Could opponents to the European Union (EU) contribute — against their own will — to help it become an institution? This paper defends the hypothesis that this is partly true for French political parties with an ‘anti-EU’ stance. The growth of the regional and political integration process embodied by the EU these last decades leads to the following question: is the EU becoming an institution? We will consider here this question from a sociological perspective, interesting ourselves with the European institution in its informal qualities rather than in its formal ones. We must thus rephrase our guiding question accordingly: has the EU begun to alter mental representations, collective beliefs or peoples’ practices, discourses and ways of thinking? Following Durkheim we could add that, as a set of collective beliefs and conducts, institutions carry a constraining dimension, it is in this sense that European integration could weigh on behaviors inside the French political party system. We will seek to identify signs of these phenomena in practices and discourses produced by anti-EU parties. This paper intends to study the EU as a source of transformation of the beliefs and ways of behaving in the French political space and, specifically, among the leadership of political parties, with a particular focus on anti-EU parties. Moreover, this paper will explore how the evolution of anti-EU parties especially can play a part in the deepening of the EU as a sociological (or informal) institution, embedding itself in discourses and conceptions of the political space and shaping them.

We will focus particularly on one component of this process of institutionalization which is discourse practices (and thus the representations made use of). We make the hypothesis that the way parties’ publications speak about Europe provides elements for a study of European integration, its spaces and themes in a domestic political space at different times. This examination is completed by an observation of a few significant strategic practices.

1 For E. Durkheim the beliefs and behaviors instituted by the community can be called Institution. E. Durkheim, *Règles de la Méthode sociologique*, Préface à la deuxième édition, Payot, 2009, p.55. We can also refer to J. Lagroye saying that “An institution presents itself as a set of practices […] rituals and rules of behaviors between people. Institution is also a set of beliefs, or representations, concerning these practices […] that justifies their existence”. J. Lagroye, *Sociologie politique*, Paris, 2002, Presses de Science po, p. 140.


3 Two main elements led us to focus on the leadership of political parties (or their managing teams, so to speak) to explore our question: (a) the verticality of Anti-EU parties’ structure, especially in right-wing ones, and (b) the fact that, in every party, the stance about the EU is exclusively produced at that level for much of their histories.

4 We can underline the fact that we make a restrictive use of this concept: institutionalization has to be understood in this text as the process by which “Europe” is becoming an institution in a sociological meaning — that is to say, for our purposes, imposing itself, through discourses and practices of partisan actors, as a frame of reference within French political space.
of political parties’ actors. Our analysis is based both on a qualitative study of party internal life and official attitudes toward the European Union, and on a quantitative lexicometric analysis of parties’ manifestos produced at the eight European elections (Euromanifestos) from the first to the most recent one (1979-2009). Our study focuses therefore on practices and Euromanifestos of left-wing Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) - Lutte Ouvrière (LO) alliance, Parti Communiste Français (PCF), right-wing Rassemblement pour la France (RPF), Mouvement pour la France (MPF) and Front National (FN) for anti-EU parties and Parti Socialiste (PS) and Rassemblement pour la République/Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (RPR/UMP) for pro-EU ones.

As underlined by J. Lagroye: “only collective or individual commitments – occasional or relentless – can give substance to an institution and make it socially exist”.

Thus, speaking about informal institutions means concerning oneself with these commitments and their effects. We can see that collective ways of behaving occur in French political space: the weight of the European issue in parties’ texts, the appearance of new organizational and strategic practices inside parties, or the changing way they present their stance about Europe can all be seen as clues of a – still moderate – form of institutionalization of European integration. We know that integration has not had strong direct effects on political parties. However a few changes in parties’ practices can be read as a move towards incorporating European political space and themes into party life, and by extension, into the French party system. Anti-EU parties have made some of these changes, partly to use the European issue as a new trump in political struggle, and partly to conform to their beliefs about what constitutes acceptable behavior and discourse in political space.

To be more precise, two main elements seem able to play a part in a potential institutionalization of “Europe” in national parties’ practices and discourses:

1. The European issue progressively embeds itself in the discourse of political parties, as it is shown by the study of Euromanifestos. Organizations’ and leaders’ practices are changed by integration and adapted to the European Union, which testifies to its inclusion in their way of thinking and struggling. Their conception of political actors itself appears modified and adapted. It reveals the increasing regard and acknowledgment of a European political space by national parties, including anti-UE parties.

2. Then, the parallel evolution of parties’ presentation of their own position about Europe reinforces a general acknowledgement of political collaboration at the European level as a necessary condition of having a reliable political program. However, the nature of the institutionalization produced by this has to be analyzed. It seems that it remains largely partial and that, more than the EU itself, it is the ambiguous idea of Europe as a political frame of reference, or rather it is the very idea of ‘European integration’, that seems to be becoming an institution in its own right.

5 Parties’ positions of hostility towards the European Union have been defined by their opposition to European treaties and French referendums (Maastricht in 1992 and the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005). In 1979, 1999 and 2004, the Trotskyists LCR and LO put forward themselves in a coalition for European elections. In 1999, the right anti-EU party RPF has been created by former minister C. Pasqua and entered a coalition with the MPF (RPF-MPF). The RPF disappeared at few years later. Between 1999 and 2004 the RPR right mainstream party has become the UMP for the 2002 presidential election.


I. The increase of discourse about Europe in political parties’ space.

A first clue indicating that European integration could develop into an institution can be found in the fact that the idea of European integration is embedded in party political discourses – and, more specifically, in several key practices of actors within the party. The discourse schemes of manifestos produced by parties and the customs of party leaderships progressively change to include a European framing, modifying therefore the conveyed conception of political space.

