

Irish citizens and the media during the Euro crisis:
An inter-arena approach to studying the politicization of the
EU

by

Anna Gora

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Abstract

When the euro crisis hit Europe, so did recurring claims of an ‘unprecedented’ politicization of European integration characterized by increased attention to the EU in the media and claims of rising euroscepticism among EU citizens. These are characteristic of the media-based analyses that dominate politicization research. This dissertation disputes the generalizability of these claims from the media to lay citizens and to other political arenas. It argues that an approach that differentiates between the various dimensions of politicization (i.e. salience, scope and contestation) and between the various arenas on which it plays out (i.e. institutional, intermediary and citizen) is necessary for an accurate understanding of the character and development of politicization. Through a mixed-methods quantitative-qualitative analysis that applies equivalent indicators longitudinally over parallel time periods, it investigates how the politicization of the EU compares between media debates and citizen discourse. It then maps how it evolved comparatively between them over the duration of the crisis.

Politicization in the Irish news media, observed through media content analysis of the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* in chapter 4, is then compared with that among Irish citizens, observed through focus group discussions and Eurobarometer surveys in chapter 5. This dissertation finds that contrary to claims of an ‘unprecedented’ degree of politicization, politicization of the EU in the Irish news media during the crisis can be characterized as a moderately salient, deep, moderately euro-critical polarization that is becoming somewhat wider in scope over time with no consistent trend in either the salience or contestation of EU politics. In contrast, in the citizen arena it was characterized as a weak to moderately salient, wide, moderately polarized politicization that is slowly

progressing in a wider but not deeper euro-critical direction. It finds that even where the intensity of politicization does not change over time, there can still be significant changes to the character of politicization in any one or more of its three dimensions.

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Glossary

Dáil Éireann	Irish House of Representatives. Lower house of the Oireachtas.
Oireachtas Éireann	National parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
Seanad	Senate of Ireland. Upper house of the Oireachtas.
Tánaiste	Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland.
Taoiseach	Prime Minister of Ireland.

Chapter 1:

Introduction: Relating economic crises in the Republic of Ireland to a politicization or lack thereof of European integration.

For the European Union, the last decade has been marked by crises: the euro crisis, the Ukraine crisis, the migration crisis, and most recently, the Brexit crisis resulting in Britain's impending exit from the EU. The crisis events from late 2009 to the present have raised some serious questions about the future trajectory of European integration, but so far none has attracted as much attention from scholars of EU democracy, public opinion, communication and contestation as has the euro crisis and the EU's response to it. In his book on European public spheres arguing that 'politics is back' as a result of the euro crisis, Thomas Risse sensationally calls it the "most profound crisis in the history of European Integration" (Risse 2015, 1). The euro crisis triggered serious questions of legitimacy relating to the EU's policy choices in trying to resolve the crisis and in light of the many new competencies over the euro area awarded to supranational EU institutions that are unaccountable to the public, such as the European Commission. Some scholars questioned whether the EU's citizens "will tolerate being governed by a 'benevolent' technocracy without demanding more participation in it for themselves and accountability from their rulers for the policies they have chosen" (Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015, 18). In September 2017 the EU's Economic Affairs Commissioner, Pierre Moscovici, called the EU's bailout negotiations with Greece a "democratic scandal" in light of the additional powers handed to the institution that he himself represents (Moscovici 2017). At the height of the crisis, citizens in Greece, then Italy, Spain, Portugal and to a lesser extent Ireland came out onto the streets in large-scale protests against austerity imposed by joint EU-IMF bailout

conditions. These protests demonstrated signs of transnational diffusion as the label *los indignados* became a unifying reference to anti-austerity protestors across the EU, and protestors directed claims at the EU as opposed to national actors to a greater degree than ever before (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 209).

In light of these developments, there is a general consensus among EU scholars that the euro crisis has resulted in an ‘unprecedented’ politicization of European integration (Schimmelfennig 2014, 322; see also Hutter and Kersch 2014; Kriesi and Grande 2016; Statham and Trez 2013a, 2015). This research locates politicization, defined here as “expansion of the scope of conflict within the political system” (see Hutter and Grande 2014, 1003), in a greater visibility of the EU in the press, more attention from political parties, a rise in Euroscepticism, and an expansion of public contestation. Paul Statham and Hanz-Jörg Trez summarize this sentiment:

From the vantage point in the early 2010s, when the Eurozone’s monetary policy is publicly debated and challenged across the region on a daily basis, it seems strange that a decade ago a primary concern of European elites was a lack of attention from citizens, political parties, and voters to the European integration project (Statham and Trez 2013: 1).

Indeed, the years of the euro crisis witnessed increased media attention on the Eurozone, highly visible and large-scale anti-austerity protests and an influx of Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament. However, evidence also points to the 2014 EP elections remaining second-order across Europe. Even following the peak of the crisis, citizens continued to vote the same way they had, or would vote in their own national elections on the basis of national issues, rather than electing their MEPs based on knowledge of their positions on EU-related topics (Nielsen and Franklin 2016), even in debtor countries like Spain and Greece (Schmitt and Teperoglou 2015). Additionally, the

Euro crisis period continued to see falling electoral turnout in EP elections; a trend observed every election since the first one in 1979. In fact, at a turnout of 42.6 percent, 2014 saw the lowest turnout in the EP's electoral history, a record also held by every EP election before it.¹

While one can argue that this reflects broader trends of declining voter turnout even in national elections in Europe since the 1990s (Solijonov 2016, 24-25), voter turnout in Ireland's 2011 parliamentary and presidential elections increased, before going down again in 2016. Meanwhile, Irish turnout in the EP election continued to decline in both 2009 and 2014. This supports more conservative observations of politicization that despite the high visibility and salience of the crisis in media debates, it "was confined to national and supranational executive actors and has not accelerated the transfer of European politics into 'mass politics'" (Kriesi 2016, 34), and that politicization has not been as far-reaching as previously expected (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016). Such observations raise the question of some alternate possibilities:

(1) First, the growing politicization of the EU among ordinary citizens may simply be getting expressed through other means and resulting in different forms of political participation, for instance, citizen engagement with EU politics through social media, which is now a regular occurrence (Mossetta, Segesten and Trenz 2017).

(2) Second, is the possibility that the EU's intergovernmental and technocratic policy responses to the eurozone crisis, which were deemed by some as

¹ Statistics on turnout available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html

undemocratic (Crum 2013; Matthijs 2017; Moscovici 2017; Scicluna 2014) or moving in a post-democratic direction (Hartfield 2013), might have led to a passive, apathetic citizenry who feel that political participation has no effect on policy and their democratic voice has no effect (Crouch 2004: 4). A sense of political efficacy has been linked to political involvement, particularly electoral turnout (Hart 2001, 408). Alternatively, increased visibility of the EU in the news media may be widening the gap between ordinary citizens and the EU by fostering excessively high expectations of the EU that cannot be met (Hix and Bartolini 2006: 53), resulting in ambivalent or indifferent citizens who abandon politics as opposed to contesting them (Van Ingelgom 2013: 123). This theory counters Thomas Risse's assertion that politicization, of the public sphere, in particular, is "bringing politics back" (Risse 1010: 227-8) and enhancing EU democracy.

(3) Finally, there is the possibility that existing assessments of politicization levels using the news media may be comparing against an excessively optimistic yardstick. Discrepancies between engagement and politicization levels among citizens compared to other arenas might simply be consistent with the fact that ordinary citizens remain at a further distance from EU policy-making than actors at the institutional level, political parties, civil society, and the media.

This dissertation investigates *how the politicization of the EU compares between media debates and citizen discourse and how it evolved comparatively between them over the duration of the crisis. It then asks how we might explain any discrepancies in the patterns between them.* More specifically, using the case of Ireland, it will examine whether the EU was politicized as much as recent research suggests in the media and if this is

reflected in citizen discourse, as proponents of a European public sphere would hope for. Various stages of politicization including electoral debates, parliamentary debates and media discourse have been studied independently, and the relationship between them and politicization among citizens has been strongly implied (Hooghe and Marks 2009), particularly by democratically normative literature relating to the public sphere (see Habermas 2001, 2006; Risse 2010, 2015), and studies of the politicization of the EU in the news media (Statham and Trezz 2013a; 2013b). *This dissertation tests the notion that politicization trends are equivalent across arenas of political actors, particularly the media and ordinary citizens.* Several researchers already question the extent to which citizens are represented by these sweeping claims of politicization (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016; Koopmans and Statham 2010; Kriesi 2016; Van Ingelgom 2013, 2014). However, the relationship between EU citizens and the intermediary actors (i.e. political parties, civil society and the media) that link them to policymakers and other institutional actors has not yet been comparatively explored in a politicization context, during parallel time periods and using compatible and empirically comparable analytical frameworks. This dissertation sets out to fill this gap this using a case study of Ireland to map and compare trends in politicization among the news media and Irish citizens from the beginning of its financial crisis in 2010 to its exit from the EU-IMF bailout programme in December of 2013.

1.1 Politicization as a Research Agenda in EU Studies

Despite its relevance to recent crises, politicization has been a prominent topic in European integration research for over a decade, particularly following the defeat of the Constitutional Treaty which some believed had potential to mobilize citizens to engage in EU politics, addressing a perceived democratic deficit (Habermas 2001; Statham and Trezz

2013a, 2013b). Studies of politicization have been characterized by moments of crisis, and both successful and failed integration steps. However, despite the increased popularity of politicization research two decades ago, and the more recent surge of politicization research in the past decade inspired by political and public reactions to the euro crisis, the idea of politicization was first applied to research on European integration by early neo-functional theories (Haas 1958, 11-19; Schmitter 1969). This work primarily focused on political elites and their behaviour, while giving little attention to public opinion, media reporting or other collective actors (Kennedy and Sinnott 2007, 63). The direction of politicization research took a turn following a series of negative outcomes on EU referendums: in Denmark, on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and particularly those in France and the Netherlands on the EU Constitution in 2005, and Ireland on the Nice Treaty in 2001 and the Lisbon Treaty in 2008. Scholars observed the emergence of an increasingly skeptical European citizenry contrasted against a largely pro-European elite (Gaxie, Hube and Rowell, 2011; Hooghe and Marks 2009).

The idea of a permissive consensus, which allowed EU elites to “impose European integration” without any significant domestic opposition (Carruba 2001: 144), began to fade, replaced by the recognition that citizens were becoming increasingly conscious, and critical of the EU’s activities in a process that started with the Maastricht Treaty and has continued into the present. The most dominant explanation for this change in scholarly literature argues that politicization is driven by the accumulated effects of increasing ‘authority transfer’ to the EU (see Hooghe and Marks 2009; de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Statham and Trenz 2013a; Zürn 2014). In an influential article, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2009) argued that politicization, measured by changing public opinion observed

largely in these referendum results as well as through electoral and party politics, marked the start of a ‘constraining dissensus,’ referring to an integration process increasingly subject to, and constrained by, public opinion and contestation. Public opinion data covering the period of the euro crisis has shown this period to have the sharpest decline in support for the EU since 2007 (Braun and Tausendpfund 2014, 242).

The degree to which politicization has occurred remains a topic of debate, but today there is a general consensus in scholarly literature that the EU has become increasingly politicized since the early 1990s and that it will inevitably continue to become more so (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; de Wilde and Zürn 2012). Empirical evidence demonstrates that “the overall share of reporting [about European integration issues] tripled between 1982-2003” (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 147). However, most recent scholarship on this topic no longer expects a smooth process of politicization, as proposed by Hooghe and Marks’ (2009) post-functionalist theory of European integration. Scholars have largely accepted that this phenomenon is rather a process affected by periods of politicization and de-politicization triggered by certain contentious moments such as key integration steps or the euro crisis, that function as opportunity structures (de Wilde, 2011; de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 140). However, even the claim that the politicization of European integration has occurred continuously since the 1990s is now disputed, and evidence exists that political contestation on European integration, rather than being strictly connected to a process of increased authority transfer over time, already existed as early as the 1950s, if not even earlier (Hurrelmann 2017, 67). Hoeglinger (2016, 146) finds that “no potential triggering event or crisis has been able to spur the politicization of Europe in the long run and keep it going.” Likewise, concluding Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi’s volume on politicization over

four decades of European integration, Grande and Kriesi write that while opportunities for politicization have become more common with the intensification of the integration process, “there is neither a single uniform process of politicization nor is there a clear trend over time” (Grande and Kriesi 2016, 279). Instead, they observe what they coin ‘punctuated politicization’ that is responsive to opportunity structures that are exploited by political actors.² This would suggest that opportunity structures, such as the euro crisis might only be triggering peaks in the politicization of the particular events or policies in question, and related actors, as opposed to a broader politicization of European integration and the EU as such. In other words, it is relevant to question whether it is really the EU that is becoming more intensely contested during these periods, or only the actors and issues related to a specific contentious issue despite its relation to European Integration. By distinguishing economic and crisis-related discourse from the remainder of EU-related discourse, I attempt to shed some light on this question. This project does not treat politicization of the EU as process isolated from other local, national, transnational and international processes, but rather one that falls into a broader interplay of endless issues and ideas, and the mechanisms that determine which issues enter public discourse and which do not, and in which EU issues compete with other local, national, and international issues for public attention.

1.2 The Irish Case

Ireland, compared to other member states hardest hit by the crisis in the Eurozone,

² This is similar to punctuated equilibrium theory’s pattern of stasis and intermittent crises that result in upheavals in public policy-making (see Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

such as Greece and Spain, lacked the large-scale and continuous protest movements against austerity that made headlines globally (see Cannon and Murphy 2015; Cox 2012; Hearne 2015; Naughton 2015). Consequently, politicization patterns during the crisis in Ireland have not been as extensively studied. For instance, an edited volume on popular contention in reaction to how European countries dealt with the 2008 global financial crisis excludes Ireland, despite its debtor status during the euro crisis (see Guigni and Grasso 2015). Research about contestation in response to austerity in Ireland has been for the most part limited to Irish scholars in Irish publications (see Cannon and Murphy 2015; Hearne 2015; Naughton 2015) and does not study contestation from a European integration perspective. Except for a few studies that included Ireland as one of several national cases (see Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016; Hurrelmann and Wagner 2017; Leupold 2015) most investigations into politicization during this time exclude Ireland and generally concentrate on media debates, public opinion and contestation in creditor states. However, a study of Irish citizens' more subdued public response to the crisis and resulting austerity measures might provide greater insights into understanding the few existing empirical findings of low politicization among citizens, than those that focus on large-scale austerity protests.

While its neighbour, the United Kingdom has stood out as the most Eurosceptic member state (George 2000, Gray 2003) culminating in its impending exit from the EU, in the past Ireland stood out one of the most pro-European. For a long time, Ireland had been seen as a committed participant in the European integration process, earning its reputation as a 'good European' and a 'model pupil' in both academic and popular discourse on the European Union (Laffan 2009, 183). Ireland's high level of support for European integration has been attributed to its remarkable economic transformation from the poorest

member state to having one of the highest GDPs per capita in the EU. The country's economy profited greatly from the EU's structural funds and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). However, Ireland's reputation as an obedient and reliable pro-European member ended with its rejection of the Nice Treaty in a referendum in 2001 and later the Lisbon Treaty in 2008. In response, the British *Independent* noted that Ireland has earned the reputation as 'Europe's most ungrateful nation' (Hobolt 2009, 183). In recent years, the Irish citizens have been reportedly more skeptical of further integration and transfer of sovereignty to the European Union, illustrating a perceived growing gap between Irish political elites and the general public (Murphy and Puirseil 2008, 550; Fitzgibbon 2013). Some authors attribute this to the extensive penetration of the Irish market by British print media, especially tabloids, which carry a generally Eurosceptic attitude (Laffan 2009, 3).

This reported change in Irish sentiment towards the EU makes it a particularly compelling case to study. Whether growing Euroscepticism (mainly observed in media and elite discourse, as well as the no-vote on the Nice and Lisbon referenda) has coincided with a growing salience and controversiality of the EU among national publics is not something that has been extensively studied. Hurrelmann and his co-authors observe that despite these observations of growing Euroscepticism in Ireland, citizens' knowledge of and interest in the EU remains low, although higher than in Britain, Germany or Austria (Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2015). Irish citizens are generally considered to be interested and well informed about politics (Coakley 2009; Mair 2010) making them a strong case in which to study political discourse and seek contextual evidence of the politicization of EU politics that larger quantitative studies have observed. Between 2010 and 2013, the period examined in this dissertation, around fifty-five percent of Irish citizens reported a medium

or high level of interest in politics (Standard Eurobarometer). If there is no evidence of politicization among populations where at least half of the population has some interest in politics, it is unlikely that we will locate politicization among populations with an even lower level of interest.

Additionally, Ireland is the only member state to hold a national referendum for all EU treaty ratifications, as required by its constitution: Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Amsterdam Treaty in 1998, Nice Treaty in 2001 and 2002, Lisbon Treaty in 2008 and 2009, Fiscal Compact in 2012, and scheduled for the EU constitution in 2005 but postponed indefinitely following no-votes in France and the Netherlands. National referendums are a key institutional opportunity structure facilitating politicization (de Wilde and Zürn, 2012: 138; Grande and Hutter, 2016a: 40) making Ireland a unique case in having these opportunities for heightened moments of EU politicization. The Irish case also allows insight into the politicization of the EU in a member state that has directly experienced the crisis and received an EU-IMF bailout. However, unlike Greece where economic problems and bailouts have been ongoing, Ireland received a single bailout in 2010, better accommodating insight over time into how the EU is politicized following the ‘peak’ moment of the crisis itself.

The frequency of national referendums on the EU and depth of the Euro crisis as felt in Ireland, in light of its financial crisis, make it a most likely case to observe noticeable changes in politicization, if we are to observe it despite preliminary observations that public contestation did not reach levels similar to those in other debtor countries. This makes the Irish case valuable as a ‘critical case’ that allows for the testing of the degree to which increased media salience and contestation do in fact trigger a growing politicization, or at

least awareness of, the EU in the citizen arena (Flyvbjerg 2006, 230). The specific national characteristics of the Irish case do not facilitate the extrapolation of these results to the entirety of the EU to the same degree as the large-n studies that have dominated politicization research to this point. However, as argued by Bent Flyvbjerg in his defence of case-study research, such generalization is overvalued, and an in-depth study of a single case can provide a much-needed contextualization of wider observations of politicisation, which cannot adequately account for how politicization, as a political phenomenon, develops. Thus, a closer look at the Irish case provides a long-needed supplement to these studies as it “can ‘close in’ on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice” (Flyvbjerg 2006 235). It facilitates a deeper understanding of the real-life contextual factors that explain variation in these larger studies, many of which acknowledge that politicization has not evolved in the same way across all member states. Thus the Irish case serves to inform generalized conclusions regarding correlations between several arenas of politicization, under context-specific circumstances and contexts that will be outlined in the following chapters. The observations of politicization in the Irish case described in the following chapters should also serve as a warning against sweeping generalizations of citizen contestation across EU members without a careful assessment of national contexts to first understand what is typical of participation and contestation in each member state and provide a better understanding of which factors might explain the outliers of such generalizations.

Proceeding to examine the Irish case, chapter two conceptualizes and operationalizes politicization as a concept and outlines the theoretical and methodological approach to this project, which facilitates comparison between media and citizen

discourses. Chapter three then sets the context of the political and civil society environment in Ireland. It focuses on the strong links between intermediary actors and the state, and the consequences this has on our understanding of the relationship between various levels of actors when it comes to politicization. Next, empirical observations of politicization in the Irish news media are explained in chapter four, followed by an analysis of empirical evidence from the citizen arena in chapter five. Finally, chapter six compares politicization trends between the two arenas and offers hypotheses that might explain the differentiated patterns of politicization among them.

Chapter 2: Conceptualizing Politicization and a Framework for its Analysis

The inconsistent conclusions about the trajectory and intensity of politicization are in part a result of differences in approaches to how the concept is understood and measured in empirical research. This chapter begins by assessing these differences and differentiating between three different arenas of politicization, and the interplay of influence between them. Next, it provides a brief overview of the public sphere in politicization research and how it intersects with and relates to the three political arenas. This is followed by an operationalization of politicization to facilitate comparative analysis between the news media and EU citizens, and a detailed discussion of the state of affairs in research about each. It concludes with an outline of the methodological approach to the empirical analysis presented in the following chapters.

The study of politicization in EU studies has spanned a wide variety of manifestations and used different sources of data to empirically measure it. Scholars have located politicization in public opinion, electoral results, and protest politics, defining it largely as Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks 2009), in parliamentary debates (Wendler 2013) and in party manifestos and electoral campaigns (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Kriesi et al. 2008). Lay citizens, who unlike political elites and the media do not have a professional interest in politics, have been the least thoroughly studied source of politicization discourse. Several qualitative studies have focused on measuring public opinion and explaining citizen attitudes about the EU (ex. Gaxie, Hube and Rowell 2011; Duchesne et al. 2013; Van Ingelgom 2014). There have been few studies of citizen discourse specific to politicization. Those published to date identify existing but lower

levels of politicization in the citizen arena than from other sources, in data collected from focus groups (see Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016; Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2015). Recently, politicization has also been measured in citizen discourse on social media (Barisione and Michailidou 2017).

Despite the popularity of politicization research based in media analysis, scholars have used the media to collect data on different actors or stages/arenas of politicization. First, media has been treated as a setting or a stage for politicization (ex. de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Statham and Trenz 2015) and as a mechanism for promoting the politicization of the EU in the wider public sphere (Koopmans 2007, 2010; Statham and Trenz 2013a,b). It has also been used as a source of data on politicization more generally, among actors and political spheres beyond the media, and political activity in other arenas. For example, media analysis has been utilized to study political party competition in national election campaigns (Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter and Kerscher 2014), EU-related protests (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016) and political elite debates (ex. Leupold 2015). Most empirical media studies assess politicization of institutional executive actors within a generalized ‘public sphere’ with the implication that observed levels and trends in politicization apply also to regular citizens, an approach that Hurrelmann (2017, 69) and de Wilde, Leupold and Schmidke (2016, 7) deem problematic.

2.1 Differentiating Arenas of Politicization.

In a special issue of *West European Politics* dedicated to the differentiated politicization of European integration, de Wilde and his co-authors identify parliaments, public spheres and public opinion as three settings in which politicization takes place (de Wilde, Leupold and Schmidke 2016, 7-9). In the same issue, Baglioni and Hurrelmann

(2016, 106) expand on this distinction to conceptualize three types of political arenas involving different political actors in which politicization can occur. These include: (a) *institutional* arenas, involving national and European politicians, not necessarily exclusive to parliaments but inclusive of other institutions such as senates or EU institutions; (b) *citizen arenas*, whereby laypeople participate in politics, for instance, through referendums, elections, protest and in conversation with peers and; (c) *intermediary* arenas, populated by actors such as mass media as well as civil society, interest groups and voluntary associations that provide a link between the citizen and institutional arenas or what Schlesinger and Fossum (2007, 85) call ‘general publics’ (See also Hurrelmann, Gora, Wagner 2015; Hurrelmann 2017). Most research on politicization to date has treated each of these arenas separately, despite the clear influence and mutual permeability between these arenas, particularly the influence of the news media on citizens. While empirical media studies often allude to media effects on citizens, these same studies do not empirically test their media findings against citizen discourse.

Mapping the causes of politicization, de Wilde and Zürn (2012, 144) conceptualize the news media as a discursive political opportunity structure that facilitates politicization. This dissertation acknowledges the influence of the media effects but also treats the media as its own arena in which politicization takes place. Thus, the intermediary arena of politicization, and the news media, in particular, play a dual function. First, the news media functions as a stage on which politicization itself occurs (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016, 106) independent of other actors and arenas. Second, it also functions as a mechanism facilitating the politicization of the EU in the greater public sphere, (i.e. intermediary arena) and citizen arena (Statham and Trenz 2015, 294). Earlier research identifies four key

functions of the media that for this project are summed up as having either top-down or bottom-up discursive communicative effects (Koopmans and Erbe 2004, 98; Koopmans 2007, 184):

- *Top-down*: whereby it makes EU actors and politics (i.e. the institutional arena) visible in a public forum and provides information and context on EU politics that is necessary for citizens to build opinions in the absence of personal experience (*Legitimation* and *accountability* functions).
- *Bottom-up*: It makes citizen preferences and concerns visible to actors in the intermediary arena and offers visibility to citizen participation in public debate, whether through social movements, protest or participation in civil society (*Responsiveness* and *Participation* functions).

In practice, while engaging in all of these functions, research suggests that the news media's role in facilitating politicization is stronger in a top-down direction. Previous research has shown that it holds some agenda setting-power over public discourse (Statham 2007, 463) while simultaneously largely representing rather than leading elite-level political discourse (Ibid., 773).

The analysis in the following chapters treats the news media primarily as a political arena in which politicization takes place. This project departs from the view that “media content reflects directly the public contestation related to European integration” (Hutter and Grande 2014, 1007) or that it provides “a good proxy for public debates about policies” (Rixen and Zangl 2013, 373). This understanding of media content is overly simplistic and excessively optimistic in its applicability to understanding politicization on the citizen arena. Journalism is governed by its own logic and influences, which will be addressed in

greater detail in relation to the media analysis in chapter four. Writing about the use of journalism as a measure of politicization in the wider public sphere, Michael Zürn points out that “on the one hand, many salient and contested issues that are discussed in mass media are utterly apolitical and, on the other hand, not all relevant aspects of the political are reported in the media” (Zürn 2016: 166). In the Irish case, in-depth media analysis has shown that news coverage of the euro crisis reflected primarily the views of political and economic elites, in part resulting from journalists’ ties to the corporate sector. This occurred at the expense of groups opposed to the bailout, such as the People Before Profit Alliance, who were given very little media attention despite publicly engaging in significant political contestation (Mercille 2015: 1, 85). Therefore, other arenas, such as parliamentary debates, as measured by media discourse analysis, provides a reflection of politicization that is mediated by the journalistic medium. This is not always an accurate reflection of the state of politicization in other arenas, but rather a reflection of those debates filtered through the eyes of journalists and specific needs and interests of editorial teams. Likewise, media-based inventories of austerity protests (for example Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016) may, in fact, underestimate levels of citizen contention that was not large-scale and disruptive enough to warrant media attention regardless of any media bias.

While politicization research in EU studies generally takes the effects of the media on citizens at face value, research on EU electoral campaigns has looked more deeply into external factors that influence media coverage. Studies of campaigns for elections to the European Parliament have observed that the media were more likely to cover European issues on which there was greater political contestation among political parties (Schuck, 2011:42) indicating that political discourse on the institutional arena also has an effect on

the salience of issues in the media. Additionally, because newspapers are dependent on subscriptions and sales to attract the advertising on which their business model depends, they are also to some extent reactive to which issues resonate most strongly among their readership. There exists an interactive communicative relationship between the media and both the institutional and citizen arenas (De Vreese 2010,119), whereby the media not only influences but is also influenced by the discourse in other arenas.

Some communication theorists also argue that the media is at an increasingly greater advantage over the behaviour of institutional actors through a ‘mediatization’ process that has been documented over the past couple of decades (see Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Stromback et al. 2011). Mediatization is observed through a process of growing media influence over politics and closer interconnectedness between the two arenas (Stromack 2011: 162), whereby political actors are constrained by their reliance on the media as a publicity-generating mechanism for legitimation, thus allowing the media’s interpretation of their affairs to influence the modes of operation of a political system. Existing research links the emergence of such mediatization processes to not only the national political context but also increasingly, the European Union (Barisione and Michailidou 2017; Trenz and Michailidou 2014). Barisione and Michailidou argue that mediatization has amplified politicization. They write that EU legitimacy no longer depends exclusively on ‘output’ and ‘input legitimacy’ but is also “shaped through either the mediation of political content through the news media or the media-based visibility of the competing arguments and justifications made by the government or by opposition parties” (Barisione and Michailidou 2017, 5-6).

