and are mutually constitutive. Government access and concession leads to institutionalization that often accompanies radicalization. These two dynamics of radicalization and institutionalization interact with two major mechanisms: repression and facilitation. Government repression takes many forms while facilitation takes place when governments respond to protest waves with reforms (Tarrow, 2011: 206).

Once mobilization has achieved attention and state response, peaks of conflict usually lead to attempts to diffuse the insurgencies and channel the participation into organization. In this moment, one part of the movement engages with the authorities as the cycle diminishes in force amid exhaustion and polarization and the initiative shifts to elites and parties. According to Tarrow, “the multipolarity of the interactions in these cycles and the diverse reactions of the authorities to challenges make their endings far less similar than their beginnings. The diffusion of collective action from early risers to late-comers, the shift of political opportunities from early challengers to their allies and elites, the different choices governments make about which groups to repress and which to facilitate, and splits between radicals and moderates – these increase the number and variety of interactions in the course of the cycle and [...] send them off in divergent directions” (Tarrow, 2011: 212). This pattern of protest cycles influences the repertoires of action, involving disruptive tactics in the initial stages and processes of institutionalization or radicalization when the authorities react with a growing number of violent actions in the final stages of the cycle. In fact, analyzing protest cycles proves to be useful for explaining and understanding the development of political violence

(Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 190). Moreover, understanding the features of a protest cycle is relevant for this research as we are dealing with the group of social movements (anti-austerity movements) created under a cycle of protest (that developed during the Great Recession).

When we look at the European Union, these components of social movements are present but in a broader picture, more complex, and with multiple interactions across borders. Moreover, the anti-austerity movements are not institutionalized actors and this makes it harder to analyze. As Davies points out “there are data repositories on highly institutionalized aspects of transnational movements, such as the database of international non-governmental organizations disseminated by the Union of International Associations” however, “the less institutionalized forms of networking and mobilization among transnational movements have been far harder to quantify. It is also very difficult to distinguish the role of transnational movements in the achievement of political and social reforms from the contribution of national movements and other factors in the political, social and economic context” (Davies, 2018: 4).

The characteristics and main features of the anti-austerity movements, as well as the context where the movements appear that help to understand them, are analyzed in the section below.

Chapter 2. New social movements and the European Union

2.1 The European Union and social movements

Europeanization of social movements takes place “when movements collaborate, or make horizontal communicative linkages with movements in other countries, contest authorities beyond the state, frame issues as European and claim an European identity” (Bourne and Chatzopoulou, 2015: 34). Literature on Europeanization emerged during the 1990s with research about grassroots mobilizations directed towards the EU and studies about the transnationalization of protest in the context of globalization carried out by social movement scholars. This literature agrees to the fact that the degree of social movement Europeanization tends to be rather low. These are the results of the research from Imig and Tarrow (2000) where they conclude that protests are directed towards national or subnational targets and are based on domestic issues. Only a tiny minority of the protest they analyzed were categorized as European protests. Similar conclusions were made by Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer (2010). According to their research, the repertoire of national political actors was mainly focused on the national level. Furthermore, Della Porta and Caiani (2009) also supported the same conclusion of low Europeanization of the domestic public sphere (Bourne and Chatzopoulou, 2015: 34).

Thus, even though literature remarks low levels of transnational social movement activities there are some considerations pointed out by Della Porta and Caiani (2009) that would imply more EU-level protest. According to these authors, “the political process approach has stressed the need for social movements to address the territorial levels where decisions are taken. [...] In parallel, we might expect contemporary social movements to develop strategies for addressing power holders at different geographical levels. Therefore, the framing of the European level as a relevant (and potentially even more relevant) level of decision-making could be a main factor in the decisions of social movements to target it. We might expect a focusing of conflicts around Europe that would reflect the growing relevance of European institutions” (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 8). Moreover, the extensive use of new technologies by social movements reduces the cost of communication in order to conduct European protest campaigns. Another aspect facilitating transnational strategies is cultural traditions. In this regard,

social movements can be more inclined to develop organizational strategies and frames than other actors that are more nationally bounded such as political parties or trade unions (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 9).

Europeanization does not only refer to the building of European institutions and structures of governance at the European level. As Della Porta and Caiani explain, it “also includes the impact of these changes at the national and even local level. Research on Europeanization has addressed, in fact, processes of resistance, transformation, and adaptation to European policies and norms in member states, shifting attention from the supranational level to multilevel governance. Linked to this is the notion that public policies are no longer the exclusive product of national institutions, but are instead part of a complex system where several norms and implementing agencies interact” (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 10).

European construction leads, according to many authors, to a new form of multilevel governance. This form involves complex interactions among different levels of government across various policy areas even though it does not produce the end of the nation-state. Europeanization is the product of interaction of various actors and has effects on national political systems. It also affects how we look at social movements at the European level and it has consequences on protest. Social movements have traditionally addressed the national level and have had an influence in the evolution of the nation-state and democratization. At the European level, social movements could contribute by increasing transparency, by creating a critical public sphere and therefore contributing to make EU institutions more accountable (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 12).

Della Porta and Caiani’s conceptualization of social movement Europeanization builds and extends on the previous approach from Imig and Tarrow (2000). Imig and Tarrow distinguished four types of European protest. First, the typical domestic protest where national actors target domestic opponents. Second, the coordinated domestic protest takes place when a transnational coalition of actors takes action against a domestic political target such as a national government. Third, domestication of conflict happens when national actors protest at the domestic level against policies of the EU. And finally, transnational contention occurs when a transnational coalition of actors target

the EU or other actors at the transnational level in response to EU policies (Bourne and Chatzopoulou, 2015: 37).

Della Porta and Caiani differentiate, first, the nation-state model of Europeanization where European challengers target a European polity while national actors are expected to continue to act at the national level. Social movements are expected to adapt their strategies to a multilevel governance that offers both restrictions and opportunities and the need to address the various territorial levels of government. Thus, social movements may take a domestication path when they “want to put pressure on the EU in favour of national interests [...], they can use protest in order to pressurize national governments which, in turn, can negotiate better arrangements at supranational levels” (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 14). Another strategy followed by social movements involves externatization. It occurs when “social movement organizations look at the EU as an additional arena for the mobilization of resources that may then be used at the national level. A strategy of externalization [...] characterizes the mobilization of national actors targeting the EU in attempts to put pressure on their own governments. In these cases, actors that feel weak at home might try to mobilize allies at the supranational level: protest addresses EU institutions to push them to intervene upon domestic governments (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 15).

Both paths of domestication and externatization seem to facilitate social movements targeting of the EU. Thus, European social movements may emerge, targeting different levels of governance at the same time, involving loose networks of national (often even local) and transnational groups. The objectives of their protests tend to be increasingly general and both national and supranational collective actors participate turning to various governmental levels. Thus, “all these considerations of multilevel governance bring us to expect different levels, paths, and forms of Europeanization in different countries and on different policy issues. Following the political opportunity approach, one could expect that social movements would be more motivated to target the European level when they have less leverage at home, in an attempt to trigger ‘boomerang’ effects” (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009:16).

An example of domestication processes could be observed in the case of anti-austerity protests that quickly developed in Southern European countries against domestic

political elites that were blamed for the implementation of austerity measures handed down by the European Union, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Thus, international pressure was transferred at the level of domestic politics directing discontent against domestic governments that implement policies demanded by supranational institutions. Domestication processes were not central in the previous wave of protest, the Global Justice Movement. On the other hand, externatisation processes in the protest against austerity took a spurious way (as both domestic and supranational institutions were blamed for the measures). Some protests, for example in Greece, targeted a combination of governmental domestic responses to international economic and political pressures (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014).

Regarding processes of transnationalisation there is an unprecedented process observed in the Global Justice Movement: transnational collective action. Processes of domestication, externalization and diffusion were present in the past cycles of protest all over the world. However, transnational collective action is characteristic from the Global Justice Movement. In the wave of contention where anti-austerity movements are developed, collective transnational action had a very limited role. There was a Global Action Day on 15 October 2011 with protest taking place worldwide under the slogan “United for Global Change”. Moreover, on 14 November 2012 a European strike against austerity organized by major trade unions from different countries took place. These protests were organized under a transnational framework but they were nationally bounded and did not involve the gathering of activists coming from different places in one protest site as it had happened with the Global Justice Movement protest events. There was an action similar to a transnational demonstration that was the Blockupy protests taking place in 16-19 May 2012 (later repeated in May 2013) organized by a transnational network of activists. These protests had the goal to engage in several protest actions at the European Central Bank in Frankfurt and try a peaceful blockade of the ECB to denounce austerity measures and financial policies implemented in several countries in the European Union (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014)

On the other hand, research on Europeanization also takes into account the relevance of framing Europe. This is a symbolic process where the role of ideas, as precondition for the definition of interest, is examined. Research on European integration was initially focused on the interests of the member states (seen as the main actors) in an

intergovernmental process. This was the dominant view in international relations coming from the realist approach with authors such as Moravcsik. The European institutions were considered as centered in the economic cooperation and the improvement of international competitiveness of member states. The evolution from the European Common Market to the Constitutional Treaty made the realist approach weaker in explaining the EU. Critics of the realist approach stressed the participation of various actors, other than states, in the international arenas. They also stressed the capacity of states to cooperate and not only to compete and the development of a complex system of international norms (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009:18).

The constructivist turn in international relations since the 1990s has paid attention to the importance of a variety of actors and their visions. According to realists, rational actors calculate their utility depending on given preferences while the constructivist approach recognizes the impact of ideas. Thus, Europe can influence values, norms and discourses in member states and a cognitive change can impact the preferences of policy makers and the process of European integration. The constructivist approach looks at institutions as producers of norms that at the same time structure the identity of actors. These considerations take into account the potential role of a European civil society that may develop a critical public sphere with an increasingly demanding public opinion (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009:19).

In fact, evidence shows that there is an increase politicization of the debate on European issues. Europe is increasingly discussed by both national and European actors at various territorial levels. The process of European integration with growing competencies at the supranational level has made the EU institutions less able to maintain a high level of consensus. EU institutions deal with decisions that affect the lives of citizens in a wide range of policy fields such as the welfare state, pensions, migration or education. These are all sensitive fields where legitimation based on efficient and apolitical governance becomes more difficult to sustain. Therefore, the intensification of the process of European integration brought conflict and contestation directed towards the European institutions (just like it happened with the nation-state) and created supranational nets and norms (Della Porta and Caiani, 2007: 15).

Studies referred to nationalism have observed that institutions tend to favor the formation of an imagined community. This develops, more or less consciously, and with the reproduction of the values and symbols necessary for the rise and survival of these institutions. This process is not harmonic or consensual and brings about the creation of a democratic polis, together with a polity. The formation of European organizational networks and European identities develops at the same time as globalization processes deepens. This shows that the trends are not only European. Globalization and Europeanization are not the same phenomena but feed each other (Della Porta and Caiani, 2007: 16).

Previous research on protest in Europe from Imig and Tarrow (2000) and Imig (2002) found that contentious political action had increasingly become part of the repertoire of European political claims making and that European integration was an important issue to a growing range of citizens across Europe. They signaled the existence of a transnational sphere of social movements slowly coming and a small but significant share of contentious events were motivated by the policies and institutions of the EU. Their data suggested that European conflict patterns were changing. They found that “while the share of all events motivated by EU institutions and policies remains small, both their frequency and their share of the total has risen rapidly since Maastricht. In other words, Europeans increasingly are likely to take to the streets in protest against the EU, its agents, and its policies—although they are still much more likely to launch protest against domestic grievances” (Imig, 2002: 922). According to their analysis, since the mid-1980s European contention had been rising and the largest share of these protests were launched by groups whose livelihood was more threatened by European integration, namely groups organized by occupation. They observed that protesters were slowly building a European repertoire of contention and were beginning to focus in cross-border actions with other similar actors across Europe to push forward their demands on the EU. Social movements were developing a wide range of ways to approach the European level: transnational cooperation against domestic actors, collective European protests, and the domestication of European issues within national politics (Imig, 2002: 930).

In the same line, Marks and McAdam expressed their expectations in “significant changes in the locus and form of social movements as a result of European integration”

(Marks and McAdam, 1996: 274). Marks and McAdam emphasize the emergence of a multi-level polity offering social movements opportunity structures defined by the combination of governmental bodies at all levels that share decision-making over issues of interest to the movements. The impact of European integration on social movements will not be, according to the research carried out by these authors, uniform. They also indicate that the European integration is a process and “the ultimate shape of the Union will depend on years of contestation, negotiation and compromise by a wide range of actors. We can expect that social movements will be among those engaged in this ongoing process, gradually transforming structures of institutionalized power, even as those emerging structures act back to reshape the form and practices of social movements (Marks and McAdam, 1996: 276).

Recently, a large interdisciplinary literature has explored the global wave of protest incorporating the Arab revolts, the Occupy movements and the anti-austerity movements in Europe. Similarly as in previous research, scholars analyzing this wave of contention observe that the nation-state is the place and focus of action. There is a change from the previous wave of protest, the Global Justice Movement, which was a paradigmatic case of transnational collective action (Bourne and Chatzopoulou, 2015: 35). Kaldor and Selchow also observed this change from the previous protest cycle when movements were challenging and engaging with Europe. They were discussing and exploring ideals about the Europe they wanted and wished to live in. With the financial crisis, the movements moved back to the national and local levels and did not engage with the EU and European issues (Kaldor and Selchow 2012). Arriving to the same conclusion, Della Porta argues that studies of social movements including political opportunity approaches explain that the closure of political opportunities at the EU level was a factor determining the shift of protest from the transnational level (during the Global Justice Movement mobilization) back to the national level (with the anti-austerity movements) (Della Porta and Parks, 2013).

Taking into consideration this research regarding the Europeanization of social movements, Bourne signals that the data used in these studies is quite old and more recent research examining the anti-austerity movements tends to focus on transnational dimensions of collective action analyzing transnational diffusion, the spread of mobilization frames, repertoires of action, slogans or movement labels. According to

Bourne and Chatzopoulou, the context of the European sovereign debt crisis seems favorable to expect a significant degree of social movement Europeanization. In this context, the EU is one of the key crisis actors and directly involved in the crisis management. According to previous research, there is an important obstacle in the costs of linking groups in different countries that share the same problems and bring them together into networks crossing national borders. Some authors, such as Castells, have observed that these difficulties can be at least partly overcome with the new technologies that facilitate communication (Castells, 2012). Moreover, experience developed in previous networks, such as the European social forums, suggest that the limitations to social movement Europeanization can be diminished. In those previous sites of mobilization there was a development of some sense of collective identity, social networks of trust, reciprocity and cultural learning among participants (Bourne and Chatzopoulou, 2015: 35). Bourne and Chatzopoulou research regarding the Europeanization of mobilization during the sovereign debt crisis concludes that even though many contentious action events are circumscribed to the domestic arena, they observe a relatively high degree of Europeanization in the case of Greece suggesting further research in the Europeanization of anti-austerity movements (Bourne and Chatzopoulou, 2015: 51).

When examining European contentious networks, literature has paid attention to exchanges of resources between TSMOs and IGOS and signaled the difficulties to maintain mobilization beyond national borders. In the context of the European Union difficulties to protest were explained by the openness to lobby tactics. Research focusing on the interest representation in the EU tended to see social movements organizations as another category of lobby group. Some studies concluded that “social movement activity at the EU level is weak, either because they are so outnumbered by interest groups representing industry and other interests, or because they have not yet managed to achieve truly transnational protests (Parks, 2008: 2). Empirical research in international relations has tackled the growth of INGOs in number, resources and influence on policy choices. The creation of INGOs as well as TSMOs has been explained as an answer to growing institutionalization of international politics. This can be confirmed in the context of the European Union where the Single European Act in 1986 implied an extension of competences in the EU and produced as a consequence a

growth in number of recognized European public interest groups (Della Porta and Parks, 2013:28).

The EU (especially some institutions such as the Commission) looks for the expertise of civil society actors and considers these interactions offer legitimacy to the EU. As mentioned, these actors have grown in numbers, influence in the various stages of policy making, credibility in public opinion and accessibility to private funding. However, the inclusion of civil society actors in international and European politics is not even. Only those organizations that adapt to the rules of the game are the ones gaining access to international governmental organizations. NGOs involved in European networks haven't been unanimously praised. In fact, they have received numerous critics referred to their internal decision making, lack of transparency, accountability and representation (Della Porta and Parks, 2013:29).

Regarding the forms of European activism, previous research had found evidence of limited protest addressing the EU institutions. INGOs and TSMOs were increasingly institutionalized, with lobby tactics, information activities and a professional profile. In this context, claims referred to transnational decisions were expressed at the national level where institutions were considered more accountable to citizens. Nevertheless, during the 2000s, the Global Justice Movement brought a growth in mobilization and protest targeting the EU institutions, with global days of action, counter-summits, or social forums. There was an evolution from tamed social movement activities to disruptive forms of transnational protest. Thus, "within these campaigns, new frames of action developed, symbolically constructing a global self, but also producing structural effects in the form of new movement networks" (Della Porta and Parks, 2013:37). However, according to research on protest in the EU, national actors within member states provide the most important political opportunities in the EU. Thus, traditional mobilizations taking place at the national level are more effective and when campaigns are directed towards the EU arena, lobbying will be more effective. These observations mean that national targets are sometimes part of the European or wider transnational level, and not only purely national. Domestic structures continue to shape transnational interactions and, in the same way, international opportunities can be expressed at the domestic level. Some European institutions, like the Commission, that appears to be open to citizens are often regarded as offering a "lip service" as it pulls discussion away

from grassroots activities towards closed doors. Thus, according to research on campaigning in the EU, both street protest and lobbying are necessary for achieving a positive outcome. This will also be influenced by protest cycles, the issue addressed, and the European institutions targeted (Della Porta and Parks, 2013:38).

Forms of transnational protest such as counter-summits (which included marches and actions against EU summits like the one in Amsterdam in 1997, Nice in 2000 or Gothenburg in 2001), social forums (developed by the Global Justice Movement as spaces for debate for activists which provided an arena for the encounter of activists and organizations), global days of action (like the protest against the Iraq war on February 15, 2003) or diffusion of protest as the *indignados* or *Occupy* (against austerity measures and the blaming of the poor for the economic crisis) produce effects on the Europeanisation of social movements. Transnational networking has intensified and supranational events have increased regarding frequency. Even though transnational protest is a rare phenomenon, all these forms mentioned created a global language, intensified interactions during the transnational events, growing acknowledgement of the roles and responsibilities of IGOs, as well as relational, cognitive and affective effects on activists and social movement organizations. Moreover, according to research on these forms of transnational protest, even though they are rooted in the national level and national political systems there is a local-global interaction that contributes to the creation of a transnational political system and the development of transnational identities (Della Porta and Parks, 2013:41).

Further research is needed in the field of mobilization and protest in the European Union. Literature in this field is still scant even though several research has been done and concluded that the EU has consequences in mobilization in the member states. Sikkink pointed out the lack of research looking inside international institutions in order to understand how social movements work there and which impacts they may have (Sikkink, 2005: 152). Moreover, research has indicated that the EU has modified the landscape for opportunities available for social movements in the same way as other intergovernmental organizations. In the same way that the understanding of social movements is important to explain the development of the nation-states, the study of social movements in the transnational arena of the EU is relevant for the development of the EU.

The present thesis contributes to understanding social movements' development in the EU and its consequences on the EU institutions. On a normative level, studying the influence of social movements in the EU may shed some light on the EU's legitimacy problems and the lack of trust in the institutions and politics in line with the historical role movements fulfilled in the development of the nation-state and democratization. Furthermore, some authors have observed that in the twenty-first century the space for transnational mobilization has been increasingly constrained as democratic institutions appear to be increasingly challenged by the resurgence of authoritarianism (Davies, 2018: 4). This thesis analyses this transnational contentious space and contributes to its understanding. In addition, it also contributes in terms of empirical knowledge with the exploration of an aspect of anti-austerity mobilization that has not been paid attention to. Anti-austerity movements do not talk to or about the EU but its impact at different levels may have had an influence on the EU and this is the aspect this thesis deals with.

2.2 New movements in the context of global transformations

Globalization is transforming the world in a fundamental manner in the economic aspect but also in the social, cultural and political aspects. Structural transformations produce changes in power and power relations in world politics where states are no longer the main and stronger actor. States, multilateral economic institutions, civil society actors, etc., interact in the global arena in new and complex forms. Moreover, a driving force behind globalization is the information revolution. All these changes produce a decline in the nation-states system and transformations in two aspects that are relevant for the present research: democracy and economy, the two main grievances that impelled the anti-austerity movements.

The transformation in the structure of global economic governance reduces the exclusivity of states and moves towards a plurality of actors. Some scholars have labelled this transformation "complex multilateralism" (O'Brien et al., 2000: 3). According to them, the fundamentals of existing world order have not been challenged but there is a growth in the plurality of governing structures, which entails changes at the institutional level and represents different interests.

Some changes in the global political economy that O'Brien and his colleagues (2000: 9) point out provide a background to increased contact between multilateral economic institutions and global social movements. The first one is the liberalisation of economies. The decade of 1980s witnessed the advance of the opening up of markets and deregulation provoking the exposure of a growing number of people to market forces. Economic liberalisation in the global political economy contributed to increased attention about markets regulation. The second change is the creation of new centres of authority beyond the state such as the rating agencies or forms of regional regulation such as the European Union. This transformation has translated into a dispersal of authority across national, regional and global levels and it has had implication for citizens that may have to engage in the transnationalisation of citizen activity if they want to influence these authorities.

The third change is the instability of the global financial system that has been questioned after a series of financial crises (Mexico, Russia, Brazil, East Asia during the 1990s and the international financial crisis of 2008). This instability has also questioned the institutions governing global finance and opened the debate over capital controls. The wave of criticism led to new opportunities for civil society groups to influence institutional policy and achieved an ideological change towards the necessity to temper the excesses of the market. Finally, the innovation in information technology had the effect to facilitate liberalisation as the new technological tools provided the necessary infrastructure for increased capital mobility. Another effect was the increased ability for people to communicate and facilitate the networking of civil society groups. Castells uses the concept network society to analyse this new environment that facilitates the communication between groups that were formerly isolated and now can easily share information about common concerns (O'Brien et al., 2000: 9).

In this new organizational and technological context, Castells argues that power relations are dramatically transformed and new forms of network communication increase the opportunities for social change without defining the content or the object of this change (Castells, 2009: 24). Thus, in the information age, new political forms are created and collective action is transformed following the logic of the network. This has prompted ideas like swarm, which stress the strength of the collective or multitude and

its capacity to self-organize, or the concept of rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) inspired by the net.

The information revolution has profound impacts on politics and power; it is transforming the nature of power and influencing world politics (Nye, 2013). This new technological context is transforming all spheres of life, from the personal to the collective. As mentioned, governments are not the only actors influencing the agendas of international organizations but a multiplicity of players are shaping them in a complex network. At the same time, new challenges are appearing like government control through these same information technologies (Nye, 2013). The context where the anti-austerity movements appear is constrained by the information revolution. These are the movements of the information age.

Moreover, the context where anti-austerity movements take place is a period of structural systemic transformation (Wallerstein, 2013). It is a context of multiple overlapping crises: financial, economic, environmental, democratic, etc. Bauman refers to this situation as a transition or “interregnum” between two periods (Bauman 2012), stressing that the period of instability cannot be classified as conjunctural crisis.

As a consequence of the democratic crisis, the movements appear with the idea of a new democracy: in some countries it is confronted to dictatorships and authoritarianism while in others (like in the European context) it is against existing liberal democracies. Transformation in democracy fuelled by neoliberal globalization challenge the liberal conception of democracy. Della Porta points out the move of power from parties (and representative institutions) to the executive, from the nation state to international governmental organizations, and from the state to the market which have “contributed to the shifts towards a neoliberal conception of democracy, based upon an elitist vision of electoral participation for the mass of the citizens and free lobbying for stronger interests, along with low levels of state intervention” (della Porta 2013: 24).

Furthermore, the fundamental principles of nation-state democracy (territoriality, majority principles and use of coercive power) do not apply globally. At the same time economic globalization reduces the capacity of state intervention affecting its own legitimacy (della Porta 2013: 33). In the international arena the “growing number,

power and visibility of international organizations challenge the very principle of legitimation of liberal democracies as representing the will of their citizens” lacking electoral accountability but also transparency and citizen participation (della Porta 2013: 29). In this context of crisis of representative democracy new experiments with deliberative democracy arise.

The decline of the nation-state order rise concerns about the loss of state sovereignty and the separation of politics and power. As mentioned before, decisions that determine the fate of millions of people are taken by bodies that are not democratically elected lacking accountability, transparency and control. Citizens cannot take part in common decisions, from where they are excluded. According to Bauman and Bordoni, real power is located in the global flow of capital, separated from politics which continues to operate at a national and local level (Bauman and Bordoni, 2014).

The market and economic power has globalized while political institutions and the power that emanates from them are still anchored in the territory. Institutional fragmentation has risen which has at the same time provoked a loss of weigh of the state towards above (European institutions and supranational), below (processes of decentralization, etc) and to the sides (private management of public services, participation of NGOs, etc). Moreover, the hierarchic logic that has characterized the exercise of power does not apply to nowadays processes of public decision which are based on interdependence relational power. As said before, the state is just one actor more and usually not the most powerful. The collision of its policies with private interests generates the problem of democratic deficit which is difficult to solve for an actor that has seen its capacities more limited and conditioned by the new environment (Subirats 2013: 71).

Society and economy is more interdependent at a global level, it is more open, while institutional politics continue to be in the old logic of territory, population and sovereignty. Traditional actors’ (parties, trade unions, etc) intermediation work is being disputed by new interlocutors, movements and events which are difficult to recognize. Thus, traditional actors’ place in European institutions, states and public powers is being disputed by these new actors (Subirats 2013).

Transformation of democracy has drawn scholarly attention. Offe reviews the diagnosis of different prominent democratic theorists which consider that we are in the midst of a second transformation of democracy (Dahl 2000; Warren 2003). The first one was the transition from direct democracy to party-dominated representative mass democracy. Many scholars have focused on the current “crisis of democracy” (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Rosanvallon 2008) – or “end of democracy” (Guéhenno 1993), “end of politics”, rise of “post-democracy” (Crouch 2004), in other author’s words – which is caused by “economic globalisation and the absence of effective supranational regulatory regimes; the exhaustion of left-of-centre political ideas and the hegemony of market-liberal public philosophies, together with their anti-statist implications; and the impact of financial and economic crises and the ensuing fiscal starvation of nation states which threatens to undermine their state capacity” (Offe 2011: 457). According to Keane, “the era of representative democracy is passing away, that a new historical form of “post-representative” democracy has been born, and is spreading throughout the world of democracy” (Keane 2009: 13).

Keane explains that a clear symptom of this historic change is the way democracy is defined and valued nowadays. It is more considered in a pragmatic way, as a weapon for use against concentrations of unaccountable power. It involves public scrutiny and control of decision makers, whether they operate in the field of state or interstate institutions, non-governmental or civil society organisations (businesses, trade unions, sports associations, etc) (Keane 2009: 13). Other changes that are also happening are the mixture of assembly-based and representative mechanisms. This entails new ways of public monitoring and controlling the exercise of power.

The system of democratic representation is contested and the new movements (from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street and beyond) are consequences of this crisis of governance and democracy (Bauman and Bordoni, 2014: 147). Society is enmeshed in a dynamic of nets and interactions with multiple actors and is moving away from institutional politics, often seen by social movement’s activists more part of the problem than the solution.

From the citizen’s point of view, the crisis of democracy is manifested in the decline in electoral turnout, citizen’s trust in politicians, the increase in apathy, cynicism and a

sense of powerlessness, disaffection, disenchantment, disappointment, the sense of the people being disempowered by elites, or despoliticisation. Even though the discussion about the crisis of democracy and political disaffection in contemporary democracies is not new and dates back to the late 1960s early 1970s, the economic crisis of 2008 has been said to threaten democracy in Europe. However, this critical evaluation of democracy made by citizens does not undermine their support for democracy, in fact “democratic principles are actually strengthened by the disaffection of the citizens with the economic and political performance of their countries in the crisis” (Kriesi, 2017:1). According to Kriesi, the impact of the euro crises on democracy in Europe has not questioned the principles of democracy. Southern Europeans have dramatically decreased their satisfaction with democracy and become politically disillusioned with both domestic and European politics, a pattern that has not been replicated in other regions in Europe less hit by the economic crisis. However, this critical evaluation of democracy does not undermine support for democracy, which suggests that it is misleading to fear for the future of European democracies (Kriesi, 2017: 20).

Chapter 3. Analytical framework

3.1 Anti-austerity movements

On 15 May 2011 hundreds of thousands of people marched in Spain and began to occupy public squares all over the country inspired by the Arab revolts. Within days, many squares all over Europe were temporally occupied and within months there were occupations all over the world. The spontaneous networked movements grew beyond the usual suspects and even though the participation of youth was notable the movements included all generations and backgrounds. The crowd was mostly composed of people without organizational affiliation and the protest reach a dimension no one expected.

These mobilizations were not “isolated instances of protest that happened to have a few characteristics in common but rather as events linked to one another as part of the wave of protest that began to develop in 2008 with the revolts in Iceland and continued with protests in Turkey and Brazil in 2013” (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014). The many events over these five years were situated in a context of which two aspects, in particular, seem significant: that of a crisis that was not only economic but also political and which affected, to varying degrees, many countries in the world. Some authors have already stressed the interconnections among these different protests, considering them as part of the same ‘international cycle of contention. (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014: 2).

The transnational dimension in the recent wave of global protests such as the Arab Spring, the European Indignados, and Occupy Wall Street is a relevant, but largely neglected, theoretical question. In the last decade, literature on global social movements and transnational collective action has flourished, particularly with research on the Global Justice Movement. Social-movement studies explained the emerging transnational social-movement organisations, global protests and cosmopolitan framing as an outcome of economic, social, political and cultural globalisation. While cross-national diffusion of movement ideas was a long-lasting phenomenon, the need to act globally – resting on the shifts of decision towards international organisations and corporations but also on the opportunities offered by new technologies – gave a new

impetus to the transnational dimension of protests and movements. Upward shift from the national to the transnational level of protest seemed to be an ineluctable trend in collective action. In other words, the transnational dimension of protests seemed to be here to stay. (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014: 2).

Recent protests across the world have maintained a transnational stance but national governments and policies seem to be their first target. Even though the financial crisis to which the movements react is singular, and global, its timing and dynamics varied across countries. In fact, protests followed the geography of the emergence of the economic crisis, which appeared with different strengths and at different times in different European countries. (First, Ireland 2008, arab spring at beginning 2011, next Portugal, then Spain, Greece, USA. Turkey, Bulgaria and Brazil in 2013, and Bosnia 2014. Although protests kept a strong link to their national contexts, there is no doubt that from the end of 2010 to 2014, mobilisations flourished in a number of countries that shared some characteristics at the level of both protest visions and protest practices. (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014).

The anti-austerity movements that appeared all over the world conform a cycle of protest. As explained in the previous section, a cycle of protest is defined by Tarrow as a phase of conflict and confrontation intensification in the social system. Fast diffusion of collective action and innovation in the forms of contention are other keys for defining a cycle. During a cycle of protest new frames for collective action appear, as well as a combination of organized and unorganized participation. The interaction between dissidents and authorities may lead to reform, repression and sometimes, revolution (Tarrow, 1997: 263).

3.1.1 Features of anti-austerity movements

The forms of transnationalization of protest are different in this wave of protest comparing with the previous cycle. There is a difference in the current cycle regarding the **forms of transnationalization of protest** (from the local to the global) and a lower degree of transnational coordination that in the previous cycle was centred around the social forums. The new wave of protest is more rooted in the national level of government and more sensitive to national political opportunities than the Global Justice Movement (Della Porta, 2012: 274).

This difference in the forms of transnationalization of protest may be connected to another aspect: each cycle has a different target. In the Global Justice Movement it is the international organizations (World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, etc) which are accused of a lack of democratic accountability and to serve only to the interests of transnational capital. So the summits of the WTO or G8 were the chosen places where the movement showed up. This made them transient, appear and disappear according to the summit (Klein 2011). For the new movements, the target is the political class of the countries (Greece, Spain, United States or whatever the country where the movement exists) and they claim exactly the same (Graeber 2011). And in that case they protest from a fixed place, the occupied square. However, as some scholars indicate, there is a “global sense of place” thanks to technological extensions (Massey 1994). Through smart phones images of what is happening in a local place can be transmitted and then retweeted and shared in social media. This extends the message that is being expressed locally and provides a global visibility of the protest which in turn is a condition for its own energy and empowerment and to endure and attract more protesters. The effect may be a multiplication and replication of waves of protests (Rovira 2014: 51).

According to Tarrow, movements in the same cycle share many features, demands and principles. This can be acknowledged in the movements we are analysing. These movements have a common agenda or commonalities (Wallerstein, 2013; Ishkanian and Glasius, 2013; Glasius and Pleyers, 2013; Kaldor and Selchow, 2012; Hardt and Negri, 2011). As stated above, the movement’s demands are mainly about **democracy** but not the existing liberal democracy. There is in fact a huge popular discontent with existing democracy and the cry for a “real democracy” or “no one represents us”, referring to the monopoly of political parties’ over political life, spreads rapidly and widely. They are a response to the crisis of representative democracy. So demands go far beyond the liberal idea of democracy.

With the new movements it appears a renewed meaning, it is a concept of democracy as a practice, based on direct participation, diffused decision-making and constant innovation for the improvement of horizontal democracy in the assemblies. Transparency, horizontal organization, consensus building, non-violence, anonymity,

absence of leaders and redistribution of power are commonalities that we observe in the new movements. Respect for different opinions is a characteristic feature of the *Indignados* assemblies and also a rarity in social movements (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013). The aim here is creating high quality discursive democracy. There is a constant search for deliberative democracy recognizing the “rights of all citizens to speak and be heard, as well as their competences and skills in the search for solutions to complex problems” (Della Porta, 2012: 276).

The reinvention of democracy, non-hierarchy, decentralization, horizontality, diversity, anti-authoritarianism, and the idea of network are features that are already present in the Global Justice Movement (Graeber 2002) and that reappear and are further enhanced in this cycle of protest. A difference in the anti-austerity movements is the commitment to non-violence. This is a source of strength and legitimation and “that means broken windows and street fights aren't upstaging the message in the media. And when police attack peaceful occupiers (and the protesters catch it on camera), it generates tremendous sympathy for the cause” (Klein 2011).

This focus on democracy is connected with the previous waves of protest (the Global Justice Movement and also there is a connection with the East European and South American movement for democracy of the 1980s). There is a common cry for “another democracy” or a “real democracy”, stressing its deterioration and the urgency for a change. The criticism is linked to neoliberalism as a doctrine that prioritizes the profit before the people. Its vision is based on “less political interventions to balance social inequalities produced by the market; elitist (mainly electoral) conception of citizen participation; increased influence for lobbies and strong interests, through forms of direct and indirect corruption” (Della Porta, 2012: 275). Accordingly, “representative democracy is criticised for having allowed the abduction of democracy, not only by financial powers, but also by international organizations, above all the International Monetary Fund and the European Union” (Della Porta, 2012: 275). In this sense, “political representatives appear to have been captured by economic elites, as political parties increasingly represent the interests of financial institutions and other corporations” (Rasha 2012: 239). The claim for global rights and blaming global financial capital for destroying them is common in this and previous wave of protest (Della Porta, 2012: 274).

As Hardt and Negri mention, demonstrations are rooted in a widespread sense of economic injustice and they express political grievances and aspirations. They are an expression of indignation against the corporate greed and economic inequality, against the failure of political representation. As they say “It is not so much a question of whether this or that politician, or this or that party, is ineffective or corrupt (although that, too, is true) but whether the representational political system more generally is inadequate. This protest movement could, and perhaps must, transform into a genuine, democratic constituent process” (Hardt and Negri 2011).

Different protest encampments proliferate in diverse contexts so each one has its own specificities and features. In Tahrir square there is a clear message: “Mubarak must go” while in other places, like in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol or in Plaça Catalunya in Barcelona, there is a more complex critique of political representation to just mention a few. But from Cairo to Spain, Athens, Tel Aviv, New York, Madison, etc, disaffection with existing structures of political representation is clearly expressed (Hardt and Negri 2011).

Activists of the way of subjectivity that create expressive movements, as Pleyers labels the precursors of these movements (Zapatistas, alterglobalization movement, etc), construct themselves as actors through performances and lived experiences (Pleyers 2010: 35). Achieving a political impact (from the point of view of institutional politics) is not their first aim. They defend the “autonomy of their *lived experience* in the face of the domination of all aspects of life (Pleyers 2010: 37). They seek to build spaces of experiences which are autonomous and permit to live according to their principles, to build different social relations and express their subjectivity.

They refuse preconceived models and plans and opt for learning by experience, by trial and error, in the process of experimenting. Instead of one model they have many alternatives. Their practices and objectives are not dissociated. Experimentation is based on this consistency between practice and defended values. So, the movement is organized reflecting these alternative values: horizontality, participation of the greatest number of people, limited or no delegation, rotation of tasks, respect for diversity, etc.

They are an example of prefigurative politics (Epstein, 1991; Graeber 2002; Arditì) and this prefiguration implies that we know in advance what forms struggles can take (Razsa 2012: 252). They share a concept of change perceived as a process which begins with society and individual behaviour more than with the decisions of policy makers and institutions. To see changes in the world they call for first changing themselves (Noor 2011). They are not openly seeking social change as most movement activist would say. They are “engaged in self-conscious processes of becoming-other-than-it-now-is in an open-ended manner, both in terms of encounters with difference and collective struggles against existing conditions” (Razsa 2012: 250).

For them, social transformation is an ongoing collective process. They distance themselves from the traditional idea of revolution, which is a radical break in the course of history, heroic and violent. Instead, they create a distributive model, where the personal is political, emotions are at the centre of action and means are the ends. It is a process of participation in first person, more personalised (Rovira 2014: 50). They do not have a messianic vision or a pre-established project but instead they focus on everyday practices. They do not seek to influence institutional politics or seize political power. They create different forms of participation and new political cultures (Pleyers 2010: 91).

The movements do not demand public services to the state or governments but instead they think, discuss and work on how to organize the commons by themselves. They consider that housing, education, health, etc, belong to the commons and there is a willingness to govern these resources in common. This idea is connected to the conception of democracy that will be discussed in the next section. The local assemblies become examples, as an activist indicates, of the “collective capacity to manage our own lives and reconstruct society from below” (Razsa 2012: 252). Disruption caused by the movements brings about the creation of a space of the commons, a dimension with multiple layers of encounter. Insurgencies don’t have a specific programme. They have an opening character and they develop on multiple confluences. They are like “changing the skin”: suddenly, things that were tolerated before become intolerable for the people, independently of their previous identities (Rovira 2014: 50).

The refusal of singular demands or programmes and prefiguration (the idea that the political practices the movement itself develops are part and parcel of the movement's aims) are assumptions that were prevalent during the 60s. The New Left was characterised by a rejection of unitary programmes for revolutionary change and pursued instead notions of participatory democracy as a way to embody multiple movement goals (Gassert 2007, Horn 2007, Miller 2004, Polletta 2002, Klimke and Scharloth 2008). As Maeckelbergh points out “movement practices of horizontality rest on the assumption that inequality will always permeate every social interaction. This shift in assumptions results in an acknowledgement that these inequalities always exist and that each person is responsible for continuously challenging these inequalities at every step of a decision-making process. The importance of horizontality [...] is directly linked to movement actors' assumption of a prefigurative strategy for social change” (Maeckelbergh 2012: 211). Many alterglobalization movement actors rejected the notion that social change would be possible by seizing power at some future moment after which an egalitarian social structure would be instituted (Nunes 2005).

These movements do not seek that their organization grows reaching global proportions. Rather they have the idea of swarm where similar but autonomous networks are multiplied and build everywhere bringing change (Pleyers 2010: 93). They learn from previous experiences and history but the movements can't be explained by the actions of previous groups: they don't have a “father” or mother (Rovira 2014: 50).

In their everyday practices they refuse official spokespeople, representatives or any transfer of rights and powers to anyone. As a consequence the movements have no leaders as they express in horizontal participatory structures, without representatives (Hardt and Negri 2011). This lack of visible leaders was even expressed by Times magazine in 2011 naming “the protester” as the person of the year. That is anyone (Rovira 2014: 50).

Their idea of democracy is translated to every aspect of daily life and the organization and process of the assemblies and workshops. There is a proliferation of small-scale experiments in democratic organizing expressing the aspiration for a “real democracy” (Hardt and Negri 2011). There is an encouragement of new initiatives even if the majority of participants are not actively supporting them. Decision-making process

follows the same idea of experimenting new ways of enacting democracy and reimagining the political. It is done ensuring space for action by marginalized or minorities. The pursuit of consensus requires the consent of those holding minority positions which protects minority voices. This practice appears in opposition to majoritarian democracy which is seen as exclusionary or hierarchically inclusionary. This process facilitates the dynamic expansion of the movement as it encourages participation, innovation and initiative and, at the same time, it reflects the much repeated idea of “rebuilding society from below” (Razsa 2012: 240). Decision-making is an open-ended process that may involve unexpected new forms relying on creative practice. It is opened to critical reflection and questioning of much that was previously taken as given (Razsa 2012: 252).

There is no authority that defines the direction of the movement, so no one can determine whether a minority’s position or initiative represents the movement (Razsa 2012: 244). There is no characterization of any kind of general will of the people but the point is to seek for beneficial encounters, new common notions between the people participating in the assemblies and workshops. The physical encampment becomes a common resource and the place where people govern together (Razsa 2012: 245). The political forms (non-state, non-identitarian, non-majoritarian, etc) created in the different assemblies evoke the idea of multitude (Razsa 2012; Hardt and Negri 2005; Hardt and Negri 2011).

The anti-austerity movements incorporate characteristics of horizontal decision-making consisting on embracing conflict as a potential source of creativity. This is one of the key innovations within the decision-making of the alterglobalization movement: the particular approach to conflict. As Maeckelbergh indicates “in the alterglobalization movement conflict is not avoided, but embraced, because it is believed to be necessary and even beneficial to fostering diversity” (2012 : 224). The public arena needs to incorporate conflict and avoid subsume it under a semblance of forced consensus (Nunes 2004:8). Allowing diversity to flourish, in turn, is thought to be necessary for the development of a truly democratic politics.

This ideas and practices also find a predecessor in the women’s movement of the 60s and 70s. Their ideas and practices were a response to gender-blind inconsistencies and

incomplete fulfilment of promises of the movements of the times. Women's movement deepened and extended their innovations, adding insights arising from women's specific experiences of breaking out their subordination. Especial importance was given to insistence on the individual as social and the collective as based on relations between individuals: a social individualism and a relational view of society and social change. As Wainwright stresses the "women's liberation movement was animated both by women's desire to realise themselves as individuals *and* their determination to end the social relationships that blocked these possibilities. This required social solidarity: an organised movement" (2012).

Moreover, the nature of the organization of the women's movement "was shaped by a constant attempt to create ways of organising that combined freedom and autonomy – what every woman struggles for in her own life – with solidarity, mutuality and values of equality" (Wainwright 2012). This practices "developed ways of relating that both allowed for autonomy and also achieved co-ordination and mutual support, without going through a single centre" in networked form of organisation (Wainwright 2012).

This networked form was distinctive because integral to its origin, character and sustainability were values of solidarity and equality and democracy. Today, the capacity of networks is radically enhanced through the new information and communications technology in its non-proprietary forms. What both generations of activists share is a recognition of the importance for movements of democratic change of practical, experiential knowledge and the need to share and socialise it. This emphasis on sharing and socialising of experiential knowledge was the relevant breakthrough of these previous movements and we find it now again in the new movements (Wainwright 2012).

The development of networked forms in the current new movements is increasingly linked to distributed economic initiatives – co-ops, credit unions, open software networks, collaborative cultural projects, etc. In this way, "today's movements are beginning to develop in practice a vision of socialising production and finance and creating an alternative kind of market, complementary to the earlier unfinished vision of democratic public power" (Wainwright 2012). These previous and current new movements have in common an assertion of organised democratic civil society as an

economic actor, both in the provision of public goods and in the sphere of market exchange.

On the other hand, the role of emotions is an important aspect to explain and understand social movements. The uprisings were often reduced to its emotional aspect. In fact, all great social movements in history have been highly emotional as emotion is the first step needed to get into action (Castells 2010). This new movements were joyful in their expressions and prone to creating celebratory atmospheres (Reyes 2011) as the movements in the previous wave of protest. Many of its participants referred to the happiness of being there and the inspiring and beautiful moment of being together in the squares (Noor 2011). Moreover, research has shown that emotions play an important role in the likelihood of participation. According to evidence, negative emotions promote different behaviours in social mobilization, whilst anger increases the likelihood of participating in social movements, anxiety decreases it (Galais,).

These movements reflect a **conceptualization of power** that can be observed in its relationship to institutional power. The movements organize themselves outside of the state. They try to create communities and a new society without asking or demanding anything to the state. In fact, there's no sense in issuing demands to politicians that they reject and against whom they are ranged. That would imply a recognition of legitimacy of the political class (Graeber 2011).

The movements are an example of prefigurative politics. Following Arditì's words "their mean is their message" and they do not really have a plan but in fact "they are the plan" (Arditi 2012). They start experimenting by themselves prefiguring the future society they want to live in. Emphasis in on the journey more than the destination or, as Reyes points out, the road is made by walking (Reyes 2011). The demand is a process, what really matters is not "what" but "how". The assemblies are an important part of this process as they are the best example of real democracy (Noor 2011). This lack of specific demands turned into harsh critics from different sectors of society. For some it was a sign of weakness, for others an infantile behaviour, an evidence of not really knowing what they wanted or something that had to be solved as fast as possible. For Klein this was something positive, as the movement had first to determine how powerful it was in order to determine what demands were possible stating that "small

movements have to settle for small reforms: big ones have the freedom to dream” (Klein 2011).

There is an attempt, within these movements, to create the institutions of a new society (Graeber, 2011) and to build a new world from the ashes of the old one without the will to take power as in previous emancipation politics. This idea marks a change in emancipation politics history and starts, according to Badiou, a new sequence where the movements reshape the concept of politics and try to rebuild it at a distance from the state power and control (Badiou, 2012). This idea finds a direct antecedent in the Zapatistas and other movements of the global south as well as the Global Justice Movement. These movements are not willing to take power but to create spaces of autonomy and new forms of organization. Democracy and diversity are distinctive features of these movements that we will later find in the uprisings we are now observing. We will come back to this point as this is a key element to grasp the nature of these collective actors. Also some repertoires of action that were already present in the Global Justice Movement can be found in these movements (Reyes 2011), the same as the forms of resistance which are remarkably similar.

The concepts of power, politics of dignity and new politics used by these new networked movements can be seen as an influence of the Zapatistas theoretical and practical challenges (Holloway 1996: 20). Some scholars like Wallerstein (2013) or Badiou (2012) go back to the anti-authoritarian revolutions of 1968 to look for a connection with the values and ideas of the new uprisings. The form of prefigurative politics taken by the new networked movements clash with the strategic vision of social transformation directed towards achieving power. In Badiou’s words these are “creative instances of a new reality” (2012), building new communities by a humble and anonymous multitude. Humility and anonymity are also characteristic features of the Zapatistas but also linked to the hacker culture. Understandably, the Zapatistas pioneered the use of internet as a tool and as an organization model.

Disenchantment with previous forms of social transformation led activist to develop a strong mistrust of all forms of power. They contest the idea of power which is a legacy of former leftist social movements. Rather than taking power or developing countervailing power, they wish to create spaces of experience “free of power relations

through the dissolution of power-over” (Holloway 2002: 37). As Pleyers points out for these movements “autonomy is central to the spaces of experience which resolutely position themselves outside the political and the institutional – not only to evade power relations but also because these actors believe that capacity for changes does not stem from political and institutional power”, their idea is that changes comes from the bottom and from everyday practices and widespread participation (Pleyers 2010: 93).

These elements are not completely new; we can observe them in previous social movements. The ideas of self-organization, creation of autonomous spaces, the idea of “anti-politics”, etc, were already present in the movements of Central and Eastern Europe in the 1970s. Also the emphasis on the consistency between practices and defended values were present in the feminist movement already in the 1960s or in figures such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela (Pleyers 2010: 94).

The ideas of anti-power or the end of power have been widely contested. Many scholars suggest that social spaces are not totally freed from structure, power and exclusion (Pleyers 2004; Polleta 2005; Teivainen 2008). Even though some organizational forms are not hierarchical and formally have no leaders “relations of power are essential components of cooperation and human relations” (Crozier and Friedberg 1980: 254). So, in a less formal way, participants in these movements have different influence according to their experience, knowledge and abilities (Pleyers 2010: 97).

On the other hand, the new technological context provides for new tools to these movements which influence its forms: in the information era the net is the form movements take. The use of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter has been widely highlighted. As Hardt and Negri have indicated “such network instruments do not create the movements, of course, but they are convenient tools, because they correspond in some sense to the horizontal network structure and democratic experiments of the movements themselves. Twitter, in other words, is useful not only for announcing an event but for polling the views of a large assembly on a specific decision in real time” (Hardt and Negri 2011).

The Internet is a new environment from where new forms of communication grow. In the net there coexist previous communication forms and, at the same time, it ends with the

exclusivity of unique broadcaster towards multiple audiences, answering and alteration. Circulation of messages in digital nets is not between broadcaster and receiver but instead it can unchain an enormous process of dissemination, a dispersion. Internet has a hypermediatic character, from one window it gets to another in an infinite proliferation (Rovira 2014: 41).

There has been a democratization on access to digital networks. The user is no longer an spectator but a producer. Internet is open to creation and recreation and the user cannot be an observer that looks at the world from outside, the user is necessary a part of the net and he/she can construct the space (Rovira 2014: 42). The net doesn't objectively provide horizontality but it stimulates individual participation. The net neither provide equality in participation but its legitimation is on the possibility to participate (Rovira 2014: 51).

The movements can't be observed in a lineal or narrative way as they are nets from where different possibilities may emerge. The movements are groups of connections and every connection is the origin of others (Rovira 2014: 50). Participation through the net permits the creation of weaker ties that enables to expand and in a concrete moment they can activate, intensify and proportionate resources to the action of the same net (Rovira 2014: 51). Internet is also a place for reflexivity (Rovira 2014: 52).

The forms of organization of the anti-austerity movements are based on the widespread use of new technologies which at the same time define and transform the logic of organizing. Internet culture, network organization, quick diffusion, transparency, anonymity, etc, are features of these new actors. Speed and resonance at a high velocity are defining aspects of globalization intensification processes in the information era and overtly shown in these movements. So, the new technologies facilitate the creation of a vast global networking of experiences and practices. Spaces and digital tools are used to define and tackle common matters (Toret et al. 2013: 45).

The idea of public sphere, referred to politics, has traditionally been reserved only to authorized actors. As Rovira states, the sphere has had a ritual and it has been separated from the "ordinary politics". With the new movements, this "ordinary politics" enters the sphere, creates processes capable to expand and create experiences of the commons.

They politicise everyday life blurring the lines between public and private (Rovira 2014: 40). So, politics is leaving the palaces (television, political parties, experts, etc) and entering spaces where anyone can participate. It is shifting from “palace politics” to “ordinary politics”. Politics is leaving the institutional realm of media, professional politicians or social movement activists and is going beyond, including anyone, the ordinary. The voice of the ordinary democratizes the public sphere and produces the irruption of the commons, without delegation, with the politicisation of the personal and the personalisation of the political (Rovira 2014: 52).

Digital networks disturb the ideal political space separated from other spheres of life. As Van Dijck states, Internet turns the borders between public and private even more porous to state and corporate realms (2012). Other scholars talk about “public screen” instead of public sphere as today most of the political messages are transmitted through screens (De Lucca and Peeples 2002). This technological transformations change politics, by confusing the broadcaster and the receiver and by changing the distribution of messages. Technological progress has in turn transformed organization forms, perceptions and sociability trough history. Habermas conceived the public sphere as based on dialogue, rationality, communication and construction of consensus and he was fearful about the internet and its tendency to create isolated political messages and lost massive audiences. As Rovira points out, his fears are a result of his conception of public sphere as a place that should be protected and maintained out of massification and reproducibility. The idea public sphere has a proper space and time, has known participants which are legitimated to participate in that sphere. His idea has a sacral and ritual dimension, an aura (Rovira 2014: 45).

Information and communication technologies make it possible today to reproduce the spaces for deliberation and creation where norms of authenticity fail completely. In the 2.0 net anyone can discuss, talk or think. Fugacity and repetition destroy the aura but facilitates generalization of access. These technological changes have consequences on forms of perception. Politics is not restricted anymore to political parties, institutions, leaders and mass media are not anymore the gatekeepers of what is explained and what is not (Rovira 2014: 45).

3.1.2 Main frames from anti-austerity movements: democracy and economic justice

The anti-austerity movements main claims were two: real democracy and economic justice with the withdrawal of austerity measures. These frames can be observed in the different protest activities carried out by anti-austerity movements in different countries. For research purposes and taking into consideration the difficulty to analyze all the different actions organized by the multiplicity of local assemblies in different countries and examine the frames in each one of them, the Manifest of the “outraged” on the occasion of the global mobilization on October 15th 2011 will be taken as the reference for the global wave of protest.

The frames of anti-austerity movements can be easily identified in the Manifest (Manifest of the “outraged”, 2011) that was a call for a global day of action. The call for the global mobilization of 15 October 2011 shows the transnational sharing of discourse, peaceful forms of protest and frames. The claim was for a true democracy where the people (as opposed to politicians and the financial elites) could decide their future and join together in a global non-violence protest:

“On October 15th people from all over the world will take to the streets and squares. From America to Asia, from Africa to Europe, people are rising up to claim their rights and demand a true democracy. Now it is time for all of us to join in a global non-violent protest. The ruling powers work for the benefit of just a few, ignoring the will of the vast majority and the human and environmental price we all have to pay. This intolerable situation must end. United in one voice, we will let politicians, and the financial elites they serve, know it is up to us, the people, to decide our future. We are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers who do not represent us. On October 15th, we will meet on the streets to initiate the global change we want. We will peacefully demonstrate, talk and organize until we make it happen. It's time for us to unite. It's time for them to listen. People of the world, rise up on October 15th!”

(Manifest of the “outraged, 2011).

Thus, the global day of action expresses in a single voice that people (as individual citizens) reclaim an authentic democracy different from the real existing democracy. According to protesters, in the existing democracy there is an elite that is composed by a tiny minority and decides the future of the majority of the population. This elite is linked to the financial world and is full responsible for the economic and financial

crisis. The manifest targets politicians that serve to that elite that governs for the minority and not for the majority of citizens who are given an unjust treatment. Thus, democratic and economic grievances are mixed in the demand for a complete social transformation. Moreover, the demands are made directed towards the global realm with a confirmation of the sense of shared problems and wishes for the future.

The claims expressed in the Manifest are connected with the characteristics the protest events signalled in previous sections. The practices and organization of the anti-austerity movements also reflect these main claims. Regarding the demand for a real democracy, the occupations of the public sphere and the encampments are an example of the democracy the protesters wish to live in. To exemplify this statement, some documents from the movements can be examined like the guide for the dynamisation of popular assemblies from Plaza del Sol in Madrid.

The guide states that it “by no means offers a closed model that cannot be adapted by consensus in every concrete assembly” (#Acampadasol, 2011) signalling that there is no preconceived manual. The guide begins by explaining the importance of collective thinking opposed to individualist thinking. It states that “the objective of collective thinking is to construct [...]. For this, active listening is a necessity [...]. Collective thinking is created when we understand that all opinions, ours and different ones, are necessary to generate the idea of consensus” (#Acampadasol, 2011). Collective thinking is a synthesis of individual ideas and intelligences, “individual intelligence for the common, to create from difference, understand difference as an element that enriches the common idea” (#Acampadasol, 2011). The guide states that it is important not to see the other as a competitor, to have a positive attitude when valuing what unites (instead of what separates) the participants, to think about the other as someone that will make me better, and not to react immediately to other people’s opinions. The guide signals that the assembly is in an ongoing learning process and time is needed to assimilate these ideas.

The guide for the Plaza del Sol protest camp emphasizes the importance of consensus that is achieved when there is no opinion against the proposal that is presented in the assembly. “There are no opposing positions, as happens when there is a vote. [The assembly] development has to be peaceful, respecting all opinions” (#Acampadasol,

2011). Moreover, if one does not agree with the decision, one is not obliged to engage with it. The assembly is meant to promote dialogue and getting to know each other.

Furthermore, the guide mentions the importance of the value of a smile in moments of tension and a conciliatory, positive, neutral and patient profile for assembly dynamizers. It also remarks on the importance of “prioritizing giving the floor to people that have not participated” (#Acampadasol, 2011). Another aspect that is included in the guide is the use of symbolic language for the collective expression of the assembly, in order to show agreement, disagreement, signal repeated ideas or too lengthy explanations. Regarding verbal language, it emphasises the importance of using positive language that is not aggressive and that facilitates conciliation, as well as inclusive language that does not endorse gender discrimination.

The guide also takes into consideration the importance of emotions, and recommends finishing the assemblies with a motivational message and a reminder of what unites all the participants. An inspiring text, a poem, an emotional quote, etc., are some examples. These were all common practices in the assemblies from these movements. Finally, the assembly guide reflects on horizontal organizational structures that promote equality between all members with no hierarchies. It is opposed to vertical organizations where only a few people decide and the others obey. The method is the assembly where people meet for a common goal.

3.2 The conception of deliberative democracy

The uprisings of 2011 challenge the existing conception of democracy in the EU. Disaffection with existing democracies was the main cause of the networked protest events. The shared perception that democracy isn't working (depicted in the 15M movement slogan: “They call it democracy but it isn't”) and the critique that societies suffer from democratic deficits raises questions on the need to build substantive democracy at European level. That is a challenge for democracy in Europe, its ability to make it possible for individuals to influence decisions that affect their lives, to work for more democracy and accountability at European levels. Ideas of democracy coming from social movements have a long history as we will see in the next section.

3.2.1 Democracy and social movements

Criticism to liberal democracy has been long expressed by different social movements that have theorized and experimented with other forms of democracy widening its liberal conception. Particularly, the labour movement has “put forward different conceptions of democracy from the liberal one, emphasizing collective and social rights over individual (negative) freedom as well as participation by citizens over delegation to politicians” (Della Porta 2013: 37). Direct, horizontal, self-managed conceptions of democracy were put into practise in protest campaigns. During 19th and 20th century, the working class conquered the right of citizenship and became members of the political community organizing in political parties (socialist parties integrated them in the system). The “masses” enlarged the rights to dissent and the open, direct, horizontal and participatory dimension of democracy (Della Porta 2013: 56).

The movements of 1968 were framed as anti-authoritarian, claiming for a “democracy from below” with an extension of civil rights and forms of political participation. They experimented internally with new democratic practices reflecting non-authoritarian relations. The new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s insisted on the importance of forms of democracy alternative to the liberal vision. They criticised the monopoly of mediation through mass parties and discussed about democracy as self-management. These conceptions were translated into reforms of the democratic state with a growth of political participation in public institutions and a political recognition of the right to dissent (Della Porta 2013: 57).

As we have mentioned before, Tarrow stresses the similarities between the Occupy movement and the women’s movement of the 70s. In the same line, Wainwright indicates how the antecedent of the women’s movement developed new thinking about organising for political change with the “same strong sense of power from below that comes from the dependence of the powerful on those they dominate or exploit. There’s the creative combination of personal and collective change, and the bringing together of resistance with experiments in creating alternatives here and now” (2012). Already in the 60s and 70s there was the same “spurning of hierarchies and the creation of organisations that are today described as ‘horizontal’ or ‘networked’ – and that now with the new techno tools for networking have both more potential and more

ambiguity” (Wainwright 2012). This previous movements also attempted to break with the institutions and their narrow definition of democracy.

Previous social movements’ of the 60s and 70s pressure for democratization threatened the authorities that reacted by talking about an “excess of democracy”, an expression showing how the ruling class feared the mob, “a fear of intelligent and organised opposition, which was hence less easy to counter” (Wainwright 2012). The grounds for these fears lay in the distinctive nature of those movements and projects, in their “ways of organising (combining autonomy and co-operation, creating the participatory conditions for the genuine sharing of knowledge), the alliances they built (across the traditional divides of economics, culture, labour and community) and their vision (beyond state versus market, individual versus social), they held out in practice the possibility of an alternative, participatory and co-operative political economy” (Wainwright 2012).

The long history of social movements and the various waves of protests have widened the concept of democracy, stressing the importance of participation. The Global Justice Movement, becoming visible in the 1999 mobilization against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, developed a deliberative model based on participation. It is this conception what we explore in the following section.

In the deliberative conception of democracy importance is given to preference (trans)formation during discursive process oriented to the definition of the public good. It requires a transformation of preferences during the discussion, involving the effort of taking into account the point of view of the others. Communication, dialogue, rich and shared flows of information and knowledge, reaching consensus in the pursuit of general interest are core features of this concept (Della Porta 2013: 61). A good deliberation is based on “horizontal flows of communication, multiple producers of content, ample opportunities for interaction, confrontation on the basis of rational argumentation, and a positive attitude to reciprocal listening” (Habermas 1987, 1996). There is recognition of the plurality of perspectives. People are different in their approaches but face common problems which bind them together.

Deliberation increases citizen's trust in political institutions and legitimacy. Deliberative spaces creates a virtuous circle by improving citizen's information and decision-making capacity and it facilitates the overcoming of own individual interests in the pursuit of a general interest. According to Offe, "the experience of deliberation can have desirable consequences at the individual level of participants (Fishkin 2009: 133 *sequ.*; Mutz 2008: 530). These include, among others, better information on the issue at hand, including the improved awareness of oppositional arguments; an increase in political tolerance and the willingness to compromise, as well as an increase in generalised social trust; an increase in the willingness to participate through voting and civic engagement, and as a result, a greater sense of political efficacy; greater consistency of opinions" (Offe 2011: 464).

Moreover, Offe considers that deliberation processes are an "exercise of an informal authority (or a kind of 'soft power')" once they are institutionalised as part of the political process. He adds that "deliberative institutions also have the potential to widen the social inclusion of participants (and contrary to so much of the anti-intellectual polemics against the idea of deliberation being an idiosyncratic leisure time activity of the educated middle class that is *en vogue* among conservative academics)" (Offe 2011: 465). In fact research on this field has found evidence that the people who are less likely to participate in traditional partisan politics are most interested in deliberative participation.

Another positive effect of deliberation is that "there is a built-in incentive to present policy preferences, even if they are driven by self-interest, as being adopted for the sake of values or reason—a rhetorical move that can subsequently trap the speaker in a dynamic of self-destructive hypocrisy: once you have started to present your interests as being congruent with *common* interests or *shared* values, you have started to force yourself to remain consistent and continue to argue in those terms, which may well lead to actually *betraying* (in either of the two senses of the word) the interests that were motivating the operation in the first place" (Offe 2011: 466).

Criticism to deliberative model stresses some limitations like the exclusion of the public sphere of counter-discourses (like ethnic minorities, workers, etc), the institutional bias which leads to the development of deliberation mainly inside public institutions, the

reproduction of inequalities (as resources, authority, opportunities, etc are not equal for everyone), and it excludes fundamental conflict, the recognition of the public sphere as a site of contentious struggle and whose conflicts cannot be solved discursively (Della Porta 2013: 64).

Participation and deliberation are democratic qualities in tension with those of representation and majority decisions. The liberal conception looks at the public institutions as the only democratic arena. Actors carrying conflictual interests are seen as anti-systemic (Sartori, 1976). Deliberative democracy goes beyond the traditional criticism of liberal democracy as not including sufficiently citizens. Here democracy is not a way of counting votes but a way to form preferences through inclusive and open dialogue. It is profoundly different to the vision that legitimates representative democracy based on the principle of majority decisions (majority wins). It is the opposite of a democracy of experts or professionals that are elected to govern and must not be disturbed until new elections arrive (Della Porta 2013: 84).

3.2.2 Deliberative democracy in the anti-austerity movements

The movements call for the creation of public spheres based on inclusiveness, equality, transparency. Inclusive means all citizens have to be considered in the new space, be able to express their voice and influence decisions. They have to be given respect and recognition. These ideas necessarily involve equality, openness and transparency. Consequently, these public spheres are distinguished for being against hierarchy and leadership. Deliberation excludes power, may it derive from coercion or any other form. This non-hierarchical approach expresses in its praxis another conception of power that, again, refers to the rejection to seize state power and locate it to the people through collective decision making.

Information technologies create and reproduce, through digital networks, public spaces of deliberation which are not limited to parties, institutions or leaders. Anyone can participate in this space and talk in first person, without delegation. New technologies reinforce deliberation as distributed networks, decentralization, absence of hierarchy, anonymity, openness, flexibility, transparency, inclusiveness, creativity, non-delegation, self-organization, etc, are proper defining traits of internet culture and organization.

The creation of multiple public spaces, highly inclusive, based on equality and plurality, that mushroomed since the Arab revolts prefigure a new conception of democracy. This new conception “follows a vision profoundly different to that which legitimates representative democracy based on the principle of majority decisions. Democratic quality here is in fact measured by the possibility to elaborate ideas within discursive, open and public arenas, where citizens play an active role in identifying problems, but also in elaborating possible solutions. It is the opposite of a certain acceptance of democracy of the prince, where the professionals elected to govern must not be disturbed” (Della Porta, 2012: 276). There is a commitment for direct democracy, as some participants point out, intended to “seize back control of our lives” (Razsa 2012: 239). Rejection to party politics, the embrace of radical diversity or the emphasis on inventing new forms of democracy from below are common features with the previous cycle (Graeber 2011).

As it has been said, there is a long tradition of participatory democracy in social movements. The Global Justice Movement elaborated and diffused through social forums a conception of democracy based on discourse, recognition of equal rights of all (not only delegates and experts), and the capacity to speak and be respected in a public and plural space open to discussion. What is new in the uprisings of 2011 is that they create public spheres as spaces for deliberation in open assemblies. The occupation of public squares becomes a central characteristic of the movements. Their innovation is to turn the occupation of a public square into a place for experimenting new forms of democracy. The deliberative and participative process takes place in that occupied square. Decision-making is done in this public sphere which is a metaphor of openness and transparency.

The occupied square becomes a living example of how another concept of democracy can work. The square becomes a small city (with its library, garden, hospital, etc) which is organized under those new principles. The contribution of these uprisings is to open previous deliberation spaces (social forums, encampments, etc) to the public places (Romanos 2011: 9). The openness of the space is probably the most striking and politically important difference with previous social movements. The occupation of public squares is different from the previous cycle of protest in at least three ways: first, the space is often being occupied (semi-)illegally; second, the space is in the middle of

an urban centre; and third, the people within the space are welcoming to strangers, curious people, cameras, etc (Maeckelbergh 2012: 2014).

The innovation was not only in the spatial organization of the square it is the combination of occupation of public space with the meeting structures and assemblies. The meetings were the movement's way to embody their own demands and the physical geography of the public and open space meant that the meetings intended as an embodiment of a 'real' democratic process were open to far more people than similar meetings within the alterglobalization movement had ever been. Of course this openness cannot be considered as a perfect organisation form. It involved many problems, exclusions, and difficulties (Maeckelbergh 2012: 215).

3.3 Social movement outcomes in the European Union

This thesis deals with the consequences of social movements at the European level. It analyses how anti-austerity movements have influenced, changed or had an impact in the European Parliament at the level of discourse. Research on the outcomes of social movements has been for a long time an understudied issue (Della Porta, Alcalde, Parks 2010) even though in the last decades research on outcomes has accelerated and reached the same level of knowledge as any other field in social movements. As Alcalde pointed out "social movement studies are anchored on nation state level. They focus on national political opportunity structures, relation to national political parties, etc, but much less on EU and/or international level" (Alcalde, 2010).

During the 1950s and 1960s social movements were considered as irrational and separate from the real of politics. Understandably, these collective behaviour theorists that didn't include protest activities as a form of politics were not interested in studying the outcomes of social movements. However, resource mobilization and political process theorists that considered movements as political actors didn't address movement's impact due mainly to methodological difficulties (Giugni 2008: 1582).

Research on the field "began by hypothesizing that political influence would be produced by the movement's literature's three main determinants of mobilization: resource mobilization and organizational forms or "mobilizing structures" (...), framing strategies (...), and political opportunities and contexts" (Amenta et al. 2010: 143).

Therefore, protest strategy and political opportunities were responsible for achieving the movement's goals whereas today's research takes into account mechanisms or processes of change. That is "the combined effect of various factors such as public opinion, powerful political allies and different mobilization strategies (...) and instead of the movement, the analysis centers on targets and asks why politicians, political parties, market actors or citizens actually listen to protest mobilization" (Uba and Romanos 2016: 2).

Since late 1960s we can find some systematic studies about movements' impact and recently we have an important amount of research mainly about policy effects of social movements assessing whether, when and how movements produce an influence (Giugni 2008: 1583). Research has focused in three main types of outcomes: political change, biographical consequences and cultural change.

First, policy outcomes are the ones that have received more attention in the field. Giugni defines political consequences as "those effects of movement activities that alter in some way the movement's political environment" (Giugni 2008: 1583). Gamson (1990) led the field on social movement consequences and identified as key outcomes: acceptance (being accepted by political authorities as legitimate actor) and new advantages (new gains for the movement). Kitschelt (1986) proposed another typology to identify the outcomes of social movements distinguishing procedural, substantial and structural impacts. Other scholars have defined and classified outcomes in different manners putting into evidence the lack of consensual definition and classification in the field (Earl 2004: 509). Other early studies by Piven and Cloward (1979) and Schumaker (1975) were also around the analysis of success and failure of social movements.

Early work aimed at answering two main lines of inquiry: one refers to disruption and whether disruptive movements are more successful than moderate ones, the other refers to movement organization and whether strongly organized movements are more successful than less organized.

Gamson's book *The Strategy of Social Protest* (1990) is an early systematic effort to analyse the impact of social movements. He concluded that "first, groups with single issue demands were more successful than groups with multiple issue demands; second,

the use of selective incentives was positively correlated with success; third, the use of radical and violent tactics is associated with success, while the receipt of violence made it more difficult; fourth, successful groups tended to be more bureaucratized, centralized and to escape factionalism. Furthermore, the author examined the role of contextual variables and found that time did not matter much, while political crises did so” (Giugni 2008: 1584).

Gamson’s study received a number of criticism and his conclusions are far from consensual. The question of the effectiveness of organization was a scholarly dispute with Piven and Cloward that contrary to Gamson considered that social movements were more successful if they were loosely organized and used disruptive tactics. However, their success was only temporal and once the protest was over concessions were withdrawn (Piven and Cloward 1979). Another important criticism to Gamson’s work came from Goldstone (1980) who concluded that organizational and tactical characteristics had no effect on group success. He suggested a model “that stresses the crucial role of broad, system-wide national crises for the success of social movements” (Giugni 2008: 1585).