1.1. Increase of the europeanization of discourses themes.

One of the main observations allowed by the lexicometric analysis of Euromanifestos is that texts speak more and more about Europe and the European Union from one European election to another. In thirty years, there is a great increase of the proportion of European themes in texts. This growth is neither totally regular nor equal between parties, but it is true for every one of them. This rise clearly takes place from the beginning of the nineties.

A first characteristic of partisan stances on Europe in the 1980s – and this is true for anti-EU as well as pro-EU ones – is their relative lack of specific European content. If the parties do develop such questions in their Euromanifestos from 1979, their overall proportion is weak (since the presence of these questions only exceeds 40% after 1989). At that time, partisan discourse on Europe is rather abstract: whether critical or favourable, the Euromanifestos tend to promote large orientations, offering rather general political programs where integration is concerned. Precise standpoints toward European politics are rare. Developments on prospective propositions and European projects are nearly inexistent. Most of anti-UE Parties stick to a critical discourse and several party (the FN and LO in particular) had still not developed a European programme in their texts of 1989. The overall composition of these texts reveals the relative indifference of partisan actors towards the theme of integration. But this can only be partly explained by a lack of knowledge of parties’ leading actors. (For example, the PCF especially kept a close eye on integration). What appears here are these parties’ choices and the priority given to the national political space and issues, even during European elections. Integration remains a minor topic and a minor political reality for parties at that time.

European construction is still relatively weak and, in addition, party memberships (apart from the notable exception of the PS via the actions of François Mitterrand) were poorly or not at all integrated into the European political arena. Besides, the relative uncertainty of the future of integration in the eyes of certain partisan actors (especially the LO-LCR alliance and the PCF), most notably between the large powers of the Cold War in the 1980s, contributed to

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8 Three scales had been built to lead our lexicometric analysis and classify texts of Euromanifestos. To get further details, please contact the author: Emmanuelle.Reungoat@malix.univ-paris1.fr. We distinguished:

- **European discourse** which refers to talk of Europe, the Community, the European Union, and/or what has been going on there. A non-exhaustive list of subjects includes: European elections, European politics, guidelines, EU actions and the nature of Europe, European leaders and institutions.

- **National discourses** which refers to developments at the interior scale: those that speak exclusively of France and/or of what has been going on there. This level, in other words, characterizes the ideas that lack connection with Europe or the European election. A non-exhaustive list of subjects includes: calls to the French, references made to the national socio-political or electoral context, to national adversaries, to public politicians and to government actions.

- **Euro-national concern** which refers to developments that reflect a preoccupation with France, with the situation in the country and with its projected interests regarding Europe (be it the CEE or the EU). It therefore concerns itself with remarks having to do with national issues, whether they refer to advantages or threats in relation to the EU. In other words, theses discourses are speaking about European issues from a national point of view.
the production of a feeble investment in European issues (which remain costly in terms of human resources). “At the time, [the beginning of the 1980s] it wasn’t sure if the European construction was actually going to work out”, resumes a then-representative of the LCR.³

A second state of discourse appears in the nineties, with an increase of European issues in texts and parties’ concerns. If the crystallization of debates during the French referendum on the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 can be said to have, in some way, set in motion the evolution of discourses and postures of parties towards integration, the movement in fact was a progressive one, and only began to truly affirm itself fully toward the end of the 1990s. This rise can also be explained by the constant development of integration and European policies in these decades¹⁰, which sometimes may have strongly contradicted party doctrines¹¹. Without deepening this explanatory aspect, we can also mention that the totality of French parties participated either habitually or punctually in the European political institutions from the 1999 elections onwards – helping them to gain competence in this area, as did the development of a European section of the global justice movement for the left-wing anti-UE parties.

All of the parties began to put European issues more considerably into their later agendas, with the proportion of European to national issues becoming more and more preponderant after 1999 and 2004 in parties’ discourses. The elections of 1999, 2004 and 2009 are those in which the texts relating to European discourses are particularly prevalent, approaching and regularly exceeding an average of 40-50% (graph 1). Even if national topics remain a strong component of the election material (in 1994 in particular because of its proximity with the presidential election of 1995); Europe progressively affirms itself as occupying a reality within French political space.

Graph 1 Part of European discourse by party (% of Euromanifestos) ¹²

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³ Interview with Léonce Aguirre, representative of the LCR since the 1970s, specialist in European questions within the party. Held at the NPA headquarters, January 20th, 2010.


¹² In 2009, the LCR integrates the new NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party) and does not enter a coalition with LO. NPA’s rate is presented here. LO’s one reaches 32.30%
If the PS regularly shows more europeanized texts, the drawing up of the RPR-UMP and the anti-EU Euromanifestos stay quite close in the last period. In the case of the FN - which has long been the most reluctant to develop wholly European themes in its text\textsuperscript{13} - the proportion of European topics reaches 30% in 2004 and go beyond 50% in 2009 (when it only got to about 10 % in 1984). As to the MPF, the European issue is immediately a key point in its texts.\textsuperscript{14} After the mobilization of 1992 against the Maastricht treaty, P. de Villiers mainly based the party on an opposition to the EU when he created it in 1994, and was its leader at the 1994 European election. Its alliance with the RPF of C. Pasqua, ex-minister and ex-RPR leader, for the 1999 election allows the proportion of European discourse to get to 70% of the text.

The same observation can be made about left-wing anti-EU parties. During the nineties, a strong europeanization\textsuperscript{15} of PCF texts is visible. The increased proportion of European issues in manifestos comes with the strong transformation that takes place in the party at the beginning of the nineties, mainly undertaken under the new leadership of R. Hue (who becomes first secretary in 1994). The 1999 European campaign is meant to be the symbol of the party’s “renovation”\textsuperscript{16}. Progress of European issues in the party discourse (41% of Euromanifesto in 1994, 58% in 1999) is also linked to a major doctrinal change. Discarding the sovereignist stance it had held during the past decades, party official discourses moved to a direct opposition to the EU itself based on anti-liberalism. This move was also driven by the ambition of a governmental alliance with the PS, realized in 1997. Since the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, and particularly with the 2005 referendum, the PCF seems to have toughened its opposition.

