Politicising Europe:
Integration and Mass Politics

Edited by Swen Hutter, Edgar Grande and Hanspeter Kriesi

forthcoming

Cambridge University Press

Table of contents

Chapter 1

Introduction: European integration and the challenge of politicisation

Edgar Grande and Swen Hutter

Politicising Europe – Why bother?

Politicisation has become a key concept in European integration studies. Since the mid-2000s, it

has been the object of an intense and controversial scholarly debate.[1] The rise of politicisation as

a topic in research on Europe certainly reflects current problems and challenges of the European

integration process. The failure of the Constitutional Treaty, increasing Euroscepticism among

citizens, the successes of Eurosceptic political parties in national and European elections, the

negative outcomes of national referenda on major treaty reforms, public controversies on political

strategies to cope with the euro crisis – all these incidents suggest that the elitist approach which

characterised European integration for decades has arrived at a critical stage. Politicisation, both

as an analytical concept and as a political strategy, seems to be the key to an understanding of the

acute problems of the European integration project.

Assessments of the 'politicisation' phenomenon in the scholarly literature differ widely,

however. Although there seems to be agreement 'that something like politicisation has happened

since the mid-1980s' (Schmitter 2009: 211-212), its level and intensity are still the object of

controversies. Three questions are at the heart of the debate. First, there is disagreement over the

empirical scope of politicisation. Can we really observe a significant increase in politicisation and

---

[1] See, in particular, Marks and Steenbergen 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2009, 2012; Zürn 2006; Kriesi 2007;
Koopmans and Statham 2010a; Risse 2010; de Wilde 2011; de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Statham and Trenz 2013a;
Zürn 2012; de Wilde et al. 2014.

what are its characteristic features? Second, it is unclear whether the changes observed are of a lasting nature. Is there a durable structuring of political conflict or do observers exaggerate singular events such as the debate on the Constitutional Treaty or public protest related to the euro crisis in some southern European countries? Third, there are conflicting opinions on the consequences of politicisation for the future of European integration. Will politicisation strengthen or weaken the European project? Is it part of the problem or the key to its solution?

To start with, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2009), who put the politicisation concept at the centre of a new 'postfunctionalist theory of European integration', argue most forcefully that there has been a significant politicisation of the integration process in the post-Maastricht period, which has become visible not only in changing public opinion but also in electoral and protest politics. In their view, the European integration project has become the object of controversial 'mass politics'. This argument takes issue with a number of scholars who argue that the 'giant' of European politics is still 'sleeping' (e.g. van der Eijk and Franklin 2004, 2007; Green-Pedersen 2012). Ruud Koopmans (2007, 205), for example, on the basis of a comparative analysis of public debates on Europe, concludes 'European integration has remained a project by political elites, and, at least as far as discursive influence is concerned, also to the benefit of political elites'. According to his analysis, those actors that have been expected to be the catalysts for a new phase of 'mass politics', i.e. political parties and civil society actors, are the least present in Europeanisation debates (see also Koopmans 2010b). Statham and Trenz (2013a, b) in their analysis of public debates on the Constitutional Treaty find evidence in support of both claims. On the one hand, they observe an increasing visibility of the EU in mass-media public debates; on the other hand, participation in these debates is mainly limited to political parties.

Moreover, there is controversy over the causes and consequences of politicisation. Hooghe and Marks (2009) argue that politicisation is the negative consequence of structural

changes in the integration process. It is considered to be a response to transfers of authority to the EU, and this process passed a critical threshold with the enactment of the Maastricht Treaty (see also de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Rauh 2015). In their view, politicisation is transforming the structural basis of European integration for the long term. Other authors, such as Börzel and Risse (2009), argue that an increase in politicisation is the result of controversies over singular events, such as the Constitutional Treaty or the opening of membership negotiations with Turkey. They expect politicisation to calm down once these conflicts about key constitutive aspects of European integration have been settled.

In this context, the crucial question is not primarily a quantitative one, i.e. whether European integration has resulted in higher levels of political conflict. More important is its qualitative dimension. To have lasting effects, politicisation should have the power to *structure* political conflict systematically (see Bartolini 2005). Such a structuring of political conflict was decisive in establishing national democracies and party systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in North America and western Europe. This process was characterised by the 'nationalisation' of political conflict, which was dominated by a specific, i.e. socio-economic, cleavage in most industrialising countries (see Lipset 1963: 324ff.; Caramani 2004; Tilly 2004). Given the intensification of the European integration process in recent decades, we may expect a similar structuring of political conflict in Europe – which could then be the basis of its attenuation and pacification.

Finally, there is substantial disagreement over the consequences of politicisation for the future of the European project. For Hooghe and Marks (2009), politicisation is one of the causes of the current crisis in European integration because the political elite can no longer rely on the 'permissive consensus' of citizens. As a result of politicisation, they are constrained in decision-making processes by citizen dissatisfaction and dissent. Hooghe and Marks's assessment

contradicts arguments that regard the politicisation of Europe as a necessary precondition for further integration, as advanced by Habermas (2001, 2012), Delanty and Rumford (2005), Beck (2006, 2013), and Hix (2006, 2008a). These authors assume that politicisation will have mainly positive effects on the integration process because it gives supporters of the 'European project' better opportunities to articulate their views and to mobilise European citizens. However, the two positions do not seem entirely incompatible. Supporters of increasing politicisation, who, for example, suggest direct elections of the president of the European Commission or Europe-wide referenda, recognise that increasing support by European citizens is an indispensable precondition for the advancement of the European project and for balancing its elitist bias. Sceptics about politicisation doubt that the EU is equipped with the requisite organisational infrastructure to mobilise and channel such developments (see, e.g., Bartolini 2005, 2009). They suspect that such opportunities will be predominantly used by Eurosceptic actors, thus aggravating the problems of European integration.

In our view, the scholarly debate on the politicisation of European integration is not primarily a normative debate. Politicisation is neither good nor bad per se. Too little can be as problematic as too much. However, the politicisation of European integration raises a number of *empirical* questions regarding its level and forms, its underlying conflicts and conflict structures and the actors and actor constellation responsible for the mobilisation of these conflicts. The controversies in the scholarly debate reflect shortcomings in empirical research on politicisation, which we attempt to overcome in this volume. First, our empirical knowledge about the scope, intensity and forms of politicisation and its timing and driving forces is still insufficient. Empirical accounts mostly focus on limited and more recent periods of time or on single events (see, e.g., Hoeglinger 2012; Statham and Trenz 2013a, b). Second, the controversies are due to different conceptualisations and measures of politicisation (see de Wilde 2011); and third, the

interpretation of the findings is often hampered by a lack of empirical benchmarks and a focus on a rather limited number of explanatory factors.

The study presented in this volume aims at settling these controversies. It systematically examines whether and how the European integration process has become politicised over the last four decades. How much politicisation of European integration do we actually have? Has there really been an increase in the overall level of politicisation? If so, what are the driving forces of change? Are there differences across countries and political arenas? And what are the likely consequences of these changes? Has politicisation resulted in a lasting structuring of political conflict and how will this conflict impact on national and European politics and on the future of the European integration process?