More recent scholars have paid attention to contextual factors. Edwin Amenta and his collaborators contributed to this shift from internal to environmental and contextual factors. The political mediation model, proposed by these authors, maintains that “the impact of social movements depends on their organization and mobilization, but it is mediated by certain aspects of their political context” (Giugni 2008: 1586). This context prevents or facilitates movements from being successful. One factor that influences the impact of social movements to policy change is the political opportunity structures (for example, movement’s allies in the institutional arena). Another factor is the role of public opinion, as Paul Burstein’s work has signalled (Burstein 1998, 1999, Burstein and Freudenburg 1978).

According to Amenta, “recent research has suggested that high mobilization is necessary for a movement to gain political influence and that certain mobilizing structures and political circumstances boost the productivity of movement efforts, but also that conditions and activities that spur mobilization often present problems for challengers beyond the attention-getting phase of politics” (Amenta et al. 2010: 143).

The focus has moved from how movements succeed and fail to analyse under which conditions social movements are influential, which are the mechanisms which explain why, when and how movements can and do bring about political or social change, how they achieve their stated goals or lead to negative unintended consequences (Uba and Romanos 2016: 2).

Even though policy outcomes are in numerical terms the most studied aspect in social movement's consequences, there are ambivalent findings in the aspects mentioned in this section. Amenta signals that the main political consequences of social movements are the extension of democratic rights, the formation of new parties and changes in policy (Amenta et al. 2010: 143).

The second type of movement outcomes that can be found in the literature are the biographical consequences. Outcomes and consequences of social movements have also widely addressed the individual level of analysis, "the effects on the life-course of individuals who have participated in movement activities, effects that are at least in part due to involvement in those activities" (Giugni 2008: 1588). Even though this aspect has been less studied than policy outcomes the findings are much more consistent. In general, these studies "point to a strong and durable impact of involvement in movement activities. These studies suggest that activism has a strong effect both on the political and personal lives of the subjects" (Giugni 2008: 1589).

Recent studies have found that not only strongly committed but also people who have participated in social movement's activities with a lower commitment carry the consequences of their involvement during their life. This expansion of the scope of the research has facilitated the understanding of how individual participation in social movements can have a broader cultural impact in life-course patterns of a generation. McAdam and his collaborators made interesting findings in this regard (McAdam 1999; McAdam et al. 1998; Van Dyke et al. 2000; Wilhelm 1998). Their research concluded that participation of few people in a social movement can bring about change on a wider population (Giugni 2008: 1591).

Finally, the third types of outcomes in the literature are the cultural consequences. Cultural consequences of social movements have been the least studied aspect of movement's consequences. Studies on cultural effects have focused on three dimensions of culture: social-psychological dimension (individual values, beliefs and meanings), cultural production and practices (signs and their meanings), and a "broader dimension [...] in which culture frames the worldview and social situation of communities and or subcultures" (Giugni 2008: 1591).

Earl summarizes different types of movement outcomes according to three main perspectives on culture: social psychological studies, symbolic studies, and communities and cultures (Earl 2004: 511). The first one focuses on changes in values, beliefs, and opinions. The second include cultural products and cultural practices (literature, media coverage, visual culture, music, fashion, science and scientific practices, language and discourse). Finally, the third perspective on culture includes collective identity and subcultures.

Observing literature on these types of effects we find, first, studies following social-psychological approaches that have examined the role of social movements in shaping the general public's values, beliefs, and opinions (d'Anjou 1996; d'Anjou and Van Male 1998; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Rochon 1998). Secondly, studies following the approach of culture as cultural production and practices have analysed the impact of movements on "literature (Farrel 1995; Pescosolido et al. 1997), media coverage (Gamson 1998), visual culture (Oldfield 1995), music (Eyerman and Barretta 1996; Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 1998), fashion (McAdam 1988, 1994), science and scientific practice (Epstein 1996; Moore 1999), language (McAdam 1988; Rochon 1998), and discourse (Gamson 1998; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Katzenstein 1995)" (Giugni 2008: 1592). Finally, broader approaches referring to worldview and communities we find studies looking at "the effects of movements on the formation and reproduction of collective identity (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Taylor and Whittier 1992) and subcultures (Bordt 1997; Fantasia 1988; Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979; Kanter 1968)" (Giugni 2008: 1592).

Cultural consequences, where this research lies on, is the least developed. The reasons are due to the limitations of pursuing research on that aspect as cultural changes take a

long time to appear after the movement's irruption. As Bosi, Giugni and Uba point out "to find out about the broader cultural outcomes of such recent events (referring to the Colored Revolutions or the Occupy movement) one has to wait for a longer time" (Bosi, Giugni and Uba, 2016: 2). Moreover, as Earl stresses, the conceptualization of culture itself is a challenging aspect as "culture has meant many things to many scholars across time" (Earl 2004: 509).

That being said, the movements of the crisis appear in the context of information revolution characterized by the acceleration of time and high-speed diffusion of information. Even though the reproduction of slogans, symbols, and repertoires of action are typical of waves of protest, the intensification of these processes due to changes in information and communication technologies could be a factor that facilitates the study of cultural outcomes in a short-term perspective. The technological context plus the fact that the movements of the squares were part of a global wave of protest may facilitate the study of its cultural outcomes.

Referring to language and discourse, many scholars have discussed that social movements are producers of linguistic changes. Gamson and Modigliani have stated the importance of framing, how movements shape discourse with new interpretative frames and how they are able to achieve new cultural advantages when their frames are being adopted (Earl 2004: 516). Rochon links discourse and value change affirming that "ideas are so tightly linked to language and discourse that changes in culture (read: ideas) can be read from linguistic changes", so "cultural change is invariably accompanied by innovations in the language" (Earl 2004: 521). From his point of view, we can say movement discourse has successfully change values if linguistic innovations become normalized.

This thesis contributes to this literature by paying attention to cultural outcomes of social movements, specifically the effects on discourse. As it has been mentioned this aspect has received less attention as compared to political and policy outcomes probably due to theoretical and methodological obstacles so more research should be done in that line. At the same time this is one of the most interesting aspects in the study of social movements and protest activities as Giugni points out "it is perhaps precisely in being

able to altering their broader cultural environment that movements can have their deepest and lasting impact” (2008: 1591).

The current research focuses on changes on discourse, as a part of broader cultural outcomes that can already be perceived at national level. The movements do not speak about Europe but the new ideas that they bring about could have an influence at the European level.

Chapter 4. Methodological framework for the case study

This chapter presents the choices of data sources and methods used in this research. The chapter begins includes the data and sources that have been used in the research. It explains the process of data collection and analysis presenting the selection of discourses in the European Parliament and the interviews to Members of the European Parliament, which are the two main data sources of the thesis. It follows the explanation about other documentary data sources used in the research: previous research and movement's evidence. Then, the qualitative method of frame analysis is introduced and explained in relation to its utility to disentangle the influence of anti-austerity movement's ideas of democracy at the level of discourse in the European Parliament. Moreover, the contextual elements of political opportunity structures and discursive opportunities are described as important aspects that have been observed in order to evaluate the effects of the movements under study.

4.1 Data, sources and methods for the evaluation of influence of anti-austerity movements in the European Parliament

The thesis is based on a qualitative analysis approach to achieve its research goals. The qualitative approach grants more freedom, which is a limitation, but also permits not looking at a phenomenon with the same old perspective. In that sense qualitative analysis is more creative and allows an unrestrained exploration. However, analysing transnational activism involves dealing with problematic methodological issues. Two main challenges are signalled by previous research. The first one is identifying and assessing the impact. The second is how to make sure the impact is due to the role played by the social movement and not by other factors that may have intervened (Alcalde, 2009: 83). Although the problem cannot be completely solved, this thesis proposes the use of frame analysis to track reactions from the European Parliament to the main claims made by anti-austerity movements. Moreover, the research includes the consideration of contextual elements with the introduction of the approaches of political opportunity structure and discursive opportunities that will be discussed below.

The thesis is based on different data sources: speeches from the EP, interviews to MEPs, documentary data sources from the anti-austerity movements and previous research on these movements.

4.1.1 Debates in the European Parliament

First, the research has selected different speeches from the EP. On the one hand, debates on the State of the Union from 2010 to 2017 and, on the other hand, seven debates on the Greek debt crisis from 2010 to 2015.

The debates on the State of the Union are chosen to trace frame development by analysing debates on different points in time: before and after the movements (taking as a reference the peak mobilization year of 2011). Moreover, these debates are observed because the State of the Union was originated with the objective of making political life of the EU more democratic and transparent. The State of the Union debate was instituted by the Lisbon Treaty with the 2010 Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission¹ and it states that:

“Each year in the first part-session of September, a State of the Union debate will be held in which the President of the Commission shall deliver an address, taking stock of the current year and looking ahead to priorities for the following years. To that end, the President of the Commission will in parallel set out in writing to Parliament the main elements guiding the preparation of the Commission Work Programme for the following year”.

Furthermore, the Framework Agreement states that the President of the European Commission is expected to present the work programme to the Parliament. The State of the Union addresses a general debate on the political situation of the Union. Thus, the analysis of these debates provides a general view of the EU and possible changes.

The first debate on the State of the Union was in 2010 (the first that is included in the observation). This is a limitation for the research because there is just one debate previous to the uprisings of 2011. To better trace changes caused by the movements from 2011 other previous debates should be taken into account. To bridge this limitation, the thesis includes other data sources necessary to answer the research question. The other data sources are mentioned below in this section.

¹ See Official Journal of the European Union, “Interinstitutional Agreements. Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission”, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:304:0047:0062:EN:PDF>

The seven debates on the Greek debt crisis are: 1) the preparation for the European Council meeting from 25-26 March 2010, 2) the debate on the ECB annual report for 2008 and on the report on the 2009 annual statement on the Euro area and public finances from 25 March 2010, 3) the conclusions of the European Council meeting from 25-26 March 2010 taking place on 7 April 2010, 4) the debate that took place on 19 May 2010 about the outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the ECOFIN meeting which discussed the political relevance of the EU 2020 strategy in the context of the financial and economic crisis as well as the consequences of the financial and economic crisis on the EU 2020 strategy and its governance, 5) the debate on the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency from 15 January 2014, 6) the debate on the review of the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014 and 7) the debate around the conclusions of the European Council of 25-26 June 2015, the Euro Summit of 7 July and about the situation in Greece.

The first three debates analyzed took place before the first bailout from 2 May 2010. After that bailout there were protest spreading against it Greece. The last four debates were celebrated after the first bailout. The debate taking place in July 2015 is relevant for the appearance of the Prime Minister of Greece Alexis Tsipras and enables the comparison of his positions with the previous Prime Minister Samaras, that has been observed in debates from 15 January 2014 and from 2 July 2014. The reason for considering the debate on Greece is that it is an example of confronting narratives of the crisis and austerity.

The different speeches in the EP have been studied using a qualitative content analysis approach. I have used computer aided qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti) to facilitate the observation. The speeches have been scrutinized under two main broad categories of classification: the frame of democracy and the frame of austerity (the crisis and the response to it). Samples of transcribed texts have been compiled for the analysis following the hypothesis mentioned above: the origin (EU country) and the position in the left-wing vs right-wing spectrum of the MEPs are two aspects that organize the evaluation of the speeches.

In order to examine the austerity and democracy frames in the speeches, different categories have been used. For austerity, the categories are economic crisis, Greece, response to the crisis, taxes, profits vs citizens, solidarity, social Europe, and inequality. The categories of economic crisis, Greece, response to the crisis and taxes are indicative of the position of the MEP observed. They contribute to the understanding and explanation of the MEP ideas and positions. The other categories: profits vs citizens, solidarity, social Europe and inequality are based on claims from anti-austerity movements. For the democracy frame, the categories are: elites vs citizens, trust, transparency, and listen to citizens. These categories refer to claims from anti-austerity movements. The observation of this aspects shed light on the correlation between the ideas and positions from the MEPs in the debates and anti-austerity movements' claims and ideas.

The debates have been assessed taking into consideration whether the frames of the economic crisis and the frames of democracy of the anti-austerity movements are present in the EP and to what extend they are. The diffusion of frames from the movements to MEPs explains the degree of influence of the anti-austerity movements on the MEPs.

4.1.2 Interviews to Members of the European Parliament

The second data sources are qualitative interviews to MEPs. Even though interviewing is a time consuming qualitative method of analysis, it is suited for the purposes of this research. According to Parks “the semi-structured interview has been particularly recommended for investigating political (and discursive) opportunities, as they minimise the “voice of the researcher” on the subject. [...] interviews should reduce interviewer bias as well as encourage full and descriptive answers by beginning with wide, open-ended questions [...] with more specific or routine questions asked at the end of the interview” (Parks, 2008: 65).

The criteria for MEPs selection were guided by the hypothesis of the research. According to the hypothesis, MEPs from countries where austerity policies are applied and have strong anti-austerity movements are more prone to be influenced by the movements. That's why I started with MEPs from Spain which are supposedly the ones to be more influenced by the movements (starting first with left-wing MEPs and then

follow with right-wing MEPs). Thereafter, I have interviewed left-wing MEPs from Italy, Portugal, Ireland and the Netherlands. Finally, right-wing MEPs from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany and Belgium have also been interviewed. The Belgian MEP from the EPP does not represent the view of his political group in the EP, however, it has been included in the analysis.

Having found evidence of influence from the movements to left-wing MEPs in the countries more affected by austerity policies, I have further interviewed left-wing and right-wing MEPs from countries not (or less) affected by austerity measures and without strong (or weak) anti-austerity movements. The countries that have been selected are Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. In some cases, assistants to MEPs have been interviewed when there was no possibility to directly interview the MEP.

A total number of 20 semi-structured interviews have been conducted between May 2018 and April 2019, each one lasting around one hour. They were done by telephone or Skype and three interviews were answered by email directly from the MEP. The languages used for the interview were English, Spanish, French and Catalan and in writing there is one interview in Portuguese. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded. A translation of the interviews into English has been made by the author of the thesis in order to introduce the references in chapter 7. There were three interviews that were conducted to the MEP's assistant and one to the President of the EP advisor. The other all carried out directly to MEPs. The full list of interviews can be checked in the methodological appendix in annex 5, with information about the date of the interview, the name of the MEP, the political party and group, and the country of origin.

MEPs were directly asked in the interviews about the influence of anti-austerity movements in order to assess the level of impact from the movements. In the first place, MEPs were asked about their ideas about democracy, the main element a democracy should have, what democracy is and how it should be, if existing democracy works and if democracy is currently in danger. In addition, MEPs were asked about their opinion on direct democracy mechanisms, transparency and citizen participation. In the second place, to examine the transfer of ideas from the movements to MEPs, they were asked whether they have been influenced by anti-austerity movements and if they have taken

any democratic innovation. In the third place, they were asked if the debate about democracy has widened due to the mobilizations, if there had been any internal changes inside their parties or political groups, and if they have perceived changes depending on political parties or groups and countries of origin of the MEPs. In the fourth place, MEPs were asked about their opinion on whether there was a differentiated influence depending on the EU institution, whether the EP has been more influenced by the movements than other EU institutions and the MEPs' opinions about the criticism made by social movements regarding the indifference of the institutions. Finally, MEPs were asked about their opinion on whether far right parties have capitalized the ideas of democracy from the movements. This question was included because MEPs from far right political parties use expressions from the movements or claims from the movements, like the importance of direct participation, or the criticism of distant elites from citizens. Thus, the aspects mentioned are observed to understand the MEPs' conception of democracy. Their position about austerity is indirectly examined through the ideas about democracy.

4.1.3 Other documentary data sources

The third source for the research is documentary data, referring to relevant documentation provided by web pages from the anti-austerity movements and documents produced by the movements have been used for the analysis. The manifest from October 15th 2011², the global day of action, provides the main frames of the anti-austerity movements. It determines the democracy frame and the economic crisis frame and it has been taken directly from the web page created for that particular global protest event.

This thesis also relies on secondary data that is used to help to meet the objectives of the study and answer the research question. This work has taken into consideration previous research on anti-austerity movements based on different countries and focused on different aspects of the movements (some of them are: Castells, 2012; Della Porta, 2012; Fuster 2012; Galais, 2018; Gamson, 2012; Giugni, 2012; Glasius and Pleyers, 2013; Graeber, 2011; Hardt and Negri, 2011; Ishkanian and Glasius, 2013; Kaldor and

² "Manifest of the "outraged" on the occasion of the global mobilization on October 15th 2011", <https://www.nodo50.org/esperanto/artik108en.htm>

Selchow, 2013; Maeckelbergh, 2012; Martí and Silva, 2014; Mateos, 2013; Piven, 2013; Razsa, 2012; Romanos, 2011; Rovira, 2013 and 2014; Tarrow, 2011; Wallerstein, 2011 and 2013; Flesher, 2017). The great amount of literature considering the wave of protest of 2011 and analysing the mobilization from diverse angles has facilitated the understanding of the movements and the design of the present thesis.

4.2 Measuring shared frames

The research builds on frame analytic methodology to understand and explain the consequences of the anti-austerity movements and to examine the reactions from the European Parliament and the impacts of the frames of the movements in the EP.

The concept of frame was developed by Goffman and introduced in social movement studies by Snow and Benford. Framing processes is a central dynamic in understanding the character of social movements together with resource mobilization and political opportunity processes (Benford and Snow, 2000: 612). From this perspective, social movements are agents engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning. The movements are involved in the politics of signification (Snow, 2004: 384).

According to Benford and Snow (2000: 614), framing “denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organizations or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretative frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity are referred to as “collective action frames” [...]. [These] are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization”.

Collective action frames are the outcome of negotiating shared meaning. It is a way of organizing experience, giving meaning to events, building a self-image and guiding action. Actors seek to answer the question “what it is going on here?”. Frames define events as problems and present the solutions to these challenges (Hyvönen, 2014: 94). Moreover, “frame analysis focuses attention to the ways political speech persuades not

only through argumentation but also (perhaps even primarily) indirectly, through images, perceptions, associations, emotions and so forth. The framing approach allows us to focus on issues such as the underlying logics of actions, world-views, political imaginaries and the intertwining of power, interest, and self-images of actors” (Hyvönen, 2014: 95). In the context of world politics events, framing permits analysing meaning and see how actors influence each other’s perception of what happens.

There are three core framing tasks introduced by Benford and Snow: diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing. First, diagnostic framing refers problem identification and attributions. It deals with the consensus regarding the source of the problem, focusing blame or responsibility. Some case studies refer to injustice frames to look at the ways movements identify the victims of a given injustice. Second, prognostic framing involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem. This means the deployment of a plan or a strategy to address the situation. It answers the question of what is to be done. And finally, motivational framing fosters action including the construction of vocabularies of motives (Benford and Snow, 2000: 615).

Collective action frames are not static or reified entities. Thus, “frames are continuously articulated and elaborated during the course of conversation and debate among the interactants within a discursive field as they go about the business of making sense of the events and issues with which they are confronted” (Snow 2004: 403). A common criticism by many academics about framing is that it trends to analyse frames as fixed even though framing is an ongoing process. Frames are continuously contested, reproduced, transformed, etc, during the course of social movement activity. They are the product of an “ongoing interaction that involves both frame articulation and frame elaboration within discursive fields” (Snow 2004: 403). Taking this criticism into consideration, this analysis has paid attention to frames at different points in time and across the territory. This has given a dynamic analysis of frames.

A useful categorization in the study of shared frames in transnational movements is diffusion of frames between various groups to a wider public sphere. It looks at how a frame travels among different groups, different levels and across national borders. Diffusion may occur actively through movement’s actors or passively through external channels such as the media. It takes place when the transmitter and the adopter share

some basic cultural or structural characteristics and when they are linked directly through relational contacts or indirectly through the media (Parks, 2008: 21). Snow and Benford have developed a typology of diffusion. First, reciprocation takes place when both the transmitter and the adopter actively participate in the process. Second, adaptation occurs when only the adopter takes an active interest. Third, accommodation occurs in the opposite situation as adaptation. Finally, contagion happens when diffusion takes place between two passive actors.

Another useful concept for studying framing in transnational protest is bridging. According to Snow and Benford, bridging refers to the “linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” (Benford and Snow 2000: 624). Bridging deals with the fusion of two or more frames. For the present thesis, attention has been paid to diffusion instead of bridging as diffusion is a useful concept to explain the influence of anti-austerity movements in the European Parliament.

Framing processes have been addressed in a transnational perspective (cross-national diffusion of movement frames, strategies of public order control, etc.). Framing is a process that is relevant for the success of protests, especially at the transnational level where identities are negotiated amongst different groups (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 16). Furthermore, evidence shows that defining the goal in concrete message in some transnational campaigns has facilitated success (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 17). The density of networks is an important aspect to ensure diffusion and quick construction of strong and shared frames. At the same time, shared frames are important in securing outcomes.

The shared cultural background is a crucial aspect for the success of framing. In global politics this task is more difficult and challenging especially in the absence of a shared cultural background. In that context, for framing to succeed, actors need to use a number of frames that are understandable to most global players. Framing is a way of capturing attention. Actors, and especially world major players such as the EU, need to activate the frames they use in order to capture attention. If they fail to do so, the frame may break. This is important as the frames are an expression of the basic principles of the world order (Hyvönen, 2014: 95).

Collective action frames and framing processes are constrained by culture and political contexts. According to Benford and Snow “framing processes are affected by a number of elements of the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded. [...] The literature points to three factors that are particularly important: political opportunity structure, cultural opportunities and constraints, and the targeted audiences” (Benford and Snow, 2000: 628).

The concept of discursive opportunity structures, which refer to the broader context in which discussions and actions take place, suggests that framing processes are influenced by the enveloping political context. Thus, the different political conditions affect the influence of movement framing efforts. However, “political contexts and opportunities do not so much determine either the occurrence or substance of framing processes as delimit the spaces in which oppositional framing occurs and affects its public character” (Snow 2004: 403). The importance of context, which this research has emphasized, is further developed in the section below.

In the present research, I have proceeded focusing on an analysis of meanings emerging from distinguished frames from anti-austerity movements and from the EP regarding the idea of democracy and the idea about the economic and financial crises and the austerity policies adopted as a response to it. The Manifest of the “outraged” on the occasion of the global mobilization on October 15th 2011³ has been used as the main document to identify the two main frames of the anti-austerity movements. This call for a global mobilization contains the master frames of the movements. As Snow signalled, “master frames were originally conceptualized as collective action frames that have expanded in scope and influence such that they color and constrain the orientations and activities of other movements within cycles of protest” (Snow, 2004: 390). In large-scale mobilizations involving numerous and heterogeneous groups, master frames function as “an important integrative mechanism across groups and movements at particular moments in time as well as during broader cycles of protest” (Snow, 2004: 390). The Manifest of 15th October includes the shared frames from anti-austerity movements in different contexts, as it is a call for a global mobilization: against the financial elites and

³ October 15th – United for a Global Change. Manifest of the “outraged” on the occasion of the global mobilization on October 15th – 2011, <https://www.nodo50.org/esperanto/artik108en.htm>

bankers' greed and for a true democracy. The identification of these frames from the Manifest of 15th October 2011 has been confronted with previous research on anti-austerity movements.

Once the master frames of the anti-austerity movements have been specified, the EP speeches, documents and interviews to MEPs have been examined and the frames (regarding democracy and the economic crisis) identified. The frames are then analysed focusing on the meaning given to democracy and the crisis in contrast with the movement's frames. The comparison sheds light on the influence of the anti-austerity movement's frames on the EP. The observation of the frames used by the EP helps us to understand the institution's political agency and the wider political context where protests occur.

4.3 Contextual elements

4.3.1 Political Opportunity Structures

To analyze the influence of anti-austerity movements in the EP the thesis uses a theoretical strand from social movement research that is centered on the concept of political opportunity structure (POS), useful for this research purposes. This strand "stresses the facilitating or constraining role played by institutional structures and power configurations [...]. Reacting to the earlier internal focus on social movement resources and strategies, the political opportunity model emphasizes the role played by the wider political context in which social movements operate" (Koopmans and Statham, 1999: 227).

Political opportunities were originally referring to national contexts. When adapting it to the contexts beyond the nation-state and extending it to international institutions, the notion of multilevel opportunity structures was developed. Multilevel political opportunity structures was used when talking about transnational activism and it was first referred to the characteristics of International Governmental Organizations offering political opportunities and constraints for social movements addressing both domestic and global problems (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 8). Multilevel political opportunity structure refers to "the different contexts at different levels that can be favorable to collective action" (Alcalde, 2009: 65).

In analyzing the paths of transnationalisation, Sikkink and Keck (1998) introduced the concept of “boomerang effect” to refer to social movements mainly operating in authoritarian countries searching external, international allies. A second path of transnationalisation was signaled by Putnam (1988) with the “double level games”. With this expression he referred to social movements addressing their governments with the intention to influence international political decisions. Regarding the EU, research on Europeanization and European integration has increasingly directed attention to the role of civil society. The enduring debate on good governance and democratic deficit has facilitated this attention to the involvement of civil society and the acceptance of EU policies (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 8).

The EU as a power center offers political opportunities to social movements. Reflections on the effects of political opportunities on protest at transnational level observed that “IGOs tend to be formally closed (lacking electoral accountability), but informally open (thanks to the bargaining culture of diplomacy). As for the configuration of power, nation states tend to represent potential allies and opponents, occupying the role that is usually played by political parties at the national level” (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 9).

This research looks at opportunities and constraints offered by EU institutions, in this case the EP. It follows the theoretical framework used in previous research and elaborated by Kriesi et al (1995) that signals three main dimensions of political opportunity structures in international institutions: formal access, informal access, and activist’s configuration of allies and opponents. Observing formal access, informal access and the configuration of allies to international institutions we see a considerable variation between institutions due to its complexity and fragmentation.

First, regarding formal access, the United Nations institutions have traditionally been considered open and many civil society organizations have participated in UN activities. On the other hand, institutions like the World Trade Organization have offered limited access to social movement organizations. Regarding the EU, there has been a growing trend towards the creation of channels of access for civil society organizations. Social movements have targeted different institutions in the EU but their degree of openness varies significantly (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 9).

The European Commission is targeted by organizations that seek to influence the EU, especially when they try to influence policy and legislation at the early stages. The Commission has apparently encouraged civil society involvement with different types of consultation meetings but this appearance hides many constraints that social movement organizations have to face when willing to access the EC. On the one hand, the Commission takes into consideration a type of information that is very costly to produce and can only be offered when social movements are institutionalized, have resources and employees to generate this information. On the other hand, the fragmentation of the Commission, with many Directorates General and different internal interests, hinders social movement's efforts to influence the institution. In practice, consultation from the Commission is restricted to privileged partners with more resources available for participating. The Council of Ministers and the European Council work behind closed doors and are the most secretive EU institutions. Thus, they may be the target of social movement's protests but they do not afford formal access to civil society organizations (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 9).

The European Parliament is not a target for protest such as the Council of Ministers or the European Council but it is considered the most open institution in the EU regarding political opportunities. The European Parliament is also open to actions such as letter-writing and email campaigns and exhibitions. However, conventional lobbying in the EP requires (as with the Commission) expertise and staff from social movements. The EP is the democratic institution of the EU and offers opportunities for both conventional and unconventional actions with the mentioned constraints (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 10).

Second, regarding informal access to international institutions there are also broad differences. The UNICEF, for example, is extremely open to civil society organizations and their involvement in research or policy consultations. In the EU, the Commission has different levels of access depending on the DGs. However, according to previous research the DGs that are friendlier (and likely to become institutional allies) to movements are less influential in the Commission. In general, informal access in the EU is basically exclusive of business lobbies (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 11).

Finally, regarding the configuration of allies and opponents “forms a relational opportunity structure’ of the totality of actors in the international system” (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 12). The distributions of links between different actors are flexible and change due to transforming events or contingent factors. These changes may reconfigure the alliances among actors. Research has confirmed that allies (as well as their position and influence and that of the opponents) are an important factor in securing outcomes (Della Porta and Parks, 2013: 12).

As stated by Koopmans and Statham, the political opportunity model “shares an important weakness with the resource mobilization model, namely, an inability to deal adequately with the discursive content of social movement mobilization” (Koopmans and Statham, 1999: 227). The model has difficulties in explaining what research findings shows: that opportunity structures do not facilitate and constrain all movements to the same extent and in the same way. To overcome some of these limitations, a second strand of theory has been taken into account: the framing approach concentrated on the discursive aspect of the mobilization.

4.3.2 Discursive Opportunities

The thesis combines the two theoretical strands in social movement research: the political opportunity model (explained above) and the framing model. In the framing approach, “the chances for the mobilization and success of social movements are determined by the ability of those movements to develop interpretive "frames" that can effectively link a movement and its cause to the interests, perceptions, and ideologies of potential constituencies” (Koopmans and Statham, 1999: 228). The framing approach pays attention to frames and discourses that provide a context and indicate their effects.

Of course, the model has also limitations, especially in explaining the reasons for success and failure of frames and the reasons that explain differences in the impacts of similar frames in different political contexts. A proposal by Koopmans and Statham to overcome these problems is to introduce opportunity structures into the framing model which means a convergence of the two perspectives. On the one hand, the political opportunity model deals with institutional structures, power relations or alliances. On the other hand, the framing model contributes to explain the mobilization of symbolic resources by social movements to achieve their goals. The common ground between the

two perspectives is referred to as discursive opportunity structure by Koopmans and Statham and determines “which ideas are considered "sensible," which constructions of reality are seen as "realistic," and which claims are held as "legitimate" within a certain polity at a specific time” (Koopmans and Statham, 1999: 228).

The inclusion of discursive opportunities approach is justified because the political opportunity perspective leaves no room for discourse. Discourses are an important element in determining the eventual outcomes of social movements as they are continually challenged and altered by the wider social and cultural context (Parks, 2008: 43). The fusion of the two theories complements both of them as the political opportunity approach has limitations in explaining different outcomes in similar circumstances and the framing approach has problems in explaining different success of similar frames in different circumstances (Parks, 2008: 44). As Snow explains “the analytic utility of the concept of discursive opportunity structures resides in its focus of attention on the ways in which broader political contexts affect framing processes and the discursive fields in which they are embedded” (Snow, 2004: 404).

Discursive opportunities come from a variety of sources. For this thesis, we consider two variables for describing discursive opportunities in the EU: the perceptions of legitimacy or democratic deficit and ideology. The perceptions of legitimacy are connected to discourses on the democratic deficit in the EU and the enduring debate shared by many sectors in the society such as EU institutions, academics and the public. The democratic deficit and lack of legitimacy is perceived and has been discussed in the institutions of the EU. Moreover, the institutional discourse on this topic has been connected with that on governance.

This perception of legitimacy is important as it represents an opportunity for social movements. The lack of legitimacy means distrust among citizens, so institutions have to react to this skepticism in order to avoid the rejection of the rules they elaborate and impose. Thus, “the basic idea of opportunity here is that those groups that demonstrate some form of moral authority in that they represent a section of public opinion [...] will be in a good position to exploit the institutions’ weakness (especially the Commission as an unelected body) in terms of a lack of legitimacy. In demonstrating that decisions have been taken in line with - or at least with an awareness of - the preferences of the

public, the EU institutions may claim more (input) legitimacy – an option attractive to them” (Parks, 2008: 46). The question of legitimacy in the EU is not a minor issue as EU legislation has an impact on everyday lives of European citizens. Furthermore, considering the EU as a global actor, it also affects the lives of citizens outside the EU.

Regarding the European Parliament, if social movements are able to claim that they represent some European citizens they will be more likely to be considered. The EP is considered to some extent as the natural ally of social movements in the EU and as MEPs have the duty to represent EU citizens the representation claim by social movement can be an opportunity.

The long debate in the EU about the democratic deficit has taken a new turn with the crisis of representative democracy and the contestation that the anti-austerity movements embody. There is a renewed and contested meaning about how a democracy should be. For analytical purposes the thesis refers to the concept of democratic deficit but without disregarding the new and contested meanings of democracy in the EU, as have been exposed in chapter 1.

The second variable used in this thesis for describing discursive opportunities in the EU is ideology. The issue this thesis is dealing with, austerity is clearly influenced by the ideological points of view. Some issues, like this one, fit into the traditional left-right ideological continuum. The rejection of austerity policies comes from left-wing actors, so it is a clearly left-wing issue.

Logically, traditionally left-wing issues are expected to be more welcomed from left-wing actors and more hostile to right-wing actors. Thus, movements will have troubles in advancing these ideological claims as not all actors will be open and favorable to listen and even less to take the claims into consideration. Moreover, EU institutions work mostly on the basis of consensus. This implies that non-ideological issues may have an advantage over ideological ones as actors from the whole political spectrum will be more willing to take them into consideration.

The method used to analyze the political and discursive opportunities that anti-austerity movements have in the context under consideration has been as follows. First,

information has been gathered from the various selected sources (mentioned above). Second, this information has been combined with data from the interviews. All this information has been coded and finally analyzed.

PART II. CASE STUDY: THE INFLUENCE OF ANTI-AUSTERITY MOVEMENTS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Chapter 5. State of the Union debates: 2010-2017

This chapter analyses the debates on the State of the Union from 2010 to 2017. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the State of the Union addresses a general debate on the political situation of the EU where the President of the European Commission addresses the priorities for the following years. It provides a context where changes and transformations regarding democracy and austerity frames can be traced. During the debate the Council President also outlines the Council priorities and the political groups in the Parliament present their positions. The European Parliament continues the dialogue with Commissioners in order to ensure that the Parliament's priorities are taken into account. The State of the Union adopts the annual Commission Work Programme. Based on this, the Parliament, Commission and Council exchanges views on initiatives for the following years and agree on a joint declaration on annual interinstitutional programming that includes aspects of major political importance considered a priority in the legislative process.

The Commission President's speech tends to be consensual, seeking to achieve a broad support from the members of the EP for the Commission's Work Programme. The State of the Union was originated with the objective to achieve a more democratic and transparent EU. Thus, the goals of the debate are communication, transparency (towards citizens, with the communication of priorities of the EU) and political accountability to the Parliament. The debates on the State of the Union give the Parliament the possibility to participate in political programming and to shape the Union's political and legislative agenda, together with the Commission and the Council. Thus, the debate attempts to provide more transparency to the process of forming EU political priorities, to contribute to the quality of political accountability of the executive and to tackle the democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process. The President of the Commission delivers the speech in response to the President's representative function and it is a sign of increasing presidentialisation of the European Commission that began with the treaty of Nice.

This chapter proceeds with the analysis of each debate from 2010 to 2017 following the frame analytic methodology, explained in the methodology chapter. The main frames of

the anti-austerity movements are used to examine whether they have generated reactions from the Members of Parliament (MEPs) and whether there are differences depending on the origin of the MEPs (countries more affected by austerity policies and countries with stronger anti-austerity movements and the opposite context) and the position in the ideological political spectrum (left or right). The preference in the observation is given to the MEPs from countries that were more affected by the economic and financial crisis and where austerity policies were deployed. These are Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Ireland. Moreover, these are the countries where the anti-austerity movements were stronger. Italy is an exception, as anti-austerity movements appeared but didn't have the same intensity and strength as in the other countries mentioned. Nevertheless, it has been included in this group of countries where there is a greater expectation to find influences from the movements in the MEPs. To confirm the hypothesis of this thesis, the opposite case has been observed. The countries that were less hit by the economic and financial crisis, not so affected by austerity policies and with weaker or no anti-austerity movements have been observed in preference. These are Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. References to MEPs from other countries have been included to better understand and assess the global context of the debate. The ideological differences (regarding the MEPs identification with left-wing and right-wing) organizes the analysis of the debate as, according to the hypothesis of the thesis presented in the methodological chapter, left-wing MEPs are expected to be more prone to have been influenced by the ideas of democracy and austerity from the movements than right-wing MEPs. The main frames, referred to democracy and austerity, organize the explanation of the analysis in this chapter. Each section, based on each debate from 2010 to 2017, starts with the examination of the President of the Commission speech and then is followed by the analysis of the MEPs reaction. In order to analyse the conception of democracy and the ideas about austerity, direct citations of discourses from MEPs are included. They are cited in English which is in some case the original languages used by the MEP and in other cases the translation offered by the services in the European Parliament and broadcasted in their website is used. The chapter ends with the main conclusions from the debates observation.

In order to organize the analysis and trace the similar aspects with the anti-austerity movements, several categories have been used for the analysis for the austerity and democracy frames. As it has been explained in the methodology chapter these are for

the austerity frames: economic crisis, Greece, response to the crisis, taxes, profits vs citizens, solidarity, social Europe, and inequality. For the democracy frame, the categories are: elites vs citizens, trust, transparency, and listen to citizens. Not all of them have been included in each section.

The first debate on the State of the Union took place in 2010, after the financial crises of 2008 and after important mobilizations such as the protest in Iceland (that began in 2008) had taken place. However, this first State of the Union debate occurs before the peak of protest of 2011. According to the literature on outcomes of social movements, the consequences of protests can be observed after a long period of time has passed from the mobilization to the effects it may or may not bring about. For this reason, even though the lack of a previous debate from 2010 is a limitation, the expectations are that no outcomes will be identified in the 2010 debate. Moreover, other discourses are analysed in the following chapters that complete the observation of the movements' influence on MEPs.

5.1 The 2010 State of the Union debate in the European Parliament⁴

The debate of 2010 was, as mentioned above, the first time the debate on the State of the Union was held. The President of the EP Jerzy Buzek opened the sitting emphasizing its importance, while asking for attendance. He stated that it was a discussion on priorities and decision-making and had to be in accordance to citizens' expectations. He reminded that "The Treaty of Lisbon has given us special powers, but greater power means greater responsibility". Buzek emphasized that "We are responsible to the 500 million citizens who elected us" and explained that "Once a year, we are going to discuss matters such as the current condition and state of the Union, political, economic and social priorities, how the Union should operate and how decisions are to be made in order to meet the expectations of our citizens. This is part of the democratic oversight of the European Union's executive institution, the European Commission".

Moreover, Jerzy Buzek, emphasized the importance of transparency, responsiveness (doing the work which has been entrusted to the EP by the citizens of Europe) and

⁴ See Annex 1: State of the Union debates.

listening to citizens. He stated that the “European Parliament has already done a great deal to bring itself closer to the citizens and to set out the possibilities for democratic supervision and scrutiny of the executive institution”.

The President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso presented a work plan for the following 12 months and enumerated the challenges for the EU over the following year signaling the priority to deal with the economic crisis and governance. He also mentioned “restoring growth for jobs; building an area of freedom, justice and security; launching negotiations for a modern EU budget; and pulling our weight on the global stage”. Barroso also signalled sustainable and inclusive growth as the main goal for the EU and made a speech centred on the economic crisis. He emphasized the EU to be open to the world and to its people. Referring to banks, he signaled their responsibility in the economic and financial crisis and their obligations to facilitate its management. He stated that “We also want the banks and the financial institutions to contribute to solving the problem that they helped to create. That is why we are in favour of taxing financial activity”.

Barroso’s speech included references to inclusion, people’s needs and poverty stating that “We must also tackle problems of poverty and exclusion. We must make sure that the most vulnerable are not left behind. This is the focus of our ‘Platform Against Poverty’. It will bring together European action for vulnerable groups such as children and old people”. Moreover, he referred to human rights, respect for minorities and against racism affirming that “Everyone in Europe must respect the law and governments must respect human rights, including those of minorities. Racism and xenophobia have no place in Europe”.

Regarding the references to democracy from Barroso, he mentioned the importance of delivering to people and the centrality of citizens affirming that “What really matters is what the institutions deliver to the people. What matters is the difference Europe makes in their daily lives”. Furthermore, Barroso answered to statements from MEPs about citizen lack of confidence by saying that this problem is more complex and is also a reality at a national level. He explains that “while confidence in the European institutions sometimes poses problems, there is sometimes a much greater problem, which is confidence in national politicians and national governments, and the truth is

that no one has mentioned this. [...] at difficult economic times, the tendency is for public opinion to have little confidence in political institutions, either at national or European level”. Barroso skips the questioning of confidence related exclusively to the European institutions and mentions the importance of building confidence among political institutions in general “not just at European level, but among political institutions in general”. He adds that “This means that all political decision makers are faced with a major challenge and a major responsibility”.

5.1.1 Democracy frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs’ references about democracy are mainly based on the issue of citizen trust in the EU. From GUE/NGL group, Lothar Bisky (Germany) refers to the lack of trust of European citizens and mentions protests against austerity that are taking place in many European cities. He explains that “The protest goes far beyond the states hit by the crisis. Today, the unions are striking in France and on 29 September, strike action will be taken in many towns and cities in Europe against the Member States’ austerity policies”. He also reminds that “Citizens were promised that the Treaty of Lisbon would make the European Union more social and more democratic” and warns that the “EU, including the Commission and the Parliament, would simply lose credibility if it now said that the Member States are responsible for the austerity measures”. From the Greens/EFA group, Reinhard Bütikofer (Germany), also refers to the loss of confidence and complained to Barroso that “Citizens had very little mention in your address. However, we also need the European institutions to show modesty towards citizens”.

Moreover, from the S&D group several MEPs also mention the problem of trust. Proinsias De Rossa (S&D, Ireland), coming from a country affected by austerity policies and with important anti-austerity movements exposes the necessity to develop a new social pact for Europe in order to rebuild the confidence of the people of Europe. Also Catherine Trautmann (S&D, France) makes a similar statement referring to the lack of confidence from European citizens stating that “Our fellow European citizens are experiencing an unprecedented crisis of confidence”. Finally, Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany) mentions the lack of transparency in the crisis management explaining that “We saw this during the crisis in Greece. The final document was negotiated by just two

people, Mrs Merkel and Mr Sarkozy, and their approach was: Mr Van Rompuy, please wait outside, leave this to us!”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs’ references to democracy are also mainly about the question of trust. First, Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE, Belgium) mentions the crisis of citizens’ confidence, according to the Eurobarometer, but at the same time the citizen demand for European economic governance. He states that “Trust in our institutions dropped last year to 42%. [...] if you look at the same Eurobarometer, you see that no less than 86% of the public want European economic governance. They believe that only the Union can provide solutions to the financial and economic crisis. However, they do not see this happening today, and that is the reason for their disappointment in our Union”.

Second, Mairead McGuinness (EPP, Ireland) also signals the crisis of confidence in democracy due to the crisis management and refers to Ireland and the consequences of the economic crisis. According to McGuinness, “There is a crisis of confidence in democracy because the public believes that there has been a failure of elected representatives to regulate financial markets and all markets. I think we have to acknowledge our weakness in this respect”.

Moreover, Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR, Poland) adds to the issue of trust the lack of credibility with the mismatch between what is being said and what is being done. He explains that “we must be more open and credible in what we deliver to the European Union’s citizens. The greatest problem of our Community is that one thing is said in our declarations, while the facts and what the citizens see being done is something completely different”.

Furthermore, Nigel Farage (EFDD, UK) also refers to the drop in confidence in the EU affirming that “there has been a dramatic drop in confidence as regards people’s belief in even belonging to the Union: a 10% drop in Germany; a 17% drop in Greece and a 9% drop in Portugal. Less than half of EU citizens think that being a member of the club is worth it”. Farage explains that the “reason why these polls are where they are is that people do not respect you because you cheated to get the Lisbon Treaty through”. He adds that “The EU has never had so much power, and yet it has never been so

unpopular” and criticizes the “ill-conceived political attempt to force people into a monetary union without ever asking any of them whether they wanted to be there”.

Finally, Andreas Mølzer (non-attached, Austria) from the Austrian far right FPÖ is the only MEPs to mention direct democracy in the debate complaining that “There is barely any direct democracy in the Union. It is treated with contempt, like, for example, in the first Irish referendum or in the referendums in France and the Netherlands”. Mølzer adds that the EU “is no longer really prepared to secure the interests of the European peoples and the interests of European citizens”.

5.1.2 Austerity frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs expose critical views regarding the economic crisis and the response to the crisis. On behalf of the GUE/NGL group, Lothar Bisky (Germany) denounce that billions of euro have been given to banks saying that “Citizens have also seen rescue and economic recovery packages amounting to billions of euro flow to the so-called system-relevant banks, and they have seen dangerously high national debts pile up everywhere. Now they are asking themselves who is responsible for this, particularly when, despite a better economic outlook, they are being hit by the Member States’ austerity measures”. Bisky alerts that these “austerity measures will result in rising prices for public services, cuts in social benefits, cuts in education services, pay cuts, an extended working life in the face of uncertain pensions and often precarious employment situations”.

From the same political group, the Portuguese MEP João Ferreira complains about the EC President’s discourse who said that “worst of the crisis has been overcome” which he considers a denial of reality. Ferreira affirms that “the European Union is still mired in a deep crisis, with no end yet in sight, as attested by the rising levels of unemployment and poverty in many countries”. Moreover, he considers that the EC President announces in the debate the same “practices and policies of the past – the very ones which have brought us to this bleak state of affairs” which are “an attack on social and labour rights”. Ferreira adds that the policies proposed are a continuation of “liberalisation and privatization; [...] deregulation of international trade” and says that “This route will only exacerbate the economic and social crisis at EU and global level”. Ferreira also reminds the rejection of these policies “as is clear from the protests that

have taken place in many countries, with millions of people demonstrating against the measures that Mr Barroso is proposing here”.

Furthermore, Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Greens/EFA, France) also alerts about the huge cost of the crises explaining that the “losses due to the crisis are reaching EUR 50 000 billion. This is equivalent to five centuries of public investment in development aid. That would build 10 billion schools in the African countries. That is the situation the world finds itself in, Mr Barroso”. On the other hand, from the S&D group Martin Schulz contradicts Barroso saying that “The state of the Union is not good. It would have been a good thing if, in your stocktake, you could have gone into why it is not good”. Schulz explains that the reason of the negative response to the crisis is that Barroso and the EC “are not adequately performing the essential roles ascribed to you in the treaties. During the crisis, I have often asked myself ‘Where is the Commission?’”. Moreover, Schulz defends a strong EU budget to even out the social imbalance, against the opinion of finance ministers, and asks Barroso to show “opposition to Mrs Lagarde, Mr Schäuble and the finance ministers of other countries! If you need help in this, Mr Barroso, please give us a call. We will come to help you”.

On the aspect of taxes, the need of a financial transaction tax is exposed by left-wing MEPs from all political groups and different countries. From the S&D group, the German MEP Martin Schultz expresses the urgency of this tax to limit speculation and says that “If you do not do this, we will utilise the instrument of the citizens’ initiative. Please believe that! Then we will bring these people that I am talking about onto the street, until the speculators have made their contribution to sorting out the finances in Europe”. Schulz insists that the involvement of banks paying their part in the economic crisis is necessary and “the financial transaction tax must be put in place. We must involve the banks, particularly the speculation sector, in the aftermath of the economic crisis”.

Moreover, the Greek MEP Stavros Labrinidis from the same political group asks for a “decisive action against tax havens” especially “At a time when workers and pensioners in our countries are suffering difficult cuts, it is unacceptable for a few private individuals and businesses to remove at least EUR 1 trillion from our economies through this form of ‘legal’ tax evasion”. Stavros Labrinidis joins the demand for “a tax

on credit transactions so that those who got us into the crisis ultimately pay their share. A 0.05% tax globally would bring in over EUR 400 billion a year in vital revenue needed for sustainable growth and employment in the Member States”.

Furthermore, from the GUE/NGL group Lothar Bisky demands “Effective financial market reforms [...] like a ban on hedge funds, or a ban on speculation on raw materials and food derivatives, or even a financial transaction tax, but also the move away from the flexicurity ideology”. He states that these “are now most definitely the responsibility of the European Union. This is something that we all need to involve ourselves with over the next few months” remarking the obligations of the EU in the management of the crisis.

The idea of giving priority to profit before citizens appears in the debate from MEPs from all political groups from different countries, not necessarily the most affected by austerity and stronger movements. In fact, several German MEPs express this idea. First, Lothar Bisky (GUE/NGL, Germany) denounces the huge amount of money that has been spent on rescuing banks while people have been left behind. He explains that “In the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, a large amount of money, billions of euro, have gone to rescue or to stand as security for the banks. It has not reached the people with real social needs or been put into education”. Second, on behalf of Greens/EFA, Daniel Cohn-Bendit (France) says that “while we are putting this pressure on the Greek people in order to resolve the problem, I have not heard you talk about the fact that now, in August, there have been negotiations between the Greek Government and the large French and German arms companies on continuing arms sales by European businesses to Greece”. Thus, he denounces that the EU puts the profit before the people.

In the same line as mentioned by MEPs from GUE/NGL and the Greens/EFA, Schulz denounces the profits from banks in opposition to cuts on pensions. He explains that “In August, the Guardian published statistics which revealed that HSBC, Barclays Bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland made more than EUR 20 billion in profit last year, EUR 9 billion of which they are putting aside as bonuses for their managers. This is happening at a time when the governments in the European Union are cutting pensions

in Europe. I expect you to come up with proposals for how we can eliminate this social divide”.

Moreover, on the idea of a social Europe some references are made regarding the problem of unemployment. The German MEP Martin Schulz (S&D) emphasizes the growth in unemployment and the consequences this situation had on EU citizens. He states that “This growth in unemployment will lead to a process of mass impoverishment and to a risk scenario for people. More and more people – including those still in work – are afraid: afraid for their jobs, afraid for their social stability and afraid for their future”. The British MEP Glenis Willmott (S&D) also rejects cuts in public services and stresses its consequences on employment and economic recovery. According to her, “across the EU, drastic cuts in public services are adding to the numbers of unemployed, taking money out of the economy and reducing essential services. How does this help the economy and avoid a job crisis? It really does not make sense. It puts the recovery at risk”.

Finally, on the aspect of inequality there are few references. Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany) mentions this issue reminding the growing income inequalities and warning about the thread it represents for democracy in the EU. Schulz explains that “On the one hand, we have an increasing number of income millionaires – there are thousands more every year – and, on the other, we have millions of people who are being reduced to poverty. This social divide is the greatest threat to democracy in Europe”.

On the other hand, from right-wing MEPs there are no significant references to austerity. Only the Irish MEP Mairead McGuinness (PPE) takes a critical stance and expresses worries about unemployment and doubts about a strict enforcement of the Stability and Growth Pact. She explains that Ireland is in an economic and banking crisis and “Unemployment is the biggest problem we face here, and if we now have strict enforcement of the Stability and Growth Pact, I worry about the impact it might have on employment, with increasing numbers of young people disillusioned and in a state of crisis because of the situation”.

5.2 The 2011 State of the Union debate in the European Parliament

The debate on the State of the Union in 2011 was the first debate after the peak of protest against austerity. The debate continued to be centered on the economic crisis and its management. Issues related to the political crisis (with the crisis of confidence, trust, etc.) were slightly more present in this debate than in the previous one in 2010. References to democracy were linked to the crisis management and responses to the crisis.

In the first place, the President of the EC José Manuel Barroso reproduces in his speech the main narrative of the economic crisis made by the political and economic establishment. He says that “The causes of the crisis are known: Europe has not met the challenges of competitiveness. Some of our Member States have lived above their means”. Moreover, he adds that “In the financial markets, there has been irresponsible and unacceptable behavior”.

Barroso mentions the feelings of fear of many citizens and the “danger of national withdrawal, or even nationalistic withdrawal”. However, he reminds the great successes of the EU stating that “Populist responses bring into question the European Union’s great successes: the euro, the single market, even the free movement of people”. Moreover, Barroso considers the EU is facing a political crisis of confidence and a risk of fragmentation.

Furthermore, the President of the EC refers to the situation in Greece stating first that “Greece is and will remain a member of the euro area”. However, he remarks that “Greece must implement its commitments in full and on time. In turn, the other euro area members have pledged to support Greece and each other. As stated at the Euro Area Summit on 21 July: ‘We are determined to continue to provide support to countries under programmes until they have regained market access, provided they successfully implement those programmes.’ That is why I created the Task Force for Greece”. He proceeds explaining the action plan for Greece which he considers will have great and positive impacts. Barroso exposes that “EUR 15 billion remain to be spent in Greece from the Structural Funds. This will support the Greek economy with an urgent programme of technical assistance to the Greek administration. A programme of EUR 500 million to guarantee European Investment Bank loans to Greek SMEs is

already under way. [...] The Commission is also considering a wider guarantee mechanism to help banks start lending again to the real economy. All of this represents huge support for Greece's fight-back and Greece will have to deliver concrete results. It must break with counter-productive practices and resist vested interests".

On the issue of taxes, Barroso states that the financial sector needs to contribute to society. He says that "Member States – I should say taxpayers – have granted aid and provided guarantees of EUR 4.6 trillion to the financial sector. It is time for the financial sector to make a contribution back to society". Barroso exposes that he is "very proud to say that today the Commission adopted a proposal for the Financial Transaction Tax". He refers to fairness saying that "I think it is fair to tax financial activities that in some of our Member States do not pay the proportionate contribution to society" and adds that "it is not only financial institutions who should pay a fair share. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to tax evasion".

Regarding the response to the crisis Barroso is clear that the way out of it is with the deployment of structural reforms. He states that "all Member States need to promote structural reforms so that we can increase our competitiveness in the world and promote growth". Barroso further explains that "Reforms to our labour markets, public finances and pension systems require a major effort from all parts of society. We all know these changes are necessary, so that we can reform our social market economy and keep our social model, but it is imperative that we hold on to our values – the values of fairness, of inclusiveness and of solidarity".

The idea of a social Europe is vaguely present in Barroso's speech. He limits it to acknowledge the problem of youth unemployment admitting that "In some countries, the situation of our young people is dramatic". He also exposes his proposal to combat youth unemployment: "I want to call on companies to make a special effort to provide internships and apprenticeships for young people. These can be supported by the European Social Fund. [...] This I believe is the most urgent social matter: to respond to the anxiety of our young people who cannot find a job". He finally adds that his proposal will deter European youngsters from protesting and affirms that "It is much better to have an apprenticeship, a traineeship, than to take their anxieties onto the streets expressing their lack of confidence in the Union as a whole".

Moreover, Barroso also mentions poverty in the EU and his proposal regarding food supply for those in need. He says that “we also need to act to help the 80 million Europeans at risk of poverty. This means that the Council must finally approve our proposal to safeguard the programme for the supply of food for the most deprived persons”.

The President of the EC does not make significant references to democracy. However, some elements that he mentions are first, the problem of decision-making in the EU. He explains that “Today we have a Union where it is the slowest member that dictates the speed of all the other Member States. This is also not credible from the markets’ point of view; this is why we need to solve this problem of decision-making. A Member State has of course the right not to accept decisions. That is a question, as they say, of national sovereignty, but a Member State does not have the right to block the moves of others; the others also have their national sovereignty and, if they want to go further, they should go further”.

Second, he considers that deepening the integration process will help to overcome current problems. Barroso affirms that “at the root of the crisis we are currently experiencing, there is a political problem. It is our will to live together that is being tested. That is why we must take the European Union to a deeper level. That is why we have built common institutions. That is why we must protect European interest”.

On the third place, Barroso mentions the Arab spring and rhetorically expresses the support for democracy. He exposes that “The Arab spring represents a deep transformation that will have far-reaching consequences, not only for the people in those countries, but also for us, for our Europe. That is why Europe should be proud. We were the first to stand alongside the Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans who wanted democracy and freedom. That is why Europe supports these legitimate aspirations, particularly through our partnership for democracy and for prosperity. The Arab spring, I hope, also opens the door to the hope of peace for the whole region, to the idea of a Palestinian State that must live in peace with the State of Israel, which is what Europe would like to see”. Finally, Barroso ends his speech with Nelson Mandela’s quote: “It

always seems impossible, until it is done” which is quite indicative in a year marked by protests.

5.2.1 Democracy frames

On one hand, left-wing MEPs express more worries about democracy than right-wing MEPs. Left-wing MEPs stress the lack of transparency, trust, decision-making problems in the EU, the mismatch between what was said and what was done, the lack of accountability and the need to improve democracy. In the first place, on the criticism of the influence of the elites before citizens, Lothar Bisky (GUE/NGL, Germany) signals the democratic problem when decisions are agreed with banks and not parliaments. He states that “More and more decisions are being taken on an intergovernmental basis without prior agreement with parliaments, but instead in agreement with bank bosses”.

Moreover, Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL, Portugal) referred to the protests of the Portuguese people against the policies discussed in the EP which, according to her have not touched the power of the financial sector. She explains that “In the face of the most serious crisis of recent decades, to which the neoliberal policies of the European Union have contributed, the Commission is insisting on deepening capitalist and neoliberal integration, adorned with a few fig leaves of demagoguery that have not even tweaked the fundamentals of the powerful financial sector. [...] That is why we support the struggle of the workers and the people for the break and change that is needed, as we will have in Portugal next Saturday with the demonstrations by the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP)”.

In the second place, regarding trust, the German MEP Lothar Bisky (GUE/NGL) states that “the European Union is increasingly losing confidence and support. The eurosceptics are gaining ground and that is a fact. The European Union is in the midst of a crisis of political credibility”. Bisky links the weak existing democracy with the growth of Euroscepticism and affirms that “The idea of European unity is a left-wing idea which has been defended by many left-wingers past and present. We will continue to defend this idea in the future and we will make sure that it is not surrendered to the profit interests of the markets and the speculators”.

On behalf of the Greens/EFA, Rebecca Harms (Germany) relates injustice with the loss of confidence of European citizens in the EU. She exposes that “Our real problem is that over the last few years we have created more injustice in various areas using a number of different measures. If we do not resolve this, we will not be able to control and bring an end to the centrifugal forces which exist not only because of the tendency of Member States to act alone, but also because the citizens of Europe are losing confidence in the ability of the Union to function”. In a similar way, Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany) explains that “hopelessness among young people and despair among their parents, who are now beginning to realise that the project which they believed in is no longer delivering what it used to” is provoking “huge mistrust in the European Union and in the concept of community values”. For this reason, Schulz says that “We need to counteract this mistrust by taking clear and specific action”.

In the third place, the transparency issue is raised by Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL, Portugal) who denounces the lack of transparency in the EU, where decisions are taken behind closed doors. She tells Barroso that “We all want Eurobonds [...], but the truth, and the problem, is that the secret agent that we currently have, who has secret plans and a licence to kill, is Chancellor Merkel”. And she adds that “Today we have found out about the Eureka plan. If you have any information about this plan, Dr Barroso, I should very much like you to give it to us, because we too would like to know about these secret plans to, supposedly, save Europe from crisis”. Moreover, Maria Eleni Koppa (S&D, Greece) stresses that “Greece has undertaken to discharge its obligations in full” but warns that “if the Greek people are to stay on the difficult path of sacrifice, the message from Europe must be clear and unequivocal”.

Furthermore, some MEPs refer to the aspect of transparency signaling the mismatch between words and actions in the EU. Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) explains that “although the state of the Union is not good, I join those who have expressed their conviction that the unrest that can be felt throughout Europe is not a result of what Europe does, and much less what Europe says – which is often applauded in this Chamber – but rather the lack of Europe, what Europe does not do, and the contradiction between what it says and applauds, and what it actually does”.

Also Alfreds Rubiks (GUE/NGL, Latvia) stresses the difficulty to defend some words in front of unfair realities like the farmers in Latvia. He says that “we must take care that our actions agree with our words” and asks “how should a Latvian farmer understand the word ‘cohesion’ if you are planning to pay only 52% of the average [rate] per hectare in the European Union to a Latvian farmer in 2020?”. Moreover, Philippe Lamberts (Greens/ALE, France) remarks that Barroso’s words are in line with those from *Indignados* but the real policies he implements are in a different direction. He says that Barroso has “managed to find a tone that the indignados from Puerta del Sol would not have disowned when it comes to the banking sector”. And complains that “We would have liked to have seen the same indignation when, on 21 July, you accepted the conditions that the banks dictated to you for the second Greek rescue package. We would have liked to have seen the same indignation when you adopted new rules for banks”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs express a few worries about democracy stressing the perils of populism and the crisis of confidence in the EU. One example is Mario Mauro (EPP, Italy) who refers to fear as a driving force for populism. He explains that “The economic crisis is also an institutional crisis, and it is right, as you said, that we should relaunch the European project and seek new solutions to the crisis that we are experiencing. Fear is actually the driving force of a populist and nationalist vision, and it is courage that is, by contrast, the value that created Europe and has given it peace and prosperity”.

Otherwise, MEPs from far right and Eurosceptic political parties openly confront the EU, the mainstream conception of democracy and the political class. Thus, Nigel Farage (EFD, United Kingdom) emphasizes that Barroso is not elected by European citizens exposing that “our tomorrows people will look back at you and they will say: how on earth did this unelected man get all of this power and how did Europe’s political class sitting in this room decide that the Community method should replace national democracy? I think people will look back in astonishment that we have surrendered democracy”.

Moreover, Farage denounces the lack of accountability in the EU and the intolerance towards different views. He says that “certainly when you take away democratic

accountability it is clear that nobody really is in charge and it is developing as a Union of intolerance. Anybody who stands up here and dares to give a political view which is different from the received wisdom is written off as mad, insane, violent and fascist; we have heard it for years from these people”. Lastly, Farage defends the importance of listening to people using referendums and denounces the criticism they get from the EU.

5.2.2 Austerity frames

Differences attributed to the country of origin of the MEPs are not evident but the interpretation of the economic crisis and responses to it clearly differs between right and left-wing parties. Otherwise, far right and Eurosceptic parties are a different group as they don't share the same speech as right-wing parties and they are very critical to the crisis management and the political elite.

On one hand, left-wing MEPs, as expected, put more emphasis on the social consequences of the economic crisis and the unfair response to it. First, regarding the response to the crisis they expose critical opinions about it. From the GUE/NGL group, João Ferreira (Portugal), says the speech from the EC President is “an attempt to silence the critics who had been accusing the Commission and its President of inaction and of systematic submission to the German directorate of Chancellor Merkel”. Moreover, Emilie Turunen (Greens/EFA, Denmark) opposes to cuts as a solution to the economic situation and states that “we cannot use cuts and savings to bring us more growth and employment – we need an investment plan and a jobs plan”. Also from the Greens/EFA group, Rebecca Harms (Germany) rejects austerity saying that “we are once again doing things that will lead to even greater injustice. We cannot rely solely on austerity measures”. She further exposes that “When we look at what is happening in Greece and in Ireland, the increase in the suicide rates in these countries alone is enough to make us blush with shame” and she explains her priorities and solutions saying that “We must consider how we can combat poverty in the European Union. We must resolve the issue of how we can invest in education. We must also make genuine investments in sustainable economic development, otherwise we will find that most of citizens are no longer prepared to support more Europe”.

From the S&D group there are also expressions of opposition to austerity policies coming from MEP Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D, Hungary). He says that “A policy of

austerity is not enough [...]. Without economic growth and job creation Europe will never break the shackles of debt". The Hungarian MEP also criticises the lack of decision-making and leadership in the response to the crisis.

Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany) also stresses the failure and injustice of the current economic model stating that "When we talk about the markets, we need to be specific. We are referring to banks which have gambled away billions of euros on the basis of the Anglo-American economic model that is still being sold to us today as the perfect solution". Moreover, Schulz asks the Heads of State or Government for market regulation in order to stop speculation wondering "when will you finally come up with some concrete proposals for regulating the markets? When will you finally put a stop to this devastating speculation involving financial products that no normal person can understand? When will the countless promises that have been made finally be followed up with action? These are the crucial questions". Schulz also acknowledges that "It is completely clear that if I, as a head of government, reduce the pensions of people in Germany, Greece, Finland, Slovakia or wherever, and then say that I have to stabilise the banks, and these are the banks with managers who are saying that they knew nothing about this young man's speculation and who then go home with compensation amounting to millions, despite their complete lack of awareness, then I can understand why the people are going out onto the streets and demonstrating. I can understand why this is happening".

Regarding the issue of taxes, João Ferreira (GUE/NGL, Portugal) criticizes the poor efforts to combat speculation. He states that "The financial transaction tax has been announced for the umpteenth time; doubts remain about its practical effects. For the time being, the most speculative products – such as derivatives – have been saved, with derisory taxes, whilst tax havens remain untouchable. Combating speculation has, therefore, had scant practical results". Also from the GUE/NGL group, the German MEP Lothar Bisky stresses that financial markets needed to be regulated and calls for a taxation of financial market transactions. Bisky says that "The Member States and the European Union have not put in place sufficiently effective regulation of the financial markets. As a result, the policy is likely to end up at the mercy of the speculators".

Furthermore, on the idea of putting profits before citizens, João Ferreira (GUE/NGL, Portugal) after accusing the EPP and S&D of the current crisis, he denounces that the workers have to bear the burden of the economic crisis. Ferreira warns that “strengthening the European Financial Stability Facility represents nothing more than transferring yet more public debt held by banks to the public sector; that is, onto the backs of the workers and the people”. The German MEP Lothar Bisky from the same political group, denounces that “The politicians are focusing on saving the banks and making available credit facilities of hundreds of billions of euros”. Contrarily, he says that “the ordinary people are being left to pick up the tab for the failed policy of deregulation and privatisation. Huge austerity programmes are being imposed on them, they have to work longer hours and their wages and benefits are being cut. They are at the mercy of the governments’ austerity programmes”.

From the Greens/EFA group, Rebecca Harms (Germany) denounces the injustice and warns Barroso that this has to change. She explains that “For years the players on the financial markets have been earning huge amounts, until it came to the crunch. Then the decision was made to nationalise the problems and leave the profits with those people who had happily been engaging in speculation. I believe that this is a big problem and that the citizens have understood that until now the stabilisation process has taken place at their expense”. Harms uses the same claim of the anti-austerity movements about the injustice of nationalizing the costs and privatizing the profits.

On the question of solidarity, Lothar Bisky (GUE/NGL, Germany) refers to the protests going on in southern Europe and Ireland and affirms that the solution to the crisis should have to be based on solidarity and more democracy. He says that “Social justice is simply being trampled underfoot and we cannot go on like this. The mass demonstrations in Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain are making this quite clear. [...] I would like to say that either we will take a joint route out of the crisis based on solidarity, which will allow the EU to emerge from the crisis in a better, more social, more sustainable and even more democratic form, or there will be no solution for the EU as a whole, with damaging after-effects that are hard to predict”. Moreover, he states that “We will continue to emphasise the value of solidarity between states and between people and the urgent need for it” and he clarifies that “Solidarity does not just involve financial aid. It also involves resisting the governments’ mania for austerity

measures. As the main representative of a genuine European institution, you should be able to support our call for a step back from this culture of austerity”.

From the Greens/EFa group, Rui Tavares (Portugal) also calls for “genuine solidarity; not the type of solidarity that we have now, which, I must confess, scares me a little more each time I hear it mentioned”. And lastly, from the S&D group Edite Estrela (S&D, Portugal) vaguely mentions the importance of solidarity when she stresses the need for action, as “citizens are sick of words”. She celebrates the proposal to stop tax havens and points out that “austerity and responsibility should be in harmony with solidarity”.

Finally, on the aspect of a social Europe, the Portuguese Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL) criticized Barroso’s proposal to offer internships to young people as a way to combat unemployment. She tells Barroso: “do not offer internships to the young people whom you mentioned demonstrating in the streets: offer them employment policies. They will thank you and so will we”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs share the idea stated by Barroso about the economic crisis that the problem is caused by Member States “living above their means”. On this regard and on behalf of EPP, Joseph Daul (France) clearly stated that there are “countries which, for decades, have lived above their means, [...] without wondering whether or not the money spent actually created growth and jobs”.

On behalf of ECR, Jan Zahradil (Czech Republic) exposes a different approach to the EU as he considers the Eurozone a political disaster and the EP as part of the problem. However, he shares that public overspending and lack of discipline are the causes that lead some countries to the verge of collapse. Zahradil also complains that regarding bailouts “the debts of some will be paid by the others”. Moreover, MEPs from far right and Eurosceptic parties blame the euro and the European integration for the economic problems of some countries. One example is Laurence J. A. J. Stassen (non-attached, Netherlands) from the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), who states that previous mistakes regarding the euro have now negative consequences on the Netherlands and therefore “Dutch citizens are being asked to foot the bill”. She affirms that the causes of

the crisis can be found in southern European countries behavior but other countries, such as the Netherlands, will have to pay for other's mistakes.

Finally, the conception of solidarity is clearly differentiated from left-wing MEPs and from anti-austerity movements' ideas. From the EPP group, Joseph Daul (France) expresses the urgency "to demonstrate our solidarity towards Greece and towards all the member countries that are seeing their markets attacked and their rating downgraded". However, Daul affirms that "At the same time, it is urgent that these same countries adopt and implement measures that are a match for the events, for European solidarity comes at that price". According to Daul solidarity is attached to the urgency to save the euro.

5.3 The 2012 State of the Union debate in the European Parliament

The debate on the State of the Union in 2012 has more references to democracy and the references to the economic crisis decreases compared to 2011 even though the economic crisis is the main issue in the debate. In this debate, compared to the previous ones, democracy gains centrality.

The President of the EC José Manuel Barroso continues with the same approach to the economic crisis and the defense of structural reforms. He explains that "At its root, the crisis results from irresponsible practices in the financial sector, unsustainable public debt, and also a lack of competitiveness in some Member States". Barroso also admits the euro has structural problems. He proceeds affirming that Europe needs growth and to achieve that it has to be more competitive. Thus, Barroso states that "At the national level it means undertaking structural reforms that have been postponed for decades – modernising public administration, reducing wasteful expenditure, tackling vested interests and privileges, reforming the labour market to balance security with flexibility and ensuring the sustainability of social systems. [...] Our agenda of structural reform requires a major adjustment effort". Moreover, Barroso alerts that "It will only work if it is fair and equitable because inequality is not sustainable. In some parts of Europe we are seeing a real social emergency with rising poverty and massive levels of unemployment, especially among our young people. That is why we must strengthen social cohesion. It is a feature that distinguishes European society from alternative models".

The reforms proposed are seen as the only possible way, without any other alternative. Barroso acknowledges that “The Commission is very aware that in the Member States implementing the most intense reforms, there is hardship and there are – sometimes very painful – difficult adjustments, but it is only through these reforms that we can come to a better future”. Barroso adds that “They were long overdue. Going back to the status quo ante is simply impossible. The Commission will continue to do all it can to support those Member States and to help them boost growth and employment, for instance through the re-programming of structural funds”.

At the same time, Barroso admits that “Citizens are frustrated. They are anxious. They feel their way of life is at risk”. He also adds that “The sense of fairness and equity between Member States is sometimes being eroded. Without equity between Member States, how can there be equity between European citizens?”.

Presenting the proposal for a single European supervisory mechanism for the euro zone Barroso acknowledged the imbalance of power and privilege between banks and taxpayers. He says that “The crisis has shown that, while banks became transnational, rules and oversight remained national. When things went wrong, it was the taxpayers who had to pick up the bill”. Moreover, Barroso considers his proposals are ambitious and rhetorically asks “is it realistic to go on as we have been doing? Is it realistic to see what we are seeing today in many European countries? Is it realistic to see taxpayers paying banks and afterwards being forced to give banks back the houses they have paid for because they cannot pay their mortgages? Is it realistic to see more than 50% of our young people without jobs in some of our Member States?”.

