Should we be wary of Euroscepticism? – An investigation of the Eurosceptic concept of the demos

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Abstract
Forecasts, leading up to the election for the European Parliament in May 2014 showed a rising popularity of Eurosceptic parties. Both leading up to the election, as well as in the debate following the election, the fast spread of Euroscepticism was maybe the single biggest theme on the public agenda. An often-heard reaction to the increasing popularity of Eurosceptic parties was a call of warning that populism is (again) spreading in Europe. It was not long after the votes were cast that a sigh of relief spread in European media. The Eurosceptic politicians, it was shown, would not be able to transform their increasing popularity into political action – they would remain on the fringes of the European parliament.

Deeming the Eurosceptics ‘populist’, besides invoking a slightly derogatory rhetoric, also begs the question of what we mean by populism, and whether the label suits the Eurosceptic parties. By reconstructing the Eurosceptic concept of the demos, using the analytical features of populism, this paper seeks to show the nuances of the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos. It is further argued, that while Euroscepticism harbors features of populism, it is difficult to directly apply recent critiques of populism to Euroscepticism.
Introduction

Eurosceptic parties gained ground in the recent election for the European Parliament in May 2014. Forecasts leading up to the election was met with a call of warning that populism is spreading in Europe. A widespread relief followed the elections when it became evident that the Eurosceptics would not be able transform their electoral gains to parliamentary power. The increasing popularity of Eurosceptic politicians, as well as the uneasiness in the reactions, points to an interesting tension, between new political currents and established political parties.

The connection between the rising Eurosceptic group and populism was made both in broadsheet media and by political officials. The popularity of Eurosceptic parties in the election was described as ‘[a]n angry eruption of populist insurgency.’ A ‘specter of populism’ was said to be haunting Europe. And voters were urged to reject the populists. The parties identified as populist is a diverse group, including: Front National, United Kingdom Independence Party, the Danish Peoples Party, Alternative for Germany, SYRIZA, and the Italian 5 star movement. The linking of Euroscepticism and populism is interesting, I believe, because of the implicit critique inherent in using such a derogatory term. Such labeling, calls for inquiry into what it means and whether it is warranted.

Indeed; it calls for an investigation of Eurosceptic articulations to understand to what extent to critics of Euroscepticism are right in their assessment of Euroscepticism as a pathological phenomenon. To reach such understanding of Euroscepticism, I argue, that we need to conceive of it as an ideological formation; a counter narrative to European integration. As such, the analysis build on the assumption that political concepts are essentially contested, and views the Eurosceptic interpretation as one, among others, competing attempts to monopolize the political language of European democracy. Such an approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the political concepts in questions. The analysis of the ideological decontestations pursued by the Eurosceptic political actors, is further strengthened by applying the analytical dimensions of populism. Using the core features of populism to help structure the investigation, the paper presents an analysis of the decontestations of the demos as it is presented in political discourse. The analysis show how the Eurosceptics interpret the demos as intimately linked to the national community. But also, that they simultaneously depicts the demos as the collective of the ‘ordinary people’. Pointing to a potential tension in the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos, between a nationally defined community, and a transnational community of ordinary citizens.

The resemblance between Eurosceptic discourse and populism begs the question of whether we should be wary of this populist turn, and if so, what exactly we should fear? As stated above the populist label has derogatory connotations, but recent contributions to literature on populism also suggest that populism poses a threat to representative democracy. I here engage with the critique of populism as being a particular moralizing form of politics promoted by Jan-Werner Müller and question whether such critique can be applied to the Euroscepticism. The last section of the paper therefore engages in a discussion of whether Euroscepticism should be understood as moralizing, arguing that the multifaceted decontestation of the demos in the Eurosceptic articulations might both limit the moralizing character of these articulations at the European level, but also point to central difficulty in demarcating between moralizing and non-moralizing.

1 Higgins 2014
2 Dixon 2014, Enrico Letta, Italy’s then prime minter, called upon the EU to unite against sceptics and populists. Calling populist parties (UKIP, FN, and M5S) the “most dangerous phenomenon” facing the European Union’ and envisioning a ‘great battle’ between ‘the Europe of the people and the Europe of populism. (Davies 2013)
3 Euronews 2014
decontestations of the demos. It is further argued that the European political context might pose a particular homogenous social situation where the polity contestation proposed by the Eurosceptics provides a needed politization of European integration, necessary to spur debate, while not in itself presenting a corrective.

**Clustering Eurosceptics**

The term Euroscepticism is broad; covering both left and right-wing political parties, as well as both rejecters of European integration and political parties seeking a reformist approach. The analysis conducted here focuses on the shared ideology among the prominent right-wing parties at the election for the European Parliament in May 2014, and is built on a reconstruction of decontestations of political concepts made by political actors. The analysis conducted here focuses on United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Front National (FN), the Danish Peoples Party (DPP), and Alternative for Germany (AfD), as well as their affiliated European political groups European Alliance for Freedom (EAF), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) and the European Conservative Reformists (ECR). The focus on right-wing Euroscepticism is justified in the special attention it attracted, both from voters and in the form of concerned reactions from political agents and media. Further, right-wing Euroscepticism is generally deemed more problematic than the left-wing counter parts. This is exactly the uneasiness that right-wing populism often spur that this paper seek to engage and discuss. The cluster of Eurosceptics was selected for analysis because of their prominence and their relatively coherent decontestations of central political concepts. The analysis is not directly engaged in the feelings and sentiments of the Eurosceptic population, but rather, relies on the articulations of Eurosceptic representatives. As such, when referring to Euroscepticism/Eurosc, I refer to a category of my making. I do not propose that the cluster Eurosceptics make up the totality of Eurosc positions out there, other dominant positions, such as the left-wing resisters and the very far-right resisters, are also present in the current Eurosceptic landscape. However, these are not the focus in the following analysis.