This book addresses these questions both empirically and theoretically. Empirically, it presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the different forms of politicisation of European integration. The study covers both electoral and non-electoral forms of political mobilisation and it systematically includes the public debates on every major integration step (i.e. treaty reforms and the accession of new member states) since the early 1970s in six west European countries (Austria, France, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK). The book also aims to strengthen the theoretical basis of the politicisation debate. Following Schattschneider (1975 [1960]), Rokkan (2000), Bartolini (2005) and Kriesi et al. (2008, 2012), we apply a dynamic framework of political conflict and political structuring to the analysis of the European integration process. We argue that there is in fact an intensified political conflict over European integration issues. This politicisation is the product of new structural conflicts over national sovereignty, national identity and transnational solidarity. These conflicts have created the potential for the formation of new political oppositions that provide the basis for an increasing and lasting politicisation of the European political process. However, these new oppositions have

not produced an entirely new cleavage, such as a 'pro-' and 'anti-EU' cleavage. Rather, following Kriesi et al. (2008, 2012), we interpret the conflicts over European integration as part of a new 'demarcation-integration' cleavage brought about by broader globalisation conflicts over economic reforms, cultural identity and national sovereignty.

In this introductory chapter, we set the stage by presenting key concepts and hypotheses. Furthermore, we provide theoretical arguments about how the politicisation of Europe may affect both the structure of political conflict in western Europe and the European integration process. The chapter is organised as follows. Next, we introduce our conceptualisation of politicisation before we present some theoretical arguments why European integration should give rise to political conflicts. Following this, we describe how the institutional structure of the European system of multi-level governance channels political conflicts and how it affects their intensity. In the following two sections, we discuss the main driving forces behind politicisation and its consequences. Finally, we introduce our research design and methods, before concluding with a brief outline of the book.

Conceptualising politicisation

What do we mean by politicisation? In the political science literature, the concept of politicisation can be found in various contexts and with rather different meanings. Scholars use it both to analyse the relationship of the political system to other societal systems (e.g. the economy) or sub-systems (e.g. the administrative system), and to analyse processes *within* the political system. The first meaning, *external* politicisation, is particularly prominent in the literature on political economy, where the concept of politicisation refers to the extension of the scope of the political system vis-à-vis the (capitalist) economy (e.g. Zysman 1983; Hall 1985). We also find the

concept in research into public administrations, where scholars use it to analyse the influence of politics, of political parties and governments in particular on the administrative system (e.g. Peters and Pierre 2004; Bauer and Ege 2012). The second meaning, *internal* politicisation, can be clarified with the help of Schattschneider's concept of politics. For Schattschneider (1975 [1960]), *conflict* is the key ingredient of politics. Accordingly, politicisation can be defined as an *expansion of the scope of conflict within the political system.*[2] This definition is very open in view of the type of political actors who are involved in a given conflict, the means they use to advance their claims, the political arenas in which they take action, the relationships in which they stand to each other, and the consequences of having such politicisation.

In our study, we adopt this second meaning of the concept of politicisation. We use it as a tool to empirically analyse the level and forms of political conflict over European integration within the political systems of west European democracies. Our main objective is a comprehensive empirical stocktaking of the politicisation of European integration in its various dimensions, which will allow us to put forward normative arguments on a solid empirical basis. However, even with such a narrow definition, politicisation must be considered a multi-faceted process. Again, we rely on Schattschneider (1957), who identified the 'intensity, visibility, direction and scope' of conflict as one of the key dimensions of politics. Following this concept of politics, we focus on three main conceptual dimensions of politicisation: *issue salience* (visibility), *actor expansion* (range), and *actor polarisation* (intensity and direction).[3]

---

[2] De Wilde and Zürn (2012: 139) combine both meanings by referring to politicisation as 'making a matter a subject of public regulation and/or a subject of public discussion'.

[3] All three dimensions have been discussed extensively in the recent literature. Therefore, it is not by chance that our list closely mirrors the three components that de Wilde (2011) stresses in his review article: (a) intensifying debates over an issue, (b) increasingly diverging issue positions taken by collective actors, and (c) public resonance of these intense polarized debates (see also de Wilde and Zürn 2012).

First, we assume that only topics that are raised by political actors in public debates can be considered politicised. If an issue is not debated in public, it can only be politicised to a very limited extent – if at all. Van der Eijk and Franklin's (2007) picture of a 'sleeping giant' illustrates this extremely well (see also de Vries 2007). While these authors find quite a high degree of polarisation in public opinion on European integration, they stress that the issue has not yet shown its full re-structuring potential, because political parties (or other types of collective political actors) have not publicly addressed the topic and its salience has remained low. For this reason, we agree with Green-Pedersen's (2012: 117) agenda-setting proposal that *salience* is the most basic dimension for politicisation (see also Guinaudeau and Persico 2013). No other dimension can replace salience. At the same time, however, we do not share Green-Pedersen's narrow definition of 'politicisation as a matter of salience' only. While it might be true that salience is correlated with the other dimensions of politicisation, we assume that they are at least partly independent; and it is these independent qualities of actor expansion and polarisation which are important for a full understanding of processes of politicisation and their dynamics. In Schattschneider's words, 'the contagiousness of conflict, the elasticity of its scope and the fluidity of involvement of people are the X factors in politics' (Schattschneider 1975 [1960]: 3) – and these factors cannot be reduced to the salience of an issue in public debates.

Second, we see *expansion of the actors* involved in a public controversy as another key dimension of politicisation. This dimension resembles what de Wilde (2011) calls 'public resonance'. However, we prefer the term 'expansions of actors' since public resonance is an ambiguous concept which can be understood in both a narrow and a broad way. Narrowly defined, it refers to an increasing number of types of actors involved in public debates. However, it could also refer to public opinion more broadly. We prefer the narrow conceptualisation, since the broader one tends to conflate politicisation with both its precondition (i.e. political potentials

in the wider public) and its effect (i.e. changing individual attitudes and behaviour).[4] In addition,

public resonance in a broader sense also partly overlaps with salience and visibility.

Following this narrow understanding, we argue that if only a restricted set of very few

(elite) actors publicly advance their positions towards European integration, this will indicate that

the issue is only politicised to a limited extent. More specifically, we need to focus on the degree

to which the dominant executive actors are joined by other actors in public debate. In this

context, we propose distinguishing between actor expansion *within* a political arena and *across*

political arenas. The most relevant political arenas for the purposes of our study are the electoral

arena and the protest arena. In this regard, the electoral arena, where political parties compete for

votes, plays a prominent role. In this arena, expansion of the range of actors means that not only

representatives of parties in government participate in debates on European integration issues but

also party actors without executive functions (for example, party leaders in parliament or from

the opposition). This may even include new challengers not represented in parliament. As long as

we only observe debates among executive politicians we consider an issue to not be highly

politicised even if it may be relatively salient (see also Koopmans 2007, 2010b and Statham and

Trenz 2013a: 79ff). However, political controversies in the electoral arena have an elitist bias.

For this reason, recent research on politicisation has given particular emphasis to the participation

of actors from civil society and their visibility in public debates (e.g. della Porta and Caiani

2009).