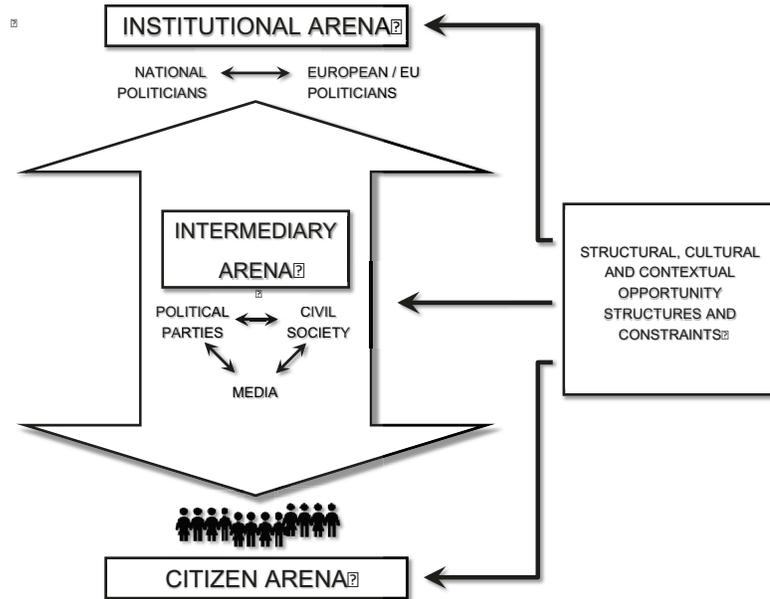


Figure 1– Relationships between EU-related discourses across political arenas

Figure 1 illustrates the complexity of influence over EU-related political discourse in the three political arenas that serve as stages for politicization. Which political issues become politicized on the citizen arena, are hypothesized to be influenced by the topics raised in the institutional arena, as they are filtered and framed by actors in the intermediary arena, particularly the news media. Likewise, both the citizen and institutional arenas can have some effect on what issues the media gives space and visibility to. Through the bottom-up *participation* functions of the media (Koopmans and Erbe 2004: 98; Koopmans 2007: 184) citizens can use it as a platform to make their contention and demands visible to institutional actors outside of participation in official democratic processes (i.e. elections and referendums). Large-scale citizen demand for more information on an issue can drive increased media attention to it, but likewise, a high density of reporting and media attention directed at a given issue, across numerous media platforms can also increase public demand for information (Statham and Trenz2015, 295-7).

Mainstream explanations of politicization, such as the authority transfer hypothesis introduced in chapter one, not only fail to explain the differentiated patterns of politicization over time but also nationally and between political arenas. To understand the politicization of the EU in each arena, we must contextualize the influence of structural, cultural and discursive opportunity structures unique to each arena in the national and transnational context (see de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Grande and Hutter 2015). For instance this could include the economic effects of an EU issue or policy on actors in a given arena (Leupold 2016), national political opportunity structures such as elections or referendums (Grande and Hutter 2016a), individual political events at the EU level that are perceived to have an potential for significant effect on actors in a given political arena, for instance the Constitutional Treaty (Börzel and Risse 2009), successive integration steps handing over authority to EU institutions (de Wilde and Zürn 2012), or even levels of political interest and apathy. Additionally, discursive opportunities for participation in publicly visible debate varies by actor. Institutional actors have easier access to getting their opinions heard on a larger scale than do members of the citizen arena (Statham 2010, 297). While it is not within the scope of this project to empirically test individual explanatory hypotheses for the levels of politicization, the existence of a diverse set of influences differentiated between each political arena strengthens the argument for mapping politicization across these arenas separately but in a framework that allows for comparison.

Consequently, research that uses the news media as the primary source of its data on politicization (ex. Grande and Hutter 2015; Hoeglinger 2015; Schmidke 2015) should be wary of extrapolating its findings to more general observations of other arenas, despite providing a window to discourse in those arenas. Arguments defending such conclusions

against accusations of ‘media bias’ based on evidence for the media’s agenda-setting and framing powers (Hoeglinger 2016: 34-39) fail to differentiate and compare differences across political arenas. Therefore, this project treats patterns of politicization that are observed in the news media at face value as the politicization of the EU in Irish newspaper reporting, rather than a window into other political arenas. However, the argument that politicization in the news media serves as a mechanism to stimulate politicization in the citizen arena enhances the value of a comparative study of politicization patterns between the intermediary and citizen arenas.

This paper holds that the news media, by acting as a major source of information about institutionalized politics, have an undeniable effect on what people think about (i.e. which political issues are salient to them), but ‘what’ people actually think, directions of public opinion and contestation (i.e. polarization) may be subject to a broader range of factors, external to the news (Cohen 1963). For this reason, it is particularly valuable to study politicization in the media and the citizen arena comparatively. Such comparison has been missing from politicization research.

2.2 The Public Sphere in Politicization Research.

The public sphere has been central to discourse-based politicisation research as this is where the institutional, intermediary, and citizen discourses intersect. The focus on media analysis in EU politicization research is heavily influenced by Jürgen Habermas’s conceptualization of deliberative democracy and his calls for a European public sphere. These studies begin with the normative notion that an inclusive Europeanized public sphere is central to democracy at the EU level. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas argues for a normative democratic model whereby the citizen not only

has agency for political influence and change, but also, active political participation through informed critical-rational debate is a prerequisite. He posits the notion that the presence of democratic institutions is not enough on its own, but that citizens must be informed and at the least, conscious and critical of the actors, institutional mechanisms and decisions that affect them (Habermas 1991). The media, in particular, print media, is integral to this ideal-type. Habermas calls for the trans-nationalization of existing national public spheres where existing media must not only:

...thematize and address European issues as such, but they must at the same time report on the political positions and controversies which the same topics evoke in other member states (Habermas 2012; 48).

Many authors argue for a shared European public sphere characterized by an EU-level deliberative arena that usually emphasizes the mass media, but is not limited to it (Habermas 2001, 2006; Schlesinger and Fossum 2007, Koopmans and Statham, 2010; Risse 2010).

Authors applying a ‘public sphere perspective’ (see Statham and Trenz 2013a, 6-8) often use politicization as a normative concept in debates on a European democratic deficit (Habermas 2001; Hix 2008). For these authors, politicization depends on the mass media’s attention and role in fostering political debate about Europe (Statham and Trenz 2015, 294). Politicization, in this context, is viewed as a precondition of legitimation or de-legitimation of a political system. An un-politicized system can therefore only be ‘a-legitimate’ (Steffek 2007, 190, as cited by Hurrelmann 2017, 66) as it is not publicly deliberated. The question of a democratic deficit in the European Union has long attracted research on its institutions and policy-making processes ranging from questions on whether EU policies are developed and implemented democratically to how these institutions (largely the European

Commission and the European Parliament) can be made more democratic in their designs. The other side of the democratic deficit debate is concerned not with institutional details but with the ‘demos’ itself, in other words, the citizens and their role in legitimizing the system (in this case the EU). The EU itself has responded to these debates and calls for more citizen engagement with the introduction of a citizen’s initiative in 2009’s Lisbon Treaty, opening up a space for public engagement. This is in line with trends toward deliberative democracy, where some would argue that society generally has, to an increasing extent, been moving to involve citizens in framing, constructing and politicizing key issues (Asdal 2008, 22). However, for politicization to exist in the citizen arena, citizens need to be conscious of and discursively engaged in a debate about the entity to which they belong.

Examining the idea of a European public sphere in his book “What is Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix It” (2008), Simon Hix identifies a lack of deliberation as the major shortcoming of EU democracy. He argues that the EU meets all the procedural (institutional) requirements to be considered a democratic polity but falls short of substantive requirements. According to Hix, there is no arena for the competition for political authority in the EU since both the EU and national election campaigns are fought on national policy issues. Therefore, the problem with the EU is that it is un-politicized, and the solution is greater politicization. This leads to a debate on how to create such an arena for European-level political deliberation, on which Jurgen Habermas has been particularly vocal.

In “Does Europe Need a Constitution?” (2006), and an earlier similarly titled essay from 2001, Habermas, like Hix, also observes that an un-politicized EU is democratically

problematic as it creates a legitimization deficit. He proposes that a referendum on an EU constitution would trigger large-scale debate across Europe fuelling citizens' imaginations and leading to a European Public Sphere where EU issues are deliberated and contested. This, he writes has been missing in Europe, and the democratic process is embedded in the concept of such a public sphere. Habermas rests on the premise that politicization for the EU through a common European public sphere would extend to the development of a shared European identity and further integration. Contrary to these predictions, while the European Constitution and its successor, the Lisbon Treaty (formerly the Reform Treaty) generated a great deal of debate, the debate was limited to the treaties themselves and was framed mainly in a national context, fading away after the treaty ratification process had been concluded.

Schlesinger and Fossum, conceptualizing the EU as ideally a cohesive polity argue for a reflexive (Habermasian) public sphere as essential for democratic order: "The EU's development as a new kind of polity is therefore closely connected with the range and depth of its development as a public and communicative space" (Schlesinger and Fossum 2007, 2). Further pursuing the concept of public spheres as arenas for deliberation, Risse and Van De Steeg (2003) and Gerhards (2001) distinguish between a European and a Europeanized public sphere. As opposed to proposing a pan European public sphere, they suggest Europeanized national public spheres whereby, the EU becomes politicized and is recognized as a common concern in national public debates and is debated similarly across member states. Koopmans and Statham take this concept one step further, proposing Europeanized national news media as the key to developing a public sphere in which the EU may become politicized (Koopmans and Statham 2010, 3). In an alternative approach

to this literature, Andrew Moravscik (2002) acknowledges a deficit in participation and democratic deliberation in the European Union yet insists that this does not present a legitimacy crisis and is not symptomatic of a severe democratic deficit. He notes that the EU lacks competence over the five most salient issues in most Western democracies - health care, education, law and order, social security and pensions, and taxation – as these areas remain under national jurisdiction (Moravscik 2002, 615). According to Moravscik, it is only concerning these most salient issues that political contestation and deliberation is essential, relieving the EU of critiques of a democratic deficit.

In contrast to the optimistic understandings of politicization held by proponents of a European public sphere or some form of deliberative democracy, others have recognized that politicization may constrain EU integration and decision-making, just as easily as it can advance it (de Wilde 2011; Hutter and Grande 2014). Understanding how politicization evolves across various arenas in relation to one another is key to understanding increasing legitimacy crises such as that which lead to the Brexit vote, or Poland and Hungary's acts of resistance against the EU's authority on democracy and the rule of law. These are often justified by questioning the EU's democratic authority. Following the euro crisis, new crises the EU is facing are increasingly characterized by perceptions of the EU's democratic legitimacy, or lack thereof and implications for national sovereignty. Research on the EU has long observed a disconnect between the EU polity and its citizens. An inadequate EU-level policy debate domestically could serve to increase feelings of disenfranchisement or eurocritical attitudes. The trajectory that politicization takes in the news media, whether it portrays EU-related political activity as a 'remote conflict' removed from domestic politics, an 'international conflict' pitting national interests against other

EU members, or ‘domestic conflict’ characterized by the polarization of groups within a member state (de Wilde and Lorde 2016), can either exacerbate or mitigate this gap, and shape political decisions. It could thus serve to help strengthen legitimation or, if feelings of disenfranchisement or eurocritical attitudes increase, contribute to a legitimacy crisis. Understanding the relationship between how the EU is politicized across these various arenas is, therefore, the first step to a better understanding of the changing dynamics in EU politics. The following chapters seek to map patterns of politicization of the EU and the euro crisis distinguishing citizen publics from more broadly defined ‘public spheres’ including the news media to provide an enhanced understanding of how they evolve and of the dynamics between them.

2.3 Conceptualizing Politicization to Accommodate a Differentiated Research Approach.

This project borrows its basic understanding of politicization from existing literature that defines it in relation to the political, as the “demand for or the act of transporting an issue into the field of politics – making previously apolitical matters political” (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 139; see also Zürn 2014, 2016) whereby the political is characterized by contestation. The political is thereby understood in a discursive sense relating to public debates regarding solutions to collective problems as used by proponents of deliberative democracy (see Habermas 1991) or agonistic pluralism (see Mouffe 2000, 2005). Mouffe (2000, 16) proposes that “a well-functioning democracy calls for a vibrant clash of democratic political positions.” Politics, she writes, cannot be treated rationally and consensus benefiting all is not possible, as is assumed by proponents of deliberative democracy. Politics requires regular conflict that is not reconcilable with consensus but

where some are ultimately defeated at the expense of others. She defines the political in relation to the “potential antagonism in social relations” (Mouffe 2005, 19), while politics, for her, include the practices and discourses that attempt to organize human existence in this context of constant conflicts so that it remains a struggle between adversaries but does not become violent. Polarization and more specifically contention that is conducive to discursive democratic ideals is a productive one aligned with Mouffe’s idea of agonism, rather than antagonistic conflict:

...the aim of democratic politics is to construct the ‘them’ in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but an ‘adversary,’ ie. somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question (Mouffe 2000, 16).

Mouffe’s understanding of agonistic debate requires “the existence of a shared symbolic space” (Mouffe 2005, 121). Similar to Europeanized deliberation promoted by proponents of deliberative democracy (see Habermas 2001, 2006; Koopmans and Statham 2010), the agonistic conceptualization of contestation is also rooted in the idea of a public sphere.

These conceptualizations of the political are less radical than ones that require contestation in the form of a pure act against established ideas about which voices and issues should be heard, and that in some cases may require an entire reconfiguration of the hegemonic system in place. For example, for Jacques Rancière, the more conventional understanding of politics applied in this dissertation and the dominant understanding in research on EU politicization is not in fact ‘politics’ as he understands it. Rejecting this conventional notion of politics, Rancière would consider the EU’s day to day activity including policy making and legislative processes, judicial decisions, economic arrangements and the overall ordering of society, instead as ‘policing’. Criticizing this notion of politics, he explains:

Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it the police (Rancière 1999, 28).

The hierarchical polity known as the police encompasses the processes and acts of political opinion that are of interest to this project due to their relevance to the everyday functioning of the EU: referendums and elections, opinion polls, public opinion, and Mouffe's agonistic debate. Rancière posits that through efforts to organize and contain contention, competition, and participation to be inclusive and just, a polity like the Irish state, or the EU will ultimately fail. This is because in defining which voices count in a community, equality is never truly attainable as some individuals (for example, in the EU, migrants) are inherently excluded and thus silenced, their voices heard only as 'noise'. Therefore, for Rancière, true democratic politics exists only in opposition to and antagonistic of the 'police' order, rather than contestation that is pursued through the outlets for political action that it established or measured through public opinion.

To apply this understanding of politics, conflict that marks true politicization would require a rupture with the present configuration of societal ordering. Thus, "[political activity] makes visible what had no business being seen and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise, it makes understood what was only heard as noise" (Rancière 1999, 30). In other words, genuinely political conflict is only such that challenges the logic of the police order, in this case, the order of European governance, with an entirely different logic. This emerges out of acts pursued by those whose voices have been until then silenced, who finally speak out to reveal the exclusion of their voices. Applying Rancière's logic, that understands politics as a democratic rupture, to this

analysis would radically limit the ‘claims’ that would be classifiable as political and thus the scope of this project. Additionally, the systematic quantification of politicization, characteristic of politicization research would itself fall into the trap of aligning itself with the ‘police’ order in contrast to true politics which are antagonistic to management, categorization and definition. However, in conceptualizing a project that is relevant to better understanding current challenges that the EU is facing, it is necessary to expand the understanding of conflict that defines politicization to include institutionalized political acts.

Changes in public opinion in relation to the European Union, especially as expressed electorally and through organized civil society have had profound effects on it over the last couple of years alone. The United Kingdom’s imminent exit from the EU and growing legitimacy crisis of the EU’s authority over democracy and the rule of law are just two examples. Therefore, while Rancière might consider it normatively inferior, a-political activity within the logic of the police can still have significant impact on the trajectory of the European project with spillover into the lives of its inhabitants. Excluding these acts from our understanding of politics and thus notions of politicization, while useful in some research circumstances, would be a disservice to attempts at a better understanding of patterns in opinion and contestation that affect the institutional and constitutional configuration of the EU in between larger ruptures. Considering the degree of EU competencies over member states and thus its effect over its inhabitants, a broader understanding of politics is justified.

Therefore, this dissertation pursues an understanding of political contestation closer to Mouffe’s polarized agonistic debate. For the analysis in the following chapters, an

increase in Euroscepticism or dissensus, as observed by Schimmelfennig (2014) and Hooghe and Marks (2009) while certainly indicating heightened contestation, is not enough to fit the idea-type of *high* politicization applied by this project, unless it is paralleled with a clash of opposing views. Therefore, while any increase in the level of contestation contributes to higher politicization, the strongest level of contestation is that which is most polarized. Polarization is highest when opposing sides on an issue advocate their positions strongly and with similar intensity (Grande and Hutter 2016a, 26; Hoeglinger 2016, 129). Following this line of reasoning, Rancière's democratic ruptures that pit actors who were previously excluded and missing from the discourse, against the organizational logic of EU governance would, in fact, represent a high level of polarization. However, in the following chapters polarization, as it relates to politicization, is not limited to these events.

This analysis aligns itself with the dominant trend in politicization research that treats contestation as a central and essential element of politicization (c.f. de Wilde 2011; Grande and Hutter 2016a; Hoeglinger 2015; Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016; Kriesi 2016; Zürn 2016). However, an issue that is highly contested among just a small group of actors is a weak indicator of the politicization of a given issue (Grande and Hutter 2016b, 11). An issue needs to reach considerable salience across a diverse set of actors to be most heavily politicized. Thus, politicization can be further conceptualized as the "expansion of the scope of conflict within the political system" (Hutter and Grande 2014, 1003), following Schattschneider's (1975[1960]) linkages between the outcomes of conflict and scope. The recent trend in media-based studies of politicization reconciles the limits of a definition based on contestation, or even polarization alone, by operationalizing it into three measurable conceptual dimensions: (1) the increasing *salience* of European integration, (2)

the *expansion of actors and audiences* interested in and involved in debate about European integration, and (3) the *polarization of opinion* on European integration (see de Wilde and Zürn 2014; de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidke 2016; Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter and Kersch 2014; Grande and Hutter 2016b, 8-10). However, as Zürn (2016, 166-168) rightly points out, these three dimensions are highly specific to the media-centered study of politicization involving newspaper content analysis. He proposes expanding our operational components of politicization to include (1) public *awareness* and interest in issues, (2) *social mobilization* aimed at influencing political decision-making and related negotiations and, (3) *public debates* expressing conflicting views of the common good.

I propose a more general set of operational components that marry these two sets of dimensions, to accommodate further operationalization into observable and measurable variables in both the citizen arena and in the news media, facilitating comparison between them. Thomas Risse (2010, 232) identifies “the emergence of Europeanized public spheres” as a “first step” in the politicization of the EU . He identifies politicization as the degree of conflict and polarization about a given issue. Likewise, Statham (2010, 278), who breaks down Europeanization of public spheres into public *visibility* and the *inclusiveness* of a variety of voices in public debate, identifies contestation over Europe as a consequence of these two dimensions of Europeanization.

Taking a step back, we see that the increasing *saliency* of European integration can be measured by the *visibility* of European integration in the news media, as has been the case among the authors who utilize the three-dimensional approach to politicization mentioned above. Citizen *awareness* of European integration can also be subsumed under this dimension of Europeanization of public spheres as conceptualized by Statham.

Likewise, the *expansion of the scope of actors and audiences* may be treated as a further specification of Statham’s variable of *inclusiveness*. Contestation, the central feature of politicization, can easily encompass both the *polarization of opinion* in the news media and both *social mobilization* and *public debates* in the citizen arena.

EUROPEANIZED PUBLIC SPHERE [<i>Salience + Scope</i>]	+	CONTESTATION	=	POLITICIZATION
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Figure 2 – Components of Politicization

Thus, the understanding of politicization applied in this project treats the Europeanization of the public sphere, to the extent that it also includes the citizen arena, as a preliminary component of politicization. Statham and Trenz (2013a,b) follow a similar approach, measuring politicization through visibility and inclusiveness in addition to contestation. These dimensions are expanded to be more inclusive of indicators in both the media and analysis of the citizen arena. Politicization is therefore operationalized as the *salience* of, and the *scope* of debate on the EU, in addition to the *contestation* of EU related issues (Figure 2). Contestation is treated as an essential ingredient of politicization, but only results in contestation when it is also accompanied by Europeanization of the debate. Contestation that has not achieved broad public visibility and is limited to a small demographic of political actors, demonstrates limited politicization akin to Van der Eijk and Franklin’s (2009) ‘sleeping giant’ metaphor relating to high levels of polarization that has not been mobilized (Grande and Hutter 2016b, 8). Despite contestation being central to a politicized discourse, politicization requires that the issues contested are first Europeanized in public debate (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Dimensions of politicization for a differentiated comparative analysis

	Dimensions	Variables	
		Media (Intermediary Arena)	Citizen Arena
Europeanization	Salience	<i>Visibility</i> : the EU is increasingly visible in national reporting. (Statham and Trenz 2013)	<i>Awareness and Interest</i> : increasing interest in and conversation about the EU (Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2015; de Wilde and Zürn 2012; Zürn 2016)
	Scope	<i>Inclusiveness</i> : an expansion of actors represented in EU-related reporting. (Statham 2010, Statham and Trenz 2013)	<i>Deepening of Knowledge and Discourse</i> : familiarity with / knowledge about the EU and discussion addressing specific EU actors/institutions/policies rather than vague references to the EU.
		<i>Wider Scope</i> : an expansion of EU policies and topics present in news reporting (i.e. policy, institutional, constitutional, membership/ identity issues) (Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer 2010).	<i>Wider Scope</i> : expansion of the variety topics and issues present in citizen discourse (i.e. policy, institutional, constitutional, membership/ identity issues) (Barisone and Michailidou 2017)
	Contestation	<i>Political Claims-Making</i> : increasing expressions of political opinion in EU-related reporting. (Koopmans 2007, Koopmans and Statham)	<i>Political Claims-Making</i> : Increasing expressions of EU-related political opinion.
<i>Polarization</i> : increasing opposed opinions represented in reported political claims. (De Wilde and Zürn 2012; Grande and Hutter 2016a; Hoeglinger 2016).		<i>Polarization</i> : increasingly opposed opinions/attitudes in citizen discourse, more polarized results in EU-related elections.	

These three dimensions of politicization, saliency, scope and contestation, provide the grounds for comparison between politicization in the news media and the citizen arena:

- (1) Saliency has been measured in the news media by *visibility* (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 55-78) and in the citizen arena by *awareness and interest* (Zürn 2016,

168), indicating an increase in general interest in and familiarity with issues relating to European integration (Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2015, 49, 54;).

(2) Scope has been measured through media analysis based on the *inclusiveness* of the debate of a wide scope of political actors from across all three political arenas (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 79-81), and an increasingly *wider scope of* issue fields and topics represented in news reporting (Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer 2010). In the citizen arena, it can be measured through a *deepening* of discourse, when individuals discuss and debate European integration in greater specificity as opposed to vague references, as well as through an increasingly *wider scope* of topics and issues, or in other words ‘focus, forms and actors’ that become subject to public debate on the citizen arena (Barisone and Michailidou 2017, 13). This comes hand-in-hand with deeper objective knowledge of the EU, which allows for a greater scope of discussion.

(3) Contestation in news reporting has been measured through media content analysis of instances of *political claims-making*. Political claims are defined as public expressions of political opinion in the form of evaluations of or proposals demands and calls to action made at EU-related objects and actors, or by an EU-level actor (Koopmans 2007, 189; Koopmans and Statham 2010, 43-47; Statham and Trenz 2013a, 8-13). This has been supplemented by measuring the level of polarization of political claims (De Wilde and Zürn 2012; Grande and Hutter 2016a; Hoeglinger 2016). In the citizen arena, contestation has been measured by polarization in citizen discourse and in responses to evaluative survey questions. Chapter three describes the limits of *social mobilization* as

and indicator of contestation proposed by Zürn 2016, 168), including voter turnout in EU elections and referendums and participation in protests and social movements (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016, 108; Gattig and Blings 2013; Imig and Tarrow 2001a). Like in the media, this can be supplemented by a measure of polarization in citizen discourse and in the results of EU elections and referendums.

Constructivist understandings of the Europeanization process posit that actors become Europeanized through communicative process and discourses that stimulate social learning and socialize actors towards new norms, identities and frames of reference (Börzel and Risse 2003: 65). This analysis understands discourse as an interactive communicative process that actors engage in both nationally and transnationally. Social learning is more likely to occur in discursive contexts or in political arenas among individuals, who share common backgrounds, meet repeatedly and exhibit a high density of interaction (Checkel 1999: 549).

In the context of Europeanization, this is most strongly felt through regular and intensive transnational interaction, such as European summits. Those political arenas which are composed of actors most directly connected to day-to-day European policy-making processes are therefore the most likely to be Europeanized. Based on Europe-wide empirical studies preceding the euro crisis, evidence indicates that a Europeanization of the news media has resulted in empowering the voices of elite actors even more so than in reporting on national politics (Statham 2007, 474). Studies of citizens' activity on social media during the crisis also revealed that the most dominant and most visible voices on platforms such as Twitter were those of elite institutional political actors (Michailidou

2017, 260). As Europeanization of the public sphere is a precondition of politicization, this dissertation expects that in the Irish case, European integration will be most politicized among these same actors and across the political arenas that they inhabit.

The following chapters will provide a detailed analysis of the expression of each of these dimensions in the Irish news media and the citizen arena, using original empirical evidence, Eurobarometer surveys, and to a lesser extent, a review of secondary research. I operationalize politicization into these three dimensions to construct a model that facilitates observation of the *degree* to which politicization appears and evolves in the media and the citizen arena, including an understanding of *which* elements are politicized, and *how*. I consciously exclude but do not discount, a deeper discussion of how issues are framed and how the EU is imagined. This project is most interested in tracking politicization across these two arenas in the context of shared exogenous opportunity structures at the group level, such as changes to the economy, political events, and values of newsworthiness. This approach aims to identifying the presence or lack thereof of politicization and provide a sense of the degree to which it exists. This is admittedly the first step in a larger conceptual project to better understand the dynamics of politicization. It is also keeping in line with the focus of the existing body of literature on EU politicization that this dissertation contributes to. Future research armed with an insight into the patterns of politicization between these two arenas should explore, in closer detail, how the EU is framed and imagined by its population.

The ideal second phase in a larger research agenda on politicization will be to understand of how factors endogenous to individual or collective imaginaries of the EU might influence observed and recorded patterns and to how the citizen arena relates to the

news media. Citizens' internalized understandings of what the EU is, or their 'political imaginary' of the EU (see Casoriadis 1987, Taylor 2004) can help to contextualize *why* politicization takes shape in the patterns observed in chapters four and five. The mainstream language and imagery related to the EU, for instance in the news media, or the visibility of the EU on signage of infrastructure projects funded by EU structural funds, for example, combine to a larger understanding of what the EU means to Irish citizens. The type of entity that citizens imagine the EU to be will affect how interesting or *salient* it is for them, and ultimately how likely it is to become politicized in relation to exogenous opportunity structures, like political events. For example, if the EU is primarily imagined as border regime, in relation to hard external borders and open borders internally, then it is more likely that the recent refugee crisis, for example, may serve as an opportunity structure for the politicization of the EU, than if these are conceptualized as entirely domestic issues. Likewise, imagining the EU in economic terms driven by the image of the Euro would be more likely to create conditions where an economic crisis stimulates politicization of the EU. Citizens' imaginaries or understandings of what the EU is and how it relates to them may change over time and have additional consequences for politicization. Several images of the EU do repeat across the focus groups analyzed in chapter five. The EU viewed in cultural terms, as a tolerant liberal political counter-weight to Irish 'backwards' conservatism was a reoccurring theme across the focus groups, as were repeated references to the 'curvature of bananas' painting the EU as a source of senseless overregulation. Therefore, a number of imaginaries emerge in the focus groups, and as the two above examples demonstrate, some can be positively charged while others might be inherently negatively charged. To accommodate a deeper breadth and depth of description

that facilitates insight into *how* politicization evolved during the study period, this project chooses not to focus on the question of *why* politicization occurs, and factors explaining variance in individual or collective politicization. These are, however, important questions for future research that would supplement this project for a more complete understanding of the dynamics of politicization.

2.4 The Intermediary Arena and News Media.

As established earlier, the media fulfills a dual role as both a stage of politicization and a key source of information on policy processes for its citizens. It is this second role and its potential agenda-setting powers representing decades of communications studies over citizens that has captivated the bulk of media-based research on the intermediary arena of politicization and the public sphere and attracted EU scholars to empirically measure politicization through media analysis. Koopmans and Statham have emphasized that the media's role in providing citizens and collective actors with information about European actors, policies and issues is vital to the construction of Europeanized public spheres (Koopmans and Statham 2010, 3), and therefore will also contribute to a politicization of them.