**Understanding Euroscepticism**

The paper follow the recent line of contributions to the literature on the Euroscepticism, which seek to understand it as a particular discursive formation. A collective identity constructed in opposition to the legitimizing efforts of the European Union. While existing literature on Eurosc is comprehensive, no unified categorization, or analytical strategy has yet won over the field. The aim of this chapter is to seek a nuanced understanding of how the ‘sceptics’ present their position through ideological decontestations. Understood as a discursive formation, I believe that insights can be drawn from studies on populism when investigating how the demos is understood by political actors resisting European integration. Combining research on Eurosc and populism as not a novel endeavor. Research on right-wing parties in Europe has sought to marry the two concepts, showing that Eurosc is underpinned by the same logics as.

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1. I do not wish to claim that the Eurosc cluster analyzed here is fully coherent group. Taking the economic and redistributive policy areas as an example it is evident that vast differences exist, spanning from the libertarian UKIP to the national conservative FN. Seeking to understand these political actors as forming a fully coherent ideology will prove an impossible, and maybe more importantly, a meaningless task. However, by showing that decontestations of core political concepts are shared across existing cleavages the analysis poses the question of whether an ideological formation is in the making, which gives resisters to European integration a common language of democracy.

2. Trenz and de Wilde 2009

3. While acknowledging the insight of existing taxonomies of Euroscepticism (Cf. Szczepanik and Taggart 2008; Kopecký, P. and Mudde, C. 2002; Vasilopoulou, 2009; Sørensen 2008; Flood 2002) I will not engage in the exercise of mapping the articulations on to such taxonomies. The group of political actors engaged with here spans the hard/soft distinction (Szczepanik and Taggart 2008), and covers, I believe, both notions of Eurosceptics and eurorejects (Kopecký, P. and Mudde, C. 2002). For a recent study applying existing taxonomies on the Eurosceptics political parties following the election 2014 see Treib 2014.
populism. There are several reasons why the logics of populism can help further our understanding of Eurosceptics as a discursive formation. Firstly, European integration has reactualized the issue of the demos – Is the EU a community of a people or peoples? Does a European demos exist, and if so, can such European identity co-exist with national identity. The focus in writings on populism on the formation and identification of the popular subject is here a useful tool in understanding how such constructions are pursued by political actors resisting European integration. As will be shown, the centrality of the concept of the people to populism, and the related considerations of how the people has been deprived of their ruling capacity resonates with much Eurosceptic rhetoric. The similarities in focus in populism and Euroscepticism means that the analytical dimensions of populism can fruitfully be applied to the analysis of Euroscepticism. This is not to say that populism and Euroscepticism are identical, be merely to suggest that the similarity in the focus on the demos, and hostility towards the political system and its representatives, warrants linking the two literatures.

While the study of populism have primarily been concerned with contextual research, seeking to understand concrete instances of populism, there is an ongoing attempt to synthesize insights from the historical experiences of populism. In seeking to further the conceptual work on populism Ernesto Laclau identifies a range of features characteristic of populism. These features; político-discursive practices constructing a popular subject, the construction of an internal frontier dividing the social space into a dichotomous space, and construction of an empty signer proving coherence to the equivalence chain. I here set out to investigate the político-discursive practices pursued by political agents resisting European integration in constructing the popular subject. As such, the ambition parts with the formalistic research agenda, of identifying how seemingly unrelated claims are brought together in chains of equivalence, formulated by Laclau. Rather, the ambition here is to seek to bring to light the concept of the demos, and it’s supporting components as they are articulated in Euro sceptic discourse. While the core features of populism are inspiring the focus of the analysis, I here adapt Michael Freeden’s conceptual approach to ideology as an analytical approach. While differences exist, both Laclau and Freeden are engaged in understanding the ideologies that structure meaning. The suggested conceptual approach, developed by Freeden, is used here as its focus on the decontestation of the political concepts, and more so, on the internal relationship between concepts, is of value to the analysis undertaken. Ideologies are, according to Freeden, understood as made up of political concepts, their component parts, and the morphological structure between them. Freeden identifies essential contestability as a basic property of concepts has consequences for the way political thought operates. Given that political concepts are essentially contestable the political utterances will always

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7 Cf. Leconte 2015
8 Canovan argues that populism is an ideology of democracy granting special attention to the notion of the people. The centrality of the concept of the people to populism, and the related considerations of how the people has been deprived of their ruling capacity resonates with much Eurosceptic rhetoric (Canovan 2002).
9 Freeden 2006, Freeden 2013. Objections have been raised that Euroscepticism cannot be understood as an ideology – that there is no ‘ism’ of Euroscepticism to investigate (Trenz, forthcoming; Flood and Usherwood 2005,8). It is argued that Euroscepticism is too scattered and have too little substance to be understood as an ideology. Euroscepticism does not confine itself a given arena, and is only formulated in the negative, leaving its ideological content thin. Euroscepticism is accordingly above all a delegitimating practice. I concur, that Euroscepticism, taken as the cluster of political parties and actors who oppose European integration, does not form a coherent ideological position. That is, they do not amount to present a full set of answers to the problems facing modern societies. However, I believe that the conceptual approach to ideologies can help to reconstruct Euroscepticism as a discourse to shed light on the nuances of the political concepts in play.
10 Canovan 2002
11 For a more elaborate discussion of the potential of linking the study of populism and the study of Euroscepticism see Leconte 2015,255-259
12 Taggart, 2000
14 Laclau 2005
compete in establishing a particular interpretation of a political concept, even though such finitude can never be achieved. The analysis covers both media appearances leading up to the election in May 2014, as well as reactions to it. These contributions are supported by background documents such as manifestos, party programs and publications. Such decontestation, as they are articulated in public debates and publication, of the demos, is the focus of the following section.