The third dimension of politicisation is *intensity of conflict*. In our view, a highly salient

public debate among a broad range of actors is not enough to speak of a high level of

---

[4] Examples that look at the impact of public contestation on individual behaviour can be found in the literature on EU issue voting (see, e.g., de Vries 2007 and de Vries et al. 2011a, b). Another innovative approach relies on focus groups to study how citizens debate Europe (see Hurrelmann et al. 2015).

politicisation (see also de Wilde 2011 and Hoeglinger 2012). In addition, the actors need to put forward differing positions and we must find opposing camps. Thus, a key aspect of politicisation is the *polarisation* of conflict among political actors. More precisely, we define polarisation as the intensity of conflict related to an issue among the different actors involved. The most polarising constellation can be found when two camps advocate completely opposing issue positions with similar intensity (see also Kriesi et al. 2012: 57-58). Thus, we assume that finding only a few dissenting voices is not enough to speak of an intensively politicised issue. A high level of politicisation involves strong opposing camps.

Having defined politicisation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon which includes an increasingly salient and polarised public debate among an expanding range of actors, we are confronted with a methodological challenge. How can we combine these dimensions in such a way that we can measure politicisation comprehensively? For this purpose, we propose a quantitative *index of politicisation*, which takes all three dimensions into account and relates them in a specific way (Figure 1.1; see also Hutter and Grande 2014). As stated before, we regard salience as a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for politicisation. Salience cannot be substituted by the other two dimensions, i.e. by actor expansion or polarisation. Therefore, its relation to these variables cannot be additive. At the same time, the latter two dimensions can to some extent replace each other. In other words, a salient and polarised debate among only a few executive politicians is not more or less politicised as compared to a salient but not polarised debate among a broad range of actors. For this reason, in our politicisation index salience is multiplied by a variable that is composed of actor expansion and polarisation (for details, see Chapter 2).

[Figure 1.1]

This combination of different variables has the great advantage of allowing comparisons over a long period of time and a large number of countries at a high level of aggregation. However, it has the disadvantage that information becomes lost that could be instructive for an in-depth analysis. In fact, we can imagine the dimensions of our index as three sliders that may each take many different positions, and these combinations may result in different patterns or types of politicisation. A focus on these different types of politicisation helps us to clarify our objectives further, since we are not only interested in the quantitative increase in the level of politicisation of European integration within and across political arenas; we want to find out whether there have been qualitative shifts in its basic types too.

To identify and compare different types of politicisation, we put forward a typology based on the two dimensions of the extension (i.e. the range of actors) and intensity of conflict (i.e. the polarisation of actors). Salience is implicitly incorporated in the typology because an issue needs to cross a certain level of salience before we can speak of politicisation. In other words, we leave aside the constellation of European issues where Europe is not really a salient issue at all. Such cases certainly exist, but, in our opinion, they do not represent instances of 'politicisation'.

On the basis of the remaining two dimensions, four different types of politicisation can be identified (see Table 1.1). To begin with, we can think of a situation when only a small set of actors raise European issues with only a moderate range of positions being heard. In this case we may speak of a 'low intensity elite conflict' (*type 1*). If polarisation increases but the contestants involved are still predominantly elite actors, the conflict may take the form of a 'polarised elite conflict' (*type 2*). We know from studies of other issue fields (e.g. women's rights or

environmental protection) that an issue might be neglected by established political actors but may be forcefully raised through mobilisation from below without the participation of the political elite. In this case, the range of actors is limited too, but for different reasons. This type of conflict may rather be labelled 'polarised outsider contestation'. Moreover, we can think of a constellation in which a broad range of actors with similar positions is engaged in an extensive public debate, something we could label 'low intensity mass conflict' (*type 3*). Finally, we prefer to speak of a 'high intensity mass conflict' when a broad range of actors is involved in a highly polarised controversy (*type 4*). This is the strongest type of political conflict since we have high values on every one of the dimensions of politicisation introduced before. However, we do not assume that politicisation to this extent is the most preferable type from a normative perspective.

[Table 1.1]

This typology allows us to clarify our objectives further. In this volume, we are not only interested in the quantitative increase in the scope and extent of politicisation of European integration within and across political arenas; we also want to find out whether there have been qualitative shifts in its basic forms. The politicisation hypotheses advanced by Hooghe and Marks (2009), for example, claims that there has in fact been such a shift from a low intensity elite conflict to a high intensity mass conflict in the past two decades.

European integration and political conflict

Why do we expect a politicisation of European integration? Since our concept of politicisation emphasises *political conflict*, answering this question requires the *causes of such conflicts* in the

integration process to be identified. As a starting point, we can take the essential problems of regional cooperation with which the participants in the European integration project have been confronted from the very beginning:

- First, the problem of *scope of cooperation*. In which areas do we need to cooperate? What is the functionally most appropriate scope of cooperation? Which areas should be excluded from cooperation? Should cooperation include fiscal solidarity?

- Second, the problem of *membership and enlargement*. With whom should we cooperate? Who should become a member of the newly created community? Are there geographical limits to cooperation? What are the obligations and entitlements associated with membership?

- Third, the problem of *institutional design and authority*. What is the appropriate institutional framework for cooperation? How large should the authority of the newly created supranational institutions be? How can the use of supranational authority be legitimised?

All of these questions refer to constitutive[5] aspects of the emerging European polity, and political decisions on European integration have provided unique answers to each of them. However, these problems have been the sources of typical conflicts within and among member states, namely conflicts over sovereignty, identity and solidarity; and these conflicts have been shaping the European integration process, its institutional manifestations and its policies from the very beginning. Before we elaborate on them, we must emphasise that at a conceptual level we assume no clear-cut relationship between the problem constellations of regional integration and

---

[5] We prefer to speak of 'constitutive' rather than 'constitutional' aspects and issues of the European integration process, because the term puts the emphasis on the *process* of establishing a constitutional framework for the EU.

the kinds of conflict that result from them. This is most obvious in the case of membership

problems, which may cause conflicts over sovereignty, identity and solidarity at the same time.

For this reason, we assume that the exact manifestation of an integration conflict at least to some

extent depends on empirically contingent actor constellations and mobilisation strategies (see

below).

Conflicts over national *sovereignty* have been the most persistent in the history of European

integration.[6] The very essence of Jean Monnet's project of European integration was the

establishment of a 'high', i.e. supranational, authority with autonomy from the member states,

thus restricting their sovereignty in areas of crucial importance for peace and welfare in Europe.

This 'pooling of sovereignty' (Keohane 2002) has provoked resistance from actual or potential

member states at every crucial stage in the integration process. Sovereignty-based resistance was

a main motive for Britain's refusal to join the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in

the early 1950s. Other examples have been the French 'policy of the empty chair' in the mid-

1960s; the resistance of a significant number of member states to advancing the project of a

'Political Union' in the 1990s; the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in national referenda in

France and the Netherlands in 2005; and controversies between member states over the

strengthening of supranational authority to control national budgets and to coordinate national

economic and fiscal policy as a consequence of the euro crisis. In each of these cases, we find

conflicts between the supporters of a transfer of authority from the national to the European level

and the defenders of national sovereignty.

There may be several reasons for sovereignty conflicts. Most important, sovereignty is

considered the most effective safeguard of national interests, economic interests in particular.

---

[6] On the history of Europe and European integration since 1945, see Urwin 1994; Pinder 2004; Judt 2005,Dinan 2006, and Bickerton 2012.