2.4.1 The Agenda-Setting Function of the News Media

Broadly, the body of work on agenda-setting is interested in the influence of the mass media's characteristics, forms and the nature of its news coverage, over *what* people think about and *how* they think about it. The birth of the research tradition into media effects is linked to Walter Lippmann's 1922 book, *Public Opinion* (McCombs 2014; Dhavan et. al. 2009) where he describes that people do not respond directly to the real

world, but rather to what he calls a pseudo-environment (pg. 10) made of pictures or images of that world as it exists in people's minds. "The world we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind," writes Lippmann, "It has to be explored reported and imagined" (Lippmann 1922: 18). The 'pictures in our heads' and therefore perceptions about key issues, according to Lippmann, are largely shaped and influenced by news media reporting. Although Lippmann himself did not use the term 'media effects,' he triggered interest among scholars into the effects of media on wartime public opinion, looking at what were commonly perceived uniform effects on an "unsuspecting and largely helpless audience" (McCombs and Reynolds 2002: 11). Today media effects research is more nuanced, and there is recognition of audience consciousness, often looking at criteria such as education and income (among others) in influencing how different individuals may react to similar media (ex. Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien, 1970). Bryant and Zillmann define media effects as the "social or psychological changes that occur in consumers of media message systems – or in their social milieu or cultural values – as a result of being exposed to, processing or acting on these mediated messages" (McCombs and Reynolds 2002: 13).

There are five general streams of media effects research: behavioural, attitudinal, cognitive, emotional and physiological. This project is interested in cognitive media effects, in other words, those effects that influence what consumers think or know. Agenda setting is closely connected to further investigating these cognitive effects of the media. A model within the broader media effects research tradition, "agenda setting asserts that audiences acquire ... saliences from the news media, incorporating similar sets of weights into their own agendas" (McCombs and Reynolds 2002: 4). The news media regularly make editorial decisions regarding the salience of certain issues over others: which content

to include and which to exclude, which issues receive greater focus, and which receive a brief mention, the order in which issues are addressed and so on. First level agenda-setting begins with the assumption that these choices influence which issues are more and less salient among the population, while second-level agenda setting looks at not only salience but also public opinion as an effect of the media (Dhavan et al. 2009, 85). However, in the case of the politicization of the EU in the media and an increasing volume of information thrown at citizens, empirical research has revealed that this may, in fact, lead to ambivalence, rather than polarization in the citizen arena, despite issues becoming more salient (Van Ingelgom 2014, 178). This project, therefore, makes a conservative hypothesis that we may expect to see some similar patterns between the media and Irish public on the salience and scope of certain issues, but much less so in terms of the levels of and direction of polarization.

This project, therefore, connects the amount of attention that an issue receives in the press, to a politicization of that issue in the news media. However, it should be clarified that this observation does not affect politicization on the citizen arena unless the issue is also salient on that arena. Issue salience among citizens is not exclusively dependent on an issue's salience in the news, and it should be clarified that news media are not the only source of information for people. Contemporary research on agenda setting and gatekeeping functions of the news media recognizes that issue awareness originates from a combination of sources. McCombs and his co-authors coined the term 'agendamelding' to refer to the way in which individuals "merge the civic agendas of the media and [their] valued reference communities with [their] personal views and experience to create a satisfying picture of the world" (McCombs, Shaw and Weaver 2014, 782). The news media

also play a gatekeeping role in either making issues public or suppressing them. This is guided by news value-based editorial decisions but also constrained by pressure from governments (i.e. through libel and privacy laws, publication bans, etc.), advertisers, journalists' sources, interest groups and other actors (see Shoemaker 2006; Shoemaker and Vos 2009).

Some issues, despite high salience and sensitivity to elite actors and the media, might therefore never make it into public debate in the news media, or see very limited coverage. However, this does not exclude individuals in the citizen arena from awareness of them. They could instead become 'public secrets,' a term coined by anthropologist Michael Taussig referring to those issues which are "generally known, but cannot be articulated" (Taussig 1999, 5). However, such 'public-secrets' or non-issues (see Lukes 1974), which are missing from the public sphere, but still present in people's overall scope of issue awareness, are only considered politicized by this project if they enter public discourse through the making of political claims in the citizen arena. Visibility or awareness is just the first of three dimensions of politicization applied in this project, all of which need to be satisfied in order for an issue or institution to be politicized. While the news agenda is not the exclusive source of issue awareness for individuals, it is still a major source and thus provides a valuable research subject. However, the potential for non-issues or public secrets that are absent from the media discourse needs to be considered when assessing inconsistencies in issue salience between news media and citizens. Non-issues in the media, can become issues in the citizen arena, and thus politicized there. For this reason, differentiating politicization between these arenas is particularly important.

2.4.2 Accounting for the Growth of New Media Technologies

Communications scholarship over the past few decades has recognized that with the emergence of new media technologies (i.e. online news media, social media, citizen journalism etc.) newspapers are no longer the dominant media influence in citizens' daily lives as imagined by Lippmann and Habermas, but just one of many. It is also recognized that newspaper readership has been steadily declining over the past few decades, especially following an increase in cost-free alternative news sources, particularly online (McCombs, Heaver and Kioussis 2011, 13). However, scholarship on agenda setting and media effects continues to value newspaper coverage as a key source of public opinion and effective influence over issue salience among the public. According to Price and Feldman (2009), survey research has found that the internet plays a negligible role in political learning (Weaver and Drew 2001) while experimental studies have indicated that recognition and recall of the news are higher for print versions of newspapers than for their online versions (Althaus and Tewksbury 2002, Tewksbury and Althaus 2000). Similar studies show that newspaper readership is a more reliable source of political learning than viewing televised news (Robinson and Levy 1986).

More recently, studies have found that despite the transformation of the media landscape in the Internet era resulting in the emergence of new media production and citizen-based journalism fostered by social media, traditional media "still set the public agenda, and do so in more complicated ways through constructing information networks" (Guo 2015, 4). Proponents of this 'third-level' Network Agenda Setting model (NAS) have found evidence that in addition to affecting the salience of various news objects among its consumers, the media also can have a profound effect on contextual linkages that are made

between various objects and attributes relating to a given issue. This affects not only if an issue becomes salient among consumers, but also frames the context through which they perceive the issue. Longitudinal analysis of the effects of the *New York Times*' coverage on public opinion between 1956 and 2004 likewise confirms the continued power of traditional, or 'legacy' media over what people think. While it found that media affects do vary in strength, no trend in the level of their effectiveness was observed over time (McCombs 2014, 18). Likewise, in a study of Euroscepticism and online news media, Asimina Michailidou observes that "EU online news spheres are largely identical to the offline newspaper or television news environments, in terms of news frames, newsworthiness criteria and reporting style of EU events (Michailidou 2015, 333). In line with these affirmations of traditional media's continued influence, EU-based research has found that European citizens continue to obtain most of their information and knowledge on the EU, and politics more generally, from traditional media such as television and newspapers (Hellwig 2010: 187).

2.4.3 *General Interest in News and Public Affairs*

Regardless of the source of news production in question, research also indicates that "given the range of entertainment media options that are continually at their disposal," it is becoming easier for people to avoid the news, especially political news altogether (McCombs, Holbert and Kioussis. 2011, 11). In fact, 'news junkies,' according to McCombs and his co-authors, on average make up only ten to fifteen percent of the population. Early media scholarship about election studies similarly observed that the "diffusion of political information is often shallow and restricted to those with strong interests in public affairs" (Price and Feldman 2009, 116). However, agenda setting theory still maintains that citizens

observe which issues are salient in the news media, and “[incorporate] similar sets of weights into their own agendas” (Bryant and Zillmann 1994, 4). The media has a direct effect on the political learning of citizens’ who are regular consumers of news media, while for others this political learning is mediated by what some call opinion leaders. Those citizens who are not enthusiastic news consumers, according to some scholars (Graber 1984; Popkin 1991; Price and Feldman 2009), apply “cognitive shortcuts” based on cues from opinion leaders (people enthusiastically following political news) in the social networks within which they are embedded (Price and Feldman 2009, 115). These opinion leaders can be individual people in citizens’ social circles, social media influencers, or even local grassroots and civil society organizations with whom citizens interact.

Therefore, there is strong empirical evidence of the print media having the potential to affect politicization of issues among the public, warranting a comparison of politicization trends in the media and among citizens. However, it is also important to remember that the media’s power is limited, and it is certainly not the only key influence in setting the agenda of political debates, as illustrated and discussed earlier in relation to Figure 1. Additionally, as much as it acts as an influential source of information for citizens, linking them to act on the institutional arena, the media is itself also a stage for politicization. The media, particularly traditional news media such as newspapers, are also a business, which affects how politicization evolves in this arena. McCombs, a central figure in agenda-setting research, points out that the media’s “agenda-setting influence is an inadvertent by-product of the media’s necessity to focus on a few topics in the news each day” (McCombs 2014, 22). European integration competes for media attention with other local, national, transnational, and international issues on a daily basis. Journalists and

news writers are not necessarily biased against reporting on the EU. They report on “what they consider powerful actors and important moments in politics” (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 139). Newspapers need to sell copies and attract advertising sales to survive, and hence need to be selective in their coverage, limiting content to issues that are editorially perceived as having the most resonance with their readers, and being most significant to them. Media logic as such will be discussed in further detail in relation to the media content analysis in Chapter four.

2.5 The Citizen Arena

Politicization research has largely been driven by Marks and Hooghe’s permissive consensus argument, and points at the increased polarization of public opinion mostly backed up by quantitative public opinion research and the results of EU referendums and elections to the European Parliament. However, qualitative research of public opinion across Europe has painted a very different picture (Duchesne et. al. 2013; Gaxie, Hube, and Rowell. 2011; Van Ingelgom 2014; White 2011). It demonstrates that while overall salience of the EU among citizens may have grown over time, it remains overwhelmingly low among citizens, despite no-votes in EU referendums, the rise of Eurosceptic parties and an alleged end to permissive consensus.

2.5.1 Contention and Polarization

Since the observation of growing contention and Euroscepticism, manifest in several rejections of EU treaties in national referendums, authors have tried to explain pro-EU and Eurosceptic attitudes in terms of costs and benefits where people who are more likely to benefit from the EU are also more likely to support it (Gabel and Palmer 1995;

Gabel 1998; Anderson and Reichert 1995; Banducci et. al 2003; Fligstein 2008; Hooghe and Marks 2004). In his book, *Euroclash*, Neil Fligstein (2008) demonstrates that support for or against the EU is determined by whether individuals are the winners or losers of the integration process. Hooghe and Marks (2004) similarly hypothesize that those citizens who feel positively about their personal and national economic prospects are more likely to support the EU. Based on this logic, as EU citizens might associate their economic situation during the euro crisis with the membership in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) or with European integration more broadly, an increase of Eurosceptic, or critical views might be expected, possible at the expense of balanced polarization.

Aspinwall (2002) who looks at the polarization of the citizen arena more critically, recognizes that citizens may in fact not pay much attention to the EU and hypothesizes that their opinions might not necessarily be well informed or triggered by their interest in the EU, but simply reflect those of the political party that they support. Likewise, Imig and Tarrow note that “[m]ost individuals continue to have difficulty ascribing the sources of their grievances directly to the EU” (Imig and Tarrow 2001a, 36) and continue to link EU level decisions to their national governments.

2.5.2 *Apathy, Indifference or Ambivalence?*

While much of the literature interested in citizens has looked at contention of Euroscepticism, others focus on exploring the now increasingly documented disinterest in or ambivalence towards the EU among Europeans and such work is growing in demand (see Stoeckel 2012; Gaxie, Hube and Rowell 2011; Van Ingelgom 2013, 2014). Noticing a low level of interest in the EU in one-on-one interviews with a cross-section of EU citizens in their study on European attitudes, Gaxie and his co-authors argue that “few

researchers have strived to comprehend...what citizens think about Europe, and how they think about it...[L]ow levels of information and interest of the mass public, as well as the differences between various fractions of the public have been strangely ignored by many authors” (Gaxie, Hube and Rowell 2011, 10-12). The above-mentioned study noticed a research bias in public opinion research on the EU, whereby citizens who may not originally have an opinion on certain EU issues force themselves to come up with one on the spot in response to EU-themed questions. For this reason, survey-based public opinion data alone is an unreliable measure of politicization in the citizen arena and should be supplemented by more qualitative observations of citizens through interactive focus groups, and other observations of political behaviour. One author who attempts to address these gaps, Jonathan White, investigates explanations of attitudes regarding the EU and explores the extent to which this is associated with a European identity through interviews with taxi drivers in several EU member states. He finds that even where there are explicit opinions, a political understanding of the EU is often missing in their justification. White too concludes with a normative proposal that “changes in certain common patterns of political understanding seem a necessary accompaniment to any deepening of the EU’s political credibility” (White 2011, 1036). Other authors, such as Florian Stoeckel (2012) and Virginie Van Ingelgom (2013, 2014) suggest that much of what has been perceived in the past as indifference in survey responses of “don’t know” or “either-or” may, in fact, be ambivalence, whereby respondents possess a mix of positive and negative views of the EU. Like Apathy or indifference, better identification and understanding of ambivalence also benefits from more qualitative research methods.

2.5.3 Explaining Different Trajectories of Politicization Across Arenas

Voter turnout in European Parliament elections, which has continuously fallen every election since 1979, and proceeded to fall throughout the crisis, is yet another factor that highlights an apparent disconnect between politicization trends in the institutional and intermediary arenas, and the citizen arena. Instead, this suggests the presence of an apathetic or indifferent public. Chantal Mouffe connects political apathy and a lack of politicization among citizens to institutionalized objectives of creating a “rational consensus reached through appropriate deliberative procedures, the aim of which is to produce decisions that represent an impartial standpoint equally in the interests of all” (Mouffe 2005, 124). She argues that such a consensus reached through elections and referendums, for instance, is not possible because it requires the silencing of dissenting voices, rather than stimulating political interest and deliberation to reach a temporary compromise. This can, in turn, result in disillusionment as citizens lose confidence in their own political efficacy and belief that the political system is responsive to their opinion (Amnå and Ekman 2014, 277). Colin Crouch hypothesizes that as the EU moves closer toward post-democracy whereby it acts in the interest of markets over citizens, citizens become increasingly apathetic, again from a feeling of lost political efficacy (Crouch 2004, 19). This is reflected for instance in a move toward supranational decision-making during the euro crisis (Crum 2013; Scicluna 2014).

However, it is important to note that observations of political apathy and falling voter turnout, for instance, are not unique to the EU context and have been observed at the national level both in Europe and internationally (Amnå and Ekman 2014; see Putnam 2000). Virginie Van Ingelgom (2013, 122) counters the perception of citizen apathy by

suggesting that the EU is, in fact, salient among most citizens and that what we think of as political apathy, may be better understood as political ambivalence. She links the increasing politicization of the EU in the institutional and especially the intermediary arenas to contributing to increased salience of the EU among citizens, and likewise ambivalence to the integration process. As the EU is increasingly present in the media, citizens may be presented with too much information to make a conclusive decision for or against the EU, leading instead to uncertainty. “Indifference and ambivalence are generated by several, often intersecting, processes: the increasing complexity of the European Union, due to increased access to information, and the feeling of distance or alienation related to the addition of a level of power” (Van Ingelgom 2014, 178). This she argues is exacerbated by politicization. Her research shows that despite being ambivalent about European integration, citizens are aware and to various degrees interested in issues relating to it and do engage in EU-related discourse with friends and family in the private sphere. This research may shed some light on observations that have identified discrepancies in politicization between citizens, and other political arenas (see Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2015) and will inform the comparison in chapter six of this dissertation.

2.5.4 Citizen Publics: When Citizens Enter the Public Sphere

The public sphere is often defined as “an arena of communication that is accessible to mass publics” (Sifft et al. 2007, 128). Rather than understanding the citizen arena as cohesive or singular, this project distinguishes between multiple publics that emerge

around different issues as they become politicized among citizens.³ These emerging publics are defined as issue-specific discursive and deliberative collectives that participate in activity within the arena of the public sphere. The arena of communication that is the public sphere, characterized by traditional and digital communicative media and other forums for public communication and claims-making, accommodates numerous issue-based publics at one time. It is when citizens form publics and enter the public sphere by participating in civil society, joining social movements, signing petitions, debating and discussing EU-related issues with friends, family and colleagues, and on social media, and to a lesser extent participate in elections and referendums to debate and contest EU-related issues, that the politicization of European integration in the citizen arena is the strongest. The analysis of politicization in chapter five focuses on the possibility for the emergence of publics nationally in relation to politicization in the news media, in the context of the euro crisis.

If in public debate, politicization involves making previously private issues public, then in the citizen arena, we see politicization at its strongest in the emergence of publics. The citizen arena is not a homogenous mass but rather composed of multiple citizen publics formed when citizens enter the public sphere. In *The Phantom Public* Walter Lippmann

³ Citizenship, here is conceptualized more broadly than conventional understandings based on legal status and legal rights (see Marshall 1950). Rather, I apply an understanding inspired by the work of Hannah Arendt, that situates citizenship in the act of entering and occupying public space (see Arendt 1958). For this project, ‘public space’ is extended to include conversation with others, even in a private setting. The notion of citizen publics is applied broadly in relation to the active participants in a political community, regardless of legal status or recognition. For logistical reasons beyond the control of this project, the focus group participants and Eurobarometer respondents are all legal residents of Ireland, but not exclusively citizens.

provides an idea of how we might conceptualize publics. However, he paints an image of passive mass publics unable to form intelligent opinions about issues at stake and which have an explicitly limited role in governance:

The random collections of bystanders who constitute a public could not, even if they had a mind to, intervene in all the problems of the day. They can, and must play a part occasionally, I believe, but they cannot make even the coarsest judgments about, and will not act even in the most grossly partisan way on, all the questions arising daily in a complex and changing society (Lippmann 1927, 115).

Governance and the deliberation involved in it, for Lippmann, are left to somewhat of a professional public of important figures (Lippmann 1927, 105). These specialized and professionalized publics change with the issue whereby members who may be actors in one issue area become spectators in another, moving between the Ins and the Outs. “Most issues are never carried beyond this ruling group,” writes Lippmann. “[T]he lay publics only catch echoes of the debate” (Lippmann 1927, 115). The mass public has agency only when it comes to legitimizing the decisions of Ins by giving them assent through elections or referendums. When problems emerge that the state institutions, and then Ins cannot handle, it becomes the responsibility of the mass public to choose between the Ins and the Outs on an evaluation of who is better suited to handle the issue, not on the basis of an evaluation of the issue itself (Lippmann 1927, 121). For him, mass publics are incapable of possessing active, engaged and effective political agency. Lippmann’s specialized publics, those with agency, are elite publics. His mass public, unable to form intelligent decisions and able only to give assent to the decisions of the Ins and Outs, on the other hand, is still conceptualized as a singular entity. The agency Lippmann gives his mass public may reflect, for example, Irish votes in EU constitutional referenda, but does not

capture assertive and conscious publics who participate in public contestation beyond institutionalized means such as referenda or elections.

This project conceptualizes publics, as related to politicization, as active publics, yet ones that are fluid in their membership and identity. They do not naturally exist but come into existence around particular issues or actors. A European public may hence be transnational, national or even local in scale depending on the nature of the particular issue at hand. As publics develop around a given issue and discourse about it develops regardless whether it is critical or supportive and whether the discourse is characterized by attempts at consensus or conflict, the issue becomes politicized. In this way, the apolitical then becomes political (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 139). As the EU becomes increasingly politicized, such publics might emerge around EU-related issues more frequently and more visibly (i.e. larger in size etc.). It is unlikely for a public to consistently exist around an institution like the EU or even a national-level body. Instead, publics emerge around individual issues relating to these institutions. The more frequently this occurs, and the larger the scale of these publics, the more politicized the related institution becomes. In one of the most influential applications of Lippmann's ideas to a contemporary context, Noortje Marres expands on the notion of issue-based publics. She points to the importance of 'publicizing issues' to encourage participation. For this to succeed, mass publics, or Lippmann's Outs, need to understand the problems in dealing with an issue, and not necessarily or exclusively the details of the issue itself. Such publicizing of issues:

...demonstrate[s] for a given issue that, first, existing institutions are not sufficiently equipped to deal with it, and second, that it requires the involvement of political outsiders for adequately defining and addressing it" (Marres 2007, 772).

She points out that *how* issues are publicized, by the media, for example, is in this case even more important to encouraging politicization among mass publics, than just the fact that they do publicize them, or the existence of democratic participatory mechanisms. Marres concludes that attempts to encourage public involvement should thus focus on the formation and publicization of issues (Marres 2007, 775). The communications theorist Pamela Shoemaker claims that the news media's role is exactly this: "to spotlight and draw public attention to problems and situations that need repair" (Shoemaker 2006, 108). She elaborates that it is for this reason that positive news or routine occurrences are less frequently covered by news outlets than bad news.

The EU has had some marginal success in its attempts to construct European publics from the top down, by opening avenues for citizen engagement such as elections to the European Parliament and the more recent citizens' initiative introduced in the Lisbon Treaty. However, these have seen limited participation, and one that accommodates passive action. Assertive publics that emerge from the bottom up demonstrate active deliberation and independent political agency outside of institutionalized participatory mechanisms. Such publics may emerge through these established venues for citizen action, akin to the process in Kristin Asdal's study of contestation over the construction of a power plant, whereby the public demonstrated agency in introducing the concept of greenhouse gas emissions to the discourse surrounding the proposed construction, through institutionalized forums that were opened up for public feedback. The introduction of this concept proceeded to reframe the discourses with consequences that the agencies who created these public forums did not anticipate (Asdal 2008, 21).

Assertive publics can alternatively be manifest through effective and strategic

action outside of these institutionalized venues in the form of mass organized protest, or the emergence of avenues for, and the existence of, engaged public debate and discourse. Recently, the growing popularity of social media as a platform for debate and opinion sharing, have stimulated research into whether social media can act as a forum fostering the emergence of digital publics. However, so far empirical evidence for this in Europe has been limited. One such empirical study of that focused on Twitter, did not observe Europeanization of public debate on social media in France, Britain or Italy leading up to the 2014 European Parliamentary elections. Additionally, it found that ‘digital movements of opinion’ were not the source of anti-austerity protests in the streets (Barisione and Ceron 2017, 98). A similar study found comments on the European Parliament’s Facebook page to be largely reactive, while the self-organized debate on European politics is not common and Facebook ‘Pages’ dedicated to European politics are uncommon, are sparsely populated and rarely used (Tarta 2017, 162-3). Nancy Fraser distinguishes between strong publics that consist of institutionalized deliberation and combine opinion making with decision-making (such as parliaments), and weak publics consisting of opinion formation at the citizen level (Fraser 1992, 74-75). The analysis in the following chapters investigates both strong and weak publics in mapping out politicization in the citizen arena, but it is the weak publics that provide stronger evidence of politicization, particularly when contestation within them is polarized.

2.6 Methodological Approach

Research into politicization trends over time must examine trends across the different arenas separately using comparative methods, rather than expecting a convergence of politicization levels between them. Even if the news media does affect

citizen discourse, we should not necessarily expect to see the EU heavily politicized in the citizen arena, in cases where it is heavily politicized in the new media, or in institutional political debates in settings such as parliaments. Rather, a more nuanced comparison is necessary to test for parallel patterns of politicization, in relation to each of the average levels in each arena, for instance, whether peaks in the politicization of the EU fall into the same time periods in each arena, and whether the same objects are more or less heavily politicized at the same moments in time. A correlation between politicization between the intermediary arena, specifically the news media and the citizen arena would not alone prove causation behind media effects over citizen discourse. However, an observed lack of correlation would put into question the strength of mainstream media effects and agenda-setting hypotheses, and further undermine the equation of politicization in a media-dominated public sphere with citizen discourse.

This dissertation applies a mixed method, quantitative and qualitative, approach to mapping the politicization of European integration longitudinally over four years of the euro crisis from 2010 to 2013 in both the news media and citizen arenas, followed by a comparative assessment. The longitudinal distribution of quantitative and qualitative empirical data applied to the analysis can be seen in Appendix I. First, a detailed media content analysis covers all EU-related news reporting biannually spanning eight weeklong time periods, within two major Irish daily newspapers, the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*. Empirical data applied to the three dimensions of salience, scope, and contestation in the news media is drawn from two original datasets resulting from the content analysis. The first dataset which is based on analysis of newspaper articles at the article level provides evidence for patterns in *salience* and *scope*, while the second provides

data on individual statements, or political claims, within the articles, allowing for an evaluation of *contestation*.

The dates of the media analysis (see appendix I) overlap with the two-week periods during which fieldwork for the European Commission's Eurobarometer opinion surveys took place in Ireland. This facilitates a degree of comparison between public opinion trends and patterns of news reporting overlapping with the timing of Eurobarometer interviews and fieldwork. As mentioned earlier, public opinion survey data alone provides an unreliable measure of change in public opinion and polarization as it has the potential to force opinion from otherwise euro-indifferent respondents (Van Ingelgom 2014). Consequently, these measures will be approached with caution when discussing the polarization dimension of *contestation*. The Eurobarometer survey's most valuable contributions to this project, however, are not its measures of political opinion, but those of political participation, political interest, and media consumption contributing to the measure of *salience* in the citizen arena. However, by applying triangulation against an alternative qualitative approach, in this case, focus groups, public opinion data can be contextualized. While focus group data cannot be generalized to the greater population in the same way as public opinion data, together the two methods can prove a more holistic image of politicization over this four-year period. Focus groups have the advantage of offering greater insight into the *salience* of European integration in a loosely structured setting allowing for natural conversation where respondents are initially prompted to discuss issues in politics that interest them, without intentionally leading to a conversation about the European Union.

I use data gathered from focus groups conducted in Dublin for two of Achim

Hurrelmann's research projects: *Multilevel Legitimacy in the European Union*, and *the Eurozone Crisis and the Politicization of European Integration*.⁴ On behalf of this project, I conducted a total of four focus groups each in December of 2010 and 2013. Each group was composed of eight to ten participants who were recruited by a local public opinion research firm, the Grafton Suite, under Hurrelmann's supervision. Two groups during each period were composed of participants with post-secondary education credentials and two with participants who had not completed post-secondary education but were otherwise evenly mixed with respect to other demographic characteristics such as gender and age.⁵ Participants had all participated in focus groups before and were familiar with the setting. However, it was ensured that none of the participants had experience in focus groups on similar topics (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016, 113; Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2015, 47-8). Conversation with peers that is reflected in these focus group, or in survey questions asking how often respondents discuss politics with friends and family, largely represent private sphere discourse. However, they are still useful measures of *salience*, and in the case of focus groups also *scope*, in the sense that they precede and contextualize contestation. Used as such, they contribute to a holistic view of politicization on the citizen arena.

The two case studies of the news media and the citizen arena are contextualized by an overview of the Irish political landscape in which the public discourses studied here are embedded, including a brief discussion regarding how this might affect the intermediary

⁴ For previously published analysis using the 2010 data see Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner 2016, and the 2013 data see Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016.

⁵ The 2010 focus groups also included average income levels in the participant selection criteria.

arena. Specific focus is placed on the relationship between the institutional and intermediary arenas, especially in the case of Irish civil society. Observations of civil society activities during the financial crisis are backed up by data from semi-structured interviews with members of select key civil society organizations conducted in Dublin during September 2013.

Applying a mixed methods perspective to this research by facilitating a dialogue between various qualitative and quantitative approaches to offer a ‘complementary perspective’ (Van Ingelgom 2014, 7) in telling the story of politicization across these two political arenas, I hope to compensate for at least some of the pitfalls of each of these methods, while emphasizing the unique assets of each. This dissertation offers a more holistic look at the various dimensions in the patterns of politicization in two distinct political arenas, the intermediary arena as represented by news media, and the citizen arena. Political discourse in both arenas is set against the background of the key moments of the financial crisis and domestic politics more generally. Figure 3, below, summarizes key moments in the timeline of the crisis in Ireland that frame and contextualize the analysis in the following chapters.

Figure 3 – A Timeline of the Financial Crisis in Ireland and other Events of Relevance to This Analysis

2008
SEPTEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Brian Lenihan (Minister of Finance) with support of the government move new budget ahead by 2 months to October (from December), intended to indicate to public that Ireland's fiscal situation is under control. ➤ The Irish government guarantees all bank deposits and obligations of privately owned banks
OCTOBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ First national austerity budget. This budget, which aims to raise 2 billion euro in new taxes, is widely contentious and followed by protest.
DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Irish government releases a plan to deal with the economic crisis, informally called the Plan for Economic Renewal. The government renews its commitment to social partnership (i.e. the institutionalized interest group participation in social and economic public policy formation and decision-making)
2009
FEBRUARY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Irish government announces the <i>Framework for Stabilization, Social Solidarity, and Economic Renewal</i>. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) refuses to sign and Social Partnership ends after twenty-two years after the government proceeds with the framework regardless.
APRIL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emergency Budget 2010: Irish government announces plans to create a National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) to stabilize Ireland's banking system.
2010
MAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greek Bailout ➤ Euro Summit. Eurozone members agree to finance a European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) to address the European sovereign-debt crisis. The EFSF is established on June 9. ➤ Taoiseach, Brian Cowan admits for the first time that domestic vulnerabilities lead to a banking crisis.
JUNE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Croke Park agreement signed between the Irish Government and several public sector trade unions. Government agrees not to impose any further pay cuts and layoffs in exchange for promises of cooperation in public sector reforms and no industrial action.
NOVEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Troika officials arrive in Dublin ➤ Brian Lenihan applies for a bailout for Ireland ➤ The Troika agree on a 3-year bailout program
DECEMBER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Budget 2011: €6 billion cuts in fiscal spending

2011**FEBRUARY**

- Federal Election: Fianna Fáil, Green, Progressive Democrat government is defeated. Fine Gael forms a governing coalition with the Labour party. Enda Kenny replaces Brian Cowan as Taoiseach.