Furthermore, Barroso defended against Eurosceptic saying that “it was not the euro which created the problem; it was the irresponsible behaviour of the financial sectors in many areas of the world, including the United States”. He insists that “This was part of the problem and that is why we need to regulate and to have credible supervision in the financial sector as well”. Moreover, he adds that “this was not the whole cause of the problem. There was also unsustainable debt created by our governments; this is the reality. I am sorry, some people prefer to hear just some part of the reality, but we have to look at the reality in full”.

Regarding the state and quality of democracy Barroso refers to the importance of accountability and mentions the lack of trust in decision-making. He explains that “Since the start of the crisis, we have seen time and again that interconnected global markets are quicker and therefore more powerful than fragmented national political systems. This undermines the trust of citizens in political decision-making and it is fuelling populism and extremism in Europe and elsewhere”. Moreover, Barroso makes general statements about the role of the EP as essential for European democracy and affirms that “The times of European integration by implicit consent of citizens are over. Europe cannot be technocratic, bureaucratic or even diplomatic. Europe has to be ever more democratic and the role of the European Parliament for this is essential”.

5.3.1 Democracy frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs express their worries about the lack of democracy in the EU and alert about antidemocratic tendencies. Moreover, they remark the need to take into consideration citizen’s needs and gain their trust in the EU. On the ideas about the elites vs citizens, Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) alerts about the mismatch between EU debates and the real needs of the people, and the risks that this implies. He states that “we [...] need a new treaty. However, if we tell the people who are currently unemployed that we have no jobs for them and, at the same time, begin discussing a new EU treaty, at best, they will fail to understand us and, at worst, they will resort to violence”.

Regarding the idea of listening to citizens, on behalf of Greens/EFA group Cohn-Bendit (France) asks “Is European Union therefore not able, in this crisis situation, to provide a social redemption fund to help crisis-hit countries like Greece so that Greek citizens turn back to Europe and not to the extreme right?” and he warns that “You can see fascism spreading in Greek society”. Cohn-Bendit considers that “a meaningful European budget, a social redemption fund for crisis-hit countries in Europe. With this and the proposals made by Mr Verhofstadt and Mr Daul, we can bring back the majority of European citizens towards Europe”. Moreover, Raúl Romeva (Greens/EFA, Spain) refers to demonstrations in Catalonia and defends the importance of listening to people to maintain their trust in the EU. He exposes that “listening to people is also one of the European pillars and it is by doing this that we make the European project credible”.

Lastly, two aspects regarding the quality of democracy appear in the debate. First, the lack of democracy in the EU is mentioned by Rui Tavares (Greens/EFA, Portugal). He affirms that “the man who is at present the second most powerful man in the EU after Mr Draghi, [...] the destiny of the EU in the hands of a non-elected institution” and urges to “create a European democracy today”. Second, Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) alerts that “we are seeing antidemocratic tendencies developing” and says that the Council has to be “fully accountable, particularly to this House. [...] The Council should not take upon itself responsibilities and powers which it is not entitled to. That is a violation of democracy”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs and far right MEPs express the need make the EU closer to citizens and listen to them. Moreover, several MEPs observe the need to enhance the democratic qualities of the EU. First, on behalf of EPP, Joseph Daul (France) refer to the crisis of confidence and lack of citizen trust and states that “the economic crisis has become a political crisis, a crisis of confidence”.

Second, Nigel Farage (EFD, United Kingdom) vaguely refers to the idea of elites that act against citizens denouncing “the ‘Community method’ which of course means that your unelected Commission has the sole right to present that legislation”. Moreover, he criticizes that “Olli Rehn [...] dares to tell countries when they should and should not have general elections. He is urging Spain to accept a full bailout so that they too are trapped in the euro prison”. Farage alerts about the lack of democracy legitimacy of the EC and the lack of democracy in the crisis management.

Third, regarding the importance of listening to citizens Martin Callanan (ECR, United Kingdom) alerts that “frustrated, angry and fearful people are toying with extremist forces and the alarm bells should be ringing”. Thus, he proposes: “Let us have that debate, let us reach the conclusions and then let us ask the people in our Member States, in referenda, what they think of the solutions offered”. Furthermore, Farage criticizes what he calls “Euro-dictatorship” and states that “The only good news I take from today is that you have helped to bring that referendum just a little bit closer”. He tells Barroso that “the point about democracy is that you engage in debate. You listen to what the other person has to say, you put it to the public and you accept the result. That is what

real, genuine parliamentary democracy is about, and you seem to actually despise that”. Lastly, Farage denounces Barroso’s power: “And to tell me that you are in this position because this Parliament voted for you! We were only given the chance to vote for one candidate! Is that your new model of European democracy?”.

In similar direction, Othamr Karas (EPP, Austria) warns about the crisis of confidence and the need to listen to people. He states that “Because it is a political crisis, we are in a position to solve it, if we can bring the citizens on board. Let us start talking to them”. Also Krisztina Morvai, from Jobbik, (non-attached, Hungary) says that Barroso “should start confronting the realities of real people” and says that “I would like to invite him to Hungary, my country, where he could confront the realities of the Third World in the middle of the European Union”. She stresses that there “He could listen to farmers [...], listen to labourers [...], listen to teachers and actors” and see how reality looks like.

5.3.2 Austerity frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs express opposition to austerity measures and highlight its negative consequences. Thus, they confront the narrative of the crisis based on the idea of people living above their means and insist on taking citizen’s need into account, tackling unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

On the explanation of the economic crisis, from the GUE/NGL group Gabriele Zimmer (Germany) confronts the narrative of people living beyond their means. She explains that “Many people in positions of responsibility believe that people in Greece and in other states have been living beyond their means. They must now be punished for this and have sanctions imposed on them. This is not an appropriate way of strengthening the European community, which is based on solidarity”. Moreover, Zimmer considers that “You should focus on the social progress clause and the social pact. You should stop all attempts to privatise social goods, social services, social security systems and pensions and put an end to any pressure on the Member States to do so. These are the reasons why many people have lost their faith in the European Union. Lastly, Zimmer expressed solidarity with protestors in Greece and Spain and urged to send a signal to these protesters that the European institutions will protect them.

Another MEP from the same political group Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL, Portugal) exposes that “the crisis did not happen due to some supernatural power, nor because some bankers’ eyes were bigger than their stomachs, but because of a policy, and the fact that those who decided that policy said that those bankers and speculators were free to have bigger eyes than their stomachs, so that nothing was done about it”. Marisa Matias asks to “Stop telling the Greeks and the Portuguese that it is their fault, and that they have lived beyond their means. There has been enough austerity. Solidarity does not work with austerity, just as growth does not work with these policies”. Lastly, Marisa Matias emphasizes that “there can be no democracy, no politics and no Europeanism without citizens, and only with markets instead”.

Moreover, regarding the positions about the response to the crisis, Gabriele Zimmer (GUE/NGL, Germany) considers that “The so-called reforms which have been adopted in the memorandum with regard to the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the Euro Plus Pact, the fiscal compact and so on, represent an attack on people’s fundamental social rights”. She also tells Barroso that he “cannot explain here how important the people and their social situation in the European Union are to you, while at the same time the Commission, which is part of the troika, is largely responsible for imposing conditions on Greece which will have an impact on the social situation of the very weakest members of society”.

Furthermore, from the Greens/EFA group, Daniel Cohn-Bendit (France) exposes that the response to the crisis was a failure. He says that “the Council and governments have been unable to come up with responses to the crisis. [...] As long as the EU budget represents only 1% of European GDP, well, we cannot have meaningful European social policy. It will definitely not work”. Moreover, he says that for countries like Greece in order to organize a flexible labour market with secure working conditions “they will need support for that security, and that will have to come from the EU budget. Otherwise, we will not succeed and nor will they”. Cohn-Bendit adds that “If we want to have a model of a social state, then the European Union must set up a social fund to relaunch the social state in Greece. That is simply how it is”. From the same political group, Ana Miranda (Greens/EFA, Spain) exposes the negative consequences of austerity policies in her region. She tells Barroso: “I am a Member from Galicia, and the state of my region, as in many other areas of Europe, is one of profound crisis. This

crisis is the consequence of austerity policies, social cuts and antisocial measures. Examples include shipbuilding, agriculture, fisheries, robbery by the banks, and the immoral rate of youth unemployment”.

On behalf of the S&D group, Hannes Swoboda (Austria) also joins the criticism towards the answer to the crisis and cuts in spending. He exposes that “If we see the economic crisis only as a crisis in state spending [...] and, therefore, if we believe that it is simply about cutting services, then we will not emerge from the crisis. In fact, we will end up in an even deeper recession. The Portuguese Prime Minister made this quite clear. If you start with an extreme austerity policy, you end up having to reach even deeper into people’s pockets. We do not want that. We do not want the poorest people in Europe to become even poorer. That is not a policy that we in the S&D Group can support”.

Swoboda says the troika follows a mistaken approach and explains that “the troika is unfortunately contributing to this recessionary policy. The troika should instead be focusing on fundamental reforms of decrepit structures, which is what we need. However, if the troika believes that we can get out of this mess simply by making cuts, I would like to know where all its successes have been. Every forecast based on measures recommended by the troika has had to be corrected”. Swoboda exemplifies the failures of the troika saying that “In Spain [...] unemployment has risen from 11% to 24%, a world record for comparable countries, and sovereign debt has increased from 40% to 81%. Is that supposed to be a success? The troika is unsuccessful, because it has the wrong solutions, because it is not investing in growth and because it is not familiar with the concept of ‘demand’ as a stimulus for growth”.

Lastly, Swoboda explained that in countries that had been seen as an example, such as Latvia, many people had left the country in search for jobs which is a sign of failure. He tells Mr Daul: “you mentioned Mr Dombrovskis. Has Mr Dombrovskis told you how many well-trained people have left Latvia, the other Baltic states and the countries in the south because they cannot find jobs? This is what is called success, when unemployment levels are high and those who are affected are exported. Where are the people of Europe supposed to emigrate to if we all end up in a recession?”. Hannes Swoboda says that investment, as many countries do, is the solution to the situation. He

exposes that “There is an alternative which, most importantly, must lead to investment. How can we go on talking about competitiveness, if we are no longer investing?”.

In the same opinion as Swoboda, Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) considers the “Parliament has the obligation to convey people’s displeasure in view of the flawed diagnosis of how to manage the crisis, a failed strategy and a formula that has led to catastrophic social damage” and urges for a different model: “A different Europe should be proposed, therefore, with an increase in the European budget and a fiscal compact that combats fraud, tax havens, and inequality inside and between Member States, to conserve and not destroy the social model”.

On the aspect of taxes, Philippe Lamberts (Greens/EFA, Belgium) congratulates about “the initiative on the issue of tax on financial transactions, which is very good. Multinationals from all sectors, including, of course, the financial sector, must start paying the taxes they owe. For this to happen, we need harmonization of corporate tax in Europe”. Also from the S&D group, Hannes Swoboda (Austria) states that “You are on our side when it comes to the question of tax increases and tax evasion. If we only received a quarter of the tax revenue which we lose every year in Europe through tax evasion, by means of transfers to Switzerland and other tax havens, we could increase public investment in Europe by 40%”. From the same political group, Ana Gomes (S&D, Portugal) signaled the absence of “tax dumping within the EU, which enables some Member States to get richer at the expense of others by functioning as tax havens, stacking in other capitals business profits that are siphoned off from other Member States, in order to avoid paying tax at home and therefore escaping from contributing their fair share to national incomes”.

Regarding the idea top put profits before citizens, on behalf of GUE/NGL, Gabriele Zimmer (Germany) affirms that the interests of the people, instead of the interests of the financial elite, should be at the center. She says that “you are willing to combat the crisis in the EU, but not its causes. The focus is moving away from the interests of the people, who urgently need a functioning, social and green Union based on the principle of solidarity. [...] You are putting the emphasis on greater regulation by the institutions, because this is what the financial elite needs. This is how you intend to bring an end to the functional deficits in the EU economy and, in particular, in the euro area”.

Moreover, from the S&D group, Jörg Leichtfried (Austria) defends that “Growth will not work without justice. As long as the large fortunes of wealthy people in the European Union continue getting bigger and bigger and as long as the people who have to do the hard work are paid less and less, there will be no justice and, of course, no growth, because there will be no mass purchasing power. Therefore, we need to make some changes to our systems” and urges to make changes in order to achieve a Europe for the people.

On the idea of a social Europe, Ana Miranda from Spain (Greens/EFA) calls to support the citizens of Europe with a social EU. She affirms that “In order for the European people to continue to believe in Europe, Europe must be on the side of the people, not against them. Mr President, let us return to a Europe of the people and a social Europe”.

From the S&D group, Hannes Swoboda (Austria) expresses that “What we are particularly concerned about is the disregard for the social question” He explains that “If we look at youth unemployment and how fast it is growing, it is clearly not only a problem for the countries on the periphery” but also “one in every five workers in Germany, good old wealthy Germany, is a low-paid worker”. He affirms: “That is the reality: poverty, old-age poverty and youth unemployment”. He states that “The questions which concern most people in Europe today, in other words, unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, are not even mentioned in Mr Van Rompuy’s paper. Therefore, I am calling for a chapter in the paper on social issues. On behalf of my group, I am also calling for a social pact”.

Furthermore, other MEPs from the S&D group express their worries for social problems. Enrique Guerrero Salom (Spain) defends “that an effort must be made to conserve the food distribution programme within a Union in which poverty, as you acknowledged yourself, continues to rise”. Also Segio Gaetano Cofferati (Italy) exposes the importance of taking poverty and employment into account. He alerts that “By ignoring poverty and the measures to tackle it or not giving serious consideration to the fact that we will soon need counter-cyclical policies for employment, you are liable to invalidate the laudable efforts that you intend to make on the institutional front”.

Finally, regarding the issue of inequalities, João Ferreira (GUE/NGL, Portugal) denounces the inequalities between Member States and workers and big businesses. He

exposes that “The deep crisis in which the EU is mired is the result of the policies and directions that have been pursued for years. These policies have promoted divergence and growing inequality among Member States, as well as the transfer of wealth from the workers to big economic and financial business”. Moreover, from the same political group, Gabriele Zimmer (Germany) calls for the need to tackle women’s equality especially in the light of the economic crisis. She says that “women have been hardest hit by the crisis, I find it incomprehensible that we are prepared to sacrifice a fundamental value and a part of the European Parliament’s and the EU’s concept of themselves and, without making any protests, withdraw a call for women’s equality now and allow it to be taken away from us. I cannot accept that and my group will also not support it”.

On the other hand, regarding right-wing MEPs several of them repeat that the crisis is due to people living above their means and defend austerity measures. However, some MEPs signal the importance to tackle youth unemployment and question the results of these measures. Furthermore, some MEPs from far right parties refer to the need to leave the euro and criticize austerity as not delivering to people’s needs.

First, on explanation of the economic crisis Joseph Daul (EPP, France) continues with the same approach referring to people living beyond their means and insists on reforms to be made in order to benefit from aid. He says that “We know that we were living beyond our means for too long, we know that we need greater discipline and a return to balanced budgets. Only then will we be able to invest in our future generations”. Daul adds that “European solidarity should not be confused with charity. That is why I support the European Central Bank’s proposal to buy bonds because any State that benefits from this solidarity must act responsibly. Without a programme of reforms offering credible proposals, a State cannot receive this aid. This is the right approach”.

Regarding the ideas about the response to the crisis, from the EPP group, Herbert Reul (EPP, Germany) insist on the implementation of structural reforms: “We should monitor the implementation of directives and ensure that structural reforms are put into effect in the Member States”. Moreover, Tunne Kelam (EPP, Estonia) links the crisis with the loss of values and considers “the crisis is first and foremost within us – in our national selfishness and the lack of will to really cooperate and reform. Structural reforms are the

key to progress” and proposes the Commission to “monitor progress on structural reforms” to assure that all Member States implement them.

In the EPP group there are also critical voices like Danuta Jazłowiecka (EPP, Poland) who considers that the measures to tackle the economic crisis have not worked. She says that “We are now in the fifth year of the crisis, and we can safely say that the remedial action taken in Europe has not worked. The measures taken by Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy are not working, and in addition the associated social costs are enormous”. Moreover, on behalf of ECR, Martin Callanan (United Kingdom) considers that “the only other alternative is for some countries to leave the euro, to devalue their currencies and for us to support them as they find the right policies that will return them to sustainable public spending and growth in the long-term”.

The idea of profits before citizens is indirectly introduced by Marine Le Pen (non-attached, France) who denounces that the international financial caste has destroyed the real economic force. She says that we are “subject us to an increasingly speculative and reckless international financial caste. Furthermore we have destroyed the social progress that our people fought so hard for over the centuries”. She also defends the exit of the euro and called for a referendum in Europe to let citizens decide on this issue.

On the idea of a social Europe, from the ALDE group, Angelika Werthmann (Austria) signals the importance of tackling unemployment in countries hit by the crisis. She says that “huge numbers of well-educated young people in Spain and Greece are unemployed. There are also many unemployed older people. This is where direct aid is required in the form of targeted investment in education, health, the environment and jobs”. Moreover, from the EPP group, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (Poland) also refers to the problem of youth unemployment and asks: “How can we expect young people to want to build a community which does not respond to their basic needs?”. From the same political group, Andrey Kovatchev (EPP, Bulgaria) defends growth and the cohesion policy. He signals the importance of “growth, jobs and, of course, the convergence of living standards and conditions across all regions of the European Union”.

Finally, from the EFD group, John Bufton (United Kingdom) exposes a very critical view denouncing the problem of youth unemployment and mentions the protests taking place in Spain. He exposes that “In Greece 55% of 16-24 year olds are now jobless. In Spain protests have involved people going into supermarkets and filling up trolleys without paying to redistribute food to the poor people. Demonstrations are commonplace throughout the country, with people objecting to the tough austerity and job cuts, leading the police to use rubber bullets to restore order. In 21st-century Europe this is a disgrace”. Moreover, Bufton considers the EU is to blame for this situation saying that “At the centre of it all is the European Union, whose draconian and tyrannical austerity measures, reckless obsession with a dangerously flawed single currency and power-crazed federal dreams are ruining people’s lives. Yet, Mr Barroso, not once have you apologised; not once have you accepted your hand in the making of this disaster. Mr Barroso, you should be ashamed”.

5.4 The 2013 State of the Union debate in the European Parliament

The 2013 State of the Union debate is focused on the management of the economic crisis. The approach to the economic crisis exposed by the President of the EC José Manuel Barroso continues in the same direction as in the previous debate. He announced that the measures adopted as a result of the economic crisis are starting to give positive results: “the facts tell us that our efforts have started to convince. Overall spreads are coming down. The most vulnerable countries are paying less to borrow. Industrial output is increasing. Market trust is returning. Stock markets are performing well. The business outlook is steadily improving. Consumer confidence is rising sharply”.

Barroso enumerates the different achievements made by Spain, Ireland and Greece thanks to the adoption of reforms and concludes that “we are on the right track”. He explains that “We see that the countries which are most vulnerable to the crisis and are now doing most to reform their economies are starting to note positive results”. Moreover, Barroso signals the good results in global trade and the necessity of the TTIP and affirms that “Contrary to perception, while most of our citizens think that we have been losing in global trade, we have in fact been increasing our surplus with the rest of the world”.

Barroso further emphasizes that structural reforms needed to be implemented. He says that “Europe must [...] speed up the pace of structural reforms. Our Country Specific Recommendations set out what the Member States must do in this respect. And at European level – because there is what can be done at national level and what can be done at European level – the focus should also be on what matters most for the real economy: exploiting the full potential of the single market comes first”.

Barroso warns that the crisis is structural and as part of a period of transformation. He alerts that “there is no way back to business as usual. Some people believe that after this everything will go back to the way it was before. They are wrong. This crisis is different. This is not a cyclical crisis, but a structural crisis. We will not go back to the old ‘normal’. We have to shape a new ‘normal’. We are in a transforming period of history and we have to understand that, and not just say it but draw all the due conclusions, including in our state of mind and how we react to the problems. We can see from the first results that it is possible to win that battle, and we all know that it is not only possible but it is necessary”.

Furthermore, Barroso affirms again that the origin of the crisis is to be found in the mismanagement of public finances from national government and the behavior of financial markets and not in the EU. He says that “the European Union was not at the origin of this crisis. It resulted from mismanagement of public finances from the national governments and the irresponsible behaviour in the financial markets”. Moreover, he adds that “Some people will say that it is Europe that is forcing governments to cut spending, but we can remind voters that government debt got way out of hand even before the crisis. Not because of, but despite, Europe. We can add that the most vulnerable in our societies, and our children, will end up paying the price if we do not persevere now and the truth is that countries, inside the euro or outside the euro, in Europe or outside Europe, are making efforts to curb their very burdened public finances”.

Barroso also insists on the irresponsible behavior of countries like Greece as the reason for the difficulties in Europe. He wonders “who is responsible for the difficulties in Europe. Was it policy or was it the mistakes made in the past? One of you said Greece is the victim of the policies of Europe. False! Completely! Greece is the victim of the

irresponsible behaviour of the governments of Greece. This is the reality, and it was because of this that the European Union was asked to come and give support. Without European Union support, Greece would now be completely insolvent. The situation would be much more difficult. So we have to have the courage to ask who created the problem”.

However, Barroso also refers to solidarity between Member States and the need to strengthen the social dimension. He says that “Economically, Europe has always been a way to close gaps between countries, regions and people. And that must remain so. We cannot do Member States’ work for them, the responsibility remains theirs, but we can and must complement it with European responsibility and European solidarity. [...] For that reason, strengthening the social dimension is a priority for the months to come, together with our social partners. The Commission will come with its communication on the social dimension of the economic and monetary union on 2 October. Solidarity is a key element of what being part of Europe is all about, and something to take pride in”. Furthermore, Barroso also mentions interdependence to explain the necessity of a European response.

Barroso defends himself from criticism for not being accurate in his emphasis of the signals of recovery from the crisis and complains that this kind of criticism strengthens the populists and extremists. Moreover, Barroso also signals that employment is a national issue and disagrees with citizens that blame on Europe for what in fact is the inaction of Member States. He affirms that “employment is mainly a national policy. We can influence, we can create some funds. We can create the Youth Employment Initiative, we took the initiative of the Youth Guarantee. But in the end it depends on what Member States do or do not do [...]. Many of our citizens are going to put the blame on Europe for what was in fact the action or inaction of some of our governments and Member States. That is the tendency to Europeanise failure and to nationalise success”.

However, Barroso exposes his worries about unemployment and defines the priorities are unemployment and the implementation of the banking union. He explains that “Ultimately, this is about one thing – growth – which is necessary to remedy today’s most pressing problem – unemployment. The current level of unemployment is

economically unsustainable, politically untenable and socially unacceptable. [...] I want to focus on the implementation of the decisions that are most crucial now: youth employment and financing the real economy for SMEs. We need to avoid a jobless recovery too. [...] These are our clear priorities: employment and growth. Our job is not finished. It is in its decisive phase”.

Regarding Barroso’s ideas about democracy, he mentions importance of values and the promotion of citizens’ rights. He says that “We are much more than a market. The European ideal touches the very foundations of European society. It is about values – and I underline the word ‘values’. It is based on a firm belief in political, social and economic standards, grounded in our social market economy. [...] In today’s world, the European Union level is indispensable to protecting these values and standards and promoting citizens’ rights: from consumer protection to labour rights, from women’s rights to respect for minorities, from environmental standards to data protection and privacy”. Moreover, Barroso refers to subsidiarity as a fundamental democratic principle and emphasizes the importance of equality between Member States. He also refers to the rule of law and stresses the importance of democratic decisions as a core element in the EU:

5.4.1 Democracy frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs mention the lack of democracy in the EU, the need to protect fundamental rights and win citizen trust with changes regarding policies. The defense of the rule of law in Europe is also mentioned by some MEPs. First, on behalf of the Greens/EFA group, Rebecca Harms (Germany) warns that the fundamental rights of the EU have been ignored. Moreover, she considers citizens trust can be won by changing the policies. She affirms that “The fundamental rights of the EU have been ignored. [...] You can win people’s trust by pursuing different policy”.

The idea of elites vs citizens is expressed during the debate by Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL, Greece). He affirms that “Today’s speech by the President of the European Commission states the determination of the monopolies and their political staff to continue with the same intensity their unpopular attack on workers in all EU Member States” and says that “The peoples must reject the tragic present and the nightmarish future that the union of monopolies has reserved for them. Their own hope lies in the

dissolution of the EU, the liberation from the bonds of lyceum, the building of the social alliance, and the passage of power from the monopolies to the hands of the working class”.

There are some references to the lack of democracy or the rule of law in the debate. First, Takis Hadjigeorgiou (GUE/NGL, Cyprus) mentions the lack of democracy in Europe and the need to treat equally all EU citizens with respect to minorities. He says that “if we really want to see European citizens supporting the EU project, the EU can only and fully materialize for its people when a Cypriot or a Maltese feels equal with a German, or a French, or a British citizen. Democracy means respect to the minorities. There is no proportional respect today to smaller countries”. Second, Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) warns about the need to protect media freedom and defend the rule of law in Europe and insists that Europe has to challenge nationalism and xenophobia. He affirms that “Journalists and friends of journalists are being intimidated in some other countries; laws against media freedom have been passed in certain countries; and Roma are being attacked again, even more so than before. These are things that we need to combat very strongly”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs also refer to the lack of democracy in the European institutions and the need to change this problem. Andrew Duff (ALDE, United Kingdom) mentions the necessity to transform the Commission in order to make it a democratic government of the union saying that “the central purpose of the next round of Treaty reform is to transform the Commission to be a democratic, federal government of a fiscal union”.

Furthermore, MEPs from far right and Eurosceptic political parties make references to the unelected President of the EC. First, Nigel Farage (EFD, United Kingdom) denounces that “the problem is not just Mr Barroso but the entire unelected government of Europe”. Second, Nicole Sinclaire (non-attached, United Kingdom) denounces that the debate is given by an “unelected arm of the EU”. She questions: “why is it that it is the President of the unelected arm of the EU that gives this address? Why is it not President Schulz?”. Moreover, she mentions the lack of trust in the EU and the need to listen to the people and let them decide.

5.4.2 Austerity frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs criticize austerity measures and the negative impacts they have on the majority of the population. Moreover, several left-wing MEPs consider these measures haven't had positive results in terms of recovery of the crisis. Many interventions mention the problem with unemployment and its consequences on citizens.

First, on behalf of GUE/NGL group, Takis Hadjigeorgiou (Cyprus) affirms that "Barroso lives in another EU". Hadjigeorgiou considers that austerity policies have deepened the crisis, increased poverty and unemployment. He says that "Austerity policies and measures that have been promoted are not only aggravating the problems that the economy is facing but are also leading to a deepening of the crisis. They result to increased poverty and unemployment, more cuts and privatizations. The harsh realities of the economic crisis cannot be afforded anymore by the people". Hadjigeorgiou affirms that this refers to all citizens of Europe who are facing hardship not only in Southern Europe. He adds that "In my country, where the decisions taken by the troika destroyed the economy, unfortunately the EU is associated nowadays with the economic crisis. [...] Greece's debt is greater today than what it was at the beginning of the crisis". Lastly, he repeats the claim from anti-austerity movements saying that "Millions of people have been robbed from the pockets of individuals and have been put into the pockets of the few".

Also, from the same political group, the Portuguese MEP Inês Cristina Zuber considers President Barroso speech is far from the real world saying that "The President of the European Commission tried to mythologize the project of the European Union, in a triumphant tone, proclaiming the project and the values of the Union, the heroic form as it resisted adversities and the need to be defended [...]. A common project in Barroso's rhetoric, a project of creating inequality, in the everyday reality of workers. Barroso's speech was thus void of concrete and strong content in abstract mystifications that are far, far from the real world". Moreover, she opposes Barroso's arguments about recovery exposing the Portuguese example.

In the second place, on behalf of Greens/EFA, Rebecca Harms (Germany) stresses that the policies to tackle the crisis have generated misery. She claims that "The policy to

deal with the crisis has not helped us to deal with the crisis. In many parts of the EU the anti-crises policy has only generated misery and gloom. We keep dwelling with public finances and we fail to deal with financial risks inherent in the private banks”. Harms also mentions the problem of unemployment and asks: “How do we want to do that? What kind of industrial and economic recovery do we want?”.

Third, on behalf of the S&D group, Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) says that “President Barroso has described a half-full glass as totally full. I will demonstrate that the glass is still half empty. President Barroso, you spoke about figures and, yes, there are some good figures, and we are happy about that, but I want to speak about people: about women, about the younger generation and about children, who are still suffering under the austerity policy”. Swoboda affirms that beyond the good figures that President Barroso exposed, people are suffering under the austerity policy. Moreover, Swoboda considered astonishing to speak about recovery with 60% unemployment between young people in Greece. Swoboda also mentions the Spanish example with extreme poverty between children and the low job creation. Furthermore, he mentions the example of children poverty in Portugal. Thus, he affirms “That is also the reality of Europe: so show that the glass is not simply half full; it is also half empty. We still have much to do, and we need to change the policies of the Commission”.

From the same political group, coming from Spain, Juan Fernando López Aguilar says that “I don’t think you can try to tell a different story and say that there’s light at the end of the tunnel or that there are green shots of recovery. This is going on for far too long and this crisis has been mismanaged”. López Aguilar mentions that “There’s a political crisis too, there’s a lack of trust, euroscepticism, populism and extremism are the consequences of that. So coming out of recession is a statistical reality [...] But if that happens that doesn’t mean that the austerity policy has been justified and the kind of self-flagellation that has been demanded to south European countries has been justified. That economic triumphalism should only apply to economy itself but that shouldn’t mean the policies have been valid and that should not camouflage growing inequality, the huge social impact and the destruction of people’s hopes and dreams”.

Moreover, the Irish MEP Nessa Childers also from the S&D group affirms that “To ordinary citizens we are in just the same situation as we were when we entered the

recession. With unemployment stabilising and statistics showing minor economic growth, there are some signs of recovery in the EU. But it is an incredibly feeble recovery. This recovery is a numerical one and the struggling people in Europe have not yet seen improvements”. Thus, she considers that “The austerity agenda is not working and is making recovery worse”. Also the Italian MEP Patrizia Toia shares the same opinion from her colleagues from the S&D group. She considers that austerity has been a mistake and stresses the need to build a new citizen-focused policy. Toia affirms that “The EU has not been up to the task [...]. Having a unilateral policy and I think there are responsibilities here, the short-sightedness to just taking one approach is what has disappointed the citizens of Europe [...]. We need a policy for citizens”. Lastly, the German MEP from the same group, Ismail Ertug, also criticizes austerity policies saying that “The austerity dictum of Chancellor Merkel & Co. was a prime example of how one should not shape European politics”. This position shows that there are no significant differences regarding the country of origin of the MEP.

On the issue of taxes, Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) calls for “progress on the financial transaction tax (FTT), which is currently taking a lot of flak. We expect of the Council, with the help of the Commission of course, that the promise made to our citizens – that the financial sector will contribute through the FTT – will finally be kept. It is not acceptable that so many citizens should suffer and that banks and financial institutions should not contribute to resolving the crisis”. Also Ismail Ertug (S&D, Germany) stresses that the “key issue we need to address more urgently at EU level is tax fraud. In Germany alone, the tax evaders incur damages amounting to 30 billion euros annually. This is money that could be better invested in education, infrastructure or debt reduction”.

Regarding the idea of putting profits before citizens, Nessa Childers (S&D, Ireland) affirms that there is a viable alternative to the crisis which “involves making the multinationals, the banks and the rich pay their fair share in solving the economic crisis they caused, whilst stimulating economic growth through targeted investment and maintaining the living standards of people on low incomes so that economic growth happens. That is how we will start to see real recovery”. Moreover, on the aspect of solidarity, Tonino Picula (S&D, Croatia) complains that solidarity hasn’t been

globalized. He affirms that “Various threads have been globalized including economic crisis. However solidarity hasn’t been globalized to an equal extent”.

The idea of a social Europe is expressed by many MEPs in this debate mainly with references to unemployment. Some examples are the references from Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) who considers that “The levels of unemployment and the lack of hope of finding employment is terrible. If you look at the situation in Spain people are just giving up [...]. We are seeing feeble growth without jobs and without hope for young people and that is the end of the European dream, that is the end of the European social model”. Also Nessa Childers (S&D, Ireland) states that “Many of our citizens have no jobs or opportunities, there have been cuts in social protection, and public services such as pensions, education and health”. Moreover, Ismail Ertug (S&D, Germany) affirms that “a slight economic recovery alone is not enough to give the many unemployed people access to the labor market again. We can only overcome the crisis of confidence in the EU and the economic crisis if the EU's crisis policy finally helps to improve the situation of the unemployed and workers in precarious employment”.

Finally, regarding inequality, Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) states that “Because austerity is increasing the rift between rich and poor and between north and south, and is aggravating racism and xenophobia. [...] austerity is undermining solidarity between states and also between citizens”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs from EPP group express the need to continue with reforms, highlighting its positive effects. However, some MEPs from that group emphasize the importance of job creation. From the ALDE group the management of the crisis is seen from a more critical point of view and they consider the perspectives are negative if the approach towards the crisis continues the same. From the ECR and EFD groups, the need for a drastic change in the EU is stated and citizen desperation as a consequence of the crisis management is emphasized.

Regarding the MEPs positions on the response to the crisis, first, Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE, Belgium) says that “It is true you have given a whole range of early signs of recovery, but we have to make a realistic assessment, [...] we are entering what I call a second phase of this crisis”. Thus, he considers there is no room for complacency as we

are in a second phase of the crisis. Moreover, Verhofstadt considers the debate hasn't given an answer to avoid what he calls the "Japanese winter", meaning a long stagnation. Finally, Verhofstadt defends a different Europe and states that "In a way the Eurosceptics are right in their criticism that this crisis has been badly managed. [...] That is not a criticism of you but is mainly directed at the Heads of State and Government, who acted far too late and did far too little in a number of their reforms".

Second, on behalf of EPP group, Joseph Daul (France) emphasises Barroso's words saying that the measures taken are giving positive results. The Portuguese MEP from the same political group, Paulo Rangel emphasis that "It's a matter of pride for me that the Commission has done the good work that it has done" and considers that "The countries in the south of Europe have been giving an example of determination in structural reform. What they need is more cohesion from the European Union and the stronger countries so it's fundamental that that line should be continued". The German MEP Herbert Reul (EPP) affirms that "Barroso gave us a realistic assessment" and considers that "Things are moving in the right direction". Reul reiterates the need to endure structural reforms and that there's no alternative: "There are countries that are careful with their money. There are countries that have made the effort of introducing structural reforms. Germany has done that [...]. That gave us the strength to achieve greater growth and to create jobs for poor people I know no alternative for that particular path".

Several MEPs from the EPP group stress the need to continue with reforms and highlight its positive effects. For example, Sandra Kalniete (Latvia) who mentions the example of Latvia or Gunnar Hökmark (Sweden) who affirms that "We must also accelerate the reforms needed to keep up with and to take up the global competition". Also the French MEP Dominique Vlasto stress that reforms are giving good results.

Third, on behalf of ECR, Martin Callanan (United Kingdom) complains about Barroso's rhetoric and lack of action saying that "your speeches this morning were long on rhetoric but your time in office has been very short on action". Forth, on behalf of EFD group, Nigel Farage (United Kingdom) considers the euro as a disaster for poor people but not for big businesses and announces its death. He affirms that "For bureaucrats, big businessmen and landowners it has not been a bad decade, but it has been a disaster for

poor people, unemployed people and those on low wages. The euro, which you, Mr Barroso, believed would give us monetary stability, has done the very opposite”.

On side of the critics to the response of the crisis there is also John Bufton (EFD, United Kingdom) who considers that recovery is not near and the policies have been ineffective. He says that “I quite simply fail to buy into his over optimistic and ideological view. And I am sure I am not the only one. Europe is, in reality, nowhere near an economic recovery – fragile or otherwise”. Moreover, Jan Zarhadil (ECR, Czech Republic) highlights that “There is impotence, desperation out there [...]. All of you have built up this fairy tale. All of you keep repeating the mantra of more Europe and more Europe [...] There’s a growing body of opinion against the EU. This people don’t want to destroy the EU they want to improve it, they want a different EU”.

Regarding the issue of a social Europe there are several references that mention the problem of unemployment in the EU. From Portugal, Nuno Teixeira (EPP) stressed the need to tackle youth unemployment. He says that “Despite some progress in economic growth, visible in European countries, we are facing a huge social crisis with 26 million unemployed, the majority of whom are qualified young people. We can not ask for more without creating a framework for future growth. It is therefore urgent to approve the next multiannual financial framework 2014-2020, as this will be the source of investment for many European regions”. Also Giovanni La Via (EPP, Italy) exposes critical views towards austerity and rigor and also signals the importance of growth and development to create jobs. He affirms that “Some of us were expecting greater courage, a greater range of proposals at this critical time for Europe. We have always focused on growth and development but very often what we have got when we’ve been calling for growth and development is only austerity and rigor. What we need to do is move towards job creation and to focus much more on growth and development”.

Several MEPs referred to the need to create jobs like Dubravka Šuica (EPP, Croatia) who affirms that “If we talk about unemployment that is indeed a big problem, so as I come from Croatia I welcome the efforts to hold it”. Also Danuta Jazłowiecka (EPP, Poland) emphasizes the need to create jobs and says that “the economic recovery is very weak and does not translate into an improvement in the labor market situation”. Moreover, Filip Kaczmarek (EPP, Poland) mentions that “unemployment is the main

problem of today's European Union, in particular youth unemployment” and urges to promote job creation among other MEPs. Lastly, from the EFD group, Lorenzo Fontana (Italy) explains that citizens are turning against the EU because there are no jobs for them: “young people have to leave their own countries the way their grandparents did because they can’t find jobs [...]. Europe provides money for Turkey and immigrants and does not provide money for Europeans themselves”.

Finally, on the issue of inequality Dubravka Šuica (EPP, Croatia) points out the need to tackle inequality between Member States in the EU: “That is the ideal that I have for citizens in my country Croatia and in Germany to have the same standards of living, the same infrastructure to enjoy, but also rule of law [...]. We must not divide Europe into Eurozone and those outside of the Eurozone, the rich and the poor, the north and the south”.

5.5 The 2015 State of the Union debate in the European Parliament

The 2015 State of the Union debate takes place after the EP elections of May 2014. It is in the context of the Greek debt crisis and the refugee crisis. The President of the EC Jean-Claude Juncker considers the first priority of the EU is the refugee crisis so the whole debate is mainly around this issue. The economic crisis is given a secondary place and references to democracy that are significant for the present thesis are just a few vague remarks. However, President Juncker expresses his worries about the EU and stated that: “My heart is full of the “social” [...]. The EU is not in a good situation [...]. There’s a lack of Europe in the EU and there’s a lack of union in this EU. And that has to change, we have to change it and now”.

Juncker refers to Greece as a difficult debate. He also tackles the problem of unemployment in the EU saying that “The crisis is of course not finished, for all that we feel we have managed to make progress in the Greek crisis and bring it towards a resolution”. He affirms that “there are over 17 million people in the Eurozone who are unemployed and levels of unemployment absolutely unacceptable in Europe. The economic recession will only be over once we have full employment in Europe”.

In this debate, President Juncker defends austerity measures, continuing with the same direction as previous debates. He explains that “If the Commission had not been there,

then the adjustment programme that would have been adopted would have been rather different [...]. The programme that has been adopted was the most nuanced that we have been able to conclude. Here I would like to pay tribute to other countries as well. Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Latvia, all shown that by implementing these measures they prove my idea that if good reforms are implemented then they bring about the right results and obviously better results than if you've done nothing".

Juncker refers to Maidan protests by saying they are not only about democracy but also against corruption. He says that "the Maidan worries were not only about democracy, about the membership of the European Union. People there, and people living in Ukraine now, do not want to have a country where corruption is playing the role it plays in Ukraine. The Ukrainian democrats want a corruption-free country and so we have to attend to them in that field".

On behalf of the Council, Nicolas Schmit, also mentions the problem with employment and the need to tackle this issue. He says that "It is true that we mustn't forget issues of unemployment and the economic relaunch that is required and also the problems with youth unemployment. We have an investment plan that we now must deploy".

5.5.1 Democracy frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs make few significant remarks referred to democracy in this debate. However, some MEPs express their worries for democracy in the EU, the need to defend it over markets and economic and financial powers. Moreover, the authoritarian tendencies of some Member States are highlighted as a threat to democracy in the EU.

First, from the GUE/NGL group, Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE/NGL, Portugal) mentions the lack of respect for democracy in the EU with the confrontation of the will of the majority of citizens to economic and financial powers. She says that "the EU does not mean respect for democracy and the will of the people, but rather the imposition of the policy that best serves the great financial and economic capital".

On behalf of the S&D group, Gianni Pittella (S&D, Italy) defends democracy over market pressure and the need to act to defend European democracy. He says that "If we

don't act now the crisis will be irreversible, European democracy has to recover its greatness and its centrality with regard to the hegemony of mercantilism and the excessive financialization of economy". From the same political group, the Hungarian MEP Tibor Szanyi expresses worries about xenophobia fostered by some governments in the EU, like the Hungarian. He exposes that "the challenge facing the unity of the EU is not only external but also internal: some governments, especially the Orban government, the migration wave - xenophobic heccam campaign and measures that restrict the rights of the people who humiliate refugees - use it for nationalist internal political purposes. Such political ambitions threatening Europe's break-up and democratization must be hampered. In this context, the European Council and the party leader of Orbán, the EPP's responsibility, are the primary ones, and I urge you to act with such determination as the President of the Commission".

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs also make few statements about democracy. Some MEPs from far right political parties emphasize the undemocratic nature of the EU. MEPs from Movimento 5 Stelle, which are part of the EFDD group, express a more nuanced view regarding the influence of the financial sector in the direction of the EU and the need to focus on citizens.

First, Florian Philippot (ENF, France) says that "Europe is a complete failure" and congratulates that "We're going to see a referendum starting off in the United Kingdom. Let's hope that this will get us to a Europe of democracy, prosperity and peace". Moreover, Marcel de Graaf (ENF, Netherlands) affirms that "This is an Angela Merkel plan it's not Juncker plan" and asks: "Where is democracy in the EU?".

Finally, Marco Valli (EFDD, Italy) from Movimento 5 Stelle also considers the EU as anti-democratic and affirms that "we do not want any further strengthening of this anti-democratic Europe, totally subservient to markets, banks and multinationals. Europe must first be refounded, putting people, rights, public goods, social and economic progress and future generations at the center of all policies".

5.5.2 Austerity frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs complain about the absence of social issues in the President Juncker speech and ask for a social agenda to be set as soon as possible. Many

MEPs refer again to the importance of tackling the problematic of unemployment as well as poverty, exclusion and inequality. The Greek situation is also mentioned with the rejection of some policies from some MEPs and the calls for solidarity to solve the debt problem from other MEPs. Some specific remarks about sectors in crisis, such as farmers, are also made.

First, on behalf of the GUE/NGL group, Gabriele Zimmer (Germany) complains that the social priorities are not discussed. She says that “You didn’t say anything about the social priorities. This is the problem that we have. Please change that because it is our joint job here”. From the same political group, the Portuguese MEP Miguel Viegas refers to the reality of farmers and the failure of European policies in this sector. Second, on behalf of the Greens/EFA group, Philippe Lamberts (Belgium) stresses the social drama in the EU. He says that “We’ve seen greater poverty, inequality, unemployment, exclusion, low quality employment”.

Third, on behalf of the S&D group, Gianni Pittella (Italy) refers to the employment crisis and expresses the need to work in order to improve the labour market. He affirms that “There’s the crisis of employment. The economic crisis which divides rich from the poor, which divides the continent [...]. We have to make sure that jobs are more secure”. The Spanish MEP Enrique Guerrero Salom (S&D, Spain) reminds the social compromise in the EU saying that “We can’t resolve the issue of austerity at the cost of worst social policy solutions than we had”. Also from Spain, Iratxe García Pérez (S&D, Spain) urges President Juncker to build the social Europe: “Europe is not going to exit the crisis nor create growth unless we invest money in other areas as well [...]. But there’s another fundamental issue: where is the social Europe in all of this? Where are the fights against inequality? What about the initiatives targeting a minimum salary? And what about the incentives to bring about equal treatment between men and women? Everything to tackle social dumping? Mr Juncker, time is passing and unfortunately Europe is not going to hang around and wait for it”. Moreover, José Blanco López (S&D, Spain) also explains the needs of the dairy farmers which is a sector in crisis.

Furthermore, some Portuguese MEPs from the S&D group also joins the voices demanding the need of a social Europe. Maria João Rodrigues affirms that “You need to come back, as you thought, to an agenda for full employment in Europe, and the

investment plan is certainly the main engine for this purpose”. Also Ricardo Serrão Santos considers that “people have to be there first” and refers to the example of the agricultural sector where “there is a great asymmetry between farmers, who are tied to land, and processing and distribution business entities who, in periods of financial contraction, crush the prices paid to production”.

Moreover, coming from a country less affected by austerity and with weaker movements, Kathleen Van Brempt (S&D, Belgium) also considered that the social agenda has to be in the first place. She affirms that “in order to give the EU its legitimacy back to citizens, it is also imperative that work be done on a European social agenda”. Van Brempt adds that “Unfair competition, false self-employment, secondment fraud, PO Boxes and, above all, the lack of a vigorous European response to these problems also cause crumbling confidence in the EU. Here too, I expect a vigorous policy from the EU. Continuing to postpone the realization of the social agenda is unacceptable and I look forward to the concrete proposals from the EC on this matter”.

Finally, Monika Smolkova (S&D, Slovakia) complains about Juncker’s speech and says that ““I expected him to be more focused on issues such as unemployment, investment, foreign policy, and help for young people. At a time when farmers are struggling, it would be appropriate to focus on the common agricultural policy as well as on cohesion policy, as more than a third of the Union's budget goes to regional development”.

The few references to Greece are from Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE / NGL, Portugal) who denounces the “blackmail against the Greek people, in an attempt to condition the choice of the path the future of your country. It is unacceptable to consider that all political forces should accept what he calls "aid" but, in practice, only means the continuation of the same policies that have led Greece to social and economic catastrophe. It is unacceptable to say that what is needed is to continue the path of so-called fiscal consolidation when the Greek people expressed exactly the same will in the last elections and last referendum”.

Lastly, Pervenche Berès (S&D, France) congratulates that Grexit has been prevented: “I would like to thank the European Commission because they have managed to prevent

the grexit, because grexit would have meant the unravelling of all European solidarity”. She also adds that “We’re going to have to be courageous to tackle the whole problem of debt. All observers know that the debt that we have at the moment is unsustainable, so let us continue with our effort to solve this problem on the bases of solidarity”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs from the EPP group continue with the consideration that the policies followed are positive, giving good results and should be further implemented. They also congratulate the Spanish and Irish growth rates and even the job creation rate in the continent as well as the change in the direction of the Tsipras government in Greece. However, MEPs from far right and Eurosceptical political parties, as well as other political parties, consider the management of the crisis is a failure and austerity policies are against citizens’ needs. Moreover, MEPs from the ENF group mention the refugee crisis and show opposition to spend resources to tackle this issue. They called for the closing of borders and demand to increase the spending for EU citizens living in poverty instead of employing it on refugees.

First, on behalf of the EPP group, Manfred Weber (Germany) considers the EU is in a difficult economic situation but moving in the right direction and with good results achieved as a consequence of the policies followed. He signals that “Ireland, Spain... we have wonderful growth rates there now”. Regarding Greece he affirms that “I we look to Greece maybe we’ve got a few wasted months behind us. [...] Tsipras has won respect [...]. Greece is no longer a place without a future. Tsipras in changing course has shown that the left ideology on this continent has failed. [...] 1.65 million jobs [...] were created last year in this continent. That’s also linked with what we’re doing”.

Moreover, Georgios Kyrtos (EPP, Greece) demands more flexible policies to get out of the crisis and mentions the impressive political changes in Greece. He says that “In Greece there are some quite impressive political changes. [...] We still have an economic crisis. [...] We are going to need support from Mr Juncker and the institutions so that we can have more flexible policies, especially when it comes to taxation of small and medium size companies and other sectors as well”.

Paulo Rangel (EPP, Portugal) introduces the issue of employment and proposes to establish a mechanism to help the unemployed. He explains: “I would like to talk about

the economy today. It is a question which is of concern to Ireland, to Portugal, to Greece and to Spain. In Portugal we've made enormous efforts, things have been done in order to get to a better situation. [...] Our Prime Minister has a vision for Europe and in this context he proposes that there should be a mechanism put in place in order to help the unemployed”.

On the other hand, Notis Marias (ECR, Greece) denounces threats against the Greeks and asks President Juncker to stop acting as a member of the Troika. He affirms that “We have also heard Mr Juncker, as a cynical spokesman for the Europe of lenders, threatening the Greek people if they do not submit to the third memorandum. So, Mr Juncker, you must stop acting as a member of the Troika. Mr Juncker, you must stop acting as a representative of neo-colonial German Europe. So I tell you, Mr Juncker, that your threats against the Greek people are not going to pass. The sooner you understand it, the better for you and the Commission”.

Furthermore, Fabio Massimo Castaldo (EFDD, Italy) complains about coward and hypocrite Europe in dealing with the economic crisis. And Marco Valli (EFDD, Italy) denounces austerity measures and the policies led by the EU that are against its citizens' needs. He says that “the Union has long since died. She died in the dogma of balancing the budget and the euro, in policies of austerity, in wild liberalization, in the guilty tolerance of mercantilist policies and excessive surpluses of the northern countries, in the fury over the countries in deficit, in tax havens and the circumvention of the multinationals, in casino finance, in the troika diktat, in the sale of public goods, in the explosion of unemployment and poverty, in growing inequalities, in the collapse of wages and mini-jobs, in the technocracy and in the excessive power of the finance, in deafness towards the needs of its citizens”.

On the other hand, Marcel de Graaf (ENF, Netherlands) mentions the refugee crisis and states that the EU should spend on EU citizens living in poverty instead of helping refugees and asylum seekers. He demands to “Close the frontiers and stop spending money for those hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers, while 120 million EU citizens live in poverty”. In a similar direction, Dominique Bilde (ENF, France) complains that resources are raised for refugees and not for other needs in the EU. She also condemns the influence of financial powers and calls for a return to a Europe of free and sovereign

nations. Finally, Sophie Montel (ENF, France) also joins the rejection of refugees in the EU and stats that the EU means crisis with unemployment, insecurity, poverty and massive immigration. She also considers the EU as undemocratic.

5.6 The 2016 State of the Union debate in the European Parliament

The 2016 State of the Union debate takes place in the context of the refugee and migration crisis, the uncertainties after the Brexit referendum and the economic crisis. Regarding the economic crisis, the President of the EC Jean-Claude Juncker refers to unemployment and the need to invest to tackle youth unemployment. He affirms that “Unemployment continues to be far too high in Europe although between 2013 and today 8 million new jobs were created. And employment is constantly rising”. Juncker admits that “Europe is not social enough. [...] more than anything, we need to invest in our young people. I cannot and will not accept that Europe is and remains the continent of youth unemployment. I cannot and will not accept that the millennials, Generation Y, might be the first generation in 70 years to be poorer than their parents. Of course, this is mainly a task of national governments (of which you are not a part, I know) but the European Union can support this effort and their efforts”.

Juncker also refers to social standards and the need to avoid exploitation and social dumping. He also compromises to fight against tax evasion. He states that “Being European also means a fair playing field. This means that workers should get the same pay for the same work in the same place. And this is why the Commission stands behind our proposal on the Posting of Workers Directive. The internal market is not a place in which workers can be exploited or subjected to lower social standards than others. Europe is not the Wild West: it is a social market economy without social dumping”. He adds his compromise to “fight against tax evasion, and many of you did not believe me, but that is what we are doing. We are delivering. This Commission is delivering on the fight against tax evasion”.

Juncker exposes his support to economic sectors in crisis, like the dairy sector. And regarding banks he affirms that “European banks are in much better shape than two years ago thanks to our joint European efforts. Europe needs its banks, but an economy almost entirely dependent on bank credit is bad for financial stability. It is also bad for business, as we saw during the financial crisis. That is why it is now urgent that we

accelerate our work on the Capital Markets Union. The Commission is putting a concrete roadmap for this on the table today”.

At the end of the debate, Juncker expresses his compromise to a stronger social Europe: “I’m pleased that almost everybody has called for a stronger social Europe”. Moreover, President Juncker makes general statements referred to democracy. He mentions the defense of European values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. He also makes explicit support to independent and effective justice systems. Moreover, Juncker insists on the need to listen to citizens. He says that “We need to listen to the citizens, we need to listen to the European Parliament, listen to the Member States. We do listen to our citizens and we would like to do that more intensely”.

5.6.1 Democracy frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs express again the urgency to strengthen democracy in the EU and the need to foster citizen participation. Some MEPs link the levels of trust on the EU with the enforcement of social standards. First, on behalf of the GUE/NGL group, Gabriele Zimmer (Germany) stresses that “The Union has to be democratic and Members of the Commission should take part in elections”. Zimmer adds that “The question of who runs the EU today was being answered by citizens in such a way to say that the answer was: lobbies. [...] Citizens have to be involved in the project, they’ve got to be participants. They can’t simply see that decisions are taken above them”.

There are a few references to the issue of trust. On behalf of the Greens/EFA group, Rebecca Harms (Germany) stresses the problem of trust saying that “We have to win back the trust of our citizens through very specific steps”. Moreover, Marc Tarabella (S&D, Belgium) observes that the institutions are constantly expressing contradictory views and this fosters citizens’ mistrust. Thus, he warned President Juncker to keep his word and make the general interest his priority. Finally, Sergei Stanishev (S&D, Bulgaria) also considers that trust in the EU will be won if Europe defends the social standards. He says that “If you start fighting for that and making it a reality, then there is a good chance that Europe will return confidence to the citizens”.

On the other hand right-wing MEPs also express worries about the lack of trust from EU citizens and different explanations and solutions are posed to this problem. MEPs

from far right political parties mention the importance of letting people express their will in a referendum and denounce the European elite and the Europe of businesses that is far from ordinary people's reality.

First, on behalf of the ALDE group, Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium) considers citizens mistrust is caused by the imbalance between globalization on one hand and democratic policies being developed on a national level on the other hand. He exposes that "I believe that it is true that the discontent, the fear and the anger of our citizens is caused by this fracture, a fracture that means that on the one hand we have the globalisation of our world and, on the other hand, democratic policies which are still only being developed on a national or local level. It is in my opinion this imbalance that was also the basis for the financial crisis in 2008 because the markets were global and our policies were not".

Several MEPs from the EPP group refer to the issue of trust as well. Herbert Reul (EPP, Germany) mention the need to "Fight against populism. The only thing we can do is to create confidence and trust [...] Confidence means we fulfill our promises, means we fulfill the rules". Also Tunne Kelam (EPP, Estonia) also insists on trust and says that "Restoring support and trust of EU citizens means concentrating on basics – that is completing the single market in deeds, not in declarations, bringing to a conclusion international free trade agreements and starting to treat Member States' meeting of their commitments without making any exceptions". Moreover, from the EFDD group, Peter Lundgren (EFDD, Sweden) also mentioned the lack of trust from citizens in the EU and states that "People are losing more and more confidence, faster and faster. This lack of confidence is what we saw in the UK as well".

Second, on behalf of the ECR group, Syed Kamall (United Kingdom) signals the importance of a more democratic chamber and institutions and says that "We also need democracy and openness to be reinvigorated within this Chamber and within our institutions". Kamall adds that "We need to see an end to the so-called grand coalition where decisions are taken by only five men from only four countries in only two political groups. So let me remind these five gentlemen that the European Parliament has 751 MEPs from eight political groups, and it is time you started to respect every one of them".

Third, on behalf of the EFDD group, Nigel Farage (United Kingdom) congratulates Barroso for his new job at Goldman Sachs stressing the high salary he will have. He says that “I am sure the whole House would like to join me – to congratulate Mr Barroso on his new, highly paid job at Goldman Sachs”. Furthermore, Farage also defends the celebration of a referendum as an important instrument to know and see what people think. Forth, on behalf of the ENF group, Marine Le Pen (France) stresses the need to be democratic with the defense of referendums and emphasizes that people should decide their fate. She affirms that “You showed disdain for the referendum. So what are you protecting us against? Freedom? Democracy? [...] Let nations be free, let them cooperate [...]. Let’s be democrats and let people decide their fate”.

Finally, Matteo Salvini (ENF, Italy) defends himself saying that there are “3.000 people dead in the Mediterranean in this Europe of peace, 26 million unemployed and the enemies of Europe are the populists and nationalist. Well, I think you need a good doctor”. Salvini talks about farce and considers the debate was far from reality. He also expresses that “We have a criminal currency, the euro. [...] Really I think this is your last speech you’re going to make here in this hemicycle, President, because the citizens cannot stand this any longer, they are populistically and nationalistically awakening”.

5.6.2 Austerity frames

In general terms, the urgency to work for a social Europe is shared by left-wing MEPs from different groups. Several MEPs are, as expected, insisting on the importance of the social pillar with special emphasis on youth unemployment and social dumping as urgent matters to tackle. Regarding employment, some MEPs mention the necessity to adopt social standards for working conditions and protect workers. The need for more investment and the lack of solidarity is also stressed by some MEPs. Also tax fairness and tax evasion is another shared worry on the left-wing groups. As in previous debates, left-wing MEPs oppose austerity measures and budget cuts and some MEPs signal the failure of these policies to recover from the economic crisis.

Regarding the position on the response to the crisis, Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL, Portugal) criticizes austerity and the differences between Member States where some of them are sanctioned for not complying, like Portugal, while others, like Germany or

France, were not. She explains that “Germany has violated the 6% threshold for external debt since 2007 and has already been warned in 2013. Germany ignored it. [...] However, we all know that there will never be sanctions for Germany. Why? Because Germany is Germany”. She adds that “Portugal has suffered one of the most severe adjustment processes across the European Union [...], we are still discussing a shameful process of sanctions for Portugal, particularly in terms of European funding cuts. Why, Mr President? Because Portugal is Portugal. This is the state of the Union which the President ignored in his speech. But tell me, Mr President, are you not ashamed?”.

Moreover, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez from the same political group (GUE/NGL, Spain) asked EPP MEP Esteban González about the fairness of budget cuts in Spain and its consequences against the poor: “Do you believe that is fair that the Spanish government is announcing more budget cuts for next year in order to be in line with the EU requirements? Don’t you think that these measures are going to further discriminate against the poor in Spain?”.

On the aspect of putting profits before citizens, Rebecca Harms (Greens/EFA, Germany) stresses the lack of solidarity inside the EU that saves banks but not public services. She affirms that “Banks are being saved but not hospitals and schools”. Harms also complained about the investment plan proposed and said that it was not sufficient: “There are so many sources of uncertainty and fear that we should be addressing. [...] The investment plan you mentioned is good but it doesn’t go far enough”.

Moreover, João Ferreira (GUE/NGL, Portugal) denounces the influence of capital on the interests of the EU. He says that “Big capital has an influence on the European Union”. Ferreira affirms that “These are the interests that you were defending. [...] People want to have future jobs, they want good wages, but they are constantly under threat, constantly being blackmailed. Let’s think about the process of the sanctions that have been imposed on Portugal. [...] Goldman Sachs is never going to do anything to champion the issues of the workers. This is the reality”. Lastly, Sotirios Zarianopoulos (non-attached, Greece), denounces capitalism and big companies as opposed to the needs of people. He warns that “People are in danger, victims of capitalism. There are young people who are becoming victims of the situation in Greece and there are people

who are becoming victims of the big companies [...]. Mr Tsipras is selling out to the big companies, he's not giving people what they really need [...]. The EU won't get better. Capitalism will only make things worse and what we need to do is to overturn the whole system”.

Regarding taxes, Patrizia Toia (S&D, Italy) insists on the necessity to work for a social Europe with tax fairness and fighting tax evasion. She affirms that “Tax fairness. That's got to be the first step in the battle against tax evasion. There are new ideas for social Europe”. Moreover, Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) refers to the issue of solidarity signaling the “Gap between speeches and deeds”. He says that “Your speeches get applause here in the chamber but when it actually comes into putting into practice then there's a lack of approval [...]. There's a very poor growth that show problems of the Juncker plan, there's a lot of youth unemployment [...]. There's a lack of support for solidarity as show the fines that are imposed to Spain and Portugal”.

On the aspect of social Europe there are several references from MEPs from all left-wing groups and coming from different EU countries. First, Gabriele Zimmer (GUE/NGL, Germany) says: “Give the citizens of Europe proper jobs and proper decent places to live”. Zimmer exposes that “It's always on the shoulders of citizens to carry the debt and to carry the efforts. And they have to live with the cuts that exist, the privatization of public services and public goods. [...] If we don't change that perspective that we have in Europe we're going round in circles”. Moreover, from the same political group, Neoklis Sylikiotis (GUE / NGL, Cyprus) criticizes neoliberal policies as the cause of the deepening of the crisis and the insistence “on the harsh measures of the Stability Pact. It has been assumed that unemployment rates, especially among young people, are particularly high. How young people are doomed to live worse than their parents. Social dumping is a serious problem in Europe. But how will the real economy be boosted when instead of promoting investment to create new jobs, the Commission proposes to fund further EU standardization by creating a permanent supreme headquarters and a European Defense Fund? Solidarity cannot exist with the measures you propose to strengthen the border and fortress Europe [...]. The only way out of the crisis is a policy towards a Europe of solidarity, peace, democracy and social justice”.

Second, Gianni Pittella (S&D, Italy) congratulates Juncker saying that “He never pronounced the word “austerity” and I’m very grateful to him for that”. Pitella exposes that “Juncker gave some positive responses to our priority [...]: sustainable growth, jobs, European democracy, and solidarity. [...] Cohesion policy is a cornerstone of European policy, we cannot undermine it, we cannot lose it. [...] tax have to be paid where profits are made”. Moreover, he expressed that “We want to combat dumping. [...] There is social dumping in the EU and we have to fight together against this social injustice. And then the directive on precarious work and also European unemployment insurance”. Pitella summarizes: “Poverty, redistribution of income, inequality, social dumping, and sustainable growth: these are our priorities. Thank you, Mr President, for saying they’re also the priorities of the European Commission”.

Other MEPs from the S&D group also refer to the importance of the social pillar. Iratxe García Pérez (S&D, Spain) states that “We demand a social pillar, a fiscal policy that is fairer, rights for workers. We’re against blocking funds for Spain and Portugal”. Also Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, Portugal) insists that “we should have a strong social pillar, making sure that all European citizens can count on a common set of social standards on working conditions and social protection. This social pillar should entail powerful instruments to deliver on the social standards”. Lastly, the S&D MEP from Belgium Kathleen Van Brempt defends the need to move towards a new type of economy. She says: “You said that Europe is not social enough. [...] our group agrees with you. We’re trying to find solutions to combat social dumping, also want to combat youth unemployment [...]. I think we can move into a different kind of economy with new types of jobs but we need a new type of economy”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs also refer to the problem of unemployment and the need to respond to this. Some of them warn that if unemployment is not reduced, populists will rise. Some MEPs denounce the dismantlement of the welfare states and the policies created by elites to protect banks but not citizens. MEPs from far right parties denounce European policies that are destructive for the people and for employment.

First, Lorenzo Cesa (EPP, Italy) mentions the importance of tackling unemployment and demands President Juncker more investment to create jobs and growth. He states

that “Unemployment, youth unemployment particularly, has gone over 20% in Europe and it’s 40% in my own country. Investment plans are bearing the first fruits and it’s great to hear that you’re going to increase them. Let’s triple them, President! Let’s stimulate investment rebooting growth and employment”.

Moreover, Paulo Rangel (EPP, Portugal) demands to stop sanctions against Portugal and Spain and alerts that this would increase populism. He affirms that “What we see in the news and what we hear in the corridors behind the scenes in the European institutions is the question of depriving Portugal and Spain of structural funding. These are countries that made enormous sacrifices which are totally ready to meet the Union’s goals and shouldn’t be sanctioned this way [...]. Don’t sanction the people, don’t sanction the companies, don’t stop this funding. All these would do is increase populism and the work against the European project and European integration”.

Furthermore, Esteban González Pons (EPP, Spain) refers to the issue of solidarity and equality between Member States. He affirms that “What’s not working is solidarity among the Member States. Without solidarity we won’t have Europe [...] Solidarity means that all countries need to live up to their obligations in terms of budget but we shouldn’t sanction some and not others. [...] Spain like all countries of the EU must live up to the obligations [...]. I don’t believe that Spain should be sanctioned but I do believe that Spain need to live up to its obligations”.

On behalf of the ECR group, Syed Kamall (United Kingdom) warned that if jobs were not created populism would rise. He affirms that “if you continue to focus on EU integration rather than on creating jobs, if you continue to press on regardless, you will drive voters into the arms of those whom you call populists”. Also Ulrike Trebesius (ECR, Germany) states that “We continue to face the eurocrisis and its very serious economic repercussions. Massive youth unemployment in southern Europe [...] The EU continues not to come up to satisfactory responses to these problems”. Furthermore, Marcel de Graaff (ENF, Netherlands) refers to the unemployed stating that “In Europe millions of people are unemployed and we are expected to pay the bill [...]. This Union is not good and its administrative elite is not right. Mr Juncker must step down”.

On the issue of putting profits before citizens, Marine Le Pen (ENF, France) says that “We have a destructive economic policy which saved the euro but not the people [...] and it’s making employment explode. Are you protecting us against prosperity?”. Moreover, Martin Sonneborn (non-attached, Germany) denounces that big multinationals should pay their taxes. He affirms that “A government which actually refuses to take the taxes from the Apple, for example, could give the impression that what we’re talking about is about the Europe of business and not of citizens”.

Finally, Laura Ferrara (EFDD, Italy) from the Movimento 5 Stelle, criticizes European policies which, according to her “The policies were efficient when it came to saving the banks but they haven’t been efficient when it came to dealing with the refugee crisis or providing economic growth for everyone”. Ferrara affirms that “The system of European power where you’ve got technocrats and lobbies and elites actually creates the policies for the future. They have imposed austerity, they reduce the role of popular democracy and sovereignty and they dismantle what the welfare states have built, they work against the rules of the labor market and they increase social imbalances. The social and economic progress of the current and future generation and our common goods these are not at the core of the European project and citizens will continue to say no to the European project”.

5.7 The 2017 State of the Union debate in the European Parliament

In the 2017 State of the Union debate the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker exposes a positive balance of the economic situation in the European Union. He congratulates about the good results regarding growth and employment. Furthermore, President Juncker considers the Stability and Growth Pact had given good results despite criticism. He also stresses the need to have a European Minister of Economy and Finance to promote structural reforms. Juncker explains that “We are now in the fifth year of an economic recovery that really reaches each and every single Member State. Growth in the European Union has outstripped that of the United States over the last two years. It now stands above 2% for the Union as a whole and at 2.2% for the monetary area. Unemployment is at a nine-year low. Almost eight million jobs have been created during this mandate so far. With 235 million people in work, more people are in employment in the European Union than ever before. [...] We can take credit for the fact that thanks to determined action, European banks once again have the capital

fire power to lend to companies so that they can grow and create jobs. And we can take credit for having brought public deficits down from 6.6% to 1.6%. This is thanks to an intelligent application of the Stability and Growth Pact. We ask for fiscal discipline but are careful not to kill growth. This is in fact working very well across the Union, despite some criticism. [...] We need a European Minister of Economy and Finance, a Minister to promote structural reform in our Member States. [...] The Minister [...] should step in whenever a Member States is facing the thread of recession or fundamental crisis”.

President Juncker is criticized in the debate about the need to prioritize the social pillar and explains that he has plenty of social initiatives. He says that “The Council and the Parliament have seen a whole range of initiatives submitted to them and I don’t need to list them here because those texts have been forwarded to you”.

Regarding references to democracy, Juncker makes general remarks about his willingness to build a more democratic Europe and highlighted the importance of transparency in the process. He says that “Now is the time to build a more united, a stronger, and a more democratic Europe for 2025. [...] I would like all these agreements to be finalized by the end of our mandate and I’m up to be committed to be negotiated in the greatest transparency. [...] From now on the Commission will publish all of the draft negotiation mandates which it will present to the Council. The citizens have the right to know what the Commission is putting forth. We’re going to finish with the lack of transparency, we’re going to finish with rumors and ideas of intention, the complaints that very often the Commission has been the object of”.

Finally, President Juncker stresses the principles of a more democratic Union based on freedom of oppression, equal opportunities and rule of law: “Europe is a Europe of values and a safe place [...]. Europe is a Europe of freedom and by that I mean freedom from oppression and dictatorship [...] Europe must be a Union of equality and equality of opportunity [...] there cannot be second class citizens. [...]. Freedom, equal opportunities and rule of law have to remain the foundation of our ever stronger and ever more united and more democratic Union”.

Matti Maasikas, President-in-Office of the Council expresses the need to listen to people and stated that the priority was to deliver to citizens: “Our citizens must be at the

centre of our attention, and delivering concrete benefits for citizens is what the guiding principle of the Estonian Presidency is”.

5.7.1 Democracy frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs mention that the analysis of the reality Juncker describes in his speech is far from the reality of the majority of the population in the EU. This opinion leads to some criticism about the lack of centrality of citizen’s needs in the priorities of the EU and the urgency to listen to them and tackle their main worries which some MEPs say they are unemployment, deterioration of welfare and low salaries, or poverty. Several MEPs emphasize that by giving an answer to these problems, citizens will gain trust in the EU. The importance of transparency is also mentioned by some MEPs, specially referred to the institution of the Minister of Finance of the EU.

First, on behalf of GUE/NGL, Patrick Le Hyaric (France) pointed out the gap between Juncker speech and the reality for the majority of citizens. Moreover, he said that the crisis of the idea of Europe is due to not taking citizens into account and not listening to them. Le Hyaric insisted on listening to citizens and taking care of their needs. Furthermore, he said the tendency was not towards a more democratic Europe, as it was expressed in the speech, but towards centralization of power:

Second, on behalf of Greens/EFA, Philippe Lamberts (Belgium) stressed the need to work for more democratic societies. Third, on behalf of S&D, Gianni Pittella (Italy) insisted on the democratic foundations of the EU, he says “We have to look at the issue of freedom, equality, rule of law, democracy”. He also referred to the functions of the Minister of Finance and the need that it is a democratic and transparent institution.

On the idea of the influence of elites vs citizens, Rina Ronja Kari (GUE/NGL, Denmark) signals the distance between the political elite and the problems of citizens. She explains that according to many citizens Europe is not going in the right direction due to poverty, deterioration of welfare, low salaries, or unemployment and the EU is not giving an answer to these problems. According to Rina Ronja Kari, the EU does not listen to citizens and says that “instead of looking at the real problems you sit there with the rest of the EU elites in your glass towers saying you want more EU, more power to

the EU Commission, a Finance Minister to control the Member States even more in the direction of the Commission [...]. I find it arrogant towards our citizens and towards democracy”.