Moreover, the protection of national sovereignty has a normative dimension, too. The principle of sovereignty has been interpreted in very different ways in west European democracies (Abromeit 1995). Therefore, some critics of European integration consider the transfer of political authority to the EU to be incompatible with fundamental political principles of their respective polity. The British idea of parliamentary sovereignty and the Swiss emphasis on direct democracy are cases in point. Both cases also exemplify the link between sovereignty conflicts and discussions about the hollowing out of national democracy due to European integration, which, according to the critics, is not compensated for by the democratic procedures established at the European level. Moreover, sovereignty conflicts substantially contribute to the permanent strains between supranational and intergovernmental principles of integration that characterise the political system of the EU (Beck and Grande 2007; Tömmel 2008).

The second source of conflicts is *identity conflicts* resulting from membership of the EU. European integration has not only been characterised by the steady extension of its functional scope, but also by substantial territorial expansion through the admission of new members. The communities have expanded their scope of membership in several steps from six member states in the 1950s to nine members in 1973, fifteen members in 1994, twenty-four in 2004 and twenty-eight member states in 2013 – and there are still states – Turkey, for example – seeking membership. The voluntary character of this enlargement must not obscure the fact that some of these membership decisions have been the object of intense conflicts, partly within the prospective new member state, partly within the existing community, partly in both. Striking examples of this type of conflict were the debates on British membership in the late 1960s and early 1970s, on EC membership in Denmark and Norway, and on Switzerland's relation to the EU in the 1990s. These conflicts were not only fuelled by concerns about a loss of national

sovereignty and national economic advantages, but, even more, by deep-seated fears about a loss of (national) identity. At stake here is the normative basis of community.

For a long time, this was mainly a matter of national community and we find controversies mostly in the countries whose governments aimed at EC/EU membership. With the territorial expansion of the EU, we can observe new types of identity conflict, however. On the one hand, we find identity conflicts between the members of an enlarged community (Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006). The conflict over the religious reference in the preamble to the Constitutional Treaty was exemplary in this regard (Waschinski 2007). On the other hand, new membership increasingly provokes fears of a loss of the current coherence and cultural homogeneity within the EU. The conflict about whether a country fits into the EU is no longer fought within an accession state only, it has moved to the centre of the Community. The salience and polarising force of such identity conflicts became most apparent in the controversies over Turkey's bid for EU membership. Critics of the membership negotiations advanced a number of arguments, e.g. on the state of democracy and human rights in Turkey, on the size of the country and the state of its economic development. Most important, however, have been normative arguments referring to allegedly unbridgeable cultural and religious differences between an 'Islamic' Turkey and the 'Christian heritage' of Europe (see, for example, Leggewie 2004 on the debate in Germany).

The third source of conflict is *problems of solidarity* resulting from decisions on the distribution and redistribution of financial resources between member states. Originally, cooperation in the European communities was limited to a small number of states with a relatively similar high level of economic development. For these states, cooperation should be of mutual benefit and the extent of mutual obligations low. The basic principle of integration was not solidarity based on redistributive policies but mutual benefit. However, the European integration project did not preclude such a re-distribution of resources either. In contrast with

other forms of intergovernmental cooperation in Europe, such as the European Space Agency, the European communities are not based on the principle of '*juste retour*', which demands a distribution of funds according to the member state's share of the organisation's budget. In cases in which it is considered necessary for the proper performance of a common policy, the rules of the communities certainly allow some redistribution of funds. Decisions on the funding of projects in the EU's research and technology policy, for example, are based on the principle of excellence rather than on entitlements to a '*juste retour*' (Grande 1995). This did not prevent Member States from jealously watching over the return of funds in their own country and stubbornly quarrelling about the settlements for new European institutions. The public debates on member states' net contributions to the EU budget which began in the 1970s and on the British share of it in the 1980s clearly show this. Redistributive conflicts have been intensified with the establishment of a single market and the accession of economically less developed and less competitive southern European countries in the 1980s, although the Community's regional and cohesion policies were designed and substantially expanded to temper such conflicts.

The current euro crisis may represent a critical turning point regarding solidarity conflicts. With the establishment of economic and monetary union, a reallocation of resources among member states was explicitly ruled out. The introduction of the euro was to be based on the principle of mutual benefit; liability for the debts of member states was expressly prohibited by article 104b of the Maastricht Treaty. The euro crisis, however, has made these contractual provisions void; and it provoked massive conflicts over solidarity between member states and over the re-distribution of funds. The euro crisis has produced new conflicts between Member States, in particular between so-called 'creditor' and 'debtor' countries; and it has intensified distributional conflicts within the member states, most certainly in the southern European debtor countries that have been hit by the crisis most severely. These conflicts seem to confirm

arguments that the scope of solidarity among EU member states must remain limited because of differences in national histories, traditions and cultures (see, e.g., Offe 2000).

Taken together, we assume that the process of European integration produces a number of typical political conflicts that result from decisions about the constitutive elements of the European polity. Most of these conflicts are not unique to European integration but can be observed in other forms of regional cooperation too. Since the process of European integration is the most ambitious and demanding form of regional cooperation regarding the level and scope of cooperation, these conflicts should be particularly intensive here.[7] We expect an increase in the level of political conflict as an effect of three different but interdependent developments: a substantial transfer of political authority to supranational institutions; a significant increase in the size and heterogeneity of membership; and increasing demands on solidarity requiring a substantial reallocation of financial resources among member states. Moreover, we assume that the various integration conflicts are not cross-cutting but reinforcing each other. For this reason, we expect particularly high levels of politicisation in controversies in which several of these integration conflicts play a role simultaneously.

To conclude, in line with authors such as Hooghe and Marks (2009) and de Wilde and Zürn (2012), we expect a significant and lasting politicisation of the European integration process.

- *Politicisation hypothesis:* The European integration process has been politicised significantly and lastingly. Therefore, we expect an increase in politicisation in all the EU member states. We also expect politicisation of European issues in countries that seek membership.

Coming back to our distinction between level and types politicisation, we expect that this process should manifest itself both in a *quantitative* increase in the level of politicisation and a

---

[7] For comparative analyses of regional integration, see, e.g., Mattli 1999; Katzenstein 2005 and Laursen 2010.

qualitative shift towards a type of highly intensive mass conflict in the past two decades. Furthermore, based on our multi-dimensional concept of politicisation, this general argument includes three more specific hypotheses on the salience of issues, the increase in the range of actors and the polarisation of actors' positions. We formulate these hypotheses separately, although we assume that they must all be confirmed for the general argument to hold. However, our differentiated conceptualisation allows for the possibility that the politicisation hypothesis may be rejected despite our expectations of some of the individual indicators being met. The three hypotheses are:

- *Visibility hypothesis:* European integration has led to an increasing visibility of European issues in public debate and, most importantly, to increasingly salient public contestation among political actors.

- *Actor expansion hypothesis:* European integration has expanded the range of actors involved in political debates on European issues; in particular, it has reduced the importance of government actors in these debates.

- *Polarisation hypothesis:* European integration has replaced 'elite consensus' with a strong polarisation of actors' positions in public debates.

We will elaborate on these hypotheses in the following two sections by introducing the institutional setting that structures the way political conflicts over Europe are fought and the driving forces that transform the potential tensions induced by European integration into manifest conflict.