Decontesting the democratic subject
The issue of the who the demos is, and further, whether such can be found in a European context were central in the Eurosceptic discourse. The Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos has an understanding of the ‘national community’ at its core, which is supported by three components; ‘the legitimacy of patriotism’ (a), the envisioned ‘right to be different’ (b), and the related idea of a lacking ‘European ethnos’ (c). These components will be laid out as they substantialize the concept of the demos as the national community. I will further address a secondary understanding of the demos namely the concept of the ‘ordinary people’ and the substantializing opposition to the European elite.

The national community
The question of who the demos is, and which qualities such must exhibit, was central to the Eurosceptic discourse. At the core of the idea of the demos, as depicted by the Eurosceptics, sits the national community and the related idea of national identity. To quote Messerschmidt (DPP), it is “[o]nly in the nation state, [that] we feel like a people”.16

According to the Eurosceptics, the identity of the people and the nation needs to be respected, and the peoples’ and the nations’ need to be free to strengthen their identity.17 Note, here that it is ‘the people’ as collective whose identity requires respect and affirmation, not people as a plurality of individuals. Identity is a dense and multifaceted concept, in this interpretation, comprising both history, language, tradition, experiences, beliefs, customs, religion, and culture.18 As emphasized by the DPP, preservation is needed of; “the Danish people’s history, experience, beliefs, language and customs.”19 Community, and the specific relationships between individuals it facilitates, is accentuated as something intrinsically valuable to the individuals living in it. The community of the people, whether this is understood as religious, cultural, or national, is depicted as where authentic life is lived. Likewise, the community of the ordinary citizens (see below) is where the authentic life of the family, friendships, and the tranquility of everyday life is found. Indeed; the national community matter, and should therefore be strengthened, because it is the community of primary importance to peoples identity. It is the source of reference; when we identify ourselves we do so in national terms, and such identification is of value. To be Danish, French, or German is, according to this decontestation not an empty label, but a label that is of intrinsic value and therefore a designation that should be respected and affirmed. In addition to making a strong link between political borders and cultural/linguistic borders, the above statements also underscores the value of these diverse cultures. The accentuation of the national community helps to reinforce the idea of European heterogeneity. Other, identity-markers, such as ethnicity, was not prioritized in the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos. The disregard of an ethnic component in the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos is interesting in that it points to the boundaries of this decontestation of the demos, which is understood as a concept of more depth.

16 Messerschmidt 2014
17 European Alliance for Freedom 2014
18 European Alliance for Freedom 2010; Front National 2014; Danish Peoples Party (website, a)
19 Danish Peoples Party (website, a)
than merely a group of affected individuals, but which does not encompass notions of race and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{20}

The concept of national community is indirectly linked to the idea of democracy. That is, the national identities put forward was not promoted as democratic as such, but rather that they constitute the necessary foundation for the creation of a people, and relatedly for democracy.

Further, trust was highlighted as a core quality of what makes up a demos, a component closely linked to the above discusses idea of community and identity. This was emphasized by Messerschmidt (DPP):

"democracy can only work in the national state, where we share both language, history, and the closeness of being a people [folkelig umiddelbarhed]. This is the necessary condition for us trusting each other. And trust is the condition for the legitimacy of our political institutions. I’ve never heard any Dane discredit our political institutions because they dislike the government. But I often hear Danes turning their back on EU institutions because they are dissatisfied with the EU. Why? Because EU does not rest on a national base."\textsuperscript{21}

National identity is linked to democracy through the trusting relationship of a demos. What is emphasized here is the intimate link between trust and legitimacy, that is, a polity cannot be legitimate if the individuals regulated by it do not trust each other and the authorities. This presents a breach with the idea that legitimacy is present whenever autonomous individuals consent to a given polity, by adding on the perspective of trust as a necessary condition of for legitimacy to exist.\textsuperscript{22} For democracy to work a trusting demos is necessary, and such resides in dense communities with shared identity, such as the national. Linking the decontestation of the community and identity to the decontestation of trust, gives substance to what trust is in the interpretation of the Eurosceptics. That is, a special kind of trust is needed, trust based on closeness or familiarity, and that such familiarity can only be found in existing national communities. Any attempt to expand democracy beyond the national realm is therefore impossible. The emphasis is here on personal trust, and other potential forms of trust, such as impersonal trust, are left unconsidered.\textsuperscript{23} This decontestation stands in opposition to much contemporary literature on democracy, which has sought to decouple community, trust, and democracy.\textsuperscript{24} The type of trust found in the community, necessary for democracy to function, seems to close to what can be called ‘personal trust’, that is relations of trust relying on the character or identity of the agents engaged.\textsuperscript{25} Other forms of trust, such as ‘impersonal trust’ ensured by mechanism and institutions seem to be deemed insufficient for democracy to work. Deeming personal rather than impersonal trust as necessary for democracy one risk underestimating the importance of institutional mechanisms, and the impersonal trust they generate.