Regarding the issue of trust, Tanja Fajon (S&D, Slovenia) highlights the need to gain trust by responding to citizen’s problems as well as ensuring the rule of law. She exposes: “You talked about the rule of law [...]. Countries shouldn’t be able to decide themselves which judgement stay in force or carry out or not. What about countries that aren’t doing this? You need to look at that Mr Juncker. And then how do young people get any faith in the EU? They see politicians not really responding to their problems”. Finally, on transparency, Carlos Zorrinho (S&D, Portugal) stresses “the importance given to the deepening of participatory democracy and transparency”.

In the debate appear other aspects referred to democracy. For example, Josep Maria Terricabras (Greens/EFA, Spain) asks the Commission to defend the freedom of expression in Spain in the coming Catalan referendum. From his side, Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) answers to Terricabras and warns that ignoring court rulings is a crime and a negation of Europe referring to Catalonia. Otherwise, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez (GUE/NGL, Spain) reminds that women’s rights has been a forgotten issue in Juncker’s speech.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs make some comments about ways to tackle the gap between citizens and institutions. Some MEPs make references to the Catalan referendum and the need to defend the constitution in Member States and confront nationalism. On the other hand, some MEPs highlight the rights of national minorities and the thread of autocratic leaders appearing in some countries. Some MEPs from far right parties express their negative opinions about the EU as undemocratic according to their views. Moreover, they consider the speech does not tackle real problems from EU citizens and some MEPs express their worries about the EU and its totalitarian tendencies that have little consideration for its citizens.

First, on behalf of ALDE, Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium) stress the need to counterweight autocratic leaders. He explains that “This European democracy is necessary, for example, to withstand alt-right governments such as we see today – also inside, in

Poland and in Hungary – who think that Trump with his white supremacy is the example, or that Putin and Orbán, who jail opponents, are the example. That will never be the example in whatever Member State in the European Union. And for that reason we have to create this European democracy with a transnational responsibility because, as Emmanuel Macron said, standing near the Acropolis, we need to be the counterweight to all these developments and yes, to autocratic leaders worldwide – a beacon of openness, a beacon of freedom and a beacon of hope in the 21st century”.

Second, on behalf of ECR, Ryszard Antoni Legutko (Poland) wonders whether the State of the Union is really a debate. He asks: “What debate? A debate is when you don’t know the end conclusion but we already have a conclusion [...]. This conclusion is more of the same old: more Europe, more Europe. [...] Is this really a debate? A debate means putting forward arguments and replying arguments”. Third, on behalf of EFDD, Nigel Farage (United Kingdom) refers to the need to have citizen consent in order to transfer more competencies and powers to the EU. According to Farage, as this is not happening the EU is an undemocratic union.

Fourth, on behalf of ENF, Harald Vilimsky (Austria) emphasizes the importance of democracy and said Europe needs more democracy for citizens, pluralism and sovereignty had to go back to the states. He states that “The right road for Europe can only be the road where there is more democracy left to the people, more democracy left to the citizens [...]. That is what we need in Europe: democracy, pluralism, we have to give more sovereignty back to the states”. On the other hand, Daniel Caspary (EPP, Germany) commented the problematic gap between institutions and citizens. He rejected pan-European lists as he considered they would widen that gap: “Many people think that we’re in an ivory tower here in Europe. We need to bridge the gap, we need to be closer to the citizens. Pan-European lists in my view would set us further apart from citizens so we reject them”.

Peter Lundgren (EFDD, Sweden) considers the speech was far away from people’s problems and no solutions. Also Nicolas Bay (ENF, France) complains about the little consideration for the people of Europe and denounces the construction of Europe going in a more and more totalitarian direction.

Finally, on the issue of inequality, Iuliu Winkler (EPP, Romania) reminds Juncker's words about equality in the EU and emphasized the need to make it a reality for members of national minorities. Winkler exposes that "In a Union of equals, there can be no second class citizens" you say. Let's make this true for the members of national minorities, too!".

During the debate, Esteban González Pons (EPP, Spain) calls for a defense of the constitution of Member States and explains the situation in Spain. He warns against nationalism, its expansion, and the thread it poses to the unity of the states and the constitutions of Member states. Otherwise, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE, Spain) also mentions the situation in Catalonia and makes a reference to right of national minorities stating that "democratic values and the rights of everyone including national minorities that do exist. As in Catalonia". Also Mark Demesmaeker (ECR, Belgium) refers to the Catalan referendum by saying that democracy needs to be respected as "we want a Europe of citizens and we want democracy to flourish and be respected".

5.7.2 Austerity frames

On the one hand, left-wing MEPs call for a social Europe. Several of them make specific mentions to tackle employment, the need to end precarious jobs and poverty. They also emphasize the urgency to work for social protections and against cuts in social policies. Some MEPs demand to end tax heavens as well as tax evasion and some went further to request the end of big companies' tax evasion. Different MEPs signal that the speech from President Juncker is in line with the interest of multinationals and lobbies but against the needs of the majority of citizens. Some MEPs consider the crisis have been unfairly paid by citizens that haven't had any role in the creation of the situation. All left-wing MEPs criticize austerity and its consequences on citizens and the majority of them explicitly call for a change of direction towards a social Europe.

The idea of a social Europe is expressed by many MEPs. First, on behalf of the GUE/NGL group, Patrick Le Hyaric (France) insists on the need to combine social and environmental progress which will create employment in the EU. Moreover, he signals the need to turn the Juncker Funds into social and development funds. Le Hyaric expresses the urgency of constructing a social Europe with minimum salaries, the end of precarious work and poverty, social protection and pensions as well as a major share of

wealth. Lastly, Le Hyaric complains about the lack of self-criticism on the consequences of austerity policies imposed on people.

Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez also (GUE/NGL, Spain) expresses her opinions against precarious jobs and competitiveness in the EU. Moreover, Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL, Greece) states that “President Juncker, the situation in Europe isn’t really as you described it. Workers look at the Union as something which is reducing their wages and rights, pensioners see nothing but further cuts in their pensions, unemployed people see the carrot in terms of investment but the stick of the weakening of legal protection and thread of job losses”. He criticizes austerity and states that Juncker is violating democracy, particularly in Greece. Lastly, Neoklis Sylikiotis (GUE/NGL, Cyprus) denounces that Juncker is “just offering the same thing again, keeping the regional imbalances and unfairness in place. We still have poverty pockets in Europe. [...] We need more public expenditure if we are going to create decent jobs. We need a social Europe, a Europe of solidarity and peace, we need a Europe in the interest of its citizens”. Second, on behalf of the Greens/EFA group, Philippe Lamberts (Belgium) refers to people who are suffering and paying for a financial crisis that they haven’t created at the expense of a few rich. Lamberts calls for the need of to live in dignity.

Third, on behalf of S&D, Gianni Pittella (Italy) refers to the need to tackle fraud saying “Let’s be courageous [...]. Let’s strike all the multinationals that have defrauded tax systems”. Moreover, Pittella exposes the need to launch an initiative against precarious jobs. In sum, Gianni Pitella reminds of the need to assure the social aspects. He affirms that “Young people, even with a master, end up earning 500 euros a month! This is a scandal we have to oppose! [...] We have to get out of the rhetoric of the “triple A” on social [...]. We need a child guarantee for young men and women. No child should be left without food, education, home”.

Many MEPs from the S&D group express similar opinions no matter from what country they come from. For example, the Spanish MEP Iratxe García Pérez (S&D) calls for the centrality of the social pillar to end poverty and recapture the European project based on equality of opportunities. She explains that “For years now Europe stopped to be part of our dreams. The idea of a project which is equality of opportunities has become something altogether different. Precarious jobs, austerity, economic crisis. [...] We need

to move ahead with new policies for the European Union. The European social pillar must be a priority. It's simply not possible that XXI century Europe there continue to have a working class that lives below the poverty line”.

Also Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) mention social demands. He says that “We want decent jobs for young people, fight against poverty particularly child poverty, fight against inequality, tackling fraud and tax heavens”. Moreover, Carlos Zorrinho (S&D, Portugal) emphasizes “the need to achieve a social pillar appropriate to the new challenges of the global economy” and Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, Portugal) insists on the social pillar and the need of an ambitious proposal for the European budget “making sure that we can count on updated social standards with regard to access to social protection and to skills, but also making sure that everybody in employment, whatever kind of job they have, can count on a decent labour contract and access to social protection. This should be the ambition of the upcoming European Social Pillar”.

Furthermore, Nicola Caputo (S&D, Italy) joins the voices that express the importance of the social pillar, basically referred to health, housing and nutrition: “social pillar to ensure free medical assistance, adequate housing and proper nutrition for families living in poverty and decent working conditions”. Also Kathleen Van Brempt (S&D, Belgium) insists on the triple A on social issues in order to ensure social security and equal working conditions in Europe: “We want a triple A on social issues [...]. We need to ensure that everybody in Europe work in the same conditions and receive the same salary. There's got to be proper social security”.

On the issue of taxes, Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL, France) reminds the need to end tax evasion and tax heavens. Also Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, Portugal) talks about the need for big corporations to contribute with taxes stating that “big corporations should pay their taxes because while they should benefit from the single market, they should pay what they owe. Moreover, Nessa Childers (S&D, Ireland) mentions taxes for big businesses that are evaded while fiscal constraints were imposed. Childers says that “big business keeps on dodging tax, and the fiscal constraints imposed on very different economies, keep on tearing our social fabric and the sense of common purpose among the peoples of the EU”.

Regarding the idea that profit is put before citizens, Miguel Urbán Crespo (GUE/NGL, Spain) tells Juncker that “With your speech you insist on continuing on the same road that has brought us to this situation”. He says that “You are creating an antidemocratic machine which in fact leads to financial blackmail in order to impose a neoliberal vision that it doesn’t work” and considers that Juncker’s proposals “are responding to the interest of multinational, lobbies and governments. What we need is a change of direction”.

Moreover, João Ferreira (GUE / NGL, Portugal) also considers that Juncker is insisting “on the same paths, the same policies and guidelines that have brought us to the economic and social disaster. [...] the President of the European Commission has come to announce, speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries of European capitalist integration”. Also Konstantinos Papadakis (NI, Greece) denounces that “In all countries all the governments are pushing ahead with very harsh measures against the workers. In Greece, France, Italy, they’re relieving big businesses from taxes”. Lastly, Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/EFA, Austria) denounces that “When it comes to trade it’s still the interest of big companies that are being put forth. Balances are not as it should be in a democracy. What we want are fair trade agreements”.

Finally, on the issue of inequality, Josef Weidenholzer (S&D, Austria) mentions that “Improvement in the economy that you mentioned isn’t benefiting everybody [...]. There’s also more disparity now between east and west [...]. Brussels has to be better, more democratic and more social”. Also Benedek Jávor (Greens/EFA, Hungary) refers to equality and participation among Member States saying that “we must make sure that the "Equal Europe" is actually implemented with the participation of all member states”. Lastly, Maria João Rodrigues (S&D, Portugal) affirms that “Europe is still working as a machine for divergence and inequality and we need to reverse this very undermining trend. So we call on the Commission to come up with an ambitious proposal for the European budget, turning the European project into a project for equality and convergence”.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs belonging to the EPP state that the economy in the EU is recovering and in good shape. They agree that the crisis is over and the proposals are in the right track. MEPs from the ALDE group also mention the positive evolution

in job creation in the EU. However, MEPs from other political groups criticize that austerity policies have led to negative consequences especially in terms of employment or poverty. Some MEPs consider real needs of EU citizens are not tackled and the crisis has not ended and will continue if the same policies are adopted. Moreover, some MEPs denounce the undemocratic structure of the EU that has severe consequences on peripheral countries.

Several MEPs refer to the aspects included in the idea of a social Europe. First, on behalf of ALDE, Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium) insist that there was a growth of jobs in the EU: “everybody knows that there is an increase in the number of jobs in the European Union”. Second, on behalf of EPP, Manfred Weber (Germany) talks about migration and says it is not good news for unemployed Europeans. He asks: “Do we really think that more legal migration to the European Union will solve the illegal migration problem? How many Africans do we invite to come to Europe? Do we really think that this will solve the problem? On behalf of my Group, I think that, first of all, we have to bear in mind the millions of young Europeans who at the moment have no jobs. We cannot say to them that we are opening the door for more legal migration when they themselves have no jobs”. Weber defends himself against criticisms and says he is working for a social union. He says that “Social policy is not occupied by the Socialists, frankly speaking, it is an issue for all of us. When you ask us, as the EPP, to look into the social union, look first at reality. In countries where the Socialists govern or governed – France or Italy for example – we have a big unemployment problem, and in a lot of countries where the EPP is governing – in Germany and in Ireland – we have a good economic situation. That is why we are working on the social union and you are only speaking about the social union”.

Several MEPs from EPP group consider that the crisis is over. For example, Esteban González Pons (EPP, Spain) affirms that “Favorable wind, that’s true Mr Juncker. We’ve left behind the euro crisis and now we also have to move this positive atmosphere on to social protection and work”. Also Birgit Collin-Langen (EPP, Germany) celebrates Junckers’ measures and considered the crisis was left behind saying that “Mr Juncker [...] has shown that we are on the right track”. Moreover, Luděk Niedermayer (PPE, Czech Republic) affirms that “life for people in Europe is better and that is what people expect from us” and Ivan Štefanec (EPP, Slovakia)

repeats that “The economy stays in good shape, creating more than eight million jobs, which is record numbers”. Lastly, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski (EPP, Poland) states that “The EU economy is gradually recovering from the economic crisis and is slowly gaining momentum”. Only Daniel Caspary (EPP, Germany) offers a critical point saying that “People are worried about jobs” and therefore “We need to protect jobs”.

Third, on behalf of ENF, Harald Vilimsky (Austria) affirms that “the euro is not a success story. We’ve seen extraordinary debts, we’ve seen astonishing unemployment, we’ve seen astonishing negative social impact on people’s life, we’ve seen incredible social instability”. Moreover, Notis Marias (ECR, Greece) complains that “We continue with the same policies, the same institutions and the same balances that existed before: a German-dominated Europe, austerity, and the stability pact. It’s the antidemocratic Eurozone, the uncontrolled euro group running the ECB”. Marias considers this is “a Europe of unemployment and marginalization of young people” and “What we need to do is combat unemployment and poverty and we can’t do it by failing to deal with the huge migrant flows which are existing at the moment”.

5.8 Conclusions

There are no substantial changes from the President of the European Commission on the explanation about the origin of the crisis and the responses to it. From 2010 to 2017, the Commission President maintains the narrative that Member States have lived above their means and reforms have to be adopted to recover from that situation. The origin of the crisis is, according to this view, due to the mismanagement of public finances from national government and the irresponsible behavior of countries like Greece that have brought the EU into difficulties. The behavior of financial markets is also signaled as an explanation for the economic crisis. The presidency change from Barroso to Juncker does not reflect major changes on this general view regarding the Great Recession and austerity policies.

The underlying idea is that there is no alternative to austerity and that this is the way to go. Moreover, both presidents make positive evaluations of the policies adopted and the need to implement structural reforms. Juncker considers the Stability and Growth Pact has given good results despite criticism. Thus, there are no substantial changes regarding the main narrative on austerity, the origin of the crisis and the need to

implement structural reforms. Both presidents made references to the importance of a social Europe but they were in general superficial remarks without concrete explanations. However, it cannot be confirmed that these references are a consequence of the anti-austerity movement's protests.

There are not relevant observations about democracy that could be related to anti-austerity movements' action. Both presidents mention the lack of citizen confidence in the EU but no solutions are explicitly exposed. The presidents make general warnings about the perils that the lack of trust in decision-making can have on the rise of populism and extremism. Thus, they stress the importance of accountability and the emphasis on delivering to people. During the debates both presidents mention the defence of the European values of freedom, democracy or the rule of law but with more rhetoric than concrete proposals. Transparency is also mentioned but referred to its importance during the conclusion of trade agreements.

There is a clear difference in the ideas of democracy and the positions about austerity between left-wing and right-wing MEPs and political groups. However, they cannot be considered a consequence of anti-austerity movements as the positions are already clear in the first debate from 2010. The evolution of these positions over the years observed (2010-2017), does not suffer drastic changes. Thus, the protest do not have a significant impact on the evolution of views and opinions expressed or do not explain this evolution. Moreover, MEPs' ideas and views can be categorized as progressive or conservative, and therefore are beforehand close or far from anti-austerity movement's claims. Thus, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter other speeches and data sources have to be used to confirm or refute this thesis hypothesis.

There are differences inside the left and right groups. Left-wing MEPs from the S&D group emphasize the importance of a social Europe, the need to increase investment and the urgency to tackle employment and poverty, as well as social exclusion. They are critical to austerity and its negative consequences on the most vulnerable. However, they are not so overtly signaling the beneficiaries and losers of austerity as MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups do. Right-wing MEPs show considerable differences, especially from MEPs from far-right political parties that oppose austerity

policies, the management of the crisis, the euro and the EU. These differences are also evident regarding the views on democracy and democratic quality of the EU.

Variations explained by MEPs' countries of origin are few. While political party membership shows clear differences on the ideas of democracy and the position on austerity, the country is not a relevant explanatory element. Several left-wing MEPs coming from countries with stronger anti-austerity movements and more affected by austerity policies were using their country experience to confront austerity and demand a change, while right-wing MEPs from same countries were not denouncing austerity. At the same time, left-wing MEPs from countries with no or weak anti-austerity movements and not or less affected by austerity policies were also demanding the implementation of other policies and opposing austerity. Finally, right-wing MEPs from these countries were defending austerity policies. In general, MEPs from the same political group share a very similar approach despite coming from different countries.

To sum up, several references from left-wing MEPs are similar or very close to claims and views from anti-austerity protesters. These similarities are observed whether the MEP comes from a country with strong anti-austerity movement and is affected by austerity policies or not. Thus, the ideological position explains more than the country of origin. As expected, right-wing MEPs does not share views and positions with anti-austerity protesters. However, MEPs from far-right parties use repeatedly the expressions "the people" vs "the elites" that was also present in the protests. Nevertheless, the positions observed in the debates cannot be explained as a consequence of anti-austerity mobilization and more data is needed to trace the influence of the movements on MEPs. In the following chapter the debate on the Greek bailout is observed.

Chapter 6. Positions in the debates on the Greek debt crisis in the European Parliament

The debates on the Greek debt crisis taking place in the European Parliament exposed the confrontation on the narratives of the crisis and the different opinions about austerity measures. In this chapter, several debates are analyzed to observe these differences and examine the coincidence of some of these positions and ideas with the narrative of the crisis from the anti-austerity movements. Seven debates have been observed from 2010 to 2015. Three of them took place before the first bailout from 2 May 2010 that sparked protests against cutbacks that Greece was forced to implement. These first three debates are the preparation for the European Council meeting from 25-26 March 2010, the debate on the ECB annual report for 2008 and on the report on the 2009 annual statement on the Euro area and public finances from 25 March 2010, and the conclusions of the European Council meeting from 25-26 March 2010 taking place on 7 April 2010.

Moreover, other four debates that took place after the first bailout are examined. The first, the debate that took place on 19 May 2010 about the outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the ECOFIN meeting which discussed the political relevance of the EU 2020 strategy in the context of the financial and economic crisis as well as the consequences of the financial and economic crisis on the EU 2020 strategy and its governance. Second, the debate on the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency from 15 January 2014 is observed; and third, the debate on the review of the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014. The Greek Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, exposed his views and opinions on these two last debates. A final debate has been included: the debate around the conclusions of the European Council of 25-26 June 2015, the Euro Summit of 7 July and about the situation in Greece. This debate taking place in July 2015 is relevant for the appearance of the Prime Minister of Greece Alexis Tsipras and enables the comparison of his positions with the previous Prime Minister Samaras.

In this chapter I analyze the debates mentioned and I observe to what extent the austerity and democracy frames of the movements are present in the European Parliament. I observe the differences between left-wing and right-wing MEPs and I

examine whether there is a significant variation depending on the country of origin of the MEP, following the hypothesis exposed in chapter 4. I also observe the positions of the President of the European Commission, European Council and European Central Bank as well as other members of these institutions. I examine whether there is any change or variation during the time frame of the selected debates. In this chapter, I focus on austerity frames and less on democracy frames. The reason is that these debates are based on the economic and financial crisis and general ideas about democracy or how democracy in the EU should be are less expressed. However, austerity frames reflect an implicit position towards democracy in the EU and moreover, some positions and ideas about democracy are expressed and included in the analysis. Several references from the selected debates are not included in this chapter for space reasons and they can be found in the annexes.

Different categories have been used to analyze the austerity and democracy frames in order to identify the main aspects and facilitate the comparison. For austerity, the categories are: economic crisis, Greece, response to the crisis, taxes, profits vs citizens, solidarity, social Europe, and inequality. The first four categories provide the main elements of the frame, to understand the position of the actor observed. The other categories (profits vs citizens, solidarity, social Europe, and inequality) are based on claims from anti-austerity movements. Thus, the observation of these elements enables the verification of the correlation between the actors observed in the debates from the EP and the anti-austerity movements' claims and ideas. For the democracy frame, the categories are: elites vs citizens, trust, transparency, and listen to citizens. These categories are all claims from anti-austerity movements.

The chapter begins with the analysis of the speeches from the presidents of the EC, Council and ECB and other members from these institutions over the time frame analysed and for all the debates selected. Second, it follows the examination of austerity frames differentiating left-wing and right-wing MEPs. Third, it continues with the observation of democracy frames from left-wing and right-wing MEPs as well. Forth, it compares the two Prime Ministers of Greece (Samaras and Tsipras) using different debates where they communicate their positions. Finally, some concluding remarks are exposed.

6.1 The Presidents of the European Commission, European Council and European Central Bank⁵

The Presidents of the Commission, Council and European Central Bank, as well as other members from these institutions all agree that the financial and economic crisis is one of the worst scenarios the EU has had to face in its history. However, their explanation of the crisis is distant from that of the anti-austerity movements, as can be observed in the debates analyzed. The situation in Greece and the measures proposed to tackle the debt crisis unveil their view of the whole financial and economic crisis. According to the President of the Commission, Greece is following the right path focusing on government deficit reduction. He states that “Greece is currently in the process of correcting its excessive government deficit” which he considers crucial. He exposes that “Such fiscal effort is in line with the course of action recommended by the Commission and the Council” and affirms that “Naturally, Greece’s fiscal effort must be continued; it is the only way to secure a lasting reduction in the cost of debt financing”, (debate 24 July 2010). Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission, expresses a similar opinion about Greece emphasizing the importance of deficit reduction. He states that “Greece is now on track to meet the 4% target of deficit reduction this year” and considers that this “may indeed be a turning point in Greek fiscal history and economic development”, (debate 25 March 2010).

Moreover, there is a continuous insistence in these debates on the necessity for Greece to continue with the agreed measures. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council makes it clear saying that “The Greek Government has taken some measures, some courageous measures that I applaud”. He informs that Greece was asked to take these measures and “it has shouldered its responsibilities”. Van Rompuy insists that “Now they must be carried out, and I fully understand the delicacy and difficulty of the circumstances under which the Greek Government must proceed. Nevertheless, they must be carried out, (debate 7 April 2010).

The measures requested to Greece are defended as necessary to foster growth and jobs as well as achieve financial stability. Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission, explains

⁵ See annex 2: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Presidents and members of the European Commission, European Council and European Central Bank.

that “We are not doing it for the sake of the mystical market forces but for the sake of sustainable growth and job creation in Europe, by ensuring that the threats to financial stability will not kill the economic recovery that is now in progress”. Moreover, he informed that “the Commission delivered EUR 14.5 billion for Greece, which the IMF has complemented with EUR 5.5 billion. We said we would be ready to meet the immediate needs of refinancing, and we delivered on time”. Olli Rehn warns that “this is all conditional on a full and complete implementation of the programme designed, together with the Greek Government, by the Commission, in liaison with the ECB and the IMF”, (debate 19 May 2010).

During the debate on 15 January 2014 about the programme of activities of the Greek presidency, Greece is praised as example of courage, determination and commitment to Europe by the President of the Commission. The Prime Minister of Greece, Antonis Samaras, is congratulated for his work and the previous predictions that Greece would exit the euro are signaled as wrong. President Barroso details the success of the Greek adjustment process and explains that “Greece has embarked on a very painful, but necessary, adjustment process, and some impressive results are already appearing: a government deficit that has been cut from nearly 15 % in 2009 to an expected primary surplus in 2013; recovering competitiveness, as illustrated by the steadily-falling current account deficit; and a vast programme of structural and public sector reforms”. Barroso states that “We expect positive growth throughout this year in Greece. The courage of the Greek people in the face of great hardship is bearing fruit” and affirms that “the European Commission has always stood by Greece and the Greek people. I thank you for your kind words recognising that. As you also know, when many others were expressing doubts and less commitment to Greece, this Parliament also always stood by Greece and supported Greece”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission, also congratulates the presidency of the country which “demonstrated enormous courage, and whose people are working hard to return to economic prosperity. The Greek Presidency is symbolic proof of European resilience, political determination and strong European solidarity” and affirms that “a Greek exit was never an option”. Moreover, Šefčovič confronts the idea that “the euro is a primary cause of Greek economic problems” and mentions that “other countries outside the European Union, such as Iceland, and many EU Member States

not in the eurozone face the same strong need for consolidation”. He finally states that the Greek “support for the euro has been at a high level throughout the crisis and is even stronger today” (debate 15 January 2014).

Furthermore, the Vice-President of the Commission, Maroš Šefčovič, stresses the success of the Greek reforms and of the Greek Presidency in the debate from 2 July 2014. He congratulates that Greece “returned to the financial markets; your country is returning to growth, and you achieved a structural surplus in your budget after many long years”. He also highlights the hard work of the Presidency “to pass the important pieces of the legislation that would make Europe better served and stronger”, (debate 2 July 2014).

The last debate selected for this chapter, the debate on the situation on Greece from 8 July 2015, is less complacent with the events in Greece as it takes place a few days after the referendum on the bailout conditions for this country. In this moment, the movement of the squares had already introduced an alternative narrative confronting the mainstream austerity. The economic crisis was generating a political crisis that was especially deep in Southern European countries, the most severely affected by austerity policies. The political crisis impacted on traditional party systems and produced major changes. In Greece, Syriza won the elections of 17 June 2015 with a clear message against austerity and for a new economic and political restructuring. Critical sectors to austerity policies in Greece and in other EU countries viewed this victory as a sign of hope for a new direction in Europe with governments advocating an end to austerity.

The new Greek government organized a referendum to decide whether Greeks accepted the bailout conditions proposed by the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank on the Eurogroup meeting of 25 June 2015. The referendum held on 17 June 2015 rejected the conditions of the bailout with the “No” vote winning in all the Greek regions. Greece governing Syriza party with its Primer Minister Alexis Tsipras campaigned for the “No”. On the other hand, former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras campaigned for a “Yes” and resigned as leader of the centre-right New Democracy party after the referendum. These results interfered in the negotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding between Greece and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM).

As has been mentioned, the debate in the European Parliament is just a few days after the Greek referendum. In this debate the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, refers to the need to re-build trust after the referendum. He explains that “Two weeks ago, I called a Euro Summit on 22 June to help break the impasse in negotiations on financial assistance to Greece and to ensure that all leaders were on the same political page. Over the next days, leaders asked the Eurogroup to accelerate discussions on a last-minute proposal by Greece. We believed a deal was achievable then. Two weeks later, there is now a race against time to re-build trust”. Tusk adds that he “will not discuss the rights and the wrongs of the Greek referendum. Everyone has their own perceptions” and urges “to move on. Let bygones be bygones”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Moreover, Tusk warns about the worst-case scenario if no agreement is found. He stresses the extremely negative consequences for Greece and its people and reminds that everyone is responsible for the crisis saying that “All sides in the negotiations share the responsibility for the current status quo. I call on all leaders to try to find consensus – that can be our common success, with no losers or winners. If that does not happen, it will mean the end of the negotiations, with all the possible consequences, including the worst-case scenario, where everyone will lose”. Tusk warns that the “inability to find agreement may lead to the bankruptcy of Greece and the insolvency of its banking system and, for sure, it will be most painful for the Greek people”. He also says that this “will affect Europe” and affirms that “All of us are responsible for the crisis and all of us have a responsibility to resolve it”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Tusk’s narrative of the crisis is clear. He stresses that “morality means paying off the debt you owe to others. It is not so that the creditors are bad and immoral, while the debtor is the innocent victim”. Moreover, he adds that “it is simply impossible to keep spending, over a long period of time, much more than one earns. This is the source of the crisis in Greece, not the common currency”, (debate 8 July 2015).

From his side, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, calls for the need to take the economic and monetary union further to tackle the Greek crisis. He complains about breaking negotiations saying that “We must go back to the negotiating table. It was a mistake to leave the negotiating table” and acknowledges lack

of transparency in the negotiations admitting that “It is true that negotiations did take place behind closed doors we cannot change that”. Moreover, he adds that he does not defend cuts for the poorest pensioners affirming that “I always stood up against cuts in pensions”, (debate 8 July 2015).

When we observe the positions around the response to the crisis in the selected debates we notice full support to austerity measures from Presidents and members of the Commission, the Council and ECB. The President of the ECB, Jean-Claude Trichet states that “An economic recovery is in progress, but this does not mean that the crisis is over. For one thing, we know that the pace of recovery will be uneven and we cannot rule out setbacks”. Moreover, he defends the monetary union as a shared destiny and defends himself of criticism saying that “We are often too quick to criticize our institutions and processes. But they have generally worked well, even in the most difficult times. I trust that European institutions and processes have remained effective during the financial crisis”. Trichet finally defends the introduction of the single currency as “the greatest achievement [...] in the history of European integration to date – a process that has ensured peace and prosperity in Europe”, (debate 25 March 2010).

After the debate from 25 March 2010, Jean-Claude Trichet admits that difficult times are not over. He also responds to worries expressed in the Parliament about unemployment stating that “by being credible in delivering stability in the medium and long run, we trust that we are contributing to sustainable growth and sustainable job creation. But you know that our message is structural reforms; structural reforms to elevate the growth potential of Europe and the job creation capacity of Europe are absolutely essential”. Furthermore, he emphasizes that “We absolutely need full and complete implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact. Surveillance of fiscal policies is at the heart of EMU, and I must also include surveillance of structural reforms and implementation of structural reforms, and surveillance of the evolution of the cost competitiveness of the various economies, particularly, members of the euro area. This is a key issue”, (debate 25 March 2010).

The President of the ECB defended himself about the questioning of the institution transparency. Trichet mentioned that “We consider the ECB to be one of the world’s most transparent central banks. Our practice of holding a press conference immediately

after the Governing Council meeting on monetary policy each month remains a pioneering initiative that has not yet been replicated by our major sister institutions. With the publication of our comprehensive introductory statement in real time, we explain policy decisions and their underlying rationale”, (debate 25 March 2010).

During the debate from 19 May 2010, the President of the Council, Diego López Garrido, also states that “the EU has acted correctly throughout this period. It may have appeared slow to take decisions [...], but it has achieved the right results”. He also supports structural reforms in the pension system and reforms in the health system. López Garrido defends “measures [...] aimed at maintaining budgetary discipline, guaranteeing compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact and establishing measures to resolve and prevent crises”. The President of the Council states that “The other alternatives, of course, are clearly populism or protectionism, and they are not an option [...] the way to respond to the situation [...] is not with less Europe but with more Europe. That is the way to respond to this situation right now”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Olli Rehn, member of the Commission also congratulates that Spain and Portugal present fiscal consolidation measures intended to reduce the public deficits. He reminds that “a faster reduction of the public deficit is indeed an essential component of the financial stability package” and warns that “It is equally important that both countries adopt structural reforms that will contribute to increased potential growth, especially reforms of the labour markets and pension systems”, (debate 19 May 2010).

The defense of structural reforms is unanimous. The President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, justifies them saying that to deliver as much of the growth and jobs agenda “Consistent and continued structural reform is the way to do this”. He further exposes the successful examples of countries that have implemented these reforms such as Ireland that “is now able to issue long-term debt at rates of only about 3 %, which is less than some other countries that did not need to ask for adjustment programmes and assistance”. Barroso also mentions “Latvia, which – together with Greece – has implemented one of the toughest adjustment programmes” and states that it “has not only joined the euro area but currently has the highest growth rate in the European Union. Spain is exiting its specific programme for banks and is once again showing its remarkable dynamism and attracting new investors. Portugal has seen positive growth

since the second quarter of last year, and its unemployment rate and interest spreads are consistently going down”. After mentioning the successes of all these examples, Barroso concludes saying “do not tell me that structural reform is unnecessary or unproductive: the facts show otherwise. We need structural reforms so that we can address the real problems of competitiveness in many of our countries if we do not want to be losers of globalization”, (debate 15 January 2014).

During the debate on the review from the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014, Barroso insists in the successful achievements made by the austerity policies saying that “During the last months, and following Ireland’s successful exit from the programme and the successful implementation of the programme in Spain for the banks, Portugal too has exited its financial assistance programme with success. The situation in Greece and Cyprus has stabilised, with real signs of improvement, particularly in terms of the correction of very important imbalances”. Barroso admits the measures are difficult mentioning that “We all know this process has been painful. I would say that Prime Minister Samaras and his government know it better than anybody”, but rapidly affirms that “after these difficult and necessary reforms, Greece has now seen a further reduction in its deficit; it has projected growth; it has corrected historic external imbalances; and, indeed, it is recovering its competitiveness”, (debate 2 July 2014).

The President of the Commission gives an answer towards criticism about “the idea being popularised in some countries that these are impositions from Brussels, or from the Commission”, saying that this “is completely false”. Barroso explains that the “Commission has the role of making proposals and is the initiator of the process. It is also the objective referee. The role of the Commission is to check whether recommendations have been implemented or not at national level. But the decisions, I repeat, have been taken by all the governments, by the finance ministers and, ultimately, by the prime ministers of all our countries. So, please, it is time to avoid these discussions putting the blame on Brussels for decisions that are taken by the governments themselves”, (debate 2 July 2014).

The focus in all the selected debates is about structural reforms and the need to implement them. However, some mentions are made to the need to regulate the financial system with the adoption of taxes on international financial transactions. The

President of the Council, Herman Van Rompuy, mentions among others the “challenge for international financial regulation” that Europe must put forward at the international level, (debate 7 April 2010). In another debate from 19 May 2010, the President of the Council, Diego López Garrido, also expresses the need to “include the debate that is beginning in the EU about tax on benefits in the financial sector and a tax that even the G20 is beginning to talk about, which is a tax on financial transactions, which is, in turn, being debated in the EU”. López Garrido insists that “On this subject, it should be said that all the European Union institutions are working towards this. It was discussed at the European Council in December of last year. The International Monetary Fund was given the task of conducting a study on a tax on international financial transactions. It was discussed in the European Council in March, the Commission proposed it on 1 April, and it was also discussed in the Ecofin Council”. The President of the Council says that there needs to be a EU common position in the G20 meeting “on the regulation of the financial system and for the important debate on taxing international financial transactions” and insists that “we must speed up the debate or the decision, which I think must be raised at the G20, on a tax on international financial transactions”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Another explicative category is the conception of solidarity that the Presidents of the different institutions express in the debates. They all share similar conceptions of solidarity. President Barroso says “solidarity is a two-way street” referring to Greece and meaning that on the one hand Greece makes economic efforts and on the other by supporting this effort the EU helps Greece and the whole eurozone, (debate 24 March 2010). The President of the Council, Diego López Garrido, is more ambiguously linking solidarity with social issues stating that “Europe is based on solidarity and therefore has a strong social content”. He also adds that it is necessary to “talk about more long-term goals, goals which I would like to single out, in particular, the element of economic, territorial and social cohesion; in essence, solidarity”, (debate 24 March 2010).

Solidarity is repeated in the debates with a vague and abstract significance but never with the meaning of helping a country in need without demanding anything in return. However, the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, mentions in a rhetoric way that the European approach to face the challenges of the EU imply “pressing ahead with what is rational and right for Europe” as well as “listening to all sides and

understanding the needs of our citizens, especially those who are suffering the most” and finally “implies preserving our European values of freedom, justice, and solidarity”, (debate 2 July 2014).

Finally, the question of social Europe is mentioned several times in the debates. For example, the member of the Commission, Maroš Šefčovič, says at the end of a debate that “We need higher employment, we need a better gender balance and we need stronger education. It is very clear that we need to invest more in research and development, and it is absolutely clear that we need to fight poverty”, (24 March 2010). Maroš Šefčovič talks again about action against poverty in the debate from 7 April 2010 explaining that “we always need to be conscious of the risk that our Union could be perceived as being more concerned about banks and businesses than about workers and families. The Commission is determined to ensure that this is not the case. A target against poverty would send a powerful signal that the EU is about opportunities for everyone in society, even the most marginalised and the most vulnerable people. And, as the Commission has repeatedly stated, the issue of poverty cannot be resolved through an employment policy alone. Employment policy is of overwhelming importance, but it can never reach out to all sectors of society [...]. Therefore I can assure you that the Commission will be keeping up the pressure to keep a target against poverty as a top priority”, (debate 7 April 2010).

In the same debate, the President of the Council, Herman Van Rompuy, adds that “the European Commission has really grasped the essence of our European social model [...]. We have decided on social inclusion and, amongst other things, the fight against poverty”, (debate 7 April 2010). Van Rompuy reminds that there needs to be “sufficient economic growth so that we can finance our social model properly, and it is also to serve a European Union that wants to play a role in the world”. He also defends himself from criticism for not doing enough to tackle poverty and he states that “It is the very first time the fight against poverty has been included in five key objectives, [...]. I am pleased, therefore – proud, even – that we and the Commission joined battle on this and were able to include the fight against social exclusion and against poverty in these five key objectives”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Furthermore, the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso also mentions that the social impact of the crisis and the problem of unemployment cannot be neglected. He states that “we never said that this was only about fiscal consolidation or structural reform. We have always said [...] that we also need investment and to look at the social impact of the crisis. We need to keep up the investment measures necessary to make the reforms work to the benefit of jobs and growth. Our number one aim is to restore employment: this is the biggest drama of today’s Europe. We cannot say that we are out of the crisis while we keep these very high levels of unemployment; however, it is true that we have now exited a phase of the crisis where there were systemic threats to the euro area”, (debate 15 January 2014).

In another debate, Barroso refers again to employment and social issues and says that “We now need to focus specifically on implementation and there is no room for complacency because a lot of reforms are needed. We need to do more, for example, regarding employment, the Youth Guarantee, the fight against poverty and social exclusion, investment, taxation and, overall, on progress in terms of our competitiveness”, (debate 2 July 2014). However, the different mentions to social issues are not given preference and in many debates are commented in the last moment and after stressing that the priority is the implementation of structural reforms.

In general, there are no significant differences in the austerity frames of the Presidents of the Commission, the Council and the ECB as well as other members from these institutions in the selected debates. Furthermore, over the period of time used to observe these frames (from the first debate in 2010 to the last in 2015) there are no significant changes from their initial positions.

6.2 Austerity frames from left-wing and right-wing MEPs

In this section, austerity frames will be analyzed differentiating left-wing and right-wing MEPs’ positions. In order to facilitate the comparison, two subsections have been made. The first one examines the MEPs’ positions on the economic crisis and the situation in Greece. The second subsection, reviews the positions on the consequences of austerity policies.

6.2.1 Left-wing MEPs and austerity⁶

6.2.1.1 The economic crisis and the situation in Greece

Left-wing MEPs' opinions about the economic and financial crisis, austerity measures and the response to the crisis range from critical to strong opposition. MEPs from the S&D group express very critical views such as Liem Hoang Ngoc (France) who complains that the “neoliberal dogma” which was “thrown into doubt by the crisis is back in force in Parliament, in the Council and in the Commission” (debate 25 March 2010). Also Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany) criticizes the *laissez-faire* ideology that has been dominating for decades and the unquestioned “superiority of the capitalist economic system”. According to him “This economic system has taken us into the deepest financial, economic and employment crisis and the deepest crisis in the morality and legitimacy of the institutions since the end of the Second World War. The system is wrong. It is, to a certain extent, immoral. [...] This is a warped system. It should be abolished and these practices should be banned. These are exactly the mechanisms that we are discussing and the real-life examples are not funny”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Another MEP from the S&D group, Antigoni Papadopoulou (Cyprus) says that “The behaviour of the markets and of the banks is like a pack of wolves [...] ready to tear the economically weak countries apart. The first victim was Greece, followed by Spain and Portugal. In the case of Greece, we saw speculators hit it mercilessly, on the one hand, and Community solidarity which was very late coming and which came on very harsh terms, forcing the Greek people to make very unpleasant sacrifices and embark on justified strikes, on the other. It would appear that the protagonists of the international economic crisis are now the states, not the banks”, (debate 19 May 2010).

The market, its importance and place in the EU, is also mentioned by Karin Kadenbach (S&D, Austria) stating that “it is time for us to realise that the market does not have an independent value and that the citizens of Europe do not have to serve the market, but instead, that the market is there to serve the people, the 500 million Europeans”, (debate 19 May 2010).

⁶ See annex 3: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Left-wing MEPs.

Another element about the economic and financial crisis, debt, is mentioned by Gabriele Zimmer (GUE/NGL, Germany) saying that “some of the debt is illegitimate debt. This is debt that has arisen because private debt has turned into public debt”, (debate 15 January 2014). This position confronts the main narrative of austerity and the consequent need to adopt structural reforms.

On the other hand, the positions about the situation in Greece is revealing of the ideas about austerity. Even though all left-wing MEPs recognize the harsh measures taken by Greece they have different opinions on the origins of the crisis and the suitability of the policies adopted. From GUE/NGL group, Nikolaos Chountis (Greece) warns that the “intervention by the International Monetary Fund [...] creates a political and legal precedent by making the Stability Pact even more austere” and regarding Greece “such choice would seriously intensify the anti-labour and anti-social measures taken by the government, measures which you call bold and which have increased poverty, increased unemployment, cut off any prospects for growth and cut off any hope of Greece’s emerging from the crisis”, (debate 24 March 2010).

Also some MEPs criticize that decisions on Greece are being taken according to Chancellor Merkel’s will, as Rebecca Harms (Greens/EFA, Germany) states. According to Harms, Merkel wants to “return to Berlin from Brussels as the victor – without actually discussing satisfactory solutions with the others. I think it is disgraceful”. Moreover, Harms considers that “the people of Greece now have an opportunity to create a better state. The state of Greece must utilise the crisis to bring about real reforms”, (debate 24 March 2010).

On behalf of S&D group, Martin Schulz (Germany) confronts the words of many MEPs that talk about European taxpayers’ money spent on Greece saying that “It is not about transferring money from taxpayers in Germany, France, Italy or any other country into Greece’s coffers. That is not the objective. It is about enabling Greece to borrow money on the international markets at the same interest rates as are available to the other countries”. Schulz condemns the negative effects of speculation and lack of solidarity on interest rates in Greece. He states that “Interest rates are usually 2.5 to 3%. As a result of the speculation caused by the failure to demonstrate solidarity with Greece, that country is paying 6%. To put it plainly, Greece’s attempts to balance its budget are

lining the pockets of speculators on the international financial markets”, (debate 24 March 2010).

The Italian MEP Sergio Gaetano Cofferati from the same political group considers, unlike many other left-wing MEPs, that “the Greek crisis [...] it is undoubtedly caused by a lack of rigour in the management of public expenditure” and condemns the European institutions’ delay in addressing this problem. Like Schulz denounces speculation and says that the delay in the response to the crisis “has already had a negative impact: indeed, it has opened the door to speculation; it has created, within the Union, doubts over certain countries’ intentions with regard to the future of Europe [...]; it has accentuated the difficulties of the Greek Government, which has had to implement anti-popular measures – not trivial or minor decisions – affecting millions of people, and it has done so without being sure that help was on its way”, (debate 24 March 2010).

Anni Podimata (S&D, Greece) also stresses that “the Greek Government has taken very harsh measures, most of which have already started to be applied at the expense of and with sacrifices by the Greek people” and however “it continues to borrow at exceptionally high interest rates”. The Greek MEP explains that this is “because there are speculators on the markets making a fortune by betting on the odds of a country going bankrupt and ultimately creating the conditions and preconditions for that to happen”. She also warns that Greece “cannot face the fury of the market alone at this difficult stage” and reminds that “Eighteen months ago, the markets were threatening to bring down the global economy. Surely Greece will be threatened today”, (debate 24 march 2010).

Another issue regarding the debate around Greece is the thread of leaving the Eurozone. Jürgen Klute, on behalf of the GUE/NGL group (Germany) denounces that the “calls from the German Chancellor, Mrs Merkel, to exclude Greece from the euro area” is an “absolutely absurd” proposal. Moreover, he adds that “the crisis is by no means solely the responsibility of Greece” and reminds that “the majority of decisions on financial policy in the euro area have been handed over to the European Central Bank”. Klute, in the name of his group, states that “The euro cannot provide the answer to the different levels of productivity in the individual economies. Major exporters such as Germany are

forcing Greek economic policy to its knees. Therefore, this also represents a crisis in EU economic and competition policy”, (debate 25 March 2010).

At the debate on the conclusions of the European Council meeting taking place on 7 April 2010, Rebecca Harms, (Greens/EFA, Germany) expresses her surprise that the agreements for Greece are considered to be helping the country while “the interest rate that Greece has to pay today [...] is not 6%, but 7%”. Thus, she considers that “what was described during and after the Council meeting [...], as a safety net really is no safety net at all”. Harms complained about the lack of will to really help Greece saying that “it was agreed that the country’s situation must reach rock bottom before Brussels would be ready to actually help. In Germany there was a feeling, when Chancellor Merkel came back from Brussels, that she wanted to show the Greeks what it is like to be at rock bottom before she would be willing to actually help them. We get the impression that this is more a case of teaching a harsh lesson, but we do not get the impression that teaching harsh lessons is what could help the European Union at the moment”. Thus, according to Harms “This very negative energy towards Greece goes hand in hand with the decision not to get involved in solving the problems in Greece. Everything that now has to happen in terms of budgetary consolidation, what areas have to be cut back in terms of public debt, how public services have to be made more efficient, how tax evasion has to be combated, how the corruption in Greece is to be tackled, is being left to the IMF, while Brussels refuses to get involved. This behaviour, to my mind, is not right”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Greek members from the S&D group express compromise towards the adoption of austerity measures without criticism and with the conviction that they are an adequate solution and they will work. The Greek MEP Kriton Arsenis (S&D) affirms that “Following the Council decision in March, no European country is at risk of bankruptcy [...] Greece is not asking for help, it is taking measures: the deficit has been reduced by 4% thanks to harsh measures which the people of Greece are heroically enduring, because they want to change the situation in Greece once and for all. By May, the Greek Parliament will have approved radical changes in taxation, insurance and the labour market. We should not be surprised if Greece emerges from this crisis stronger and free from the debts of the past”, (debate 7 April 2010).

However, other MEPs from S&D group call for respect towards Greece and its government. Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D, Finland) says that “there is one thing we could stop doing, and that is ridiculing Greece. The Greek nation, Prime Minister and politicians now deserve our respect, since they are taking some very difficult decisions”. At the same time she explains that “Finland and Sweden were Greece in the early 1990s. We had to take decisions that were just as hard, but we succeeded”, (debate 19 May 2010).

During the debate on the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency from 15 January 2014, the Greek MEP Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL) signals that it was not Greece but the European banks that were saved. He states that “we sacrificed the Greek economy and the Greek people to save the European banks and the euro, to save a financial system that is unstable and functions as a casino. It is not true the EU saved Greece from bankruptcy, from default. Some political elites that voted and accepted the troika pushed us towards the economic disaster and towards the people facing the consequences [...] of the crisis. We sacrificed Greece”, (debate 15 January 2014).

In the same debate, Rebecca Harms, (Greens/ EFA, Germany) warns the Greek President that he can't affirm that expectations are being met. She says to Mr Samaras that “it's a big mistake [...] to come to this parliament and say everything's fine” and “this is not entirely true”. Harms admits that “Expectations are met in terms of figures and on paper [...] but what's happening in parallel to that? Something that is not mentioned clear enough by the Greek government”. Harms explains that public institutions are not working and schools, universities, hospitals, etc., are “in a deplorable state”. According to Harms “you can't just look at the savings targets that are being met, there is a second part and the second part has to be met as well”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Moreover, Bas Eickhout (Greens/ EFA, Netherlands) in the same direction as Rebecca Harms says “Mr Samaras [...] I have the feeling that you are a bit in denial” and mentions the decline in the approval of the EU leadership in Greece that was “60 % in 2009 [and] declined to a level of 19 % in 2013”. Eickhout adds that “If we then look at the debt level of Greece, we see that it is still at 180 %; unemployment is still rising in Greece, standing at over 27 %, and youth unemployment is around 58 %. Then, Mr

Samaras, you say ‘we have been rebalancing our trade balance, we are back to zero’. Yes, but how? By cutting consumption levels, that is how you are doing it. That is not the way”. Finally he complains that “there is no debate on a haircut on the bail-out loans, when we all know it is needed; and no debate on real, balanced social economic policies, instead of the austerity-driven obsession of right-wing politics”, (debate 15 January 2014).

On behalf of the S&D group, Hannes Swoboda (Austria) acknowledges the hard work and difficult reforms carried out in Greece and points out that “this is not the end of the reform process but rather the beginning of it. You may not gain politically from it [...] but it is important to carry out the reforms, and we have to help”. However, after insisting in the necessity to adopt the reforms he asks “why does Greece have to pay back all its debts so quickly? Germany and Austria had nearly 100 years to pay back some of their debts. So, let us be honest and let us be helpful to Greece concerning its debt repayment”. Moreover, he insists that “Reform is necessary, yes, but some of the demands of the Troika are totally unacceptable [...] because they are destroying the social network”. Swoboda also stated that the method is unacceptable because “if you have a pistol and you ask somebody whether he agrees with your demands and he says ‘yes’ in order to survive, that is an agreement, but it is not a fair agreement, and therefore the Troika has to be phased out”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) agrees with Swoboda that “timetables were impossible to meet for cutting the debt” for Greece. He also agrees with Swoboda that the strategy is not the correct as it is impoverishing the Greeks and making people’s lives, especially the workers and middle classes, more difficult (debate 15 January 2014). The Italian MEP Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (S&D) joins the criticism on the negative effects of austerity policies and denounces the lack of any kind of investment that provokes a lot of suffering to the Greek population. He affirms that “That’s a recipe that shouldn’t be applied to the rest of Europe”, (debate 15 January 2014).

During the debate about the review of the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014, MEPs from the GUE/NGL group continue insisting on the danger of following austerity policies that, according to Sofía Sakorafa (Greece), are “a thread now for the whole of Europe”. She further emphasizes that “we have been paying this massive debt, a debt

which was shouldered entirely by the Greek population” while at the same time “there has been a reduction in state spending on health”, (debate 2 July 2014).

The debate on the situation in Greece from 8 July, the last selected debate, is especially tense as it takes place after the Greek referendum that rejected the bailout conditions proposed by the troika. The German MEP Gabriele Zimmer, on behalf of the GUE/NGL says that “People were saying enough [...] we’ve had enough [...]. Do not listen to hard liners on the creditor side”. Moreover, she reminds Germany’s history saying that “If we look back at the history of Germany and of Europe, let’s learn lessons. I think Germany has proved with the debt that was built from the II World War that they didn’t have to pay for decades [...]. It’s about time that we look into the history books and we show this responsibility towards people in Europe. And not to [...] pretend that we know it all, that we have the monopoly of wisdom. And that applies to Germans in this hemicycle”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Moreover, on behalf of the Greens/EFA group, Rebecca Harms (Germany) states that “The vote in Greece was a response to the impoverishment of large waves of society. A lot of people in Greece simply can’t go on and the vote was quite clearly a vote expressing hope for change”. At the same time she demands President Tsipras clear proposals on a fair tax system and pension system. Harms says that “We all recognize that you can’t cut further low pensions but how can we ensure the system is fair in Greece, what’s the future of the health system in Greece?”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Other Germans MEPs from the same political group, such as Reinhard Bütikofer, defends debt forgiveness and at the same time reforms for Greece. He says that “Europe has to say yes to debt forgiveness for Greece and Greece must say yes to the reforms package that is put to them”, (debate 8 July 2015). Another German MEP from the same group, Ska Keller, also ask for reforms but not for austerity saying that “Greece can only overcome the crisis if we offer a fair and viable solution that gives security to the people and space for manoeuvre for the reforms that you have mentioned – reforms, not austerity”. She also points out that “The returns from those reforms also need to stay within the country to give new prosperity to people. They should not be spent on years of debt repayment only; we need to have debt reduction on the table”. Keller also emphasizes that “It is our common future that is at stake. So let us be prepared to go to

the table to negotiate for a fair and good deal for Greece and for a common future of all of us”, (debate 8 July 2015).

On the S&D group, Gianni Pittella (Italy) defends a discussion about restructuring debt. The Portuguese MEP Maria Joao Rodrigues calls to “use this opportunity today to discuss exactly what a fair deal is, because what is at stake is whether we can reconcile the euro with democracy”. She mentions more opportunity to invest, more fiscal space with “commitments for reform, ensuring good public administration, tax collection and a sustainable pension system” as some elements for a fair deal with Greece, (debate 8 July 2015).

Other MEPs from S&D group like Glenis Willmott (United Kingdom) considers the “EU too entrenched in the dogma of austerity”. Another English MEP, Lucy Anderson, remarks the unjust measures and says that “another strong democratic message has been sent by Greek citizens in support of their key demand to end unfair austerity measures”. Moreover, the Spanish MEP, Iratxe García Pérez, stresses that austerity is a mistaken and failed policy and calls for more dialogue, flexibility and solutions to debt from the European side and a credible reform plan from the Greek government side. The German Jutta Steinruck considers that there have been errors but structural reforms have to continue. She says that “There’s no doubt that serious mistakes have been made on both sides and there’s no doubt that Greece has to implement structural reforms but we have to bring creativity that has to go well beyond austerity measures”. Also some MEPs such as Pervenche Berès (France) and Costas Mavrides (Cyprus) urge Tsipras to make concrete proposals (debate 8 July 2015).

6.2.1.2 The consequences of austerity policies

The EU response to the crisis is criticized from all left-wing MEPs. Some MEPs, such as Rebecca Harms (Greens/EFA, Germany), confronts the rapid reaction to bail European banks and the slow response to take decisions tackling the crisis. Harms says that “practically overnight – we decided to bail out Europe’s banks when they were in trouble. Yet it is only now that we are debating the terms on which this assistance is being granted. We still have not clarified the terms of the repayments and responsibilities, nor have we set out how the banks will be supervised”, (debate 24 March 2010). In the debate from 19 May 2010 Rebecca Harms points out again that “a

large number of German and French banks were rescued. [...] However, we must get out of this cycle of rescuing the banks, which has cost us billions upon billions. We no longer know where the money is coming from and we are only daring to take tiny steps towards state regulation of the financial markets". She recognizes that "It is true that the banks are a vital part of the system, but there must be something very rotten in this system if our states can repeatedly be brought to the brink of disaster and the political system allows this to happen", (debate 19 May 2010).

Jürgen Klute, (GUE/NGL, Germany) also remarks that "The financial sector has shamelessly allowed itself to be bought out of the crisis by taxpayers, but we are now being asked to deny help of this kind to Greece. It will be difficult to explain to the pensioners and the workers in Greece and also in the other countries affected [...] why they are now being asked to pay up, having already supported the banks with their taxes. Taking this route would be the equivalent of driving the EU project into a wall", (debate 25 March 2010).

Besides criticism on the priority to bail banks, several MEPs warn about the potentially negative consequences of the recipe against the crisis. Stephen Hughes (S&D, United Kingdom) states that "If we follow that prescription of a rigid return to the Stability Pact criteria by the end of 2013, it will be a recipe for huge cuts in public spending and public provision, unemployment will rise, tax takes will be reduced, and we will enter a period of sluggish growth that could lead to a real reduction in the economic potential of the European Union for many years to come. It is a recipe for disaster", (debate 24 March 2010). Also the German MEP Jo Leinen (S&D) emphasizes the failed strategy to tackle the crisis. He explains that the Council's conclusions are "focused and reduced to the classical growth strategy – a strategy that has failed and that did not get us very far", (debate 24 March 2010).

The Greek MEP from the GUE/NGL group Nikolaos Chountis also agrees that the crisis is not over and that the measures taken are leading to negative consequences. He says that "The economic situation in numerous countries is clearly negative. Unemployment is increasing in most countries. The measures being taken to address deficits are exacerbating the crisis" and complains that the EU institutions did not pay attention to early signs of the crisis. Moreover, he asks for a change in the response to the crisis

explaining that “Insisting on the application of the Stability Pact, especially in a recession, will clearly increase and exacerbate regional and social inequalities, increase unemployment and wipe out any prospects of growth”, (debate 25 March 2010). Chountis insists in the debate from 7 April 2010 stating that “Apart from Greece, Spain and Portugal are taking harsh anti-grassroots measures so as to avoid the same fate and, as a result of this, poverty is increasing, unemployment is increasing, growth is slowing and the recession is getting worse”, (debate 7 April 2010). Chountis states that “To resolve the situation you should say the truth, you should say that we are walking towards a wrong end and that we are imposing more recession and unemployment”, (debate 15 January 2014).

From the S&D group, Liem Hoang Ngoc (France) states that the policies to tackle the crisis are not working. He warns about wage deflation and its consequences on the “slowdown in internal demand which [...] has led to negative growth”. Moreover, he states that “we are seeing a rise in the personal debt of households with modest incomes and means, whose purchasing power is no longer increasing”. Thus “These policies will fail to reduce the deficits in Greece, in Spain and elsewhere [...]. They will exacerbate unemployment and will fuel social tensions”, (debate 25 March 2010).

Philippe Lamberts (Greens/EFA, Belgium) remarks the mistake of focusing only on reduce expenditure. He says that “it is a sham to let people believe that we are going to meet the current challenges solely by reducing expenditure” and warns that this “will most certainly destroy the social fabric”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Remarks about wrong policies undertaken by the EU are also made by Anni Podimata (S&D, Greece). She says that “We are making a mistake and undermining our common future and the future of subsequent generations by putting the sole emphasis on immediate financial recovery and underestimating the impact of growth, employment and the basic structures of the welfare state which have been several decades in the making”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Furthermore, Gabriele Zimmer (GUE/NGL, Germany) also considers that the “EU politics is going in the wrong way”. She states that “This market driven policy based on crisis management has taken us exactly where we are now. In the crisis countries we

have a humanitarian disaster” and she reminds the “huge levels of youth unemployment and long term unemployment”. Zimmer warns that “you’re not going to solve these problems by cutting social benefit, by eroding fundamental rights of Greek people”, (15 January 2014). Sven Giegold (Greens/EFA, Germany) says that “I hear the European Commission is working on the rescue fund [...]. What about investment packs?” and considers there’s not enough investment and the funding is unfair, (debate 2 July 2014). The Portuguese MEP, Elisa Ferreira (S&D) complains about EU response to the crisis saying that “In austerity there can be no success stories”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Moreover, Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, Spain) joins the criticism to the response to the crisis expressing his “Concern over the inadequate nature of the response” and about the “involvement of the International Monetary Fund and the recourse to bilateral loans”. He states that “the response has not been effective enough, with the short-term effect that the Greek debt has increased. [...] the debt have rocketed as a consequence of the financial rescue plans, which have been extremely expensive. Therefore, austerity must not put at risk either the investment necessary for economic recovery or the financing of essential reforms”, (debate 7 April 2010).

The role of the IMF in the management of the Greek debt crisis is also signaled by Pervenche Berès (S&D, France) saying that “The idea of referring Greece to the International Monetary Fund seems to us – for those us who aspire to be responsible and consistent Europeans on the international stage – to be a complete nonsense”, (debate 24 March 2010). Moreover, Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL, Greece) tells the member of the Commission Olli Rehn: “You let the speculators run riot, you brought the International Monetary Fund into the euro area and now you are asking for harsh austerity programmes”, (debate 19 May 2010).

At the same time, some MEPs also consider that strict measures have to be taken but in a context of European solidarity. Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) makes it clear that “We need a carrot and stick approach. Measures are needed in Greece – there is no question about that – and they will be tough, very tough. However, we also need cooperation at European level”. Moreover, Swoboda expects “European solidarity in order to create a better future”, (debate 24 March 2010). In the debate from 15 January 2014 he congratulates about improvements but acknowledging some problems.

Swoboda admits that “there are slight improvements, and we are happy about that – especially about the improvements in Greece. But the unemployment situation is still a disaster”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Another aspect regarding the response to the crisis is the leading role of Germany. Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL, France) complains that “Germany [...] is imposing its demands” and that “the European Central Bank flew to the banks’ assistance” but regarding Greece and other countries deeply affected by the crisis it was “employees, civil servants and pensioners, even though their countries have also been victims of financial speculation” who had to pay, (debate, 25 March 2010). Also Rebecca Harms (Greens/EFA, Germany) laments the German influence disregarding the social objectives. She says that “It is so embarrassing that the already weak socio-political goals that Mr Barroso put forward have been watered down once again by Germany, by Chancellor Merkel”, (debate 7 April 2010).

In their criticism to the management of the crisis, MEPs from all left-wing political groups propose the introduction of a tax on financial transactions. In the GUE/NGL group, Takis Hatzigeorgiou (Greece) asks about “imposing a tax on major cross-border transactions between States?”, (debate 24 March 2010) and Lothar Bisky (Germany) states that “We are lacking the lasting and effective re-regulation of the financial sector”. Bisky adds that a tax policy needs to be adopted as well as a tax on financial transaction. He states that “We are lacking a coordinated tax policy and wage policy and a tax on financial transactions. Although we have been talking about this tax for a long time, it remains just talk”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Moreover, Philippe Lamberts, (Greens/EFA, Belgium) joins the call saying that “We need to implement the financial transaction tax” and says that this will help “shift behaviour and to provide income”. Lamberts says that “If we do not do that, our governments will prove incapable of reconciling the need to balance budgets and to meet social needs and investment needs”, (debate 25 March 2010). Furthermore, Lamberts adds that imposing a tax on financial transactions and also on banks “means making the financial sector contribute”, (debate 19 May 2010). Rebecca Harms (Germany) from the same political group insists that “we must stop talking about introducing a tax on financial transactions and actually do something about it. We need

this tax, among other things, in order to refinance what we are doing with public money. The participation of banks and speculators must no longer be merely a matter for soapbox speeches. We can genuinely guarantee their involvement by introducing the tax”, (debate 19 May 2010). Finally, from the S&D group, Udo Bullmann (Germany) also asks to “fight for a financial transactions tax” in order to be able to acquire new funds, (debate 24 March 2010).

Another aspect that appears in the selected debates is the idea to prioritize the profits before the citizens’ needs and welfare. Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL, Greece) refers to the EU as “an imperialist, transnational union between capital and the monopolies which, with a single strategy, is attacking the people and crossing swords for a share of the spoils” (debate 24 March 2010). Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL, Greece) refers to the “anti-imperialist fight” as the crisis has led to “deterioration in the living standards of the workers. [...] it has given capital an opportunity to step up the application of anti-labour policy choices. Under state terrorism of the workers, the plutocracy started a real war against fundamental wage and social rights, in a bid to increase the profits of capital”. Moreover, Angourakis condemns the ECB saying that it is “The basic pillar of the anti-grassroots policy” with “a harsh policy exercised solely on the basis of the criterion of the profitability of capital”. He adds that “The ECB has acted as the bourgeois assistant of the plutocracy in shifting the burden of the crisis on to the workers’ shoulders. It has channelled over EUR 1 trillion to the banks and monopoly groups. Today, however, it is calling on the workers to pay for the damage and to repay that money”, (debate 25 March 2010).

Furthermore, Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany) refers to speculation in Greece and says that “This means the people there are being robbed”, (debate 24 March 2010). Karin Kadenbach (S&D, Austria) adds that “Those groups which are not responsible for the crisis must not now be made to bear the cost”, (debate 25 March 2010).

Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL, Greece) also compares the pressure on the labour to the increase of profits for the capital. He says that there are “harsh, permanent, anti-grassroots measures against the working class” and that “all possible means are being used to reduce the price of labour and increase the degree of exploitation, in a bid to increase the profitability of capital”, (debate 7 April 2010). On the other hand, Lothar

Bisky (GUE/NGL, Germany) says that “it is a good thing that the Heads of State or Government were able to agree an emergency package” but laments that the agreement is not a “package to cover the citizens”. He emphasizes that “The State and the citizens are to make savings, while the financial markets – the banks – are to evaluate whether enough savings have been made” which he considers “a dubious procedure”, (debate 7 April 2010). Moreover, Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL, Greece) observes that involving the IMF the EU is “imposing a stricter Stability Pact at the expense of the weaker economies and weaker social groups”, (debate 7 April 2010)

In the debate from 19 May 2010, Lothar Bisky (GUE/NGL, Germany) insists that huge sums have been “spent to rescue banks which are themselves responsible for getting heavily into debt” and thus “These governments have saved casino capitalism using taxpayers’ money. However, they have taken a very hesitant approach to rescuing the states that are in debt”. He signals that “it is totally wrong to nationalise the billions which are being spent as losses and privatise the profits. The banks must not be allowed direct access to taxpayers’ money with the support of the state”, (debate 19 May 2010). The French MEP Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL) also affirms that “a great deal of money is being put on the table, but this is actually designed to reassure the financial markets, whereas to the people you promise only pain”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Cornelis de Jong (GUE/NGL, Netherlands) also considers that financial institutions have been bailed without bearing the cost of the crisis. He says that “Governments have twice had to bail out our financial institutions, without these institutions footing even part of the bill themselves. [...] speculation is continuing as before, and soon we may have to rescue the pension funds too. EU 2020 should lay the bill at the right door. Rather than by making extreme cutbacks to essential public services, the cost should be covered by the top earners and speculators, by means of partial debt relief for countries such as Greece and of a tax on banks”, (debate 19 May 2010). From the S&D group, George Sabin Cutaş (Romania) also affirms that “state providers must learn to put people first before financial profit”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Gabriele Zimmer (GUE/NGL, Germany) insists that first people have to be helped and they should not pay other’s debts. She affirms that “You need to save people before you force them to hand over the last pennies they have. [...] Where there are debts that those

people haven't run up themselves, they should be forced to pay them off", (debate 15 January 2014). The Greek MEP Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL) emphasizes that "The policies are against the interest of the working people, they are extremist and neoliberal policies" and Georgios Toussas (GUE/NGL, Greece) adds that the "EU is an intergovernmental capital union in order to secure power and profits for the monopolists" and against the people, (debate 15 January 2014). Another Greek MEP, Nikos Chrysogelos (Greens/EFA) also considers that "the discussion must be about the lives of our citizens not about data". He criticizes that "You can have a surplus if you don't spend nothing on your house" but how citizens live has to be taken into consideration. Thus, he says that reforms are needed "but in the interest of society", (debate 15 January 2014)

During the debate from 8 July 2015 about the situation in Greece, Pablo Iglesias (GUE/NGL, Spain) expresses that the Greek referendum is not the problem in Europe but instead "What's threatening Europe is financial totalitarianism, is the arrogance of the German government. The incapacity to certain people in government to defend their people" (debate 8 July 2015). Another Spanish MEP, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García (S&D) regrets that a just solution has not been found to the economic and financial situation and denounces austerity policies that "put the debt before the people and whose principal consequence is the suffering of thousands of Greeks", (debate 8 July 2015). Finally, the non-attached MEP Konstantinos Papadakis (Communist Party of Greece, Greece) denounces people are the ones who will suffer stating that the "Agreement on a memorandum or Grexit is once again people are going to pay the unfair burden", (debate 8 July 2015).

Another aspect that explains the position and ideas towards austerity is the meaning and importance of solidarity. In the debate from 24 March 2010, Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL, Portugal) complains that "there is no real solidarity within the euro area and that so-called 'economic and social cohesion' is nothing more than propaganda used in electoral campaigns". She condemns the threats coming from Mrs Merkel to "Member States which do not fulfil the requirements of the Stability Pact, such as Greece, amongst others" that "will be expelled from the euro area, forgetting that Germany has been and is the major beneficiary of policies based on a strong euro", (debate 24 March 2010). Other MEPs like Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/EFA, Austria) make

direct calls to solidarity with Greece saying that “The voice of reason tells us that a solidarity fund – for Greece too – must now be set up so that Greece can obtain lower interest rates” (debate 24 March 2010).

Moreover, from the S&D group, Martin Schulz (Germany) also says that in order to protect from speculation and “If we do not want to see a large-scale conflagration, we need now to demonstrate solidarity with Greece” (debate 24 March 2010). Another MEP from the S&D group, Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (Italy) alerts that the delay in the response to the crisis “has clearly damaged the founding value of solidarity, which is the cornerstone and the binding force of the idea that we all share of the European Union”. He also reminds that “Germany is, without doubt, one of the countries to have benefited most from the entry into force of the euro and its effect on interest rates” (debate 24 March 2010). The Spanish MEP Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D) also insist on solidarity and says that “The message of solidarity with Greece is not a message for Greece; it is a message for Europe and Europeans”, (debate 24 March 2010). Antolín Sánchez Presedo (S&D, Spain) stresses that “The efforts and courage of Greece deserve clear and resolute support. It is a question of common interest and uncertainty harms all Europeans”, (debate 25 March 2010).

Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) says in the debate on the conclusions of the Council meeting from 7 April 2010 that it is “unfair to treat Greece in this way now, after having stood by and watched it for years, actually well aware that something was wrong, and to say now, after the event, ‘You cannot count on our solidarity now’. That is why the outcome of the Council in relation to Greece is completely unsatisfactory” (debate 7 April 2010). From the GUE/NGL group, Nikolaos Chountis (Greece) considers there’s no solidarity and tells Mr Rehn that “it is major hypocrisy to call this tripartite financing mechanism a ‘rescue and solidarity’ mechanism. It is a European punishment mechanism, with the International Monetary Fund playing bad cop”, (debate 19 May 2010).

On the other hand, criticism towards austerity policies is often made with calls for a social Europe, which is another issue that explains the MEPs positions. Employment and poverty are two problems present in the EU that are mentioned by various MEPs. From the GUE/NGL group, Ilda Figueiredo (Portugal) exposes the serious social

problems in several Member States “including unemployment, lack of job security and poverty” that require “a serious and thorough response”. However, she regrets that the responses from the spring European Council “are aimed mainly at the supposed sustainability of public finances, while neglecting measures aimed at social sustainability”, (debate 24 March 2010). During the same debate, the Spanish MEP Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D) exposes that from the social point of view there has to be a “commitment to workers and social protection” with special emphasis to equality, (debate 24 March 2010). In the debate from 7 April 2010, Juan Fernando López Aguilar insists again on the need of a “commitment to high-quality employment and, above all, egalitarian employment that will better prepare us to face the future” and reminds not to neglect “the fight against poverty”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Many MEPs in the different debates refer to the need to combat poverty. During the debate about the conclusions on the European Council meeting from 7 April 2010, Lothar Bisky (GUE/NGL, Germany) asks the Council: “Why has it postponed the agreement on specific targets to combat poverty in the EU indefinitely? [...] I consider that to be a scandal in this, the European Year for Combating Poverty”, (debate 7 April 2010). From the S&D group, Hannes Swoboda (Austria) also says that “we need to insist that the fight against poverty [...] and reducing poverty must remain our goals”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Other MEPs from the S&D group like Kathleen Van Brempt (Belgium) denounce the failure “to respect the objectives on poverty, based on the fallacy that further consideration is needed” and states that “it is a slap in the face for the 80 million poor in the European Union”, (debate 7 April 2010). Moreover, Joanna Senyszyn (S&D, Poland) rejects the 2020 strategy adopted by the European Council because “It lacks a clear statement of a strategic objective (combating poverty) and does not contain measures for achieving this goal”. She says that poverty “is not only an economic problem, but is also a violation of human rights” and that what is needed is a “long-term strategy for fighting poverty as an integral part of EU policy”, (debate 7 April 2010).