MAY

- Europe Day
- Portugal Receives Bailout

OCTOBER

- Euro Summit: Eurozone leaders agree to bank recapitalization and Italian PM, Silvio Berlusconi agrees to economic reforms
- Irish Presidential Election

NOVEMBER

- Members of the Eurogroup adopt the ‘six-pack’ of legislative procedures.

DECEMBER

- Budget 2012: First budget of the Fine Gael-Labour government announces further spending cuts.

2012**JANUARY**

- European Council approves the Fiscal Compact. Euro Summit held on the same day.

MAY

- Spain applies for bailout (approved June 9th)
- Ireland holds a referendum on the Fiscal Compact

JUNE

- Euro Summit agrees to a banking union

SEPTEMBER

- The European Stability Mechanism enters into force

OCTOBER

- The EU is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

DECEMBER

- Budget 2012: €3.5 billion cuts in fiscal spending

2013

Irish Presidency of the European Council from January – May

MAY

- Eurogroup adopts the “Two-Pack” of legislative procedures.
- British PM, David Cameron, announces the Draft EU Referendum Bill

OCTOBER

- Budget 2014: €2.5 billion cuts in fiscal spending

DECEMBER

- Ireland exits the bailout
-

Chapter 3: The Irish Political Environment: A Blurring of Political Arenas

“Iceland, Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Chile, etc. etc. Would it be everywhere but here? Here being a country that has plunged down in the world far more dramatically than most. Yet we beheld signs of Greek protestors saying, ‘We are not Ireland.’ The shame of it. What would it take to get the Irish people to act?”
(Helena Sheehan 2013)

As the severity of the Euro crisis grew in Europe, the news media jumped on coverage of protests in Spain, and later mass strikes and protests in Greece and Portugal. Dramatic images of tens of thousands of citizens spilling out of the Puerta del sol square in Madrid and beyond, week after week, in protest of harsh austerity policies imposed by pressure from the EU and IMF, were seen across newsstands and television broadcasts worldwide. Despite a similarly harsh austerity program in Ireland, news of anti-austerity protests on the streets of Dublin was missing from media discourse. In both academic and non-academic debates, Ireland developed a reputation of a country that does not protest (Hearne 2015, 4). Articles, such as the *Irish Times*' economics editor, Dan O'Brien's "Searching for the Source of Perpetual Passivity" (*Irish Times*, 2011) were characteristic of this. Irish political scientist, Peter Mair, likewise described a "passive and demobilized citizenry" despite a high degree of interest in politics (Mair 2010, 7). In another example, Greek workers, protesting in February 2010 chanted, "This is Greece, not Ireland, we fight back!" as Ireland developed a reputation for passive acceptance of austerity. This chapter describes the political environment in which Irish media and citizen responses to the crisis were embedded and that provided specific opportunity structures which will help to understand the character of politicization in each arena in subsequent chapters.

Like identities, political arenas can overlap and may be fluid depending on political

and other environmental factors. In addition to the conceptual multi-directional relationships and influence between political arenas hypothesized in the previous chapter, the specific character of the political system within which they are embedded also shapes and alters the relationships between them. In the Irish case, the historical relationship between the state and civil society resulted in a blurring between the intermediary and institutional arenas, which had a lasting effect on how citizens participate in political claims-making and express political grievances. Such case-specific details make a differentiated understanding of politicization by member state particularly important. To understand the politicization of the EU across the intermediary and citizen arenas, we must first understand the political environment into which they are embedded.

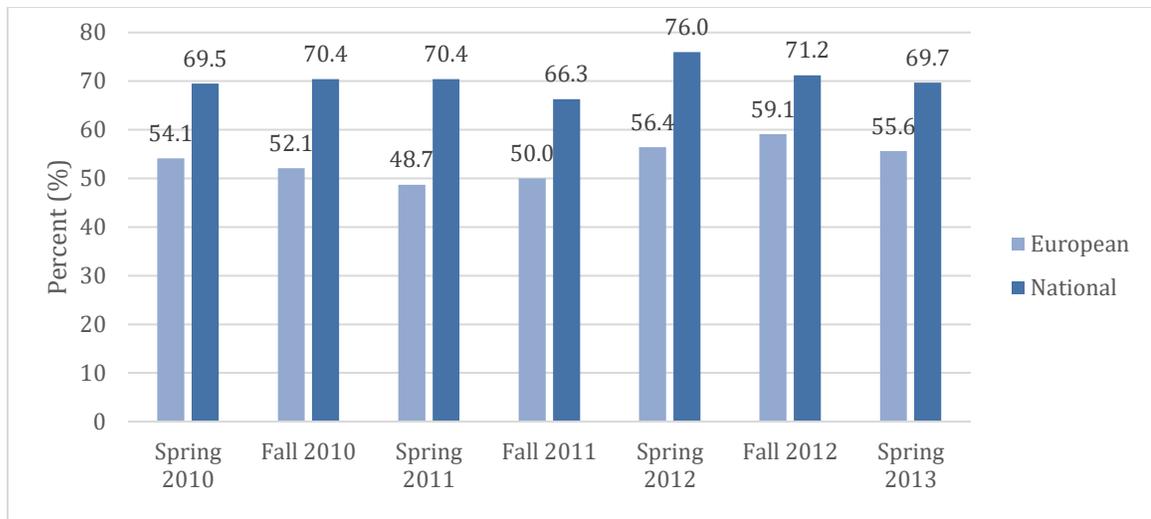
This chapter thus sets the stage by describing the Irish political arena. First, it describes the character of protest as a reaction to austerity in Ireland and draws lessons for the deeper study of politicization, particularly its contestation dimension. It then outlines the specific nature of Irish citizens' relationship with politics, and the institutional arena specific to Ireland. While based in a review of secondary literature and existing survey data, the observations in this chapter are informed by a series of semi-structured interviews with representatives of eleven civil society groups, representing trade union, professional and grassroots organizations, conducted by the author in Dublin during September 2013 (see Appendix G for questionnaire).

3.1 Political Participation in Ireland

In most cases, people do not take to the streets themselves. They do not mobilize in a vacuum. The character of political participation is fostered, in part, by the specific national character of a civil society that has the resources and social capital to actively

encourage the emergence of social movements, and political campaigns. This and other structural and cultural factors that may vary between different member states may, at least in part, account for variances in how citizens in other debtor states expressed their grievances with austerity and provide insight into where evidence of the contestation dimension of politicization should be sought in each case. Civil society here refers to the organized groups and collective action as well as non-institutionalized social movements that are part of the intermediary arena. Protests are indeed not the only means of voicing political grievances and demands. Citizens turn to voting in elections, reaching out to politicians, signing petitions, pub-talk with friends, family and colleagues, drafting letters to the editor, and phoning in to talk radio shows, among other means, express their grievances (Allen 2014, 55).

These other vehicles for political contestation are particularly significant to the Irish case where participation in protest has traditionally been lower than in some other member states, particularly other debtor states and political party membership, as well as membership in voluntary groups, has consistently placed Ireland below the EU average. Despite falling membership in non-governmental groups, Ireland is known for a highly active civil society, but one that is more heavily focused on volunteering and service provision than advocacy and other political activity (Murphy 2011, 174; see also O'Malley 2011, 110). This is the first indication, that a concentration on contentious politics alone, such as protest, when looking into political contestation at both the intermediary and citizen arenas may be misleading.



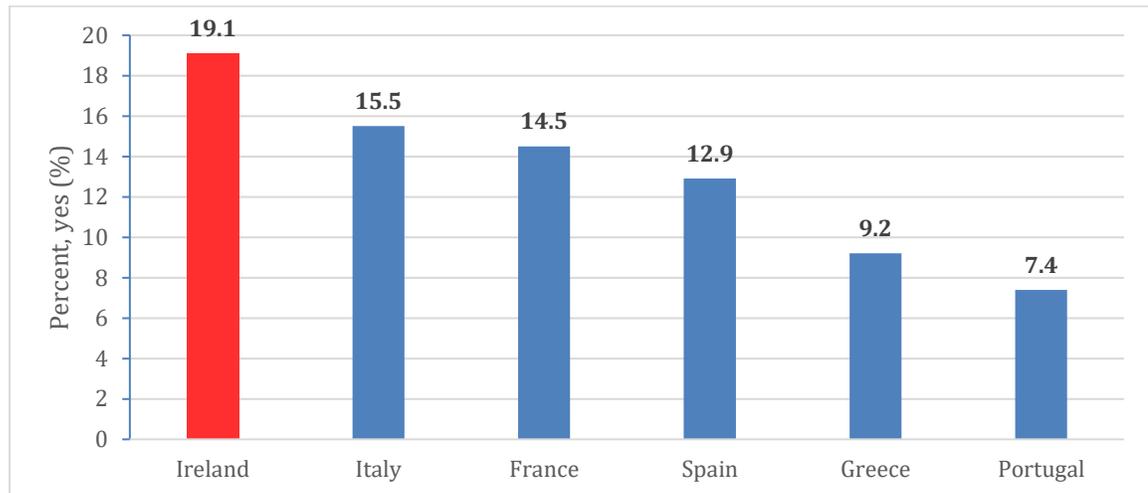
Source: Eurobarometer Series 73.4, 74.2, 75.3, 76.3, 77.3, 78.1, 79.3.

Figure 4 – Discussion of Politics, Ireland, 2010 – 2013⁶

On average, just over half of all Irish respondents report discussing European politics with friends, family and colleagues, and on between seventy and seventy-five percent report discussing national politics. For most of the duration of the Euro crisis, survey data shows that consistently just over half of respondents in Ireland report discussing European political issues. The relative stability of this proportion throughout the crisis suggests that while there is a substantial degree of salience of European politics in Ireland, this is not just a reaction to the crisis. (Figure 4). This is in line with Peter Mair’s assertion that there is a widespread interest in politics among the Irish (Mair 2010, 1). Eurobarometer data from 2016 reveals that the Irish also have a high degree of trust in public institutions, and especially police and the army, despite low levels of trust in the government, parliament and political parties. In fact, trust in public institutions such as public administration and regional authorities is eleven and twelve percentage points higher, respectively, than the EU average where trust for each falls below fifty percent

⁶ Eurobarometer asks this question from series 73.4 to 79.3 only.

(Eurobarometer no. 86, November 2016).

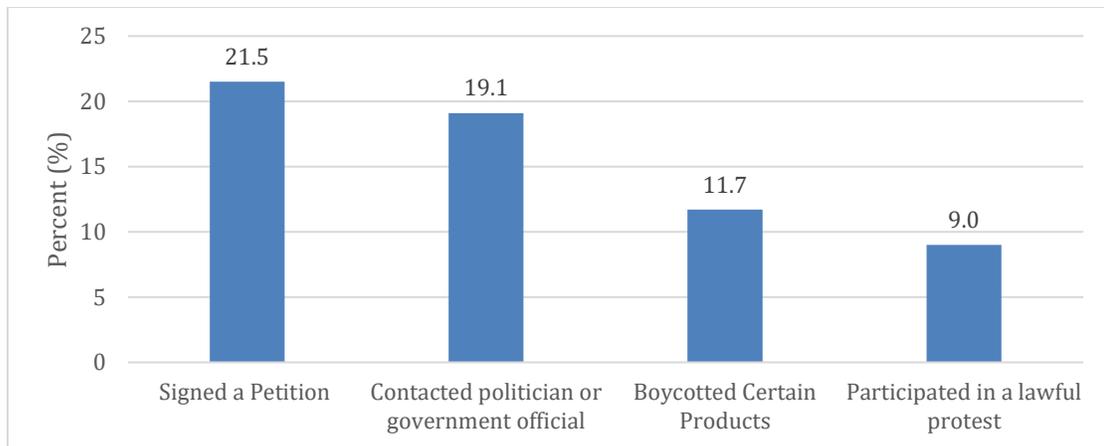


Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 3-7 (2018)

*Chi-Square p-Value: 0.000

Figure 5 – Proportion of citizens who report having contacted a politician or government official in the last 12 months, 2006 – 2014*

John Coakley writes that this trust in public institutions translates into a reliance on institutions, rather than other forms of public contestation to solve problems and voice political grievances: “Irish people have a distinctive attitude towards official channels for getting things done; they often prefer to rely on personal contact with office holders” (Coakley 2018, 50). Figure 5, above, shows that the Irish are in fact significantly more likely to personally contact a politician or government official, particularly in comparison to France and Spain which have the highest reported rates of participation in protest activity. When compared to other forms of political participation (Figure 6), Irish respondents reported that they had participated in political contestation through contact with official channels, whether in person or through the submission of a petition, in much higher numbers than they did through contentious politics such as boycotts or protests.



Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 3-7 (2018)

Figure 6 – Political participation in Ireland, by type, 2006 – 2014

Beyond individual practices of voting or contacting a politician, citizens engage in political contestation through activity in the intermediary arena, through participation in social and political movements and membership in non-governmental organizations. Thus, the intermediary arena not only provides a communicative link between the institutional and citizen arenas through news media and civil society, but citizens may also enter this arena to engage in political contestation beyond private activity such as voting in elections, or political discussions with friends and colleagues. Irish scholars have linked the character of Irish political participation, which prefers access to official channels of influence, rather than contentious politics, to several factors affecting the intermediary arena. These include the clientelist nature of Irish Politics and the legacy of Ireland’s social partnership. These features of Ireland’s political system influence available forms of access to political decision-makers and thus have an impact on the opportunity structures for political influence that may shape civil society and the public’s chosen methods of political action and claims-making.

In social movement research, the political opportunity structure (POS) approach explains the emergence and character of political protest based on the political structure of

its environment. For instance, POS approaches hypothesize that whether a protest or social movement emerges will depend on a variety of factors affecting the ease and opportunity for protest, for instance, the openness of a political system, and access to resources (Ketelaars 2015, 111-116). However, even among scholars of social movements, there is continued debate on whether protest movements are in fact triggered by social and political grievances or instead by an opening of opportunity structures for protest (Giugni and Grasso 2015, 5; Meyer 2004, 126). Ancelovici (2015) and Giugni and Grasso's (2015) insistence that economic crises alone are necessary but insufficient factors for triggering protest movements illustrates this dilemma. This project hypothesizes that characteristics of the political culture specific to Ireland combine in a way that effectively shapes the political opportunity structures for civil society engagement, not necessarily determining the presence of political protest movements, but rather the shape that political contestation ultimately takes. In other words, the types of contentious politics that emerged in Ireland during the crisis were influenced by its specific institutional context (Dufour, Nez and Ancelovici 2016, 298), and not exclusively by grievances stemming from the economic crisis.

3.2 A Brief Account of Austerity Protest in Ireland

Despite the proliferation of Irish citizens' reputation as passive at the height of the crisis while experiencing severe austerity policies, some observers have since noted that this characterization is not entirely accurate (see. Allen and O'Boyle 2013; Allen 2014; Cannon and Murphy 2015; Carney et. al. 2014; Hearne 2015; O'Connor 2017). While Ireland did not join the broader anti-austerity movements such as the indignados movement that spread across other debtor countries including Greece, Portugal and Spain, it did, in

fact, see an unprecedented number of short-lived independent anti-austerity protests, in some instances with very high turnout, particularly early in the crisis. For example, in 2008 fifteen thousand pensioners took to the streets successfully protesting the government's withdrawal of medical cards. Later in 2009 Ireland saw over 100 thousand public sector workers demonstrate against a proposed pension levy, and later that year, staged a one-day strike that brought out 250 thousand people (Allen and O'Boyle 2013, 127).

These protests, as some observed, differed in both "structure and language" of protest from their counterparts in other crisis-hit member states in that they were "overwhelmingly sectional and focused on single issues" rather than belonging to the larger and more general anti-austerity movements that swept across other European debtor countries (Allen 2014, 55; Cannon and Murphy 2015, 13). While such large-scale protest failed to maintain lasting momentum and significant levels of participation beyond the sectional interests represented, demonstrations continued regularly on a smaller, and more regionally localized scale around issues such as hospital downgrades and cuts to funding for things like family benefits and disadvantaged schools.

In his analysis of protest activity during the crisis in Ireland, Francis O'Connor distinguishes between three waves of protest. The *first*, between 2008-2010 was characterized by several large demonstrations against austerity, uncharacteristic of the reputation that Ireland would later earn in the media. For instance, two anti-austerity demonstrations organized by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) brought out about 100 thousand participants in Dublin in February and 150 thousand in November 2009, as well as 250 thousand public sector workers for a one-day strike in November of that year (Hearne 2015, 310). A year earlier the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and Age Action

Ireland organized a demonstration of fifteen thousand mostly elderly people in protest of newly imposed limits on the eligibility for health care coverage for people over seventy, successfully convincing the government to overturn this decision. Finally, in November 2010, another 100 thousand people showed up at a general protest against Ireland's austerity budget in the run-up to the signing of the Irish bailout agreement (O'Connor 2017, 77-80).

While some political groups, such as the People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA), ran anti-austerity campaigns ahead of the bailout deal, this main rally was again organized by a coalition of trade unions, and like those protests in 2009, it was attended in large part, by their membership base. While these protests had significant turnout for Ireland, they were one-day events and targeted the sectional interests of those who attended. For instance, the ICTU-led demonstrations largely defended public sector workers, while being accused of disregarding the interests represented by primarily private sector unions such as UNITE and citizens outside of the labour market (Carney et. al. 2014; 329).

The *second* phase, which O'Connor defines as spanning between 2010-2014, was characterized by a high number of small local protests that had very specific objectives, with only seven of a total of 415 reporting more than ten thousand participants (Naughton 2015, 299). Data from the European Social Survey shows that self-reported participation in protest over the last twelve months dropped almost three percentage points between 2008 and 2010, to seven percent. However, it increased again in 2012, coinciding with several national campaigns against household and water taxes, before peaking at thirteen percent in 2014 (see table 2) with the widespread Right2Water campaign which marked the start of what O'Connor has identified as the *third* phase of Irish protest since the crisis

began. Thus, the second phase was marked by more frequent protest, but on a smaller scale without a generalized anti-austerity movement.

Table 2 – Participated in a lawful public demonstration in the last 12 months, yes (%)⁷

	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Ireland	7.1	5.9	5.2	9.8	7.0	11.5	13.0
France	17.9	12.8	16.5	15.3	17.7	11.7	14.2
Greece	4.5	5.0	-	6.1	10.0	-	-
Portugal	1.3	3.5	3.1	3.7	2.4	6.9	7.1
Spain	17.5	34.0	17.8	15.9	18.3	25.9	23.2
Chi-square p value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 1-7 (2018)

While media reports of Irish acquiescence were misleading, the protests that were occurring were not attracting the attention of national or international media. One example, of this is the 2013 Save Our Forests campaign, which was organized by a coalition of the Woodland League, a grassroots group dedicated to preserving Ireland’s national forests, the Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Union (IMPACT) and a collection of left-leaning political groups, including the People Before Profit Alliance. This campaign objected to the sale of Ireland’s national forests to pay off Ireland’s debt to the Troika. It culminated in a small gathering for a family-friendly “day of action” at the site of a national forest in Avondale, Co. Wicklow. While a sizeable anti-austerity movement spread across the remaining debtor countries, many small campaigns, like Save Our Forests, took place across Ireland. In almost all cases, grievances were directed against the government, and not always related to the crisis. For instance, the death of Savita Halappanaver to septic

⁷ Public responses against austerity in Greece were largely led by trade union strikes, which are not included as demonstrations by the ESS, explaining the lower frequencies.

shock following the refusal of an abortion in October of 2012 triggered numerous pro-choice demonstrations, and the Marriage Equality Campaign inspired a number of demonstrations in support of the legalization of gay marriage (O'Connor 2017, 81).

In his study of European anti-austerity protests, Marcos Ancelovici warns against the assumption of a causal relationship between events like financial crises and protest. Despite their presence during the Euro crisis, Ancelovici writes that “social suffering and relative deprivation *alone* cannot explain variation in the timing, nature and magnitude of protest” (Ancelovici 2015, 198; see also Allen and Boyle 2013, 128; Guigni and Grasso 2015, 6). Ireland, like its fellow debtor states, did see a rise in the number of people reporting participation in protests since the implementation of austerity policies, even if participation levels at peak moments continued to be lower. However, we also know that these were mostly unrelated protest events, on mainly sectional issues, rather than belonging to the broader social movements that spread across these other debtor countries. Despite Ireland exhibiting a similar spike in protest activity to these other debtor states, it has seen consistently lower levels of mobilization even before the crisis (see Table 2). Ancelovici points out that countries, including Spain, and France, a non-debtor state, protest activity was already high before the crisis (Ancelovici 2016, 191). These were the same member states who then also had the highest rates of protest during the crisis. This suggests that these countries may have different protest cultures more generally. Therefore, in this circumstance, it is more fitting to explore the specific character of Ireland’s political culture, rather than try to explain the volume of protest activity to determine the site where we might be able to locate citizens’ contestation of the EU.

Thus, the variation in austerity protests between Ireland and other debtor countries

is not necessarily a consequence of lower politicization of the crisis and the responses to it, whether national or European. Ireland, like the other debtor countries, saw the percentage of citizens engaged in protest jump from 9.8 percent in 2008 to 11.5 percent in 2012 despite the numbers of Irish who identify as very interested in politics noticeably decreasing immediately after the crisis hit.⁸ In contrast, interest in politics in the remaining debtor countries gradually increased starting in 2008 (see Table 3). While Ireland’s self-reported participation in protest is lower than the 25.9 percent of respondents in Spain who indicated they had participated, it is consistent with Ireland’s generally lower levels of protest activity over time. It is thus valuable to take a closer look not only at the frequency but also the character of these protests.

Table 3 – Interest in Politics: very interested versus not interested at all, Ireland compared with Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain (PIGS), by year (%)

		Very Interested	Not Interested at all	Chi-Square P Value
2008	<i>Ireland</i>	48.1	51.9	0.000
	<i>PGS</i>	14.2	85.8	
2010	<i>Ireland</i>	21.7	78.3	0.000
	<i>PGS</i>	15.5	84.5	
2012	<i>Ireland</i>	27.5	72.5	0.002
	<i>PIS</i>	22.2	77.8	
2014	<i>Ireland</i>	25.5	74.5	0.093
	<i>PIS</i>	28.8	71.2	
TOTAL	<i>Ireland</i>	28.4	71.6	0.000
	<i>PIGS</i>	18.3	81.7	

Source: European Social Survey Cumulative File, ESS 3-7 (2018)

Note: ESS provides data for Italy for 2012 only, and Greece for 2008 and 2010 only.

⁸ It is interesting that self-reported interest in politics fell over the course of the crisis, while rates of discussion of politics seen in the Eurobarometer data on page 4 did not. One possible cause may be a growing disillusionment or indifference to politics as described by Virginie Van Ingelgom (2014), despite a continued salience of political issues. This highlights that political salience may not necessarily depend on political interest.

3.2.1 The Character of Irish Anti-Austerity Protest

The handful of larger anti-austerity protests, prior to 2014's demonstrations against water taxes, and those most akin to broader anti-austerity movements rather than sectional issue-specific demonstrations, were organized mainly by trade unions, sometimes in collaboration with a small network of left-leaning political parties and social movements. These were organized through the ICTU, in collaboration with its member unions. In an interview, Macdara Doyle, a communications officer with ICTU explained that he believed that it is the only organization with the logistical and organizational capacity to pull off a demonstration that large. Consequently, participants at these demonstrations were chiefly composed of union membership, despite attempts at more widespread recruitment and public recruitment campaigns through newspaper and poster advertising (Macdara Doyle 2013). Bernard Harbor, the head of communications for IMPACT trade union, explains:

It's not been particularly easy to get impressive numbers of people on to the streets to demonstrate, even at times when people's pay was being cut, taxes were being increased, and services were being cut. (Bernard Harbor 2013).

Niall Shanahan, a communications officer with IMPACT also adds:

And then to meet people at our demonstrations who aren't involved with the trade union is always something of a surprise because they would be a tiny minority, or else they're there to cause trouble (Niall Shanahan, 2013).

While this could be affected by a prioritization of internal mobilization strategies, unions' inability to mobilize the general public, usually done through media appearances and posters, was also largely influenced by the trade union movement's particular relationship with the state, which will be discussed in this chapter.

With respect to the question of levels of salience and contestation of the EU in these protests, retrospective evidence of participants' motivations, the addressees of their

grievances, and the framing of these issues is limited to several studies. These studies collected interview data of protest participants (Naughton 2015; Hearne 2015), surveys of the coverage of these protests by the news media (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016), and the author's interviews with Irish civil society actors who played an organizational role in them. Generally, Irish anti-austerity protests targeted their grievances and demands at local and national, not EU-level addressees and addressed narrow demands, for instance, cuts to services such as healthcare and education, and sector-specific working conditions (Naughton 2015, 302). Interviews with various civil society actors in Dublin in 2013 demonstrate an understanding of the crisis as an Irish rather than a European problem and an emphasis on the Irish government as the key actor with agency to negotiate the bailout and implement austerity policies. One civil society leader explains:

I don't think that the EU is blamed for austerity in Ireland. I think there's a strong sense within civil society organizations that to a certain extent the Irish state has to do what's in that agreement. It was a key player in negotiating that agreement. So, in that sense we would have austerity with or without the EU and the IMF. There might be a difference, but it doesn't come from there. It comes from a domestic impetus (Anna Visser 2013).

This statement reflects not only an understanding of the crisis shared by civil society organizations but also arguably to a large extent that of the general population as is further elaborated in chapter five.

Even when participants' reasons for joining anti-austerity protests in Ireland did include EU-related grievances these were buried among, and secondary to, numerous local and especially national grievances (Allen 2014; Hearne 2015). Participants' justifications for these protests were complex, driven by multiple factors among which the EU was only sometimes included. Most often, they were driven to participate by the implications of recent policy decisions and had an Irish addressee as the target. On occasion such

observations were contextualized by deeper grievances with democratic governance and the political system including, but not limited to, Ireland's relationship with the European Union (Hearne 2015, 9-12). One study, by Rory Hearne, surveyed participants of the 2014 Right2Water protests. Some consider this campaign to be the only general, inclusive and non-sectional anti-austerity movement in Ireland. Despite starting as a campaign protesting the introduction of charges for household water consumption, Hearne (2015) and O'Connor (2017) observed that participants were motivated to join as a result of the culmination of years of frustration with austerity policies more generally. When asked why they joined the protests, respondents expressed general grievances against austerity, rather than ones limited to the water charges alone. Hearne does not indicate what overall proportion of respondents referred to the EU in their responses. However, his report noted that of those who did mention the EU, over half (62 percent) did so in the context of demands on the Irish government concerning how it represents Irish interests at the EU level (Hearne 2015, 28). Overall, these observations are in line with Baglioni and Hurrelmann's examination of the media coverage of demonstrations in Spain and Ireland, where, in both cases, they found it focused primarily on protest activity characterized by national politics (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016, 108). The EU had some degree of salience in these dialogues, but it was overshadowed by a dominating national orientation.

In summary, Ireland did experience some collective anti-austerity action that was organized through both established and ad-hoc grassroots civil society organizations, but there is little evidence of the largescale participation of unaffiliated individuals as eventually occurred in the indignados movement. While there is evidence that protests in Ireland did involve a cross-section of demographic groups (ex. students, pensioners, trade

unions etc.), except for the Right2Water campaign, participation did not transcend that which was organized by pre-existing civil society organization and the labour movement (Naughton 2015, 290). Barring the Right2Water campaign in 2014, Ireland's protest response to austerity has been characterized by numerous mostly smaller sectional and single-issue demonstrations directed at national or local government, rather than a widespread austerity movement. It also displays evidence of a somewhat fragmented, rather than cooperative civil society environment, resulting in mainly sectional turnout at protest events. This often resulted in groups that mobilized simultaneously, on similar issues, yet lacking any coordination between them that might encourage broader turnout (O'Connor 2017, 81). Scholarship on Irish politics has pointed to the Irish political environment and the legacy of Ireland's social partnership, among other cultural factors, as having an influence on the direction that political participation has taken, particularly during the crisis.