\textbf{a. The Legitimacy of Patriotism}

The core concept of national community and identity was further substantialized by another albeit less central idea of patriotism. Patriotism as ‘love for one’s country’ was promoted by the Eurosceptic as a component linked to the decontestation of the national community. UKIP might be the most obvious case, referring to themselves as a patriotic party: "As a party we are unashamedly patriotic: we believe there is so much to be proud about Britain and the contribution it has made to the world."\textsuperscript{26} FN echoes this, and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Worries about rising immigration was surely a shared policy area for the Eurosceptics, and the it was also sometimes indicated that the worry was directed at immigrants from Muslim religious, and of Middle Eastern or African origin, while at other times Eastern European immigrants was highlighted. While this was an emphasized policy area the concept of the ethnicity was not brought up in relation to what constitutes a demos.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Messerschmidt 2014. Author's translation.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} For a discussion of trust and legitimacy in the EU see Follesdal 2007
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Pettit, 1998
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Bohmann 2007, Goodhart 2005
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Pettit 1998
  \item \textsuperscript{26} UKIP (website, a)
\end{itemize}
encourages the French to; “unite [us] in the rediscovered love of our country.” What is loved is not abstract principles or ideals, but rather the distinct traits of the national communities. Indeed; patriotic feelings has no necessary tie to the sitting regime, but rather one’s country, culture, and polity more abstractly. Patriotism as a virtue of the demos accentuate, I argue, an affective dimension of importance to the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos.

Patriotism’s relation to nationalism is a contested idea. UKIP does pay some attention to the relation between nationalism and patriotism, stressing that patriotism and nationalism are distinct values, and that one can be patriotic without excluding or demeaning others. Nigel Farage, the party leader of UKIP notes; “Personally, I am a patriot, but not a nationalist ... Just because I love the United Kingdom that does not mean that I have to hate another country. Patriotism and a sure sense of cultural identity can also lead a person to respect the culture, identity and distinctiveness of other countries and other cultures.” Indeed; national pride is legitimate as far as it does not lead to devaluation or disrespect of other national communities. The appreciation of the unique value of the national community, makes you sensitive to and respectful of others affection of their national community. That is, you would recognize the legitimacy of such feelings of patriotism experienced by others, without extending feelings of affection to other national communities. Patriotic feelings are closely tied to the communities described above, patriotism is linked to a particular national fundament and a sense of shared history. So while explicitly denouncing the link between patriotism and nationalism, the form of patriotism promoted is tied to an ethical community. This form of patriotism, linked to ethical communities, has been criticized for its exclusionary tendencies and for its historical linking to nationalism. Such worries could lead to a rejection of the form of patriotism promoted by the Eurosceptics for being dangerously exclusionary and potentially chauvinistic. However, two questions arise from the Eurosceptic accentuation of patriotism. Firstly, whether the implicit respectfulness of others right to patriotic affection can salvage this form of patriotism from mere chauvinism. And, secondly, if not, whether the strictly civic form of patriotism promoted as an alternative is strong enough to be a relevant foundation for a demos.

b. The right to and appraisal of difference
To support the decontestation of the demos as the national community, the difference between national communities and identities was emphasized. National communities are promoted as vastly different both in their cultural and moral core. Diversity among national communities is not merely a description, rather, diversity is elevated from a description of what is, to a normative guideline in the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos. As stressed by Farage; “As I have always said, I don’t think that we British are any better or worse than you Italians but, by heavens, we are certainly very different! What’s wrong with that anyway? ‘Vive la différence!’” These statements formulate the differences in the abstract; what is noted is that national communities are different but not what actually differentiate them. The substantive difference of the

27 Willsher 2014. See also Danish Peoples Party’s party program, which states “… the essence of the party program is a warm and strong love of our country” (Danish Peoples Party (website, a))
28 Danish Peoples Party (website, a)
29 Primoratz 2013
30 Farage 2014
31 It should be noted how the link between patriotism and Christianity made by Farage, noting; “I sometimes wonder why some Catholic bishops have become so quiet about teaching the Christian value of patriotism.” point to the difficulty in wresting the idea of patriotism from a particular ethic.
32 Primoratz 2013; Habermas 2006,50-55; Habermas 2006b,75-92
33 One could discuss that further theoretical implications of these diverging perspectives on patriotism. However, I will limit myself from elaborating further on these considerations here, and merely accentuate the importance of the ‘legitimacy of patriotism’ in corroborating the notion of the intrinsic valuable national community.
34 Alternative for Germany 2014,8
35 Farage 2013; von Rohr 2014
national communities, and related identities, is rarely articulated, and the few instances where substantial examples of national culture are provided, these often resonated across national divides.\textsuperscript{36} This indicates that what is decontested here is not so much the factual differences between the national communities and identities, but rather a right to be and remain different. What is promoted here is not so much depictions of other national identities having different traits (either positively or negatively defined), but rather a more abstract point that national identities are potentially different, and that they have a right to be so. When upholding a right to difference among the European peoples, one has to ask how this relates to the right to difference more broadly speaking. That is, whether this perspective remains sensitive to the right to difference also within the identified community. While the interpretation put forward by the Eurosceptics does not deny such intra-national right to difference, the lack of attention given to this issue should be noticed. In sum, the promotion of a ‘right to difference’ begs the question of which entities can claim such right.

c. No European community
National communities matter, the love for them is legitimate, and each national community has a right to underline its difference. As so far analyzed, the decontestation of the demos does not directly refer to the European setting in which the ideas are articulated. However, a last component is added, which ties this promoted decontestation of the demos to European democracy. The idea of the lacking of a European community was emphasized by the Eurosceptics; EAF stress; “... There is no such thing as a ‘single European people.’”\textsuperscript{37} That is, according to the Eurosceptics, Europe is comprised not by a people but rather by peoples.\textsuperscript{38}

Farage elaborates; “There is no 'European people'. There is no united groupthink. And because of this, for the European Union to work, democracy simply cannot.”\textsuperscript{39} Here the link between the people, a shared set of ideas, and democracy is made clear. Democracy needs a people who are capable of forming collective opinion. This links this decontestation of the demos, to the idea of democratic discourse, and to democratic decision-making processes. This accentuates how the lack of a European people, capable of groupthink, renders European democracy impossible. AfD emphasizes this point; “There is no European nation as such and no single European constitutive populace”\textsuperscript{40} What is highlighted is not just the lack of a ‘populace’, or a ‘collective of citizens’, but in addition to this, the lack of community.