The Romanian MEP Rovana Plumb (S&D) also considers that “an ambitious long-term strategy is required to combat poverty, with large-scale poverty reduction targets, whose ‘key points’ must include an increase in the employment rate and in good quality jobs,

including for women, young people, the elderly and poor workers”, (debate 19 May 2010). The MEP from Cyprus Sophocles Sophocleous (S&D) reminds the reach of poverty and unemployment in the EU and the urgency to return to a social Europe. According to him “Today the EU has 33 million unemployed, 24% on the limits of poverty. [...] we have to return to social economy. Beyond numbers we have people”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Specific references to unemployment are made from several MEPs like Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D, Rumania) who says that “The biggest challenge the EU is currently facing is the dramatic rise in unemployment”. She signals that “The fall in the number of employees and companies has a powerful impact on the budgets allocated for public expenditure, as well as on European citizens’ quality of life” so the EU has to take action and provide investment, (debate 7 April 2010). During the debate on the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency, Maria Eleni Koppa (S&D, Greece) reminds that “unemployment of young people is 60%, is the highest in the whole of Europe” and urges the Hellenic presidency to stress the importance of “social cohesion and combat unemployment”, (debate 15 January 2014). Another Greek MEP, Miltiadis Kyrkos (S&D) considers “The Hellenic presidency was a success from the point of view that it has moved forward the social legislation that was pending” but also considers that “on the other hand, the presidency didn’t adopt the necessary initiatives on issues which established as its priority: youth unemployment for example”, (debate 2 July 2014).

Other MEPs made general calls for a social Europe, like Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL, France) who asks for a different Europe “for the benefit of the majority, not just of a few”, (debate 25 March 2010). From the Greens/EFA political group, Michail Tremopoulos (Greece) demands a “minimum social security indicator for social cohesion”, (debate 25 March 2010). Moreover, Lothar Bisky (GUE/NGL, Germany) states that “What we are lacking is a social union” and considers that “It is time to safeguard the social state by means of the EU institutions, not to dismantle it. The Greeks and other nations are afraid because they can see the measures that are being taken on the social side. It is time to fight for the harmonisation of social standards at a high level”, (debate 19 May 2010).

From the S&D group Sylvana Rapti (Greece) tells the Greek Prime Minister that “we will not be by your side [...] when you don’t take into account social cohesion, when you do not take into account people and their rights”, (debate 15 January 2014). In the same debate, the French MEP Catherine Trautmann (S&D) states that “under your Presidency, we have the duty of strengthening the European social model and contributing to economic recovery”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Finally, few mentions are made towards inequality as a negative consequence of the economic and financial crisis. Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL, France) mentions the unequal distribution of wealth and asks why instead of talking about deficits and debts “do we never talk about existing revenue options? We have a deficit at the moment because we have consistently lowered taxes on capital and created the conditions for an increasingly unequal distribution of wealth”, (debate 19 May 2010). Philippe Lamberts (Greens/EFA, Belgium) states that “we already have huge and deepening social inequalities. 16% of Europeans below the poverty level is not a small figure; 40% of young Spaniards under 25 unemployed is not a small figure, and I could carry on” and mentions that it cannot be ignored, (debate 25 March 2010).

From the S&D group, Pervenche Berès (France) reminds the “increasing divergence between the Member States of the euro area” that is underestimated but that must be taken into account, (debate 25 March 2010). Finally, Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) says that “the gap between the rich and the poor in Europe is widening” which is “a question of social security and social policy”. Given that fact, Swoboda asks Mr Rehn “how you intend to get people to accept the economic measures and the strict budgetary requirements which you rightly propose when people begin to realise that Europe and the euro area are characterised by a growing gap between rich and poor. This is unacceptable and this is why there are more protests against the necessary measures than would normally be the case”, (debate 19 May 2010).

6.2.2 Right-wing MEPs and austerity⁷

6.2.2.1 The economic crisis and the situation in Greece

The majority of right-wing MEPs defend the euro and deny any relationship between the economic and financial crisis and the common currency. Manfred Weber (EPP, Germany) emphasizes that “We should talk positively about the euro. It is not a currency crisis that we have; it is an economic crisis. The euro is a major benefit for everyone”, (debate 24 March 2010). The Spanish MEP Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE) also states that “The euro has been a secure port against the huge waves of the global financial storms”. Moreover, he adds that “The euro is not in crisis today: it is the fiscal crises of certain Member States that are causing the single currency difficulties”, (debate 25 March 2010). Furthermore, Olle Schmidt (ALDE, Sweden) recognizes the positive role of the ECB and says that “The ECB has been a bastion of strength when the financial storms have hit”. He also considers that “the euro has been a success during the financial crisis and it has been an anchor in Europe, including for countries outside the euro area”. Schmidt also adds that “The euro has provided stability and the conditions for creating millions of new jobs [...] Greece’s problems and those of other euro area countries cannot be blamed on the euro”, (debate 25 March 2010).

Other MEPs that applaud the euro are Sophie Auconie (EPP, France) who says that “Belonging to the euro area has enabled more than one country to avoid a devaluation of their national currencies, which would have further exacerbated the consequences of the crisis. The euro area has therefore become more attractive”. Auconie signals the relevant role of the ECB saying that “the active and flexible monetary policy conducted by the ECB, increasing its injections of liquid funds into lending establishments, has played a significant role in keeping European banks afloat”, (debate 25 March 2010). Moreover, Othmar Karas (EPP, Austria) joins the positive comments stating that “The euro is a stabilising force, even in times of crisis” and emphasizes that “We must put an end to the myth that the euro and the Stability and Growth Pact are the cause of the problems experienced by Greece and other countries. [...] the euro is not to blame. On the contrary, it is part of the solution. There can be no reform without the euro”, (debate 25 March 2010).

⁷ See annex 4: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Right-wing MEPs.

On the critical side about the common currency are Godfrey Bloom (EFD, United Kingdom) that says that “hearing about the success of the euro” is like “living in some sort of parallel universe here” and reminds the problem of youth unemployment in many Eurozone countries. He considers it’s “A complete disaster” and that “the euro has not been successful at all”, (debate 25 March 2010). Criticism towards the euro also comes from Nigel Farage (EFD, United Kingdom) who says that “your beloved euro has failed; [...] and you cannot bail out Greece without the International Monetary Fund coming in to save, at least for the moment, your euro dream”, (debate 7 April 2010). Moreover, Martin Callanan (ECR, United Kingdom) says that the dream of a common currency was not honest about the costs and now “The people of Greece are paying the price of those mistakes”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Regarding the causes of the crisis the majority of MEPs consider it is debt and too much spending. Werner Langen (EPP, Germany) states that “this crisis [...] is caused by the level of debt in the Member States and the fact that they have lost control of it”, (debate 19 May 2010). Moreover, Jaime Mayor Oreja (EPP, Spain) repeats the main narrative of the crisis saying that “We have been living beyond our means, especially in some countries. We have moved away from the real economy and embraced the fictional economy, in our public accounts and, at the same time, in our family and private lives”. He further explains that “We have not been capable of understanding that, as is the case for any living organism, growing is not the same thing as getting fat. Growth requires effort and proportion, while the process of getting fat involves a lack of proportion and balance in comparison with the work that we do and the welfare that we enjoy”, (debate 19 May 2010).

The Greek MEP Theodoros Skylakakis (EPP) also says that the main reason of the crisis “is that we have spent beyond our means and run up credit. We spent when there was no crisis, we spent during the crisis, we are spending now on our way out of the crisis. Anyone who wants to learn what happens when you consistently spend more than you have just needs to come to Greece”, (debate 19 May 2010). In the same direction, Derk Jan Eppink (ECR, Netherlands) states that “The structural problem of ours has been that public overspending went on for too long. The public sector was out of control for many years”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Joseph Daul (EPP, France) refers to the countries with higher debt as working less and retire earlier. Daul says he understands “the anger of some of our compatriots when they are asked to make sacrifices for others who work less and retire earlier”. He also states that the Commission has to do its job “which is to apply the carrot and the stick technique with Member States. Financially reward the ones that clean up their public finances and punish the ones that refuse to do so!”, (debate 19 May 2010). Furthermore, the Portuguese MEP Paulo Rangel (EPP) emphasizes that his party “is supporting the government’s austerity measures, because we believe that the mistakes that have been made during 15 years of socialist government in Portugal, which are now unfortunately visible for all to see, must be remedied”, (debate 19 May 2010)

During the debate about the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency, Herbert Reul (EPP, Germany) says that the Greek Prime Minister “deserves our support, our recognition, our help, not just complaints about what else might go wrong” and states that “This approach is probably the only approach. There is no alternative”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Regarding speculation, Olle Schmidt (ALDE, Sweden) says that “when countries are subject to speculation [...] it actually provides us with a good opportunity to organise the measures we take”, (debate 25 March 2010). However, Corien Wortmann-Kool (EPP, Netherlands) considers that it is necessary to “work energetically on proposals to curtail irresponsible behaviour on the financial markets”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Irish MEPs from EPP group are more critical towards the explanation of the crisis. Seán Kelly (EPP, Ireland) says the financial crisis is “caused by a lack of regulation, a lack of supervision and a lack of governance”. He also adds that “we should also move on to dealing with the financial terrorists of the rating agencies and the speculators who are playing havoc with people’s lives and trying to bring down sovereign governments. By taking that twin approach – dealing with governance at political level and dealing with the financial terrorists – we might be able to look forward to a better future”, (debate 19 May 2010). Moreover, Mairead McGuinness (EPP, Ireland) states that “We are the makers of the problem, because we failed to listen to those who warned us of problems: we failed in Ireland, we failed in Greece and we are failing here. If we cannot listen to

each other we will fail again. Do not let the extremists win because we could not listen with two ears”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Some non-attached MEPs like Csanád Szegedi (Non-attached, Jobbik, Hungary) are also critical asking to “name those responsible” for the crisis. According to him “the crisis was not caused by people living off their wages or salaries, but by those banks, multinationals and insurance companies that milked European societies dry”. Thus, he demands “that multinationals, banks and insurance companies play their part and shoulder the task of solving and putting an end to the economic crisis”, (debate 25 March 2010).

On the other hand, regarding the positions on Greece some disagreements appear among right-wing MEPs. On behalf of the ALDE group, Guy Verhofstadt (Belgium) considers that “Europe has the necessary credibility and liquidity, and it is on this basis that it will be possible to bring down Greece’s interest rates without a single euro of taxpayers’ money going to Greece”. He states that Greece has to make efforts but warns that if “interest rates cannot be reduced, all the efforts that the Greeks are going to make will ultimately go to the capital markets [...] if a firm decision is not taken during this Council. The Greeks are going to make efforts, are going to make savings, and who is going to benefit? The speculators, the capital markets and so on, as they are going to have much higher interest rates”, (debate 24 March 2010).

However, Manfred Weber (EPP, Germany) replies to Verhofstadt accepting that there is pressure from speculation but also affirming that “Greece enjoyed major rate advantages thanks to being in the euro area”. Weber considers that the importance is that Greece implements the rules, (debate 24 March 2010). In the same opinion, Werner Langen (EPP, Germany) states that “The solution to the Greek crisis must entail tough reform measures in Greece. That is the right path to take” and affirms that “It is not speculators that have resulted in Greece’s problems. It is the internal rules”, (debate 24 March 2010). Moreover, the Greek MEP Georgios Koumoutsakos (EPP) acknowledges Greek economic failure but states that now “it has fully assumed its responsibilities” for which “The Greek people are paying a heavy price”. Koumoutsakos expresses worries about speculators and says: “Let us together shoot down the speculators who would like to see the euro on its knees”, (debate 24 March 2010). On behalf of the EFD group,

Nikolaos Salavrakos (Greece) considers the severe austerity measures introduced by Greece have “exhausted its citizens” and even though he says that “Many people will say it serves Greece right and it should pay for its mistakes” Salavrakos reminds the significant Greek imports from Germany, (debate 25 March 2010).

During the debate on the conclusions of the European Council meeting from 7 April 2010, Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE, Belgium) alerts that “the mechanism which the Council decided on for Greece [...] a system of bilateral loans [...] is not in fact helping Greece, but punishing it at the moment”, (debate 7 April 2010). On the other hand, Theodoros Skylakakis (EPP, Greece) expresses his gratitude “for the help which my country has received from the European support mechanism which, in conjunction with harsh but mostly unavoidable measures, has prevented the Greek economy from immediate collapse”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Regarding the involvement of the IMF in the management of the Greek crisis some MEPs, like Peter van Dalen (ECR, Netherlands), consider that “the IMF is the right organisation to help Greece out of the crisis”, (debate 25 March 2010). Bastiaan Belder (EFD, Netherlands) also say that “Financial assistance for Greece should come primarily from the IMF. The IMF has itself said that it is in an excellent position to help Greece”, (debate 25 March 2010). On the other hand, Marietta Giannakou (EPP, Greece) is more critical about the involvement of the IMF and says that even it is accepted by the Greek Government “it signals the fact that the Union itself is unable to address, not the problem of Greece, but similar problems that might arise in the future”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Several MEPs defend the urgency for Greece to implement reforms. The Greek MEP Georgios Kyrtos (EPP) affirms that “We cannot destroy our country by giving pensions to people who’ve only worked for 15 years [...]. We continue to give jobs to relatives and friends”, (debate 8 July 2015). Moreover, the Irish MEP Seán Kelly (EPP) explains his country experience saying that they took the necessary decisions. He says it was hard and “People lost their houses; people lost their savings; people lost their jobs; people lost their children to immigration. But now, thankfully, because we took the hard medicine, we have the fastest-growing economy in Europe, at 4.8%. That is because of good leadership”, (debate 8 July 2015). Furthermore, Tunne Kelam (EPP, Estonia)

urges to apply cuts on pensions saying that “Greece spends 17% of GDP on pensions – while Estonia, Ireland and Lithuania each spend less than 8%. We survived and reformed”, (debate 8 July 2015).

On the other hand, several MEPs from the ECR and EFD group consider the agreement on Greece as a failure. According to Peter van Dalen (ECR, Netherlands) “the support package for Greece will not work” as it is not possible to “reduce a 14% budget deficit to 3% in three years”. Moreover, he states that “The countries of the euro area must put their budgets in order, publish honest figures, comply with the requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact and purge their debts” and warns that “Countries failing to do those things must leave the euro area” (debate 19 May 2010). Van Dalen admits that “Greek people are paying a very high price for remaining in the Eurozone” and asks for exit criteria to be applied on Greece, (debate 15 January 2014). Furthermore, Marta Andreasen (EFD, United Kingdom) criticizes the rescue package saying that “most of the countries supposed to contribute to it do not have money to do so”, (debate 19 May 2010).

During the debate on the review of the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014, Notis Marias (ECR, Greece) affirms that “hellenic presidency [...] has not produced any success stories” and that in Greece the policies based on a memorandum have “put the country to its knees”. He states that “Greece has become a social grave yard because Primer Minister Samaras went along with the troika’s policy” and laments that “you lost the opportunity to put an end to austerity policies which you supported as classical market policies”, (debate 2 July 2014). Also far right MEPs like Georgios Epitideios (non-attached, Golden Dawn, Greece) condemn the memorandum saying that “the greek population is living the effects of the troika memorandum. In other words, hunger, unemployment, poverty, more oligarchies in the government”, (debate 2 July 2014).

In the debate on the situation in Greece from 8 July 2015, Notis Marias (ECR, Greece) states that “The memorandum has failed in Greece” and says that Greece “has 1.5 million unemployed, and 40% of the population below the poverty level”. Marias affirms that the money “went to save the German banks” and that “Greek people can no

longer accept the memorandum and Merkel's austerity. And that message was clear with the "no" in the referendum", (debate 8 July 2015).

Moreover, some references are made to the debt forgiveness to Germany from the II World War comparing the situation with the Greek debt and considering the treatment Greece has received as unjust. For example, Notis Marias (ECR, Greece) tells Mr Weber that "you continue your anti-Greek delirium" and asks him to "Tell Ms Merkel to pay off the reparations from the II World War and then we can start talking about dignity". Marias asks to "Stop pointing your finger at the people of Greece. They have been brought to bankruptcy by austerity and Merkel, your policies", (debate 8 July 2015). Also Peter van Dalen (ECR, Netherlands) reminds that "Germany had the biggest debt forgiveness", (debate 8 July 2015). The far right MEP Eleftherios Synadinos (non-attached, Golden Dawn, Greece) also says that "I would like to address the German chancellor for what she has done. What the Germans did to the Greeks during the II World War, over a million debt [...] there was this huge loan to the III Reich. Thousands of millions from these repayments which you are refusing to actually include in the question of the debt", (debate 8 July 2015).

6.2.2.2 The consequences of austerity policies

The positions on the EU response to the crisis are not uniform. Several MEPs emphasize the fact that the banks have received a lot of money but haven't paid their part. Mario Borghezio (EFD, Italy) asks: "What proportion of the huge sums given to the banks really ends up in the small enterprises sector, in my country – Italy – for example? How much of the Structural Funds? Only between 1-2% is used in the SME sector in some regions, according to bodies representing SMEs" and according to him that is a problem that should be addressed, (debate 24 March 2010). Moreover, Kay Swinburne (ECR, United Kingdom) affirms that "the public sector has done its job in the crisis. It bailed out the banks and stepped up when the private sector failed" and states that "Now it is the turn of the private sector to replenish the coffers", (debate 25 March 2010).

On the other hand, some MEPs like Othmar Karas (EPP, Austria) congratulate the President of the ECB for the good response to the crisis. He thanks Trichet "not only for what you have done in recent years, but also for your approach in recent weeks. You

have been competent, independent and consistent. You and your staff have been a calming influence in troubled times”, (debate 25 March 2010). However, during the debate from 7 April 2010, Othmar Karas is critical towards the Heads of State or Government that “lacked the courage to opt for a purely European solution. With such a solution, we would not have needed to involve the IMF”, (debate 7 April 2010). During the same debate, the Spanish MEP José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil (EPP) regrets that “the Council has decided to delay the regulation of alternative investment funds – known as casino capitalism – at precisely the time when these funds have been partly responsible for the speculation on the Greek economy” but at the same time applauds that “the 2020 strategy talks about obliging financial institutions to put money aside to pay for some of the plates they smash”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Furthermore, Seán Kelly (EPP, Ireland) signals that “the management of the Anglo-Irish Bank got an increase in wages while taxpayers had EUR 40 billion and growing added to their bill over the next number of years”. He also states that “Unless the perpetrators of these bad deeds are brought to heel, both individually and institutionally, not only will history repeat itself [...], but it will repeat itself in exactly the same way as it occurred in the first place”, (debate 7 April 2010). Marian-Jean Marinescu (EPP, Romania) also stresses that “Last year, large sums of money were injected into banks”. Even though he acknowledges that “This was a necessary measure” he says that “saving the banks has not helped mitigate the crisis later on”. However, Marinescu considers that “all Member States have helped trigger the crisis” and that “We cannot consume more than we produce, nor can we spend more than we can collect”, (debate 19 May 2010).

During the debate about the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency from 15 January 2014, Gunnar Hökmark (EPP, Sweden) defends the reforms to get out of the crisis. He says that “the reforms that some Members of this Parliament are still fighting for are creating the change that can help Member States come out” of the crisis, (15 January 2014). On the other hand, Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE, Belgium) is less enthusiastic about the response to the crisis that he considers the biggest thread the EU has ever faced and complains that this wouldn’t have happened “if the political class in Greece had taken responsibility far earlier than they did and, at the same time, if European leaders and the European national elites had shown full solidarity from the

beginning of the crisis in 2009”. However, according to Verhofstadt “both failed [...] and that is why we have this tragedy today. [...] with huge unemployment [...] rising populism and nationalism, and growing racism”, (debate 15 January 2014). Also Martin Callanan (ECR, United Kingdom) shows his surprise for the statement from the Greek Prime Minister who said that “it was time to enjoy the fruits of the Union”. Callanan reminds the unemployed and states that “perhaps the three million people who are unemployed in your country might think that those fruits are perhaps turning a little sour today. Of course mistakes do happen and, to be fair, you acknowledged them in your speech. What is important is that we learn the lessons from those mistakes”, (15 January 2014).

During the debate on the situation in Greece from 8 July 2015, several MEPs tell to the Greek Prime Minister Tsipras that he has no concrete proposals to tackle the situation. Elisabetta Gardini (EPP, Italy) says: “Prime Minister Tsipras, you’ve come here and you said nothing specific”. Also Othmar Karas (EPP, Austria) states that “We’ve not had a tangible single proposal”. Moreover, Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE, Belgium) tells Tsipras that “you are talking about reforms, but we never see concrete proposals for reforms” and states that “To avoid Grexit there is only one possible way and you know very well what it is. The only possible way is that you come forward in the coming days – in the coming 48 hours – with a credible reform package”, (debate 8 July 2015).

On the other hand, Marine Le Pen (ENF, France) criticizes those politicians who defend austerity measures for Greece but would never defend them in their countries: “Ladies and gentlemen in the EPP and the liberals, who frenetically applauded Mr Weber’s list of charges, would you accept that kind of campaign? So, make a campaign for it, why don’t you promise to your respective peoples a 25% cut in wages, a 25% cut in pensions! [...] an explosion of infant mortality, a tripling of unemployment! Be brave! Live up to your promises!”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Regarding references to taxes there is almost no mention to that issue in the selected debates from right-wing MEPs, unlike left-wing MEPs. Only Othmar Karas (EPP, Austria) says that “on the subject of the transaction tax, we must not just keep calling for it; we must put it into practice” and urges the Commission to “quickly submit a proposal for the European transaction tax”, (debate 19 May 2010). Moreover, Franz

Obermayr (non-attached, FPÖ, Austria) supports a financial transaction tax to deal with speculators and hedge funds that should involve the “taxation of profits made by the banks and the financial sector”. He states that it should be “an example to taxpayers and remind the financial sector of its obligations at last”, (debate 19 May 2010).

On the other, right-wing MEPs hardly refer to the idea of priority given to profits before the citizens. Notis Marias (ECR, Greece) vaguely mentions that “50 million euros” have been spent “to save the Greek oligarchs, to the main stakeholders in the banks”, (debate 2 July 2014). Moreover, the Italian far right MEP Matteo Salvini (ENF) calls against the treaties that help multinational and not the people in Europe saying that he wants “a Europe based on work, on respect of human rights, on farming, on fishing, which doesn’t approve these disgusting international treaties, which help the multinationals and not our people, not our workers” and he thanks Mr Tsipras, the Greek people and citizens who have had the courage “to get out of this cage”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Two Italian MEPs from the EFD group and belonging to the Movimento 5 Stelle also mention the neglect of citizens in the implementation of austerity policies. However, it should be mentioned that this political party is ideologically not clearly defined in the left-right spectrum and its organization is closed to social movements. First, Laura Ferrara condemns austerity policies and says that it is not possible to consider the enemy of Europe those people who reaffirm their dignity and that don’t want to be “slave of austerity policies, banks and international finance and the lobbying interest”. She also calls for “The Europe of the peoples, with a sense of solidarity” and says that it “is possible and we have to all work together to build this better Europe”, (debate 8 July 2015). Second, Fabio Massimo Castaldo says that “billions of euros have [...] ended up in the banks, French, German and some of the Italian ones as well”. He says that “Those are people you’ve helped, you saved, not the people of Greece [...] so drop this mask of hypocrisy”. Fabio Massimo Castaldo tells Mr Tsipras that he gave “a message of hope and democracy” and calls for an end to austerity, (debate 8 July 2015).

Another issue that explains the different positions around austerity is the meaning of solidarity. Right-wing MEPs consider Greece has to be responsible which means to adopt reforms. Moreover, it is considered that Greece is profiting from other Member States’ financial support. On behalf of the EPP group, Joseph Daul (France) exposes his

support for European solidarity and at the same time states that everyone has to “face up to his or her responsibilities”. He considers that “solidarity has been shown since the start of the financial crisis and it must not be denied our Greek friends, or any other EU country that encounters the same difficulties” but affirms that “on the reverse side of Europe there is solidarity, and, on the front side, responsibility”. Joseph Daul considers responsibility “is that of each Member State to guarantee accurate and reliable public accounts. It is also that of the citizens of States that are facing temporary payment problems to make sacrifices, to participate in the collective effort to get public finances back on track and to accept the reforms that are necessary to achieve this, however harsh they may be”. He insists that “Europe must show solidarity with Greece. It must ensure that Greece comes through this difficult period. However, Greece, too, must carry out those internal reforms that are required in the short and medium terms and in order to warrant this solidarity”, (debate 24 March 2010). Corien Wortmann-Kool (EPP, Netherlands) expresses the same opinion as Joseph Daul and links solidarity and responsibility. She says that “solidarity works both ways. Greece will have to abide by its agreements by actually implementing the reform plans”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Several MEPs emphasize the Greek government mismanagement as an alert to be careful with solidarity to that country. For example, Lena Ek (ALDE, Sweden) says that “we cannot keep spending taxpayers’ money on governments that lie and cheat with statistics – solidarity, yes, but based on transparency”, (debate 24 March 2010). Moreover, Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR, Poland) stresses that “It seems to me that Greece does need our solidarity, because Europe is built on the principle of solidarity, but, of course, we must not allow any politician in any country to treat economic policy like going shopping with a credit card with no limit, because things will end up as they have done in Greece”, (debate 24 March 2010). Also Hans-Peter Martin (non-attached, Liste Dr. Martin, Austria) says that “It is not possible to show solidarity with people who have been responsible for mismanagement, waste and excessive administrative measures”, (debate 25 March 2010).

Furthermore, many MEPs say that foreign taxpayers will have to pay for Greek’s debt which is an unfair situation. Timothy Kirkhope (ECR, United Kingdom) considers that “Greece needs our support and encouragement but asking foreign taxpayers, especially in countries outside the eurozone, to pick up the bill is difficult”. He insists that “only

the Greeks themselves can sort out the problems of the Greek public sector debt and we wish them well in their efforts to find their way out of the crisis”, (debate 7 April 2010). Moreover, during the debate on the situation in Greece from 8 July 2015 several MEPs insist in the same idea. Manfred Weber (EPP, Germany) tells Mr Tsipras: “May I say something else about dignity, the dignity of other people in Europe if you’re talking about debt [...] it’s going to be paid by Portugal 3,5 billions, Spain 24 billions [...] We have to look at ordinary people dignity in other EU countries”, (debate 8 July 2015). Herbert Reul (EPP, Germany) complains Greece is not doing the work saying that “In Portugal, in Spain, in Ireland they took the opportunity and moved forward, and in Greece too. [...] Solidarity is about doing your bid”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Françoise Grossetête (EPP, France) complains that “citizens no longer want to pour their money into Greece. What to say to the Portuguese, to the Spanish and others who never blamed Europe for their problems but have got ahead. What about those in other European countries that are poorer than the Greeks?”, (debate 8 July 2015). The same opinion is expressed by Esteban González Pons (EPP, Spain) who tells Mr Tsipras: “you said that aid hasn’t reached through to the people, so where’s the money that was lent to you by the retirees, workers and Spanish families? When you forecast that Greece would grow at 2.5%, now Greece is in a recession, so what was the point of more than 200 billion euros that citizens have lent to the people of Greece? Spain has lend you 6 billion euros that it didn’t have, that it had to borrow and another 20 billion in guarantees, if actually you don’t pay what you owe then the workers and the middle class of Spain will have to pay through their taxes for your debts. Do you think that’s fair? Do you think that’s just?”. Moreover he adds that “the public opinion in Europe think it’s unfair that they should be paying for your mistakes and the mistakes of other Greek politician” , he tells Mr Tsipras that “Europe is a project that is based upon good faith, how much longer will you abuse our good faith sir?”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Also Milan Zver (EPP, Slovenia) asks: “Is it fair that Slovenia has to give Greece 1.7 billion loans and guarantees? [...]. How to convince our taxpayers to continue financing somebody who has high standard?” and Ruža Tomašić (ECR, Croatia) states that “Every country can spend their taxpayers money as they wish but they do not have the right to responsibly spend the money of other Member States taxpayers especially those that have worse pensions and salaries than those in Greece”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Furthermore, Harald Vilimsky (ENF, FPÖ, Austria) reminds Mr Tsipras that he represents “a country which has helped you out 9 billion euros what I’m lacking from your side is any recognition that you want to pay that money back. It’s a question of decency and honesty to pay back. And I know that is not reaching the population of Greece that money” and tells the Greek Prime Minister: “If your Marxist model in Greece is one that you wish to pursue then do it but do it but with the Greek billionaires and ship builders but not with European tax payers’ money”, (debate 8 July 2015). Finally, Peter Lundgren (EFDD, Sweden) reminds that the “Biggest losers are going to be the Greek people and tax payers in all Member States of the European Union who are going to have to stamp up the bill”, (debate 8 July 2015).

On the other hand, few right-wing MEPs mention aspects of the social Europe. The majority of these references are from MEPs coming from Central and Eastern Europe and almost all mentions refer to employment. Thus, Alajos Mészáros (EPP, Slovakia) says that “it is alarming that despite all our efforts, the rate of unemployment and the level of state indebtedness keeps rising in almost all Member States of the European Union”, (debate 25 March 2010). Elena Băsescu (EPP, Romania) also expresses her support for the “European Council’s objectives of raising the level of employment, especially through policies aimed at supporting young people” and also urges the European Commission to “put forward as soon as possible specific measures intended to implement the projects aimed at reducing poverty across the whole European Union”, (debate 7 April 2010).

Another reference comes from the Finish MEP Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE) who states that “The figures for youth unemployment are alarming” and signals that “Almost half of young people are unemployed in Latvia and Spain. The longer people remain unemployed, the greater the risk, not just of poverty, but of exclusion”. For that reason, she says that “We need concrete measures. The young need jobs, not promises”, (debate 19 May 2010). Also Danuta Jazłowiecka (EPP, Poland) warns that the employment indicator “should be treated as a priority” and says that “the steps we take should concentrate not only on structural reforms, but also on better preparation and use of the EU’s workforce and intellectual capital”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Moreover, Dubravka Šuica (EPP, Croatia) makes several references to the problem of unemployment. First, in the debate about the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency from 15 January 2014 she states that even though Greece has managed to stay in the Eurozone “the numbers such as 27% of unemployed, 65% of unemployed youth is however worrying maybe even alarming”, (debate 15 January 2014). Second, in the debate about the review of the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014, Dubravka repeats that “youth unemployment remains a problem and I agree with President Barroso who stressed we should continue working on this matter”, (debate 2 July 2014). In the same debate, the Hungarian MEP Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (EPP) mentions that “We must tackle youth unemployment” and “improve job prospects”, (debate 2 July 2014).

Finally, very few mentions are made to inequality within the EU and they refer to inequality between Member States. On the one hand, the Polish MEP Danuta Jazłowiecka (EPP) asks not to “exclude the new Member States from such an important debate. We have had the ‘two-speed Europe’ slogan. Let us not now divide Europe into a Europe in the euro area and a Europe outside the euro area, because we are a single Union”, (debate 25 March 2010). On the other hand, Sandra Kalniete (EPP, Latvia) signals the importance of economic cohesion “meaning that it is still crucial to reduce economic disparities between EU regions which lag behind and those which are more prosperous”. She adds that “The focus should be kept on the EU regions which have suffered the most from the economic and financial crisis”, (debate 19 May 2010).

6.3 Democracy frames⁸

Democracy frames from left-wing and right-wing MEPs can be identified from the austerity frames. However, in the selected debates there are some references that are specific about democracy. These references have been organized under three different categories. First, the idea that the political elites are far away from citizens (elites vs citizens) and trust; second, the importance of taking into account citizens’ views and opinions by listening to them (listen to citizens); and third, transparency as a basic component of democracy.

⁸ See annex 3: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Left-wing MEPs and annex 4: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Right-wing MEPs.

On the one hand, observing left-wing MEPs we find several criticisms towards the elites that are not giving an answer to citizens' needs. From the GUE/NGL group, Georgios Toussas (Greece) says that austerity measures are decided by “the political elite and governments of the Member States of the European Union” and “form part of the overall strategic plan of capital” that is promoted in the EU, (debate 24 March 2010). Toussas considers there is a “union of capital that breaks the rights of its peoples” and urges “the Greek people and other people to use their experience to condemn the EU, [...] to unilaterally write down their debt”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Moreover, some criticism is directed towards the IMF. Hannes Swoboda (S&D, Austria) states that “it is more democratic to solve problems through closer collaboration in Europe than through a technocratic body such as the IMF”, (debate 7 April 2010). Also Cornelis de Jong (GUE/NGL, Netherlands) stresses that “Europe will have to stop being led by large companies” as well as “large financial institutions” and promote a coordinated European policy to address the consequences of the crisis, (debate 19 May 2010). Furthermore, the question of trust is expressed by Martin Schulz (S&D, Germany) who signals the “extremely serious crisis of legitimacy” and citizen lack of confidence in institutions due to the failure of the economic system, (debate 19 May 2010).

Rebecca Harms (Greens/EFA, Germany) also says that it is not possible to “just have the elite leading the country” and stresses the feeling of injustice of the Greek people, (debate 15 January 2014). In the same direction, Kostas Chrysogonos (GUE/NGL, Greece) states that the Greek Presidency “follows the policies of the European elite” which have not produced positive results for Europe. Chrysogonos affirms that a different policy and a different Europe is needed, a “Europe of the people not a Europe of the capital markets which apparently you are serving”, (debate 2 July 2014).

During the debate on the situation in Greece from 8 July 2015, João Ferreira (GUE/NGL, Portugal) says that “budgetary terrorism is against the interest of the development and progress of the people” and what is need is “not to be subordinate to those who are defending their interest rather than defend the interest of the people”, (debate 8 July 2015). Moreover, Martina Anderson (GUE/NGL, United Kingdom) stresses that “the brave and dignified Greek people asserted the primacy of democracy

over the technocratic and neoliberal order in Europe”. She mentions however that “creditors are inflicting poverty and deprivation on Greece, refusing debt relief and investment” and salutes the Greek government that “stood up for Greece, stood up for Ireland, stood up for Spain, for Portugal for Europe”, (debate 8 July 2015). Also Ernest Urtasun (Greens/ALE, Spain) congratulates Mr Tsipras “for opening a door of hope to the peoples of Europe” and “for saying no to the blackmail and austerity of the Troika that has launched so many lives in Europe into misery”. He also thanks the Greek people and government “for resisting the ongoing blackmail of the European Central Bank”, (debate 8 July 2015).

The other aspect observed in the debates, the importance of listening to citizens. On behalf of S&D group, Juan Fernando López Aguilar (Spain) states that “It is therefore the time to recall once again that those millions of Europeans are expressing their discontent with the Europe that we are offering them, with the Europe that is expressing more threats and penalties for countries that do not comply than incentives for a model of growth that is capable of restoring employment and social cohesion and assisting in the fight against poverty”. He signals the importance of citizens saying that “Without that citizens’ Europe, this crisis will be impossible to resolve”, (debate 19 May 2010).

Moreover, Pablo Iglesias (GUE/NGL, Spain) tells “Mr Weber was saying that democracy means knowing how to listen. He is right. And I hope that you, Mr Weber, and Mr Juncker will succeed in listening, listening to what the Greeks said in their referendum last Sunday”, (debate 8 July 2015). Moreover, Ernest Maragall (Greens/EFA, Spain) calls for the construction of the Europe of the peoples, an oppose project to that of Weber, Farage or Le Pen. He explains that “Sunday was a starting point for reconstruction of a part of Greece and reaffirming a new horizon for Europe and for Europeans. Mr Tsipras, Mr Juncker, Mr Tusk let us work together now to show that Mr Weber, Mr Farage or Ms Le Pen were wrong and to build together the Europe of the peoples and of citizens in which so many are still believing”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Finally, regarding transparency there are very few references. Olle Ludvigsson (S&D, Sweden) emphasizes the importance of transparency saying that it “is not only an excellent way to counter harmful risk-taking behaviour on the financial market.

Enhanced transparency is also necessary for supervision to be effective and for the public financial institutions to have the public's trust, which is extremely important". He also remarks that the ECB should be more transparent and the minutes of the ECB Council meeting should be published, (debate 25 March 2010). Moreover, Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL, France) complains that the IMF has been brought into the European fold and asks: "Why were we not consulted about this decision?". He also criticizes the supervision of national budgets by the Commission, (debate 19 May 2010).

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs use the idea of opposing interests of the elites and the citizens from different perspectives. First, Othmar Karas (EPP, Austria) stresses the importance of citizens saying that "we do not want intergovernmental collaboration based around President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel, without the European Parliament and without the citizens", (debate 7 April 2010). Second, Nigel Farage (EFD, United Kingdom) mentions the lack of democracy in the EU telling Mr Van Rompuy that "What really matters is the loss of democracy. You have not been elected. You are not accountable and there is no mechanism for the peoples of Europe to remove you. [...] my fear is that you are kidnapping our democracy", (debate 7 April 2010).

In the third place, there are some mentions to the bureaucratic elites and the huge power of banks and big businesses in the EU that are made from far right MEPs. Thus, Mara Bizzotto (EFD, Italy) affirms that "what the peoples, young people and small and medium-sized enterprises – in other words, 99% of Europe's productive fabric – want, is not impractical European strategies for growth, but decentralisation and freedom from the orders of the political and bureaucratic elites", (debate 7 April 2010). Also Nigel Farage (EFD, United Kingdom) during the debate about the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency tells Mr Samaras: "You cannot make any decisions, you have been bailed out and you have surrendered". He further explains that "Mr Papandreou [...] even said there should be a referendum in Greece – and within 48 hours the unholy trinity that now run this European Union had him removed and replaced by an ex-Goldman Sachs employee puppet". Farage states that "We are run now by big business, big banks and, in the shape of Mr Barroso, big bureaucrats", (debate 15 January 2014). Moreover, Lorenzo Fontana (EFD, Italy) agrees that "There is the Europe of the banks"

and states that “on the other hand you have the Europe of the people”, (debate 15 January 2014).

During the debate on the situation in Greece from 8 July 2015, Ashley Fox (ECR, United Kingdom) emphasizes the corrupt political class in Greece and says that “the Greek people [...] have been ill-served by a corrupt political class who spent too much and borrowed too much for far too long”, (debate 8 July 2015). In the same debate, Nigel Farage (EFD, United Kingdom) mentions again the importance of banks in the EU telling the Greek Prime Minister Tsipras that “your country should never have joined the euro [...] but the big banks, the big businesses and big politics forced you in. Goldman Sachs, the German arms manufacturers, they were all very happy”. Then Farage stresses that “when the bailouts began, they were not for the Greek people. Those bailouts were to bail out French, German and Italian banks: they have not helped you at all”, (debate 8 July 2015).

A forth aspect is trust. The French MEP Jean-Pierre Audy (EPP) links trust with growth, jobs and investment. He says that “the task facing us now is to regain the trust of our citizens, which means ensuring growth and jobs. Growth means investment. If the public sector does not invest, we cannot expect the private sector to do so”, (debate 19 May 2010). Alajos Mészáros (EPP, Slovakia) puts the emphasis on the consequences of the monetary crisis which he thinks “may include increased Euroscepticism”, (debate 19 May 2010). On the other hand, Manfred Weber (EPP, Germany) connects the lack of proposals from Mr Tsipras to the lack of trust in EU. According to Weber “There are no specific proposals from Greece. [...] You are destroying confidence in Europe”, (debate 8 July 2015).

The second aspect that reflects the positions about democracy is the importance given to listening to citizens. Under that category we find in the debates some MEPs that criticize instruments such as a referendum to directly ask citizens. One example is Manfred Weber (EPP, Germany) who disapproves the Greek referendum explaining that in “Latvia [...] in 2009 they were facing an economic catastrophe but the parties there didn’t resort to a referendum, they sorted out the budget, their fiscal situation. Now they’ve got faith in the future”, (debate 8 July 2015).

On the contrary, other MEPs from far right political parties support the Greek referendum and signal the importance of giving citizens a say. Bernd Lucke (ECR, Germany) says democracy means accepting people's decisions and says that "Democracy is ruled by the people and if the people of Greece have made a decision that is a decision that we have to accept", (debate 8 July 2015). Marine Le Pen (ENF, France) also celebrates the organization of the referendum in Greece saying that beyond differences she shares with Mr Tsipras the desire to give voice to the people "against the interest of the bureaucrats and so we were quite pleased about the organization of the referendum. This referendum on austerity in Greece meant a return to the noblest kind of politics in Europe which is often too technocratic". She adds that "Europe's institutions have dropped their mask and shown their true face: horror! They tried everything to win the referendum. There have been all kinds of moral pressures, there were forecast about the disasters that would take place if there was a "no" vote". Le Pen observes that even though there were strong pressures "the anger of the Greek people vis-a-vis austerity was such that they swept everything away", (debate 8 July 2015).

Furthermore, Matteo Salvini (EFD, Italy) complains about contempt expressed towards the Greek referendum saying that in the EP "someone [...] is talking with disrespect about the referendum, citizens who go out to vote, to make their choice", (debate 8 July 2015). Also Petr Mach (EFDD, Czech Republic) emphasizes the importance of democratic decisions and tells Mr Tsipras: "you have allowed the Greek nation to take a democratic decision and the Greek nation has rejected the diktat of the EU which is clearly damaging them", (debate 8 July 2015). Ignazio Corrao (EFFD, Italy) emphasizes the use of the referendum in Greece as a democratic instrument used to ask citizens about a delicate decision for their future, (debate 8 July 2015). Lastly, Nigel Farage (EFDD, United Kingdom) criticizes the process of European integration without listening to people and says that "the European project, is actually beginning to die. Nobody in this room will recognise that, but actually the peoples of Europe are saying, 'We were never asked whether we wanted this: this has been foisted upon us'", (debate 8 July 2015).

Finally, in the selected debates there are almost no references to transparency from right-wing MEPs. Only the Swedish MEP Lena Ek (ALDE) signals in the debate about the conclusions of the European Council meeting from 7 April 2010 "two key words

that are devastatingly missing in the Council conclusions, and they are ‘transparency’ and ‘courage’”. She adds that “It is a secret coordination method today” and what is need “are open, binding targets and carrots and sticks for states to implement what is decided”, (debate 7 April 2010).

6.4 From Samaras to Tsipras

The comparison of the speeches from two Prime Ministers of Greece, Samaras and Tsipras, gives evidences of two confronting narratives of the crisis. Antonis Samaras leader of the conservative party New Democracy and Alexis Tsipras of the left-wing party Syriza represent, broadly speaking, two different ideological positions that according to my hypothesis translate into different positions about austerity and democracy. The selected debates are also in different points in time, which may also have influences on the different views about the economic and financial crisis. Prime Minister Samaras participates in the debate about the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency from 15 January 2010 and the debate on the review of the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014. On the other hand, Prime Minister Tsipras is invited in the debate about the conclusions of the European Council (25-26 June 2015) and of the Euro Summit (7 July 2015) and the current situation in Greece taking place on the 8 July 2015 amid the debt crisis and negotiations to find a solution for Greece. Following the same categories used in the previous sections to explain the different positions and ideas about austerity and democracy we can make the following observations.

First, observing the views from the two Prime Ministers about the economic crisis and the situation in Greece we can observe that Antonis Samaras acknowledges the suffering from Greece but considers the country is following the road towards recovery. On the other hand, Alexis Tsipras stresses that the bailout have made things worse. Samaras affirms that Greece “has suffered those last years more than probably any other member of the EU has ever suffered. We suffered because our own mistakes, mistakes that have been going on for decades. We also suffered because of the structural deficiencies of the common currency itself. We also suffered because of mistakes we’ve committed during the drawing up of the first programme, for example the mistake with the multiplier that underestimated the consequences of the first programe on the recession [...] and this recession turned out to be much deeper” (debate 15 January 2014). However, Samaras considers that Greece now “is changing radically, it is

overcoming its problems and it is on the road of recovery and correcting its mistakes”, (debate 15 January 2014). Samaras emphasizes that “Greece honoured its commitments and its signature. We can also say that we delivered” and mentions the “unbelievable sacrifices that its people had to suffer” with six successive years of recession, the biggest fall of GDP since the big recession of the 30s, an important loss of citizens’ living standard and a huge rise in unemployment rates. Yet he says that Greece “is back again on its feet”, (debate 15 January 2014).

On the other hand, Tsipras explains that “Greece has got to the verge of bankruptcy because for many years the governments of Greece have been creating a clientelist government, they have strengthened and enhanced corruption, they have created and nurtured a nexus between political and economic power, they have allowed tax evasion to run riot”, (debate 8 July 2015). Moreover, he mentions that inequalities have increased with austerity as “10% of Greeks have 56% of the national wealth. And this 10%, in a time of austerity they have not born they share of the pressure. This is a great injustice and the bailout programs have not made things better, on the contrary they’ve made things worse. They were supposed to bring about reforms but those reforms have not improved the tax collecting mechanisms which collapsed under the excessive zeal of enlightened and terrified national officials”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Furthermore, Tsipras calls to change the mindsets and find an alternative way out of the crisis which is not confronting Europe but the Greek establishment. He says that “we come with a strong mandate from the Greek people and we are determined not to have a clash with Europe but to tackle the establishment in our country and to change the mindsets which have taken us and taken the Eurozone down. [...] Europe finds itself at a crucial crossroads. What we now call the Greek crisis is only a manifestation of the general inability of the Eurozone to find a lasting solution to the debt crisis. This is not exclusively a Greek problem, this is a European problem. And European problems require European solutions”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Regarding the opinions from the Primer Ministers about the response to the crisis, Samaras considers the measures implemented have led to positive results while Tsipras considers austerity programmes have been unsuccessful. Thus, in the debate about the programme of activities of the Greek Presidency from 15 January 2014, Samaras

explains that Greece has implemented “one of the most ambitious, one of the broadest programmes of reforms and structural changes that have ever taken place” and the country “is on the first position internationally on implementing structural changes”. Samaras exposes that “the results are clear” and signals that “we have regained our lost competitiveness since 2002 while we brought down our trade balance deficit to 0 in 2013 for the first time Greece has managed primary surplus on its budget”. Samaras affirms that “There will be recovery after 6 years of recession” but “we still have a lot to do”, (debate 15 January 2014). Samaras reminds that the country was “at the verge of disaster and some predicted that it would leave the euro. Some even said that that would lead to the dissolution of the Eurozone, some even said that the EU itself would have to be dissolved”. Samaras proudly states that all these predictions were wrong and that means that “Greece works, that Greece can, that Europe works [...] and we are managing to come out of the crisis”, (debate 15 January 2014).

Samaras states that Greece is overcoming the recession “thanks to the unprecedented sacrifices and the responsible attitude of the Greek people, [...] the support of our partners” and also thanks to “the people of Europe for the solidarity they showed to Greece”, (debate 15 January 2014). However, Samaras admits criticism made during the debate regarding the high levels of unemployment and the neglect of the social needs of the population. He affirms that “Competitiveness is not exclusive with social justice. One cannot exist without the other” and expresses the need to “avoid a jobless recovery”, (debate 15 January 2014).

During the debate about the review of the Greek Presidency from 2 July 2014, Antonis Samaras repeats the same ideas and affirms again that “Our Union has problems, but it also has the capacity to solve those problems and go ahead”, (debate 2 July 2014). Samaras admits that “If we were now to rewrite our roadmap out of the crisis, everyone agrees that we would do it differently” and acknowledges “the mistakes of the past and all the structural problems of the present” but concludes that “we ended up delivering results”. Samaras summarizes the results exposing that “We achieved the largest fiscal adjustment ever in the shortest time ever. We corrected our fiscal deficit by 8% of our GDP in two years, stabilised the collapsing economy, produced a primary surplus one year ahead of our programme and came out into the international markets much earlier than anybody could have thought only six months ago” and declares that “Despite the

strict austerity measures, we reversed the trend of unemployment, which is now falling”. Samaras also repeats that “We are putting an end to a six-year-long recession and are now starting recovery, and robust growth for the coming year is forecast”, (debate 2 July 2014).

On the other hand, the response to the crisis according to Tsipras is a clear failure. He says that “Nowhere have those programs been so harsh and so long-lasting as in Greece” and that the country has been “transformed into an austerity laboratory” that “has not been a success”. Tsipras proceeds exposing the negative consequences of austerity policies saying that “Over these five years we have seen a skyrocketing of poverty, unemployment has soared, social marginalization has increased, as has the public debt which is now 180% of GDP”. That’s why according to Tsipras the Greek people rejected these policies, (debate 8 July 2015). Moreover, Tsipras considers the debate is about the future of Europe not only about one country and says that “two conflicting strategies about the future of the European unification come face to face here”. He expresses his respect for the laws governing the EU but states that “there are times when the greatest law of all human laws is justice for human beings. And I think that’s something we have to remember”, (debate 8 July 2015).

On the other aspect observed in the debates, the priority given to profits before citizens, we observe that this idea is only reproduced by Alexis Tsipras. He defends himself from criticism expressed in the debate that European taxpayers would have to pay for the Greek’s debt and affirms that “The proposals by the Greek government for the funding of its obligations and for the restructuring of its debt are not designed to provide an extra burden for European taxpayers”. Thus, Tsipras reproduces the claim made by social movements that the money given to Greece went to save the banks and not to the people. He makes clear that “The money that has been given to Greece never got to the Greek people. This is money which was given in order to save the Greek and European banks but never went to ordinary Greek men and women”, (debate 8 July 2015)

Furthermore, Tsipras denounces that reforms haven’t affected the interests of the economic and political establishment. He exposes that “None of the reforms has helped when it comes to the nexus between the political establishment, the oligarchs and the banks. None of the reforms have improved the functioning and efficiency of the

mechanisms of State which has now become inured to working in the vested interest rather than the common good”. Hence, he defends his proposals that “are based on genuine reforms whose purpose is to change the face of Greece” and states “That was not the purpose of the bailout, effectively tackling the oligarchy and the cartel of vested interest. We have now got to turn the page of that”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Regarding the references to democracy we can observe a few mentions mainly coming from Alexis Tsipras. First, on the aspect of the opposition between the elites and citizens, Tsipras questions the absence of the European Parliament in the negotiations while the IMF is present and taking decisions. He affirms that “the European Parliament has to play a more active role” as it is “the heart of democracy in Europe?”, (debate 8 July 2015). Moreover, Tsipras also defends the right to choose on the burden share stating that “We have the right to choose where we, as a sovereign government, will put the tax burden”. He considers that “it is the sovereign right of any government to decide to increase taxation on profit making businesses and not affect the lowest possible pensions and cut back further there”. Tsipras explains that the lack of this right to decide is antidemocratic and in that case elections shouldn’t take place and technocrats should be appointed to implement the programs, (debate 8 July 2015).

Second, on transparency, Tsipras insists that the debate “isn’t only about the future of Greece, it’s about the future of the Eurozone” and therefore “it’s not possible for these debates to take place behind closed doors. That’s not our responsibility. For five months negotiations have been conducted indeed behind closed doors”, (debate 8 July 2015).

Third, regarding the importance of listening to citizens, Antonis Samaras says that the citizens’ needs and interests have to shape the EP’s decisions. He states that “The EP must be able to control the decisions and to put at the heart of all decisions the needs and the interest of European citizens”, (debate 15 January 2014). Alexis Tsipras refers to direct democracy after the Greek referendum has taken place and signals the importance to “ask the Greek people directly for their views and to be an active part of the negotiations affecting their future”. He links the significance to ask directly to citizens with the need to get rid of austerity and affirms that the mandate given by citizens is to “get a socially just and economically sustainable solution to the Greek problem” but “without the perpetual austerity which trapped economy in a recessionary

vicious circle”. Tsipras emphasizes the importance of listening to citizens saying that “the European Union will either be democratic or will have immense difficulties in surviving”, (debate 8 July 2015).

6.5 Conclusions

To sum up, the observations made in the selected debates confirm that first, the Presidents of the EC, Council and ECB share an explanation of the crisis which is completely opposite to that of the anti-austerity movements. These Presidents all agree that the main message is the need to implement structural reforms and consider that this is the responsible way to proceed for a country in need such as Greece. They all acknowledge that the reforms entail difficulties but insist that this is the right path and measures have to be carried out without delay. The Presidents express full support for austerity and the euro. They also defend reforms saying that they serve to promote growth in Europe and therefore to enhance the capacity to create jobs. The importance given to the need to regulate the financial system with the adoption of taxes on international financial transactions is not significant in the debates.

Moreover, the Presidents agree that the reforms are successful and in many debates they expose the positive results achieved thanks to them. The different reaction of the Presidents of these institutions to the Prime Ministers of Greece Samaras and Tsipras is indicative of their positions about austerity and democracy. While they congratulate and praise Antonis Samaras emphasizing their courage and responsibility, they criticize Alexis Tsipras alerting him that it is not possible to spend more than what you earn, and that you need to pay what you owe to others and stop pretending that the debtor is a victim while the creditors are evil.

The conception of solidarity of the Presidents of these institutions is based on the idea of a two-way street: on the one hand Greece has to make economic efforts and on the other the EU will support and help Greece. The assistance is always conditional to the adoption of a reforms program. Although there are some mentions about the social Europe they are not the main message in the debates. The priority is the insistence on the implementation of structural reforms and just afterwards some remarks tackle the problem of unemployment and poverty. There are no differences in the austerity frames

of the Presidents in the debates and there is no significant change from their initial positions over time.

Second, regarding austerity we observe on one hand that left-wing MEPs have different positions about the economic and financial crisis, austerity measures and the response to the crisis. These positions are on some cases a critical stance and on other a clear opposition and rejection. MEPs from the GUE/NGL group use a very similar language and expressions to those of the anti-austerity movements whether they come from countries more affected by austerity and with stronger movements or they come from countries with weaker movements and less influenced by austerity. They confront the main narrative of austerity saying that some of the debt is illegitimate or that the banks instead of the people are saved. Also MEPs from the Greens/EFA group share many positions and claims from the movements. For example, regarding debt some German MEPs defend debt forgiveness.

Moreover, several MEPs from the GUE/NGL political group also criticize the behavior of the markets, the banks and the financial system, the policies of the IMF that lead to poverty and unemployment and the leading role of Germany in the crisis management. From the Greens/EFA group, MEPs from different EU countries also criticize austerity and the denial of the Greek reality with the celebration of the positive results from the reforms. Some MEPs from the Greens/EFA group defend reforms but not austerity. They claim that reforms have to be in the interest of society. From the S&D group they express more ambivalent positions. For example, on the origin of the Greek debt crisis some S&D MEPs signal the lack of rigor in the management of public expenditure. Moreover, Greek S&D MEPs show their compromise towards the adoption of austerity measures without criticism and with the conviction that they are the adequate solution to the situation. S&D MEPs from other countries defend austerity but with more flexibility, for example regarding the timings, and express more concern about the need of a social Europe.

Furthermore, the response given to the crisis is criticized from all left-wing MEPs. There is a generalized disapproval of the priority given to bail banks and a consideration that the strategy to tackle the crisis is a failure as they haven't been able to reduce the deficits in indebted countries. In addition these policies are seen as responsible for

exacerbating unemployment and fueling social tensions. They also express worries about speculation. MEPs from all left-wing political groups agree that an introduction of a tax on financial transactions is necessary and urgent. Also left-wing MEPs condemn the decision to put debt and profits before citizens. From the GUE/NGL group they state that the EU is attacking people and governments have used taxpayers' money to save banks which are themselves responsible for getting heavily into debt. However, decisions to rescue indebted states have been hesitant. Thus, they affirm that financial institutions have been bailed without bearing the cost of the crisis. Some German MEPs from the GUE/NGL group repeat the claim from the anti-austerity movements that it is unjust to nationalize the losses and privatize the profits. Also some S&D MEPs consider that people have been robbed and that groups which are not responsible for the crisis must not now be made to bear the cost.

Some left-wing MEPs from the GUE/NGL group criticize that solidarity is used as an empty word or pure propaganda. They also state that there is no real solidarity within the euro area. Moreover, several left-wing MEPs mention the problem of unemployment and poverty and the need to preserve the social Europe. MEPs from the GUE/NGL group denounce that the response to the crisis is based on achieving the sustainability of public finances and neglects social sustainability for the benefit of the majority. There are few mentions to the huge and deepening social inequalities, from one hand coming from the Greens/EFA group and also from some S&D MEPs that alert about increasing divergence between the Member States of the euro.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs' positions about austerity are diverse with the main differences coming from their membership on far right and Eurosceptic political parties. The majority of right-wing MEPs defend the euro and deny any relationship between the economic and financial crisis and the common currency. However, MEPs from far right and Eurosceptic political parties (such as some British MEPs from the EFD group) are critical towards the euro and consider it a complete disaster. German and Greek EPP MEPs, among others, repeat the mainstream narrative of the causes of the crisis which is the level of debt in Member States and their loss of control as well as living beyond their means, especially in some countries. The idea of living and spending beyond our means and run up credit is repeated by several right-wing MEPs. This idea is shared with MEPs from different EU countries whether they have been more affected by

austerity and have stronger anti-austerity social movements or not. Moreover, the German MEPs from EPP also reproduce the central idea that the approach used to tackle the crisis is the only approach, the idea that there is no other alternative. Irish MEPs from the EPP group are a bit more critical towards the explanation of the crisis and mention the lack of regulation as another cause of the crisis. Contrarily, far right MEPs (like MEPs from the Hungarian Jobbik) reject that the crisis is caused by people living above their means but consider it is caused by banks and big businesses.

There are several positions regarding the situation in Greece. German MEPs from EPP group defend tough reform measures for Greece and deny that speculators have resulted in Greece's problems. Instead, its problems are caused by internal rules. Otherwise, MEPs from ALDE group consider the mechanism decided on for Greece is not helping the country but punishing it. Also several MEPs from the ECR and EFD group state the agreement on Greece is a failure. Greek MEPs from ECR repeat that the financial help went to save German banks and Greek far right (Golden Dawn) condemn the memorandum that produce hunger, unemployment and poverty and just helps the oligarchies. Furthermore, the positions on the response to the crisis are not uniform. Several MEPs emphasize the fact that the banks have received a lot of money but haven't paid their part while on the other hand some EPP MEPs congratulate the President of the ECB for the good response to the crisis. As expected, Alexis Tsipras receives many accusations from right-wing MEPs of not having proposals.

Right-wing MEPs do not give importance to the proposal to introduce a tax on financial transactions and there are almost no mentions to this idea. Also the idea of priority to profits before citizens is hardly reproduced, only from far right and Eurosceptic MEPs (a Greek MEP from ECR and an Italian MEP from ENF). Moreover, solidarity is mentioned but in rhetorical ways. Right-wing MEPs consider Greece has to be responsible and that means adopting reforms. At the same time, they affirm that Greece is profiting from other Member States' financial support. Several mentions to that issue signal that foreign taxpayers will have to pay for Greek's debt and consider this is an unfair situation as solidarity is about doing your bid. Furthermore, very few mentions are made to the social Europe and the majority of MEPs who signal the importance of social issues are from Central and Eastern Europe. Almost all of these references are

about the alarming rate of unemployment. Finally, inequality is mentioned a few times with references to inequalities between Member States.

On the third place, regarding democracy, left-wing MEPs from the GUE/NGL and the Greens/EFA groups mention the fact that the elites decide the policies and lead disregarding the majority of the population. Some GUE/NGL MEPs also criticize openly the IMF and signal that Europe is led by large companies and financial institutions which work against the interest and progress of the majority of citizens. A few mentions from GUE/NGL MEPs refer to the importance of listening to citizens and identifies democracy with knowing how to listen. Also, S&D MEPs call for more transparency on behalf of the ECB.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs from the EFD group are critical towards the EU and its lack of democracy, bureaucratic elites and huge power of banks and big businesses in the EU. Some MEPs from the EPP group refer to the need to regain citizen trust linking it to growth and jobs. Moreover, regarding the issue of listening to citizens some MEPs from the EPP disagree with the use of direct democracy instruments such as a referendum to directly ask citizens. On the contrary, MEPs coming from far right and Eurosceptic political parties, some of them from the ECR group, support the Greek referendum and signal the importance of giving citizens a say. Also MEPs from the ENF group celebrate the organization of the referendum in Greece. Lastly, there are almost no references to transparency from right-wing MEPs.

Finally, the comparison of two Greek Prime Ministers (Samaras and Tsipras) is very enlightening of the two confronting narratives of the crisis. First, on the positions about the economic crisis and the situation in Greece, Antonis Samaras acknowledges the suffering from Greece but considers the country is following the road towards recovery, it is overcoming its problems. On the other hand, Alexis Tsipras stresses that the bailout has made things worse and brought injustice with the increase of inequalities. Tsipras calls for an alternative way out of the crisis that is not based on austerity.

Second, regarding the positions on the response to the crisis, Samaras considers the measures implemented have led to positive results showing the Greece and Europe works, while Tsipras considers austerity programmes have been unsuccessful. For

Samaras Greece is coming out of the crisis and even though he admits the need to avoid a jobless recovery he considers reforms have been a success. On the contrary, Tsipras states the response to the crisis is a clear failure and has provoked the increase of poverty, unemployment and social marginalization while public debt has also increased. Tsipras quotes Sophocles to call for justice above any laws. This idea of justice is present in the movements of the squares, as well as a central impulse to action in progressive social movements: response based on justice not austerity

Third, on the ideas of profits before citizens Tsipras defends himself from criticism expressed in the debates that European taxpayers would have to pay for the Greek's debt. He repeats that the money that has been given to Greece never got to the Greek people and it was given to save the Greek and European banks. Tsipras also condemns that reforms haven't affected the interests of the economic and political establishment. From Samaras side there are no mentions to the ideas of putting profits before the people.

Lastly, on democracy, Tsipras questions the absence of the European Parliament in the negotiations while the IMF is present and taking decisions. He also defends the right to choose on the burden share as a right of any sovereign government. Moreover, Tsipras refers to transparency stressing that the debates cannot take place behind closed doors. Finally, regarding the importance of listening to citizens, Antonis Samaras mentions that the citizens' needs and interests have to shape the EP's decisions. Otherwise, Alexis Tsipras refers to direct democracy after the Greek referendum. He links the significance to ask directly to citizens with the need to get rid of austerity and considers democracy is essential for Europe's survival.

Chapter 7. Diffusion of ideas from the movements to the Members of the European Parliament

Anti-austerity movements gained attention in several European countries but their influence beyond local assemblies and their national network cannot be clearly identified. In the previous chapters we have observed the difficulty of establishing the connection between MEPs' positions and the ideas and claims of anti-austerity movements. By examining the discourses of different MEPs in the EP coming from diverse EU countries (more and less affected by austerity and with stronger and weaker anti-austerity movements) we cannot measure how strong or how weak this influence has been. For this reason, the research has included personal interviews with MEPs from left- and right-wing political parties and from the countries selected in this thesis. However, due to the arduous task of obtaining positive responses for carrying out interviews with MEPs, Greece has not been included and some of the selected countries do not have examples from all the political parties. Thus, in the end the countries included are: Spain, Portugal, Italy and Ireland as countries that were more affected by austerity policies and where anti-austerity movements spread widely (even though the strength of the movements was not the same in all four countries). On the other hand, we include Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands as countries that were less affected by the economic and financial crisis and had weaker anti-austerity movements, even though they were also present.

In the end, 20 interviews were conducted with MEPs from the countries mentioned and from different political groups. The interviews were conducted between May 2018 and April 2019 and were carried out via telephone or Skype. Three of them were answered in writing and sent by email directly from the MEP. The interviews were carried out in Spanish, Catalan, English and French via telephone and in writing there is one interview in Portuguese. An English translation was provided for this research by the author of the thesis. Three interviews were conducted with the MEP's assistant and one with the President of the EP's advisor. The list of the interviews with their details can be found in annex 5.

This chapter examines the level of influence of anti-austerity movements by directly taking into account the MEPs' response to that question. In order to do that, MEPs are first questioned about their ideas about democracy, asked the main element that they think a democracy should basically have. General ideas about what a democracy is, how it should be, if existing democracy works and if democracy is currently in danger are other aspects that are examined. Moreover, other aspects that are observed in order to determine the MEPs' conception of democracy are their opinion about direct democracy mechanisms, decision-making processes, transparency and citizen participation. Second, the transfer of ideas from movements to MEPs is examined. Here, MEPs are asked directly whether they have been influenced by anti-austerity movements and if they have made any democratic innovation. Third, the influence of the movements is observed by asking their opinion about the movements and whether they have widened the debate about democracy, about the internal influence of the movements (whether they have seen any changes inside their political party or group) and external influence (whether they have detected any differences, depending on political parties or groups and depending on countries of origin). Fourth, the MEPs' perception of influence depending on the EU institution is examined (whether the EP has been more influenced by the movements than other EU institutions) and there is a review of the MEPs' opinions about the criticisms made by social movements regarding the indifference of the institutions. Finally, a last element has been included: the idea of democracy of far right groups according to the interviewed MEPs. This aspect was added after the observation that MEPs from far right political parties make many references to elements that were raised by the movements such as the importance of direct participation or the criticism of an elite that is far away from the citizens. Using all these aspects, the MEPs' conception of democracy is observed as well as their position on austerity, indirectly examined through their ideas about democracy.

The chapter starts with the analysis of the left-wing MEPs, where more influence is expected to be found, starting with the countries more affected by austerity and with stronger movements and finishing with the countries less affected by austerity and with weaker movements. Then, follows the analysis of right-wing MEPs, where less influence is expected to be found, also starting with countries more affected by austerity and stronger movements and finishing with countries that are less affected and with

weaker anti-austerity movements. Some final remarks are included at the end of the chapter.

7.1 Left-wing MEPs

The observation starts with Spanish left-wing MEPs, where the expectations to find influences from the anti-austerity movements are higher. It follows with MEPs from Portugal, Ireland, Italy and finally the Netherlands. For each country, first, MEPs from the GUE/NGL group are examined, then those from the Greens/EFA and finally those from the S&D group.

7.1.1 MEPs' ideas about democracy

Starting with Spain, we first observe the MEP from the GUE/NGL group Paloma López (Izquierda Unida), who considers that “we cannot understand democracy only as voting every four years” and then just leave the work in the hands of institutions. Paloma López also adds that “our democracies are deteriorated fundamentally due to the assault of the economic powers towards these democracies and towards decision-making that corresponds to political representatives”. She explains the example of lobbies in the EP that come from big transnational corporations and “push institutions and politicians to adopt legislation according to their particular interests and against the general interest”. Moreover, according to Paloma López, there are threats in existing democracies that she describes as “elements that should have a temporal component that end up consolidating, becoming structural and undermining freedom and democracy”. Some examples that she gives of such elements that should be temporal are austerity policies or security issues related to a specific attack (Paloma López, interview August 2018).

Paloma López affirms that, regarding the state of democracy in the EU, there is a consensus in the European institutions that “things cannot continue in the same way”. However, alternative ways have not yet been devised and “the problem is that if the same recipes are used and that have brought us here, then we’ll have a serious problem, not only of a democratic nature”. Paloma López affirms that a way forward should be based on “policies that have a direct influence on citizens, with wealth redistribution, where people are at the centre and not the banks and multinationals” (Paloma López, interview August 2018).

Moreover, another Spanish MEP from the same political group, Javier Couso (Izquierda Unida), also emphasizes the importance of “effective citizen’s power” as an essential aspect of democracy. Javier Couso affirms that decision-making has to be democratic and denounces that some institutions like the ECB are not accountable to citizens as they cannot directly vote about the direction this institution takes. In this way, the delegated power of citizens is restricted. Javier Couso underlines the importance of the debates from the 15M movement regarding democracy. He affirms “people in the squares were discussing about the intrusion of financial power in public institutions and democracy. That’s why the main slogan about the 15M referred to this, to the recuperation of this democracy that had been taken by big global financial powers” (Javier Couso, interview September 2018).

Furthermore, coming from the same political group in the EP but from another political party, Podemos, Jorge Conesa (assistant to MEP Lola Sánchez) also affirms that democracy is “a system where beyond voting, we have the right to decide who we want to lead society”. He refers to the media, and to “conditions of social equality, access to basic services that we are losing, education, etc. that enables us to have freedom”. Jorge Conesa emphasizes that democracy is lacking when we lose social services and real freedom. Moreover, he considers that democracy is under threat and affirms that in the EP some “groups which are less critical towards this question [...] are conscious that people are realizing that without basic rights there is no democracy and are changing their discourse”. Jorge Conesa states that social welfare is breaking up and “the problem is that we are in a situation where we are ignoring the interests of citizens and favouring in general those of the big businesses”. He concludes that society has had enough of this (Jorge Conesa, interview August 2018).

From the Greens/EFA group, Ana Miranda (Bloque Nacionalista Galego) considers that democracy is the “possibility to offer opportunities, fulfil rights and freedoms that are supposed to be part of a democracy in one is to be considered as such”. Ana Miranda states that we do not have a real democracy “because it is a democracy from a formal point of view but with little content”. Moreover, she adds that “there is no democracy without social justice, it is inherent to it, and it is probably one of the values that is lacking in the Spanish and European context”. Another element that Ana Miranda signals is “the possibility of people’s participation in all decisions and this is not

happening either”. According to Miranda, “we do not have a direct participatory democracy where we can have a say as citizens, as people”. She says that the EU is a place of peace and stability “but not democracy, because there are decisions that are taken in anti-democratic ways in the Commission or the Council, much less in the EP”. Lastly, Ana Miranda points out that her group is very active in promoting participation and inviting groups into the EP; however she complains that this is not common “because unfortunately, that institution for many is just a place to work and get paid” (Ana Miranda, interview August 2018).

Moreover, from the same political group in the EP, Ernest Urtasun (Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds) emphasizes that democracy “is basically the capacity that citizens have for deciding on the actions of their public institutions that govern society”. He adds that “there are two important dimensions in democracy: one is if public institutions respond to people’s will [...], and the other, and this is a very important question nowadays, is if public institutions are able to govern according to its decisions”. Urtasun stresses that the great doubt in today’s societies is whether “public institutions are able to govern a globalized society” and affirms that democracy has this double aspect and both are very important (Ernest Urtasun, interview June 2018).