\textsuperscript{13} This is also related to our classification. The insertion of European issues in the FN discourse is indeed strongly linked to a worry for France in this perspective. This type of discourse belongs to another scale (Euro-national concern, cf above footnote). That’s why the europeanization of the FN discourse not only appears in this graph showing the proportion of strict European discourse in text.

\textsuperscript{14} The same comment can be made about a mixed europeanization in MPF texts: besides strict European discourse, Euro-national concern takes an important part of Euromanifestos.

\textsuperscript{15} The term is used in a simple and restrictive definition here. Europeanization of texts can be understood as the integration of European issues and topics in discourses, especially in texts.

The same intensification of mentions of European issues can be noticed in the LCR-LO discourse. Quite regularly increasing between elections, the proportion of European issues in the party’s texts has remained relatively steady from 40% to 50% of Euromanifestos since 1999, when they had fluctuated from 12% to 25% between 1984 and 1994. More interested in European themes and integrated in European networks than the LO, the LCR has also been taking a greater part in national political space since the end of the nineties. The struggle against liberalism appears as the major objective of the party. If it remains of secondary importance, the European issue has progressively become one of its important themes of struggle. Party leaders were elected at the European parliament in 1999-2004 and O. Besancenot, the LCR main candidate running for presidential elections in 2002 and 2007, made a part of his political training there. Besides, the LCR party is involved in the global justice movement and involved in European social forums which develop political reflection and struggle at the European level.

Every French party, including anti-UE ones, appear to have integrated the European issue in their political discourses during this second period. Opposition to the EU, far from excluding it, allows for the integration and development of a European level of political conceptualization and propaganda, contributing to europeized political discourse in the French party system. This gradual inclusion of European themes in texts asserts Europe as a strong reality within the political space. Taking part in this process, anti-UE parties (whenever criticizing or proposing an alternative) contribute to create a homogeneity of political discourse that inserts Europe in the conception of political space and issues, and embeds, in this way, its institutionalization.

1.2. Confirmed by political leaders’ practices and small changes in political organizations.

This spread of the European issue can be observed beyond the examination of Euromanifestos. We can identify some practices inside our political organizations which testify to the fact that the European issue is anchored in French political space and struggle, and that integration progressively contributes to changing ways of talking and thinking about politics as well as the usual conceptions of political actors. This corresponds to a clue of institutionalization, understood as a successful and legitimated insertion of European themes and new representation of the political space.

A few changes in parties’ organizations can be identified as having allowed and contributed at the same time to the development of political discourses about Europe. We first observe a boost of European specialists inside anti-EU as well as pro-EU parties in the nineties. MEPs, specialists of European political institutions and policies or leaders integrated in European networks grow in number in every party. This growth in European expertise allows parties’ doctrines on Europe to increase. The communist Francis Wurtz appears as a good example of this growing type of expert leader: MEP from 1979 to 2009, president of the GUE/NGL group from 1999 to 2009, he is one of the pivotal figures in the PCF’s

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17 The two parties present common texts at European election until 2009.
18 We can precise that it’s the case for LCR. As we said, the proportion of European discourse in LO Euromanifesto only rise at 32% in 2009. Thus LO becomes the only party sticking to the old discourse scheme.
19 O. Besancenot was parliamentary assistant of MEP A. Krivine at the European parliament.
21 Gauche Unitaire Européenne (European United Left)/ Nordic Green Left.
production of European doctrine in the last decades. The same could be said of G. Berthu for the MPF. Government official who entered anti-EU mobilization during the 1992 campaign, MEP from 1994 to 2004, vice-president of the parliament committee of Constitutional Affairs from 1999 to 2004, co-president of the short-lived parliamentary group “Independents for a Europe of Nations” from 1997 to 1999, G. Berthu puts a lot of himself in European issues. Main author of the MPF European programs of 1994 and 199922, he’s also author or co-author (with P. de Villiers) of no less than nine books on the European issue from 1997 to 2005, most of which are critical commentaries of each new European treaty.23 What is more, sometimes political organizations also create ad hoc internal structures, dedicated to the analysis of European subjects. This is the case of left-wing anti-EU parties: in the PCF the political section dedicated to the European Union becomes gradually separated from the section devoted to Foreign Policy (la “Polex”) at the end of the nineties. In the LCR, a specific “Commission-Europe” is created in 2002.24

Several attempts to create a large anti-EU political party in recent French political history underline the fact that, from the beginning of the nineties, it appears both legitimate and feasible to set up a party based on European stakes.25 These attempts to put the European issue at the forefront of political struggle attest to its standing and its newly established legitimacy as a major political reality in front of which it seems suitable for every party to take a stand. If most of them failed, theses political enterprises were attempts to reconfigure the political system by a new reading of political cleavages, based on parties’ stance toward the EU. This new interpretation of political space is present in discourses of the right-wing sovereignist parties. The MPF leader P. de Villiers is used to choosing meaningful and pejorative expression to point at his adversary, speaking of the “Parties of the Yes” or of the “Cartel of the Yes”. Commenting the presidential election results in 2007, he declared: “Last Sunday, a majority of sovereignist parties has been sucked up by the demagogy of the three short-listed candidates of Euroland.”26 This reasoning makes the European issue as a central dividing line of political cleavage, allowing in this way anti-EU parties, and particularly the MPF, to move away from its peripheral position in the political space to emerge as one of the main political parties.27