The promoted idea of the demos as a national community, with a shared identity, and the further diagnosis that such a collective is missing in the European contexts, begs the question of this is just a matter evolutionary progression. That is, whether a collective could be thought to evolve into a European phenomenon, or whether the such a demos is thought to be impossible beyond the nation state. In the Eurosceptic discourse, such evolutionary perspective is deemed impossible. At least at a European scale. EAF stresses this point; “‘a single European people’ – a European Demos – does not exist and cannot be created through forceful or legislative means ...”\textsuperscript{41} According to this interpretation it seems that the demos is not easily constructed through institutional or legislative means, and further an idea so strongly linked to the national community that it, according to the Eurosceptics is linked by necessity.

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\textsuperscript{36} Two examples of substantial characteristics of the national communities, which resonate across national borders are; the importance of the family (Alternative for Germany 2014,\textsuperscript{18}; European Alliance for Freedom 2014) and Christianity (Danish Peoples Party (website, a); Farage 2014; Betz 2013)

\textsuperscript{37} European Alliance for Freedom 2010

\textsuperscript{38} Front National 2014; Europe for Freedom and Direct Democracy (website, a)

\textsuperscript{39} Farage 2014a; Schaper 2014

\textsuperscript{40} Alternative for Germany 2014

\textsuperscript{41} European Alliance for Freedom 2014; Farage 2013. This we further supported in an interview with MEP Hans-Olaf Henkel, Alternative for Germany (personal correspondence)
The ordinary people

While the Eurosceptics primarily seek to decontest the demos as the national community, they simultaneously promote a different decontestation of the demos, namely as the 'ordinary people'. A category which, I argue, is recognized to be transnational.

Democracy should, according to the Eurosceptic be concerned with “the people’s will, not the fads of the political class.” Farage accentuates this focus on the life and interests of ordinary citizens; “I am very proud to have formed this Group with other MEPs and we undertake to be the peoples’ voice.” The sentiment of promoting the perspective and interests of the ordinary people is also evident in UKIPs 2014 Manifesto, where a female UKIP voter is quoted “I’ll be voting UKIP because they are the only party listening to what people want.” Stressing at once, both the segment in focus, and the lack of attention given to this segment by other parties. The focus on the ordinary people permeates the communication of a party like UKIP, with their accentuation of the effects of Europeanization on the average worker, and the small business owners. In their party program AfD accentuates the illegitimacy of European institutions, exempted of parliamentary control, intervening in " ... the lives of ordinary people in Greece, Portugal or Cyprus." A similar idea is evident in FN’s critique of EU’s economic policies as disproportionally affecting French manufacturing jobs. While I argue that the decontestation of the demos as the ordinary people was shared among the Eurosceptics it should be mentioned that it was also internally used to demarcate between the political actors. Le Pen (FN) identified the difference between FN and AfD as one of closeness to the people; “We share certain viewpoints with the AfD, but they are not a party of the people. Rather they are an elitist party with a different structure from ours.” Again noticing the difference between the people and the elite.

Promoting the ordinary citizen as the subject of importance is a way of telling the story of who is, and who should be, in the center of politics. It is therefore a way framing and narrowing the scope of politics, that is, it is a way of monopolizing the idea of what democratic politics should be concerned with, by further substantializing the idea of the demos. It is important to note here that the type of person that is brought forward is a particular subject. Firstly, it is not just a ‘right bearing’ subject, that is not to say that such an interpretation is not present in the ideological structure presented by the Eurosceptics, but the accentuation of a less abstract subject narrows the focus of the political. In turn, the focus of the political should be the concern of the ordinary citizen who is depicted as a workingman concerned with economic stability and job security. By accentuating the lived experience, and the concrete effects that EU policies have on the depicted average citizen the decontestation seeks to limit the political rhetoric forcing it from the abstract to the concrete. While this decontestation of the demos as the average working citizen is concrete, it is of course still depicted in the abstract, which the commonality of the depiction across the political actors help to accentuate. That this category of ordinary citizens is identified by political actors across several European nations is interesting in that it points to a central similarity or at least a transnational sympathy with ordinary citizens in other nation states. Farage accentuates this; “If I were a Greek citizen I would have been out there

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42 Interestingly, this does not seem to affect the perceived homogeneity of the national people.
43 UKIP (website, b)
44 UKIP (website, c)
45 UKIP 2014
46 UKIP 2014
47 AFD Party program, p. 3
48 Front National 2014. I here interpret the reference made to the people, as a reference to more particular understanding of the ordinary or common people, only explicitly addressed in the above quote by AfD. I believe that the references made to e.g. the worker and manufacturing job lends credibility to this interpretation
49 von Rohr 2014
in the streets during the protests! I would be out there trying to fight this monstrosity.”

As such, a group of ordinary citizens exists, across borders, around which politics should revolve. This is worthy of notice because it does seem to limit the envisioned difference among the European peoples. As already mentioned the difference envisioned by the Eurosceptics is deconstested as formal, not substantial, and this concept of the ‘ordinary people’ might be yet another component pointing to the limits to the differences among the European peoples.