Lastly, another MEP from the same political group in the EP, Josep Maria Terricabras (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya) stresses that first democracy has “separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers”; second, “security forces have to be strictly under political authority”; third, “there has to be a clear separation between church and state”, then there is “freedom of press” and “no interference from economic powers, but this of course is extraordinarily difficult. A great deal of the problems of our democracies comes from this, because of economic powers”. Moreover, Terricabras adds citizen participation and egalitarian access to culture, power, and fundamental freedoms (of expression, of assembly, etc.). Josep Maria Terricabras affirms that democracy exists when there is “freedom, participation, the sense of justice, public education, strong public values in the face of private interests” and that all these values and ideas are fundamental for a democracy to work (Josep Maria Terricabras, interview September 2018).

Moreover, Josep Maria Terricabras considers that policies that are not citizen-centred and removed from reality are dangerous and may fuel xenophobic and authoritarian views. For this reason, he considers that “it is necessary to find good solutions not for everyone but for the most disadvantaged”, as people who are more privileged have the resources to solve things for themselves. Terricabras adds that there needs to be a “firm attitude towards businesses that when they make a profit, they have to create jobs. It is not acceptable that they do not create jobs when they earn money and when they do not earn it, they need to be compensated. I’m sorry, but this is intolerable” (Josep Maria Terricabras, interview September 2018).

Finally, from the S&D group, Juan Fernando López Aguilar (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) considers that democracy is a set of rules of participation and democratic deliberation. López Aguilar enumerates the common principles of the Member States of the EU, which are “representative democracy, rule of law, separation of powers, guarantee of the fundamental rights based on an independent judicial power, and above all political pluralism and minority rights”. In this way, he gives a legal conception of democracy based on law, the constitution and legal systems. Moreover, regarding his view about existing democracies, López Aguilar affirms that “there is no one single democracy that functions fully satisfactorily and therefore all of them are exposed to criticism for their flawed functioning, for their insufficiencies”. He considers that “all democracies are imperfect, and they are certainly all fragile. All of them are exposed to constant threats that never disappear” and admits that “it is part of a democratic reality that problems and pathologies are manifested and reforms to tackle these pathologies are requested” (Juan Fernando López Aguilar, interview May 2018).

Marisa Matias, from Portugal, (Bloco de Esquerda, GUE/NGL group) considers that the main element a democracy should have is freedom. Marisa Matias believes that today “democracy is totally in danger and even the democracy that we practice in the Parliament or other institutions is a low intensity democracy”. Therefore, she affirms that institutions and parties have to open up to citizens because “democratic forces are somehow feeding undemocratic movements both with austerity policies but also by legitimizing the discourse and the claims of these movements by trying to stop them growing” and alerts that “not only we are not being able to avoid that, they are actually being legitimated by everything” (Marisa Matias, interview December 2018).

Moreover, Ana Gomes (Partido Socialista, S&D) emphasizes that “democracy is respect for plurality of opinion” and warns that “the rule of majority should not exclude the voices of the minority”. Thus, she affirms, like López Aguilar, that democracy is the capacity “to be able to encompass all the diversity of society, take on board the views of the minority groups and the respect of minority rights”. Regarding today’s democracy, Ana Gomes believes democracy is at risk and adds “I’m afraid we’re heading towards a big confrontation or big disaster”. She explains that ideas that are given as solutions based on going back to national states, such as “America first” or “Europe first”, “try to manipulate the idea of democracy” and depict themselves as “the true guardians of democracy, of citizen participation, citizen control by putting the EU into question”. Ana Gomes says of these ideas “in my opinion that’s wrong” and “that lies into the hand of the extreme right-wing which is anti-democratic”. She believes that there has to be criticism within the EU but it has to be “the kind of healthy criticism”. At the same time, Ana Gomes signals that the problem is “with the seizing of governance, at the national, local or European level by corporations or private interest which undermines the common interest, the public interest” and affirms that this is “where in my opinion the emphasis should be and not entirely in this illusion that the more you have citizens demonstrating in the square, although I am for citizen demonstrations, but that’s not the way we’re going to really make an organized difference”. She adds that “it’s pretty desperate if you have to go into a square and cry for instance against a corrupt government; it’s because the situation has already gone beyond what would be acceptable” (Ana Gomes, interview August 2018).

Lastly, Carlos Zorrinho (Partido Socialista, S&D) defines democracy as “the government of the people” and “the system that allows each citizen to be represented in equal conditions in decision-making bodies”. Zorrinho considers that democracy should be “the most participatory, representative and transparent possible” and regarding existing democracy, he affirms “with all its flaws, it is the best known political system”. Furthermore, Carlos Zorrinho affirms that “the populist approach is always dangerous even if the intentions are good” and adds that “movements and parties are not enemies in a healthy democracy” but instead “they are complementary and must cooperate for a better democracy” (Carlos Zorrinho, interview October 2018).

From Ireland, Matt Carthy (Sinn Féin, GUE/NGL) emphasizes that for him “democracy is about self-determination, including national self-determination, it’s about people being empowered to change decisions that affect them, that means to be able to reverse decisions that governments have taken but also to be able to influence decisions”. Regarding the risks for democracy, Matt Carthy explains that on one hand, there are demophobic mobilizations driven by far right parties that “are constructed on the bases of the people being thought of as exclusive, [...] wanting to exclude others on the base of either nationality or ethnicity”. He considers that is an “exploitation of the sense of disillusion and democratic deficit”. And on the other hand, anti-austerity movements and “the parties that have represented them have been much more honest in terms of identifying the causes of the democratic deficit and the financial crises and the austerity” that was defended to tackle the crisis (Matt Carthy, interview September 2018).

Finally, from the Netherlands, Dennis de Jong’s assistant, Diederik van der Loo (Socialistische Partij, GUE/NGL) mentions that the main element that a democracy should have is consensual decision-making and refers to the internal practices of his political group in the EP as an example. Regarding the dangers of existing democracy he affirms that the “real risk comes from basically the establishment” and exposes that the “the more political parties start to look alike, the more people will look for something completely radical and different”. When citizens have the feeling that “there’s nothing else to choose”, it poses a threat to democracy. Diederik van der Loo explains that anti-austerity movements come from this situation and then “because the anti-austerity movements were basically sidelined, you can’t say really that they had a lot of power in Europe because the establishment just went on and on [...]; because that happened people are saying: oh well, the anti-austerity parties did not manage to do anything about it”, so they vote for extreme right party. According to van der Loo, this is “the result of no democracy, it’s not a cause” (Diederik van der Loo, interview April 2019).

To sum up, MEPs from the GUE/NGL and the Greens/EFA groups share anti-austerity movements’ idea that democracy is more than voting, that citizens need to have more participation and influence, and they support citizens’ power in opposition to banks and multinationals. They also refer to redistribution, access to social services and justice as

important aspects of a democracy. MEPs from the S&D group emphasize that democracy is based on citizens' representation, respect for minorities and the rule of law. They share a more critical view of the ideas of democracy coming from anti-austerity movements and defend existing democracy as a system with flaws and problems, but that is nevertheless, the best political system.

7.1.2 Direct democracy, decision-making processes and citizen participation

Regarding the elements of a democracy that were signalled as important by anti-austerity movements, we can observe first the Spanish MEP Paloma López (GUE/NGL) who considers that there needs to be more direct democracy mechanisms. She thinks it is “essential that there are instruments for participating in decision-making” and affirms “there are elements that are of common interest and should be subject to direct and participatory democracy for citizens”. Then, regarding the democratic decision-making processes, Paloma López considers the European citizens' initiative should be more taken into consideration. According to López, “these proposals are elaborated and developed through social participation and then transferred to the Commission; then they are hardly, or not at all, taken into consideration by the institutions”. She further explains that these initiatives are complicated to put together, the process is arduous and they can be rejected even for discussion. Lastly, regarding citizen participation, Paloma López states “it is important that citizens have a greater control over important decisions [...]. The control cannot be limited to ratifying or not every four of five years” but there has to be a real democratic control “especially in institutions where it is not clear to whom they respond, for example the Eurogroup” (Paloma López, interview August 2018).

Javier Couso is from the same political group and also thinks there should be more direct democracy mechanisms. Couso takes the example of European citizens' initiative about free trade agreements that could not be debated because the Commission rejected it. He affirms that “there need to be elements that can foster direct democracy and not only voting every four of five years”. As for the democratic decision-making process, Javier Couso states “it is essential that there is transparency and accountability from the politicians”. He thinks that “an elected person cannot act in an opaque way, that favours impunity” and defines impunity as “the participation of elements that do not participate in the elections but that end up ruling”. Lastly, Couso also considers that citizen

participation is essential and mentions the importance of participating in the European elections “where participation is very low, showing disaffection towards this EU” while other more active actors such as the extreme right can obtain more political gains (Javier Couso, interview September 2018).

Meanwhile, Jorge Conesa (GUE/NGL) agrees that direct democracy mechanisms are necessary and sometimes a guarantee. On democratic decision-making processes, he remarks on the importance of transparency. Conesa gives the example of international trade and refers to the opacity in the negotiations of trade agreements. Also regarding development aid, he considers that “the terms are always warped and that is a form of opacity”. Jorge Conesa explains that the concepts are not clear and it is extremely difficult “for people to understand what it is being done with their money and what they wouldn’t agree with”. On citizen participation, Jorge Conesa affirms that “it needs to increase” and adds that “first people have to feel that their participation is worthwhile”. He thinks people’s participation and commitment is a heroic deed since everything is against it, so he considers there should be a system that facilitates participation so that it could increase without people having to make such huge efforts (Jorge Conesa, interview August 2018).

From the Greens/EFA, Ana Miranda agrees with the other MEPs about the importance of direct democracy mechanisms, and signals that there should be consultations and referenda, mentioning the Swiss example. Ana Miranda also refers to the European citizens’ initiative and makes similar remarks to Paloma López’s, stating that “it is still a complex mechanism, you need one million signatures, from several states and nations without a state; regions or autonomies or other entities do not have the facilities to participate”. She adds that “in many places there is a demand, from Scotland to Catalonia, for the possibility to use referenda” and affirms that it is positive to facilitate consultations. On democratic decision-making processes, Ana Miranda mentions the problem of closed decisions in the Council and the issue of transparency regarding lobbies in the EP which has been contested by the Greens/EFA. On citizen participation, Miranda also agrees that it is of great importance. She mentions the Committee on Petitions in the EP and explains that it has received citizens’ complaints from many groups, from environmental groups to groups such as the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH). She thinks the Committee “is fundamental but of

course it is just one Committee”. However, Miranda explains the example of the Angoris train accident saying that “when the victims of the train were not listened to by anyone else [...] Europe did listen to them” and also the example of the Catalan independence movement, with the creation of the EU-Catalonia Dialogue Platform (Ana Miranda, interview August 2018).

Meanwhile, another MEP from the Greens/EFA, Ernest Urtasun, also states that he defends direct democracy mechanisms and mentions, like Ana Miranda, the Swiss example. However, he makes clear that “representative democracy is irreplaceable because it is the only way to guarantee a democratic functioning in the everyday government; but direct democracy is a complement that I think is very important although it is not very used in the case of Catalonia and Spain”. Furthermore, on democratic decision-making processes, Urtasun remarks that regarding transparency “in the EP there has been an important effort towards transparency on decision-making and this has helped to bring the Parliament closer to citizens; it is a very open Parliament”. At the same time, he explains that “however, transparency is absent in other decision elements, for example, there is a total lack of transparency in decisions taken by the Council”. Lastly, on citizen participation he agrees with the others MEPs mentioned above that “it is very important and we have always said that voting every four years is not sufficient to guarantee a full democracy and a lot of everyday issues can be ameliorated through citizen participation in different areas”. He clarifies that “voting every four or five years is essential in order to ensure the working of the representative structures, however it is true that continuous citizen supervision is very important”. Urtasun explains that this supervision is carried out through two mechanisms: first, organized civil society (associations, trade unions, etc.) as a representative of society and second, public institutions that can establish direct participation mechanisms (Ernest Urtasun, interview June 2018).

Josep Maria Terricabras (Greens/EFA) also considers that there should be more direct democracy mechanisms and also mention the European citizens’ initiative, making similar statements to Ana Miranda and Paloma López. Terricabras agrees that it is a complex process and signals that, “at the end of the process there should be a follow-up from the Commission”, and that institution should be compelled to do so. He warns that “if the Commission receives petitions and keeps them in a drawer, not only will

European citizens not approach the institutions again but they will also be frustrated. That's why this is a key point". Moreover, on democratic decision-making processes, he agrees that "transparency is of paramount important" and considers that the EP is quite transparent. Terricabras points out that "what is sometimes not transparent are the agreements between the Parliament and the Council". Lastly, on citizen participation, he also considers it is very important and refers to the referenda, as useful at municipal, regional and national level. At the European level, he acknowledges the difficulties of organizing referenda, but explains that they are important for bringing institutions closer to the citizens. Terricabras says, "people feel removed from democratic institutions because they do not feel called to be part of them; when decisions are taken they are communicated to them and they are obliged to comply, but that's all" (Josep Maria Terricabras, interview September 2018).

Lastly, from the S&D group, Juan Fernando López Aguilar affirms that direct democracy mechanisms are present in the constitutional systems of advanced democracies. However, he considers that direct democracy "has to be compatible with the architecture of the democratic process, that is essentially representative" and representative democracy articulates the complexity of society that is plural and conflictive. López Aguilar explains that the ideal of an "infinitely open forum where all individuals permanently debate decisions that affect the public space" from his point of view is not desirable. He further states that "empirical evidence shows that this is not only unfeasible but also not desirable. [...] No one can be permanently open to decision-making in the public space because we wouldn't do anything else than that and it generates legal insecurity". López Aguilar affirms that "an articulation of politics with these characteristics would be suffocating. All decisions would permanently be opened up to an infinite continuum of deliberation, which would supposedly be open but would be conflictive, with as many individuals participating as make up a political community or society". Moreover, "the deliberative process requires not only information but also calls for expert knowledge" and "not everybody can always decide about everything [...], it is profoundly undesirable due to the irrationality of decisions that would be adopted" (Juan Fernando López Aguilar, May 2018).

Second, López Aguilar - on democratic decision-making processes - explains that he does "not recognize any vertical power to a politician that has been freely elected by

citizens, nor hierarchies of any type”. He reflects on horizontality saying “in an assembly where no one takes on the responsibility to lead everything breaks down in the magma of horizontality” and considers that in that situation “decisions are impossible and it is a way to cover-up lack of responsibility in the process of decision making”. Moreover, López Aguilar refers to transparency as a requirement in advanced democracies. He reminds us that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU includes “the rights to openness and transparency of all the information and documentation available in the decision process from the European institutions”. López Aguilar explains that “all citizens’ right of access to any document or information from the European institutions” is guaranteed. Again, López Aguilar exposes his views based on a legal basis about the functioning of the European institutions. Finally, on citizen participation he considers it is fundamental and “crucial to qualify the democratic quality” and adds “democracy has to be deliberative and participatory”. Moreover, he complains about the lack of participation in European elections even though “the EP is the strongest parliament that has ever existed in the history of the Union” (Juan Fernando López Aguilar, May 2018).

Marisa Matias, from Portugal, affirms that more direct democracy mechanisms are needed. She says that “we don’t have enough participation” and explains that even if there were “we would need other types of democracy to complement this”. Regarding the processes of decision-making, Marisa Matias affirms that “transparency is crucial” and says that one reason that explains the lack of participation is “because institutions don’t want citizens to participate” as this involves more complexity. She mentions that citizen participation “is sometimes seen as something which blocks the decision-making process” but also that “it is in the hands of citizens to claim” more democracy. Marisa Matias exposes that due to social movements, “transparency was demanded by citizens and we were forced to give out information that normally doesn’t get out of institutions” in some cases. Thus, greater transparency is the result of citizen pressure. Marisa Matias explains that her party has always defended increasing citizen participation and affirms that “there is still a lot of room for participation, not only in national institutions but also international ones” (Marisa Matias, interview December 2018).

Ana Gomes affirms that there are already plenty of direct democracy mechanisms and believes that “direct democracy is not going to be a panacea and will not replace

representative democracy”. She states that “we should be open to all forms of direct democracy but without fooling ourselves” and explains how some direct democracy mechanisms such as referenda “have been used as instruments to create trouble, to create conflict, not to solve it”. Ana Gomes says that she is “more reluctant now about referenda than years ago, after having seen the manipulation in the case of Brexit” and insists that the views of the citizens have to be taken into consideration but in some referenda the will of the citizens has been manipulated. She explains that she had even advocated for a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty and affirms that now she has changed her mind and she would not do it again. Regarding transparency and openness in decision-making processes, Ana Gomes considers that the lack of it is “what explains the scepticism of many citizens regarding democracy”. According to Gomes, citizens “don’t feel represented because you find more and more cases of lack of transparency actually covering up for corruption”. She says that “people who are supposed to defend the common interest are actually pursuing private sectorial interests” and “that’s the source of the scepticism and distrust of citizens” as well as being something that “has been undermining democracy”. In addition, Ana Gomes says that this cannot be disconnected from the “neoliberal thesis that has been prevailing for decades in the Western world”, and explains that “neoliberal policies have been a great source of corruption, of abandonment of the public interest for the benefit of some private sectorial interests”. She adds that “the neoliberal thesis is also the excuse of the ideological cover-up of this lack of accountability and transparency” and therefore “public opinion’s distrust in many politicians”. Ana Gomes also explains that these neoliberal theories “in terms of the economy have been devastating, have been the main source of damage to democracy and have been the source of the crisis that we’ve gone through”. Even though she affirms that she is not against austerity, mentioning that she is not against rigour in public accounting, she states that “democracy with neoliberal economic policies are the poison [...] and this has been undermining democracy more than anything else” (Ana Gomes, interview August 2018).

Finally, on citizen participation, Ana Gomes affirms it is crucial but considers that if there is no accountability and transparency in government, then citizen participation is not worthwhile. Gomes exposes that to ensure accountability there should be “public media that would ensure the plurality of points of view and criticism of power”, and says that “this has been shrinking because of this neoliberal thesis; the media have been

privatized and manipulated”. She also mentions social media as an alternative to “opening up more avenues for public expression” but quickly refers to the problem of “manipulation of public opinion through fake news and all sorts of disinformation campaigns, even brainwashing campaigns”. Therefore, she admits the contradictions of the current era “where we have a lot of new technology that opens up tremendous possibilities for the participation of citizens in public governance” but “on the other hand “you see these new media been actually perverted, to control, to disinform, to manipulate citizens” (Ana Gomes, interview August 2018).

Lastly, Carlos Zorrinho believes that direct democracy mechanisms are very important “as a complement to the mechanisms of representation, but should not replace them”. Regarding transparency in decision-making processes, he affirms it is essential to the democratic process; on citizen participation he states that “it should be facilitated as much as possible”, and taking into consideration the problem of manipulation, he defends “the use of new technologies to assist these participation processes” (Carlos Zorrinho, interview October 2018).

From Ireland, Matt Carthy (Sinn Féin, GUE/NGL) considers that direct democracy mechanisms are important. He explains that “the existent representative process is totally distorted by unequal distribution of wealth and power in society” and the “people who have access to wealth, education and the media are in a privileged position”. Therefore, Matt Carthy sets out that “representative democracy needs to be accompanied by an expansion of accountability and grassroots democracy” and “you can have decision-making at the local and the national level”. In addition, he states that “there are occasions when plebiscites or referendums should be held on major issues that would affect people for generations”. On decision-making processes, Matt Carthy explains that he supports “horizontal, open, and democratic decision-making processes”, and on citizen participation he affirms “citizen participation is vital to any healthy democratic society. If we had had genuine citizen participation in decision-making over the past decades I don’t think we would have seen the rise of the far right, for example”. He says that what happens usually is that “the bare minimum possible to say that the process was democratic” rather than really allowing citizens to genuinely participate and stay informed and engaged (Matt Carthy, interview September 2018).

Mercedes Bresso, from Italy, (Partito Democratico S&D) explains that “transparency and better ways of involving citizens in the decision-making are important or indeed necessary”, as has been confirmed with the economic and political crisis. She considers the work done “in order to improve transparency inside the European Parliament and the reform of the European Citizen Initiative are great steps forward in improving the capacity of citizens to control the work of their institutions and to be more pro-active in the decision-making process”. Nevertheless, Mercedes Bresso says that direct democracy is not always the answer and mentions that “many populist parties use it in their rhetoric as a tool to improve democracy”. Thus, Bresso states that she prefers “representative democracy because this system works on the construction of a consensus and not, like direct democracy, of the imposition of the will of a majority on the minority” (Mercedes Bresso, interview May 2018).

Finally from the Netherlands, Dennis de Jong’s assistant, Diederik van der Loo (Socialistische Partij, GUE/NGL) thinks that direct democracy mechanisms like referenda are “excellent tools at national and lower levels”, but that they can be “interpreted in many ways so it works best I think on concrete proposals asking the citizens for approval of a certain law for a change”. In that case, “in general a referendum as a tool can be useful”. Van der Loo explains that sometimes there is an intellectual elite that only support referenda when the outcome favours them and mentions the example of the referendum about the European constitution that was held in some countries in 2004 and that was not taken into account because the results were not the desired ones. In addition, regarding transparency in decision-making processes, Diederik van der Loo affirms that the EP is doing very well. However, he mentions that regarding lobbies, more work needs to be done to make it fully transparent to citizens. Moreover, van der Loo explains that the other “decision-maker is the Council and that’s not transparent at all”. He considers that should change as well. On citizen participation, Diederik van der Loo affirms that they have always been interested in that aspect. He adds that inside his political group in the EP there are parties that come from anti-austerity movements like Podemos and Syriza and signals that “many of the new left parties that are not the old style communist maybe coming usually from local backgrounds”. Van der Loo thinks that “there’s always a very strong inclusiveness in how left-wing parties participate in the social fora” (Diederik van der Loo, interview April 2019).

In conclusion, there is a coincidence between MEPs from GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups from different countries in the elements of democracy that were emphasized by anti-austerity movements. They all think that there should be more direct democracy mechanisms and that citizen participation is a central element in a democracy. Many of them refer to the fact that a democracy is more than just voting every four or five years. Meanwhile, MEPs from the S&D group from the selected countries acknowledge that direct democracy mechanisms are part of the systems of advanced democracies but are more reluctant about using them. They signal the problems that have arisen due to running referenda and consider that expert knowledge is also necessary to take the best decisions. Thus, direct democracy is seen as a complement to representative democracy, but taken into consideration with all its flaws. And, while MEPs from GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups point to the European Citizens' Initiative as being too complex, MEPs from the S&D think it is a good instrument.

Transparency in decision-making processes is an aspect that is considered important by all MEPs. There is a slight difference in the assessment that they make on whether the levels of transparency achieved in the EP are sufficient or too limited. Thus, while some S&D MEPs mention the great efforts the EP has made regarding transparency, other MEPs from Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL refer to the problem of lobbies and the lack of transparency in the Council as aspects that need to be tackled.

7.1.3 Movements' outcomes

First from Spain, Paloma López (GUE/NGL) affirms that she has been influenced by anti-austerity movements. She says that “we participated in the movements against austerity” and explains that “political parties have to contribute to creating something more collective, more general, to tackle the root of the problem” and to bring together mobilizations that are more sectorial, with separated claims. Regarding Paloma López's opinion about the movements, she states that “they had a very significant influence at the moment when they emerged” and considers that “15M made people take note that things had to change [...]. The 15M protests contributed to debates, with demands, with elements of democratic participation”, however Paloma López says that “the evolution of the movement has not fulfilled the expectations it generated initially. I think the mistake from my point of view was to think that a street movement could turn into

institutional or political representation and that would be enough to change things”. Nevertheless, the movement “had a mobilizing effect, of participation and democratic interest, although afterwards it had an opposite evolution” but it “produced a significant change, an important element of *before* and *after* 15M” (Paloma López, interview August 2018).

On the internal influence in her party and political group in the EP, Paloma López affirms that “yes, internally yes, it brought interest and change. She explains that her party “Izquierda Unida, from the beginning, was constituted as a political and social movement. It didn’t have this classical conception of political party; it already had an element of political and social mobilization, ahead of its time”. However, Paloma López admits that “it is true that institutional practices lead you towards certain processes” and, in addition, if you do not have enough institutional influence, then your political influence is very weak. Paloma López says that “the 15M was a new evolution or impulse [...] and now there is a change inside IU where the tendency is again to be a political and social movement and less of a classical political party. It is an evolution from something that we were at the beginning, but the 15M gives a new impulse”. Moreover, on her opinion about the external influence on other political parties, institutions or countries, she confirms that there have been changes inside her political group in the EP due to changes in national parties such as the presence of Mélenchon in France, the divide in Die Linke or division inside the Greek group due to the policies carried out by Tsipras’ government. However, the changes she mentions cannot be directly linked to the anti-austerity movements but have other multiple causes. As for the differences between countries, Paloma López considers that there are no important differences. In fact, she states that “it is a group that in general is one of the most homogeneous” and a group that supports different social mobilizations that appear in different areas and from different spheres as well as supporting all kinds of alternative demonstrations (Paloma López, interview August 2018).

Javier Couso, from the same party and political group, also confirms that he was influenced by anti-austerity movements. He talks about the Spanish case saying that “15M was like a global movement for all political and social organizations, as well as for trade unions that needed an evident renovation regarding bureaucratization, for improving contact with the feelings of the people, and all these was discussed at the last

meeting from Izquierda Unida”. He explains that at this party congress “many elements from 15M were incorporated, elements regarding revocation of elected officials, facilitating participation (and not only of the affiliated members), as well as the inclusion and compulsory election of candidates through primaries, and the obligation for elected officials to be accountable towards their bases and voters”. Regarding Couso’s opinion about the movements, he thinks that in Spain “compared to other European countries where xenophobic and radical right movements are growing, the 15M has vaccinated us against that, by providing a social base that maybe before was not participating in elections or politics”, he thinks that “politics was brought to everyday life and this has been essential”. On the internal influence in his party and political group in the EP, he thinks that the movements have provoked many changes. Couso admits that “before the 15M there were attempts to make IU a more agile organization and with more internal democracy that did not come to fruition”, he explains that “we came up with good theories but we were not able to put them into practice. Instead, this impulse of millions of people in the street and above all this public debate in the streets, in the squares, this has been like a detonator, an accelerator we could say, of all those things that we hadn’t put into practice”. Couso says that “all this debate has been fundamental and has incorporated norms that were in line with those claims from the 15M made about traditional political parties” (Javier Couso, interview September 2018).

Lastly, regarding the external influence on other political parties, institutions or countries, Javier Couso thinks that “left-wing parties have been quite permeable to these claims” and the influence has been stronger in Southern Europe where “countries share the misfortune of a debt that exceeds GDP and that have had a process of deindustrialization since Maastricht [...]. I think this have been the countries that have been more influenced”. Javier Couso says that inside his political group in the EP, the GUE/NGL, it is possible to observe that priorities from the groups are diverse as “we see the priority of debt, or for example problems with unemployment that are not comparable, the structural unemployment that we have with unemployment in northern countries” (Javier Couso, interview September 2018).

Lola Sanchez’s assistant, from the same political group in the EP but from a different political party, Podemos, affirms that they have been “deeply influenced” and in fact,

that the movements have brought them to the EP. Jorge Conesa affirms that they are working in the same way as they were in social movements “sharing information, in decision-making”. However, he accepts that “it is true that there is a hierarchic element when you enter institutions, one that is always there even if you work in a more similar way to social movements than other parties”. Regarding his opinion about the movements, Conesa thinks that they have had important repercussions “to begin with, the manners of traditional political parties have changed since then [...]. They are aware that a great social revolution is possible, that it has already happened, it has generated institutional changes and it can happen again. And without doubt it will”. On the internal influence in his party and political group in the EP, he thinks that way of working is very much influenced by the previous mobilization. Conesa explains that when a new issue emerges “the first thing we do is to look what is going on in the social fabric and I think that this does not happen in other parties, not with the same horizontality”. Lastly, regarding the external influence on other political parties, institutions or countries, Jorge Conesa thinks that the country and the political party determine many differences. Conesa reminds that the GUE/NGL is a confederal group where each political party has its own culture and context that shapes its actions (Jorge Conesa, interview August 2018).

From the Greens/EFA group, Ana Miranda explains that regarding the influence of anti-austerity movements her party (BNG) “has always been a platform, a movement block [...]; we have always been against austerity and defended policies for the majority, for social justice, for freedom, for self-determination”. Thus, she considers that the anti-austerity movements “somehow didn’t mean anything new from the point of view of the political praxis but it did mean an inflection regarding many issues”. Regarding her opinion about the movements, Ana Miranda thinks that we have to “differentiate between *real politik* and the utopias that we all have” and considers that many “processes that were opened by the movements have had an important influence but also bringing some aspects into practice is complicated due to culture [...] or the level of decision-making in parliaments”. She thinks that there was a “questioning of organizational politics but at the end there is no movement without organization”. Moreover, Miranda repeats that her party was already accomplishing many of the proposals that were present in the movements and thinks that “maybe the profound clash was with the parties from the system and clearly with bipartidism”. On the internal

influence in her party and political group in the EP Ana Miranda explains that in her political group, the deliberations and decision-making processes are very democratic and transparent and considers that anti-austerity movements have had “more influence or have made the parties from the system question themselves more deeply”. Miranda affirms that “we were not from the system or at least we didn’t wanted to be, although political praxis often leads you to take complicated decisions but always with a cost”. She explains that during 2011 there was a strong questioning of MEPs travelling in business class and reminds that at that time “MEPs like Oriol Junqueras and Raul Romeva did not travel in business class, as well as other left-wing MEPs”. Thus, there was a strong questioning of forms and therefore a change in the ways of doing politics but that at the same time influenced the contents. Miranda explains that when MEPs from Podemos arrived they verbalized many things that they and other left-wing MEPs had been doing for a long time. She considers that “new concepts have been created as well as new ways of doing things that sometimes already existed but we didn’t have the communicative platforms or the ways to transmit information or maybe we didn’t know how to do it, we didn’t know how to communicate” (Ana Miranda, interview August 2018). With this explanation Ana Miranda points to a change in culture where things that before were being done but not communicated (because they were not considered interesting or necessary to communicate) are now communicated. Thus, the movements have brought along a communicative change.

Regarding the external influence on other political parties, institutions or countries, Ana Miranda considers that “Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain... maybe a little bit France with the movements that took place there but especially Southern European countries and the countries more affected by the crisis and austerity” are the ones that have had a stronger influence. Miranda considers that inside her political group there are differences especially between green and nationalist MEPs regarding economic issues and also depending on the generation (Ana Miranda, interview August 2018). Thus, the country and the generation are aspects that determine differences and not so much the existence of strong or weak movements.

Furthermore, another MEP from the same group in the EP, Ernest Urtasun believes that everyone has been influenced by anti-austerity movements. Urtasun considers that “the 15M was mainly a cultural upheaval that had political consequences” where people did

not feel represented by political institutions, as in the famous slogan: “they don’t represent us”. Urtasun explains that “the 15M questioned that decision-making at that moment did not respond to the popular will”. Ernest Urtasun, like Paloma López thinks that “there is a before and after the 15M from the cultural point of view” and adds that “at this moment we live in a country where decisions from governments are much more scrutinized, there is a higher demand for transparency, accountability and today’s Catalonia and Spain from 2018 from this point of view has nothing to do with that of 2008, ten years ago. I think that there has been an improvement regarding the level of demands from citizens and this is a cultural change propelled by the 15M”. Moreover, Ernest Urtasun says that in the EP there is a lot of discussion about using democratic innovations in order to bring European institutions closer to the citizens and refers to two of these innovations defended by his political group. First, in the “European elections there should be the possibility, at European level of electing candidates for EC President, that was traditionally a figure that was chosen behind closed doors after the European elections”. Urtasun explain that “this has changed as political families present their candidates for EC President and the one that wins the elections becomes the EC President. This has helped to clarify the mechanisms of democratic control of an institution such as the Commission”. The second innovation, on which his group is still working is the “creation of transnational lists for the EP. This is an important mechanism where people not only vote for a party in their Member State but also vote for a pan-European transnational list that represents the European political family. This mechanism for democratic innovation is important because it brings decisions closer to citizens” (Ernest Urtasun, interview June 2018).

Regarding Ernest Urtasun’s opinion about the movements, he affirms that “they have been essential and determinant” in their contribution to democratic quality. He says that “before, many decisions were taken behind closed doors, there was less accountability. Since the 15M I think that this is over, at this moment there is a higher demand for total transparency, and politics has completely changed in the last years. Now, there is a much higher control of people who are in politics than ten years ago”. Urtasun also refers to the important role of social media, which also contributes to the stricter control and supervision of politicians. Urtasun adds that “the 15M had the crisis of democracy as its principal component. It denounced the absolute disconnection between governments at that moment and the popular will”. On the internal influence in his

party, Urtasun refers to his national party saying that “we have worked to make it a transparent party, open and with maximum participation”. He explains that the configuration of the new space of Catalunya en Comú in Catalonia has been built “with regular territorial assemblies, where people could express their opinion beyond the classic party structure”. He admits that “of course we have board organs but we have tried to organize an internal assembly so that there is constant control of the task of the board organs and politicians”. Regarding the external influence on other political parties, Ernest Urtasun states that “all political parties have been influenced” by the movements and says that those who consider that they haven’t been affected are lying “because it meant a deep cultural change from the whole political class”. Urtasun explains that “it is true that some parties and movements that are more sensitive and some, I would say like ours, Catalunya en Comú, like Podemos, that are born directly from this experience”. He says that “Catalunya en Comú is the gathering of institutionally existing left-wing groups like Esquerra Unida Alternativa and Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds but also the gathering of people that were coming from social movements. Not only have Catalunya en Comú and Podemos been more inclined to listen to those movements, but they have also taken part in the movements themselves; the basis of these projects has been these movements and therefore we feel very close”. In addition, Ernest Urtasun thinks that there are differences depending on countries in the EU. He affirms that “some countries have been more influenced than others as there have not been such upheavals in all of them. Germany has not seen such political upheaval. These have taken place mainly in countries where the social and democratic crisis has been stronger, like Greece, Portugal, Italy or Ireland”. However, Urtasun states that his political group in the EP has been clearly influenced by anti-austerity movements and has led democratic innovations (mentioned above) at European level (Ernest Urtasun, interview June 2018).

Josep Maria Terricabras, from the same political group but from another national political party, considers that it is difficult to measure the influence of anti-austerity movements. He affirms that in his party, Esquerra Republica de Catalunya, “in the last years there has had a period of debate, consolidation, of opening up” and an example is that “in the last European elections the two elected candidates were one independent, me, and the other was Ernest Maragall who was coming from the socialist party and from a group that didn’t belong to ERC [...]. Thus, it is a group with a will to be open”.

However, Terricabras is not sure whether the 15M movement in Spain had any influence on that. He thinks that “maybe, maybe yes, but the 15M was something very diffuse, but with many diverse forces acting there. And when for example, Pablo Iglesias wanted to capitalise on the 15M, practically saying *I am the 15M*”, people disagreed with that. Terricabras says that “the 15M was a revolution, as was May 68 and we need this kind of revolution [...] but they do not generate effects automatically, this is hard to demonstrate”. He thinks that, “probably they have influenced some things but not as much as we wanted in our collective life”.

On Terricabras’ opinion about the movements and whether they have widened the debate about democracy in the EP, he considers that “probably yes, they have pushed for debates” on democracy but these are more due to the fear about the future than about acts from the past. On the internal influence in his party and political group in the EP, Josep Maria Terricabras admits he can’t evaluate whether there have been important changes that can be linked to previous mobilization. However, he states that in his political party there is constant internal deliberation and debate and since he entered politics he has been “in a permanent campaign which means being in permanent debate about proposals, about criticisms, it means being permanently active”. About the external influence on other political parties or institutions Terricabras is cautious. He explains that he sees an “extremely conservative EP [...] where the EPP and the S&D groups usually agree” and the institution is ideologically without substance “with the exception of the GUE/NGL group that is very diverse and critical as well as my group the Greens/EFA”. Thus, Terricabras says “there is good quality debate but in general I think it is conservative and defending specific interests which are the interests of the most powerful”. Regarding the differences depending on countries, Terricabras explains that there are differences on many issues but his group, the Greens/EFA, is “absolutely against austerity” as it has been a disastrous policy “and we relied on Mr Juncker, who seemed to be a champion at the beginning, even though we hadn’t voted for him, but this hasn’t worked. It has been a poor and unfortunate Commission” (Josep Maria Terricabras, interview September 2018).

Finally, from the S&D group, Juan Fernando López Aguilar considers that he has been influenced by the ideas of anti-austerity movements. He talks about influence in a broad sense, based on the dedication and interest he has had during his “whole life to promote

civic values and a democratic quality, a democracy that is accountable, that protects and solves and all this in favour of a disadvantaged social majority”. Thus, the influence is based mainly on his interest in democratic quality and the deterioration of democracy but not only coming from the mobilization against austerity but even before that. López Aguilar also admits that “being a politician and politics has recently become a difficult and unpleasant job”. He explains that “it is increasingly more difficult to engage with to the public, to communicate” and, in addition, “the process of delegitimation has made it very difficult to be a political representative”. López Aguilar considers this has been mainly caused by increased information and the technological revolution that has had a deep impact on political communication. In that sense, he explains that “conventional communication has been overwhelmed by social media that has banalized and simplified political communication”. Thus, López Aguilar like Ernest Urtasun highlights the important change that social media has produced in politics. Moreover, López Aguilar explains that there have been reforms and debates regarding “citizen participation, increasing transparency and accountability of all the work that is being done in the institutions” and mentions that the “EP is the most transparent in the world and that is a democratic reform” even though he admits that it has some communication deficits (Juan Fernando López Aguilar, May 2018). However, these reforms are not directly related to the anti-austerity mobilization but rather a longer process of debates about the democratic deficit and democratic quality in the EU.

Regarding Lopez Aguilar’s opinion about the movements he refers mainly to austerity and affirms his clear “opposition to recessive austerity from minute 1”. He also mentions the “disastrous consequences the decision has had on all the spheres of life [...]. On citizens’ conditions of life, especially those most vulnerable, the middle class and working class, while there has been an accumulation of wealth like never before and inequalities have widened between Member States and within Member States. In addition, Europe has not got out of the tunnel”. More specifically about the movements, López Aguilar points out that they have changed the landscape, “not only the 15M but all the movements more or less disseminated in the European political landscape”. In the Spanish case, he considers that the “bad management of the Great Recession dictated by a conservative majority and hegemony that is lasting too long in the EU” has produced as a consequence a type of “populism with a radical left-wing rhetoric that shares its main features with the populisms that are agitating Europe, i.e. the

simplification of complexity, the search for scapegoats to hate and a political formulation that is not ideological but that consists of the fabrication of a collective imaginary that is falsified but very effective where virtuous people (a virtuous *us*) is contraposed with a vile *them* that we have to hate”. He explains that “in some countries the vile scapegoat is an ethnic or religious collective. It can be Gypsies in the Czech Republic, Jews in Hungary or Muslims in the Netherlands. In Southern European countries, the most affected by the injustice of recessive austerity, it is politicians and politics caricaturized as a caste” and adds that “this has basically been the political expression of the 15M, the political consequences with most impact”. However, beyond the Spanish case, López Aguilar vaguely mentions that the movements “have indeed had an impact and have contributed to changing democracy”.

On the internal influence in his political party López Aguilar affirms that “there have been huge movements inside the socialist party as a consequences of all this, of course. There have been convulsive congresses and confrontation” and admits that there have been changes in the internal practices of his party. He explains that “all the decisions have to be consulted with the bases, the fact that it is continuously said that the militants are the ones who rule in the party, or that the party is of the militants”. In the EP he explains that “we have seen the impact of all this” and adds that “we have seen populism, aggressive nationalism, and Europhobia emerge and we have combatted it”. Thus, López Aguilar mixes up the consequences on the quality of democracy with the emergences and rise of new political phenomena.

When questioned about the external influence on other political parties or institutions he considers that “social democrat parties have been agitated by these forms of doing politics and obliged to simplify the way to express their messages, obliged to communicate and construct narratives of good and bad. All this has meant a great redefinition of politics and communication”. Regarding the influence depending on countries López Aguilar admits that there have been differences “for example in Germany there has been no debate about austerity because Germany imposed austerity. Therefore in Germany social democrats are not penalized for earning high salaries that in the Bundestag are much higher than in the EP, or for conserving an extremely generous financing for their foundations. The foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, which is the foundation from the German social democrat party, receives 400 million

euros from the German budget” and exclaims that this wouldn’t be possible in Spain while in Germany it generate no criticism. He also explains that it also generates no criticism “that a social democrat member of parliament receives a salary of 24.000 euros per month in the Bundestag” and again says that this would be intolerable in Spain. López Aguilar considers Portugal, Greece and Spain share some similarities but of course with important differences and refers to the “lack of peripheral nationalisms in Portugal [...] and it is inconceivable that a left-wing populist movement like Bloco de Esquerda asks for a referendum of self-determination whereas in Spain it is a phenomenon but absolutely pandemic. In all territories there is a sort of illuminated self-proclaimed radical left-wing that thinks that their territory has to separate from Spain as a horizon of freedom and emancipation. They exist in the Canary Islands, in Valencia, in Galicia, everywhere! This illuminated and cretin left-wing is everywhere! This does not happen in Portugal” (Juan Fernando López Aguilar, May 2018).

Second from Portugal, Marisa Matias considers anti-austerity movements have had an influence. She says that even though the outcomes are not always clear and sometimes provoke the opposite at least “there are things which cannot be discussed in a room by just a few heads” and with the sole interest of large corporations but “we have to listen to citizens as well”. However, Marisa Matias affirms that due to austerity “a lot of people was abandoned in their rights across Europe and I don’t think the existing parties or the institutions have the capacity to answer and to give proper answers to the concrete problems of people”. She says that this lack of responses “generated some empty space” that has been filled by “far right movements, xenophobic and nationalistic movements across Europe” and at the same times other movements “like the feminist movement” are managing to mobilize. These antagonistic forces are an expression of the “total transformation of both the political system and the party system”, an expression of “a big change, also of democracy itself”. Regarding the internal influence on her party, Marisa Matias exposes that “Bloco was created as a movement party, it was the result, the outcome, of some small parties and several movements” and diversity has been and still is a key identity. Matias explains that since regarding the party relationship with social movements they are “in solidarity with them” and also participate in them with without “making an appropriation and that’s something we didn’t change because it’s like that since the beginning”. Thus, they cooperate with the movements. In addition, she affirms that also transparency has been an important aspect

since the beginning and regarding limitation of mandates they have a norm not to go beyond two mandates but with exceptions depending on the context. Also regarding party congresses, they have always been movements, trade unions and non-party members. She considers that there have been changes on “the way of doing things, a democratic path” that was mainly due to internal changes in the organization especially the increase of presence of members from across the country, from different regions, and the increase in the participation of women. On differentiated influences inside Marisa Matias’ political group in the EP, she affirms that concerning austerity and democracy she does not see it even though there are a lot of differences inside the group as it is a confederal group, quite heterogeneous and without discipline of voting. Marisa Matias considers that differences are more visible around “the political tradition than nationality”, so there can be different approaches that depend on the political tradition and not on the origin of the MEP. She affirms that “opposition to austerity policies is a common issue” independently on whether the MEP is from Finland or from a Southern country (Marisa Matias, interview December 2018).

Moreover, Ana Gomes, admits she has been influenced by anti-austerity movements “as a politician who comes from a country, Portugal, that went through this austerity program imposed from outside” and explains that “these austerity programmes were designed not to correct deviating behaviour of citizens but actually to save banks who were very much responsible for irresponsible lending policies”. She affirms that she’s been both positively and negatively influenced by all this and exposes that in her country “people paid direly, also learnt their lesson and we have been in the last years, three years, undoing much of the worst of these policies with great success, demonstrating that there was alternative contrarily to what was the line, the TINA line”. Gomes admits however that his has been done at a tremendous social cost for the families and for credibility of the political class. She agrees with Marisa Matias that the rise of extreme right and xenophobic movements have a lot to do with this distrust of citizens and adds that this “voices are all building their thesis on the bases of: you can’t trust these politicians”. Ana Gomes thinks that it is important that the movements promote debates but states that “this can’t just be sterile exercise it must translate into changing of behaviour of those who are in government or in power”. Regarding internal influence from the movements to her political party she thinks that “there have been some changes but not enough”. She explains that the changes are about “taking the

consequences of our analysis that policies of the left have been neoliberal and they have been against the public interest”. On differences inside Ana Gomes’ political group in the EP she states that she does not think that “the difference is south or north” but instead she considers it is “those who are serious about the way they do politics or are there just to take advantage” and examples from can be found from MEPs from north and south. Gomes mentions the example of “corrupt behaviour were not only found in southern countries, the behaviour of banks such as Deutsche Bank for instance enabling tax evasion, and money laundering these years until now”. She blames the “elite of the financial system not just in Europe but in Germany in particular” (Ana Gomes, interview August 2018).

Lastly, Carlos Zorrinho regarding the influence of anti-austerity movements he explains that these movements “are examples of reactive democracy” and as MEP he “tried to interpret and also represent the ideas of these movements” that were in accordance with his ideological vision and political values”. In addition, Zorrinho considers that the movements had two effects, one on the positive side “they forced the European institutions and governments to be more transparent in justifying the measures they took”, and on the negative side “they have opened the door to radical populist movements that are trying to undermine the foundations of representative democracy”. On the influence the movements had on parties, Zorrinho explains that the parties “had to give concrete answers to the questions posed by the movements” and “this stimulated internal debate and interaction with civil society”. He explains that “in the case of the Socialist Party in Portugal, this debate helped to formulate an anti-austerity government program that has been in place since 2015”, therefore he admits the movements had an important impact in the country. Regarding the differences in Zorrinho’s political group in the EP he signals that culture has an important role. On the differences regarding the country of origin, he explains that “in southern countries the culture of participation is less developed than in the north” but he doesn’t link it to the movements. In addition, he affirms that participation tends to be stronger in new parties than in traditional parties. And finally, states that “the left is by nature more open to interaction with civil society than the right” (Carlos Zorrinho, interview October 2018).

In the third place, from Ireland, Matt Carthy thinks that “not only have I been influenced by the political demands of the anti-austerity movements in Ireland for

example, I have also been part of them too to some degree and I've always tried to represent the views of anti-austerity movements in the EP". He adds that he has tried to hold the European institutions accountable as decisions are often made "behind closed doors and against the interest of the vast majority of citizens". Matt Carthy explains that he has been "fully supportive of all these movements and I've been actively involved in the movement in my own country, Ireland". According to Matt Carthy, the movements "have been an expression of democracy and that they provided an avenue for voices of millions of people to be heard but have also been a reflection of the limitations in terms of the formal democratic process" where popular views "shared by the majority of people across the EU" have been "barely represented in official institutions such as Parliament". Therefore, Matt Carthy affirms that anti-austerity movements in Europe were important "in highlighting the extremely undemocratic nature of the decision-making process in the EU and the troika intervention". Regarding his political group in the EP he exposes that the GUE/NGL "allows most of the views to be represented for individual parties" and that "position protects the democratic will of the people in the national parties of the Member States that we represent". Matt Carthy considers this is "an important way of ensuring that those mobilizations coming from different countries are actually reflected on". On the differentiated influence depending on the parties, Matt Carthy believes that "the parties within the GUE/NGL group that have been most influenced by anti-austerity movements are Podemos, Bloco, and Sinn Féin" and states that this is not an accident that "those parties come from countries that experienced the troika intervention". He adds that "we've been directly influenced by actually participating in the anti-austerity movements that are strong in our countries" and says that "those who were least influenced in my opinion were probably the old communist parties who would have had a particular position that didn't change as a result of the actual financial crisis" (Matt Carthy, interview September 2018).

In the fourth place, from Italy, Mercedes Bresso assesses the influence of anti-austerity movements by acknowledging that these movements seek changes that concern the political parties and representation and affirms that "we could observe a cross feeding process between political parties and these movements". She adds that her party family "the socialists and social democrats have been in the last year the forerunner of transparency, consultation and a more democratic approach, organizing primaries and open consultations". Regarding austerity she affirms that "we are the political group

fighting against it already since before the crisis and have done so during the whole decade” and states that “our work and action in the Parliament have help to develop regulation limiting the austerity supported by the liberals and conservatives in the national and European Parliaments”. Bresso mentions as an example “the tax on financial transactions, which we the socialists have passed in the European Parliament”. Moreover, on democratic innovations taken by her party she believes that “the different consultations we are organizing at the moment in different Member States on the future of the European Union are a good example of a new more democratic way to be politically active”. Lastly, on internal influences in her party or political group she mentions as a change the open primaries that take place in many of the member parties of the S&D group. Mercedes Bresso states that “this is a good example of a more transparent and participative life of political parties” (Mercedes Bresso, interview May 2018).

Finally from the Netherlands, Dennis de Jong’s assistant, Diederik van der Loo (Socialistische Partij, GUE/NGL) says that anti-austerity movements have had some effects in his party but affirms it is difficult to measure how much. He explains that in 2009 his party grew a lot as people were wondering “how the crisis happened and how politics, political choices led to those crises” and in that moment it influenced them because they had “always been with the anti-austerity politics”. However, debates about democracy inside the party have not so much increased. There haven’t been significant changes either in the internal practices of the party. Van der Loo explains that the representatives of their party “donate their money to the party and in return they receive a reimbursement for the working hours [...]; so nobody of us is getting richer by doing their political duty. It has always been our policy”. He also explains that the budget of the party is also public and can be delivered upon request. Moreover, the party congresses are open and Diederik van der Loo says that “there’s always journalist there. We have nothing to hide”. Lastly, on the differentiated influence depending on the origin of MEPs, van der Loo considers that it is not so clear. Even though at first sight it seems that countries that have been more affected by austerity should be more influenced he exposes the case of the Danish Red-Green Alliance where they have very inclusive internal practices, respecting diversity, etc. and Denmark is not affected by austerity in the same way as other EU countries (Diederik van der Loo, interview April

2019). Van der Loo gives this example to counter the argument of difference depending on the origin of the MEP.

To sum up, all left-wing MEPs express that they have been influenced by anti-austerity movements. Some of them, from the GUE/NGL and Greens explain that they have also taken part in the movements. Moreover, they all consider that the mobilizations have propelled changes inside their political parties and political groups in the EP. In some cases, some parties from the GUE/NGL consider that the movements pushed their parties back to their origin when they were constituted as movement parties. Some of them expressed that some norms changed inside the party. The higher demand for transparency, accountability and the importance of listening to citizens are aspects that MEPs relate to the movements. Josep Maria Terricabras from the Greens/EFA group is more cautious explaining changes as a consequence of movements and he believes the transformations have several roots. The Spanish S&D MEP, López Aguilar, exposes that after the mobilizations against austerity, populist, nationalist and Europhobic movements have also appeared. However, he admits that there has been a great redefinition of politics and communication in social democrat parties. The Portuguese MEPs from the S&D group explain that the movements helped created an anti-austerity government program. MEPs from the Greens/EFA and S&D groups also mention the role of social media that has completely changed the communication landscape and contributed to more control and supervision of politicians. This is an important change that is not due to the movements.

Regarding differences depending on countries there is a great variety of opinions. MEPs from different political groups and countries consider have different positions. Some consider that there are clearly no differences, others think that differences are difficult to signal, and still others consider that the countries more affected by austerity have had a stronger impact. Some MEPs refer to the culture, tradition and context as elements that determine the level of influence but not so much the country of origin. However, in that aspect there is no clear pattern.

7.1.4 Comparison with the perception of influence on other European institutions

First from Spain, Paloma López thinks that “the EP has been much more influenced” than other institutions. She adds that the “EP, even though it is very conservative, is

much more democratic in its behavior and functioning than other parliaments and in that sense the EP is much more influenced by mobilizations”. Paloma López says that the EP as a “democratic organ, of citizen representation, logically receives much more pressure than other institutions that are not democratically elected”. When she compares with other European institutions she affirms that the EP “is more influenced than the Commission and obviously than the Council, that is only influenced by what is said in its country and that’s all”. Paloma López also says that the ECB and the Eurogroup are even less influenced and in fact she explains that “these are elements that practically have no contact with any social reality”.

Regarding the indifference of the EP that was signalled as a criticism by anti-austerity activists, Paloma López believes that “mobilizations logically have effects on left-wing parties [...]. In social movements there is always representation from parliamentary left-wing from the EP or from national parliaments” and says that there is no representation of rightwing in social mobilization. Therefore, according to Paloma López “mobilizations have impacts and involve people from left-wing groups and not right-wing and the same happens in the EP as in national parliaments” (Paloma López, interview August 2018). Thus, the indifference in the EP according to her would be from groups in the right-wing political spectrum.

Moreover, Javier Couso is more critical than his colleague and affirms that “there has been a reactive cosmetic operation. Saying that they assume or listen to the streets but then they have not implemented it”. He also explains that “there are no mechanisms from the Commission or from the EP that facilitate listening to European citizens”. Couso exposes that the EP openness has been limited to “visits to the Parliament which are sort of touristic visits” but “there has been no development or interest in developing policies that facilitate citizen participation in the EP’s decision-making which is a co-legislator and has limited functions”. Thus, Javier Couso considers the EP has been absolutely indifferent towards anti-austerity mobilization (Javier Couso, interview September 2018).

Furthermore, Lola Sánchez assistant, Jorge Conesa, explains that in the field of commercial policy “the Commission has changed its behaviour, not in content but in the forms, due to the mobilizations” and continues saying that “they keep the manners and

put a lot of emphasis in explaining that they are very transparent and have never been so transparent as now”. Regarding the EP, Conesa believes that “the system is designed in a way that it is normal and inevitable that people feel the institutions are far away [...], people do not have access” to the institutions and this feeds the feeling that the EP is indifferent towards citizens worries and claims (Jorge Conesa, interview August 2018).

From the Greens/EFA, Ana Miranda also agrees that the EP has been the institution that has been more influenced by the movements. She affirms that “in the Commission the influence has been smaller and in the Council it has been almost none”. Ana Miranda explains that in the EC “anti-austerity movements at least have achieved to bring debates that were not taken into consideration” but adds that “however, the issue of precariousness in the labour market have not been considered, or the reform of the euro and economic governance, and these are the key to many crisis that we are suffering”. Ana Miranda stresses that “maybe the influence has been stronger in the Court of Justice of the European Union” and explains that “it is curious that most progressive decisions from the last three years or after the crisis in the issues of evictions, women’s equality, migration policies or same-sex marriage, etc., have been from the CJEU”. She also considers that the “EP is also progressive in some proposals from some groups but not in the resolutions that it adopts because the resolutions are by majority and we never achieve that our discourses are taken into consideration”. Ana Miranda explains that the EP “has not accepted the claims from the anti-austerity movements” but “some parts of the institution have listened to them and taken the demands into consideration”. She considers that this happens because “there are no sufficient mechanisms for the citizens’ movements to have presence [...], there is the Committee of Petitions but it is not enough, there have to be other mechanisms” (Ana Miranda, interview August 2018).

Furthermore, Ernest Urtasun basically agrees with his colleagues from his political group and states that the Council “continues to be a very closed institution where it is very difficult to enter” and considers that “there has been a limited impact” there. He says that “the Council, where the governments of the Member States meet, continues to be one of the most opaque existing institutions”. However, he believes that there have been impacts in “the EP and EC because they are institutions which are accountable and therefore more permeable to social humor”. Urtasun affirms that in both institutions “these movements have had impacts because the demands from some Member States

have become apparent and there has been the willingness to move forward”. Ernest Urtasun explains that in the EP the influence of the movements has been clearly differentiated depending on MEPs. He says that “there are MEPs that are very much aware of social movements and protests. Moreover, in the EP there has been a great effort regarding transparency. Here in Brussels we constantly have conferences inside the Parliament where movements participate, express themselves and bring proposals, etc.”. Urtasun acknowledges some limitations like geographic distance but considers that the EP tries to bring the institution closer to social movements and civic associations that participate in protests”. Of course, this depends on the MEP and the willingness to work in that direction but he affirms that “in general the institution has made an effort to be more transparent and open and we have to recognize that” (Ernest Urtasun, interview June 2018).

In addition, Josep Maria Terricabras categorically states that the Commission has not been influenced by the movements and exposes that “the Commission is quite disastrous because of its own functioning where every Member States sends a person of its choice and then the President of the EC have to take them all and create a football team with all this. How do you want it to function?” and he acknowledges that some members of the Commission are however good professionals and carry out a good job. Regarding the EP Terricabras cannot assess whether the anti-austerity movements have had any impact in that institutions, however he exposes that there have been some improvements especially regarding women’s rights and environment where a good job has been done and the Commission has adhered but affirms that “the Commission has had little personality and energy” (Josep Maria Terricabras, interview September 2018).

Finally, from the S&D group, Juan Fernando López Aguilar exposes a very different opinion from the previous left-wing MEPs. He affirms that as a consequence of mobilizations there has been a growing support for the “idea that an important decision has to be legitimized through referendum” and mentions that many referendums have taken place in the last years. López Aguilar explains that many governors “have been tempted to call for referendums that have been unfortunate experiences” and refers to these experiences as “situations where it seems that decisions have to be legitimized on the streets”. Thus, unlike the other left-wing MEPs, he exposes a very critical view towards citizens’ direct participation.

Moreover, López Aguilar exposes that he is “very critical towards European inertias especially from the last years” but celebrates that the “EC has been firm in the importance of the rule of law and the constitutional state”. However, he admits that the democratic quality has been deteriorated but not due to the cycle of protest but to “the wave of aggressive anti-European nationalism”. López Aguilar explains that “the lack of willingness to cooperate between Member States” has spread and the space of justice and freedom of the Union has deteriorated. He mentions as an example the “clamorous breaking of the Euroorder that is based in mutual trust and recognition” and affirms that “there are every time more cases where Euroorders requested by other states are denied based on the lack of trust that in this Member States there is a true rule of law”. Lastly, regarding the EP and its indifference towards protests López Aguilar admits that “there is a bureaucratized inertia in the process of decision-making which is slow and complicated and led by people whose status has made them loose contact and sensitivity with the problems of citizens that are waiting for our decisions”. He critically adds that in those processes there are people “whose wage or status does not depend at all on the quality of decisions, or its rapidity or effectiveness of the impacts they produce in society” (Juan Fernando López Aguilar, May 2018).

In the second place, from Portugal, Marisa Matias says on the influence of movements in the EP and other EU institutions that the EP “it’s still quite far but it’s the closest one” to citizens. Marisa Matias affirms that the “Commission is like a closed box and the Council is directorial” with “few countries deciding on all about all the countries” due to the fact that “countries don’t have all the same number of votes for taking decisions [...]; Germany has more than seven times more votes than Portugal”. In sum, she believes that there have been no major changes in the European institutions due to the movements and states that she sees “some signs, some things... but sometimes it’s really cosmetic”. Marisa Matias affirms that in the EP “there has been much more pressure from citizens because it’s easier to access to the contacts of MEPs, to send them emails, to just come here, to demonstrations, to ask for hearings, things like that” and she believes that “this has improved but it’s far away from being regular”. In addition, Marisa Matias accepts the criticism that the EP is sometimes still insensitive to citizens, where their complaints do not have “proper outcome in the decision-making” and do not change anything even though in some domains there are changes. She

believes however, that “when citizens mobilize things are not the same” (Marisa Matias, interview December 2018).

Moreover, Ana Gomes also considers that the “EP is definitely the institution that is closer to citizens” and thinks that “after the EP, the Commission has been the one to realize what’s at stake, but in Member States, in the governance, prevails all sorts of egoistical and nasty views”. However, Ana Gomes thinks that the Commission has been slow in acting on many occasions and even though “the Commission today doesn’t have the ultraliberal approach that it had during the Barroso years, it has improved, but not fast enough and not strong enough”, it has been active in some areas and in others it has not acted or has been very weak. She also affirms that “if the matters have visibility in the media, governments and the Commission” have to listen but “if the matter is not mediatized, has no impact in the media, then they can get away”. Thus, if a movement is very persistent and is present in the media there will be more impact on the institutions. On activists’ idea that the EP is indifferent towards their claims, Ana Gomes says that she doesn’t agree “with that kind of line which is the line which populists from the left and the right always use”. She explains that “when citizens care and are organized, when they are informed, sending messages to their MEPs, to the Commission [...] if citizens care and don’t leave it to the so-called experts” then there is a reaction in the EP as well as in the EC. Their messages are heard in the institutions and taken into account. She admits however that sometimes “the cost demobilizes citizens and then everybody is far away” (Ana Gomes, interview August 2018). In sum, she considers to be a responsibility of citizens to organize and participate in order to defend their interests and to bridge the democratic deficit regardless of the cost.

Finally, Carlos Zorrinho considers that the institutions “have adapted their practices and discourse” but reminds that “pro-austerity parties still have a majority in the European institutions” and a real change will only come “if representation also changes structurally” in the next elections. Regarding the complaint made by some anti-austerity protesters that the EP is indifferent to citizens, Zorrinho affirms that he could see in his work in the EP that “this perception does not correspond to reality” (Carlos Zorrinho, interview October 2018).

In the third place, from Ireland, Matt Carthy thinks that the influence of movements on European institutions has been scarce and that “unfortunately the European institutions collectively have largely remained immune to the political demands of the anti-austerity movements”. In addition, Matt Carthy criticises the Trialogue meetings where “democracy goes to die” as it excludes MEPs that “are no longer able to amend the proposal in the plenary”. In that meetings the “two major political groups, the EPP and the S&D, have become more entrenched” and have “sidelined smaller groups in terms of their rights”. Furthermore, Matt Carthy considers that the major parties in the EP have ignored the demands and messages from anti-austerity movements and he thinks that “it’s really frustrating and disappointing to see how elected representatives can be so intent on ignoring the wished of the people they are supposed to represent” (Matt Carthy, interview September 2018).

In the fourth place from Italy, Mercedes Bresso reflects on the influence of anti-austerity movements in the institutions of the EU and says that “The European institutions have partially learned these lessons and worked in the legislative period on transparency”. Thus, according to her “more transparency and more tools for the citizen’s participation are the big lessons of the crisis”. In addition, on the austerity issue Bresso believes that “the work of the EP has helped to develop measures to counterbalance sometimes very liberal positions from the EC” (Mercedes Bresso, interview May 2018). According to Bresso, the influences have been very diffuse and she does not differentiate between institutions.

Finally from the Netherlands, Dennis de Jong’s assistant, Diederik van der Loo (Socialistische Partij, GUE/NGL) considers that the “EC is a bureaucracy and they change when the norm changes” and the “EP tries to move the norm”. Van der Loo mentions the Petitions Committee but also complains like Ana Miranda that “if there’s a successful petition it’s still up to the Commission to do something, so there’s no incentive” to use that Committee. Regarding the responsiveness of the EP towards citizens claims and demands, Diederik van der Loo says that “it depends a lot on who you ask” but “all the EU is big law making machine and law making machines are not the best, not responsive to citizen needs in general”. In addition, he insists on the problem of the influence of lobbyists and affirms that there’s no clarity in the EP on which business is getting privileged access and no way for people to check it, so even

though the “EP is in general being transparent about how they vote, [...] the accountability mechanism is lacking”. Van der Loo denounces that the fact that the laws in the EP “have been lobbied to and from all sorts of large corporations” it makes Europe “a playground for multinationals”. In the EP “there’s no good reporting on what is happening and where the real power resides, there’s no way for citizens to hold their elected representatives to account” and that means that “the voice of normal citizens is not heard” (Diederik van der Loo, interview April 2019).

In conclusion, in general terms left-wing MEPs agree that the EP is the closest to citizens as it receives more pressure than other institutions. As they explain, the EP is easier to contact, to send emails to MEPs, etc. However, some MEPs from the GUE/NGL group affirm that there are merely cosmetic changes in order to affirm that the institution listens to citizens but it is still far from them. They also signal that citizens have no mechanisms to facilitate listening to citizens and be present. Moreover, there is a general agreement that the EC has been less influenced by the movements. Some consider that its forms have changed more than content and that has been due to mobilizations. The S&D Portuguese MEP thinks that sometimes the EC has been slow in giving a response. All the interviewed MEPs agree that the Council is the most opaque and far from to citizens. Some MEPs mention the total lack of contact with the social reality of other institutions like the ECB or bodies like the Eurogroup. Ana Miranda, from the Greens/EFA, mentions the importance of the Court of Justice of the European Union that she considers that has been influenced by the movements.

Regarding the criticism made to the EP as being indifferent, MEPs expose several opinions. Some of them consider that of course it depends on the MEP and whether they belong to a right or left-wing party. Several MEPs from the GUE/NGL group from different countries consider that the EP is absolutely indifferent, insensitive to citizens, ignoring their demands and voices. However, Ernest Urtasun, from the Greens/EFA expresses that we have to acknowledge the effort that the EP has made to be more transparent and open. In the S&D group, the Spanish MEP considers that indifference is due to the bureaucratized inertia where there is no incentive to change or innovate. Otherwise, the Portuguese MEPs from the same group do not agree that there is indifference in the EP and Ana Gomes considers that this expression is proper from both left and right-wing populists.

7.1.5 Idea of democracy of far right groups

First, from Spain, Paloma López explains that far right parties talk about direct democracy just if they consider that this is the most appropriate and that will benefit them. However, she says that “in the economic issues they know very well who they obey, they don’t question the system; on the contrary, they sustain it”. Thus, according to Paloma López their positions are very clear regarding austerity, against workers’ rights and benefiting particular interests. Paloma López also affirms that their “discourse is politically very simple [...] it is easier to accuse someone than to question a system or consider an alternative” and that’s why sometimes their voices are clearer than progressive ones (Paloma López, interview August 2018). Moreover, also from Spain, Javier Couso agrees with Paloma López that far right parties have used the ideas of democracy because mobilizations brought them on the debates but it’s just a tactical use of these elements. He thinks that they have tried to capitalize these ideas but they haven’t achieved it (Javier Couso, interview September 2018). Furthermore, Lola Sánchez assistant, Jorge Conesa also believes that far right parties have not capitalized the ideas of democracy raised by anti-austerity movements as “the term democracy is indistinctly used by everyone but with different meanings”. However, Conesa affirms that these groups have simplified problems and deceived people (Jorge Conesa, interview August 2018).

In addition, Ana Miranda thinks that far right parties play an important role in the discourses about democracy and the importance of direct democracy. However, she exposes that at the same time their discourses are xenophobic, homophobic, misogynist, and populist and therefore “they represent a clear danger” (Ana Miranda, interview August 2018). Another Spanish MEP, Ernest Urtasun affirms that far right parties “express an idea of democracy that is profoundly authoritarian” and the model that these groups share “are not mechanisms of direct participation as a mechanism of real influence but these movements and parties are organized with a very authoritarian board that use plebiscites in a tendentious way but without real accountability”. He explains that these plebiscites are exposed as democratic innovations when they are not and therefore these groups have a demagogic idea of democracy which can be observed in their functioning. Urtasun also signals that the criticisms these groups make to the elites for example is also demagogic and “do not represent a real willingness to ameliorate

democracy in Europe”. He says that these contradictions can be observed when you look at the socio-economic proposals that these parties have and their voting behavior. Urtasun says that “their discourse is about the elites against the people but they are an instrument of the elites” and they are favorable to the elites (Ernest Urtasun, interview June 2018).

Furthermore, Josep Maria Terricabras agrees that far right groups have capitalized the ideas of democracy and direct democracy that were present in the anti-austerity mobilizations. He affirms that they have used these ideas and have nationalized them as in the case of Brexit (Josep Maria Terricabras, interview September 2018). Lastly, also from Spain, Juan Fernando López Aguilar explains that far right parties defend democracy but with another meaning. He says that for them “freedom of speech is the freedom to insult the others” and when they are sanctioned in the EP they leave shouting that there is no freedom of speech in the EP. López Aguilar also says that for these groups “democracy is having the masses on the streets [...] as if they were hooligans in a football match with their violence and aggressiveness” (Juan Fernando López Aguilar, interview May 2018).

In the second place, from Portugal, Marisa Matias thinks that far right groups “have been able to capitalise the discontent of the people” and that’s a fact as they are stronger across Europe (Marisa Matias, interview December 2018). Moreover, Ana Gomes affirms that these parties “don’t have any democratic objectives; they use democracy to gain power and to actually then to pervert democracy and to indeed suppress democracy, as in the past”. Ana Gomes says that “they try to discredit mainstream politicians, to actually pretend that they are the democratic ones; that they are speaking out for the people” and then they always push for national solutions, going back to the national realm (Ana Gomes, interview August 2018). Lastly, also from Portugal, Carlos Zorrinho considers that “radical populism is a distorted form of democracy” and therefore the claims made by these groups are not for a true democracy (Carlos Zorrinho, interview October 2018).

In the third place, from Ireland, Matt Carthy exposes that the far right parties have “exploited the lack of democratic accountability that people feel that is there and use them to pursue a very negative narrow political agenda” (Matt Carthy, interview

September 2018). Finally, from the Netherlands, Dennis de Jong's assistant believes that far right parties have not capitalized ideas of democracy as he considers that "their claim that they are for the people is rhetoric". He explains that "these are very anti-democratic parties; they don't involve citizens at all" and this can be easily observed in their organization (Diederik van der Loo, interview April 2019).

In conclusion, regarding the ideas of democracy expressed by far right groups in the EP and their claims that they are for the people and against the elites and undemocratic Europe, not all MEPs agree that they have capitalized the ideas of democracy from anti-austerity movement. However, all MEPs interviewed consider that the ideas of democracy from these groups are demagogic and rhetoric and this can be observed in their authoritarian functioning, economic proposals and voting behavior. Ernest Urtasun considers that their discourse is about the elites against the people but they are an instrument of the elites and favorable to them. Also some MEPs, like López Aguilar explain that the idea of democracy of these groups has another meaning and it's based on insults, violence and aggressiveness.

7.2 Right-wing MEPs

The observation for right-wing MEPs starts again with Spanish MEPs which is where the expectations to find an influence from the movements are higher. It is followed by MEPs from Portugal, Italy, Germany and finally Belgium. First, MEPs from the ALDE group are examined and then from the EPP and ECR group. The Belgium MEP from the EPP group does not hold a representative view from his group, however it has been included in the observation.

7.2.1 MEPs ideas about democracy

First from Spain, Ramon Tremosa (Partit Demòcrata Europeu i Català, ALDE) emphasizes two main elements in a democracy. First, small constituencies have higher levels of accountability and that creates many positive effects like more citizen control or act as a disincentive to long political careers. Second, the referendum should be everywhere an important instrument in politics. On the situation of existing democracy, Tremosa explains that "new technologies have disseminated information and has broken censorship from conventional media", therefore "social media has turned into a facilitator of politicians' work" where MEPs can explain in first person which are their

opinions and what actions have they done. He adds that this “access to information has increased citizen control and citizen political consciousness”, so he considers that democracy is not at danger at all (Ramon Tremosa, interview October 2018).