3.3 The Irish Political Environment

Some scholars have linked the character of political participation in Ireland, particularly the comparatively high rates of contact with politicians and government officials, to the longstanding political culture surrounding the constituency work of members of the lower house of Irish parliament, known as Teachtaí Dála (TDs). What may be called personalism refers to citizens' prioritization of personal connections to their political representatives rather than evaluating their TDs based on 'objective norms' (Coakley 2018, 48). Some Irish scholars characterize the nature of this work critically as populist and clientelist (Murphy 2011; Murphy 2014; Teague and Donaghey 2009, 52), while others reject the applicability of this characterization and label it more mildly as

excessive brokerage, which is not necessarily unique to Ireland but takes a distinctive character there (O'Malley 2011, 116; Sinnott 2018, 165). In either case, it is believed to contribute to an individualistic political culture that favours independent over collective action (Gallagher 1982, 16-20; Coakley 2018, 48).

While the volume of constituency work is high for elected officials in most democracies, in 2009 a survey of Irish TDs reported that fifty-three percent of their work hours were spent on activities such as holding public clinics, and email and phone communication with constituents, and believed that their chances of re-election would suffer if they cut down on this. For comparison, in the United Kingdom MPs reported spending just over forty percent of their work time on similar issues. (Gallagher and Komito 2018, 161-7). This is attributed in part to Ireland's use of the single transferable vote version of proportional representation (PR-STV) for its electoral system. Rather than Ranking parties, or party lists, citizens rank order individual candidates. Some argue that because this forces competition between candidates of the same party, it encourages campaigns driven by personality, brokerage promises and issues of constituency rather than party platform and ideological positions (Murphy 2016, 26; O'Malley 2011, 116; Sinnott 2018, 128-9). Additionally, the historical development of the Irish party system has roots in the Irish civil war and whether one supported or rejected the Anglo-Irish Treaty, rather than ideological divisions. Consequently, due to an absence of significant ideological differences between the two largest parties, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, political campaigns emphasize opponents' political competence and economic performance. Traditionally Fianna Fáil has represented small landowners and small business, while Fine Gael represented large farmers and professionals. Both parties, however, may be classified as

centre-right (O'Malley 2011, 117; Weeks 2015, 592). Similar to the effects of the PR-STV system, this too has been attributed to motivating political campaigns that are based around personality and brokerage (Cannon and Murphy 2015, 13; Mair 2010, 2; O'Malley 2011, 116).

For these reasons, TDs are heavily committed to local constituency issues and problems. Just as this opens the opportunity for individualist political action, it does not close off opportunity structures for collective action but instead redefines them. Research also shows that protest groups have tended to “[foster] their attentions on winning the support of local-elected representatives on a cross-party basis in order for them to lobby on their behalf” on individual issues, rather than forming coalitions with other groups and evolving into more widespread social movements (O'Connor 2017, 81). This might help to explain why the crisis period in Ireland saw a proliferation of smaller protests, rather than a general anti-austerity movement across civil society groups. Additionally, it might lead to instances where groups who might otherwise collaborate will compete for the support of local TDs, adding a fragmented character to Ireland's civil society. Focusing on protest activity at the local level, consequently leads to less contestation of the EU at these demonstrations, unless the EU rather than local or national government is perceived to have primary decision-making agency on a given issue. This backs up the notion that the specific character of Irish anti-austerity protest, may not be the best indicator of the contestation dimension of the EU's politicization levels at the citizen level. However, EU-related contestation might still be present in non-activist public discourse.

Limited opportunity structures for protest emerging in the Irish civil society landscape combined with the ease of access to TDs due to strong constituency connections

might partially explain the heavier emphasis on individualistic, rather than collective action in Ireland. In his analysis of the constituency work of Irish TDs, Gallagher explains the degree to which some Irish scholars believe this approach to political claims-making has become a norm:

For generations, Irish people saw that to get the benefits that public authorities bestow, the help of a man with connections and influence was necessary. All that democracy has meant is that such a person has been laid on officially (Gallagher and Komito 2018; 167).

Another explanation, based on hundreds of interviews with Irish citizens, proposes that a characteristically Irish “reliance on family promotes coping rather than ‘protesting’ responses to austerity” and thus individualistic political contestation if any (Carney et. al. 2014, 313). However, a study of Ireland’s democratic culture in the 1970s found the Irish had a generally lower sense of a capacity to influence politics than the average in other Western democracies (Raven et. al. 1976, 46). While Ireland has changed dramatically since the 1970s away from a mostly underdeveloped, rural and heavily agricultural society, this characterization of Irish citizens’ sense of political efficacy continues to be referenced in contemporary texts on Irish politics (see Coakley 2018). It might help to explain the reliance on family as a coping mechanism as well more general claims of Ireland’s generally lower rates of political participation in elections and membership of political parties and voluntary organizations, compared to other European states (Murphy, 2011, 183). Our understanding of the character of Irish political contestation may be further explained in light of the legacy of Ireland’s tradition of social partnership through which economic and eventually social policy was made for twenty-two years before social partnership ended with the crisis in 2010.

3.4 State-Society Relations in Ireland before and After Social Partnership

Before the collapse of Ireland's social partnership model in late 2009, under the pressure of Ireland's financial crisis, the Irish economy was governed through a model of privileged access and input into policy-making by major Irish interest groups. Rather than a basic lobbying relationship with the state whereby intermediary actors serve as a mediator between the citizens and the state, select trade unions, and employers and business groups were treated as official partners in the policy-making process and their participation was perceived as "vital to securing the long-term future and viability of the Irish state" (Murphy 2013, 23). Previous research on anti-austerity protest has found a correlation between governments' inclusion of trade unions in social and economic policy bargaining processes, and lower levels of anti-austerity protest. In France, which experienced a high volume of protest during the crisis period, access to such policy processes is closed off to unions (Anceloveci 2015, 197). Thus, the institutional structure of social partnership contributed to shaping the existing opportunity structures available for civil society to use in making political claims and demands, affecting the character of contentious politics during the crisis.

In 1987, facing a severe fiscal crisis, the Fianna Fáil government established a partnership with three core economic pillars: farmers, trade unions, and business associations. The goal was to develop a solution to overcome the economic crisis and essentially create a "new approach to economic management" (Murphy 2018, 223). The three pillars, with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), and the Irish Farmer's Association (IFA) at the top of the hierarchy, negotiated and unanimously agreed to the three-year Programme for

National Recovery, an agreement on a broad range of economic and social policies, to revive the Irish economy. It was followed by five new similar three-year agreements which were mutually formulated and approved in a similar fashion. This institutionalized relationship between certain civil society groups and the state came to be known as the social partnership. While Ireland has had a long history of corporatist relations with various interests, particularly the IFA, going as far back as the 1960s, this was the first time that this relationship was not drawn on the government's terms but rather each pillar was treated as an equal partner (Murphy 2013, 22).

In 2007, the social partnership was expanded to include a wider range of civil society groups in a new Community and Voluntary Pillar. The organizations of this new pillar were not included in the formulation of new agreements to the same extent as the original partners, yet they continued as partners because remaining insiders was still more desirable than working from the outside. In their assessment of the implications of twenty-two years of social partnership, Geoghegan and Powell argue that "since the inclusion of the community and voluntary sector...a slow but inexorable marginalization of direct participatory involvement of civil society in the political process occurred (Geoghegan and Powell 2009, 109). At the same time as some groups were given preferential access to regular consultation with the government, and often also funding,⁹ government relations with those groups who remained outside of social partnership suffered, creating an insider and outsider group dynamic within Irish civil society (Adshead and Tonge 2009, 237).

⁹ In 2009, before the implementation of austerity policy, the Irish state provided about 60% of the funding received by the non-profit sector (Adshead and Tonge 2009, 139). Between 2003 and 2008, SIPTU and the ICTU received 4.5 million euro and IBEC received 6 million euro in government funding (Allen and O'Boyle 2013, 141).

Some scholars have argued that while groups on the outside lost some access to government, insider groups, particularly trade unions and the voluntary sector, lost political influence as they were co-opted into passive collaboration with government out of fear that excessive advocacy or protest would risk their place in the partnership (Allen 2014, 61; Geoghegan and Powell 2009, 109; Murphy 2016, 26). Thus, as some groups were co-opted into the policy-making process as official actors, the lines between the intermediary and political arenas became blurred, and groups that were insiders in the partnership developed a preference for bargaining within the structure of the partnership over more contentious forms of politics. Thus, while there were some union-led protests that had significant turnout, they were not frequent and did not continue throughout the duration of the crisis as long as unions felt they had some access or potential for access to the decision-making process. This blurring of political arenas became evident as the Irish crisis developed, and particularly trade unions, due to their involvement in negotiating the economic policy of the Celtic Tiger era, were perceived by many as implicated in the causes of the crisis. Additionally, as trade unions entered public sector wage agreements with the government, they often supported policies that wider union membership and the broader union movement were opposed to, leading to rifts in within union movement itself (Cannon and Murphy 2015, 12).

Social partnership finally came to an end with the onset of the Irish financial crisis in 2009. In February of that year, ICTU and the trade unions refused to sign onto the government's proposed *Framework for Stabilization, Social Solidarity and Economic Renewal* which included a public-sector levy. While social partnership has until then required negotiation until all partners agreed on a solution, the Fianna Fail-Green coalition

government refused to negotiate, and the unions walked away from the negotiations effectively ending twenty-two years of partnership (Murphy 2010, 494-5). Marcos Anceloveci explains that as unions and these other organizations had been conditioned for three decades into cooperation through social partnership, they “developed a repertoire of action that did not favour protest” (Anceloveci 2015, 199). Therefore, after the fall of social partnership, public-sector trade unions led by the ICTU continued to seek out opportunities for bargaining, rather than pursuing more aggressive advocacy and assertive reactions in response to the austerity budget. In 2010 they ultimately agreed, against the wishes of some smaller unions, to a set of cost-saving measures including minor pay cuts, in exchange for preventing further layoffs in the public sector, in what became known as the Croke Park Agreement (Allen and O’Boyle 2013, 142). Despite voting in support of the agreement Jack O’Connor, the leader of the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), himself admitted that the deal “took the best, organized section of the workforce out of the equation for social protest” (Allen 2014, 55).

Following the demise of social partnership, the former partners have struggled with redefining their relationship with the state and finding new avenues for influencing policy and change. To some degree, the playing field between the social partners and former outsiders to the partnership has therefore been levelled. In one example, former partners, the ICTU and community pillar joined forces with groups who were formerly on the outside, for example, Social Justice Ireland, the Think-Tank for Action on Social Change (TASC), various environmental groups, and others to form the Claiming Our Future movement. This was a collective initiative for a joint forum to “explore how best to cooperate and coordinate endeavours for a more equal, inclusive and sustainable Ireland”

(Kirby and Murphy 2011, 220). While an example of new opportunities for more collaboration across civil society, this never materialized into a widespread movement, nor did it entirely change these groups' preference for seeking continued partnerships with the state. Anna Visser of the Advocacy Initiative, another collaborative effort among civil society groups, explains this continued desire for a new social partnership in some form:

Social Partnership in many respects has come to be quite deeply questioned by civil society organizations in terms of its impact. That said, we're still very committed to it but there were debates about the direction of government policy (Anna Visser 2013).

Despite widespread acknowledgement within the civil society community of social partnership's adverse effect had on its political efficacy, there remains a desire for consensual rather than contentious forms of political influence. The best example and that which has had arguably the largest effect on political contestation within Irish civil society was the signing of the Croke Park Agreement which led to a deep backlash against the ICTU from the civil society community and wider labour movements.

Observers argue that the union-led protests, despite having high turnout among its membership, failed to attract widespread participation beyond its membership for two reasons, neither of which suggests a lack of salience of the crisis among citizens are an absence of grievances. First, the main unions associated with the ICTU, such as IMPACT and SIPTU were perceived as advocating exclusively in the interests of their membership at the expense of private sector workers and those outside of the workforce (Carney et. al. 2014, 329). Second, due to trade unions' privileged access to economic policy-making during the Celtic Tiger era, there was a public perception that they were themselves implicated in the cause of the crisis (Cannon and Murphy 2015, 12). Such perceptions did not improve with ICTU's continued attempts at cooperation with the government during

the crisis, and especially in light of unions' close relationship with the Labour Party who, in a coalition government with Fine Gael after the 2011 elections, was itself implementing austerity policies. This eventually pressured the mainstream union movement to step away from protest activity altogether. Frank Connolly, the head of communication for SIPTU explained that this relationship between unions and the Labour party became difficult for them during the crisis:

So, there's a traditional allegiance between the trade union movement and, particularly this union and the Labour Party. Of course, that comes under strain at a time like this when Labour's in government, and when their policies of austerity are hitting ordinary people. (Frank Connolly 2013)

However, following the signing of the Croke Park Agreement, this strain was clearly absent from the union movement's public image.

Civil society actors, particularly those on the emerging left felt betrayed by the unions. Colm Stephens, a national electoral candidate for People Before Profit, a bloc party alliance between the Socialist Worker's Party and other similarly leaning parties and political groups, describes this perception of the union movement's antagonism toward tangible political resistance against austerity:

And we have a situation where the main trade unions and the trade union leadership, to a large extent – not completely – is doing as little as possible and being now aggressively anti-us making any change. So, the large unions, like SIPTU and IMPACT – the leadership of these unions are very strongly trying to oppose any movement. (Colm Stephens, 2013).

People Before Profit, began in 2005 as a movement against neoliberal economic policies and globalization, including opposition to further European integration and attempt at uniting a fragmented political left. It eventually began to run electoral candidates under its name to gain political influence. This was following the legacy of a political environment

where winning representation in the Dáil was considered a viable opportunity for influence by many groups who were left outside of the formal social partnership structure.

Despite Bernard Harbor of IMPACT union insisting in an interview that participants in ICTU's demonstrations included a traditionally allied trade union movement with the left (Bernard Harbor 2013), speaking to members of parties and political groups on the left, painted a much more fragmented picture. The ICTU, lead by SIPTU and IMPACT organized a demonstration in Dublin ahead of the approval of Ireland's austerity budget and the Troika's arrival in Ireland, which saw a turnout of upwards of 100 thousand participants. However, Jack O'Connor and David Begg, the president and general secretary of ICTU respectively, were booed by the crowds when they made an appearance, indicating disillusionment with unions' behaviour even among their own grassroots membership (Allen and O'Boyle 2013, 140). Groups on the left, including People Before Profit, participating through the now defunct United Left Alliance and newly radicalized smaller unions who felt betrayed by the mainstream union movement, sat out and instead joined forces just over two weeks later in a smaller demonstration one day ahead of the signing of the EU-IMF bailout agreement.

While anti-austerity movements across Europe, starting out with trade unions, eventually experienced a solidarity between civil society actors across ideologies and organizational objectives, the scene in Ireland became fragmented, with often multiple protests occurring simultaneously on the same issues (O'Connor 2017, 81). During this same period, the Occupy movement failed to take off in Ireland, also due to a resistance by unions, political parties, and other groups to cooperate and form alliances (Dufour, Nez and Ancelovici 2016, 298). In interviews with civil society groups in Dublin,

representatives of IMPACT claimed credit as the main organizers and drivers of one joint campaign, while those of the Woodland League praised it as a “real alliance across groups that wouldn’t agree with us on a whole lot of other things” (Andrew St. Ledger 2013). This was true even in cases where there was collaboration between various groups, such as the Woodland League, IMPACT and the PBPA on the Save Our Forests Campaign. Such comments imply that this cooperation was not entirely a collaborative effort. Andrew St. Ledger, a public relations official for the Woodland League, while admitting to cooperation with the PBPA as partners on the campaign, also revealed that this relationship was not without its own problems:

...from some of the People Before Profit campaigns that we were conscious of, there were elements of extreme activity associated with them, a whining, complaining type of protest that we weren’t willing to engage (Andrew St. Ledger 2013).

Thus, even examples of collaboration between civil society actors who had been outsiders of the social partnership agreements demonstrate evidence of a somewhat fractured civil society.

However, a fractured civil society when it came to austerity-related political activity in some cases allowed for groups outside of the social partnership to orient claims toward the EU level on anti-austerity issues. By failing to cooperate with the mainstream union movement in opposing the austerity budget and situating their protests around the signing of the EU-IMF deal, rather than the national austerity budget, the network of left-leaning groups organized their own demonstration. The general discourse during this event saw a higher salience of the EU, as a part of the Troika, than the much larger union-backed demonstration two weeks earlier. While the grievances were still directed at national leadership, their demands related to national negotiations with, among others, the European

Union. Recruitment posters for the demonstrations distinguished between the EU and IMF as actors in the bailout negotiations, rather than conflating them into the Troika as was largely the case in the earlier protests (Figure 7).



Figure 7 – Poster for a demonstration ahead of the signing of the IMF-EU bailout agreement for Ireland in 2010 (Photo: Anna Gora, 2010).

While this increased salience of the EU in this one example of contestation of austerity may have been coincidental, the institutional structure of state-society relations in Ireland did appear to have some effect, albeit indirectly, on levels of salience of the EU among civil society groups and the scope of their knowledge about it. However, we cannot immediately assume that this translates into a similar level of salience among actual participants in the protest.

3.5 The Legacy of Social Partnership on EU-Related Political Contestation

Mary Murphy writes that “the distinctive form civil society takes reflects the institutional logic of capitalist arrangements in any one country” (Murphy 2016, 25). In

Ireland, the institutional logic of social and economic policy was for many years defined by social partnership. Those groups who were insiders in social partnership had regular access to policy-making debates on both national-level policy and that which linked to an EU mandate. Thus, the political contestation in which they engaged covered both national and EU frames of reference and addressees. Stemming from the depth of institutionalization and professionalism in their engagement with policy, these groups developed a sophisticated understanding of the multi-level policy processes that Irish society is subjected to and tackled policy influence at many political levels.

Among the social partners, the ICTU, Irish Farmer's Association (IFA), and Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) have the longest standing relationships with government and are at the top of the hierarchy of interest groups in Ireland. In fact, the IFA has had an evolving privileged relationship with government and has been involved in the policy process on agriculture since 1964, even before social partnership. In addition to their history as core social partners, representatives of these three groups also regularly appear as commentators in the media, and as the faces of the industries they claim to represent. Also, former national and EU level bureaucrats who had dealt with agriculture, for instance, have on many occasions taken senior positions within the IFA, and members of IFA have likewise served as special advisors to the department of agriculture (Murphy 2009, 333). Former social partners, including the IFA and IBEC, have their own permanent offices and staff located in Brussels for mobilization directed at influencing policy at the supranational level. A member of the IFA described the extent of this arrangement:

We'd be continuously in communication with our European office and with COPA, and I suppose [members of the Dublin office] would often go to Brussels for meetings and different working groups...they've engaged significantly with Europe." (Kevin Kilcline 2013).

Due to their institutionalized access to national policymaking, which is intertwined with EU-level legislation, these groups are therefore themselves also strongly Europeanized and we can expect at least higher salience of the EU, a greater scope of understanding of it, and ultimately greater EU-related contestation as these groups engage in lobbying activity at the European level. For instance, as well as negotiating with the Irish government, the IFA has long-established connections with the EU as members of the Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations (COPA) and maintain a permanent staff and office in Brussels. In addition to once having a seat at national budget negotiations and using social partnership access to pressure the government to, for example, access the EU's agricultural crisis reserve fund, the IFA also has access to quadrilateral negotiations with the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. Another reason for this degree of EU-level of engagement related to the fact that the EU has policy competence over Agriculture, and its Agriculture Policy has traditionally composed a substantial proportion of the EU budget. Thus, the IFA's policy field is one that is directly tied to EU-policy making. Also, a former social partner and the largest lobby group in Ireland, IBEC which represents business and employers' interests in Ireland, even had its own team to work on the Irish presidency of the European Council, and a strong engagement with the Troika, despite the dissolution of the social partnership.

A member of the Advocacy Initiative, a group representing the interest of civil society in Ireland, sums up this relationship between certain interest groups and both the EU and national governments:

There's a very strong history of that type of engagement of proactively seeking to influence the Irish government through the EU, whether that's on individual reports on Ireland, or whether more generally contributing to Europe-wide campaigns." (Anna Visser 2013).

However, this does not necessarily translate into discourse with and among these groups' wider membership in Ireland. Despite their engagement on two fronts, the national and European, communication with the wider membership of the IFA, for instance, is almost entirely internally oriented to Ireland. Even when on the topic of access to the EU's crisis reserve fund, information communicated to Irish farmers would relate to how these funds can be accessed through national institutional arrangements, rather than a politicized discussion of the fund's EU origins. There is no indication of this changing during or as a result of the euro crisis (Kevin Kilcline 2013). This is unsurprising, and earlier research reveals a similar dilution of the EU's salience in candidate's campaigns for European Parliament elections when compared to highly Europeanized transnational electoral platforms such as that of the European Greens (Gora 2010).

Due to their reliance on institutionalized opportunities for political influence at the national and EU level, groups such as the IFA and IBEC are socialized in a policy environment that is inherently tied to European-level decision making in addition to that at the national level. However, for these same reasons, civil society that has traditionally been outside of the social partnership has fewer resources and a more limited repertoire of knowledge on the possibilities for influence at and through the EU level. O'Connor describes Ireland's civil society as 'weak' and 'vertically fragmented' (O'Connor 2017, 79). While some groups had privileged access to policy-makers and even the policy-making process in certain areas, others in the community and voluntary pillar had much more limited access, and the remainder of Ireland's civil society, particularly groups at the grassroots level were entirely cut off from official access to policymakers. On the other hand, some argue that those with the most influential position in the social partnership,

particularly the trade unions, were co-opted by the Irish government into acquiescence, careful not to lose their privileged place at the negotiating table, thus placing them in a weak position for genuine advocacy. Some of these groups feared they could lose state funding or policy access for organizing or engaging in protest, with some evidence that some groups did in fact experience this (Murphy 2016, 27).

On the other hand, those groups who were outsiders in the partnership had to find alternative avenues of political influence and lacked the direct access to, and thus first-hand familiarity, with the policy-making process. Consequently, most of these groups' mobilization efforts aimed at influencing political change targeting national, regional or community-level avenues of influence. When they did seek out influence at the European level, it was sometimes misguided. One example of such a group is the Woodland League, a small grassroots organization of environmentalists, artists, woodworkers and others, aimed at promoting the restoration of Ireland's woodlands. In 2009, they launched the Save Our Forests campaign as a response to the Irish government's announcement of the potential sale of public forests, on the recommendation of Troika, "whose modus operandi," according to the group's co-founder, Andrew St. Ledger, "is privatization, taking advantage of collapsed economies to transfer public assets into private ownership" (Andrew Ledger 2013).

While the campaign did have allies in more institutional settings such as IMPACT and some elected members of the PBPA, each organized its own corresponding campaign materials. Despite the initiative being in direct opposition to proposals by the Troika, neither the Troika, nor EU, ECB or IMF made it into the discourse in slogans or onto campaign material produced by the Woodland League (Figure 8). The Woodland League

did travel to Brussels in 2005 to bring their report, titled *Forestry in Ireland: A Citizen's Perspective* to the European Parliament. This demonstrates that the EU, in fact, has enough salience, even outside of former social partners, for there to be some knowledge of opportunities for political advocacy and influence at the EU level. However, the limits to the scope of their understanding of these opportunities are evident in St. Ledger's admission that only once they arrived at the European Parliament and spoke to some MEPs, did they learn that the EU did not have competency over laws governing forests. Also, only upon speaking with various MEPs, were they informed of the existence of forest-related NGOs organized at the European level (Andrew St. Ledger 2013). Finally, it is telling that despite the salience of the EU as a policy actor in the group's repertoire, the EU still failed to make it into the discourse around the Save Our Forests campaign, despite the obvious connection to the conditions of the EU-IMF bailout, and claims in politicization research that the salience of the EU grew during the crisis.



Figure 8 – Sample posters from the ‘Save Our Forests’ campaign (Credit: Jacki Hehir, 2009)

3.6 The Legacy of Social Partnership on Political Advocacy

Social partnership's legacy on the shape and form of the available opportunity structures for civil society advocacy was so strong, that following its dissolution numerous civil society groups, particularly former members of the community and voluntary pillar of social partnership formed the Advocacy Initiative. This was their collective attempt to solve the problem of how to do advocacy in the absence of social partnership and reflect on past performance as social partners. The group's director, Anna Visser, described the advocacy initiative as a:

...response to a sense that throughout the boom period the civil society organizations were not as influential as they could have been on government policy and ...the context in which a lot of those organizations do advocacy is becoming less effective. The state apparatus for policymaking has shifted quite a lot in the last few years (Anna Visser 2013).

By cutting off some groups from policymaking, while offering others privileged access, social partnership thus created an environment where there was a noticeable discrepancy between two classes of civil society actors. This was apparent not only in levels of socialization in the policy culture at the national level, including an understanding of the scope of EU influence but also in the actual opportunity structures different groups had at their disposal to make political demands and contest political issues. With access to policy-making closed off for most groups outside of social partnership, they depended on alternative methods of influence. These included developing collaborative alliances with members of the Dáil (TDs) and even ran their own members as independent candidates in national and local elections as means to become insiders in the policy process.

For instance, the Woodland League developed relationships with several politicians from the PBPA, including TD Richard Boyd Barret and electoral candidate Colm Stephens.

Another initiative, the People's Movement which in the past had actively opposed further EU integration and campaigned against the European fiscal compact¹⁰, actively sought out patronage from local politicians, such as independent TD Thomas Pringle:

They asked a number of elected representatives around the country whether they would be willing to add their names as patrons basically, of the movement. At that time, I was county councillor, so I was happy to agree. Generally, I would have opposed the further integration of the European Union and further developments taking place within the Union, so it would have been quite easy for me to add my name to the people's movement (Thomas Pringle 2013).

There was a perception among these groups that influencing policy from the outside was largely ineffective. This behaviour essentially stretched the understanding of civil society to one that spans the intermediary and political arenas, even for those groups outside of the partnership (Murphy 2009, 328; Murphy 2018, 221).

This was most visible in the noticeable increase in independents following the 2011 national elections that ousted Fianna Fáil from government, after sixty-one years of power in the preceding seventy-nine years. Irish voters elected fifteen independents in what became known as the 'pencil revolution,' the largest number of independents in Ireland since 1927 (Weeks 2015, 589; Mair 2011, 288). This was in part Irish voters' reaction to Fianna Fail's perceived implication in the causes of the financial crisis, as they "saw independents as the main conduit for change" (Weeks 2015, 590). A number of these independents were affiliated with smaller grassroots, particularly leftist organizations who had previously campaigned against austerity, such as the People Before Profit Alliance.

¹⁰ The European Fiscal Compact is the simplified name for the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, also known as the Fiscal Stability Treaty. Opponents of the treaty in Ireland coined it the 'Austerity Treaty' in their oppositional campaigns.

While some candidates affiliated with the PBPA ran as independents, others were members of affiliate parties such as the Socialist Workers Party who ran under the PBPA banner.

Overall, whether insiders or outsiders to social partnership, this institutional arrangement for policy making altered available opportunity structures in such a way that encouraged Irish civil society to pursue political influence through means that blurred the lines between the institutional and political arenas in addition to or in place of more traditional lobbying tactics. While it is crucial to understanding the placement of civil society in relation to the intermediary arena in Ireland due to its collapse at the peak of the crisis, social partnership is not unique to Ireland. In the 1990s when Ireland's social partnership was credited with contributing to the rise of the Celtic Tiger economy, nine other EU members (of a total of fifteen at the time) had some version of social pact agreements in place, albeit not to the same degree (Murphy 2009, 339). Social pacts also exist at the European level involving Europe-wide groups representing employers and employees, EU heads of state and the president of the European Commission., Understanding the nature of the state-society relationship should be central to decisions in how to judge politicization at the intermediary arena, in other member states also.

Finally, while it may be argued that social partnership arrangements influenced the character of anti-austerity protest in Ireland, Ireland does have a history of strong and effective social movements. Social partnership centred primarily on pay agreements, taxation, social welfare and related economic policy, thus involving those actors most relevant to the scope of these issues. These are the same issues most affected by austerity policies during the crisis, and in which the social partners, as well as unions and social welfare groups on the outside, had the most at stake. Groups lobbying on issues outside of

that scope are arguably not affected by the same degree of co-option by the political system. For instance, in 1979 and 1981, mass protests stopped the building of a nuclear power plant, and demonstrations relating to the abortion debate have also brought out thousands of people, as early as the 1990s (Allen and O'Boyle 2013, 127). Civil society is, therefore, itself a heterogeneous idea in need of differentiation. Consequently, caution should be applied in the treatment of civil society as strictly intermediary actors when differentiating politicization between political arenas even beyond just the Irish case, particularly when interested in the communicative links between political arenas.