The decontestation of the demos as the group of ordinary individuals is further strengthened by emphasizing the cleavage between the ordinary citizens and the European political elite. The depiction of the European political elite being a group of technocratic administrators is a shared sentiment the Eurosceptics. FN expresses concern of the dominant role of unelected experts in the EU. UKIP also raises this point, they emphasize, “the EU is only the biggest symptom of the real problem – the theft of our democracy by a powerful, remote political ‘elite’ which has forgotten that it’s here to serve the people.” Note here that who is being ruled is not the UK as such, but more directly the people of the UK, and the ruler is not a politician but an ‘unelected bureaucrat’. Serving the people, means trusting in the ordinary citizens’ ability to govern. AfD emphasizes that issues’ complexity cannot be an argument that they are not eligible for democratic procedure. And further, the inability to make politics comprehensible to the citizens is raised as a critique of the political elite; “Politicians ... don’t trust in the capability of citizens and think that they are too stupid to make an informed decisions in such referenda, but we think that they are totally wrong. Instead they have failed to explain their politics well.”

The Eurosceptic representatives depict themselves, in opposition to the European elite, to be closer to the everyday of the ordinary citizen speaking to their voters from a leveraged point of view. Farage notes, “I believe that the ability to talk to people, and have them feeling engaged, rather than patronised, isn’t something you can learn. It’s a bit like being able to sing or play cricket. You can either do it or you can’t.” That is, either you have the ability to understand the ordinary people, or you do not, this is not an exercise in ‘putting yourself in the place of others’ it is a natural ability that one can either possess or lack. The naturalness related to this capability is interesting, I believe, because it delegitimze opponent representatives. Some simply does not have the traits necessary to represent the people. This indicates that an antagonistic, rather than agonistic, relation is sought vis-à-vis opposing representatives.

The European elite, in contrast, are dispassionate. Le Pen (FN) notes; “Our political class no longer has any convictions. You can only pass along the beliefs that you hold. They no longer believe in France.” The EU has become; “... the bureaucrat’s dream: a completely uniform, formatted Europe.” This decontestation of the European power elite as a bureaucratic elite, with shared traits of being unelected, remote, lacking convictions, and anonymous, serves a dual purpose in that it both fixes the European power elite and at the same time mirrors the virtues that an politician ought to hold. A politician should be; closely present, elected, and known. As such, the decontestations of the politician present a specific personalization of the politician; a type of politician, which is directly opposed to the uniform technocrat, identified as promoting European

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50 Farage 2014b
51 Front National 2014
52 UKIP (website, b). See also; Grillo, 2013
53 Bürgerrecht Direkte Demokratie 2014
54 EUROCAFE 2014
55 Inside the Mind of Nigel Farage: ‘I Want to Be Minister for Europe’ By Robert Chalmers / October 9, 2014 7:58 PM EDT
56 Rummens, forthcoming
57 Von Rohr, 2014
58 Henley 2014; UKIP (website, b)
integration. This is of interest, I believe, because it highlights the particular European context, in which the decontestations are articulated, a context understood to be technocratic rather than political.

As last sub-point to add to this idea of the distinction between the individual seen as the ‘ordinary citizen’ and the accentuation of the dispassionate and technocratic European elites, was the downplaying of the left-right divide made by the Eurosceptics. FN makes this point clear in their slogan; “Ni gauche ni droite: Front National!” This is also stressed by the EAF; “Protecting the nation is one of the top priorities of the Alliance; we strongly disagree with the political elite. With the Left and the Right sharing the same EU vision, the difference between them has become obscure; this is why, the EU project may be legitimately called “a child” both of the Left and the Right.” Further, the political actors resisting European integration have indicated that while they are in disagreement on a range of policy areas they stand united in their resistance to the European Union. Hereby pointing to a common ground in the resisters-promoters relation that is played up vis-a-vis intra-resister disagreements. The decontestation of a shared Eurosceptic position across the left-right divide is interesting, in that is point to the construction of a vertical conflict, at the expense of horizontal conflict; an essential feature of populism.

Sharpening the dichotomy between the common people and the political elite can be fruitful strategy for outsider parties. The prevalence of the idea of the ordinary people can therefore be written off as a strategic move on behalf of these politicians in order to rally up votes. This points to the question of whether it makes sense, at all, to, as I do, to interpret the Eurosceptics as also promoting a transnational demos. One objection could be that the Eurosceptics are merely “going to war together” based on shared interests, without really believing in either the existence or the desirability of a transnational demos. I think it should be noted that the decontestation of the transnational demos is reliant on the existence of the EU. The transnationalism is constructed in the hostile relationship to the European elite. That is, should the EU cease to exist, the transnational aspect of this decontestation of the demos would probably fade. As such, the dual decontestation of the demos as both the national community, and the trans-national group of ordinary people, would most likely change if the political context, in which it is articulated, changes. The argument I’m seeking to make is not that Eurosceptics see themselves as committed to securing the perceived interest of the ordinary citizens transnationally, beyond EU. They might or they might not. However, I do wish to argue, both that this decontestation of the demos as the ordinary citizens entail some recognition of similarities across nations by the Eurosceptics. Whether this amounts to transnationalization of the Eurosceptics is a question that I will leave aside for now. And further, that such duality in the decontestation, vis-a-vis the European context, takes Euroscepticism beyond mere nationalism, which is of importance when assessing its normative standing. I will return to this point in the next section. The dual existence of national peoples and a transnational group of ordinary citizens might point to a special trait of populism in relation to the EU.