On the other hand, Santiago Fisas (Partido Popular, EPP) signals that the main elements of a democracy are the rule of law and the possibility for everyone to vote. On existing democracy, he admits that there are some forces that represent a thread like “populisms in general, extreme nationalisms that put democracy in danger” but he believes that “liberal democracy is sufficiently strong to resist all these tensions”. However, he warns that we should be careful with all type of populisms “as sometimes there have been dictatorships that have reached power through free elections” (Santiago Fisas, interview November 2018).

In the second place, from Portugal, António Marinho e Pinto (Partido Democrático Republicano, ALDE) considers democracy “is a political regime that is based on the will of the people and is governed by the principles of separation of powers”. He also adds the importance of “pluralism, freedom of press, independence of courts, transparency of political decisions, including legislative processes, and absolute respect for human rights, including individual freedoms (expression, association, etc.)”. Marinho e Pinto also mentions the basic element of the rule of law that any democracy should have. Regarding his opinions about existing democracy and whether existing democracy works he explains that “in some countries it works better than in others” and that “the democratic model is always susceptible to improvement”. He admits that democracy “will never reach perfection, but it is “our duty to always strive to perfect it, to make it better. Democracy defends itself every day at every moment, exercising it, practicing it, deepening it. The best defense of democracy is its deepening”. Regarding his opinions about the dangers of democracy, Marinho e Pinto thinks that “the emergence and assumption of the far right forces is mainly due to the errors of the left and the traditional democratic forces that have abdicated from genuine and serious political combat”. He considers democratic forces use words without content “or whose content is not perceived by citizens”. Marinho e Pinto expresses a very critical view and states that democrats live far from reality and “they talk to the media and not to citizens”. He adds that politicians and journalists live in the same bubble and the media reports what the political agents say that is happening but not what is really happening

in the political world. Moreover, he signals another problem is the immense privilege of the political class and says that “while members of the far right attack the EU and its democratic institutions” and take action in the streets democrats are in “gala dinners and political or diplomatic receptions”. Thus, the values which are more relevant in the EU are not taken care. Marinho e Pinto exposes that “traditional politicians are professionalized, that is, they live professionally from political activity. They have a political career to defend and preserve. This often causes them (almost always) to place their personal interests above the interests of those they claim to represent. The political career of political agents is always above the interests of the citizens who elected them”. According to Marinho e Pinto representative democracy is crumbling as the far right is taking further advancements in every election. He complains that “political activity is becoming mechanical, repetitive, soulless, heartless, without sincerity, without genuineness, without truth” and signals that “a major problem for the EU today is the absence of leaders who can rise to the great challenges that history poses for all Democrats. This is the Europe of the Barrosos, the Junckers, the multitudes of politically powerful bureaucrats, and the clusters of politicians who act as bureaucrats” (António Marinho e Pinto, interview October 2018).

In the third place, from Italy, Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi (advisor of the EP President’s Cabinet) exposes that the main of a democracy is the connection between institutions and its citizens. He adds that these institutions have to work to give an answer to citizen’s needs. De Mendoza Asensi exposes the worries that exist in the EU regarding Eurosceptic movements which are against the EU. These movements are based on “feelings and seeks to cause polarization and citizen division”. De Mendoza affirms that this causes concern as the “EU is a collective project, a great consensus among all Europeans and we have to work together in order to make it work”. He thinks that movements against Europe try to “cheat citizens telling them that everything is possible” and this is not true in a democracy (Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi, interview April 2019).

In the fourth place, from Germany, Stefan Gehrold’s assistant (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, EPP), Tillman Otto Ruether, mentions as an important element of a democracy the need “to be counterbalance by something like a legislation or a constitutional state, especially to protect minorities”. According to

Gehrold's assistant, competence is also an important element for a democracy and there should be always "the best person at the top position". Moreover, he considers corruption should be eradicated and that could be done with more transparency. Nevertheless, he believes that "too much transparency would generate a big decline in the quality of the people who would be willing to do such a job" as working in the EP, so there should a balance between transparency and competence (Tillman Otto Ruether, interview November 2018).

Moreover, also from Germany, Hans-Olaf Henkel (independent, ECR) affirms that the main elements of a democracy are voting rights. On the threads on democracy today, Hans-Olaf Henkel thinks that "today we have more democracy in the world than ever before" and also there is peace in Europe thanks to democracy. He thinks that's the reason why "we must defend democracy every day" as "there is no better system to govern a country than democracy" (Hans-Olaf Henkel, interview November 2018).

Finally from Belgium, Claude Rolin (Centre Démocrate Humaniste, EPP) does not represent the view of his political group as he declares himself a leftist and a trade unionist. Regarding his opinion on the most important element a democracy should have, he points out to the importance of democracy in the workplace which according to him doesn't exist. He thinks that "the struggle for democracy is completely related to the struggle in the workplace" and as the workplace is today not democratic therefore "democratic systems are today incomplete". On the existing threads on democracy, Claude Rolin affirms that "representative democracy as we know it is being questioned" and explains that political parties used to represent a social category and this is not clear nowadays. He thinks that there is a situation of fragmentation regarding references and categories and there is on the one hand a claim for more direct democracy and on the other authoritarian tendencies which represents a dangerous situation for democracy (Claude Rolin, interview April 2019).

To sum up, a majority of MEPs consider the main element of a democracy is the voting rights and the rule of law. The Portuguese MEP from the ALDE group also mentions the separation of powers, pluralism, freedom of press, transparency, respect for human rights and individual freedoms. Few mentions are made to the importance of accountability and connecting institutions and citizens. The Belgian MEP from the PP,

as an exception, mentions the importance of democracy in the workplace. On the threads of democracy, Ramon Tremosa and Hans-Olaf Henkel consider democracy is not in danger. However, the other MEPs and MEPs' assistant mention populisms, extreme nationalisms or Eurosceptic movements as elements of risk for existing democracy. António Marinho e Pinto is more critical and stresses that beyond the thread of far right forces the problems is that democrats live far from reality, the political class has too many privileges and the professionalization of politicians make them put their personal interest before the citizens' interest.

7.2.2 Direct democracy, decision-making processes and citizen participation

First from Spain, Ramon Tremosa thinks that there should be more mechanisms of direct democracy like referendums. Even though he affirms that any society should not abuse of these mechanism, there are many “sensitive issues that are important and a non-binding consultation could be made”. He states that “the results of these consultations could be similar to that of the parliament and this could enhance legitimacy to decisions that are being adopted”. On decision-making processes, Ramon Tremosa thinks that the EP is completely transparent and “the moment you enter and amendment, it can be consulted on your phone”. He also talks about the influence of lobbies and believes that they are mainly in the European capitals where real power is. Regarding citizen participation, Tremosa talks in terms of voters control to MEP, however he considers that accountability is very weak in Southern European countries (Ramon Tremosa, interview October 2018).

On the other hand, for Santiago Fisas “representative democracy is the most suitable system” although he thinks it is fine “to have direct consultations on very specific issues but in any case this has to take place in societies that are used to direct democracy like for example Switzerland”. Fisas points out some weakness of these mechanisms like for example that sometimes the answers to these consultations are based on other parameters and not the issue at stake. Regarding decision-making processes, Fisas considers transparency is always very important and “if there's no transparency it is a form of cheating to a certain extent, therefore transparency is fundamental”. He also considers that there are some decisions that are technically complex and maybe the institution has better knowledge and capacity to take a decision. On citizen participation, Fisas' view is similar to Tremosa and refers to electoral participation as

the main aspect of citizen participation. Fisas affirms that the “worse that can happen is abstention in the elections”, therefore “efforts have to be made to make citizens vote”. For Fisas that citizens vote in the elections “is the best form of citizen participation” (Santiago Fisas, interview November 2018).

In the second place, from Portugal, António Marinho e Pinto on direct democracy mechanisms he thinks that there should more of these elements. He thinks that today “with the progress made in the area of communication technologies, we must seek to adapt the system of representative political democracy to these advances” and asks for the sense that it makes today for a person to represent me, expressing my will, when I can directly express it in real time. Marinho e Pinto repeats his worries that political representatives generally place their personal interest above those of the represented and their promises during electoral campaigns vanish once they are elected. Therefore, he considers it is urgent “to restore the ethical and political trust between the democratically elected and the voters”. Regarding the process of decision-making, Marinho e Pinto thinks that the “common good must always prevail over private or individual interests” and in democratic decision-making processes, “minorities should always be able to express themselves in freedom”. On transparency, he believes it is necessary “at all stages of the democratic decision-making process, because that is the only way to scrutinize the reasons for each step”. Decisions have to be transparent in order to know the full motives behind the final decision. Lastly, on citizen participation, Marinho e Pinto thinks that “It is very important for citizens to participate in democratic life, particularly in political decision-making”. According to him, politics is too important to be left to professionalized political agents. He considers that participation is a citizen demand and essential to democracy. Marinho e Pinto also thinks that citizen participation “increases the quality of political activity itself” and emphasizes the need of affinity between voters and representatives. He thinks that when representatives distance themselves from voters then democracy is weakened and ultimately it can be destroyed (António Marinho e Pinto, interview October 2018).

In the third place, from Italy, Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi thinks that there is a constant effort in the EU to bring institutions closer to citizens and mentions the example of the European Citizens’ Initiative. He also states that there is the willingness to make citizens participate in decision-making but the possibility to use direct democracy

mechanisms such as referendums in the European level is still far away. On transparency, Gonzalo de Mendoza says that “European institutions are the most transparent, even more than the national ones” with all the documents and speeches online and on different languages. He also states that transparency “is one of the most relevant elements that a system requires to be considered democratic”, transparency and efficiency in decisions. On citizen participation, Gonzalo de Mendoza affirms that bringing the EP closer to citizens is a priority and many small initiatives have been done in that respect. He mentions as an example the increase of the EP’s sponsorship to citizen or civil society events which “is one of the objectives that the President has had”. De Mendoza believes that there is an increase in worries about that aspect because “we are in a moment of rising populisms and nationalisms and an anti-Europe narrative” as well as fake news which cause confusion on the general public about the institutions and about what Europe does and does not (Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi, interview April 2019).

In the fourth place, from Germany, Tillman Otto Ruether considers direct democracy mechanisms entail many problems. Even though he thinks in the future it may be possible for citizens to vote on certain issues from their computers there are some limitations like the problem for a government to guarantee the safety of the data of its people. On decision-making processes, Tillman Otto Ruether believes that “transparency is a double edge issue” in negotiations and decision-making processes. He mentions the example of TTIP negotiations where “people demanded to be informed constantly about the momentum of the debate” and “this was disempowering to all the negotiators and finally protesters’ own interest”. Therefore, he believes that “there has to be room for secrecy and development behind closed doors” in order to carry a good negotiation. Regarding citizen participation, Tillman Otto Ruether thinks that this is related to education, so “political participation would increase if we had better educational systems with more political education”. These educational systems should give citizens “the tools and skills to make up their minds and come to the comprehensive political decisions” (Tillman Otto Ruether, interview November 2018).

Moreover, the German MEP Hans-Olaf Henkel thinks that direct democracy mechanisms depend on the context. For example he affirms that Switzerland does not need more direct democracy elements but Germany would need more. At the EU level,

he considers that direct democracy mechanisms shouldn't be needed because the "EP should be dissolved". He states that "we don't need a EP, we have parliaments in each country and each country's government is democratically elected and these governments can take joint decisions in the European Council. Tough a EP is in my view not necessary and having spent here four years I have come to the conclusion that that is an absolute necessity to dissolve it". On decision-making processes, Hans-Olaf Henkel thinks that a lot of decisions should be more transparent. However, he believes like Stefan Gehrold's assistant that there are some exceptions. For example, "when you have a negotiation, let's say like TTIP between the US and EU you cannot have negotiation in public, it doesn't work, you can never negotiate in public because when you negotiate you have got to have the right to not to put everything on the table immediately". Regarding citizen participation, Hans-Olaf Henkel thinks that "it's very important but I don't think you can have a formula for it". He refers again to the example of Switzerland where according to him people have a very high level of education and "usually vote very much like the elite of the country" whereas in Great Britain people are not used to vote that often and then voted for Brexit "because they were not very well informed". Thus, Hans-Olaf Henkel affirms that "citizen participation requires the education and the knowledge of the citizens and if you have citizen participation and little knowledge then populists will always be successful in their environment", so he considers that "the less educated a country the less participation of the citizens you need, the better educated the more citizen participation you can give them" (Hans-Olaf Henkel, interview November 2018).

Finally from Belgium, Claude Rolin thinks that more direct democracy mechanisms are sometimes necessary and sometimes not. He believes that the European Citizens Initiative should be reinforced as it is "inefficient due to its complexity and without the obligation from the EP" to take it into consideration. Otherwise, Claude Rolin thinks that in complex societies problems are also complex so there is a need for a deliberative democracy. He mentions the British referendum and signals that there was a lack of debate, of deliberation, that is a reason why it is necessary to enhance deliberation processes. On decision-making processes, Claude Rolin shares the view with the other MEPs that the EP is quite transparent where all MEPs can be traceable. On citizen participation he refers to the need of citizen mobilization to interpellate MEPs and pressure them on important issues. Rolin thinks that politics needs citizen mobilization

and affirms that he has relied on citizen mobilization that reinforced the point of view that he was defending (Claude Rolin, interview April 2019).

To sum up, right-wing MEPs are very cautious regarding direct democracy mechanisms with the exception of Ramon Tremosa that defends the referendum even though he also affirms that there should be a moderate use. The others consider that these mechanisms have some weaknesses and at the European level it's even more difficult than in lower territorial levels. On the importance of transparency in decision-making processes all MEPs and assistants agree that it is a fundamental element and they consider that the EP is already a very transparent institution. However, Stefan Gehrold's assistant and Hans-Olaf Henkel believe that transparency also needs some limitations like for example during negotiations where some level of opacity is needed. Regarding the need to increase citizen participation, some MEPs refer to electoral participation. António Marinho e Pinto mentions the importance for citizens to participate as well in political decision-making and Claude Rolin emphasizes the importance of citizen mobilization. Hans-Olaf Henkel, from the ECR group, is the most critical voice regarding participation as he considers that without knowledge and education citizen participation paves the way for populists.

7.2.3 Movements' outcomes

First from Spain, Ramon Tremosa affirms that he did not participate in the anti-austerity movements but he points out that he has been active in the secessionist process in Catalonia. He is far from the anti-austerity mobilization and therefore he cannot assess the internal influence in his group of these movements as he does not recognize anti-austerity movements. Tremosa holds an idea about austerity that is based on culture. Thus, he explains that austerity is a cultural issue and is maintained even if a government changes because "you cannot spend more than what you have, if there is a recession you have to apply cuts". With this explanation he is repeating the main narrative of the crisis and the necessary response to it, which is only one. Tremosa also affirms that there are differences depending on countries and he explains that this is due to "different traditions; deficit zero is a cultural consensus in the North of Europe while the South lives from debt and from not paying it" (Ramon Tremosa, interview October 2018).

Furthermore, Santiago Fisas affirms that “any politician has to be aware of any citizen movement” and adds that “it has to be taken into consideration, what cannot be done is to just look to the other side”. However, he states that it is also necessary to analyze mobilizations, “whether they are spontaneous or not, whether they are induced, which is the origin, who is behind the demonstrations, etc.”. Regarding the internal influence of the anti-austerity movements in the political party or group, Fisas believes that inside his political group in the EP “logically these mobilization has been commented but often this kind of demonstrations have a future and sometimes not” therefore he signals that it is still to be seen their influence in the future or “if they have just been demonstrations of conjunctural hardship”. Santiago Fisas thinks that his group has changed but not only due to anti-austerity mobilizations. He thinks “political discourse is changing, as can be seen in Internet” and he considers this is related to a different political communication and forms of doing politics due to the increasing influence of certain type of media. Fisas affirms that “the way to address the public has changed quite a lot” and it has been provoked by social media and other forms of communication through Internet. Santiago Fisas exposes that the way the public is addressed is more direct and refers to the example of Donald Trump whose way of “doing politics is only through tweets”. This is a “more direct communication with people using the Internet in general and this is something that a few years ago was not like that and we should take into consideration”. However, according to Fisas this is another phenomena not linked to the movements. Moreover, Fisas admits that there are some elements like celebrating primaries that are now more taken into consideration in all parties. He explains that the PP celebrates primaries in almost every election and also the EPP does it. Nevertheless, Fisas believes that this kind of aspects may have been accelerated by the movements but they come from before the mobilizations. In addition, regarding differences depending on countries, Fisas considers that there is a variation and mentions the example of Germans that “do not let themselves be driven by public demagogy” which means according to him that “if they consider that there are some issues that they think are reasonable, they maintain themselves firm in their points of view and do not let themselves be influenced by popular expressions”. Santiago Fisas considers that other political groups may be more influenced than their group but exposes that in some issues people’s lack of information is the cause of confrontation. Fisas mentions that they receive thousands of emails from people defending certain positions but

“sometimes you have to know how to resist these campaigns; you think that your opinion is the correct”. As an example, Fisas says that some parties defend a position and then they do not fulfill it like Podemos that talks about the *casta* and now they are as *casta* as the others. Lastly, Fisas affirms that among countries there are “important cultural differences” and this is common to all political groups in the EP (Santiago Fisas, interview November 2018).

In the second place, from Portugal, António Marinho e Pinto explains that social movements of various kinds have brought him knowledge and experience which have been very important in his political conceptions. He believes that social movements are essential in a democracy. Regarding austerity, Marinho e Pinto differentiates two types: one that results from the economic inability to meet all the needs and another that has a political motivation as a result of some ideological choices. He believes that anti-austerity movements did not make this distinction and considered austerity as purely politically motivated which he considers a mistake. On changes inside his party or political group, Marinho e Pinto says that “the anti-austerity movements have influenced my party – PDR – more than the political family I belong to in the EP – the ALDE”. He clarifies that however, anti-austerity movements are not seen as “spiritual guides to our political action”. Moreover, Marinho e Pinto thinks that the influence of these movements on parties has been differentiated and says that leftist parties are more influenced by the mobilizations. He defines these movements as spontaneous, “hierarchically fragmented, open, without ideological cohesion” and says that often they are “mere instruments of action of certain political parties, especially those of the traditional left” (António Marinho e Pinto, interview October 2018).

In the third place, from Italy, Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi thinks that social movements have had an impact in the strategy to get out of the crisis. He explains that it has been taken into account that “the EU is not only the banks, the euro, the financial system but also its citizens”. De Mendoza points out the importance that has been given to promote jobs for citizens or mobility for students in the EU as well as policies to promote democracy and to be close to citizens. De Mendoza also affirms that MEPs are elected in their Member States and therefore they have “a very close link with their electorate; they are not people who are disconnected from European social reality but the contrary”. He believes that citizens’ claims have been totally taken into account and the

debate and worries to deepen European democracy has been present all the time. Moreover, De Mendoza thinks that political parties have been opening their participation processes in their electoral programs at both national and European levels and organized debates with citizens also in the Member States and the EU. He explains that there is a major pressure for openness regarding financial transparency or the work that is being done in the EP but he believes this has been a tendency over the last years not necessarily linked to the cycle of protest. Furthermore, De Mendoza does not consider that there exist differences depending on countries. He exposes that there have been changes over the course of economic crisis and emphasizes that these have come from President Juncker who supported and applied flexibility in the Stability Pact. According to De Mendoza, Juncker “has not been so rigorous and this can be seen in this period which is the period to come out of the crisis and starting recovery” (Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi, interview April 2019).

In the fourth place, from Germany, Stefan Gehrold’s assistant shares the main narrative of the crisis. He affirms that “nations cannot live over their capabilities” and explains that “when you go for huge party and you forget about modesty and responsibility you will have headache the next day; people of the anti-austerity movements should rather be upset about their former governments that were bad at managing the budget” and stated that “there no such thing as free lunch”. Tillman Otto Ruether believes that anti-austerity movements have to be observed from a critical point of view as according to him the system wouldn’t last “if we would follow just the view of the majority”. This would have a “totalitarian element” and exposes that “following the will of the crowd, of a cheery crowd, is not inherently good just because of they are a majority”. Therefore, according to Tillman Otto Ruether, changes inside the political group are more determined by “the most useful argument” than by the action of the crowd. He believes that the EPP as a centrist and dialogue-oriented group is not so much influenced by anti-austerity movements and he does not signal any difference depending on the origin of the MEP. Moreover, he explains that “People go on the streets because they are unhappy with the current situation, so we try to understand first of all why people are unhappy and try to extinguish the fire that makes them angry” and affirms that “we try to eradicate the problem rather than screaming in the same voice” (Tillman Otto Ruether, interview November 2018).

Moreover, also from Germany, Hans-Olaf Henkel considers austerity is the result of wrong policies and mentions the example of Greece. He exposes that “there was austerity in Greece [...] because Greece went into the euro and the euro became much too strong for Greek exports so the entire industry collapsed. So Greece had a choice: they could have left the euro, devalue their currency and have a thriving economy, they wouldn’t have needed austerity but they decided to stick to the euro so here the austerity was a result of the euro participation”. Hans-Olaf Henkel also believes that the term austerity is an “unfair trick of usually leftists who think that you can survive without reforms, just to spend more money”, so in his opinion is a way to block reforms. There is a willingness “to make the necessity of reforms look bad” and he thinks this comes from a “populistic approach” from both the right and the left in the parliament. He also thinks that austerity is “a result of usually too socialistic policies which require then austerity because some politicians have spent too much money”. Furthermore, Hans-Olaf Henkel explains that in his party they have always discussed about democracy and its disadvantages, even though he affirms that “compared to the other systems it is the best”. One of the problem he signals is the power of political parties in decision-making and considers that in that case it is positive to “introduce more direct participation of the people” like plebiscites. He refers to the example of the euro as a fundamental question that should be asked to citizens whether they want the euro or not and laments that was not the case in Germany. On the influence of anti-austerity movements in his political group in the EP, Hans-Olaf Henkel says that the “EP like many parliaments sit in a bubble” and mobilizations like the ones against austerity usually “doesn’t affect the elected parliamentarians, they continue to get their salary and they continue to get their pension”. He also believes that when governments think that reforms are necessary they should start with themselves saying: “I reduce my salary by 50% and now I will come up with a programme which aims the reforms necessary to make my country again competitive”. Regarding differences depending on the origin of the MEP, he thinks that “nationality is not really very important” although societies in the different EU countries are different and this can be seen in the EP as well. He exposes that in his political group in the EP there are few differences regarding austerity and also emphasizes the position of his group, the ECR, on the EU saying that they “believe in a Europe of sovereign nations, we don’t think the United States of Europe is a good idea” (Hans-Olaf Henkel, interview November 2018).

Finally from Belgium, Claude Rolin explains that as a trade unionist he condemned austerity measures. He thinks that “the dominant analysis of the crises was wrong and considered that the problem was the indebtedness of states” without taking into consideration the indebtedness of private actors. According to Rolin, this led to “counterproductive and socially catastrophic policies”. Moreover, regarding the influence of anti-austerity movements, Rolin thinks that there have been changes and can be noted when we look at the idea of a social Europe. Claude Rolin explains that “the Barroso Commission was terrible on this issue” and with Juncker it has changed as the social pillar has gained importance. Claude Rolin thinks that this change was due to citizen rejection of a “EU that was only sanctioning [...] and also to the increase of extreme right, that represented a danger for the European project”. These aspects have created “a certain inflection in the social discourse” in the EU. On internal changes in his political party and group, Rolin affirms that there have been changes in some parties but not in all of them. He exposes that there are many differences inside the EPP, like Orbán from Hungary that according to Rolin is situated in the extreme right. He also considers that the EPP’s evolution is “towards more conservatism, more into the neoliberal dogma and less social”. Regarding differences between countries, Claude Rolin thinks that it is based on “a cleavage between old countries and new countries [...] that can be seen on positions on the market, or closeness regarding migration coming from countries from Central and Eastern Europe and more open positions in other countries” (Claude Rolin, interview April 2019).

In conclusion, MEPs from right-wing parties did not participate in the movements however some of them acknowledge that they took the mobilizations into consideration and that they are necessary in a democracy while others consider that the movements should protest against their governments that didn’t manage the budget correctly. Hans-Olaf Henkel even considers that sometimes opposition to austerity is just defending to spend more money without taking into account the necessary reforms. Regarding changes inside the parties and political groups some MEPs point out to some transformations that have taken place but do not relate them necessarily to the mobilizations against austerity. For example, Santiago Fisas explains that political discourse has changed a lot but he also considers that this has been propelled by the changes information technologies and social media. Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi also thinks that now there is a higher demand for transparency but he believes that is a

tendency that comes from before the movements and Claude Rolin explains the major emphasis on the social pillar thanks to the Juncker Commission but not necessarily the movements. Regarding differences depending on countries some MEPs refer to cultural differences but there were no differences on the position on austerity inside the groups. Moreover, Santiago Fisas considers that sometimes you have to resist the pressure from the streets and maintain your opinion. In addition, both Stefan Gehrold's assistant and Hans-Olaf Henkel think that the EP has not been influenced at all by the movements and all MEPs express their support to austerity policies with the exception of Claude Rolin who disagrees with his party.

7.2.4 Comparison with the perception of influence on other European institutions

First from Spain, Ramon Tremosa thinks that the EP is clearly the EU institution that is closer to citizens and the Council the most opaque. He mentions the Trilogue meetings where the Council can block a negotiation that has been voted in the EP without disclosing any information about who is against the proposal. Tremosa considers the Commission has made an effort to be a more transparent institution. Moreover, Tremosa does not agree that the EP is indifferent towards citizens' demands and claims and mentions the aspect of transparency and the communicative efforts made by the institution to deny this criticism (Ramon Tremosa, interview October 2018).

On the other hand, Santiago Fisas shares a similar position on this aspect. He thinks that the "EP is most democratic of all parliaments because there is total free vote", MEPs are free to vote without sanctions and "this does not happen in other parliaments where vote discipline is strict". Fisas adds that the EP has always been characterized by "the defense of democracy in a wide sense" and of human rights. He considers that the Commission would like to escape the EP's control and the Council where "Member States are the ones taking decisions and do not want to lose their power". Moreover, like Tremosa he does not think there is indifference in the EP towards citizen's needs and demands. However, Fisas admits that it is not an easy task "to be in contact with all the people" as the EU is big and there are not so many MEPs representing them. Fisas also considers that the "EP cannot cede to any movements that exists". He points out the high level of respect in the debates in the EP and towards political adversaries but affirms that "we cannot be driven by any kind of movement that unfolds; we will listen and see the reasons of everybody" (Santiago Fisas, interview November 2018).

In the second place, from Portugal, António Marinho e Pinto thinks that it is impossible for a EU institutions like the EP to remain indifferent to social movements against austerity and believes that it was partly influenced by them. However, he states that the EP is a very large institution divided by several cleavage lines that make it difficult to imprint an impact. Regarding some activists' criticism about the EP's indifference, Marinho e Pinto disagrees to that statement and says that "it will be very difficult to have no members, out of the 751 MEPs, who are not interested in a civic cause raised by a social movement". Otherwise, he thinks that the problem is that "the EP has no legislative initiative" and the "EP's parliamentary agenda is practically defined by the EC". He also points out that one country, Germany, has enormous influence in the EP and "has the power to dictate or paralyze the EP's agenda" (António Marinho e Pinto, interview October 2018).

In the third place, from Italy, Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi share the view that the EP is closer to citizens than other EU institutions. He explains that "MEPs are directly elected in their Member States [...] and are very much in contact with the reality of their Member States which makes them more permeable" to any social change that may take place. De Mendoza also believes the EC has made serious efforts to open to citizens and that is a constant task in that institution as well. Regarding the criticism of the EP as indifferent to citizens' claims, De Mendoza thinks that this is not the reality as he does not know "any MEP who is not aware and worried about the social needs of citizens". He explains that this attention to citizens and demands from movements is a democratic necessity. However, he mentions that sometimes there are populist, nationalist or anti-systemic claims and discourses that are a somehow misleading when it comes to the issue of austerity. He exposes that the "EU was for many years recommending to the Member States to endure economic reforms" which are necessary due to the single currency and when the economic shock came it was very difficult to apply. De Mendoza affirms that nevertheless "efforts made by citizens during the crisis and in all countries which have suffered the most are very much recognized" and continues that "they have achieved that the euro is still a reality, [...] and a guarantee of prosperity for all Europeans" (Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi, interview April 2019).

In the fourth place, from Germany, Stefan Gehrold's assistant considers that anti-austerity movements have not had a big impact in the EP because as he explains "the Commission is proposing laws and we can amend them, or call for law change or call the Commission to propose a law, but first of all the Commission is doing the proposal". Therefore, if someone in the EP is supporting anti-austerity movements "it always stays in a proposal" which is something that limits the influence of the EP. Lastly, Tillman Otto Ruether does not agree with the criticism of the EP as indifferent to citizen's claims and needs. In fact, he considers that the EP is supporting "simple citizens and is not so much for big interest" and many committees in the EP work for citizens' rights or against tax evasion. He also thinks that many issues that are tackled in the EP "would be greeted by anti-austerity movements" (Tillman Otto Ruether, interview November 2018).

Moreover, also from Germany, Hans-Olaf Henkel affirms that "the institution which is closest to the citizens is the European Council which is made up of the leaders of the various countries because they represent their countries, they were voted into their jobs by the citizens of those countries" and on the other hand affirms that "The EC has not been voted by any person" and he thinks that its functioning is not very democratic. He also considers that in the EP there a similar problem as in the EC because "the people from the smaller countries have much more influence than the people from the bigger countries". On the criticism about the indifference from the EP to citizens' claims and demands, Hans-Olaf Henkel thinks that this depends on the individual MEP but considers that this is not the main problem in the EP. He points out that the main problem is that "the EP tends to take responsibility from the countries and to solve problems". He believes that problems should be solved locally where politicians are closer to citizens and not at the EU level. He adds that the tendency is "to centralise everything to have more power" which he considers it is wrong and "will destroy the future of Europe and the competitiveness" (Hans-Olaf Henkel, interview November 2018).

Finally from Belgium, Claude Rolin thinks that both the EP and EC have changed during this period but considers that the "EC has changed more [...], it has led more ambitious policies". On the criticism about the indifference of the EP to citizens' claims, Rolin thinks that "it depends on the political party". He thinks that progressive

forces have been more influenced by anti-austerity movements and more responsive to them whereas on right-wing forces like the EPP they have had little impact. Rolin considers that to have a more important influence “trade unions and movements against austerity should work closer to MEPs” and says that many MEPs have no contact with trade unions which, according to him, is a problem (Claude Rolin, interview April 2019).

To sum up, all MEPs and assistants consider that the EP is the institution that is closest to citizens with the exception of Hans-Olaf Henkel who thinks that it is the Council because there are representatives of each country. Ramon Tremosa and Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi also think the EC has made an effort to be more open to citizens and transparent. Regarding the criticism that the EP is indifferent to citizens’ claims, all MEPs and assistant disagree with that statement. Some of them consider that it depends on the MEP or political party and others believe that the institution is supporting citizens but of course with some limitations.

7.2.5 Idea of democracy of far right groups

First, from Spain, Ramon Tremosa thinks that far right parties canalize hardship but considers that call them extreme right or fascist is a way to avoid self-criticism (Ramon Tremosa, interview October 2018). Otherwise, Santiago Fisas affirms that he believes that “both extreme right and extreme left have capitalized” the ideas of democracy that were raised with the mobilizations against austerity. He mentions the example of international trade in the EP where Marine Le Pen and MEPs from Podemos voted the same, for different reasons, but with the same vote. Fisas thinks that this happens because due to several reasons “there is fear and uncertainty that makes people look for refuge in their nation or in what is more familiar to them” (Santiago Fisas, interview November 2018).

In the second place, from Portugal, António Marinho e Pinto thinks that far right parties are not democratic and are based on the figure of an undisputed chief that must be followed blindly. He exposes that “far-right parties are very close to the personality cult prevalent in certain left-wing and far-left parties” so he also refers to this idea that the extremes are similar (António Marinho e Pinto, interview October 2018). In the third place, from Italy, the advisor of the EP President’s Cabinet, Gonzalo de Mendoza

Asensi also shares the view that “both extreme right and extreme left have replicated the discourses about democracy in the institutions”. He also adds that “hardship during the crisis has fed populist, nationalist and other anti-systemic discourses” (Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi, interview April 2019).

In the fourth place, from Germany, Stefan Gehrold’s assistant refers to the threads that far right groups represent to democracy and peace in Europe. He also shares the opinion that both far left and far right share these discourses, that “they are the same; another side of the same medal” and both should be opposed (Tillman Otto Ruether, interview November 2018). Also from Germany, Hans-Olaf Henkel agrees that the discussions about democracy from far right groups are the same as the ones from far left groups, he thinks that “this is in my view populist stuff”. He explains that “there should be no difference in the interest of the so called elite and the average citizen as every member of the elite is a citizen” and adds that “many of the people who are now in the elite they are very simple people”. He mentions as an example the EP that for many Europeans is composed by the elite and affirms that “most of this people come from rather modest background” (Hans-Olaf Henkel, interview November 2018).

Finally, from Belgium, Claude Rolin refers to the fact that far right groups have a social discourse but only for national citizens of their states and mentions the example of Viktor Orbán who has social proposals for the true Hungarians but not for the others. Thus, he thinks that the real danger is not so much the appropriation of the discourse about democracy from the far right parties but the absence of social responses from the big democratic groups in Europe (Claude Rolin, interview April 2019).

To sum up, all MEPs and assistants interviewed share the view that both far right and far left movements and parties have replicated some ideas about democracy raised by anti-austerity movements. Claude Rolin is again an exception and he emphasizes the problem that far right groups have a social discourse that is absent in democratic groups. They all agree that far right movements and parties have increased their influence and some of the MEPs interviewed signal as causes of this growth the hardship provoked by the economic crisis.

7.3 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, we have observed on the one hand left-wing MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups from different countries defend an idea of democracy that goes beyond voting every four or five years. They also consider a democracy needs to have social justice and expose their support to citizens in opposition to banks and multinationals. MEPs from the S&D group define democracy as a system of representation of citizens and based on the rule of law. They are also less critical to existing democracy. Regarding the elements of direct democracy, MEPs from GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups believe that there should be more instruments of direct democracy and encourage citizen participation while MEPs from S&D group believe that these elements are already part of advanced democracies and are a complement of representative democracy. S&D MEPs are more cautious about these mechanisms. Moreover, transparency is an aspect that is considered fundamental by everyone but there are differences on the levels of satisfaction achieved by the EU institutions. MEPs from GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups mention the problem of the lobbies and opacity of some EU institutions like the Council and S&D MEPs emphasize the efforts already done in that aspect.

On the influence of anti-austerity movements all left-wing MEPs express that they have been influenced by anti-austerity movements and MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups also affirm that they have taken part in the movements. All MEPs consider that these mobilizations have created changes in their parties and political groups even though some MEPs are a bit cautious in relating these changes to the anti-austerity mobilizations alone. The influence and impacts of social media on political communication and the way of doing politics is also signalled by some MEPs. Regarding the differences on the influence of movements depending on the country of origin of the MEP there is a great variety of opinions. Therefore, that aspect is confusing and there is no clear pattern.

Furthermore, on the comparison with the perception of influence in EU institutions there is a general agreement that the EP is the closest to citizens and the institution that receives more citizen pressure. The GUE/NGL group is more critical on that aspect and considers the changes made in the EP are only cosmetic. Regarding the EC, they agree that has been less influenced by the movements and the Council has been the least

influenced. Some MEPs mention the ECB and the Eurogroup as totally closed to social reality and there is one mention to the Court of Justice of the European Union as an institution that has been influenced by the mobilization. Moreover, on the criticism made to the EP as being indifferent to citizens, some MEPs express that this depends on the MEP and on whether they are from left or right-wing parties. Some MEPs from the GUE/NGL are very critical and affirm that there is a total indifference and citizens' voices are ignored in the EP. The Spanish MEP from the Greens/EFA is critical but acknowledges the big effort made by the EP to be more open. The Spanish S&D MEP considers that there is a bureaucratized inertia that leads to indifference but other MEPs from the same group do not agree and think that these opinions are proper from populists.

Finally, on the ideas of democracy expressed by far right parties in the EP not all MEPs think that they have capitalized the views from the movements. Some MEPs signal that their ideas of democracy are demagogic and rhetoric and this can be observed in their authoritarian organizations, economic proposals and voting behavior. The Spanish MEP from the Greens/EFA explains that their rhetoric about the elites and the people is purely demagogic and they are an instrument of the elites and favorable to them. Also the Spanish MEP from the S&D points out that the idea of democracy of these groups is based on insults, violence and aggressiveness.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs' conception of democracy is based on voting rights and the rule of law. The Portuguese MEP from the ALDE group mentions other aspects like separation of powers, pluralism, freedom of press, transparency, respect for human rights and individual freedom. Also the Belgian MEP from the EPP mentions the importance of democracy in the workplace as a basic element. Not all MEPs agree that democracy is in danger even though some MEPs signal the threads of populisms, extreme nationalisms or Eurosceptic movements for existing democracy. The Portuguese MEP from the ALDE group also mentions the professionalization of politicians as a threat to democracy.

Regarding direct democracy mechanisms right-wing MEPs are very cautious and point out the limitations of these instruments at the European level. There is the exception of the Spanish MEP from the ALDE group that supports the referenda with moderate use.

On transparency in decision-making processes all MEPs and assistants agree that it is a fundamental element and that the EP is a transparent institution. Some MEPs consider that sometimes transparency should be limited like during negotiations. On citizen participation, some MEPs refer to electoral participation. The German MEP from the ECR considers that participation without knowledge and education may facilitate the growth of populism.

Moreover, regarding the influence of anti-austerity movements MEPs from right-wing parties did not participate in the movements and were less influenced by them. However, some MEPS acknowledge that they took the mobilizations into consideration and that they are necessary in a democracy. The German MEP from the ECR group is more critical and considers opposition to austerity is a way to avoid reforms. On changes inside their parties and political groups, MEPs signal some transformations which they do not directly relate to the mobilization. The Spanish MEP from the EPP group affirms that political discourse has changed a lot but he links it more to the use of social media and changes in information technologies. The advisor of the EP's President thinks that there is a higher demand for transparency but also this is part of a long process from before the movements. In addition, the Belgian MEP considers changes came from the Juncker Commission that made more emphasis on the social pillar. Lastly, regarding differences depending on countries, there is a general agreement on the main aspects inside the political groups and even though MEPs signal to some cultural differences they don't consider the country of origin plays an important role.

Furthermore, on the comparison with the perception of influence on other European institutions, all MEPs consider that the EP is the institution that is closest to citizens. The German MEP from the ECR group is the exception who believes that it is the Council. Moreover, some MEPs consider the EC has made an effort to be more open to citizens. On the criticism that the EP is indifferent to citizens' claims, all MEPs and assistants disagree with that statement.

Finally, on the ideas of democracy of far right parties and the question of whether they have capitalised the views of the movements, all MEPs and assistant from right-wing groups agree that both far right and far left movements and parties have replicated some of these ideas. They all agree that these parties have increased and this has been partly

due to the hardship during the crisis. The Belgian MEP from the EPP expresses a different opinion and states that far right groups have a social discourse that is absent in democratic groups and that's the real problem, according to him.

Chapter 8. Conclusions

This thesis analyzes the influence of anti-austerity movements in the EP. It focuses on the indirect interaction between these movements that spread and networked through local assemblies and the European Parliament. The movements did not directly engage with the European institutions but they questioned existing democracy and signalled some flaws that, according to protesters, should be transformed. Therefore, the research observes the movements' conception of deliberative democracy and examines to what extent and in which aspects the movements have had an impact in the EP. The initial assumptions were that left-wing MEPs were more receptive towards anti-austerity movements than right-wing MEPs. Moreover, MEPs from countries that had been more affected by austerity policies and that had stronger movements were expected to be more influenced by the movements. Conversely, MEPs from countries that had been less affected by austerity policies and with weaker movements were expected to be less influenced by the movements.

This chapter first summarizes the main findings of the research and the answers to the research questions. Then follow some remarks about the theoretical and political implications of the thesis. Finally, the main limitations of the analysis and future lines of research are pointed out.

8.1 Summary of main findings

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the following questions: how have anti-austerity movements influenced political discourse in the European Parliament? How have the movements' ideas of democracy (deliberative democracy) influenced political discourse in the European Parliament?

For this purpose, several categories have been used to assess the impacts of the movements at the level of discourse in the State of the Union debates from 2010 to 2017 and in the seven debates about the Greek debt crisis that took place between 2010 and 2015. Thus, for austerity frames the categories are: the economic crisis, Greece, response to the crisis, taxes, profits vs citizens, solidarity, social Europe, and inequality. The categories of economic crisis, Greece, response to the crisis and taxes indicate the

MEP's position on austerity policies. The categories of profits vs citizens, solidarity, social Europe and inequality are based on movements' claims. Moreover, for the democracy frames, the categories are: elites vs citizens, trust, transparency, and listening to citizens. These categories are also based on movements' claims and therefore, their observation sheds light on the correlation between the movements' ideas and claims and the MEPs' positions. The categories have been used to determine the austerity frames and democracy frames of the different MEPs and compare them to those of the movements. The categories themselves have been chosen as aspects that were emphasized by the movements. The observation have mainly centered on MEPs from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Ireland (as countries that were more affected by austerity measures and with stronger anti-austerity movements) and MEPs from Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands (as countries that were less affected by austerity policies and with weaker movements) in order to assess any differences on the level of impact.

In order to observe the results, a summary of the main findings of each empirical chapter is exposed: chapter 5, on the debates on the State of the Union; chapter 6, on the positions on the Greek debt crisis in the EP; and chapter 7, on MEPs' opinions and perceptions of influence from the movements and their ideas about democracy. Then, the results are observed following the research initial hypothesis.

In the first place, the results of the analysis on the State of the Union debates from 2010 to 2017, explained in chapter 5, are the following. The observation of the debates shows that there are no substantial changes in the discourses of the Presidents of the EC. Both Barroso and Juncker share the explanation about the origins of the crisis and the responses that are necessary to start the recovery. They reproduce the main narrative of the crisis that considers that Member States have lived above their means, national governments have mismanaged their budgets and some countries, like Greece, have had irresponsible behaviour that has provoked difficulties in the whole EU. The behaviour of financial markets is also mentioned as an explanatory element of the crisis. To overcome the situation, they demand specific reforms that have to be adopted. There is a slight change with the Juncker Commission regarding the references to the social pillar of the EU, which is an aspect that is more emphasized and given more attention in his discourse. This slight difference could be caused by citizens' increasing mistrust in the

EU and growing disaffection, as some MEPs have signalled in the interviews conducted for this thesis. However, the main austerity frame is maintained with the idea that there is no alternative to austerity, the policies adopted have given positive results and that further structural reforms have to be implemented. On democracy frames, there are no relevant observations that could be related to the movements. Both Presidents express their worries about citizens' lack of confidence in the EU, the importance of accountability and delivering to citizens, and the values of the EU (freedom, democracy and the rule of law). There are also mentions of transparency related to trade agreements.

On the other hand, the MEPs' observation shows that ideology plays a role in the movements' outcomes. Left-wing MEPs support the claims and ideas of the movements and open opportunities in the EU for these actors. The positions on austerity and democracy of left- and right-wing MEPs are clearly differentiated. The positions of left-wing MEPs do not change drastically over the years, therefore it cannot be concluded that the positions expressed are related or influenced by anti-austerity movements by solely observing the SOTEU. Inside left- and right-wing groups there are important differences. Looking at the left, MEPs belonging to the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups overtly signal the beneficiaries and losers of austerity, evidencing the aspects that are unjust according to them. MEPs from these groups replicate ideas and positions expressed by the anti-austerity movements. MEPs from the S&D group refer to the importance of the social and to the negative consequences of austerity but their frames are more distant from those from the movements. As for the right, MEPs from far right parties express the most divergent voices: criticizing austerity policies, opposing the euro and the EU. Right-wing MEPs do not replicate the frames of the movements, but far right parties reproduce a discourse with elements from the movements (such as the emphasis on the people vs the elites). Lastly, the country of origin does not appear to cause differences regarding the positions on austerity, therefore it is not a relevant explanatory element.

In the second place, the observation of the positions on the Greek debt crisis analysed in chapter 6, can be summarised as follows. The debates on the Greek debt crisis show that, firstly, the Presidents of the EC, Council and ECB gave an explanation of the crisis which is completely opposite to that of the anti-austerity movements. Their main

message is the need to implement structural reforms as the right path forward, which has to be followed without delay. They fully support austerity and the euro and agree on the success of the reforms. They repeat the main narrative of the crisis that you cannot spend more than what you earn and you have to pay what you owe to others, as they tell the Greek Prime Minister. The need to regulate the financial system with the adoption of taxes on international financial transactions is not significant in the debates on the Greek debt crisis. Lastly, the mentions of a social Europe are not central to the debates.

The observations made of left-wing MEPs in the debates on the Greek debt crisis shows that MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups use similar expressions and share the ideas of the anti-austerity movements. Some MEPs refer to the debt as illegitimate, others demand debt forgiveness and denounce that banks have been saved but not the people. They criticize the behaviour of the markets, the banks, the financial system, the policies of the IMF and the leading role of Germany in the crisis management in the EU. Otherwise, MEPs from the S&D group share the main narrative of the crisis that the origin of the Greek debt problem is lack of rigour in the management of public expenditure. Moreover, Greek S&D MEPs express their clear compromise towards the adoption of austerity measures.

Furthermore, several left-wing MEPs express disapproval of the priority of bailing out banks and consider the strategy for coming out of the crisis is a failure as deficits in indebted countries have not been reduced and unemployment and social tensions have increased. They also decry the problem of speculation and ask for an introduction of a tax on financial transactions as necessary and urgent. Some MEPs from the GUE/NGL replicate expressions from the movements and criticize the way that debt and profits have been prioritized before citizens and say that it is unjust to nationalize losses and privatize profits. Moreover, several MEPs consider that there is no real solidarity in the EU and call for the preservation of the social Europe, to firmly confront unemployment and poverty.

On the other hand, observing right-wing MEPs in the debates on the Greek debt crisis shows several differences mainly come from far right and Eurosceptic parties. EPP MEPs repeat that the causes of the crisis are the level of debt in Member States and the mismanagement of budgets. They repeat the mainstream ideas of Member States living

above their means, spending too much, and that the result of this situation leaves just one alternative: austerity. There are MEPs that are more critical and signal the lack of regulation as another cause of the crisis, as some EPP Irish MEPs do. However, differences between countries are not important. The majority of right-wing MEPs insist on defending the euro, with the exception of MEPs from far right and Eurosceptic political parties. Also, far right and Eurosceptic MEPs deny that citizens and Member States have lived beyond their means and affirm that the causes of the crisis are to be found in the behaviour of banks and big businesses.

Regarding the positions of right-wing MEPs on the situation in Greece, the EPP defends tough reforms and rejects the role of speculation in the Greek problems. MEPs from the ALDE group consider the mechanism decided on for Greece is not helping the country but punishing it. MEPs from the ECR and EFD groups state that the agreement on Greece is a failure because the financial help went to save the German banks and the policies adopted are producing hunger, unemployment and poverty. These groups also point out that the reforms are only benefiting the oligarchies. At the same time, while MEPs from the EPP congratulate the President of the ECB for the good response to the crisis, other MEPs emphasize that the banks have received a lot of money but have not paid their part.

Moreover, the proposal of a tax on financial transactions is hardly mentioned by right-wing MEPs. The idea of putting profits before citizens is not mentioned either, with the exception of some far right and Eurosceptic MEPs. Furthermore, solidarity is given another meaning as compared to left-wing MEPs, and is related to Greece's responsibility for implementing reforms while at the same time being accused of profiting from other Member States' financial support. Several MEPs repeat that foreign taxpayers will have to pay for Greek debt and appeal to solidarity as meaning that each Member State has to do its bit. Lastly, very few mentions are made about a social Europe.

The selected debates on the Greek debt crisis expose the ideas and positions about austerity. However, these positions imply an idea of democracy. On the one hand, left-wing MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups replicate ideas from anti-austerity movements and affirm that policies are decided on by an elite that disregards

the majority of the population. Some MEPs from the GUE/NGL also challenge the role of the IMF, large companies and financial institutions in leading the EU at the expense of the citizens. There are also some mentions of the importance of a democracy listening to its citizen. From the S&D MEPs there are calls for more transparency at the ECB.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs from the EPP express their worries about citizens' lack of trust and consider they will regain it with growth and jobs. MEPs from the EFD group criticize European democracy, the bureaucratic elites and the huge power of banks and big businesses. On the issue of listening to citizens, MEPs from the EPP disagree with the use of direct democracy mechanisms like referenda to ask citizens their opinions directly, while MEPs from far right and Eurosceptic political parties celebrate the Greek referendum and signal the importance of giving citizens a say. Lastly, regarding transparency there are almost no references.

A last aspect that has been observed in the debates on the Greek debt crisis are the positions on austerity and democracy of two Greek Prime Ministers, Samaras and Tsipras. On the positions about the economic crisis and the situation in Greece, Antonis Samaras recognizes the sacrifices of the Greek citizens but believes the country is on the road towards recovery. Samaras considers that the measures implemented have led to positive results and emphasizes that Europe works. On the other hand, Alexis Tsipras thinks the bailout has increased inequalities and brought injustice. He demands an alternative way out of the crisis that is not based on austerity. For Tsipras the response to the crisis has been a failure. Austerity programmes have been unsuccessful, as they have increased poverty, unemployment and social marginalization while public debt has not diminished. Alexis Tsipras calls for justice with a voice similar to that of the movements of the squares when they challenged austerity. He also repeats an idea present in the anti-austerity mobilizations, prioritizing profits above citizens. Tsipras denies that European taxpayers will have to pay for Greece's debt and explains that the financial assistance that was given to Greece was used to save the Greek and European banks but it never reached the Greek people.

Finally, regarding democracy, Alexis Tsipras questions why the EP is not present in the negotiations while the IMF plays an important role in them. He also denounces the lack

of transparency and the fact that debates take place behind closed doors. On the aspect of listening to citizens, Antonis Samaras affirms that citizens' needs and interests have to shape the EP's decisions while Alexis Tsipras refers to the Greek referendum and the significance of asking citizens directly. Tsipras gives more attention to democracy in his discourse and considers it is essential for Europe's survival.

Due to the difficulties in assessing the level of influence of anti-austerity movements on MEPs and in measuring whether changes that may have taken place can be explained (at least partially) by the movements, the research has included interviews to MEPs from the selected countries (with the exception of Greece). MEPs were asked about their opinions and perceptions of influence from the movements and their ideas about democracy. A detailed examination of the interviews has been presented in chapter 7. As a result of the interviews, we have observed that left-wing MEPs from GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups consider that democracy is more than just voting every four or five years, while S&D MEPs have a conception of democracy mainly based on the task of representation of citizens and the importance of the rule of law. MEPs from GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA also believe that a democracy needs social justice and attention to citizens' needs above the interest of banks and multinationals. Positions from the S&D group are less critical of existing democracy. Regarding direct democracy mechanisms, we have observed that from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA they are more supportive in encouraging citizens' participation and express more favorable opinions towards increasing the elements of direct democracy. S&D MEPs are more cautious about the promotion of direct democracy instruments and consider that they are already a part of advanced democracies as a complement to representative democracy. In addition, transparency is considered a central aspect by everyone, and S&D MEPs celebrate the efforts made in that aspect. MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups show concern about the influence of lobbies and the opacity of some institutions like the Council.

During the interviews, left-wing MEPs were asked about the influence of anti-austerity movements and all of them affirmed that they had been influenced by them. Also, MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA explained that they participated in the movements. In addition, all MEPs believed that anti-austerity mobilizations provoked changes inside their political parties and groups. There is no clear pattern on the level of

influence depending on the country. Moreover, when MEPs were asked about their perception on the influence of the movements on the European institutions, the majority agreed that the EP is the institution that is exposed to more citizen pressure and is the closest to citizens. Some MEPs from the GUE/NGL signalled that the changes in the EP were only cosmetic. There is also a general agreement that the EC has been less influenced and the Council the least influenced by the movements. There was a mention to the CJEU as an institution that has given voice to claims from the movements and there was a reference to the ECB and Eurogroup as completely distanced from reality. Moreover, on the criticism that the EP is indifferent to citizens' claims and needs, from the GUE/NGL they totally agree that there is indifference and disregard towards citizens. Other MEPs from the Greens/EFA are also critical but recognize the big effort made by the EP to be more open. From the S&D they admit the bureaucratized inertia that involves indifference even though other MEPs from the same political group believe that this type of accusation is proper from populists. However, in general they believe that this depends on the MEP and on whether he or she belongs to left- or right-wing parties.

Finally, left-wing MEPs were asked whether they believed that far right parties have capitalized the ideas of the movements in the EP. On that question, even though some warned that their influence has been very strong, many of them agreed as well that these views expressed by far right MEPs are demagogic and rhetoric. Left-wing MEPs considered that a proof of that is their authoritarian organization, the economic proposals and voting behaviour as well as their idea of democracy that involves insults, violence and aggressiveness, which is the negation of democracy itself. Thus, they are seen as an instrument of the elites even though they replicate the movement's claims about the elites against the people.

On the other hand, right-wing MEPs were also interviewed and were asked the same questions. In that case, we observed that on their conception of democracy they emphasized voting rights, the rule of law, and the separation of powers, pluralism, freedom of press, transparency, respect for human rights and individual freedom. Not all of them believed that democracy is currently in danger but pointed out some existing threads like populisms, extreme nationalisms or Eurosceptic movements. There was also a mention to the professionalization of politicians. Regarding the opinion on direct

democracy mechanisms, right-wing MEPs were generally more cautious and pointing out the limitations of these instruments. There was the exception of the Catalan MEP that referred to the referenda for some specific issues. On transparency, all MEPs agreed that it is a fundamental aspect and many of them celebrated the great level of transparency achieved by the EP. There was a mention to the need to limit transparency when negotiations are taking place. Regarding citizen participation, MEPs referred to its electoral aspect as the most important and there was an opinion from the ECR MEP expressing the worries that the lack of knowledge and education may agitate populism.

Moreover, on the influence of anti-austerity movements, right-wing MEPs were less influenced and did not participate in the mobilization. Regarding the changes inside the political parties or groups, they admit that there have been many transformations in the last years. However, they do not relate these changes to the impacts of the movements and they consider the causes are other ones like the information revolution, the higher demand for transparency or the change of President of the EC. In addition, all MEPs agree that the country of origin do not play an important role. Furthermore, regarding the differentiated influence depending on the institution, all MEPs coincide that the EP is the closest to citizens with the exception of the ECR MEP who believes it is the Council. They also consider that the EC has become more transparent and improved its openness. Lastly, all MEPs and assistants disagree with the claim that the EP is indifferent to citizens. Regarding the question on whether far right MEPs have capitalised the ideas of the movements in the EP, all right-wing MEPs disagree and consider that both far right and far left movements and parties have replicated some of these ideas.

To sum up, we can make the following observations based on the research initial hypothesis:

- 1) There is an (apparent) indifference towards anti-austerity movements in the EP but the movements have achieved a certain degree of influence at the level of discourse.

The EP has made a progressive effort of openness and transparency. At the same time, the EP is the most open EU institution regarding political opportunities for social movements. Facilitator aspects, signalled by previous research, are the attention to the involvement of civil society which has been evolving for a long period of time with the

debate on good governance and democratic deficit in the EU. An example of that enduring debate is the European Commission's White Paper on European Governance from 2001. The outburst of anti-austerity movements has made the old discussion and criticism about the democratic deficit in the EU more urgent. At the same time, the decline in citizen support to the EU institutions and policies has focused more attention to this issue. On the other hand, there are also evident constraints like the fact that the EU is far from citizens, the few and complex mechanisms for citizen participation in the EU and the difficulties for citizens to interact with the European institutions.

Observing the dimensions elaborated by Kriesi et al (1995), mentioned in chapter 4, which indicates three main dimensions of political opportunity structures in international institutions: formal access, informal access, and activist's configuration of allies and opponents, we can make some remarks. First, regarding formal access we observe that movements and activists have gained relevance within the cycle of protest against austerity and some of them have been invited in the EP. For example, the Platform of People Affected by Mortgages (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca – PAH) has been present in the Committee on Petitions in the EP (Ana Miranda, interview August 2018). Second, the informal access has not been open for the movements. This is basically exclusive for business lobbies involved in policy consultations, for example. Third, on the configuration of allies, we have observed that left-wing MEPs, especially coming from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups have been open to anti-austerity movements. These allies are important in securing outcomes, as previous research has confirmed.

Then, the indifference depends on whether MEPs belong to left- or right-wing groups, being left-wing MEPs more responsive to social movements. It also depends on the willingness from the MEPs to invite citizens, groups, movements, activists, or any civil society actor to the EP and facilitate their participation. The global reaction of the EP to social movements' claims will ultimately depend on its composition. Thus, even though there has been an apparent indifference from the EP, there is a certain degree of influence from the movements to the MEPs.

- 2) Left-wing MEPs are more receptive towards the movements and have been more influenced by them.

As we have observed, formal access to the EP has been facilitated by left-wing MEPs and allies in that institution have also been left-wing MEPs. The research refers to the influence regarding discourse as discourse determines eventual outcomes of social movements. The two variables, mentioned in chapter 4, used for describing discursive opportunities in the EU are: first, the perceptions of legitimacy or democratic deficit and second, ideology. The first variable, as has been explained above, refers to the discourse on democratic deficit and the perception of the lack of legitimacy. As we have seen, these perceptions open opportunities for social movements as they involve citizen mistrust. When citizens do not trust institutions, then these institutions have to react and adjust to citizens perceptions if they want to avoid the rejection of the rules they elaborate and implement. The second variable, ideology, is confirmed by the evidence that left-wing MEPs are supportive of anti-austerity movements. Therefore, those MEPs sharing that ideology are close to the movements' claims and ideas. This does not mean that those MEPs have not evolved due to the movement pressure. In fact, as has been explained by some MEPs in the interviews, the movements forced changes inside their parties and regarding forms of doing politics and communicating. In some cases, these changes were aspects that were present at the origin of those parties but had been eroded due to the institutional inertia. Therefore, the anti-austerity movements are a revulsive towards these political organizations.

In the debates examined and the interviews that have been conducted, this research has detected differences between left-wing MEPs belonging to different political groups. In general terms, MEPs from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups are very close to the movements, to their claims and ideas. In some cases, some MEPs even have participated or taken part in the mobilizations. On the other hand, S&D MEPs are more distant to anti-austerity movements. As some interviewees have explained, S&D are part of the political establishment, they have had an important role in defining politics in the EU and they have formed governments in many EU Member States. Moreover, they have played an important role in the definition of the response to the crisis and therefore they have responsibilities in the definition of austerity policies. Even though in the debates we have seen their references to the social pillar, worries about the negative consequences of the crisis, and they express that they have been influenced by the movements and listened to them, they do not identify with their claims and conceptions.

- 3) Left-wing MEPs from EU countries that have been more affected by anti-austerity policies and where the anti-austerity movements have been stronger and more present are more receptive towards the movements and have been more influenced by them. These countries are: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Ireland. Conversely, left-wing MEPs from countries that are less affected and with weaker movements may have been slightly less influenced by the movements.

The observation carried out for this research confirms that ideology plays a role regarding the influence of anti-austerity movements on the MEPs. However, the evidence does not confirm that the country of origin of the MEP is an element that makes a differentiated level of impact from the movements. The observations made in the thesis in the debates from the EP and in the interviews to MEPs do not reflect a clear pattern regarding the country of origin.

The observation shows a tendency towards considering Southern European countries and others also affected by a deeper economic crisis and harsher austerity policies, like Ireland, have had stronger debates and contestation. Therefore, the impacts of the movements have been stronger at first sight. Several MEPs that have been interviewed agree that in countries such as Germany debates were weaker as well as contestation to those policies. This has several implications, for example, the criticism towards the political class has not that harsh and the rejection of politicians' privileges does not suffer such a fierce reaction as in other states such as Spain. Moreover, the two cases of Podemos and Syriza which emerged from the movements and countries suffering from a deep crisis and austerity are often mentioned as a confirmation of this stronger influence from the movements in these countries. However, several MEPs have also pointed out that some changes have taken place in political parties from countries less affected by austerity. Thus, evidence suggests that further research should be made to specifically assess the difference between EU countries through comparative research between these countries.

- 4) Right-wing MEPs are less receptive towards the movements and less influenced by them.

Ideology, as stated above, opens discursive opportunities for social movements in the EU. Nevertheless, not all actors support anti-austerity movements. As has been

observed in this research, right-wing MEPs are less supportive of movements' ideas and claims, they have not participated in the movements and they do not identify with them. Right-wing MEPs admit that the forms of doing politics and communicating have changed a lot but do not relate it to anti-austerity movements. In general, right-wing MEPs do not recognize changes that have taken place as a consequence of the movements but consider they are originated in more long term processes. Some right-wing MEPs admit that due to anti-austerity mobilizations they have been compelled to listen to their claims and discuss them.

Moreover, what has been observed in the research are the important differences inside the broad category of right-wing. On the one hand, the MEPs from the EPP group that express the mainstream narrative of the crisis and the defence of austerity as the only possible option and the MEPs from the ALDE group that even though are more cautious and critical in certain aspects they globally share the same narrative. On the other hand, MEPs from far right and Eurosceptic groups which have a different discourse mainly with an important rhetoric about democracy, with emphasis on direct democracy mechanisms and repeating the importance of asking and listening to citizens. Some of them express their support to citizens in front of the elites and denounce the influence of banks and big businesses. As Eurosceptics, they expose their views against the euro and the EU. Even though these ideas seem to replicate those from the anti-austerity movements, both left- and right-wing MEPs reject that these MEPs have capitalised anti-austerity claims. From the left, they consider this discourse is demagogic and their ideas of democracy are in total contradiction with those from the movements. In addition, they point out that their economic proposals, voting behaviour and organization forms are authoritarian and anti-democratic. From the right, MEPs consider far right discourse as similar to the discourse from the far left and believe that both have capitalised the ideas of the movements.

- 5) Right-wing MEPs from countries that have not been affected (or less affected) by austerity policies and do not have strong anti-austerity movements are not receptive towards the movements and are not influenced by them. Two examples of this case are Germany and Belgium. On the contrary, right-wing MEPs from countries more affected by austerity policies and strong anti-austerity movements may have been slightly more affected by the movements.

The research has not found clear evidence that there is a differentiated influence from the movement depending on the country of origin. This has been observed for left-wing MEPs, as has been mentioned above, as well as right-wing MEPs. Hence, right-wing MEPs from countries less affected by austerity like Germany are not necessarily less influenced by anti-austerity mobilization. At least, this cannot be concluded from the present research.

In conclusion, there has been a diffusion of frames through contagion, without direct contact of activists (in general) that has alerted about the importance of some aspects of democracy. Some of these aspects are higher demands of transparency, decisions are much more closely examined, the importance of accountability, more prominence given to citizens' needs, or the relevance of listening to citizens. There have not been democratic innovations in the EP influenced by the anti-austerity movements' conception of deliberative democracy. However, elements that were crucial in the movements' conception of democracy are currently considered essential. There is a general agreement that transparency, accountability, listening to citizens and taking their claims into account are central aspects of European democracy. The majority of MEPs in the EP believe that these are basic aspects. It is worth noting that this position is shared by left and right-wing MEPs although there is a difference in the explanation of this position. Left-wing MEPs consider that citizen pressure and social movements, included the anti-austerity movements, have made impossible to ignore these basic aspects of democracy. On the other hand, right-wing MEPs believe that this is a transformation that has been evolving for a long time and they do not relate it to citizens' pressure, protest, or social movements. Right-wing MEPs tend to explain these changes as evolutions of the European institutions. In any case, at the level of discourse, no MEP affirms that there is no need to listen to citizens or that transparency and accountability are not important.

Furthermore, this research shows that anti-austerity movements' influence has been stronger in left-wing MEPs, especially from the GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA groups which in some cases have even taken part in the anti-austerity mobilizations. Even if the influence is weak, these aspects are not possible to ignore and at least there have been some cosmetic changes in the EP where the centrality of citizens has to be mentioned discursively. The differentiated influence depending on the country of origin of the

MEP has not been confirmed. Therefore, further research should be needed in that aspect. At the same time, another important element that should be further analysed is the impact of information and communication technologies on changes in politics and the way of doing politics.

8.2 Theoretical and political implications

This thesis can contribute to support and keep the debate open on two main aspects: first, the consideration of the EU as a space for social movements' protest and second, the processes of democratization from below.

The first aspect is the understanding of the EU as an area of protest, a contested area with political and discursive opportunities for social movements. Research on European integration was initially centred on Member States as the main actors but with the constructivist turn in international relations, a variety of actors (with their interests and visions) was taken into account. As has been explained, social movements have traditionally been discriminated in international relations theory as agents of institutional changes in the international system. The main focus of the discipline has examined the states as the principal actors. Moreover, the EU has traditionally been seen as a space that has lacked opportunities for social movements.

However, with the intensification of the process of European integration, contestation directed towards European institutions has increased. Previous research has shown that European contention has been rising (Imig and Tarrow, 2000; Imig, 2002), there is an increased politicization of the debate on European issues and Europe is discussed to a greater extent. European integration is a process that is shaped by contestation, negotiation and compromise of multiple ranges of actors, being social movements one of them. Europe can influence values, norms and discourses and actors within the European civil society may engage in that process potentially transforming structures of power. At the same time, the European construction has consequences on protest and may reshape the forms and practices of social movements. Hence, the study of social movements in the transnational arena of the EU is relevant to the development of the EU. As we have seen, anti-austerity movements do not directly engage with EU institutions but contest them at the local and national levels. As has been explained in this thesis, anti-austerity movements do not demand anything of the European

institutions. Nevertheless, their strength at the local and national levels and the spread of the movements worldwide made them a phenomenon that is impossible to ignore. The results of the observation carried out at the level of discourse shows that this contestation has had outcomes in the EP.

The second theoretical implication of this research is the relationship between protest and the widening and deepening of democracy, in this case in its deliberative conception. Anti-austerity movements push the criticism over the limitations of democratic deliberation which usually refer to the need for expert knowledge as well as the limits of direct democracy. The pressure from the mobilization for more democracy is a process of democratic widening and deepening through mobilization and social movements' actions. The conception of democracy from the movements may entail more political participation, bring reforms to the state or institutions and many even improve democracy. It is a conception that has been pushed from below, from civil society. These aspects remain to be confirmed in the long term. However, as we have seen in this research, there are some elements such as the importance of transparency, accountability or the emphasis on listening to citizens and take them into account, that are considered as crucial aspects of any democracy. Of course transformations in democracy not always come from civil society, but the processes of democratization from below are usually forgotten (Della Porta, 2014).

Beyond theoretical implications, this research can contribute to the understanding of processes in the EU regarding democracy and democratic quality. In the first place, the old criticism and debate about the democratic deficit in the EU has evolved towards the frustration with formal politics and existing democracy. At the European level mechanisms for citizen participation are very complex and limited. In the second place, the criticism of the influence of lobbies is now overcome by the consideration of EU as a playground for multinationals, where the financial interest is privileged before the interest of citizens. As a consequence, citizens' perception that there is no real democracy implies distrust in the EU democratic project. Anti-austerity mobilizations expressed a sense of failure of democracy but its observations also display a re-imagination of democracy that may contribute to regaining trust and legitimacy of EU institutions. It reveals the need for adjustment to achieve citizens' compliance.

8.3 Limitations and further research

This thesis seeks to open avenues for future research and rather than providing close answers, it opens new research questions. The thesis has two main limitations that should be further explored. The first one is the examination of differences between EU countries regarding the levels of impact from the anti-austerity movements. A comparative study should assess whether there are differences in the influence that movements have imprint in politics and society. Beyond the general features, anti-austerity movements are mainly locally organized and totally autonomous and therefore they have their own specificities in each context although they are globally networked. This analysis goes beyond the scope of the present thesis but it would contribute to the understanding of the influence of the movements in the EP.

The second limitation is the difficulty to clearly define the changes produced by the mobilization from anti-austerity movements and those generated by the transformations caused by the information and communications technologies. Both phenomena are intertwined and, in fact, as Manuel Castells explains the anti-austerity movements are the movements of the information age, defined by a new organization and technological context (Castells, 2009: 24). Therefore, future research should examine the role of new information technologies in changing politics and observe whether this technological context facilitates accountability, enhances democracy and bring institutions closer to citizens or not (also at European level).

Future research should also look at what has happened in other EU institutions: EC, ECB and the Council. In order to better assess the impact of anti-austerity movements, observations should be carried out in these institutions and trace possible changes caused by the mobilizations. This research would contribute to the analysis of the influence of anti-austerity movements in the EU. Furthermore, the observation of changes in international institutions like the IMF or also in the United Nations would contribute to assessing whether there are any of the aspects of democracy that were emphasized by anti-austerity movements that are present in this institutions. It could be noticed whether they express more concern about citizen participation or transparency. This observation would provide a more detailed picture of the international influence of the anti-austerity cycle of protest.

Anti-austerity movements did not engage with European or international institutions. They did not seek to influence institutions. Anti-austerity movements wanted to transform society, to completely change the way democracy works and re-imagine how societies could be organized. Their irruption and spread entailed a cultural change that has had many consequences at different levels and they will be discerned in the years to come.