22 He is also the author of a system of short briefings in the form of ‘slips’ on European issues made to help lead MPF candidates through European campaigns.
23 G. Berthu has been publishing nine books on the European issue and about one or two books per Treaty since the end of the nineties. We will only give a few examples here: A chaque peuple sa monnaie. Contre la monnaie unique, Œil, 1998 ; Non au traité d’Amsterdam, Edition groupe Europe des Nations, 1998 ; L’Europe autrement, with P. de Villiers, François-Xavier de Guibert, 1999 ; Traité de Nice, l’Europe sans repères, Œil, 2001 ; L’Europe sans les peuples, Editions Œil, 2004.
24 Interview with Léonce Aguirre (LCR) January 2010 and Roger Martelli (PCF) February 2010.
25 Without going into details here, we can mention the MPF of P. de Villiers in 1994, the RPF established out of the alliance of the C. Pasqua, the previously resigned minister of the interior, and P. de Villiers in 1999, the MDC in 1993 and later on in 2002 the “Pôle Republican” of J.P. Chevènement whose doctrine insisted on the European issue, and more recently the small sovereignist party Debout La République of N. Dupont-Aignan, created in 1999 and which becomes independent from UMP in 2007. The recent creation of the Party of gauche in 2008 can be mentioned too. If it is not centered on the European issue, its scission from the PS is strongly linked to the dissensions derived from 2005. The party formed an alliance with the PCF in the “Front de gauche” for the 2009 European elections.
26 P. de Villiers, on the MPF website : www.pourlafrance.fr, consulted in may 2007. The criticism of “UMPS” used by MPF as well as by FN is built on the same principle (UMPS is a contraction of the initials of mainstream parties: the right wing UMP and the left wing PS).
Indeed, European skills and europeanization become political resources. This strongly contributes to inserting and raising the issue in discourse schemes. If the decade of the 1990s was the one in which parties and movements that opposed themselves to the European Union multiplied, equally explosive was the production of books about Europe by party leaders and high members during the nineties and the following decade, each developing their own positions on Europe and often on the different treaties. As well as pro-EU leaders, anti-EU leaders, high members of parties contribute to the dissemination of European themes and concerns about Europe in political discourses. PCF and LCR members’ stances seem to be above all published in internal party press (Rouge for the LCR and Les Cahiers du Communisme for the PCF, for example), even if we can notice a few publications (by. P. Herzog, R. Martelli and F.Wurtz for the PCF\textsuperscript{28}). But as well as J.P. Chevènement\textsuperscript{29} (who published four books), right-wing anti-EU leaders happen to be prolific on the European issue: from the far end of the eighties to 2006, P. Seguin (RPR then UMP) and C. Pasqua (RPR then RPF), the two leaders of the opposition to the EU inside the mainstream right-wing party (RPR) during the nineties published four books, P. de Villiers (MPF) published eight books, N. Dupont-Aignan (UMP then DLR) four, and for the FN, J.M. Le Pen published one in 1999 and J.C. Martinez five.\textsuperscript{30}

Besides this increase of European themes in parties’ discourses, a growing number of parties – including anti-EU ones – insert EU political actors in their discourses and are more and more presenting themselves as one of them. This fact can be considered as evidence of the changing effect of integration on political representation. The way party leaders attempt to present their organization as a European ‘player’ appears as a mark of the gradual influence of “Europe” as an institution. Modifying the configuration of national and European political spaces, European integration gives also new resources for political struggle. In using them, party leaders contribute to substantiate them.

The study of Euromanifestos shows that actors at the European level introduce themselves into the debates, becoming relevant targets for both praise and criticism. It is especially after 1999 and 2004 that consideration of European political actors increases in a visible manner, coming to occupy 5-6% of the texts (as opposed to 1-2% in the 1980s). Thus the nascent, progressive structuring of European political space makes its mark.\textsuperscript{31} Put into place in the Euromanifestos here is the fact that political strategies have been projected at the European level. All parties, from the most favourable to the most oppositional, henceforth take into serious consideration the European political arena, and invest of themselves in it.

This new proportion of discourse including EU political actors is unsurprisingly composed of a part of references to EU Institutions and its actors (Council, President and Commissioners of the Commission, parliament and its MEPS) but we can also observe what could be seen as an unfinished transposition of political competition at the European level. Criticism of non-strictly institutional European political actors or groups constantly increases in French parties’ texts since 1999 and mixes itself with French ones. It reveals that the


\textsuperscript{29} Ex–socialist leader and strong opponent to the Maastricht treaty who, in the wave of the Maastricht campaign, decided to build up its own party the MDC, and then run for president in 2002. Ex-minister of the interior, he remains an important critic of the EU.

\textsuperscript{30} The book list is in annex.

\textsuperscript{31} The progressive construction of a political European arena, brought into place by the federations of European parties or by strategic parliamentary interests, was affirmed during the decade of the 1990s.
conception of political adversaries is slowly europeanized. (This is true for every party even if they do not develop it in the same way). It can be seen in 2009 in the PCF-PG text for example: “To vote for the Front de Gauche means to vote for another Europe than Europe of the Lisbon treaty, which was adopted hand in glove by the right and by European socialists who are ruling together European parliament and Commission in Brussels”. This europeanization of the conception of political space is also pregnant in the LO-LCR text of 2004 for instance: “In Europe, when 13 of the 15 European governments were socialists, European institutions have run the same policies of social decline as they are now”.

If the increase can be observed in every party, they do not share the same proportion of this type of discourse. In 2009 for example, it appears to be weaker in FN texts, as well as in LO and UMP ones. We can see that insertion of a europeanized conception of political adversaries is especially real for challengers who have developed a real political practice at the European level. That is to say the PS, the PCF, the MPF and in a lower proportion the NPA (ex-LCR). (Here, their contribution to EU institutionalization through discourses depends on each parties’ own integration at the EU political level.)