Channelling conflict: the institutional context of politicisation in the EU

Political conflicts take place in a wider institutional context that structures the actors' opportunities to articulate, organise and mobilise their preferences (see Kriesi 2004). Thus, in order to examine the politicisation of the European integration process we need to take into account the specific characteristics of the *EU polity*. For the purposes of our analysis, its multi-layered structure is of particular importance (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Bache and Flinders 2004). The EU is certainly not a 'super-state', it is a polity in which political authority is divided between the European and the national level,[8] where supranational and national actors jointly govern, and where intergovernmental and supranational structures coexist at the European level. At this European level, the result is a system of *double representation* – representation of the member states (in the European Council and the Council of Ministers) and representation of citizens (in the European Parliament). The representation of member states is the task of the national governments, while the representation of citizens is primarily the function of the parties in the European Parliament, as well as in the national parliaments of the member states.[9] At the same time, this integrated system of multi-level governance gives the national level – its actors and institutions – a prominent role in EU policy-making.

As a result, the politicisation of European integration may take place in different institutional contexts at both the national and the European level; and depending on the channel that carries the burden of politicisation, the protagonists will either be mainly national governments or political parties. It is an open empirical question at which territorial level politicisation takes place and which of the institutional channels available is actually used. However, the literature on EU politics suggests a structural asymmetry in the mobilisation of political conflict within the EU for several reasons.

---

[8] And in member states with a federal state structure this even includes the sub-national level of policy making.
[9] The representation of regions and functional interests can be neglected here.

First, there is an asymmetry between collective and individual representation. The EU is still above all a 'community of communities rather than a community of individuals', which privileges the representation of collectivities over the representation of individuals (Schimmelfennig 2010: 220). Second, because of the importance of collective representation and the prominent role played by national governments in the EU policy process, executive actors are privileged over non-executive actors (Moravcsik 1997). Consequently, scholars observe a substantial loss of power by national parliaments, which has not yet been compensated for by an increase in the competencies of the European Parliament. Third, the multi-level system of policy-making poses serious problems in the organisation, aggregation and representation of social interests and political preferences (Grande 2003). This holds for both political parties and interest groups, and it holds for both conventional and unconventional forms of political participation. As a result, the partisan channel and political protest are underdeveloped at the EU level. Despite the expansion of the competencies of the European Parliament, transnational party organisations are weak and their public visibility is low (Hix and Lord 1997). Because of the weakness of transnational parties in mobilising European issues forcefully in European elections, these contests have thus far been mainly used as 'second order national elections' (Reif and Schmitt 1980), which means that they have been instrumentalised by both parties and voters for their strategic interests in domestic politics (see also Schmitt 2005).

These asymmetries produce a typical pattern of political mobilisation that is clearly distinct from national politics. On the one hand, we expect that politicisation at the *European level* mainly takes place in the intergovernmental channel and is limited to elite debates of varying and, as some would argue, increasing conflict intensity. On the other hand, we primarily expect an expansion of political conflict over European issues beyond the closed circles of national and supranational political elites in the *national* electoral arena and in the *national*

protest arena. These are the institutional contexts in which a highly conflictive type of politicisation is most likely to be organised – if at all. However, in the national electoral arena, European issues have to compete with domestic issues (e.g. welfare, security) for public visibility and we must not assume that they will become dominant in such contests. This may provide additional incentives to use the protest arena in order to mobilise political conflict over European issues. To put it differently, the places to look for politicisation of European issues are primarily intergovernmental interactions at the European level or the electoral and the protest arenas at the national level. Since the level of politicisation in the intergovernmental channel is by definition very limited, we should expect high levels of politicisation only in the national electoral and protest arenas. If our politicisation hypothesis is to be confirmed, we must observe a significant increase there.

Taken together, the particular institutional context of the EU channels the articulation, organisation and mobilisation of conflict in a specific way. Most important, this institutional context does not foster a politicisation of European integration despite its multiple points of political access. Instead, it causes a *politicisation dilemma*: if articulated at the European level, political conflict is restricted by the dominance of intergovernmental actors and executive elites; if organised at the national level in national election contests, it is limited by competition with key domestic political issues. Because of these structural restrictions, we should not overrate the opportunities to politicise the European integration process. Even if the elite consensus of the formative phase of European integration has now been replaced by some public contestation, there are certainly limits to a politicisation of European integration. In other words, the transfer of political authority from the national to the European level and the expansion of membership have created political potentials for a politicisation of the European integration process beyond the narrow realm of elite controversies. However, we expect that the specific institutional structure of

this new polity will tend to cushion the resulting political conflicts in general, and to channel it into national political arenas.

Driving forces of politicisation: critical events, actors and mobilisation strategies

What are the driving forces of this process? We assume that political conflicts need to be articulated and mobilised *in public* if they are to have a lasting effect in a political system. The various sources of conflict as we described them previously nourish political potentials, but these potentials do not automatically translate into political activity. The decisive question is whether and how these potentials will be organised and articulated. This may depend on a number of mediating factors (see also de Wilde and Zürn 2012: 141). Most important in our view are two sets of factors: critical events, on the one hand, and political actors and their mobilisation strategies, on the other.

Critical events in the integration process

The first factor is critical events and thresholds in the integration process. According to de Wilde and Zürn (2012: 140), 'the rising politicisation of European integration is primarily a reaction to the increasing authority of the EU over time'. Major integration steps, but also national decisions on EU membership, may serve as triggers or focal points of political controversies. Such events represent milestones in the transfer of political authority to supranational institutions and in the territorial expansion of the EU. In the course of such key events, we expect public attention paid to European issues to be particularly high and discussion of relevant political alternatives on the future direction of European integration to be intense. To put it differently, we expect higher levels of politicisation around such incidents because they are crucial moments in time when the

typical questions of regional integration are discussed and conflicts over sovereignty, identity, and solidarity are very likely to arise.

While the relevance of such key events in the integration process is obvious, there are two aspects of them which are the objects of scholarly debates. First of all, which critical events are most important for the politicisation of Europe is contested. In this book, we propose to systematically study the effects of enlargement rounds, i.e. the accession of new members, and of treaty reforms, i.e. major changes in the constitutional framework. Except for the euro crisis, we are not considering critical junctures in the integration process in which there has been open conflict among member states without them leading to changes in the Community's legal framework, as was the case in the mid-1960s with the crisis of the 'empty chair'. Regarding treaty reforms, there is broad agreement in the literature that the Maastricht Treaty represents a critical threshold in the European integration process, as it caused both a substantial transfer of political authority to the EU and a strong increase in the scope of its activity (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2009: 21; Leuffen et al. 2012: 21). According to Ciftci (2005), Maastricht also marks a critical threshold in public support for European integration. In terms of public support, he identifies three periods since the 1970s: a period characterised by stagnation and low support from the early 1970s until 1985; a period characterised by an intensification of the integration process and increasing public support from 1985 until 1991; and a 'post-Maastricht' period after 1991, in which public support has been declining again (see also Eichenberg and Dalton 2007). Apart from Maastricht, the literature expects the constitutional process and the euro crisis to represent yet other critical events in the integration process, and they may thus be milestones in the politicisation of the integration process (e.g. Statham and Trenz 2012, 2013a, b). As argued before, the euro crisis is expected to be particularly important since it may exacerbate conflicts of solidarity, in addition to conflicts over sovereignty and identity.