3.7 Irish Media in the Intermediary Arena

In addition to civil society experiencing a blurring of the intermediary and political arenas, it tends to focus on pursuing more formalized relationships with political institutions and seeking out opportunities for political bargaining rather than traditional advocacy. This means that organizations have less time and fewer resources for traditional outreach activity on the ground (Adshead and Tonge 2009, 139), ultimately weakening the role of civil society as a communicative link between the state and the public. For these reasons, the news media, rather than civil society, provides a strong case for studying the politicization of the EU in the intermediary arena, particularly with respect to its role as a communicative link to the political sphere for Irish citizens. As in most strong democracies, to maintain their legitimacy and objectivity Irish newspapers are non-partisan with no official relationships to political parties (O'Malley 2011, 134) and therefore are resistant to the same level of political co-option as has been witnessed with civil society. Criticism of the Irish press points out the strong relationship between journalists and members of government and the corporate sector, which ultimately led to an absence of criticism of

economic policies of the Celtic Tiger and later austerity policy, and very little coverage of any mobilization against these policies (Mercille 2015, 128). While it is true that the Irish press favours the voices of former social partners over other civil society groups, it does still reflect a communication of overall government and institutionalized civil society discourses. While it perhaps fails as a communicative link between those groups formerly on the outside of institutionalized bargaining arrangements with the state and the public, it is nevertheless an effective link between citizens and the political arena.

3.8 Conclusion

For the reasons outlined in this chapter, detailed micro-level differentiated analysis of politicization must be aware of national structural factors shaping political spheres, before comparison between national cases can be understood, and especially before the extrapolation of national results more broadly. A comparison of anti-austerity protest across member states, while important, is insufficient on its own as a measure of the contestation dimension of the politicization of European integration.

In the Irish case, while potentially an indicator of low citizen mobilization on EU-related issues, an absence of widespread anti-austerity movements and public participation in union-lead rallies is more telling of general political engagement patterns specific to Ireland as well as the political climate at the time, rather than necessarily a weakness in politicization. For this reason, political mobilization and engagement through protest, as a measure of the contestation dimension of politicization, is a complex and not necessarily a reliable indicator. Likewise, the presence of large-scale anti-austerity movements in member states such as Spain, Portugal and Greece do not necessarily provide evidence that either the EU or the euro crisis were more heavily contested in these countries, without

first a deeper interrogation into their specific character and their addressees. A brokerage-style of politics, high trust in political institutions, fractured civil society movement and legacy of social partnership in Ireland have shaped perceived opportunity structures for political contestation in such a way that points Irish citizens to individual rather than collective forms of political participation and “a pragmatic preference for social dialogue” rather than contentious politics (Geary 2016, 135).

However, the survey of Irish civil society activity presented in this chapter demonstrated that there is evidence of some degree of salience of both the crisis and the EU in the intermediary arena. Civil society groups, particularly the former social partners, due to a collaborative rather than advocacy approach to policy influence, have become heavily institutionalized and professionalized. This has included socialization in the European context of national policy-making and resulted in institutionalized links to the EU and advocacy at the EU level. Even grassroots groups who were complete outsiders to the social partnership are aware of some opportunities for political influence provided by the EU, but the scope of their knowledge of EU competencies and access to resources to institutionalize relationships with the EU level is limited. However, since the character of contestation is facilitated by opportunity structures to influence change, this chapter demonstrates that civil society in Ireland has located these in more consensual forms of claims-making and political relationships, rather than advocacy and contentious politics. The effects of this are two-fold. First, it suggests that protest is not a dominant form of political contestation of economic issues in Ireland and as such, it is not a reliable measure of EU-related contestation or lack thereof. Second, civil society’s deep but complicated relationship with the state has blurred the lines between the intermediary and political

arenas, especially in the character of political discourse we might expect to find there and potentially the character of the politicization of the EU. The character of Ireland's state-civil society relationship offers strong justification for the need to differentiate not only between political arenas in studying politicization but also between the varying ways it can be manifest in different member states. This chapter demonstrates that what is a strong indicator for politicization in one national context, for example protest activity, is not necessarily going to be a strong indicator in all member states.

Chapter 4: Mapping politicization: European integration and the Euro crisis in the Irish news media

This chapter sets out to engage with the *intermediary arena* of politicization (Hurrelmann, Gora, and Wagner 2015), more specifically focusing on the politicization of the European Union in the news media. Claes H. De Vreese writes that voters (ie. the *citizen arena* of politicization) experience electoral campaigns in one of two ways: *directly* through attending political rallies, signing petitions, debating with friends and family, and door-to-door canvassing, as well as *indirectly* as mediated by the news media (De Vreese 2010, 134), in other words, by this intermediary arena of politicization. People experience politics, even outside of elections, in very much the same way. Therefore, the coverage of EU politics in the Irish press may play an influence on how and to what extent the EU is politicized among citizens in Ireland.

Politicization patterns and trends regularly spill over from one arena to another, for example from the intermediary to the citizen arena. Regardless, we cannot assume that these arenas do not also develop and exhibit politicization patterns independently. The news media are recognized as having agenda-setting powers over broader discourse on politics, deciding which issues get more coverage and how to frame this coverage, effectively influencing the salience and priority of certain issues over others among citizens. As best put by Bernard Cohen, “the press may not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful at telling its readers what to think about” (Cohen 1963, 13). Given the evidence for agenda-setting powers in the media in existing communications literature (Cohen 1963; McCombs and Shaw 1972, 1991; McCombs

2014), a more in-depth look into the patterns of EU politicization in Irish print media is warranted.

The media are likewise subject to pressure to adapt news content to the demands and interests of its audience, to maintain sales and advertising revenue. Judgment regarding what makes it into newspapers comes down to what the given news outlets and journalists consider significant, interesting or new and is guided by a series of news values, regularly cited in journalism textbooks, which assist in evaluating the newsworthiness of a story, such as proximity, prominence, and impact (McKercher and Cumming 1998; Yopp and McAdams 2013).¹¹ These news values also provide a reference for hypotheses regarding expectations of the visibility of EU issues in the Irish press, a key ingredient of politicization:

- *Proximity*: EU-related stories are more likely to be picked by the media when there is a clear local (Irish) connection, such as EU meetings occurring in Ireland, or EU-level developments involving an Irish politician.
- *Prominence*: EU related stories are more likely to be picked up by the media when they involve prominent, particularly executive-level actors (Irish, EU-level, or national executive actors in other member states). However, it is also important to note that an assessment of prominence in relation to EU-related news coverage is heavily determined on media professionals' own knowledge of "who is important and influential in EU policy circles" (Koopmans 2007, 207).
- *Impact*: EU-related stories are more likely to be picked up by the media if the news in question will have a direct effect on the lives of its readers, especially financially.

It should be noted that these news values are not abstract concepts needed to understand

¹¹ According to Horgan, McNamara and O'Sullivan (2007), streamlined journalistic education only appeared in Ireland in the early 1990s resulting in a lack of Irish teaching material. Consequently, journalism programs at Irish universities are under a heavy influence of textbooks from North America and Britain, such as the ones cited above in relation to news values.

‘esoteric’ media logic, but they touch on the core factors behind what people find interesting. This makes them invaluable to news media, which need to attract readership to stay afloat, but also, to the next chapter of this dissertation when trying to understand which issues it is that Irish citizens, themselves care about. Overall, these three news values can inform our understanding of the unsurprisingly generally lower salience of EU issues in national media in comparison to coverage of national parliamentary politics, for instance.

Additionally, there is research that suggests that the news agenda, particularly one driven by the consumer market for information and sales, tends to favour bad news, drama and conflict in its storytelling (McIntyre 2016; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). In politicization studies, Anna Leupold’s *crisis impact hypothesis* that “the worse a national economy is during the euro crisis, the higher the salience of politicization in a country,” (Leupold 2016, 87) parallels similar observations in communications studies of the news value of bad news, particularly that which relates to the economy. In his study of Irish journalism leading up to and during the crisis, Mark O’Brien (2015) interviewed numerous Irish financial journalists. One of his interview subjects noted that in Ireland, “financial journalism has become much more closely read in the last two years, in my opinion – partly as people try to understand what happened, but also because newspapers are pushing financial news more – bad news sells” (O’Brien 2015, 82). As pointed out in chapter three, the Celtic Tiger years experienced a rapid shift from a largely agricultural society to one that saw growing numbers of small businesses and entrepreneurs and increasing numbers of Irish becoming home owners during the building boom that came with it. This dramatically increased the proportion of stakeholders with an interest in understanding the crisis better, as more people fell victim to its effects through home devaluation and

excessive debt, for instance. Combined with the media's favouring of 'bad news,' this economic crisis had particularly strong reasons to be visible in the news. Following this logic, the role of increased salience of the EU, in the context of the economics of the euro crisis or Irish financial crisis should be taken as a weaker sign of EU politicization, than peaks in non-economic coverage, that might include spillover of the crisis into social and political issues or reporting entirely unrelated to the crisis. Likewise, the less likely scenario of peaks in coverage that lacks proximity to Ireland involves a broader scope of actors, or has a less clear direct effect on Irish citizens, provides stronger evidence of politicization, than those, which are in line with these three common news values.

Considering these basic premises of news values, we can expect, as some research to date has indeed observed (Grande and Hutter 2016; Leupold 2016) to see an increase in media interest in and therefore potential politicization of EU issues relating to political events connected to the euro crisis and the Irish Financial crisis. Likewise, we might expect some increased interest in EU politics relating to Brexit, with news of David Cameron's draft EU referendum bill in May 2013. The strongest evidence of EU politicization in the news media, is that which exists outside of and despite traditional news values, such as reporting on social and political issues during peak moments of the economic crises, politics in other member states relating to the EU, and general reporting on EU policy issues separate from the crisis. The analysis over the next two chapters differentiates between commentary about the euro and Irish crises that were explicitly about the economics of them, for example those about national debt, interest rates for the bailout, and changes in GDP, as opposed to obvious discourse around spillover of the crises into other socio-political issues such as migration, and entirely unrelated issues, for instance the

selection of a new Irish Commissioner. It investigates whether heightened interest in the crisis spilled over into a heightened salience of other issues, or whether any initially assumed increase in the salience and ultimately politicization of the EU might, in fact, represent a politicization of the crises only. If the crisis politicized issues that spilled over into discussions of other topics, its effects have the potential to be longer lasting than if only the strict economics of the euro crisis become politicized. For purposes of simplification, discourse specifically relating to the economics of each crisis, and not any economic spill-over into other issue areas, will be referred to as ‘economic.’ Likewise, discourse on any issues not explicitly tied to the economics of the crisis, including spillover effects of the crisis into other socio-political issues and consequences will be termed ‘non-economic.’ Finally, significant references to EU institutions and actors not directly associated with any political or economic crisis would prove equally significant. Because increased references to the European Central Bank and European Commission, key players in the ‘Troika,’ are expected in relation to the crisis, reporting that mentions the European Parliament or Court of Justice of the European Union, for example, is a more significant indicator of politicization.

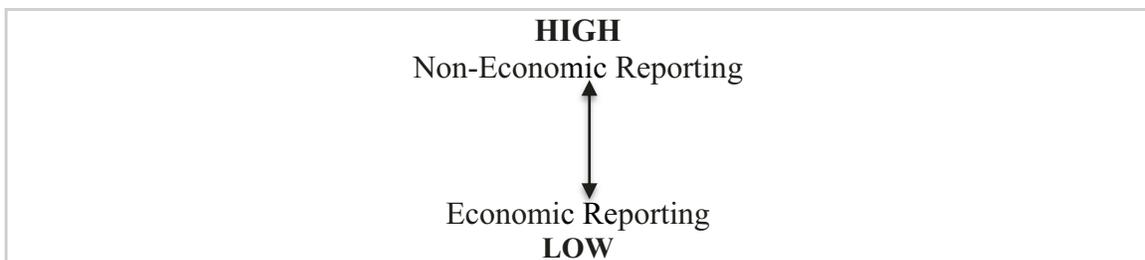


Figure 9 – Central indicator of level of politicization, specific to analysis during the euro crisis

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the Irish press landscape followed by an outline of the methodology applied to the media analysis. It then proceeds to analyze

the degree of politicization of the EU in relation to intensification, understood as visibility, the scope of objects and actors, and to the contestation of EU-issues. The central indicator of politicization consistently applied to the media analysis relates to the relative share of the reporting that is economic, as compared to non-economic reporting (see Figure 9). The share of economic reporting as an indicator complements additional indicators specific to the individual features of politicization studied: salience, scope, and contestation. The objective of this chapter is twofold: first, to provide insight into the degree of politicization of the EU during this period of the economic crises, and variances over time, and second, to map out how the discourse on the EU evolved during this time.

4.1 The Irish Press

The following analysis of Irish media focuses on two national Irish dailies: the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times*. As in other Western countries, newspaper readership has been steadily declining. However, the Joint National Researcher Survey, estimates eighty-four percent of people in Ireland during 2012-2013, the latter half of the period analyzed here, regularly read a print or digital newspaper, and an estimated eighty-one percent regularly read a print edition of a newspaper.¹² Additionally, even with the growing popularity of alternative news sources, and particularly social media and user-driven news sources, evidence suggests that ‘quality’ national newspapers still serve an inter-media agenda-setting function over what is picked up as news by other newspapers, television and new media sources (Golan, 2006: 331). A 2015 study of Irish media coverage of the

¹² See << <http://newsbrandsireland.ie/84-of-the-adult-population-regularly-read-newspapers/>>>

European Economic Crisis by Julien Mercille identifies the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*, alongside their corresponding Sunday editions, as playing such an inter-media agenda-setting role in Ireland. He writes, “they shape to a great extent what other news outlets cover in print and on radio and television, and thus play an important role in determining the nature of public debate,” in Ireland (Mercille 2015, 3).

Despite a growing number of foreign media products, particularly British newspapers and tabloids (O’Regan 2010, 447), the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* remain the country’s two main national quality dailies. The *Irish Independent* is Ireland’s bestselling national daily newspaper with a circulation of 117,361 by the end of 2013 and estimated daily readership levels, of both print and digital editions¹³ at 666 thousand. It is owned by Independent News Media (INM), an Irish global media company, that already in 2006, owned or partially owned eighty percent of newspapers sold in Ireland. Recently, INM has come under scrutiny in the European Parliament over Irish billionaire businessman Denis O’Brien’s significant minority share in the company, which he has actively used in attempts to influence media in his interest (Gallagher and Booth 2016, 4-5). This, alongside INM’s ownership of numerous other Irish publications, may act to reinforce the *Irish Independent*’s inter-media agenda-setting role.

The *Irish Times*, Ireland’s oldest national newspaper, is considered to be the country’s leading quality daily (Treutschler 2007, 34) and “national newspaper of reference” (Brady 2005, 63). By the end of 2013, it had a daily print circulation of 82,058

¹³ Note: Estimated readership figures reflect readership of print editions as well as digital versions of the print editions available on a paid/subscription basis. This data does not include readership of newspapers’ free online content.

and an estimated daily readership, of both print and digital editions of 385,000.¹⁴ Since 1974 it has been owned by an independent non-profit trust with a mandate to secure it as “an independent newspaper primarily concerned with serious issues for the benefit of the community throughout the whole of Ireland, free from any form of personal or party political, commercial, religious or other sectional control” (www.irishtimes.com/about-us/the-irish-times-trust#trust). While the *Irish Examiner* boasts higher circulation than the *Irish Times*, it is excluded here because despite being available across the Republic of Ireland, it is a regional newspaper catering to Cork and its surrounding area. The *Irish Times* is Ireland’s liberal national daily, akin to the *Guardian* in the United Kingdom, while the *Irish Independent* has a more conservative leaning.

4.2 Methodology

This chapter approaches the media analysis more broadly than previous claims-based studies of the politicization of the EU in the media (See Hurrelmann, et. al. 2016; Koopmans and Statham 2010; Statham and Trenz 2013; Wendler 2013), which focused exclusively on political conflict or contestation. Issue salience and the scope of coverage are key components of politicization as it is conceptualized by this project, in addition to conflict or polarization. As a result, this analysis uses a two-pronged approach. First, an article-level analysis of all EU related articles, regardless of whether or not they contain political claims, is used to investigate overall levels of the salience of the EU and the scope of the coverage about the EU. Second, a more detailed claims-based analysis of individual

¹⁴ Data collected by News Brands Ireland, the representative body for the Irish newspaper industry. See: Circulation data at: [>>](http://newsbrandsireland.ie/data-centre/circulation/) and readership data at: [>>](http://newsbrandsireland.ie/data-centre/readership/)

statements containing political claims (evaluations, demands, and proposals) and speculations/forecasts is conducted to investigate the polarization of the EU in the Irish press. Articles were selected based on a search of the terms “*eu OR europ* OR eurozone*” in the Factiva database and then filtered manually to keep only those which contained an EU-related reference in the headline or lead paragraph. The media analysis covers eight one-week time periods between 2010 and 2013 corresponding with the dates of the biannual Eurobarometer surveys:

2010	May 14-20 November 18-24	2011	May 10-16 November 8-14
2012	May 16-22 November 8-14	2013	May 15-21 November 6-12

The article-level analysis looked at a total of 629 individual EU-related articles (ie. 326 articles from the *Irish Times* and 253 articles from the *Irish independent*) based on the following main qualitative categories, in addition to a quantitative analysis of references to specific EU actors (see annex for complete coding scheme):

- *Article type*: The analysis distinguished between news briefs, news stories, and feature stories.
- *Overall topic of the article*: Articles were coded based on the overall topic distinguishing between economic issues (ie. European Monetary Union, Eurozone crisis, Irish financial crisis, Irish economy unrelated to the crisis) and non-economic issues (ie. Irish domestic politics, domestic politics of other member states, and EU internal politics, external politics, constitutional issues, membership and enlargement, structural and institutional issues).
- *References to politics in other EU member states*: Articles were coded to identify whether they mentioned national politics related to the EU in other member states.

Visibility is a central component to the media’s ability to affect citizens, and the most likely to be strongly affected by news values. It is a central concept tested by this project,

particularly in looking at the Irish press. However, articles are counted toward this analysis using a more restricted approach than Hutter, Grande, and Kriesi (2016, 52) where articles were selected if they contained “at least one relevant core sentence related to European integration.” This project selected only those articles that make an EU-related reference in the headline or lead paragraph as this is an indicator of cases where an EU-related issue is the core subject of the article. Such articles provide a higher indicator of visibility of EU-related issues as they filter out reporting in which the EU is only referenced in passing. Generally, if an article is on an EU-related topic, there is some EU-level reference in its headline or the lead paragraph.

The statement-level analysis looked at a total of 512 individual EU-related articles from among those in the article-level analysis that contained a political claim or speculation (i.e. 334 articles from the *Irish Times* and 178 articles from the *Irish Independent*). Political claims are defined as expressions of opinion “related to institutions or processes of collective decision-making” (Hurrelmann, et. al. 2016, 2). Not all articles selected for the article level analysis contained a political claim or speculation, but individual articles could contain one to three political claims that were coded. Individual statements were coded using categories adapted from the main structure of Hurrelmann et.al.’s. “The Politicization of European Integration. Codebook for the Analysis of Political Claims in the News Media” (Hurrelmann et.al. 2016; Hurrelmann and Wagner 2017), with subcategories adjusted to the needs of this dissertation. The analysis is based on the following main qualitative categories identifying relevant components of the structure of each claim or speculation:

- *Speaker*: This category identifies the author or the speaker of the individual statement/political claim. In cases of opinion pieces, the speaker is usually the

journalist. In other cases, top-level categories distinguished between Irish state actors, other member state actors, EU-level actors, and civil society/interest group actors, further distinguishing between those Ireland, and external actors.

- *Addressee*: This category is used in cases when statements/claims are directed at another actor. Top-level categories distinguished between EU-level actors, national Irish actors, other member state actors and non-governmental actors.
- *Object*: This category identifies the topic or overall aspect of the EU-related politics relevant to the statement being made (not necessarily corresponding to the topic of the overall article). Top-level categories distinguished between politics related to integration and membership issues, constitutional and institutional issues, internal policy, external policy, Irish domestic affairs linked to the EU, and domestic affairs in other member states, linked to the EU.
- *Evaluation*: This category distinguishes between claims that include positive or negative evaluations, as well as statements offering a prediction, speculation or forecast concerning an EU-related object.
- *Demand*: This category is used to classify political claims with demands for either change, or no change based on the object area to which they correspond: integration and membership, constitutional and institutional issues, EU policy, and internal politics.

4.3 Salience

This section evaluates the salience of EU politics within national daily newspapers in the context of the agenda-setting function of the mass media. Pieter de Wilde, in developing a general definition of politicization refers to this as *intensification*. He writes, “The more an issue is discussed, the more politicized it becomes” (de Wilde 2011, 567). The extent to which an issue is salient in the media may be measured by its visibility, referring to the frequency of reports or articles dedicated to it and by the depth of the coverage. How this content is structured concerning the type of article, and overall space dedicated to EU reporting is just as significant as the frequency of articles dedicated to an issue. How salient the EU is to the press, is not only an initial indicator of its politicization

levels in this arena but also has significant consequences on the way it is presented to and received by its audience. There is a general consensus among scholars who study the agenda-setting function of the media (McCombs 2014; McCombs and Shaw 1991; Wanta and Ghanem 2009) that people do tend to think about what they read or hear and that what journalists select as newsworthy, and how they choose to report on it, does affect which issues catch citizens' attention. Therefore, at the most basic level, we expect that for the European Union to be politicized in the Irish press, there must exist some level of news coverage of the EU and EU-related issues. Likewise, for the media to have agenda-setting effects over politicization of the EU at the citizen arena, it is necessary at the minimum, for the EU to be visible in its coverage. At a minimum, Irish print media studied must be receptive to EU-related issues and events for them to be considered politicized. The salience of the EU to the news media will be measured by its overall visibility in the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*.

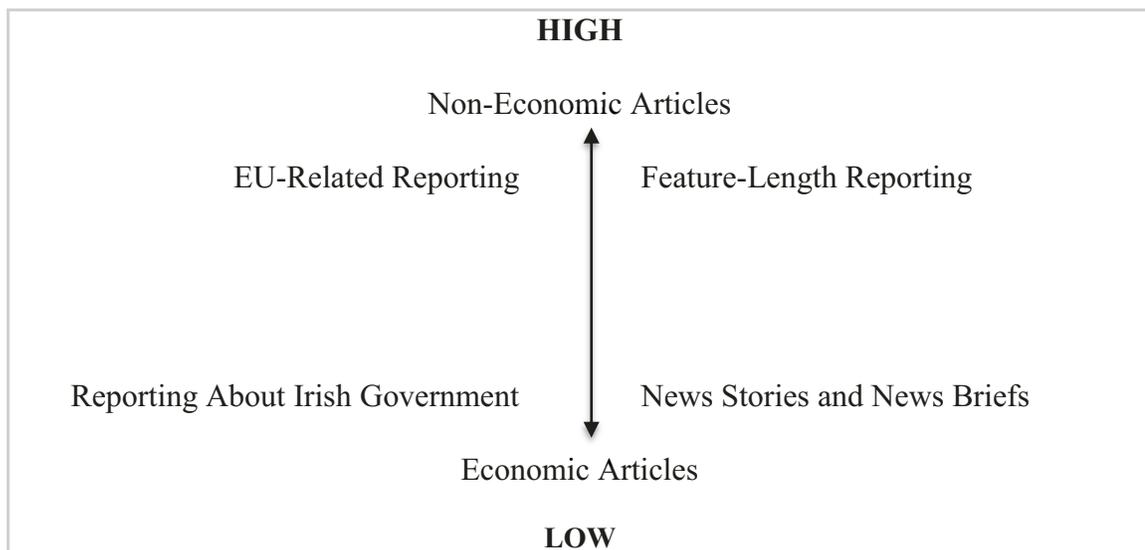


Figure 10 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to visibility

Considering that the EU was a key actor during the Irish financial crisis, its institutions composing two-thirds of the ‘Troika’ group behind the Irish bailout, and that

the Euro crisis, in consequences and implications, transcended the EU political arena, the distinction between economic (crisis) and non-economic EU-related reporting, serves as a core measure of the visibility of the EU in the news media (see Figure 10). Therefore, observations specific to non-economic reporting connected to the EU provide insight into a deeper form of politicization, than those relating to economic issues alone. Second, building on the news value of proximity, the more reporting there is relating to the EU compared to entirely national reporting about the Irish government, despite its lower everyday proximity to Irish citizens, the higher its visibility and the greater politicization. In addition to the frequency of EU-related reporting, the depth of reporting on EU-related issues is also central to evaluating its visibility in the press. This analysis distinguishes between feature-length reporting, consisting of articles greater than 651 words in length, news briefs, consisting of articles below 250 words and news stories, which generally range between 250 and 650 words in a typical daily newspaper. Generally, the higher the frequency of feature-length news stories about EU-related issues, the more in-depth the reporting on them, and greater their visibility.

Overall, while there are several moments of intensification in the frequency of EU related articles there is no overall upward trend in the number of articles devoted to EU issues over time. The visibility of the EU in the news media appears to be sensitive to major political events or decisions that the media picks up as newsworthy, rather than it becoming more visible over time. The same time periods that display peaks in frequency of EU-related reporting (see Figure 11), with the addition of November 2013, are also the periods where the number of EU-related articles exceeds those related to the Irish federal government. These time periods reflect news interest that falls into two overall thematic

frames: (1) major *economic* events and developments related to the Irish Financial crisis and Euro crisis, and (2) contested *domestic Irish* political developments, with a connection to the European Union. The key political developments during the periods displaying peaks in EU-related reporting include the following:

- *November 2010*: EU and IMF officials arrive in Ireland the Troika agrees to a three-year rescue package for Ireland.
- *November 2011*: The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) adopts the ‘Six Pack’ of legislative proposals aimed at strengthening economic governance in the EU and Mario Draghi takes over as president of the ECB.
- *May 2012*: The leadup to the Irish referendum on the Fiscal Compact of May 31st and the first news of David Cameron’s pledge for a referendum on EU membership.

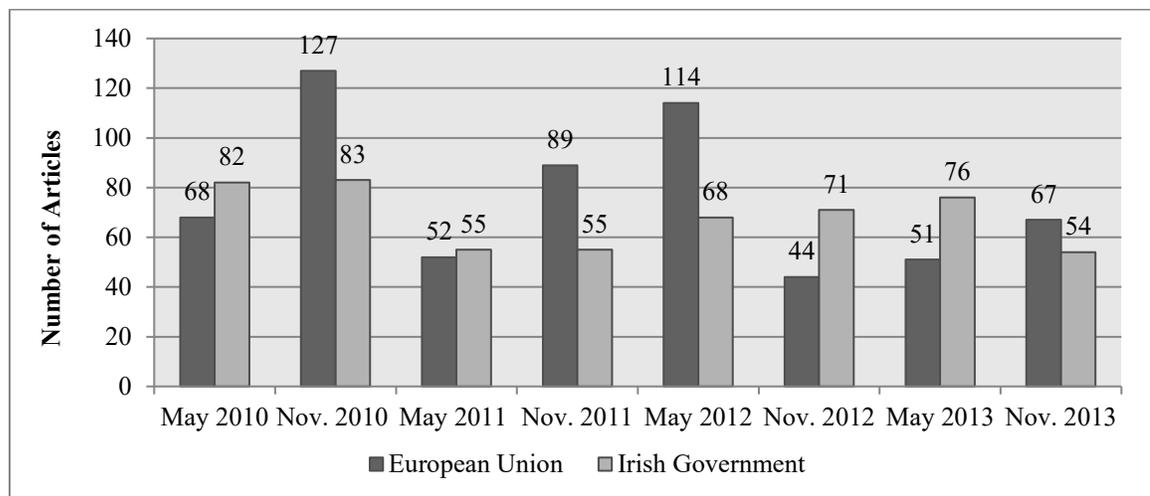


Figure 11 – Total number of EU -related versus Irish government-related articles by period

Figure 11¹⁵ illustrates the total number of EU related articles by period, compared to a benchmark of articles on Irish government. EU-related coverage displays greater variance in frequency of reporting than media coverage of the Irish national government. This suggests that media coverage of EU issues (ranging between 44 and 127 articles during each one-week period) is more sensitive to high profile events or controversy than reporting which focuses exclusively on Ireland, which is overall much more consistent (ranging from 55 to 82 articles during each one-week period). Considering the overall proximity of the Irish political system and its decisions to Irish citizens, over EU politics, this observation is not surprising. However, excluding those periods which exhibited spikes in the frequency of EU-related articles, coverage of the Irish government exceeds coverage of the EU by at most 33.5 percent, with frequencies of articles about the EU equaling at least 66.2 percent of national government coverage during the same period. As it is expected that national government politics will hold greater salience than EU politics simply due to their proximity to citizens, it is significant that the EU's visibility is only slightly lower than that of Irish government in its two major national daily newspapers, and even has the ability to exceed coverage of government with an appropriate trigger.