Not only do parties’ discourses integrate growing references to European political actors and spaces, but also their leaders (including anti-UE ones) insist on presenting themselves as a part of European politics, and for a few of them, as reliable actors within the European parliament. Indeed, parties progressively insert their belonging to European organized political movements in Euromanifestos as an electoral ‘selling point’, as for the PCF in 1999:

In the whole of Europe, political and social forces are taking action in order to make European construction resist to financial markets [...]. We need to give more weight to these forces. Your vote for our list “Bouge l’Europe” allows it: it contributes to root Europe toward the left.

In the cases of the LO and the LCR, the internationalist stance of their doctrine helps a transnational vision of political struggle: “We have to build up a political force defending essentials goals which could be imposed by coming struggles, here in France as beyond borders.” (LO-LCR 2004).

The importance of getting MEPs or set up a group which can influence political life in the European parliament progressively even becomes an objective underlined by several EU-opponents. As the text of the MPF declares in 2004, the importance of the parliament is underlined in even the most sovereigntist of manifestos: “Let’s create in Strasbourg a parliamentary group that counts!” It clearly demonstrates the development of a strategy at the European level:

MPF 2004: “European election promises allowing us to create at last the great group of transition which could unify, in the 25 Members states, every one who refuses […], a powerful group whose mission will be to control the Brussels European Commission, and constrain it to respect peoples […] a parliamentary group which will contribute to put Europe the right way round”.

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33 We use here “europeanization” in a wider sense than above (cf footnote 15). Close to Radaelli or Ladrecht definition, it is understood as a change in behavior, an adaptation of actors to a changing environment related to European integration, an incorporation of the EU dynamics in the national frame of discourses, identity, practices and political structures. C. Radaelli, « Whither Europeanization ? Concept strechting and substantive change », European Integration Online Paper, 2000, 4(8), pp. 1-25. Robert Ladrecht, « Europeanization and Political Parties: Toward a Framework for Analysis », Party Politics, 2002, 8 (4), pp. 389-403. We understand thus that europeanization can take part in the institutionalization of European integration.
34 The party is in charge, and chooses to point out its actions during the French Presidency of the European Council (from July to December 2008).
FN 2004: “The more you will have FN MEPs, the more you could be heard and defended and the more France will be respected in Europe and Europe in the world […] We will defend you in the European Parliament.”

PCF-PG 2009: “To vote Front de Gauche means elect MEPs who will have a seat in the only independent leftist group, the European United Left (GUE/NGL) who has been able to stop the Bolkenstein directive and the proposal of 65 hours of work per week.”

Though, here again, a distinction can be made. A difference between EU opponents can be observed: each one has developed a renewed conception of relevant political actors, situating them at the European level, but not systematically in the European parliament. This is particularly true for the FN, which – as we have already mentioned - is more reluctant to acknowledge a specific European political arena, and the LCR-NPA. The latter party tends to point out the formation of a European social movement and an anti-capitalist party network, true to their criticism of political institutions in general and, in particular, its defense of social struggle. It is worth noting that this weaker mention of one’s party as a European political actor comes from parties occupying the most peripheral places in the political space of all EU-opponents.

Finally, this promotion of oneself as a political actor taking part in European networks, (in other words, parties’ own Europeanization), can also be observed in other parties’ practices, especially in campaign strategies. The development – and public display – of party partnerships with other European political organization has been noticeable in every party in recent years. This is patently obvious in the 2009 European electoral campaign. It is firstly the case of the MPF which joins forces in the Libertas network built up by the Irish businessman Declan Ganley. The Libertas project intended to present a list in every country of the EU. In other parties every one pointed out its europeanization by inviting European counterparts and leaders in meeting or underlining their leaders’ European responsibilities. From the NPA to the FN, every party made it. P.N. Rasmussen, Party of European Socialist (PES) president was invited by French Socialists leader, M. Aubry, for the first meeting of the campaign, and N. Sarkozy, the UMP leader, could be seen side by side with the German leader A. Merkel. O. Lafontaine, cofounder of Die Linke was present at the first meeting of the Parti de Gauche and L. Bisky, European Left (EL) president, was the guest of honor of a public meeting of the Front de Gauche in Paris. For the NPA, European partnerships are weaker but the meetings of O. Besancenot in Spain, for example, were underlined by the party’s propaganda. The FN’s possibilities are more erratic in this matter because of its weak financial means and its fluctuating relationship with its European partners. Nonetheless, the FN systematically uses this same strategy when it can, playing up its European network and underlining J.M. Le Pen’s function as parliamentary group president in the 1989 and 1994 Euromanifestos.

One’s European stance has become a useful card in political struggle that one must correctly use in order to gain credibility and try to become more central in the national political space. Concerning anti-EU parties, this new routine is also explained by their lack of legitimacy and credibility in the national political space, which makes them rely on the European level as a new source of political currency. Another element of French political context helps to understand this attitude: the structure of the French voting system. French majority system makes it difficult for small parties to win representatives. On the opposite and

35 “Front de gauche” is an alliance concluded between the PCF and the Parti de Gauche for the 2009 European election. Born in 2008, after a scission with the socialist party of the senator J.L. Mélenchon and the deputy Marc Dolez the Parti de Gauche appears as a new leftist anti-EU party. The Front de gauche carries on with the alliance of PG and PCF for the presidential election of 2012. It will be represented by J.L. Mélenchon.