Regarding enlargement, we expect that these decisions will be most decisive for politicisation in the country seeking EU accession (see Kitschelt 1997). Moreover, it can be argued that the more distinct the cultural and identitarian background of a candidate country is – or is perceived to be – the more its accession should represent a critical event which leads to heightened politicisation. In the case of the EU, membership conflicts certainly include transfers of national sovereignty, and at advanced stages of the integration process these transfers must be particularly consequential. But membership in a larger community also raises questions of national identity ('who are we?') and it jeopardises national principles, norms, institutions and political routines. Moreover, membership may trigger demands on transnational solidarity, thus causing re-distributional conflicts within a national community. Membership in the European communities is not only 'the mother of all authority transfers'; it raises all sorts of identitarian and distributional problems at the same time. To put it differently, the various sources of conflict mentioned before may not only coexist, but they can also amplify each other. In this context, we argue that politicisation is intensified if conflict is nourished from different sources. It is most intense if the three sources of integration conflict play a role simultaneously and we assume that such an intensification of conflict is most likely if the accession of one's own country is at stake.

Apart from identifying such critical events that may provoke political conflicts about European integration, the second open question is whether controversies around such critical stages in the integration process have *lasting* effects on public support and the politicisation of European integration. In other words, do such critical events and thresholds lead to a lasting increase in the level of politicisation, or do they produce cyclical ups and downs? In this context, Hooghe and Marks (2009) and de Wilde and Zürn (2012) argue that politicisation is irreversible because of structural changes in the integration process, whereas Börzel and Risse (2009) suggest

that recent increases in the level of politicisation might calm down because of an increasing

salience of socio-economic policy issues.

Political actors and mobilisation strategies

The second set of factors to be discussed is the role of *political actors* and their *mobilisation*

strategies. Critical events may trigger political controversies. However, these conflicts only

become relevant if political actors and organisations articulate them in public debates. Their

decisions partly depend on the activities of other actors who are involved in a conflict. Thus, for

an analysis of politicisation it is crucial to examine what types of actors are most active and

which strategies they utilise. In the following, we briefly introduce three factors that are of

particular importance when it comes to the mobilisation strategies of political actors: the

emphasis actors give to a specific issue ('selective emphasis'), the position they take on this issue

('position taking'), and the way they justify their position in the public debate ('framing'). Table

1.2 summarises the basic alternatives for each of these factors (see, e.g., Meguid 2008; Wagner

2012; Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012; de Vries and Hobolt forthcoming).

[Table 1.2]

The first factor, *selective emphasis* is most directly related to the salience or visibility of

European issues. By emphasising or de-emphasising European issues in general, actors attempt to

influence the overall visibility or salience of these issues. Moreover, by focusing on specific

aspects, actors may try to shift attention to controversies in which they are likely to profit relative

to other actors. In this context, we argue that the distinction between *constitutive* and *policy-*

related European issues is crucial (for similar distinctions, see Bartolini 2005: 310 and Schmitt 2007). The former type of issue refers to the very nature of the EU polity and deals with the typical problems of regional integration outlined above, i.e. questions of authority transfer, membership, institutional capabilities and decision-making rules. *Policy-related issues*, by contrast, refers to questions about how European institutions should use the competencies they have in a specific policy area.

The second factor is the *issue positions* taken by the various actors in a conflict. Issue positions are most directly related to the intensity of conflict, i.e. the degree of polarisation. By advocating a position that is in conflict with the position shared by other participants in a debate, actors may gain visibility and, in the end, this should increase the overall degree of polarisation around a given topic (Wagner 2012). Indirectly, such differing issue positions adopted by the actors may result in a higher salience of European integration in the public debate because polarisation increases the likelihood that other actors counter certain positions and that the struggle makes the headlines.

Finally, by strategically *framing* a given issue, actors can shift the central logic of a conflict. Actors try to frame a conflict in line with their general ideological predisposition and with regard to strategic factors in order to improve their competitive position. In this context, we must emphasise that 'Europe' is a complex issue which has both an economic-distributional and a cultural-identitarian dimension (see Helbling et al. 2010; Hooghe and Marks 2012 and Kriesi et al. 2012: 16-20). For example, we cannot unambiguously classify EU enlargement as either an economic or a cultural issue, because it can be associated with both increasing cultural diversity and increasing economic prosperity (to name just two possible associations). Therefore, an analysis of mobilisation strategies must include both the specific topics discussed and the thematic frames used by actors to justify their positions. In order to identify such differences, we

distinguish between *three different justification strategies:* cultural, economic and utilitarian justifications. These justifications respond to structural conflicts in the European integration process, but they do so in entirely different ways. A cultural justification emphasises the cultural-identitarian consequences of political integration – the benefits of cultural diversity, for example; while an economic justification may stress the positive or negative consequences of economic integration; and a utilitarian frame provides other non-economic pragmatic reasons in favour of or against political integration.

How do these three factors combine into mobilisation strategies? The scholarly literature suggests that two arenas are of particular importance: the electoral arena and the protest arena. In the electoral arena, the *main path towards the politicisation of Europe is dominated by Eurosceptic parties of the right.* The majority of authors stress the role of these parties in the politicisation of European integration (see Kriesi 2007; Kriesi et al. 2008; Hooghe and Marks 2009: 14ff.; Gómez-Reino and Llamazares 2013; de Vries and Hobolt forthcoming). They argue that a strong populist radical right challenger is most conducive to the politicisation of Europe due to its specific mobilisation strategy, which conflicts with that adopted by mainstream parties on both the right and the left. More specifically, scholars argue that populist radical right parties: (a) emphasise European integration in general and its constitutive aspects more specifically; (b) take a pronounced Eurosceptic or Euro-critical position; and (c) justify their criticism by referring to cultural-identitarian motives. This contrasts with the strategies of mainstream parties, which are portrayed as: (a) de-emphasising European issues; (b) taking a fairly positive position on European integration; and (c) highlighting the economic and other utilitarian benefits created by the integration process. Thus, by challenging the pro-European consensus of mainstream parties and the political elite more generally, the populist radical right is seen as the most vigorous driving force of the politicisation of European integration. The dominant role of Eurosceptic

radical right parties in controversies over European integration is explained not the least by the fact that European issues cut across existing political divides, thus producing severe intra-party conflict within mainstream parties (Franklin et al. 1996a). For this reason, mainstream parties tend to dismiss such issues with the aim of neutralising internal conflicts. However, the scholarly literature also reports cases in which European integration has become an object of major controversy between government and opposition (e.g. Green-Pedersen 2012) and this may constitute a second path towards the politicisation of Europe in the electoral arena.

In cases in which European integration is politicised by the populist radical right, this process is driven by a specific type of issue being emphasised and a particular framing of European integration. More precisely, it focuses on constitutive issues and uses a cultural-identitarian framing. Simplifying somewhat, two arguments can be found in the scholarly literature to justify the central role of constitutive issues and cultural-identitarian justification frames. It is argued that constitutive issues drive politicisation because they touch upon the most fundamental sources of conflict over European integration, i.e. sovereignty, identity and solidarity. Thus, by emphasising constitutive European issues, the populist radical right puts the spotlight on fears of a loss of national sovereignty, identity and financial resources. Furthermore, opposing European integration by reference to cultural-identitarian justifications is nurtured by the 'nativist' ideological predispositions of radical right parties (Mudde 2007: 24). In this way, the populist radical right has been successfully mobilising the potential losers from the further opening-up of national boundaries in western Europe since the 1990s (Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012).