**Euroscepticism and democracy**

Taking Euroscepticism to be a discourse, which harbors traits similar to the feature identified in populism, the question that remain to be answered is whether we need to be cautious of Euroscepticism, and if so, why? That is, if Euroscepticism, on core features resemble populism, do the critiques raised against populism also

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*EAF, 2014*
*Rowena, 2014*
*Mény and Surel, 2002.*
*Treib 2014*
*I’m grateful to Jan Peiter Beetz for bringing this issue to my attention*
apply to Euroscepticism? A general consensus on the non-desirability of Euroscepticism is present in EU studies. However, the notion of Euroscepticism remains widely contested it is unclear what exactly is non-desirable about the phenomenon. The aim of the following section, is to discuss whether Euroscepticism, with its populist traits, should be understood as a pathology of modern democracy. Recent contributions has suggested that populism has more to it than being a way of constructing the political subject. Indeed; populism harbors more substance than merely separating “us” from “them”. Müller (2014) has suggested that populism is a special moralizing way of conducting politics, where an exclusivist notion of the people is promoted. Framing the people as a true, natural entity endangers the pluralism needed for representative democracy. We should therefore, Müller argues, be cautious of populism.

In Müller’s conception of populism’s distinctive mark (besides the features identified above) is that it presents a moralistic understanding of politics. The depiction of a pure demos against a corrupt elite is an example of such moralistic ideas. That is, the demos is not just any sub-group but the true, pure, or right people. Being ultimately the true people one has a right to rule through ones representatives. Populism is not against representative government as such, it is against representative government by the wrong representatives. The basic feature of representative democracy, that the populace elects representatives who they believe to have superior capacity in bringing about the common good, therefore also holds for populist politics. However, the moralistic understanding of the demos promoted by populism cannot sustain the pluralism needed for representative government and will therefore ‘in the end’ show to be undemocratic. The relationship between the moralistic understanding of politics and the incapability of sustaining pluralism is important to highlight, since its insistence, to use Müllers terminology, that ‘we are the people’ (a different claim that ‘we are also the people’) that makes populists disregard the value of pluralism. A second critique raised by Müller is that populism eliminates the political. Müller argues that the moralizing understanding of politics inherent in populism shares with technocratic rule a ‘doing away with politics’. Technocratic rule does away with politics because of the insistence that only one right solution exists, and populism, Müller argues, does away with politics in its insistence that only one legitimate interest exists. In turn, both populism and technocracy seek to colonize the ‘empty place’, which is the locus of power in democratic rule in illegitimate ways. The revolt against the dispassionate politician promoted by the Eurosceptic ideology seems to resemble the critique given by Müller of technocratic rule. Indeed; the Eurosceptic decontestation of the politician aligns with Müller in addressing this problem of elites, however, the solution they propose might be as anti-political as the problem they seek to fix. I will in the following two sections briefly engage with the two concerns raised by Müller.

**Does Euroscepticism endanger pluralism?**

The demos, as promoted by the Eurosceptics, is closely tied to the national community, which was defined as a dense and multifaceted. Any political community beyond the national borders is rejected as a demos because of the lack of the necessary cultural, linguistic, and political bonds. Such an interpretation the people will inevitably exclude some. The question then is whether the construction of the demos as it is done by the Eurosceptics is especially illegitimate. The Eurosceptic articulation of the people seems to warrant the worry posed by Müller. However, as it was shown, the Eurosceptics also pursued a decontestation of the demos as the ‘ordinary citizen’ - placing the needs, experiences, and wants of this sub-group the center of politics. This indicates that this demos too has a legitimate right to rule. That is, across nations states exists a group of

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64 Leconte 2015, 251  
65 Müller, 2014. See also Urbinati 2014, chapter 3  
66 Müller, 2014, 486.  
67 Müller 2014, 486  
68 Lefort, 1988, 17
individuals who seems to share affinity with citizens of other European nation states. While the uneasy relationship between the two ideas raise questions of internal coherence the portrayed tension indicate a complexity in the Eurosceptic understanding of the demos. Indeed; the demos, while relying on idealizing articulations, harbors internal nuances of importance. The Eurosceptic articulations points simultaneously to the republican and a national ideal-type of populism. 69 This tension, while potentially uneasy, might limit the moralizing aspect of Euroscepticism, in that, when claiming ‘we are the people’ they seem to claim simultaneously that ‘we are the national people and the transnational group of ordinary citizens. A further nuance to be added is the accentuation of the right to difference. The articulation by the Eurosceptics is not that one national community is the demos, but rather that national identity is necessary for constructing a demos. The notion of the right to difference underscores this idea, namely that other and different peoples exist within the European polity, and that such difference should exist. This seems to allow multiple peoples to be extracted from within the people, if the larger people is understood as the collective of individuals living under the European polity.

As such, the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos when engaging in its constituting components is less coherent than the picture drawn by Müller of the populist notion of the people. The tension between the national community and the potential transnational community of ordinary men, as well as the recognition of the right to difference, points to a less unified concept of the demos in the European context. The internal tensions in the Eurosceptic concept of the democratic people might just be an indication that the Euroscepticism in question is not sufficiently populist to be moralizing, and hence not sufficiently populist to be dangerous. 70 While this is plausible, I believe, that is also points to the difficulty in assessing when an extraction of the people from within the people is (sufficiently) moralizing. The internal tensions in the Eurosceptic decontestation of the people suggest, I argue, that such decontestation might never be completely safe, or moralistic.