36 Foreign leaders take the floor at the FN “Presidential convention” of 2007 in Lille. Three MEP stand among them: Andreas Mölzer, FPO leader, the Belgian Koen Dillen, and Eugen Mihaescu from the Romania Mare party. Rivarol, n°2800, 2 mars 2007, p. 3.
in spite of its reform in 2003, the proportional voting system of European election allows small anti-EU party leaders to obtain a mandate to exercise power. This European mandate appears as a real source of political credibility in front of the public and the media. As the FN vice-president, B. Gollnisch says: “It gives you legitimacy! It’s obvious that when you make a public meeting or when you call a prefect or when you address the medias and you’re member of parliament, it’s not quite the same than if you’re Mr. Smith, representative of I don’t know which small group.” This explains the somewhat paradoxical fact that European positions of responsibility are most emphasized by anti-EU party leaders in reference to themselves.

All these elements can appear as steps toward the establishment of “Europe” as an institution shaping partisan actors’ habits and political representations. We have observed a few significant phenomena attesting to how parties contribute to the setting up of European issues in political discourses and in the conception of political reality. Showing one’s own Europeanization – through one’s knowledge and expertise on the European issue, one’s efforts to highlight one’s image as a European political actor and also one’s integration in European networks – has become a new standard, necessary for all parties to gain political credibility at the national level. French political parties’ customs take part – in their moderate way – in rooting a new understanding of political space where the European level has a part to play. Understanding ‘institutionalization’ as a modifying effect of integration on beliefs, discourse in the political space or on parties’ practices and internal organization, we can consider that institutionalization is indeed partly happening here.

II. Toward a strengthened acceptance of a European political level.

This insistence on showing their cooperation at the European level appears very useful to French anti-EU parties since it allows them to take the exact opposite position of the stigmatizing image of being a radical opponent to European construction as such, and thus avoid the threat of political isolation. We can see this same strategy developing through manifestos.

The study of Euromanifestos allows us to observe what could be called different states of discourses about Europe in the political space from 1979 to 2009. Our analysis shifts here from proportion of discourse in manifestos to the manifestos’ content. Euromanifesto analysis clearly shows that – far from building up their stance in an autonomous or independent way – parties’ discourses about Europe have been involuntarily structured in relation to one another throughout the thirty years of Euromanifestos production. Because parties belong to a party system which affects their discourses, we can observe the evolution of a parallel move and consequently an implicit consensus on what can be said (and what cannot) about the CEE and then the EU. Analyzing what has to be avoided (the unspeakable about Europe) when parties present their own stance about it is meaningful and gives clues to understand the level of institutionalization of the European project at different times in the national political space.

As for the proportion dedicated to European issues in texts, the analysis allows us to distinguish the same two periods in order to describe the way parties present their European stances in texts. These periods can be separated into a ‘before’ and an ‘after’ 1992. The second period (1992-2009) is the one that interests us here. Since the end of the nineties especially, the boundaries of what could be said of European integration evolved, in particular amongst the constituents who resisted the EU. Two main transformations in the way parties present their European stance have to be underlined. A parallel movement can be noted in

37 Interview with B. Gollnisch, FN vice-president, January 2010.
party speeches which, (a) first, involves a reduction of critical discourse with regard to the EU, and (b) then a gradual shift in its appearance to favour the development of counter-projects. In other words, we can (a) first observe the disappearance of an exclusive opposition to Europe in party Euromanifestos: after the Maastricht referendum, no one presents one’s self nor accepts to be described as solely “against Europe”. Throughout these last two decades, words such as “anti-European” or “eurosceptic” have also been strongly rejected by EU opponents. Secondly, and consequently, we can see a transformation of the presentations of anti-EU parties’ oppositional postures (b).

First, texts become more propositional and from then on, every anti-EU party introduces itself in a new particular way: claiming to stand “for another Europe”. This key motto of “changing Europe” and support an alternative toward “another Europe” is found throughout the texts of parties who maintain anti-EU stances. The synchronicity of this change and the similarity of the phrasing adopted by parties to present their views are striking. It begins in 1994 with the MPF list named “List of the majority for another Europe”. The same year, the following assertion can be found in the PCF text “Europe: we can find some other way”. In 1999, contagiousness has reached every anti-EU political organization. The text of the Pasqua/Villiers coalition largely develops this willing of transformation: “Yes, together, we can still change Europe”. The same year, the communist party wants to answer a need of change with its list “Move Europe!” In 2004 PCF’s list shows an identical wording: “Yes to Europe… but not this one!”, its manifestos explaining: “We offer you to vote for the other Europe which is building up”. And the Front de gauche, including PCF and PG in 2009, does not say any different, calling to rally “to build another Europe”. The claim for change is also the main theme of the 1999 FN manifesto whose first sentence in bold characters emphasises: “For France…Let’s change Europe!” the need of change is then developed through various FN concerns. Trotskyists also take up the leitmotiv: the same year, LCR-LO manifesto opens inviting “For another Europe”. The 2004 LO-LCR text as well as the NPA 2009 one follows a same dialectical construction opposing “their Europe” (the EU promoted by governments and institutions) to the European policy promoted by the party. Stressing their conception, NPA affirms in 2009 “Against a Europe of Power we want a Europe of Solidarity”.