Differentiating between articles on economic and non-economic topics (see Figure 12) reveals that the observed greater variance in the frequency of EU-related reporting in contrast to that on Irish government-related reporting over time is largely caused by

¹⁵ *'EU-related articles'* refers to all articles with an EU reference in the headline or lead paragraph (i.e.. EU institutions or institutional figures, EU Treaties, EU policies and the EU as such). *'Irish government related articles'* refers to all articles referencing Tánaiste, Seanad, Dáil, Taoiseach, or Oireachtas in the headline or lead paragraph.

variance in articles on economic topics. Non-economic reporting shows a significant amount of stability over time, with the exception of one spike during the campaign period ahead of the Irish referendum on the fiscal compact in May 2012. This period also stands out as being the only one of the three with noticeable spikes in reporting on the EU, which does not display a significant majority of articles dedicated to economic issues. Just over half of the media coverage in May 2012 had a non-economic focus, making it one of only two time periods of the eight included in this study¹⁶ where non-economic reporting exceeded economic articles, albeit marginally. However marginal the difference to non-economic reporting during this time, May 2012 reported the second highest frequency of articles on EU-related topics largely as a result of this heightened interest in non-economic developments, in this case, the Irish referendum. This indicates that newspaper reporting leading up to Ireland's referendum on the Fiscal Compact was primarily framed in a political rather than economic manner.

¹⁶ Periods with non-economic reporting exceeding economic-focused reporting include: May 2012 (50.9%) and May 2013 (68.4%).

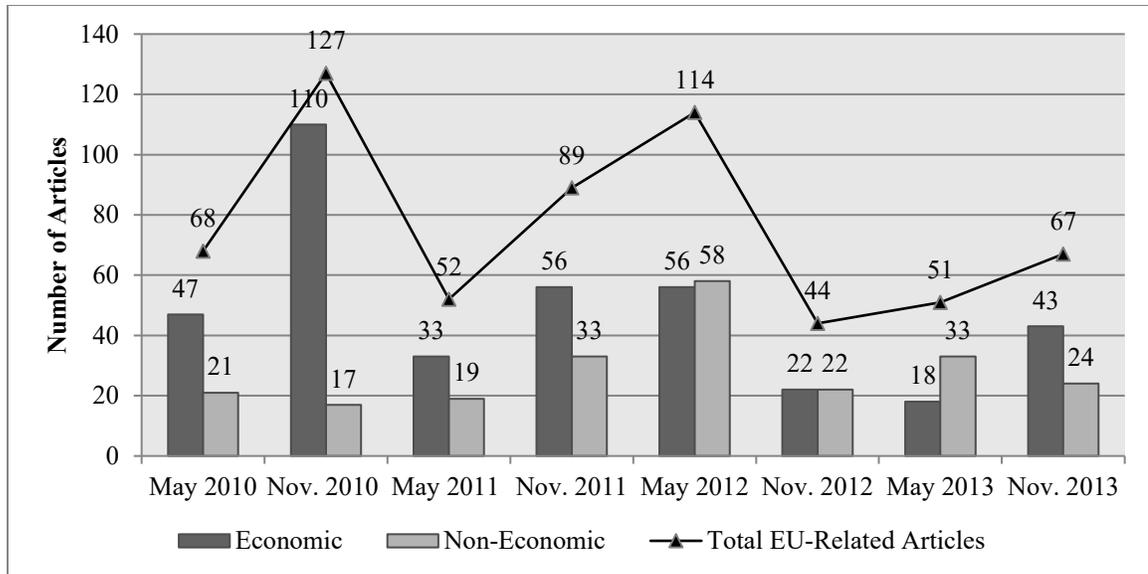


Figure 12 – Frequency of economic and non-economic themed articles, over time.

May 2013, which coincides with the Irish presidency of the European Council, does not result in a significant increase in overall EU-related reporting. It is, however, the only period where non-economic coverage in EU-related reporting exceeds reporting related to the economy with a large margin (at about 65 percent of EU-related articles for that period). This indicates that crisis-related milestones have a stronger effect on the media’s interest in the European Union overall than do significant moments of Irish participation in EU politics that are not necessarily linked to national democratic processes such as referendums, or crisis-related developments. In contrast to the spike in non-economic coverage in May 2013, in nearly all of the remaining time periods, articles that report on economic issues comprise the majority of reporting (see Figure 12).¹⁷ This indicates that while the media was sensitive to Ireland’s EU presidency, it was so in place of reporting on the economy, rather than increasing the coverage of EU-related issues overall. This

¹⁷ During the May 2012 time period, non-economic articles exceed economic ones by less than two percentage points.

shows preliminary evidence that while EU-related politics beyond the Irish financial and Euro crises do not show significant increases in the frequency of reporting over time since 2010, the nature of the reporting that does exist indicates that Irish media are in fact receptive to EU-related politics, as is reflected by the content of the news coverage in the two newspapers analyzed. Thus, we observe that both economic and national democratic triggers can increase the visibility of the EU with respect to the frequency of reporting. However, political events related to national democratic processes that involve citizens such as a referendum, even when linked to the Euro crisis, are capable of maintaining a political discourse that is separate from the economics of the crisis.

An analysis of more specific issue topics composing the larger economic/non-economic distinction will be elaborated in the discussion on the *scope* of reporting. Furthermore, the general stability in the frequency of EU-related reporting that is not economic in nature suggests that these newspapers have a pre-established amount of space dedicated to coverage of EU issues, separate from any effects of the crisis, which is a further indicator of the media's receptiveness to EU issues (de Wilde and Zürn, 2012: 144). Such reporting displayed the greatest increase in frequency in relation to 'yes' and 'no' campaigns for the referendum on the Fiscal Compact. This, while a possible sign of a high salience of EU constitutional issues, is likely also largely an effect of the media's fulfillment of its democratic role as a source of information for voters. Democratic processes hold great *proximity* to consumers of these newspapers, as they directly involve them, and their results generally have a clear and transparent *impact* on them.

The type of coverage, which is linked to the amount of space and attention dedicated to EU-related issues beyond just the total number of EU-related articles, is also

central to understanding the visibility of EU issues in the Irish print media. Several news briefs, while increasing the overall article count, display issue visibility to a lesser degree than a single feature-length story, which may be spread out across one or two pages in a newspaper. Most of the reporting in the *Irish Times* and *Irish independent* can be classified as standard news stories (i.e. 62.9 percent of economic reporting and 59.8 percent of non-economic reporting among coded articles between May 2010 and November 2013). Overall, feature-length reporting indicates the highest depth of coverage, and news briefs indicate the lowest.

The proportion of non-economic themed articles that were of feature-length rather than news briefs or news articles was higher than for economic articles for reporting in half of the time periods studied (see *Table 4*). Of these, three periods, from May 2012 through May 2013, were characterized by having at least half of all their EU-related reporting focused on non-economic topics. Except for May 2011, the overall economic or non-economic direction of reporting that generated the highest proportion of newspaper articles was also more likely to be written about in greater depth. May 2011 was unique because the release of Ireland's National Reform Program for the Europe 2020 scheme around the time of Europe Day and just six months after Ireland's bailout generated some in-depth reporting evaluating Ireland's membership in the European project. This accounts for the marginally higher frequency of feature-length reporting among non-economic content. However, there was overall much less non-economic reporting during those periods. In general, apart from May 2012, which was dominated by coverage of the campaigns for the Irish referendum on the Fiscal Compact, the remaining periods with a higher propensity for non-economic feature-length reporting were generally also those with the lowest

frequency of EU-related reporting overall. There were no major developments relating to either crisis around that time, and economic reporting was more likely to be basic informational news reporting. In the remainder of the analysis, economically themed articles had a higher proportion of feature-length articles with generally a larger margin than non-economic articles in the previous periods. The media is thus more likely to take an in-depth interest in EU-related articles in a non-economic direction when the overall coverage does not see a single-issue dominated spike in reporting.

May 2010, which featured talk of a Greek bailout, Ireland deep in banking crisis, and an emergency Euro Summit at the beginning of the month, displayed the highest incidence of feature-length reporting among both economic and non-economic coverage. These feature articles, while not reacting to a single trigger event or decision, took place over a period of generally heightened tension regarding the Irish, Greek, and Portuguese economies, increasing concern about the Euro, and in the six-month aftermath of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty following the second Irish referendum. The general topics of the feature-length reporting during May 2010 reflect these themes. This is observed in a heightened spike in feature stories both economic and non-economic in focus. Therefore, the increasing tension regarding the Irish and Eurozone economies at this time, while not necessarily inspiring more frequency in EU-related reporting, did inspire more in-depth coverage of EU-related issues.

Table 4 – Distribution of economically and non-economically themed reporting by type of article and overall articles.

		May 2010	Nov. 2010	May 2011	Nov. 2011	May 2012	Nov. 2012	May 2013	Nov. 2013
% of total EU-related articles:	<i>Economic</i>	69.1	86.6	63.5	62.9	49.1	50.0	35.3	64.2
	<i>Non-Economic</i>	30.9	13.4	36.5	37.1	50.9	50.0	64.7	35.8
% of economic articles that are feature-length:		36.2	33.6	15.2	32.1	25.0	18.2	22.2	30.2

<i>% of non-economic articles that are feature-length:</i>	33.3	17.6	19.0	29.4	26.7	24.0	30.8	18.5
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The general level of coverage of the EU has therefore been evaluated by considering both the depth and frequency of reporting on economic and non-economic issues relating to EU politics. Overall visibility can be measured by the average number of words per EU-related article, thereby accounting for both the depth and visibility of economic and non-economic EU issues in the two newspapers. At 564 words per article between 2010 and 2013, economic articles take up on average eighty words more per article than non-economic reporting relating to the EU (484 words/article). Looking across all time periods (see Figure 13) the visibility of non-economic reporting exceeds economic reporting in just May 2011 and May 2012, and only by a small margin. May 2013 had a slightly higher proportion of non-economic reporting and more feature-length articles than economic reporting during that same period. However, due to a spike in non-economic news briefs, at 30.8 percent of all non-economic articles, the highest of any period, the overall visibility of non-economic reporting during that period suffers. Overall, the variance in visibility in terms of space dedicated to EU over time is relatively stable; more so than newspaper coverage measured article count alone. While the frequency of coverage may vary, the visibility of this coverage remains on average fairly stable. This observation is in line with standard news-stories composing the majority of reporting on EU-related issues, with economic issues dedicated slightly more attention, per article, than non-economic ones.

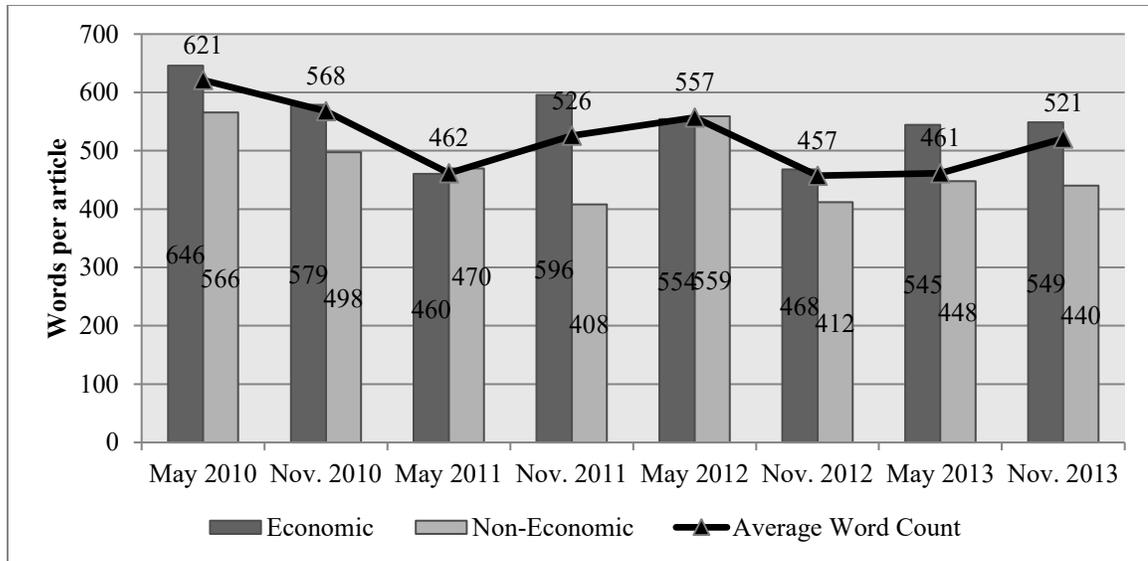


Figure 13 – Overall Visibility of economic versus non-economic EU-related reporting

To conclude, the above data shows that coverage of the EU can exceed that which relates strictly to the Irish government, given an adequate situational context that is in line with traditional news values. As can be expected, the Irish press is receptive to EU constitutional changes, at least when there is a national context, such as a referendum. Much of the visibility of the EU during the financial crisis in Ireland was economic, particularly during periods of intensified reporting on the EU, with the exception of May 2012, during the lead up to the Irish referendum on the Fiscal Compact. These observations are in line with Kriesi and Grande’s observations, relating to media debates in EU creditor countries, that while some intensification of EU politicization did occur during the euro crisis, there were no pronounced peaks of politicization as was seen during previous integration debates, such as the lead up to the Maastricht Treaty (Kriesi and Grande 2016: 242). The individual moments of intensification that did occur during the period studied are a result of increased reporting on economic topics and likely reflect some level of politicization of the crisis, rather than the EU as such. The EU in a non-economic context appears higher on the news agenda in cases of national democratic processes than other

issues, even in cases of ‘bad news’ or negative developments. However, the more nuanced observations outlined in this section demonstrate that while the EU may not necessarily show a ‘high’ level of salience during these four years spanning the crisis, the EU is still surprisingly salient within the Irish press, even allowing coverage of EU issues to exceed coverage of the national government with appropriate triggers. Coverage unrelated to the crisis is generally stable over time and is not pushed aside in favour of reporting on the Euro crisis. The increased visibility of the EU in the Irish press that resulted from the crisis did not have a noticeable effect on the levels of EU-related reporting outside of the coverage of the crisis.

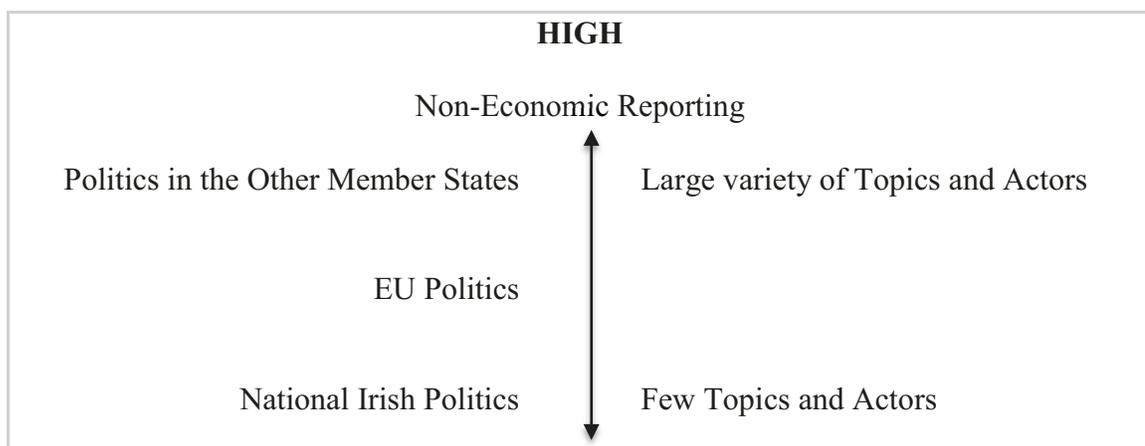
4.4 Scope

This section builds on the analysis of salience and proceeds to evaluate the scope of reporting about the European Union in the Irish press. While salience was measured by the visibility of the EU in general, the analysis of the scope of this coverage moves into a more in-depth breakdown of which EU-related topics and actors appear most frequently in EU related reporting in Ireland. Scope, as an ingredient of politicization, has been studied by EU scholars in the context of the expansion of actors involved either as claimants or addressees in EU-related conflict or claims-making (see de Wilde et.al. 2016; Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter and Kerscher 2014; Kriesi 2016) and will be further elaborated in this context when discussing polarization. However, at the article level, the overall depth of reporting depends not only on how visible the EU is but also the scope of overall topics of EU-related reporting and the scope of references to EU actors and institutions.

The analysis takes as a departure point, Habermas’ ideal-type of a European public sphere necessary for democratic legitimacy, whereby national media “takes[s] up and

comment[s] on the substance of controversies being conducted in other member countries” (Habermas 2006, 103). For Habermas’, European public sphere, it is not sufficient for national media to be Europeanized, or in other words, for EU issues to be salient in national news media. National public spheres in member states must also be open to and receptive to one another.

Thus, as illustrated below in Figure 14, article topics, which focus on politics in other member states, in this context, would represent the strongest evidence of politicization, compared to reporting that is focused exclusively internally on Ireland or the supranationally on the EU. Additionally, the higher the repertoire of EU-related topics covered by the media, and the less reporting is dominated by a single overall topic, the more intensely politicized the EU is in Irish media as more dimensions of it are given visibility in the press. Finally, non-economic reporting, during a period when the economic crisis in Europe was at its peak, provides stronger evidence of politicization than economic reporting which is expected to be high given the proximity of its consequences on the everyday life of these newspapers’ core audience and the national Irish economy.



Economic Reporting

LOW

Figure 14 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to the scope of coverage

In examining the scope of reporting on the EU, this section first examines it in the context of the expansion of topics relating to the EU in media discourse. Taking into account the news value of the two overlapping economic crises, and the crisis impact hypothesis, articles about economic EU-related topics are treated as weaker evidence of EU politicization than are non-economic articles. Article topics are also distinguished based on whether they discuss a variety of topics at the EU level, national Irish level, or politics in other EU member states. The more internally focused an article topic is on Ireland, despite EU references, the weaker the evidence of politicization that it provides, in contrast to articles moving beyond the news value of proximity and focusing outwardly on exclusively EU-level topics, and even more so on national politics linked to the EU in other member states. Additionally, a more extensive variety of article topics indicates a stronger politicization of the EU than reporting where one or two core topic areas dominate.

4.4.1 Overall Topic of Article

An analysis of the overall topics of EU-related articles during the 2010 to 2013 periods provides a first look into whether the reported heightened media spotlight on the EU (ex. Hutter and Kerscher 2014; Hoeglinger 2016; Leupold 2016; Statham and Trenz 2013a: 153) was simply a product of reporting on the euro crisis and related national economic crises, or a heightened interest in the EU more generally. It is also a first look into what the rest of EU-related reporting during this period focused on despite the ongoing economic crises. A simple word frequency count of all EU-related reporting during the time periods studied indicates that the economy dominated the Irish media's interest in the

EU at the time of the Irish debt crisis and the euro crisis. ‘Banks’ and related words (i.e. bank, banking) were the fourth most frequently occurring words overall (0.88%) and the top most frequently cited words in 2010, the year of the Irish bailout (1.34%). Words such as ‘banks,’ ‘markets,’ ‘debts,’ ‘funds,’ ‘euro,’ ‘crisis,’ ‘financing,’ and other economic vocabulary dominate a search of the twenty-five most frequently occurring words in the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* during the periods studied. Taking into account the proximity of the Irish debt crisis and euro crisis to the everyday lives of Irish citizens, as well as the economic impact of these crises, and the prominence of the actors involved (i.e. Irish government, IMF, European Central Bank) it is unsurprising that economic issues dominated Irish reporting at the time. However, despite the dominance of these issues, it is still valuable to take a closer look at the relationships in trends between specific economic and non-economic topics of EU-related articles, as well as the proximity of recurring topics to national Irish issues.

Individual articles were coded on the basis of the general topic of the contribution as a whole. The coding distinguished between thirteen distinct topics of EU-related reporting at both the domestic and European levels, as well as distinguishing between topics related to the Irish or euro crises, and those separate from them:

- The Euro / Eurozone Crisis
- EMU (not related to the crisis): This included articles relating to EMU that did not have a strong emphasis on, or link to the euro crisis, such as interest rate changes, and new designs for euro banknotes.
- The Irish Financial / Debt Crisis
- Irish Economy (not related to the crisis)
- Domestic Politics (Ireland): This included articles about Irish politics with a link to the EU, such as national implementation of EU policy and regulations, and the performance of Irish politicians at EU Council meetings.

- Domestic Politics (EU other): This category included articles about EU-related domestic politics in other member states.
- EU Internal Politics
- EU External Politics
- EU Constitutional Issues
- EU Structural and Institutional Issues
- EU membership issues
- Other – Non-EU: This code was used for articles that were about politics unrelated to the EU, but with an EU focus. For examples, this included articles about the politics in third countries with references to EU-level actors' statements towards politics in these countries.
- Other. This was used for cases that did not fit into the above topics.

Overall, the Eurozone crisis followed by the Irish financial crisis were the most frequently occurring topics relating to EU politics covered by the Irish Times and Irish Independent from 2010 to 2013 (at 31.3 percent and 25.8 percent, respectively). Consequently, crisis-related articles account for over half of EU-related coverage during this period, followed by Irish domestic politics at just 14.9 percent. The following three most common topics, EU internal politics (8.7 percent), EU external politics (5.4 percent), and EU constitutional issues (3.7 percent) indicate that there is a higher interest in policy-related news, rather than questions regarding constitutional issues, or the function, size and general idea of European integration. This is unsurprising given the higher effect of concrete policy issues on the everyday lives of citizens, and the increased accessibility of political debate, versus structural or ideological debate on the EU. Policy issues are also more likely to be connected to political events, increasing their newsworthiness. Despite EU-related topics (i.e. EU internal politics, EU external politics, EU constitutional issues, EU membership issues and EU structural issues) each occupying nine percent or less of total EU-related

articles, combined coverage of EU internal and external politics (at 14.1 percent) is nearly equal to that of domestic Irish politics.

While it is unsurprising that the two economic crises dominated EU-related reporting, it is significant that general EU policy-related reporting that is not explicitly linked to national Irish politics was covered with nearly equal frequency to EU related-domestic politics in Ireland. Additionally, despite the Irish financial crisis having a higher resonance among Irish citizens in their everyday lives, the Euro crisis was covered with higher frequency among EU-related articles.¹⁸ This provides partial evidence toward the argument that the politicization of the EU in Ireland was not insignificant during this time.

4.4.2 Article Topics, Over Time

When examining the topics of EU-related media coverage over time, observations reflect overall trends. From among the three most frequently reported article topics overall (ie. Euro/Eurozone crisis, and Irish financial/debt crisis, and Irish domestic politics), at least two remain in the top three for each of the eight periods, and in half of these periods all three remain, albeit in varying orders. The topic of EU internal politics, on the other hand, is covered by the two newspapers during every period, but only breaking ten percent of coverage in half of the cases and falling among the two most frequently reported themes during two time periods: November 2012 and May 2013 (see Figure 15). In fact, in November 2012, EU internal politics are the most heavily reported topic, along with the euro crisis, each representing thirty-four percent of the coded articles, outperforming

¹⁸ The Irish financial crisis was more visible in Irish reporting overall. This data focuses only on that reporting of the Irish financial crisis which included EU-references and an overall EU-related context.

reporting on both the Irish crisis and Irish domestic politics. The low article count and increased attention to internal EU politics may be a consequence of this generally being a period without any significant political events or developments relating to either the euro crisis or Irish financial crisis on the scale of major EU summit decisions of national political or economic events. November 2012 overlaps with an ongoing EU-level debate regarding the EU's 2014-2020 budget, which appears to be the dominant story carrying news value as the articles focus mainly on aspects of the budget particularly critical to Ireland. The bulk of the reporting on EU internal politics focuses on budget issues relating to agriculture (ex. farming subsidies, and rural development funds), which while no longer the leading sector in Ireland's economy, continues to play an important role and is supported by strong lobby interests contributing to its news value. Additionally, these are policy fields in which the EU holds strong competencies and are therefore expected to have higher salience than others, like immigration, where EU competencies are weaker (Koopmans 2007, 187).

Reporting on EU internal policy during this period, even when unrelated to the EU budget, continues to focus strongly on agriculture, for instance EU regulations against genetically modified organisms and pig antibiotics, and on fisheries, another industry that Ireland has keen interest in (ex. arguments relating to reforming the common fisheries policy), and oil prices. Finally, there is some coverage of the EU's bid to stop Ryan Air's takeover of the Irish airline, Aer Lingus. It is worth noting that revising the Common Agriculture and the Common Fisheries Policies were among the priorities on the agenda for Ireland's Presidency, which took place in the first half of 2013. This period also displayed a significant number of claims on Internal EU politics, which related to the common agriculture and fisheries policies. It is notable that these two periods are among

the periods with the lowest frequency of EU-related reporting overall. Irish media appears most receptive to reporting on internal EU politics at the expense of other EU-related topics when there is no large or significant political event relating to either of the economic crises, an election or referendum, or moment of political crisis.

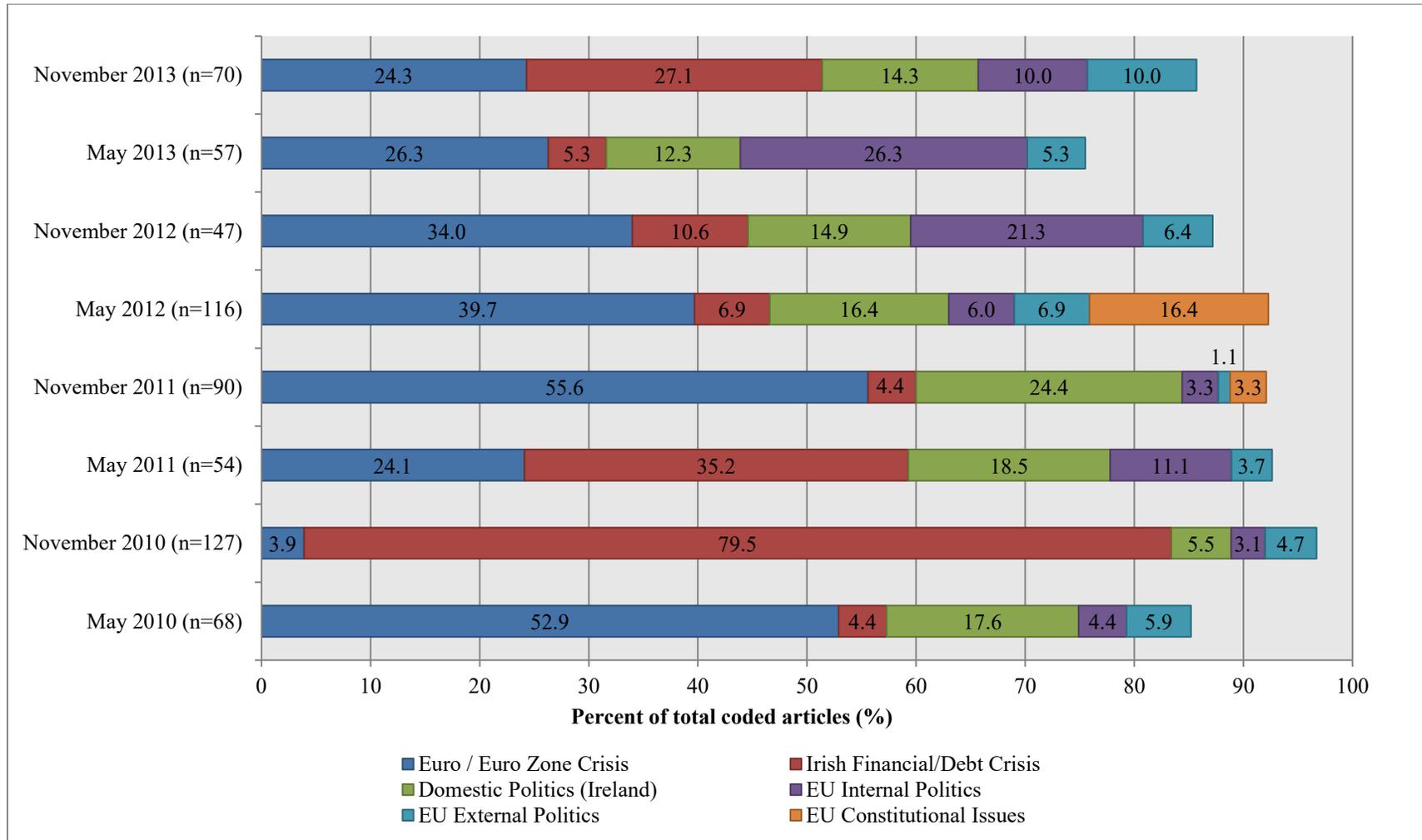


Figure 15 – Six Most Salient Topics of EU Related Articles, Over Time

When it does pay increased attention to EU politics, it is selective, in most cases, of those news items that have the greatest *proximity* to and prospect for a direct *impact* on Irish citizens and key Irish industries. Keeping in line with previous observations, while EU issues do have resonance in national Irish media, which issues are picked up and how they are presented appears to be more so a factor of hitting on particular news values, than a process of EU politicization alone. EU-related topics are picked up by the news media when they satisfy news values of domestic *proximity* and *impact*, for instance, political developments on the national level with an EU connection that are likely to have a direct and noticeable impact on Irish citizens, and not necessarily due to a higher interest in the EU generally.