By putting Europe on the agenda and highlighting its negative consequences, the populist right exacerbates tensions within mainstream parties of the left and right, which can no longer so easily integrate European issues in their programmes. As a result, mainstream parties in EU member states, in particular conservative and Christian Democratic parties, have toughened their

stance on the most politicised EU issues (Leconte 2010: 121). As Hooghe and Marks (2009) argue, the shift from an economic to a cultural or identity-related conflict might be the key factor driving the changes 'from permissive consensus to constraining dissensus' and the radical right is seen as the main mobilising agent behind this shift.

This path towards the politicisation of Europe in the electoral arena clearly dominates research on political parties and electoral behaviour. However, there are also authors who emphasise the role of social movements and organised civil society in the politicisation of Europe (see, e.g., Beck and Grande 2007 and Habermas 2011). While there is general agreement that political protest against European integration was of limited scope in the past, some authors argue that the transformation of European politics into 'mass politics' is also due to an increase in activities in the protest arena (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2009: 7; Imig and Tarrow 2001). Thus, 'mobilisation from below', i.e. the mobilising power of social movements in the protest arena, could constitute a second channel towards the politicisation of Europe. However, it is important to note that the positions taken and the mobilising strategies employed in the protest arena tend to be different from those of most Eurosceptic political parties. According to social movement scholars (see, e.g., Balme and Chabanet 2008; and della Porta and Caiani 2009), actors in the protest arena mostly try to politicise Europe not by fundamentally opposing the European project, but rather by striving for a different, more 'cosmopolitan', democratic or social Europe. In other words, challengers in the protest arena accept the importance of European integration in principle; however, they adopt a critical position towards the dominant, elite-driven approach towards integration and they focus on the negative political and economic effects of it.

In conclusion, we formulate five major hypotheses on possible driving forces of politicisation:

- *Authority transfer hypothesis.* The politicisation of European integration is driven by transfers of authority from the nation to the European level. Because the Maastricht Treaty represents a very critical event in this process, we expect a significant and lasting increase in politicisation in the period after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

- *Radical right hypothesis.* Radical right and Eurosceptic parties are the most important driving forces of the politicisation of Europe.

- *Cultural shift hypothesis.* The politicisation of European integration is the product of an increasing importance of cultural and identity-related frames.

- *Constitutive issue hypothesis.* The politicisation of European integration is due to increasing conflicts over constitutive – and not policy-related – European issues.

- *Mass politics hypothesis.* The politicisation of European integration is not restricted to the electoral arena. The transfer of political authority increasingly provokes resistance in the protest arena, thus making European integration an object of mass politics beyond the electoral arena.

Consequences of politicisation: towards political structuring?

Having analysed the development of conflict over European integration in several political arenas, we finally turn to the consequences of this politicisation for the EU political system and for the integration process. The effects of politicisation on European decision-making processes and on the future course of the integration processes are still a matter of scholarly debate. Our empirical analysis contributes to this controversy in a specific way. By distinguishing between *politicisation* and *political structuring*, we are interested in the long-term structural effects of politicisation on political conflict in Europe. Political structuring in this context means the

durable polarisation of political actors (parties, social groups, voters) on specific political issues. Following Schattschneider (1975 [1960]), Rokkan (2000) and Bartolini (2005), we assume that political conflict is most intense if it is structured in this way. As Schattschneider (1975 [1960]: 64) put it, 'There are billions of potential conflicts in any modern society, but only a few become significant. The reduction of the number of conflicts is an essential part of politics'. Political structuring then is the process in which the number of conflicts is reduced significantly, thus giving political conflict a permanent structure.

Our analysis of the politicisation of European integration is based on the assumption that politicisation has lasting consequences if it results in a permanent structuring of political conflict over European integration. Politicisation, which is the expansion of the scope of political conflict, is a necessary condition for political structuring, because only an increase in the visibility, level and intensity of political conflict has the power to establish a permanent structure of political oppositions. However, politicisation is not sufficient for political structuring. Protest votes, for example, can momentarily produce a very intense politicisation but they have no long-term effect on conflict structures. Politicisation only becomes irreversible when conflicts over European issues are reflected in permanent political oppositions. In this constellation, political parties and other collective actors are integrated into stable actor coalitions which represent citizens' attitudes on EU politics. Moreover, these attitudes are no longer volatile but very stable and related to specific socio-structural characteristics (e.g. education, social class). We define this formation of stable political oppositions as *political structuring*; and we assume that politicisation is irreversible and of lasting importance if it has the power to structure political conflict in this way.

In this study, we analyse the structuring of political conflict in two steps. First, we are interested in the long-term development of political conflict structures across political arenas. Has

politicisation produced stable political coalitions and actor constellations on major integration issues over time? In a second step, we pay particular attention to the euro-crisis. How has the euro crisis affected these political coalitions and actor constellations? Are arguments on the increasing importance of cultural conflicts and frames still valid after the break-out of the euro crisis?

Since 2010, when several members of the euro-zone, Greece in particular, were threatened with bankruptcy, the euro crisis has been dominating the agendas of governments and European institutions, it has been sparking an intensive public debate widely covered by mass media, and it has unleashed a new wave of public protest, in particular in those countries most heavily affected by the crisis (Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Italy and Spain). The question of whether the euro crisis has contributed to the politicisation of the European integration process seems trivial at first sight. Less obvious is the answer to the question of how. Has the euro crisis reinforced the economic dimension of political conflict, thus reversing previous changes in the structure of political conflict? Has it changed not only the intensity of politicisation but also its content and nature? Has it expanded the range of actors by strengthening 'mass protest' on European issues? It is true that the euro crisis was an economic crisis in the first place, but the question is how it has been constructed politically and how it resonates among the general public. As a result of the central role of national governments in the decision-making process regarding the euro crisis, we expect that the politicisation of the crisis is likely to have contributed to the renaissance of nationalism and Eurosceptic parties in the electoral arena that previous research has found in west European countries up to the global financial crisis (Kriesi et al. 2012).

Finally, we formulate two hypotheses on the consequences of politicisation for the structuring of political conflict in Europe:

- *Structuring hypothesis.* The politicisation of European integration is structuring political conflict in Europe and has a lasting effect on the structure of political oppositions regarding European issues.

- *Euro crisis hypothesis.* The euro crisis does not reverse existing patterns of politicisation; rather, it contributes to this structuring by strengthening nationalist actors and frames.

Research design and methods

This study is based on original data collected in a large-scale empirical research effort. It employs three comparative angles: historical, cross-national and across political arenas. First, we analyse politicisation over a very long period of time. Our data covers the entire period from the early 1970s to the year 2012. This allows us to trace the politicisation of European integration from the years that Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) characterised as 'permissive consensus' to the critical stages of the euro-crisis.

Second, our study makes use of cross-national comparisons by covering six west European countries: Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. In our selection strategy, we follow a most-similar-systems design. Only west European states with stable democratic systems throughout our research period are included in the sample. We deliberately exclude east European countries because of their late membership in the EU. The countries selected differ with regard to important context factors that might shape the level and timing of politicisation and that may help us to qualify the general hypotheses previously introduced. These factors will be explained in detail in Chapter 2.