Such oppositional discourse is always accompanied by a presentation of alternative European projects, constituting a more-or-less thinly veiled criticism of the EU. Since the 1999 and 2004 elections, every political party has gradually taken up a new discourse displaying a project for Europe. The quantitative analysis shows a substantial increase in propositional discourse in the texts of all parties and European discourses appears more concrete too. This important move in discourses runs parallel to a stronger structuring of the anti-UE posture in peripheral parties during theses years and should also be connected to their growing knowledge of the EU and their deeper involvement in European networks as we mentioned previously. If proportions of criticism remain, the rate of propositions is about equal or higher in our anti-EU parties since 2004, and for instance, propositional discourse gains 10 % in FN and NPA’s texts from 2004 to 2009, even more in the MPF text, confirming the normalization of this practice. Though this balance was not surprising in analysing the texts of the PS and the UMP, it was rather surprising to find this trend amongst the sovereignist FN and MPF. An exclusively critical position no longer seemed worthwhile. All parties put forth their European Projects, as in the case of the FN: if the party had always cultivated a doctrine that rejected the amplification of integration, the texts developed an alternative by the promotion of a “Europe of Nations”. The party equally presented its precise claims on the entry of Turkey, the necessity of a “European preference”, the right to

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38 This is particularly striking in the layout of Euromanifestos: almost every texts point out its European program through a list of proposals largely emphasized and presented point by point.
39 Directly inspired by the expression “French first”, promoted at the national level.
modulate customs duties or the redistribution of institutional powers. Noteworthy in this regard is that each party carried through with the development of alternative projects in response to the traditional themes that made up the base of their doctrines. For example, for a party such as the LCR (which gives up its exclusive critical tone since 1999 to include real developments about European issues), the rights of women, workers and foreigners were at the heart of their European-level discussions. Though the speeches reveal programmatic content in varying degrees of depth, we may above all observe here a new manner of presenting opposition and resistance. The synchronicity of theses moves also underlines the “relational” logic of position building towards Europe in the party system.

In the end, two facts appear as evidence of the incipient manifestation of Europe as an institution. The first one is the spread of the claim for change toward another Europe. Every party takes care to steer clear of a stance of exclusive opposition to European construction, contributing this way to reinforce the potential stigmatization and political isolation they fear this position might bring upon a party. The study of parties’ discourses follows thus an evolution toward a common implicit consensus, literally about the “unspeakable”. Everyone agrees on the need of a kind of collaboration at the European level. This first step of discourses even becomes a condition to present its own opposition against the European Union for the anti-UE parties ever since the end of the nineties. If we come back to our initial definition, this can be seen as a mark of the constraining effect of institutionalization on actors’ behaviors inside a system of social relations – constraining effect which actors contribute in creating.

Second, highlighting a prospective European program appears as a new political norm, even for EU opponents. By conforming and promoting this new routine, parties confirm the necessity to show a European project in order not to lack political credibility. This recurring behavior reveals the strong legitimacy gained by integration in the French political space just as it contributes to build it. A European project is recognized as a necessary section of every reliable political program. And the conversion of anti-EU parties to this kind of discourse strengthens this fact. They simply contribute to establish the legitimacy of integration since the attitude of openly questioning it has been abandoned for a new struggle in which (anti-EU) parties compel themselves to develop a positive vision for a Europe they actually want.

These elements show that not only do anti-EU parties take part in the introduction and insertion of European thematic in the national electoral stakes, but they also show that their collective change of discourse underlines the necessity of supporting, at least a minimal degree, union or cooperation at the European level in order to keep political credibility in the French political system. When our parties, including sovereignist ones, highlight their programs for another Europe and emphasize the fact that their opponent is the EU and not the European project or the idea of a European cooperation as such, they contribute to the embedding of the legitimacy of this principle, only questioning the content of its current

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40 We speak here of a symmetry of partisan discourse. The parallelism of avoiding certain speech acts is in no case a voluntary measure. (One ought not take this to mean that each of the parties does not try to influence it, however).
41 We verify here the implicit idea of this panel, intuition which was also expressed by Y. Deloye in 2008, through the fact that the study of resistances gives good clues about what is changing. Here, resistance against European Union and opponent activities speaks about what is the EU, and what in its dynamics is rooting or still fought against. Y. Deloye, « En guise de conclusion : ce que résister veut dire ou les paradoxes d’une construction européenne face aux contingences historiques et aux logiques politiques nationales », Revue internationale de politique comparée, vol. 15, n° 4, 2008, p. 679-85.
realization. They contribute to European institutionalization by discursively entrenching European construction as a framework of political activity.

Conclusion: What is institutionalizing?

When trying to characterize the role of anti-EU parties’ discourses and practices in the development of Europe as an institution, we should first speak of a paradoxical involvement. Why? Because the increase of political discourses about Europe and its insertion in political space comes with its critics. As we have observed, appropriation of the European issue remains critical toward the EU in our anti-EU parties claiming to argue for another Europe. What is more, a further phenomenon can be observed in the way in which parties presented their European stance: a growth of the controversy in French political space. In recent years, the leitmotif of anti-EU parties’ has come to be voiced by pro-EU parties as well. In 2009, every party, including the mainstream pro-EU PS and UMP, presented a discourse arguing for “change” toward “another Europe”. “Change Europe now with socialists” states the PS 2009 manifesto. And the PS first secretary, Martine Aubry, repeats the expression of the global justice movement, assuming in a meeting in 2009 that “another Europe is possible”.

This objective of change is reaffirmed during the 2010 summer school of the party by the leader: “We need another Europe, for another world”. UMP behavior confirms this growing legitimacy of critical stances toward the EU, using the very same expression in its 2009 Euromanifesto: “another Europe is possible”. But party discourse immediately appropriates the alternative and surrounds the change inside European institutions: “The French presidency proved it. Nicolas Sarkozy began to change Europe.” UMP leader, Nicolas Sarkozy, who was directly involved in the 2009 campaign, used the same discourse scheme: asking for the possibility to “change Europe” at the first campaign meeting in Nice he says: “Is it possible? My answer is yes: we did it during the French presidency”. Finally, in the more recent period, evidence of the diffusion of an injunction to transform Europe has been generalised into partisan speech acts. Undoubtedly the rejection of the ECT by French people in the 2005 referendum plays an important part in this evolution of parties’ speech acts. But we can also see here the influence of anti-EU parties in shaping national political space. A new consensus appeared in discourses, based on a critical presentation of each parties’ own position on the EU – including those of mainstream political parties.