Annexes

Annex 1: State of the Union debates

2011 State of the Union debate			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Response to crisis	João Ferreira - GUE/NGL	Portugal	“the applause that united the Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats) and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament is enlightening and symbolic of a ‘unity’ that has driven the EU and its Member States to the current crisis, which is still there, as can be seen from the adoption of the economic governance package, welcomed by Dr Barroso. [...] That package represents the reinforcement of the Stability and Growth Pact and the restrictions inherent to it, which particularly affect the weaker economies and are largely responsible for Portugal’s weak economic growth over the last decade”
	Laurence J. A. J. Stassen - non-attached	Netherlands	“The euro crisis was caused by the southern euro area countries being allowed to borrow money too easily. [...] Member States, such as the Netherlands, whose household budgets are in order, are being squeezed out like a lemon in order to foot the bill for fraudulent Greece, for example”.
	Jaroslav Paška – EFD	Slovakia	“Mr President, please try to stand up before Slovakia’s citizens and tell them that they have to save even more and get even more deeply into debt only to maintain the much higher incomes in the wealthier, insolvent countries. I do not think that you can really appeal to people’s sense of solidarity in this case”
	Niki Tzavela – EFD	Greece	“We in the south started as pigs and are now in a period of being guinea pigs. We do not object to that. If we have to be the guinea pigs for testing and finding out the methodology and the process of having a real coherence and a real unity within the European Union, we accept that, but how long will this experiment last? As a Greek, I accept all the criticism and admit that we have made mistakes and are still making mistakes, but I will do so within my own Parliament and my country. As a European, the question is: how long will the experiment last?”
Taxes	Lothar Bisky – GUE/NGL	Germany	“Europe needs a jointly coordinated, democratically legitimate, economic, fiscal and social policy based on solidarity. Therefore, we will support you, Mr Barroso, when you finally present the promised legislative proposals, which have been called for by Parliament, as the first steps towards comprehensive regulation of the financial markets, taxation of financial market transactions and Eurobonds in order to reaffirm the principle of solidarity in the European Union”
Profits vs citizens	Angelika Werthmann – non-attached	Austria	“To get out of this crisis we have to help and support Europe’s people first”.
	Diane Dodds - non-attached	United Kingdom	“The political class in this House, led by you and the Presidents in this House, should hang their heads in shame. We have a monetary union that has been politically inspired. It is an ideology that is not working and that is costing Europe’s citizens a significant amount of money as they suffer cuts and more and more depression and a greater downturn in economic growth”
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	Zita Gurmai - S&D	Hungary	“the legitimacy of the European construction is being questioned”
	Miloslav Ransdorf - GUE/NGL	Czech Republic	“following the events of 1953 in Berlin, when the politburo of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany issued the statement that the people had forfeited the confidence of the politburo, Bertolt Brecht recommended that the politburo elect another people who would

			not forfeit its confidence. I got the impression from the speech of President Barroso and others that the European states, the European nations, had forfeited the confidence of the Commission. I would therefore like to recommend that President Barroso elects another European people, who will not forfeit his confidence”
	Mirosław Piotrowski – ECR	Poland	“all the talk about the economic crisis is ignoring the crisis of democracy and the crisis of values. [...] the process of constructing a European state is being carried on without any reference to the most important values upon which Europe is built, by which I mean Christian values. What is more, we are witnessing an attempt to disown them. It needs to be stated clearly and emphatically that no reform will be successful without a return to the true roots of Europe”
	Jean-Paul Gauzès – EPP	France	“beyond the economic, financial and social crisis that you described, and the confidence crisis, there was and is a political decision crisis”
	Rui Tavares - Greens/EFA	Portugal	“The purpose of this would be that, in the end, when there are good ideas on the table, they cannot be killed off by the leaders of Paris or Berlin at a summit next door to a casino, and that the voice of the 500 million would make itself heard so that we could have a European Union with genuine solidarity”
Listen to people	Nigel Farage – EFD	United Kingdom	“The intolerance is so deep that, when we get referendums in France, the Netherlands and Ireland that reject your view, you as a political class see it as a problem to be overcome. So I am very worried about the whole root of this Union”
	Nigel Farage – EFD	United Kingdom	“There is a new nationalism that is sweeping Europe. You want to abolish the nation states, in your case, Mr Schulz, perhaps because you are ashamed of your past. And you now want this flag and a new anthem to replace nation states and you do not care how you get there. If you have to crush national democracy, if you have to oppose popular referendums, you just sweep this aside and say that it is populism. [...] But it is not, it is democracy. What is sweeping northern Europe now, starting off in April with that amazing result in the Finnish general election, is a new democratic revolution. It is not anti-European. It wants a Europe of trade; it wants a Europe of cooperation; it wants a Europe where we can do student exchanges and we can work in each others’ capital cities; it wants those things. But it does not want this European Union model. Frankly, you are all now yesterday’s men”

2012 State of the Union debate

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the EC	-	“This [the irresponsible behaviour of the financial sectors] was the crux of the problem, and let me tell you that sadly we can see that some people in the financial sector have learnt nothing. After what happened we continued to receive reports of rigging with Libor, manipulating the interest rates. We have seen banks in the United States that are financing Iran contrary to all the legislation of the United States. We have seen banks from Britain financing drug smuggling in Mexico. We continue to see some intolerable practices in the financial sector. [...] we need to see how we came here. We came to this situation because the financial markets did not behave properly and that was the responsibility not of the European Union but of the national supervisors”.
	Kristiina Ojuland – ALDE	Estonia	“you stated in your speech that Europe needs a new direction, but then you started talking about the social market economy. Will all due respect, I believe that the socialist approach to the market economy is clearly a thing of the past, and it is partly due to this

			approach that Europe is in crisis today”
Response to crisis	Diogo Feio – EPP	Portugal	“I recall you saying that the current crisis requires a political solution. That is precisely what the public, some of whom are protesting while others are not, are asking of us, and that is precisely why we should stress that more Europe means more Europe for citizens and resolving their problems”
	Gabriele Zimmer - GUE/NGL	Germany	“We need to restore that faith and we can only do this by finally taking on the task of creating a social, green and democratic Europe based on the principle of solidarity, a democratic Union which also fulfils its obligation as a global player to show solidarity with others. I would like to distance myself totally from what has just been said by those on the right. [...] the Commission as a European institution wants to ensure that people are no longer pushed into poverty, that working hours are not increased and that environmental and social standards are not ignored”
	Daniel Cohn-Bendit - Greens/EFA	France	“Having a flexible labour market with secure working conditions is obviously right. Take a country like Greece, where unemployment has reached astounding levels. Do you believe that, if we were to now organise a flexible labour market, like the one you want, this country can pay for the security? If we now want flexicurity for some poor countries, whether that is Greece, Spain, Italy or any other country with a serious unemployment crisis. [...] If you want there to be a genuine social pact, for Europe to have the means to help those States who are not able to provide security, like the United States can do with their budget, well, we will not achieve this with 1%, and not even with the amount proposed by the Commission”
	Glenis Willmott - S&D	United Kingdom	“Do we want a Europe of austerity, pursuing policies which clearly are not working, or do we want a Europe that gives hope to our young people?”
	Zigmantas Balčytis - S&D	Lithuania	“For a long time we have been convinced that the crisis is coming to an end and that in order to exit it as soon as possible we need to take the toughest austerity measures. Now we can see that such austerity measures have reduced consumption and budget revenue collection, have significantly increased unemployment and have halted economic growth in the Member States in the long term. The majority of economists recognise that tough austerity measures have not provided the anticipated benefits but simply further hampered the EU’s economic and social recovery”
	João Ferreira - GUE/NGL	Portugal	“There will be no end to the crisis as long as these policies continue. Instead of thinking again and opting for a change in direction and policies, Mr Barroso is now proposing amendments to the institutional architecture of the EU. These amendments are aimed primarily at creating new and more favourable conditions for pursuing those same policies that have brought about disaster and social regression, and which have been brutally imposed on workers and people, with well-known consequences. New institutional shifts are being announced, giving new and greater expression to the growing confrontation between the EU and democracy”
	Andreas Mölzer - non-attached	Austria	“When the President of the European Central Bank (ECB), Mr Draghi, says that the euro is irreversible, this is nothing more than an admission that we have been taking the wrong path, which is intended to lead to the creation of a transfer and debt union. When the ECB buys government bonds from ailing states, it is bending if not breaking the law. Countries which for years have lived above their means are to be rewarded and those which have applied budgetary discipline are to be punished. [...] The question also arises as to who should pay for the whole euro disaster. We cannot continue asking the economically successful euro countries, such as Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, to come up with the cash. This simply will not work. They have already reached the limits of their ability to pay and if Spain requires more money than is currently expected and if Italy also turns out to need the euro rescue package, they will be the last dominos to fall. Therefore, we need to put in place rules as quickly as possible for excluding bankrupt states from the euro zone”

	Tadeusz Cymański – EFD	Poland	“The European Union’s current problem is that it is trying to tackle the crisis by drastically reducing public spending in order to reduce budget deficits. In this way, by forcing savings, although we can of course improve the general state of public finances temporarily, we are also restricting opportunities for growth, thus threatening the continent with a deepening crisis and large-scale recession. Some Member States are also pushing for an ideology of reduced public spending at the level of the EU budget in the period up to 2020. It is difficult to understand such a policy in the current economic situation since we know that EU funds play a major part in stimulating the economy, and not only on the demand side, but also through the mechanisms for their acquisition, such as co-financing and the need for job creation, that is to say by an emphasis on new ventures”
	Ildikó Gáll-Pelecz – EPP	Hungary	“Your plans are, as always, indeed very nice and promising, but I am afraid that they are unrealistic. You are assuming that you have been managing the crisis correctly for three years. Unfortunately the situation is much, much more subtle than that. We are already far behind schedule. We are trying to struggle through an economic crisis, adopting austerity packages, and drafts and sanctions incompatible with the Treaty”
	Marine Le Pen - non-attached	France	“the euro and federalism form a sacrificial religion that stifles farmers, artisans, small and medium-sized enterprises and industries, who are the movers and shakers in our society, in other words, the real and living economic force. [...] together we should be introducing a mechanism, as soon as possible, enabling an effective exit from the euro rather than suffering the catastrophic consequences of its impending collapse. For this reason, I call for the introduction of referenda in France and in Europe on these crucial issues”
Profit vs citizens	Jörg Leichtfried - S&D	Austria	“We need a fairer tax system, in which large companies start to pay tax again. We need fairer wages, which allow working people to benefit from the immense wealth that they create. Most importantly, we need a fair market economy, which does not involve the shareholders being paid and, at the same time, the workers being made redundant. If those changes are made, we will have a Europe for the people. Otherwise, nothing will happen”
	Hans-Peter Martin - non-attached	Austria	“Mr Barroso, you have been speaking about the irresponsible actions of the banks which triggered the crisis. However, we are also aware that we politicians have failed, because we have not kept the banks under control. [...] I would like to repeat that you should be concentrating solely on regulating the financial markets. It is clear from conversations with people all over Europe that this is a very important issue. A new conspiracy theory is now going the rounds which claims that Europe is really governed by Goldman Sachs, because Mr Draghi, Mr Monti and many of the events in Greece have direct links with Goldman Sachs. These are dangerous trends. However, if you manage to get the financial sector under control, then you will no longer have to be concerned about sovereign power. I am convinced that we can win the referendums, but the key word is, of course, not ‘banking union’, but ‘citizens union’ or to put it briefly ‘citizens not banks’”
Social Europe	Hannes Swoboda - S&D	Austria	“Germany is also sliding into recession. One third of Germans are worried about social exclusion. That is today’s Europe. If we want to defend Europe, it should not be a Europe like this. [...] The ladies and gentlemen on the right of this House are very keen on having a fiscal compact. I agree. With great difficulty and only as a result of pressure from the new French Government, we have a growth pact, a weak one, but a growth pact all the same. However, a social pact is apparently not important to you at all. [...] We need a social pact to combat the decline in solidarity in Europe, youth unemployment and old-age poverty and to promote the integration of our foreign and immigrant fellow citizens”
	Joanna Senyszyn - S&D	Poland	“Europeans have not lost faith in the EU project. The Eurobarometer results of last week show that 40% of respondents have a positive opinion of the EU. Most respondents thought the European Parliament was a recognisable and trustworthy institution

			of the EU. As in previous polls, citizens expect the European Parliament to fight poverty, social exclusion and unemployment effectively. This is why Parliament must be fully involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Compact for Growth and Jobs. In particular, we must deal with the issue of increasing employment as soon as possible. I therefore urge the Council to carry out an efficient analysis of the Commission's employment package, so that new jobs can be created"
	Segio Gaetano Cofferati – S&D	Italy	"making a Europe in which the Member States transfer sovereignty to our institutions may be important, but it is not enough to instil confidence and hope into millions of people who are today out of work or losing their jobs or seeing their lives becoming desperately harder"
	Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska – EPP	Poland	"More than one third of persons aged between 15 and 24 are not in education or employment. One quarter of the population under 25 are unemployed, and in Greece and Spain almost half of this age group are unemployed. Over 25% of unemployed young persons have been unable to find a job for a year or more. National labour markets mainly offer them poorly paid temporary work which does not match their education or skills. They could look for work abroad, but are often afraid to take advantage of this opportunity. Their fear could be alleviated if they travelled abroad during their studies, but for most of them this means using their own financial resources. It is mainly only the residents of large urban centres who are in a position to do so. How, then, can all young people believe in our common European project? How can they trust us when we call for further sacrifices while talking about equality and democracy?"
	Andrey Kovatchev – EPP	Bulgaria	"The cohesion policy must not be reduced – the Member States and their leaders must understand this and get the same message across in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg, when they return to their capitals in the Member States"
Inequality (rich vs poor / between MS)	Ildikó Gáll-Pelecz – EPP	Hungary	"What is this if not a wall, if we are not talking about uniform rules, and the EU is not functioning according to uniform rules? In my opinion, this should be changed, and I agree with you that we should be talking about a single EU and uniform rules in the interest of European citizens"
	Gabriele Zimmer – GUE/NGL	Germany	"What is the people's opinion of this, how will they become involved and whose interest does a future model of this kind ultimately serve? If we can answer this question, it will probably be easier for us to discuss the sort of Europe that we need in the future. [...] An earlier speaker mentioned, for example, the question of the Commission withdrawing its proposal for quotas for women and I would like to know why this is being done. In the light of the fact that most of the proposals for bringing an end to the crisis and developing the future European Union have been made by men, and in this context the presence of Ms Merkel by no means constitutes equality"
	Iliana Ivanova – EPP	Bulgaria	"The crisis exposed serious flaws in the supervision of the banking sector in the EU Member States. The problems of the banking systems of some countries in the euro area caused serious problems to their public finances. However, now the cost is being paid by the European taxpayer. [...] However, assurances are needed that the ten Member States outside the euro area will not be put on the back burner and that their voices will continue to be heard. This is the only way to ensure equality when making decisions on our common European future"
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	Silvia-Adriana Țicău - S&D	Romania	"President Barroso, on behalf of the Romanian citizens, I call on the Commission's support for the accession of both Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area, which would be a significant step towards the contract of confidence between the European institutions and the European citizens"
	Marine Le Pen – non-attached	France	"I call for early European elections to be held given the rapid decline of our respective countries, which are being dragged down precisely because of the 'state of the European Union'"

2013 State of the Union debate

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Response to crisis	José Manuel Barroso – EC President	-	<p>“In Spain, as a signal of the very important reforms and increased competitiveness, exports of goods and services now make up 33% of GDP, more than ever since the introduction of the euro. [...] Ireland has been able to draw money from capital markets since the summer of 2012, the economy is expected to grow for a third consecutive year in 2013 and Irish manufacturing companies are rehiring staff. In Portugal, the external current account, which was structurally negative, is now expected to be broadly balanced, and growth is picking up after many quarters in the red. [...] Greece has completed, in just three years, a truly remarkable fiscal adjustment, is regaining competitiveness and is nearing for the first time in decades a primary surplus. And Cyprus, which started the programme later, is also implementing that programme as scheduled, which is a precondition for a return to growth. [...] My point is this: for Europe, recovery is within sight. Let us be realistic in analysis, let us not overestimate the positive results but let us not also underestimate what has been done”</p> <p>“We have a significant and increased trade surplus of more than EUR 300 billion a year in goods, services and agriculture. We need to build on that. This too will demand our full attention in the months to come, notably with the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the US and the negotiations with Canada and Japan”</p> <p>“Some will campaign saying that we have given too much money to vulnerable countries. Others will say we have given too little money to the most vulnerable countries, but every one of us can explain what we did and why: there is a direct link between one country’s loans and another country’s banks, between one country’s investments and another country’s businesses, between one country’s workers and another country’s companies. This kind of interdependence means only European solutions can work. What I tell people is: when you are in the same boat, one cannot say: ‘your end of the boat is sinking’. We were in the same boat when things went well, and we are in it together when things are difficult”</p> <p>“We have a lot to do still: namely, adopting and implementing the European budget, the MFF. This is critical for investment in our regions all over Europe. This is indispensable for the first priority we have: the fight against unemployment, notably youth unemployment. [...] Another priority is to advance and implement the banking union. This is critical in order to address the problem of financing for businesses and SMEs”</p>
	Hannes Swoboda - S&D	Austria	<p>“[...] I demand from the Commission more policies for economic recovery, more policies on social cohesion and solidarity, and more capacity to defend the rule of the law in Europe. [...] We cannot defend the interests of our citizens if we go back to nationalism and xenophobia. We have to go forward towards a common united Europe”</p>
	Hannes Swoboda - S&D	Austria	<p>“You spoke about increasing investment confidence. But why, Mr Barroso, is there a lack of confidence on the part of Europe’s citizens? This is another question that the Commission and the Commission President need to answer. Recently, Prime Minister Samaras, of the future Greek Presidency of the Council, spoke about a Greek recovery. With 60% of young people still unemployed and with efforts to find a new package for Greece, it is astonishing that some people should talk about a recovery. [...] Turning to Spain, you probably read the recent article about the</p>

			young generation there: the children who have to go to school to be fed because they cannot get enough meals at home. And do you know, Mr Barroso, how many jobs have been created in Spain in the last few months? The answer is 31. Thirty-one new jobs: this is the recovery in Spain! It is a scandal. [...] As for Portugal, your own country, Mr Barroso, I do not know whether you have spoken, as I did recently when I was in Setúbal, with Caritas, who can show you children being taken out of kindergarten because people are ashamed to send their children to kindergarten with poor clothes”
	Inês Cristina Zuber – GUE/NGL	Portugal	“Barroso also bet on the argument that change is there, the signs of economic recovery are finally showing up after our efforts. Portugal served as an example - growth returned to the country after a series of negative quarters. The Portuguese economy, as we know, did not grow, what happened was that the pace of the recession slowed slightly and circumstantially. The Portuguese live a real social drama, with prospects of worsening through the announced measures of dismissals and cuts in pensions”
	Glenis Willmott - S&D	United Kingdom	“I am afraid that for many, this message really just does not fit the reality and, while you may be thinking about popping open the champagne, I would air some caution as the real work is yet to begin. The financial markets may be recovering and the experts may be more optimistic about the EU economy, but if you step outside the bubble, you will see the true consequences of austerity: living, social and working standards dropping; ordinary people feeling the pain; exploitation by predatory employers using zero-hour contracts; a massive rise in food banks and the need for aid across the EU, while energy prices rise and unemployment remains cripplingly high. Now is not the time to congratulate ourselves. Now is the time to get to work and stop the erosion of living and working conditions caused by austerity across the EU”
	Monika Flašíková Beňová - S&D	Slovakia	“The persistent economic and social crisis has a strong impact on the most vulnerable groups of the EU population. The enormous levels of unemployment, bankruptcies and unreasonable cuts in the public sector lead to an increase in the phenomenon of poverty and to a situation where our citizens can not provide basic social services and rights, such as the right to a dignified life, the right to education, the right to work, care, the right to emergency assistance, etc. The poor economic and social situation of our populations causes distrust in the sense of the European project and in the European Union as such. The Union's current problems make people feel their own skin. We can not be surprised that they are increasingly skeptical. Residents of individual Member States do not feel the real results of our efforts. Anti-crisis measures are not effective enough. There is a need to take concrete measures to promote sustainable and smart growth, create new jobs, take measures to guarantee young people that they can start working on the labor market after finishing their studies rather than throw away their talents at the employment offices. The necessary measures are needed to promote the EU's competitiveness. Measures must be taken to revive our single market and to support small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who are irreplaceable in the context of economic recovery. The Union needs a deeper integration and a greater degree of mutual solidarity”
	Mitro Repo - S&D	Finland	“Mr Barroso, recognition of the facts is the beginning of wisdom. It is unforgivable to let the European project drain into the ashes of the wind. We must accept that the average European is entitled to feel frustrated and even fooled about the recent economic crisis in different phases and in different instances. The politics that irresponsibly overwhelms promises, even without trying to redeem them, can not lead to bankruptcy. Keeping the tens of summits, after which people are told over and over again about the historical decisions taken to resolve the crisis, can not be without even the most honest European”
	Philip Claeys - non-attached	Belgium	“Citizens are now turning away from the European Union more and more so they find it difficult, they find it complex, and the EU is taking money away from them”

	Laurence J.A.J. Stassen – non-attached	Netherlands	“What planet are you living on Mr Barroso? [...]. Citizens [...] are fed up with being guinea pigs, they don’t want to have these experiments carried out to their detriment, they have had enough [...]. We’re now on the eve of a real change, a substantial change, a paradigm shift in terms of our electorate. There’ll be a European spring soon”
	Sandra Kalniete – EPP	Latvia	“Member States should not stop by the reforms that have been made. Work has to continue, as economic growth is still unpredictably weak in the euro area. If Member States do not pursue reforms, then this can indeed be called a lost decade [...]. Latvia as an example of which the government and the people have done their best to make a lasting and sustainable economic boost. However, Southern European countries must also understand the harsh reality that they will have to adopt a series of unpleasant decisions to maintain a high standard of living in the future”
	Guy Verhofstadt – ALDE	Belgium	“It is far too easy only to see the negative points, as has been done a few minutes ago – but it is also not fair only to see the positive signs and say, OK, it is over now, we are going up again. That is not true. What we are in fact seeing is a second phase in this crisis: a long period of economic stagnation that we are about to enter – what I call a Japanese winter. [...] the State of the Union address, Mr Barroso, is that it fails to show a consistent vision for that problem: how to avoid a Japanese winter, how to avoid two lost decades of economic stagnation in the next twenty years. What do we do to avoid that? What is our common vision so we do not fall into that trap?”
	Jean-Pierre Audy – EPP	France	“We are facing a crisis of confidence which is the worst possible crisis [...]. How can we regain that trust on the part of our citizens? Well, we have to tell them the truth. The truth is that Member states have been overspending, they have incurred debts and these are not manageable debts”
	Dominique Vlasto – EPP	France	“the results are there, and reforms in supervision, fiscal consolidation and convergence are beginning to bear fruit. In most member countries, unemployment is falling and industrial activity is picking up again. Nothing will ever be the same as before, or at least hope. If Europe has tools to guard against relapse, it is now a question of convincing states that let slip the public debt to make courageous choices”
	John Bufton – EFD	United Kingdom	“And this incessant pursuit of forming a Europe-wide banking union is unlikely to aid recovery. It is, if anything, more likely to lead Europe into an even deeper financial mess. Similarly, his suggestion that we continue to work in the same way to alleviate unemployment levels in the EU is simply absurd. One look at the figures tells us that the schemes and systems implemented to date have been ineffective – and yet he insists on forcing the Member States to continue down this road to ruin”
Social Europe	Corina Crețu - S&D	Romania	“austerity has increased unemployment, poverty and Euroscepticism. At the same time, there is no step towards what we call "more Europe". The Barroso Commission did not have the vision and courage needed to push the European construction forward. There are initiatives such as the "banking union" and the "youth guarantee" blocked in a bureaucratic process that needs to be accelerated [...]. Although austerity has disappeared from the vocabulary of Europeans, it is a reality at Union level, reflected also in the Council's perception of the European budget for the next seven years. It is unacceptable to cut the budget allocated to job creation for young people and to innovation by one billion euros at the last minute”
	Silvia-Adriana Țicău - S&D	Romania	“Trust of the 500 million European citizens in their own future. The employment rate is only 68.4%, research and development spending is only 2.02% of gross domestic product (GDP), 12.8% of the 18-24 year old population has dropped out of school early and 119.8 million European citizens are on the verge of poverty or social exclusion. The state of the Union can not be improved without investing in education and health, in decent employment and in guaranteeing a decent pension”
	Tonino	Croatia	“Every new European generation will have less permanent

	Picula - S&D		employment than the previous one. Citizens of Europe face continuing economic uncertainty and you are among those most responsible for the situation”
	Hannes Swoboda - S&D	Austria	“I also want to raise the issue of health and safety regulations because I mentioned the health situation earlier. You need only look briefly at the book <i>The body economic: why austerity kills</i> . It kills in the true sense. Under austerity, among other things, the rate of suicide is increasing, so we also need health and safety regulations from the Commission”
	Danuta Jazłowiecka – EPP	Poland	“Data from the European economy show that the worst period of the crisis is over. However, [...] Most analysts agree that the small economic growth that awaits us in the next few years will not increase the number of jobs. We also can not forget that the ones that arise are usually of a temporary nature and are low-paid. The EU therefore needs a new industrial policy. Sanation activities in recent years have focused mainly on reducing public spending. The situation on the labor market shows very clearly that these activities were perhaps not wrong, but certainly too one-sided. It is necessary to supplement them with initiatives that support the creation of jobs, and these should aim at attracting industrial investments to Europe. We can not deceive ourselves that new or green technologies will not create jobs for all Europeans”
	Filip Kaczmarek – EPP	Poland	“It is good that the EU is trying to reduce the scale of unemployment. Let us not forget, however, that neither the state nor international organizations - in general - create jobs. We should therefore concentrate on creating conditions for those who, in turn, will create lasting jobs. We can help entrepreneurs create wealth, but do not try to replace them”
	Marian-Jean Marinescu – EPP	Romania	“Debate about austerity and jobs has led to a rise in populism. Member states have to take measures under the European semester to invest sensibly in development and job growth”
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	Nicole Sinclaire - non-attached	United Kingdom	“Mr Barroso, your own Commission’s poll shows there is no trust in the EU. The people of the biggest five countries feel the EU is not working. Two-thirds of people across the EU think their views are not being heard. No wonder – but when they do express an opinion, for example in a rare referendum, they are treated with contempt and told that somehow they do not understand. The arrogance is palpable. The people must be listened to. Let the people decide”
	Ismail Ertug - S&D	Germany	“EU policy has been experiencing a crisis of legitimacy, as the European population has been increasingly unsettled by the austerity policies of the Eurozone. Many people are now critical of not only this policy, but also the European integration process. Therefore, we must try to win back the population for our policies and actions”
2015 State of the Union debate			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Response to crisis	Jean-Claude Juncker, EC President	-	“Every individual has the right and entitlement to a job and this is something which is of paramount importance in Europe. [...] we need to return to a situation of full employment. This is far from impossible. Of course this will presuppose that we continue to consolidate our budgets and to work on structural reform and to invest [...]. The Council has a 315 million investment plan which we hope will be launched in detail in the foreseeable future”
2016 State of the Union debate			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference

Austerity			
Social Europe	Tanja Fajon - S&D	Slovenia	“Many Europeans either forgot about this identity [European] or never knew about it. Why? [...] because we are not offering a social Europe”
	Olga Sehnalová - S&D	Czech Republic	“The question also is what will be part of the EU's social pillar and what will be the real results of the fight against tax evasion”
	Tibor Szanyi - S&D	Hungary	“the key to solving the problems currently facing the Union is the return to the core values of integration [...], calling for the EU's "social pillar" to be built. Rapid and effective action in this area also serves to regain European citizens' trust and support”
	Sergei Stanishev - S&D	Bulgaria	“in order to help the European Union and create perspective, you need to address the root causes and therein the fact that, in the five years of the Barroso Commission, social Europe fell victim to an austerity—only policy. When you were elected as President of the Commission, you promised to change that. You said that Europe should have social triple—A standards, but this is not a reality yet. What the socialist family is expecting from you and from the Commission is for you to have a clear road map which will balance the freedom of economy and initiative with clear social standards across the European Union. [...] I would urge you one more time to seriously address the issue of youth in the European Union. Our family proposed a clear plan, a European youth plan, with four clear pillars: employment with much more money for that for the Youth Guarantee – and I did not hear your commitment – culture, education and child protection”
	Isabelle Thomas - S&D	France	“For how many years now have citizens seen the social pillar non exist? Nobody believes in it. How can we possibly be happy if 80% of legislation in Europe has been held up? Yes, Europe is waiting for action. But we have no proof when it comes to the budget and the lack of money and funds and no action at all”

Annex 2: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Presidents and members of the European Commission, European Council and European Central Bank

Greece		
Institution	Debate	Reference
José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission	Preparation for the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 24 March 2010	“In response to the economic and financial situation in Greece, the informal meeting of the Heads of State or Government on 11 February stated that, and I quote, ‘euro area Member States will take determined and coordinated action, if needed, to safeguard financial stability in the euro area as a whole’”.
José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission	Programme of activities of the Greek Presidency – 15 January 2014	“Let us not forget that some people, not so long ago, were predicting that Greece would exit the euro and that Greece could even leave the European Union. In the more apocalyptic scenarios, some people were even predicting the implosion of the euro and, eventually, the disintegration of the European Union. [...] The fact that today the Prime Minister of Greece, with his strong European commitment and pride in the commitment of his country to Europe, is here standing among us, launching this new Presidency, proves that the prophets of doom were wrong. The resilience and determination of the Greek people are far, far greater than the scaremongers were ready to foresee”.
Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission	ECB annual report for 2008 - Report on the 2009 Annual Statement on the Euro Area and Public Finances - 25 March 2010	“in addition to the immediate crisis management, we need to look at how similar situations can be avoided in the future so that we never again have cases similar to the Greek case now. The Greek crisis has demonstrated the need for enhanced economic governance”.
Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council	Conclusions of the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 7 April 2010	<p>“We fully support the efforts of the Greek Government and welcome the additional measures announced on 3 March, which are sufficient to safeguard the 2010 budgetary targets. Those measures were requested by the informal European Council of 11 February”.</p> <p>“the Greek Government has shown itself to be in complete agreement with the conclusions of the European Council [...] Thirdly, they have not yet asked for financial support. They repeated that again yesterday”.</p> <p>“the Greek finance minister said this very clearly yesterday. He did not, I repeat once again, request financial assistance. He hopes that once the results of his efforts are visible, the spreads will decrease. [...] Therefore, making all kinds of statements and spreading all kinds of rumours is very harmful to Greek taxpayers, because not only does it not help anyone, it is also to the detriment of those who have to endure a number of measures because action was not taken quickly enough in their country previously”.</p>
Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the Commission	Conclusions of the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 7 April 2010	<p>“After intensive and earnest debate, it not only agreed on the essence of the Commission’s proposals for the Europe 2020 strategy on growth and jobs but it also decided on a mechanism to ensure financial stability in the euro area capable of providing financial support to Greece, should the need arise”.</p> <p>“we have a solution for Greece and we have a solution for the Eurozone [...] if there is a need and a request from Greece, then I am sure the whole eurozone and the Commission would mobilise and come to the rescue of that country. So we have the mechanism, we have the means,</p>

		and we are ready to use them if it comes to it”.
EU response to crisis		
Institution	Debate	Reference
Jean-Claude Trichet, President of the European Central Bank	ECB annual report for 2008 - Report on the 2009 Annual Statement on the Euro Area and Public Finances - 25 March 2010	<p>“Overall, our non-standard monetary policy measures, which are known collectively as enhanced credit support, have served, we trust, the euro area economy well. They have supported the functioning of the money market, contributed to improving financing conditions and allowed for a better flow of credit to the real economy than could have been achieved through interest rate reductions alone. By and large, banks have been passing on the sharply lower key ECB interest rates to households and businesses”.</p> <p>“Thus far, a great deal of attention has been focused on the banking sector. Effective reforms also have to look very closely at non-bank financial institutions and at the set-up and functioning of financial markets. We have to devise mechanisms and incentives to ensure that finance does not spiral out of control in the destructive way that it did just prior to the crisis”.</p> <p>“Greece has a role model, and the role model is Ireland. Ireland had an extremely difficult problem – this was said by one of the MEPs here – and Ireland took its problem very seriously ex ante, with extreme determination, professionalism and capacity, and this has been recognised by all. I want to stress that. That being said, I repeat: the judgment of the ECB on the new measures which have been taken by the Greek Government is that they are convincing and, I would add, courageous”.</p>
Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission	ECB annual report for 2008 - Report on the 2009 Annual Statement on the Euro Area and Public Finances - 25 March 2010	“First and foremost, we needed to prevent unsustainable public deficits and therefore we need to be better able to monitor the mid-term budgetary policies of the euro area Member States. We need to be able to issue broader and more stringent recommendations to the Member States to take corrective measures [...]. I just want to conclude by saying that the financial crisis has harshly demonstrated that the continuous economic growth of past decades cannot be taken for granted. Today, the worst may be over. The economic recovery is now in progress but it is still fragile and not self-sustaining. Unemployment has not yet changed for the better. The same applies to the consolidation of public finances, which is a prerequisite for sustainable growth. No matter how important fiscal stimulus was for the economic recovery, the two years of the crisis have wiped out over 20 years of consolidation of public finances”.
Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council	Outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the ECOFIN meeting – Debate 19 May 2010	“Not only are recommendations being given in relation to the liquidity of its public accounts, but also regarding structural reforms in the pensions system and the need to undertake reforms in the health system. Then came 23 April, when an action mechanism was adopted regarding Greece. Yesterday, this mechanism was manifested for the first time in funds being sent to Greece by EU countries through the system of this agreed mechanism”.
Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission.	Outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the ECOFIN meeting – Debate 19 May 2010	<p>“With these decisions, Europe came up with a credible package that shows our citizens, the markets and the wider world that we will defend the euro – our common currency – whatever it takes”.</p> <p>“The essential cornerstone of reinforcing economic governance is to coordinate fiscal policy in advance, in order to ensure that national budgets are consistent with the jointly-agreed European policies and obligations, so that they will not put at risk the stability of the euro area as a whole and that of the other Member States. Some have criticised this, saying that this is a breach of parliamentary sovereignty. I myself am a former member of a national and the European Parliament, and I am fully aware of the sensitivities of parliamentary fiscal powers. However, everyone can see that this is not about breaching democracy or parliamentary sovereignty but ensuring that our Member States respect those very same rules which they have themselves decided on previously: in other words, to practice what you preach”</p>

		<p>“we must continue with vigilance and determination to safeguard financial stability in Europe and thus protect the still-fragile economic recovery of our continent. [...] we need to speed up, intensify and complete the regulatory reform of financial markets, bank levies, short selling and credit agencies. It is much better to act at a European level and to do it as soon as possible. We need to create a framework to correct the systemic errors of the financial markets [...]we need to work for the basic idea of a social market economy in order to create a credible legal framework for financial markets through completing the regulatory reform. [...] we need to move on to decisions concerning reinforcing economic governance in Europe; we need to strengthen the Stability and Growth Pact through preventive fiscal surveillance; we must put in place workable sanctions and they must be rules-based”.</p>
José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission	Review of the Greek Presidency – 2 July 2014	<p>“these last months have coincided with the beginning of the exit from the deep crisis in the European Union, perhaps the most difficult we have had since the creation of the European Community in the 1950s [...]We have now started on the road to recovery, but there is still a long way to go. [...]The reality is that economic confidence has improved and is improving in Europe. Growth across the European Union is predicted at 1.6% this year, rising to 2% by 2015. Investment is rebounding. Our collective excessive deficits are now under the 3% mark for the first time since the beginning of the crisis. Six more Member States have now exited the excessive deficit procedure, bringing the total number down to 11, fewer than half of the 24 countries which were in this position in 2011. I believe this is progress; and it shows that the Stability and Growth Pact is working”.</p> <p>“Despite the many prophets of doom, Greece has remained an integral, loyal, member of the euro area. I remember that, not so long ago, I personally had to discuss these matters not only with many in the European Union, but also outside the Union with those predicting a Greek exit and those predicting the implosion of the euro and even the disintegration of the European Union. It would be helpful if they could consider that they were wrong. Nobody denies that the recovery is still fragile and uneven. Growth is modest. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is, the biggest challenge facing us. We cannot afford a jobless recovery or a lost generation. That is why we need to speed up the work that is now on the table of the Council and Parliament. In fact, it is now possible to make more progress in that direction because very important achievements have been realised during these last months. Some of these developments were considered unthinkable a few years ago. If you had asked analysts in Europe and outside Europe, just two or three years ago, whether it would be possible to have a Banking Union and to have European Central Bank competence over national banks, they would have said it was not realistic”.</p>
Solidarity		
Institution	Debate	Reference
Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council	Preparation for the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 24 March 2010	“A strong political message on Europe will be sent out from that European Council; one of support for its economy, support for its currency and, therefore, a message of support for solidarity, because this is what the public is hoping for, although it is true that a number of Eurosceptics are hoping for failure”.
Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council	Outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the ECOFIN meeting - Debate 19 May 2010	“We need to deepen solidarity in the euro area, which is why the aid to Greece was so right and why the decision was so right to create this EUR 750 million fund – for a three-year period, so it is not yet completely permanent – to prevent possible difficult situations with public accounts or imbalances in public accounts”.
Social Europe		
Institution	Debate	Reference
Diego López Garrido, President-in-	Outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the	“we need to commit to competitiveness. It is therefore very important for the 2020 strategy to be adopted and launched in the European Council in June, and that it quantifies the targets, including on poverty

Office of the Council	ECOFIN meeting - Debate 19 May 2010	and social inclusion, which have not yet been quantified”.
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Annex 3: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Left-wing MEPs

1 - Preparation for the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 24 March 2010			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	Lothar Bisky - GUE/NGL	Germany	“recently in Strasbourg, we heard Mr Barroso thinking aloud as to whether the worst of the speculation on the financial markets should be banned outright”
	Georgios Toussas - GUE/NGL	Greece	“It is obvious that what is happening in Greece is directly connected to the acute competition between the imperialist states and between the European Union, the USA, China and other developing countries”
Greece	Takis Hatzigeorgiou - GUE/NGL	Greece	“I should like to tell you that in Cyprus, the interest rate currently stands at 6%. Anything above this level and the banks are on their knees and nothing can change this picture. We consider that the Council should also work in this direction in future, so that we do not see other countries getting into the same mess as Greece”
	Ilda Figueiredo - GUE/NGL	Portugal	“The response to the situation in Greece is an important matter, especially because what is happening there contradicts everything that was trumpeted about the virtues of the euro and the blessings of being in the euro area: being in the vanguard of the strong currency of rich countries. It was said that being in the euro area would be a safeguard against financial crises, as the country in question would be able to avoid loans and receive money from the International Monetary Fund”
	Hannes Swoboda - S&D	Austria	“Greece must do its own homework. From my point of view, however, it has also been stated quite clearly that there must be solidarity. Solidarity that helps Greece to accomplish what it has to do. Whatever the percentages, speculation may not be responsible for the crisis in Greece, but it is to blame for the huge burden that Greece now has to shoulder beyond what is necessary”
	Anni Podimata - S&D	Greece	“Today, the debate revolves around Greece; tomorrow it will probably concern another Member State. Will the European Council stop it by creating an effective European preventive mechanism which will safeguard the national economies and the stability of the euro area?”
Response to crisis	Takis Hatzigeorgiou - GUE/NGL	Greece	“We gave billions to the banks in a bid to get the banks rolling. Would it not have been better for the state to give this money as the interest rate on a mortgage for a primary residence, given that consumers were going to the bank to pay their instalment?”
	Georgios Toussas - GUE/NGL	Greece	“the anti-grassroots shotgun measures being promoted by the PASOK government in our country, with the fundamental agreement of all the political forces of capital and the parties of the European one-way street, are not unique to Greece”
Solidarity	Lothar Bisky - GUE/NGL	Germany	“it is rare for me to agree with the President of Parliament and the President of the Commission. However, when they both call for solidarity with Greece and warn of renationalisation, then I can only agree with them, because what they say is correct”
Social Europe	Lothar Bisky - GUE/NGL	Germany	“The increasing social chasm in the European Union and within the Member States can no longer be overlooked by anyone, yet the pressing issues associated with this are not on the agenda of the Heads of State at their first summit following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon”
	Stephen Hughes - S&D	United Kingdom	“What we need [...] is a smart balance between responsible fiscal policy on the one hand and continued labour market support on the other. We need a sustained social and sustainable exit strategy”

2 - ECB annual report for 2008, Report on the 2009 Annual Statement on the Euro Area and Public Finances - 25 March 2010			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	Liem Hoang Ngoc - S&D	France	“This crisis is far from behind us. The current recovery is all the more fragile given the fact that Europe is continuing with wage deflation and the Commission, but also the President of the Eurogroup and the President of the European Central Bank [...] are calling on the Member States to prematurely adopt exit policies that are comparable to real austerity plans”
	Anni Podimata - S&D	Greece	“Without doubt, the basic responsibility for this situation lies with Greece and it has fully assumed it. However, there are other – collective – responsibilities. The common currency has provided a great deal, but it also has serious weaknesses”
Greece	Michail Tremopoulos – Greens/EFA	Greece	“The increase in the budget deficit and public debt in Greece over the last two or three years was the result of the collapse in incomes, the reduction in income from abroad, such as tourism and shipping, due to the crisis, and the increase in public spending”
Response to crisis	Jürgen Klute - GUE/NGL	Germany	“we are calling for the ban on financial assistance for EU Member States to be lifted. The Member States in the euro area should make euro loans available, the European Central Bank should buy up debts in the same way that the Federal Reserve in the USA has done and credit default swaps should be banned. This is what we are calling for”
	Jaromír Kohlíček - GUE/NGL	Czech Republic	“The activities of the European Central Bank have, since its inception, been a subject of constant criticism [...]. The first cause of this justified criticism is the objectives of the bank. Since the main objective of the bank is to ensure that inflation does not exceed 2% and the budget deficits of the EU Member States do not exceed 3% of GDP, then everything is clearly fine in times of growth, when unemployment ‘falls by itself’, the liquidity of the banks is ‘secured by itself’ and the ECB is able to ‘press governments’ in individual Member States to reduce their debts. From the moment when an economic crisis erupts, however, it is a very different story. [...] The report, which is concerned with assessing the ECB’s annual report and performance in relation to solving the financial crisis, nonetheless stubbornly insists on this badly-formulated pivotal objective. [...] The report does not concern itself at all with the critical state of the finances of at least five EU states, and it seems that the authors of the report are also indifferent to the meteoric rise in unemployment. All of this only confirms the harmfulness of the current concept of the European Central Bank”
	Philippe Lamberts – Greens/EFA	Belgium	“if we just look at the expenditure side, we will not succeed [...] We need to rebalance tax income away from labour income towards other forms of income, including capital income”
	Gianni Pittella - S&D	Italy	“This morning, I have heard so many speeches exalting the virtues of the euro. Very well, I am obviously in agreement, but why not think of the euro as a currency that saves us not only from inflation but, by means of a little virtuous and guaranteed debt, also secures us greater liquidity to launch a major European investment programme by issuing Eurobonds? As far as managing emergencies is concerned, I agree with the idea of establishing a European Monetary Fund, which would be a sensible solution”
	Olle Ludvigsson - S&D	Sweden	“Firstly, we should not devote the debate on public finances to issues relating to austerity alone. We also need to focus on what we can do to initiate growth and combat unemployment. In many countries, cuts in public expenditure are needed. At the same time, however, it is also important to increase revenue via positive growth, by getting more people into work and paying taxes”
	Zigmantas Balčytis -	Lithuania	“I think that the European Central Bank should have ensured and must ensure the provision of liquidity to Member States not in the

	S&D		euro area that were hit particularly hard by this crisis”
3 - Conclusions of the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 7 April 2010			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Response to crisis	Pervenche Berès - S&D	France	“only tool that we have had available until now – the Stability and Growth Pact – is insufficient, since it has never been a growth pact, and it is a pact that has not permitted the euro area to fulfil its potential. [...] It is also a pact that has not prevented the existence of, or increase in, competitive differences among the economies of the euro area. No matter what reform of the Treaty you think up, no matter what reform of the Stability and Growth Pact you envisage, you will not address the problem of the competitive differences of the economies with those tools. New tools therefore have to be invented; this is how you must approach the mandate”
Solidarity	Nikolaos Chountis - GUE/NGL	Greece	“What solidarity mechanism was set up, given that a mechanism for coercion and pressure was already in the offing?”
Social Europe	Kinga Góncz - S&D	Hungary	“It is to be welcomed that the European Council is devoting a great deal of attention to increasing employment not only among young and older workers but also among the low skilled. Increasing employment among the targeted groups must go hand in hand with the acquisition of skills that have market value, as well as with fostering lifelong learning. I also agree with the Hungarian Government’s efforts to get us to think, in the fight against poverty, about quantitative regional cohesion goals instead of poverty-related objectives, since those living in poverty and particularly in severe poverty within the EU live in clearly defined geographical regions”
4 - Outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the ECOFIN meeting - What is the political relevance of the EU 2020 strategy in the context of the current financial and economic crisis? - Consequences of the financial and economic crisis on the EU 2020 strategy and its governance - What is the relevance of the EU 2020 strategy in the framework of the current financial and economic crisis? – 19 May 2010			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	Juan Fernando López Aguilar - S&D	Spain	“there is nothing more important for us to talk about than a crisis that has destroyed 20 million jobs in Europe. [...] The crisis is not the ‘euro crisis in Greece’. It is a crisis that has demonstrated three intolerable asymmetries that must be overcome. The first is the asymmetry between the real economy and the financial economy. The second is the asymmetry between the monetary union and the lack of a fiscal, budgetary and economic-policy union that is in step with the monetary union. The third is the virulence of the crisis and its challenges and, despite this, the exasperating slowness of the response and decision-making mechanisms that are typical of the European Union”
Response to crisis	Rebecca Harms – Greens/EFA	Germany	“We must safeguard jobs by means of innovation, future viability and sustainability, but this does cost money. The introduction of new taxes is a taboo subject. However, I am convinced that we will only emerge from this crisis if we can break down the taboo of state intervention, the role of the state and the need for intelligent taxes”
	Martin	Germany	“Regulations should have been introduced in many areas at a much

Schulz - S&D		earlier stage and we have often called for this to happen in this House. Now we are bringing in regulations for hedge funds, but when will the European Rating Agency be established? Is it really normal for an American rating agency, at exactly the point at which the speculation against Greece reached its climax, to set its sights on the next target and lower Portugal's rating? What type of institutions are these which can decide on the fate of entire nations? They must be controlled and regulated. However, this should not be happening now. It should have taken place years ago and we called for it years ago, but our calls were rejected. They were rejected by the same governments which today claim to be managing this crisis"
Hannes Swoboda - S&D	Austria	"You spoke today about the reform of the labour market and the pension system. This is the right approach, but it is not enough just to reform the labour market and pensions. We must also look at the budget. If we do not develop our infrastructure and if we do not use all the means at our disposal in the Europe 2020 strategy, including green technologies and so on, we will not succeed in achieving this objective. Therefore, I am asking you to take note of the fact that competitiveness and social security in Europe must be strengthened"
Udo Bullmann - S&D	Germany	"Mr Schulz has referred to the highly critical speculative products and credit default insurance and to the damaging practice of short selling, which brought Greece to the brink of disaster and could represent a major problem for Portugal and many other countries. Mr López Garrido, you have frequently attended the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Ecofin) in recent months, why was it not possible for the Member States to take concerted action to ban these products?"
Juan Fernando López Aguilar - S&D	Spain	"We are [...] behind in responding to all those millions of unemployed people who are looking to us, and we are raising difficulties that are not arising in other countries that are tackling the crisis with greater decision-making capacity. [...] We have seen extraordinary decisions at the same time [...]. However, these extraordinary measures do not come free of charge: they are accompanied by major requirements, restrictions and threats of penalties for countries that are not capable of restricting spending, and which could therefore also compromise growth"
David-Maria Sassoli - S&D	Italy	"a Europe of the people and not a Europe of the States. The crisis we are experiencing is the crisis of European policy's inability to govern the market. [...] New European governance alone will allow us to defend the single currency, promote growth, employment and social inclusion. We must discard the old approach of coordinating national policies and equip ourselves with strong decision-making instruments"
Antigoni Papadopoulou - S&D	Cyprus	"We need to learn from this adversity. The European Union needs more Community solidarity, better supervision of the financial system, stronger national compliance with the Stability Pact, more coordinated financial policy and measures to prevent competitive imbalances. The people of Europe want a more humane Europe, with fewer inequalities between the Member States. The time has come for a more realistic and people friendly programme for the European Union of 2020 which listens to the challenges of the times"
Liisa Jaakonsaari - S&D	Finland	"when there is a crisis the psychological reaction is either to curl up in a ball, blame others, look for enemies or try to find solutions. Europe is now witnessing this threeway approach: on the one hand, nationalism and protectionism are on the rise in many countries; on the other, new solutions are being sought, as is the case with the Commission. We have to appreciate them dearly. The stronger the political system is in the European Union and at national level, the better we can tame market forces. Otherwise, it will go badly"
Karin Kadenbach - S&D	Austria	"I am convinced that we need consolidation and growth, but both terms are always connected with another aspect, in other words, socially responsible consolidation on the one hand and sustainable growth on the other. We need confidence to achieve this and the people of Europe need perspectives. However, we will only be able

			to offer them these perspectives if we can promise them that they will live in a Europe where they can share in the prosperity or put measures in place to ensure that this is the case. In the Europe of the future, growth should not only benefit the few”
Profit vs citizens	Philippe Lamberts – Greens/ EFA	Belgium	“making those who have profited the most from the situation contribute – I am talking here about the energy sector; it means stopping the handing out of gifts, such as all the tax reforms that have been implemented, to society’s richest individuals or to companies that take advantage of tax havens, and really trying to stamp out tax fraud. This therefore means breaking another taboo, ladies and gentlemen: not the tax taboo but the taboo of sovereignty, which you, Members of the Council – and, unfortunately, with the support of the Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats) – will defend to the death. Better to have tax sovereignty and failure than to really tackle the roots of the problem”
Solidarity	Patrick Le Hyaric - GUE/NGL	France	“the measures to be taken should include amending the statutes and the role of the European Central Bank. We need true solidarity”
	João Ferreira - GUE/NGL	Portugal	“Faced with the crisis that they created, speculative financial capital’s decision-making centres – as well as their institutional extensions in the EU’s institutions and in governments – have just launched a new and different attack on the people and workers of Europe. The lords of the EU have decided to usurp the budgetary powers of the Member States and they have done this not in the name of solidarity, which is a concept that is increasingly alien to them, but in the name of the stability that the great powers demand for the euro”
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	João Ferreira - GUE/NGL	Portugal	“[The lords of the EU have decided to usurp the budgetary powers of the Member States and they have done this not in the name of solidarity]. [...] this is an intolerable affront to democracy and the sovereignty of the peoples. This affront is accompanied by measures that are pure social terrorism, to which the national governments have meekly submitted. The response to the so-called ‘European economic government’ and to the increasingly antidemocratic nature of the integration process under way is being given by struggling workers all over Europe. The necessary change will grow out of this struggle and its drive towards progress”

5 - Programme of activities of the Greek Presidency – 15 January 2014

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Greece	Gabriele Zimmer - GUE/NGL	Germany	“I appreciate the efforts of Greek people who’ve made great sacrifices”
Social Europe	Hannes Swoboda - S&D	Austria	“What is even more important, however, is to prevent the social dumping that we are experiencing in Europe. Some companies misuse workers in order to undercut salaries and to undermine standards and working conditions. [...] what we need in order to convince our citizens that they should fight for Europe – and maybe even demonstrate for Europe – is a social Europe. If you make a contribution towards a social Europe, we will fully support you”

6 - Review of the Greek Presidency – 2 July 2014

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Response to crisis	Sofia Sakorafa -	Greece	“I think this presidency has been a disaster for the Greek population and has raised threads to the people of Europe and there

	GUE / NGL		are risks for the future of the European Union. And I think we have to fight to ensure that the Italian presidency doesn't come out with the same results as has the Hellenic presidency"
	Eva Kaili - S&D	Greece	"we have been successful in this presidency on the priorities of supporting young people, unemployment, growth and also strengthening the banking union [...]. Greece has achieved what it has achieved bay very great sacrifices of the Greek people"
	Boguslaw Liberadzki - S&D	Poland	"Poverty, lack of perspectives, unemployment, many problems that are not solved and they say that they do not believe in such a EU anymore [...], we have to relaunch Europe again because the problems will persist and grow"
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	Konstantinos Papadakis - non-attached	Greece	"The antipopular mission which has been adopted by the presidency has been successful. [...]we'll fight against these antipopular measures and against the antipopular attack"
7 - Conclusions of the European Council (25-26 June 2015) and of the Euro Summit (7 July 2015) and the current situation in Greece – 8 July 2015			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Greece	Dimitrios Papadimoulis - GUE/NGL	Greece	"We've seen huge unemployment, austerity and great social pain in Greece and in practice the Commission, the Council and the Greek government have to try to put an end to that. Mr Weber, stop offending Greece and the Greeks. Stop playing with matches in a barrel of explosives. Miss Le Pen and Mr Farage, stop playing on the back of the Greek people the populist game so that you can push forward your own far right expectations and desires. We want self-respecting member states of the Eurozone and the European Union, that's what we want in Greece. We want not to be brought to our knees. We want a balanced fiscal approach, we want stronger economy, we want to reduce unemployment, we want not to have a clientelistic state, we want a fair state and a fair tax system, we want to limit tax evasion, and finally that the strong and the rich have to pay, we have to break the oligarchy of the rich, we want to limit corruption and bureaucracy, we want to achieve the aims of the Greek government and to do that, Mr Juncker, the Commission, Mr Tusk and the Council need to provide a European style solution to the debt problem. We don't want just reports and proposals from the IMF".
Response to crisis	Eva Joly - Greens/EFA	France	"Mr Tsipras, we may not agree on everything, but I would like to thank you for sticking to your position. You're right to ask for the debt issue in Europe to be sorted out. To come out of this debt crisis Ms Merkel has to stop playing with fire and Mr Hollande has to break the deadlock"
	Roberto Gualtieri - S&D	Italy	"No European citizens should have to pay one single euro and you, Mr Weber would do well to tell the truth rather than to incite fear"
Profit vs citizens	Pablo Iglesias - GUE/NGL	Spain	"I would like to appeal once again to the socialist family in this Chamber. Take the step to support the people and give up once and for all on the grand coalition. Today, defend the Greek people and its government is to defend the dignity of Europe. And you can be certain Alexis that times are changing. 2015 is the year of change and we will soon be much stronger"
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	Emmanouil Glezos - GUE/NGL	Greece	"We are fighting for justice and that's why we are here in this house, to fight for justice".
	Udo Bullmann - S&D	Germany	"Mr Tsipras, you said that you are not seeking confrontation with Europe you are seeking confrontation with the establishment in your own country in Greece [...] you want to do this, do it! Do it! The time has come"
	Iliana Iotova	Bulgaria	"We believe in the European project, solidarity and held out hands,

	- S&D		when citizens and not financial structures take decisions”
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Annex 4: Debates on the Greek debt crisis in the EP. Right-wing MEPs

1 - Preparation for the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 24 March 2010			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	José Manuel Fernandes - EPP	Portugal	“The economic, financial and social crisis that we are currently experiencing requires a concerted response at European level. The crisis in Greece and the attack on the euro require a joint response, but unfortunately, this has been delayed. It is both possible and desirable to find a European solution in order to avoid these constant speculative attacks on the euro”
	Georgios Papastamkos – EPP	Greece	“What is needed is a European support mechanism, a European Monetary Fund equipped with the necessary resources and facility for intervention. Coordinated regulatory intervention is required in order to protect the common currency against speculation. A detailed examination of the operation of the credit default swaps market is needed. The European Council is being called upon to give fundamental answers to the crisis in the euro area and to express real solidarity towards Greece in order to overcome the financial crisis. Greece is not begging. It is demanding that the short supplies of Greek citizens should not vanish into the pockets of international speculators”
Greece	Othmar Karas – EPP	Austria	“We say ‘yes’ to the Greek Government’s savings and reform programme – Greece is firmly resolved to do its homework and comply with the European rules. We also say ‘yes’ to loaning money where the reform programme would otherwise be threatened. We do, however, say a definitive ‘no’ to fines and to expelling a country from the euro area. All that would do is to institute a domino effect that would lead to a loss of confidence by the markets”
Response to crisis	Niki Tzavela – EFD	Greece	“I wonder, if California had lending problems, would the central administration of the USA leave it at the mercy of speculators...It is clear, therefore, that we face a crash test of the strength of the European currency and, more importantly, of the intentions of the leaders of the European Union to defend it”
Solidarity	Mario Mauro - EPP	Italy	“What is the point of Europe if not to help Greece at this time? I do not think that this idea is crazy because it is in our DNA, in the nature of our political project: in the nature of our political project because it embraces solidarity”
Democracy			
Listen to people	John Bufton – EFD	United Kingdom	“should it not be for the people of Greece to have their say, not the dictators in this place? Surely it should be for the good people of Greece perhaps to have a referendum on whether they should be in the euro. It is their case. It is their cause”
2 - ECB annual report for 2008, Report on the 2009 Annual Statement on the Euro Area and Public Finances - 25 March 2010			
Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	Burkhard Balz – EPP	Germany	“I think that the ECB was faced with particularly difficult tasks in 2008, which was the first year of the crisis. Given these challenges, in my view, the ECB has acted effectively and, above all, very prudently”
	Werner Langen –	Germany	“I would like to thank the President of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, warmly for his very successful work over the

	EPP		last six years. [...] the EU has largely succeeded in balancing its accounts, thanks to the countries in surplus. If that had not been the case, the ECB would have had to put much stricter policies in place”
	Enikő Györi –EPP	Hungary	“The ECB reacted quickly and, in my judgment, appropriately to these financial events, but when we evaluate the crisis relief measures, we cannot overlook one deplorable fact, namely, the discrimination towards countries not in the euro area”
	Czesław Adam Siekierski – EPP	Poland	“The cause of the crisis was activity which was contrary to market principles – speculative activity. The market itself is not able to reject, counteract or limit these factors if there is not suitable supervision and monitoring of the progress of processes, particularly in situations which are not typical for the market. Until now, financial markets were monitored and supervised mainly by state and national institutions. Globalisation has led to the establishment of world financial institutions and a global finance market. However, adequate world, regional and, in our case, European institutions for supervising and monitoring these markets have not been established”
	Tunne Kelam – EPP	Estonia	“the euro has been an anchor of stability and credibility. Without the functioning eurozone, overcoming the crisis would have been much slower and uneven [...] Those who have joined the eurozone are expected to bear higher responsibility for balancing their expenses and incomes. It does not make sense to take the role of supposed victims of financial speculation or economic mafias”
	Ryszard Czarnecki – ECR	Poland	“MEPs do not really believe the European Central Bank can be a solution, a remedy, to the crisis, or that it can be a lifebelt. Mr Rehn said the euro area is something of value in itself, and then spoke about the crisis in Greece. There is a certain contradiction here. Greece is currently going through a crisis because it entered that oasis of stability too soon. We should avoid such inconsistency”
	Andreas Mölzer – non-attached	Austria	“The European Union obviously wants to use the current crisis to strip the Member States of their financial autonomy, which is one of the last core areas of national sovereignty remaining to them. However, taking another huge step towards a centralised European superstate will not solve the existing problems. On the contrary, it will further exacerbate them. The alarming state that the monetary union finds itself in and the fact that the euro has become a high-risk currency are a result of countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, on the one hand, being brought together with states such as Greece, Italy and Spain, on the other, with a deliberate disregard for the existing differences between them concerning their economic development and the ethos on which their financial policy is based”
Greece	Sari Essayah – EPP	Finland	“Attention has been given to incorrect statistical information in the case of Greece, but the core of the problem is a badly managed economic policy”
	Othmar Karas - EPP	Austria	“I would also like to add that Greece is not begging for money, which is the impression often given by the daily press. It would be a good thing if many members of the Council stopped focusing on popular opinion on the domestic political front when they talk about this subject but instead worked with us to find common European solutions. Greece cannot be given subsidies, but it wants support for implementing its reform and savings plan. The President of the European Central Bank, Mr Trichet, has also stated very clearly in a three-step plan what is possible and when the measures can be taken. No one has said that nothing could be done”
Solidarity	Frank Engel – EPP	Luxembourg	“Only solidarity can curb the speculative activities of which Greece is a victim today and which may hit other countries in the euro area at any moment”
	Czesław Adam Siekierski - EPP	Poland	“We must take action so that the costs of the crisis do not fall on the weakest and poorest. European Union solidarity obliges us also to support the countries which have been worst hit by the crisis. Recovery will not come from outside, if the body, or the state, does not take up the fight”

3 - Conclusions of the European Council meeting (25-26 March 2010) – 7 April 2010

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	Timothy Kirkhope – ECR	United Kingdom	“Certainly the current crisis has revealed some of the underlying problems with the present design of the eurozone. However, in seeking to address these problems, the crisis must not be used as a pretext for extending further the powers of the European Union”
Greece	Guy Verhofstadt – ALDE	Belgium	“the mechanism which the Council decided on for Greece and about which I have serious doubts. I hope that I am wrong, but I do not think that it can work for the simple reason that it is a system of bilateral loans and not a system – a European solution – under which a single loan is made by the European Commission to Greece, which was the initial idea. [...] It is absolutely necessary that the European Commission return as fast as possible to its initial idea of a European loan, issued by the European Commission. Then you will automatically have lower interest rates than those on the markets today, because there will be this guarantee from the European Commission and the European institutions. That is the only way to help the Greek Government achieve its targets. [...] At the same time, the Greek Government naturally has to stop its internal struggles”
	Cristian Silviu Buşoi – ALDE	Romania	“The outcome of this Summit is far from responding effectively to Greece’s needs... The solution proposed is everything but a European one. In order to have a real European response we should have had a European framework for helping Greece out of its debt crisis, instead of doing it through bilateral loans. Moreover, I’m afraid that the credibility of the whole euro area may suffer if the IMF is to intervene, not to mention the fact that apparently the Greek government has stepped back on IMF intervention since the IMF conditions could lead to social and political unrest in the country. What’s really worrying me is that markets have simply not reacted very positively to this solution, as interests proposed to Greece by the markets remain around 7% or even slightly above, which is unfavorable for Greece. Nevertheless, I welcome the setup of the task force which I hope will come with more ambitious proposals so that the economic and fiscal sustainability of the Eurozone is effectively ensured in the future”
	Marian-Jean Marinescu – EPP	Romania	“I welcome the outcome of the European Council, especially the important decision made to support Greece, in cooperation with the IMF. This is an important step towards strengthening European solidarity. Greece is not the only State in the euro area facing financial problems. Structural reforms and restoring macroeconomic stability through reallocating budget resources to support sustainable growth are more pertinent than direct aid”
	Artur Zasada – EPP	Poland	“Its catastrophic condition is both the effect of the world crisis and the result of the neglect of the government in Athens. It is because of the failure to carry out serious reforms and an interpretation of macroeconomic data which was too casual that Greece is, today, on the brink of bankruptcy. Greece is going to feel the effects of today’s economic collapse for many years to come”
	Social Europe	Csaba Óry – EPP	Hungary
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	Martin Ehrenhauser – non-attached	Austria	“there is always talk of new ground rules and solutions. These have been on the table for some time already! The problem is that, under pressure from the banks and the lobbyists, politicians have left these solutions full of as many holes as a Swiss cheese. That is why independence is so very important in politics”

4 - Outcome of the summit of 7 May 2010 and the ECOFIN meeting - What is the political relevance of the EU 2020 strategy in the context of the current financial and economic crisis? - Consequences of the financial and economic crisis on the EU 2020 strategy and its governance - What is the relevance of the EU 2020 strategy in the framework of the current financial and economic crisis? – 19 May 2010

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Economic crisis	Marielle De Smeets – ALDE	France	“we must urgently follow it up with the establishment, in the long term, of a real European monetary fund, a European bond market and a European rating agency, because as we all know, the single currency will not be able to operate without budgetary, tax, economic and political convergence. Moreover, until Europe indicates that it wishes to be governed, the markets and speculators can quite simply take the reins”
	Wolf Klinz – ALDE	Germany	“They should have identified these weaknesses themselves at an early stage. When the euro was introduced, we knew that we would not have a single monetary and fiscal policy, as is normally the case in individual states. For this reason, we have taken measures to find a substitute for this, but we have not adhered closely to these measures. The rules were broken very quickly and right at the start, even by the larger Member States. We need another effective set of rules with sanction mechanisms, including a name and shame policy, the loss of voting rights and suspension of payments from the European funds until the fines have been paid”
	Paulo Rangel – EPP	Portugal	“while we are supporting the austerity measures, we would also criticise the Portuguese Government – and this is a good example to others in similar situations – because it is not cutting spending. To reduce the deficit, it is essential not just to increase taxes, but also to cut spending and the government must have the courage to take measures to reduce spending, reduce the deficit and pay off some public debt”
Greece	Rachida Dati – EPP	France	“it is true that the sudden emergence and the depth of the Greek crisis have created a great deal of fear amongst our fellow citizens, fear which I think is legitimate. Once again, this does not mean, as a Member has just said, that we should point the finger at Greece”
Response to crisis	Danuta Maria Hübner – EPP	Poland	“What is also clear is that fiscal and monetary policies are not substitutes for structural reforms. Structural reforms have to address the underlying weaknesses of the European Union economy: sharply growing debts and deficits, ageing, the highly probable new surge of inflation, risks generated by climate-change policies, low productivity and lack of competitiveness”
Solidarity	Niki Tzavela – EFD	Greece	“I should like to take this opportunity to thank you personally for your hard and effective work in connection with the economic crisis in Greece. I should also like to thank all the parties in Parliament for the support and solidarity they have shown Greece”
Social Europe	Lívía Járóka – EPP	Hungary	“I welcome the fact that, in addition to the aspects concerning a sustainable social market economy, environmental protection and innovation, the strategy also places great emphasis on the fight against poverty and exclusion, in other words, on strengthening social cohesion”

5 - Programme of activities of the Greek Presidency – 15 January 2014

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Greece	Marina Yannakouda	United Kingdom	“In the past six years, Greeks have endured much suffering. Troika decisions have not been easy to swallow, but Greece is now

	kis – ECR		technically on the road to recovery, albeit a fragile one. At this crucial time I urge Brussels to back off and give Greece the space it needs to start growing its economy. Let us not hinder any progress by imposing restrictions and hurting the Greek people. The answer is trade, not the Troika”
	Nigel Farage – EFD	United Kingdom	“I must congratulate you, Mr Samaras, for getting the Greek Presidency off to such a cracking start. I am sure your overnight successful negotiations in the trilogue on the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID) will have them dancing in the streets of Athens. No matter that your country, very poorly advised by Goldman Sachs, joined a currency which it was never suited to; no matter that 30 % are unemployed, that 60 % of young people are unemployed, that a neo-Nazi party is on the march, that there was a terrorist attack on the German embassy”
	Nicole Sinclaire – non-attached	United Kingdom	“it is poignant that Greece should take over the Presidency at this time. Greece is the living embodiment of the failure of the Troika and indeed the euro project. Mr Samaras, you talk about the mistakes of your country over decades. Surprisingly, you failed to put any blame where it truly belongs, namely on the pro-federalising Eurocrats who ignore the Maastricht convergence criteria to push on with their project of a federal Euro-state. Linking the Greek economy with such a powerhouse as Germany was utter madness, and your people paid the price – not least with a suicide rate that increased by 46 %”
Solidarity	Joseph Daul – EPP	France	“European solidarity is there and it has been demonstrated on what we’ve been working on in the bureaux”
Democracy			
Elites vs citizens / trust	Nicole Sinclaire – non-attached	United Kingdom	“Your people and people across Europe came out onto the streets to show their displeasure at the medication for the Eurocrats’ mental illness”
	Nick Griffin – non-attached	United Kingdom	“Prime Minister, 2014 is supposed to be the year of democracy in Europe, but what kind of democracy tears up its own constitution, bans demonstrations to prove the people are happy, sends machine gun-toting storm-troopers to arrest democratically elected MPs and imprisons opponents without trial when they cannot disprove hearsay allegations made against them by police informers? Totalitarians like you always justify such attacks on freedom with propaganda lies about criminal association but, Mr Samaras, your bankers’ occupation government – now busy helping your masters loot Greece – are the real criminals. You are the heir of the communists who refused to fight when your country was invaded by Mussolini, when Metaxas said ‘no’ and fought foreign occupation and exploitation – which is of course the real crime of its modern political descendants, Golden Dawn”

7 - Conclusions of the European Council (25-26 June 2015) and of the Euro Summit (7 July 2015) and the current situation in Greece – 8 July 2015

Category	MEP/ Political group	Country	Reference
Austerity			
Greece	Maria Spyrali – EPP	Greece	“Greece urgently needs an agreement, an agreement which even now can guarantee funding, can stress structural reform and facilitate the serving of the public debt”
	Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski – ECR	Poland	“Greece will have to go [...]. There won’t be any big drama if Greece exits the Eurozone”.
Response to crisis	Janusz Korwin-Mikke – non-attached	Poland	“I think that for Greeks, torn between euro-socialism and national socialism, there is only one way to be rescued. In 1973, Chile – occupied by the gang of Salvador Allende – was in a much worse state than Greece is today. Then General Augusto Pinochet introduced a normal economy, and in two years Chile became the richest country in Latin America. Black colonels are not the

			solution, but I hope that some golden general will fulfil his duty and save Greece from the present turmoil. Moreover, I think the European Union must be destroyed”
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Annex 5: List of interviews

<i>N</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>MEP</i>	<i>Political group</i>	<i>Country</i>
1	24/05/2018	Juan Fernando López Aguilar	PSOE ⁹ , S&D	Spain
2	29/05/2018	Mercedes Bresso	Partito Democratico, S&D Italy	
3	5/06/2018	Ernest Urtasun	ICV, Greens/EFA	Spain
4	14/08/2018	Paloma López Bermejo	IU, GUE/NGL	Spain
5	16/08/2018	Ana Miranda	BNG, Greens/EFA	Spain
6	28/08/2018	Ana Gomes	Partido Socialista, S&D	Portugal
7	31/08/2018	Lola Sánchez, assistant ¹⁰	Podemos, GUE/NGL	Spain
8	4/09/2018	Javier Couso Permuy	IU, GUE/NGL	Spain
9	10/09/2018	Josep Maria Terricabras	ERC, Greens/EFA	Spain
10	12/09/2018	Matt Carthy	Sinn Féin, GUE/NGL	Ireland
11	17/10/2018	Antonio Marinho e Pinto	PDR ¹¹ , ALDE	Portugal
12	18/10/2018	Carlos Zorrinho	Partido Socialista, S&D	Portugal
13	26/10/2018	Ramon Tremosa	PDeCAT ¹² , ALDE	Spain
14	6/11/2018	Stefan Gehrold, assistant ¹³	CDU ¹⁴ , EPP	Germany
15	13/11/2018	Santiago Fisas	Partido Popular, EPP	Spain
16	28/11/2018	Hans-Olaf Henkel	Independent, ECR	Germany
17	6/12/2018	Marisa Matias	BE ¹⁵ , GUE/NGL	Portugal
18	1/04/2019	Claude Rolin	CDH ¹⁶ , EPP	Belgium
19	2/04/2019	Antonio Tajani, advisor ¹⁷	Forza Italia, EPP	Italy
20	2/04/2019	Dennis de Jong, assistant ¹⁸	SP ¹⁹ , GUE/NGL	Netherlands

⁹ Partido Socialista Obrero Español.

¹⁰ Interview conducted to Jorge Conesa de Lara, assistant to MEP Lola Sánchez Caldentey.

¹¹ Partido Democrático Republicano.

¹² Partit Demòcrata Europeu i Català.

¹³ Interview conducted to Tillman Otto Ruether, assistant to MEP Stefan Gehrold.

¹⁴ Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands.

¹⁵ Bloco de Esquerda.

¹⁶ Centre Démocrate Humaniste.

¹⁷ Interview conducted to Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi, advisor from the EP President's cabinet.

¹⁸ Interview conducted to Diederik van der Loo, candidate for his party and assistant in the EP for Dennis de Jong.

¹⁹ Socialistische Partij.

Annex 6: List of abbreviations

ALDE	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
ECR	Group of the European Conservatives and Reformists
EFN	Group of the Europe of Nations and
EP	European Parliament
EPP	Group of the European People's Party
EU	European Union
Greens/EFA	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL	Group of the European United Left/ Nordic Green Left
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MEP	Member of Parliament
S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
SOTEU	State of the European Union

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