**Does Euroscepticism eliminate the political?**

Müller argues that populism is a dangerous form of politics because the accentuation that only one legitimate interest exists. As already discussed above this might be a too simplistic characterization to fit to the Euroscepticism analyzed here, but more so, it might be worth discussing whether Euroscepticism in the European context ‘does away with politics’. While promoting the idea of conflict in politics, the accentuation of the conflictual relationship between the rulers and ruled in the Eurosceptic articulations, might still understood to undermine or ‘do away’ with the political. The accentuation of a vertical conflict line at the same time dampens other conflictual relationships that might exist, such as ideological differences on traditional political cleavage lines. The diminishing of the traditional left-right cleavage in the Eurosceptic decontestation might hamper the political. Attempt to wash away the classical left-right divide might create lower recognition from voters, and thereby potentially affect the input legitimacy. 71

Besides the challenge posed by diminishing traditional political cleavage lines recognizable to the voters, the question remains whether Eurosceptic articulations challenge the existence of the political in the European context. The increasing resistance to European integration has been categorized as a shift away from a ‘permissive consensus’ - a period in which European integration was understood to be a matter concerning the political elite, and the legitimacy of the European project was predominantly evaluated on its output legitimacy. 72 With the rising Euroscepticism, the permissive consensus has been replaced by a ‘constraining

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69 Meny and Surel 2002,6-7
70 I here, in line with Laclau, conceive of populism as a continuum rather than a dichotomous phenomenon (Laclau 2005,45)
71 Schmidt 2012,12
72 Hooghe and Marks 2009
dissensus’, where disagreements on the benefits of European integration impede the progression of the integration process altogether.\textsuperscript{73} The dilemma faced seems to be, that earlier reliance on output legitimacy provides a questionable legitimacy foundation, but that increased contestation on European integration, providing heightened input legitimacy, largely manifest itself as hostility towards the European project altogether.\textsuperscript{74} The largely politically uncontested progression of European integration might at one at the same time explain the emergence of a Eurosceptic response to European integration, and warrant its existence. By contesting the polity as such, the Eurosceptics presents an alternative way of thinking about European integration, an alternative that raises the question of the input legitimacy of the EU. As such, Euroscepticism reinserts a political dimension, which have been largely absent in European integration. Indeed; Eurosceptic populist polity contestation might spur necessary debate to further the legitimacy of the integration process. Taken to be a contestation of the European polity the Eurosceptic account might not be a nuanced account, and the conception of the demos is undoubtedly idealized. However, the act of presenting an alternative, I argue, helps render debate on the future of European integration possible.

To use the terminology of Canovan, Euroscepticism might help to ‘bring politics to the people’, which in the European context is an urgent task.\textsuperscript{75} Euroscepticism might invoke the active orientation of the people, by spurring the mistrust needed for the people to hold the governing elite accountable.\textsuperscript{76} Euroscepticism, I argue, raise awareness and contestation, and as such, help strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the EU. However, it is important to emphasize that the vertical nature of Eurosceptic antagonism eliminates horizontal politization between competing political positions within the European polity by negating its rightful existence.\textsuperscript{77} As such, I argue, Euroscepticism does not, in itself, present a corrective. However, it raises both awareness and contestation in the European population, and push for other political actors to engage in this debate.

As described above, Müller is sensitive to the unpolitical traits in technocratic rule, as well as in populism, as both does away with the pluralism necessary for democracy. However, I suggest that the conflict between European integration, as a largely politically uncontested process, and polity contestation coming from Eurosceptic parties, is a political conflict that should be taken seriously. And more so, that reluctance to engage with the polity contestation coming from Eurosceptic parties underestimates the importance of this conflict for European democratic legitimacy. Therefore, rather than deeming Euroscepticism illegitimate due to its populist traits, a central challenge is to present a different, constructive, perspective on how we should come to think about European democracy. To echo a point made by Mény and Surel, populist claims might be problematic in their articulation, but that does not mean that they cannot be well-founded. Eurosceptics, while relying on a populist articulation, therefore, should not ‘be described as anti-political per se.’\textsuperscript{78}

\textbf{Conclusion}

As indicated in the beginning the motivation for this paper was the public labeling of the Eurosceptic parties as populist. The first part of the paper sought to clarify what populism is. It was argued that, while populism is a contested concept in itself, agreement seems to be reached on three main components, 1) the centrality of

\textsuperscript{73} Hooghe and Marks 2009
\textsuperscript{74} Trenz and de Wilde 2009,5
\textsuperscript{75} Canovan 2002
\textsuperscript{76} MacCormick 2001
\textsuperscript{77} Rummens, forthcoming
\textsuperscript{78} Meny and Surel 2002,5-6
the ‘people’ and the proclamation of their legitimate right to rule, 2) the identification of an opposing other, who have illegitimately taken over the rule, and 3) the vertical framing of political conflict, at the expense of horizontal conflict. It was shown, through an analysis of the Eurosceptic articulations, that Euroscepticism does invoke the features of populism, pointing to the potential benefit of marrying the analytical tools from literature on populism, and analyses of Euroscepticism.

If Euroscepticism, understood as a distinct discursive formation, harboring populist features, the next question then seems to be whether we should extent concerns related to populism on to Euroscepticism, that is, should we be cautious of the recent rise in Euroscepticism? The later part of the paper brought up this concern. Some key concerns were brought forward. Namely, that populism as a special moralizing form of conducting politics, hostile to pluralism and the political. It was argued that, while embodying the traits of populism, the Eurosceptic decontestation of the demos entails both a notion of the national community, which is decontested with reference to the recognition of other communities’ right to difference, and an promotion of a transnational collective of ordinary men. This dual notion of demos hampers the universalizing uniformity of the interpretation of the demos proposed by the Euroscepticism at the European level. Taking up the worry that Euroscepticism eliminates the political, it was suggested that Euroscepticism in the European context might actually, by opposing the system, spur a debate on the democratic legitimacy of European integration. Euroscepticism is therefore not giving up on the idea of democracy as such but contesting its organizational form.79 However, the Eurosceptic contestation, by prioritizing the vertical politization, disregard the horizontal contestation, does not present a corrective.80

79 Mény and Surel 2002,4
80 Rummens, forthcoming
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