Our analysis focuses on the *domestic level* because the national level is still considered the central arena for political mobilisation and national governments are still the most relevant actors

in key decisions on European integration (see Raunio 2007). It is no coincidence that Vivien Schmidt (2006: 1) arrives at the conclusion that 'the real problem of democracy in the EU' is not to be found at the European but at the national level. In addition, as Marks and Hooghe (2009) show very plausibly, an essential irony of the increasing politicisation of Europe is a deepening interconnection of European decision processes and national political competition. This is not to say that we restrict our analysis to the national level, however. Our strategy for collecting and analysing data deliberately attempts to avoid the pitfalls of methodological nationalism. In our study, we analyse data at three different levels: (a) the national level, where we are only interested in the participation of national actors in national debates; (b) the transnational level, where we focus on domestic political arenas, but include actors from other countries or from supranational institutions and international organisations; and (c) the European level, where we analyse data at an aggregate level. The basis for deciding on the most appropriate level of analysis is the research question addressed in each chapter of this study, which implies that levels of analysis can not only vary between chapters but also within each chapter.

Third, we trace politicisation processes in three different types of occasion: national elections, political protest, and public debates on major integration steps. We focus on national elections as they offer 'windows of opportunity' where political conflicts among political parties can be observed in a condensed form. However, studying politicisation in the national electoral arena sets very high stakes, as European issues have to compete with other domestic political issues during an election campaign. Thus, we assume that if issues related to European integration have become politicised during national election campaigns, the structuring capacity of this conflict can be considered to be very high. In addition, we analyse protest events related to European integration in the period from 1995 to 2010. This allows us to include precisely those activities and actors that often go unheard in the wider public debate. Finally, in order to cover

the full range of actors and the exact importance of critical events responsible for the politicisation of European integration, we look at public debates on major integration steps. Starting with the first inclusion of new members into the EC in 1973 (Denmark, Ireland, UK), we analyse public debates on every treaty reform and on the accession of every new member state since the early 1970s. As the euro crisis has major implications for the future course of the integration process, we include the most decisive phase of the euro crisis from December 2010 until March 2012, although it does not represent an integration step according to our definition.

This study is based on original data collected for the purposes of this book. In order to identify the various manifestations of politicisation, we rely on the mass media as our data source. Media content directly reflects the *public* contestation related to European integration. It allows us to systematically study how the various actors compete with each other, how their competition resonates with the wider public, who is actually speaking (e.g. executive politicians, parliamentarians, civil society actors), and which sub-issues related to European integration are being debated. More specifically, this book is based on data collected with the help of two different kinds of content analysis. On the one hand, we use the so-called core sentence approach to data collected on public debates in the mass media as they unfold during election campaigns and decision-making on major integration steps. On the other hand, we collect information on protest politics from daily newspapers by means of a protest event analysis. Our research methods will be described in full detail in Chapter 2 of this volume. Taken together, the two approaches give us a comprehensive and detailed picture of the scope and intensity of the politicisation of the European integration process, the actors responsible for it, the mobilisation strategies they use and the structural consequences of this process.

Outline of the book

The volume is structured in four parts. The first part (Chapters 1 and 2) is devoted to the key theoretical and methodological aspects of our study. The second part (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) focuses on the empirical mapping of politicisation. We start with an in-depth study of politicisation in public debates on all major integration steps from the early 1970s to the late 2000s (Chapter 3). Next, we shift attention to the two main arenas of mass politics on the domestic level: the electoral arena (Chapter 4) and the protest arena (Chapter 5). The aim of this second part is mainly, although not exclusively, descriptive. Most important, we map the level and forms of politicisation over time, across political arenas, and across countries. At the same time, we already present tentative answers about key factors that might account for the empirical variation in the level and types of politicisation. The third part of the book (Chapters 6 to 10) takes up this search by systematically focusing on the main driving forces and consequences of politicisation. In other words, how can we explain the different levels and patterns of politicisation? Has politicisation resulted in a lasting structuring of political conflict? More precisely, the five chapters focus on the following crucial aspects: the issues most conducive for politicisation (Chapter 6); the strategies of political parties in electoral contests (Chapter 7); the frames adopted by actors to justify their positions towards Europe (Chapter 8); the structuring power of conflicts over European integration (Chapter 9); and the impact of the euro crisis on politicisation (Chapter 10). Finally, in the concluding part (Chapter 11), we summarise our findings, discuss their broader implications for the future of European integration and integration theory and we offer avenues for further research.

Figures and tables
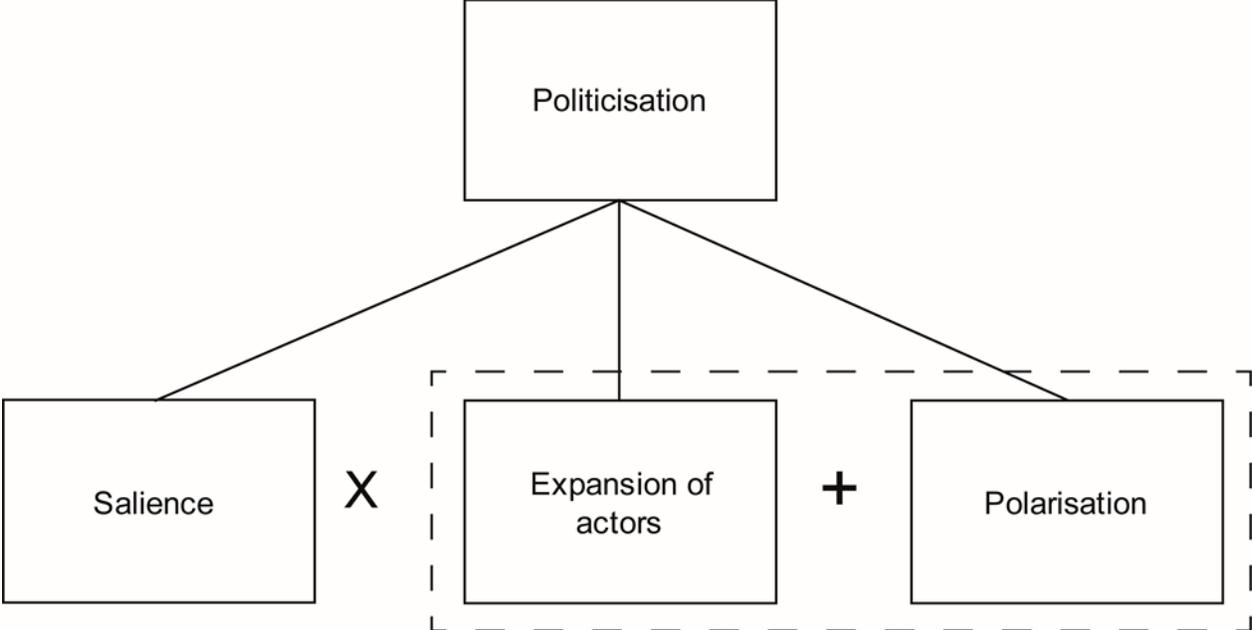
Figure 1.1: Index of politicisation

Table 1.1: Types of politicisation

		Extension of conflict: *Actor expansion*	
		Low	High
Intensity of conflict: *Polarisation*	Low	Low intensity elite conflict *(type 1)*	Low intensity mass conflict *(type 3)*
	High	High intensity elite conflict *(type 2)*	High intensity mass conflict *(type 4)*

Note: This typology refers only to constellations in which European integration is salient.

Table 1.2: The three elements of mobilisation strategies

Selective emphasis	De-emphasise
	Emphasise
Position taking	Pro
	Contra
Justification framing	Cultural
	Economic
	Other utilitarian