What does this mean in relation to evaluating the EU as an institution? Does it weaken it or can this phenomenon partly mean a step toward more institutionalization by including political struggle inside the EU political system? The scope of the change being asked for within the EU is itself at stake between parties. As we just saw in a UMP speech, for mainstream and pro-EU parties, the claim for change arises within the current EU political institutions. Generally, the aim is to gain more power within the European parliament and Council, and to give another direction to EU policies. Actually, it appears as a transposition of the political struggle at the European level. Each one is fighting to impose its reforms inside the system. By building the EU as a framework for political thought and action, theses parties consequently demonstrate the existence of, and contribute to, the institutionalization of the EU. Besides, that absorption of the opponents’ keyword “another Europe is possible” by mainstream parties is a political operation in order to put a “smokescreen” in front of

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42 Le Monde, 9 mai 2009.
opposition to the EU and inscribe its critics in the institutional political game. Using the same vocabulary, they try to insert this yearning for another Europe put forward by anti-EU parties inside the current political institutional system. We can thus speak here of an attempt toward more institutionalization of an EU which could absorb the political struggle and become an implicit framework for this struggle and not the object of it. Strengthening this evolution, some opponents (MPF, PCF) chose to take part in European institutions and develop their opposition there too (belonging to parliamentary groups and European political organization such as the PGE or Libertas).

This new discourse of pro-EU parties is a strategy to understate the importance of anti-EU parties’ claim for change and transformation. Indeed, the scope of this demand for change is clearly deeper for anti-EU parties depending on whether the party belongs to the right or the left. As we can see in this quote of the PCF, parties are now fighting to appear as the more legitimate and convincing representative of this change. But they also fight for defining its extent: in 2009 whereas PS manifestos call for “changer l’Europe” (change Europe), PCF’s Euromanifesto insists on “changer d’Europe (change of Europe). The sovereignist deputy N. Dupont-Aignan denounces this takeover: “We see now that the ones who have been signing every European treaty since thirty years, PS, UMP, Modem and Green, all of a sudden tell us that Europe must be changed. But they have made this very Europe! And I can see them duping French people”. Asking for another Europe, anti-EU parties do not consider that the change can take place in the current institutional system. They clearly question the EU itself and want to transform it. (Generally, in their views, EU institutions have to be replaced by another type of organization, often quite vague).

Adding to what has already been demonstrated; this last element allows us to specify the object of the informal institutionalization we are talking about. We understand that what anti-EU parties contribute to build as an institution is first the reality of a European political space in which everyone has to stand. They also legitimate the idea of cooperation at the European level. By their behavior, anti-EU parties contribute to root the European reality in national political discourses and customs and to somewhat modify the conception of political reality. They consolidate the position of Europe as a lasting reality within an international context. Strictly oppositional presentation of one’s stance toward integration has been discredited and pushed out of political space. What is more, developing and promoting a structured position on this matter has become a benchmark of political credibility, and this is partly due to anti-EU parties.

We can also observe a kind of acceptance about partly bringing political action and strategy at a European level. But we do not observe a complete acknowledgment of the political game of the European Union from theses parties. The need for collaboration at the European level is accepted, belonging to European networks is underlined. But the definition of this political Europe follows no consensus. The LCR, for example, opts for non-EU institutional spaces when the party develops actions and networks at the European level. Until now, we observe that European integration has contributed to enlarge parties’ political schemes of action (discourses, strategies). And anti-EU parties clearly take part in this change of conception of politics. But anti-EU parties go on fighting against the legitimacy of the EU and explicitly reject its complete political acknowledgment. They do not inscribe all their Europeanized practices – and of course discourses – into the frame of the EU, and this way, their participation to its institutionalization remains weak. They clearly contribute to embedding European integration in national political space more than the European Union itself.

45 N. Dupont-Aignan, Radio Interview, France info, 24/03/09.
On the contrary, if we consider that an accomplished institution can be recognized by an implicit (and sometimes unconscious) general acknowledgment of it as a frame of thought and action and can be defined by the fact that the main controversies between individuals take places inside the bounds of its system; then, anti-EU parties clearly do not produce it. Institutionalization of the EU is not complete because the EU has not integrated its own opponents yet. In France, a few of them even ask for the exit out of the EU from time to time (generally because of inter or intra-party contexts). Besides, we have seen that the absorption of political struggle by European institutions is far from being complete.

Finally, the progressive unanimous support of parties’ discourses produces a situation where the acceptance of the rightfulness of a union or cooperation at the European level is established as the most legitimated position in domestic party system. But this acceptance can be very restrictive, particularly in the case of “sovereignist” parties (MPF, FN) for whom alternative projects for “another” integration are strictly limited. Besides, parties’ concern for Europe remains generally weak and rather neglected, save for the period of European elections. It appears then that it is the frame of a European form of cooperation as well as the existence of European level political structure, which seem legitimized and can appear as successfully institutionalizing, rather than the EU itself. It is also clear that Europe has stood out as presenting real stakes in the domestic political game and as a tool that both anti- and pro-EU parties now seek to use to their advantage.

46 They do so always being careful to avoid asserting that they reject Europe as such, stressing their support for cooperation at the European level or their European identity. “The French state has put itself as a servant of Brussels’ bureaucracy which is leading astray the beautiful idea of European agreement to substitute a technocratic and totalitarian project, harmful to our freedoms.” Marine Le Pen, FN leader, nomination’s speech, 17/01/2011.

47 We can add that the end of the nineties seems to correspond the defeat and decline of sovereignist movements, marked by the series of treaties and the collapse of the Pasqua/Villiers coalition which had the ambition to become one of the main right-wing parties of the French national political space.
Bibliography


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Annex:

A few publications of anti-EU leaders and high members since the nineties:

**MDC-MRC**

**RPR**

**DLR**

**MPF**

**FN**