Newspaper coverage in November 2010 covered the fewest EU-related topics of the eight periods studied, six of thirteen total topics, (see Appendix A, Table A.1), despite being the period with the highest number of individual EU-related articles overall. Media coverage of EU issues was dominated by reporting on the Irish financial crisis, which made up nearly eighty percent of all EU-related articles during that period (Figure 15). Even though there was more coverage of the Eurozone crisis than the Irish financial crisis overall, the one period exhibiting the highest spike in EU reporting, November 2010 was also the only period where coverage of the Eurozone crisis was not among the two most frequently reported topics. Coverage of the euro crisis represented just 3.9 percent of EU-related reporting during the November 2010 sample and coverage of each the remaining topics did not exceed six percent of coded articles. This confirms the earlier observation that the high frequency of articles during this period was a reaction to two related events integral to Ireland's path for recovery from its financial crisis: the arrival of EU and IMF

officials to Dublin, and the agreement for a bailout package for Ireland. This suggests that despite some degree of interest in EU issues in Irish media, it is big political events and decisions that explicitly relate to Ireland, and have real ramifications on Irish citizens, particularly economic ones, that have the biggest resonance in the Irish press. This observation is again in line with media behaving according to basic traditional news values of proximity, impact and the prominence of the actors involved, in this case, key representatives of the IMF and European Central Bank. Overall, with respect to economic reporting, Figure 14 also indicates that the periods that exhibit peaks in intensification of EU-related reporting are also more heavily dominated by reporting on a single topic.

As discussed during the analysis of the visibility of EU issues, May 2012, the one period of heightened media interest in the EU that is not triggered by reporting about the Irish crisis,¹⁹ corresponds with a period related to constitutional change, rather than exclusively economic events. The news reporting during this period leading up to the Irish referendum on the fiscal compact was also the only coverage of the top peak periods in EU reporting where non-economic reporting exceeded that on the economy, albeit by less than two percent. However, while an emphasis on non-economic reporting initially suggests the possibility of deeper interest in the implications of EU politics beyond just the economics of the crisis, an examination of the topics of these articles indicates a large amount of this interest is more internally focused on Irish politics than externally toward the EU. About half of the non-economic reporting relating to this referendum focuses on merits of the national yes and no campaigns, and other domestic angles as exemplified by the following

¹⁹ November 2010 was the second period to exhibit a spike in EU-related reporting, but this was dominated by reporting on the Irish financial crisis, at 70.5 % of coded articles.

headlines:

“Yes camp looks strong but plenty of time for an upset”
Irish Independent, 17 May 2012

“Kenny tries to play down talk of second vote after the radio gaffe”
Irish Independent, 19 May 2012

“Postponing May 31st referendum not legally possible”
Irish Times, 16 May 2012

“Greens will campaign for neither side in referendum”
Irish Times, 21 May 2012

A more detailed breakdown of non-economic reporting for May 2012 reveals that articles about domestic Irish politics and those about EU constitutional issues each equally made up 32.8 percent of total coded non-economic reporting. While coverage of Irish domestic politics in 2012 was lower proportionally than for all time periods overall (41.4%) and in fact, the third lowest of the eight time periods examined, coverage of EU constitutional issues was the highest of any period, and higher than the average for all time periods (10.1%). This is evidence, that despite half of the media coverage of the Irish referendum on the fiscal compact being internally focused on Ireland, in this case, the media still paid a significant amount of interest to the issues in the broader EU-wide context, despite lesser proximity of the European arena to the Irish audience.

Finally, it is worth noting, that despite a having less of a direct link to domestic Irish politics and its general low level of representation, EU external politics is the only topic that is not domestic or internal EU policy-related to come up in each of the eight periods studied. External politics are most visible in November 2013 at ten percent of total reporting, equal to coverage of the EU’s internal politics during that same period. These articles do not appear to focus on any one particular issue in EU external politics but cover

a generally broad range of issues from international aid, EU sanctions against third countries, international trade, and the EU's participation as an actor in meetings of other international organizations. In this sense, this is the most Europeanized topic of EU-related coverage in the Irish press. Despite seeing limited coverage, this coverage does not appear to either be influenced by the levels of economic reporting nor does it appear to require moments of either crisis or major political events at the EU or national level, at the same scale as those that influence the remaining most visible topics. EU constitutional issues, membership issues, and structural issues, on the other hand, are inconsistently covered by the media, and generally appear when triggered by a significant event or crisis.

4.4.3 Reporting on Politics in Other Member States

Despite initial evidence that the EU may, in fact, have a fair level of politicization in the Irish media, there are still gaps in the reporting of EU issues if we are to hold the Irish press to the standards of a Habermasian European public sphere. The coverage of domestic politics relating to the EU in other EU member states occupied only 1.6 percent of total EU-related reporting during this period. Given the significance of national politics in several member states to the euro crisis, which received a high volume of coverage, this is surprisingly low. However overall coverage of domestic politics in these countries is much higher than the fraction of it that explicitly relates to the EU. EU-related reporting comprises just 9.8 percent of total reporting on domestic politics in other member states. The internal politics of EU member states do have visibility in the Irish press, but it is infrequently framed in a transnational EU context.

Over time, there is no visible trend in the coverage of EU-related politics in other EU member states. Visible spikes in reporting on this topic can be attributed to major

political events or crisis moments for the EU. The number of articles specifically about EU politics in other member states spikes significantly beyond 1.6 percent only once at just 7.0 percent of total EU-related reporting in May 2013. This period corresponds with David Cameron's draft EU referendum bill relating to British EU membership and the majority of the articles on politics in other member states during this period are focused on this topic.

This reporting was characterized by such headlines as:

“Third of Tory MPs vote against Cameron on EU.”
Irish Times, 16 May 2013

“Cameron bids to crush Eurosceptic rebellion with new referendum bill”
Irish Independent, 15 May 2013

May 2013 also marked the announcement that France was back in recession. Also around this time, France and Spain were granted an additional two years to reduce their budget deficits. While these political events did not inspire reporting specifically about the internal politics of these member states, they did affect a spike in general references to politics in other member states in articles of any topic.

Just below twenty percent (see Figure 16) of EU-related articles in May 2013 contain some reference to politics in other member states. Half of these references occur in non-economic articles, most of which fall under the topic of EU politics in other member states. The remaining half of these references, namely to politics in France and Spain, appear in economic articles, specifically in articles about the Eurozone crisis, and economic articles are the source of the bulk of references to other member states over time. References to politics in other EU member states in May 2013 occur in a high proportion of non-economic articles largely due to the amount of attention that the British draft EU membership referendum bill received in the media. Rather than representing a trend in

coverage of EU issues, this appears to be an isolated reaction to political events holding particular news value. The possibility of a British exit from the EU, while a domestic issue for Britain, represented a possible new crisis for the EU and for domestic affairs in many of its members states, especially Ireland. The media heavily debated its consequences for Ireland and Irish citizens, especially considering Ireland’s border with Northern Ireland. British politics, in this context, were presented in a way that emphasized the scale of their effect on Ireland, and consequently, one can hypothesize that for this reason, they resonated particularly strongly in the Irish press, among others.

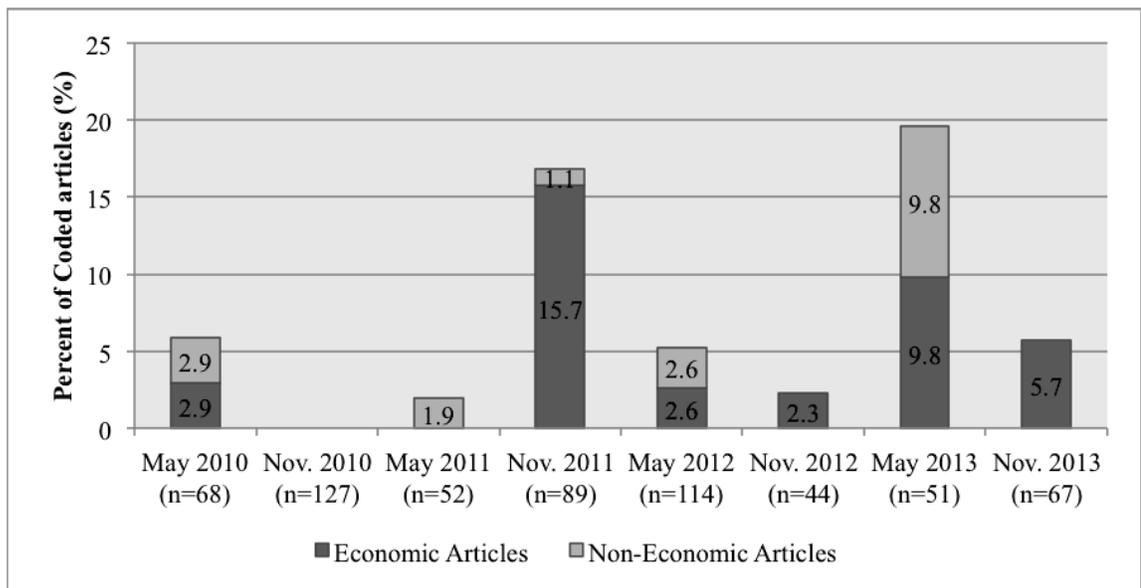


Figure 16 – References to politics in other member states by period.

In contrast, during the one other period of intensified references to other EU member states, November 2011, these references almost entirely occur in articles about the economy and relate to negotiations at the Eurogroup meeting that month. Overall, 70.7 percent of all references to politics in other member states were in articles coded under the topic heading of ‘euro/Eurozone crisis.’ The second significant spike in reporting on national politics among EU members occurred in November 2011 (16.9 percent of total

EU-related reporting), corresponding to the EU Summit decision to reduce Greek debt and ECOFIN's adoption of the 'six pack' of proposals to strengthen economic governance in the EU. Nearly all of the references during this period present themselves in economic articles, more specifically in articles about the euro crisis, with just one reference to politics in other member states in an article specifically about domestic politics in other member states. In summary, references to politics in other member states are still infrequent in Irish news media, and when they do appear, they are primarily present in economic reporting, triggered by the newsworthiness of the euro crisis. When non-economic articles with references to politics in other member states peak, it is still limited to major political events, like Brexit, debated in Britain, rather than a sign of a larger trend in Irish reporting.

4.4.4 References to EU Actors and Institutions

Generally, more inclusive coverage (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 12) featuring a wider scope of actors, and more specific references to individual institutions or actors, fosters a deeper discourse on the European Union and a broader potential scope for the politicization of the EU in the media, than a general discussion of the EU as such. Media coverage that addresses specific actors involved in a particular political event or issue, as opposed to referring generically to the EU as a cloak for its individual actors, expands the scope of actors that hold salience and exposes them to opportunities for political claims-making and political conflict, which is addressed in the next section. Therefore, the broader the scope of the actors that are included in media discourse, the higher the opportunity for a deeper and more meaningful politicization of the EU.

Looking at EU-related reporting in the Irish Times, and Irish Independent, the 'EU as such' dominated as the most frequently mentioned EU actor overall, at 40.4 percent of

all references to an EU actor out of the fourteen actors and institutions counted in the analysis (see Annex B, Table B1). It was also the most frequently cited EU reference across all eight time periods. The next most common actors referenced included the Eurozone and the European Central Bank (ECB), but at much lower proportions of overall references to an EU actor, at 14.9 and 11.2 percent, respectively. Institutions most closely relating to the economy, and more specifically both the euro and Irish financial crises are the most frequently cited actors beyond references to the EU as such. While the European Commission is the only not-explicitly economically related actor to fall into the three most frequently cited, in May 2010 and 2013, it played a key role in the crises, particularly in Ireland, as one of the three institutions constituting the ‘Troika’ in addition to the ECB and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Despite the dominance of general references to the EU as such, eleven of the fourteen actors that were coded for are mentioned to some degree in each of the eight time periods. The EU Council presidency and EU Council summit are referenced in seven and six time periods respectively, which is not entirely surprising as these are both references that are tied to specific scheduled moments in time (i.e. scheduled European Council summits occur twice annually, and the Irish EU presidency lasted from January to June 2013). In general, despite a small number of actors dominating EU-related reporting, there is a significant variety in the actors that do appear in Irish media reporting about EU-related issues and politics.

The EU as such is the most common EU-related reference, appearing in about four fifths of articles about EU non-crisis politics (see table 5). EU politics external to the euro crisis have the fewest number EU-related articles that are driven by reporting on specific

actors that are not buffered by general reference to the ‘EU as such.’ In contrast, news coverage of the economic crises is more likely than non-crisis reporting to contain references to institutional or individual EU actors, even when unaccompanied by the EU as such. Additionally, tables 5 and 6 show that articles about either of the two economic crises are more likely to refer to the overall three most frequently reported actors excluding the EU as such by period, as discussed above.

Irish news coverage of other EU-related topics at both the EU and Irish level, despite including fewer articles which do not refer to the EU by name, more often include a higher repertoire of actors mentioned in their reporting, including the court of justice of the EU, the EU Council presidency, and the European Parliament. Mention of the European Parliament is highest in articles on EU politics. Occurring in 14.2 percent of articles on the topic, it is noticeably more frequently mentioned than in articles on all three other topics. However, in general, the percentages of articles that mention a specific actor are lower among the articles unrelated to the economic crises. This suggests that the reporting on the two economic crises may have increased the references to and visibility of specific EU actors in Irish reporting, in place of general references to the EU as such, but not the variety of institutional and individual actors that are referenced.

Table 5 – Percentage of articles referencing EU institutional actors, by article topic

<i>Article Topic</i>	<i>INSTITUTIONAL ACTOR</i>										
	EU as such	Eurozone	European Commission	European Central Bank	Council Ministers	European Parliament	European Council	EU Summit	EU Council Presidency	Court of Justice of the EU	Troika
Irish Politics (non-crisis)	72.1	10.6	19.2	10.6	2.9	8.7	1.9	1.0	6.7	7.7	9.6
EU (non-crisis)	82.1	23.5	30.9	13.0	9.3	14.2	4.9	3.7	4.9	4.9	2.5
Irish Financial Crisis	66.0	25.9	27.2	30.2	13.6	2.5	3.7	1.2	1.2	0.0	63.0
Eurozone Crisis	67.9	67.4	21.7	37.0	11.4	5.4	7.6	7.1	2.7	2.2	13.6

Table 6 – Percentage of articles referencing EU individual actors, by article topic

<i>Article Topic</i>	<i>INDIVIDUAL ACTOR</i>		
	EU Executive Actor	Irish MEP	Other MEP
Irish Politics (non-crisis)	9.6	4.8	0.0
EU (non-crisis)	24.1	6.2	6.8
Irish Financial Crisis	22.2	1.9	0.6
Eurozone Crisis	32.1	1.1	3.3

Therefore, the overall scope of coverage of EU topics in Irish media during this period of the financial crisis is heavily focused on a limited number of topics concerning the Irish financial crisis and the euro crisis. An ideally politicized EU in the news media would be present across a broader scope of topics, rather than a narrow selection, which is particularly economic and national in orientation. In instances where major news coverage opens up beyond these three, it is generally to internal Irish politics, which is the most relatable facet of EU politics for citizens with the most concrete applications and effects. Additionally, interest in the politics of other member states, when lacking a strong connection to politics in relation to the euro crisis, is low. Finally, the scope of actors mentioned in the Irish press prioritizes most of its energy on a select few actors, and in particular those relating to the economic crises.

4.5 Contestation

This section looks at an individual claims-based analysis of statements within the articles to examine the polarization of the EU, the third and final aspect of politicization, in the Irish press. Contestation and public debate on EU issues are core features of politicization scholarship on the EU, particularly in studies of the media (Statham and Trenz 2015; de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016). Like previous claims-based politicization analysis, this project takes Tarrow and Tilly's conceptualization of contention as "making claims that bear on someone else's interests," in this case political interests, as a departure point (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 7). For an issue to be politicized, it is not enough for it to appear in news coverage. There must also be a degree of opinion formation about it, whether this is in the form of positive or negative evaluations, demands for change or speculations on the consequences of actions or decisions, ideally in relation

to opposing opinions rather than isolated from debate. The more contentious that contestation of the EU is, the higher the degree of politicization. This analysis departs from the question of which issues are picked up by the news media and to what degree and begins to investigate how the media treats the issues that do get picked up.

The contestation of the EU in Irish media during the Irish sovereign debt crisis and euro crisis will be evaluated along three dimensions (see Figure 17). First, claims-making itself indicates opinion-formation, the basic foundation of contestation. It is characterized by intensification of the level of contestation about the EU, and of certain EU-related issues. Second, issues are more deeply polarized the greater the diversity among speakers, meaning those directly involved in the debate (de Wilde 2011, 567). Finally, an issue is most contested when it is polarized around at least two opposing positions, as evidenced by changes in the proportion of evaluative statements on various aspects relating to EU governance (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 16; de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016, 6-7).

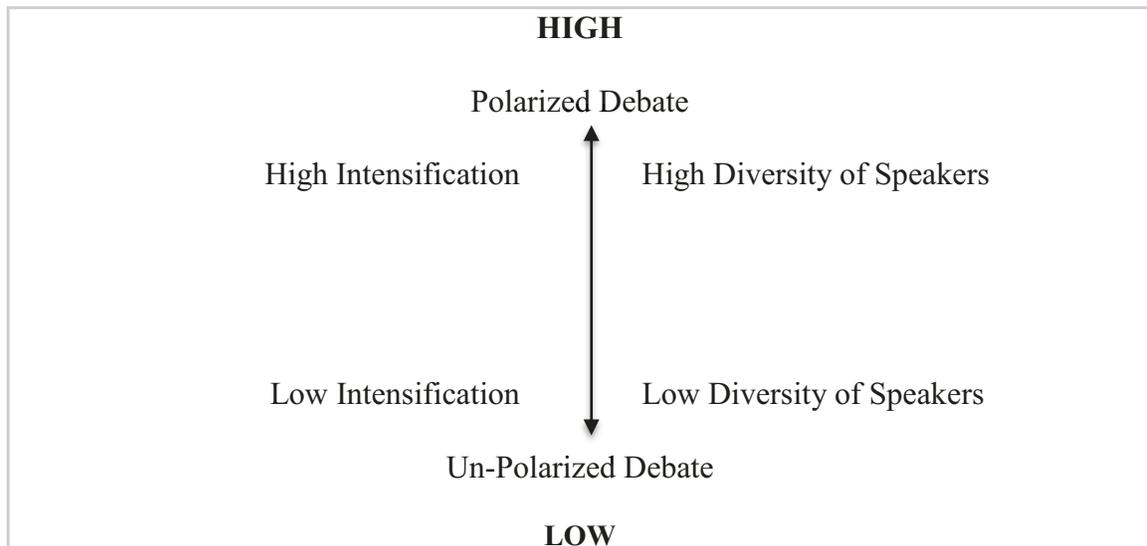


Figure 17 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to Contestation

4.5.1 EU-Related Claims in the Irish News Media: Intensification

EU issues present in the media are not fully politicized unless they are also contested, meaning that journalists or other actors form and publicly express opinions about them. Of the 512 EU-related articles coded in the eight time periods between 2010 and 2012, the majority, at 77.9% (399 articles), contained a political claim. Because one article can contain more than one claim, 495 political claims were coded overall. Therefore, over three-quarters of EU-related content in Irish media during the selected periods between 2010 and 2013, contained a statement of political opinion either about an EU-related issue or policy or made by or directed at an EU actor.

The number of articles containing a political claim exceeded those that were neutral or purely informational, in every period, except for May 2013 where nearly half of the articles contained a claim at 49.1 percent of EU related articles. This period also had a relatively low frequency of EU-related articles, exhibiting both a low visibility and a low polarization of the EU, despite it corresponding with the Irish Presidency of the EU and David Cameron's draft EU referendum bill. On the other hand, November 2012, despite having the lowest number of EU-related articles of all eight periods, has the second highest rate of articles with political claims. In general, there is no apparent relationship between the salience of the EU during a given period and polarization. Periods with a higher number of articles, such as November 2011, do not necessarily have a higher overall proportion of articles with political claims. However, the period with the highest frequency of EU related articles overall, May 2012 also has the highest proportion of articles containing at least one political claim, at 73.3 percent of total EU-related articles. This suggests that while the traditional news values of proximity, prominence, and impact, have a clear effect on the

salience/visibility of the EU, this does not necessarily drive the level of polarization of the EU in the media. The media are likely reactive to report on particularly salient cleavages and conflict among key national political actors and to an extent, also to public demand for news on such conflicts as proposed by Statham and Trenz (2013a, 166), even if it is on a topic that does not receive a significant amount of attention. The observations in this chapter show that contestation is not necessary for an issue to be salient. This suggests a possible discrepancy between which issues are salient to political actors, and polarizing to them, and which issues are salient to the media. News values do not appear to affect whether an issue is contested, but they do influence which debates, which voices, and which opinions are given a platform. The reporting of political claims, and therefore reporting on contestation of the EU in these two newspapers is likely reacting to *prominent* actors engaging in political debate.

Over half of the political claims, sixty-two percent, during these eight periods combined, appeared in articles about one of the two economic crises. Of these, 58.1 percent were about the euro crisis. While the two economic crises contributed the largest frequency of contested reporting, it is interesting that the euro crisis itself appears to have been more contested in the Irish press, than the Irish debt crisis, despite the obvious greater proximity of the Irish debt crisis to the Irish population. Not discounting the massive implications of the euro crisis on Ireland, a member of the Eurozone, and on solutions to its own crisis, it is still significant that the euro crisis would dominate this much of the reporting during this period. Given the much greater proximity and urgency of the Irish debt crisis nationally, particularly considering the tangible economic effects of various resulting austerity measures on Irish citizens, over thirty six percent of all EU-related expressions of political

opinion came out of articles specifically about the euro crisis, rather than discussing the crisis through domestic affairs connected to the EU.

*Table 7 – Distribution of political claims by article topic, by year**

	Euro Crisis	EU (other topics)	Irish Debt Crisis	Ireland (other topics)
<i>May 2010 (n=58)</i>	43.1	37.9	1.7	17.2
<i>Nov. 2010 (n=99)</i>	9.1	6.1	80.8	4.0
<i>May 2011 (n=39)</i>	28.2	10.3	48.7	12.8
<i>Nov. 2011 (n=65)</i>	73.8	13.8	1.5	10.8
<i>May 2012 (n=111)</i>	43.2	38.7	6.3	11.7
<i>Nov. 2012 (n=37)</i>	29.7	54.1	8.1	8.1
<i>May 2013 (n=33)</i>	36.4	48.5	9.1	6.1
<i>Nov. 2013 (n=46)</i>	30.4	26.1	30.4	13.0

*Values shown as percent of total claims, per period. Totals exclude articles coded at ‘other – non-EU’

When comparing over time, the November 2010 period, covering the week that Ireland formally applied for a joint EU-IMF bailout, and the coded period that followed, May 2011, were the only periods where more claims were extracted from EU-related articles about the Irish debt crisis than the euro crisis (see table 7). Articles about the Irish financial crisis dominated in November 2010, so this is not entirely surprising. Despite the dominance of claims stemming from articles about the two economic crises, articles on other EU topics exceeded or produced either equal as, or more political claims than either crisis in May 2013 (48.5% of claims, equal to articles on Eurozone crisis), and November 2012 (54.1% of claims), and more claims than articles on the Irish debt crisis in May 2010 (37.9% of claims), and November 2011 (13.8% of claims). May 2013 marked the Irish Presidency of the European Council, which, as mentioned during the discussion on salience, brought attention to particular issues on its agenda. The reform of CAP, for instance, triggered debate, as policies relating to agriculture are already highly salient in Ireland. Agriculture is the overall most common object of political claims, following the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the Single Market.

Likewise, many of the claims on EU policy unrelated to the crisis in November 2012, occur in articles with business-related, or other links to Ireland. Many claims during this period occurred in articles on issues relating to the EU's competition policy. Examples include the acquisition of Aer Lingus, the takeover of the British mobile phone provider Three by O2 (both providers are dominant on the Irish market), and the European Newspaper Publishers Association's request to the European Commission for protection of creative content, following the group's meeting in Dublin. As mentioned earlier, this period also included claims stemming from debates about the 2014-2020 EU budget. This is evidence, that as with salience of overall political events or decisions, the intensification of political opinion is also tied to *proximity* to or connection to the national context, linking back to the primary news values. Regardless, articles on EU politics unrelated to the crisis produced more political claims than those about Irish domestic politics relating the EU during seven of the eight periods (apart from May 2011).

The objects of most of the claims (see table 8), meaning the objects being evaluated or at which a demand or speculation was specifically directed, were EU internal politics (41.2%), followed by domestic Irish politics (29.8% of claims). Within EU internal politics, these claims were dominated by claims about EMU (70.9 percent of claims relating to EU internal politics). Domestic politics of other EU member states, EU integration and membership, EU constitutions and institutions and EU external policy, were each the object of less than ten percent of overall claims. The dominance of statements of opinion in Irish media about policy-oriented objects is in line with earlier observations on salience and scope as they relate to core news values. Policy issues have the strongest tangible effect on the everyday life of Irish citizens, the primary audience of national Irish press, and are

therefore the most newsworthy. The dominance of EMU as an object is in line with the dominance of economic reporting, particularly that which is about the euro crisis, overall.

Table 8 – Objects of EU-Related Claims as proportion of total claims (%)

	Economic Reporting (n=264)	Non-Economic Reporting (n=160)	Total Claims (n=488)
<i>EU Internal Policy</i>	40.2	31.1	41.2
<i>Domestic Politics, Ireland</i>	31.4	31.3	29.8
<i>Domestic Politics, EU other</i>	12.9	3.8	9.2
<i>Integration / Membership</i>	9.5	7.5	7.8
<i>Constitution / Institutions</i>	5.7	11.9	7.3
<i>EU External Policy</i>	0.4	12.5	4.7

Examining the data over time (see table 9) EU internal politics continues to be the dominant object of political claims in six of the time periods. May 2011 and November 2010, the same two periods with more claims on the Irish debt crisis than the euro crisis, were also the only periods during which claims on Irish domestic politics exceeded those about internal politics of the EU. As observed earlier, these mark the periods of Ireland’s entrance into the EU-IMF bailout program, and the period of austerity that followed. May 2010 on the other hand, is heavily dominated by claims relating to EU internal politics, the object of nearly eighty percent of all claims during that period. Contestation in May of 2010 was also highest among articles about the euro crisis, which is in line with the number of claims relating to the agreement on an instalment of the Greek bailout (May 2),²⁰ and a series of decisions at the Euro Summit in defence of the euro (May 7).²¹

²⁰ Example from the *Irish Times*, 14 May 2010: “Already many MPs are looking for a chance to let off steam at what they see as an abuse of euro-zone emergency bailout regulations. “They were intended for situations like natural catastrophes and emergency situations,” said MEP Werner Langen from Dr Merkel’s Christian Democrats (CDU), “but heads of state and the European Commission should not use them to rescue states from debt crises they have caused themselves”.

²¹ Example from the *Irish Independent*, 19 May 2010: “FG leader Enda Kenny last week warned of a threat to sovereignty from the European Commission's proposals. FG deputy leader Richard Bruton claimed the peer review proposals, where other EU states could

Distinguishing between claims extracted from economic and non-economic articles reveals a similar trend in the dominance of claims about EU internal politics (40.2% in economic and 31.4% in non-economic) and Irish internal politics (29.8% in economic and 31.3% in non-economic), with internal EU policy dominating more strongly in claims from economic reporting. Most revealing is the significantly higher volume of individual statements of opinion about the domestic politics in other EU member states in economic reporting (12.5 percent of economic claims, compared to 3.8 percent of non-economic claims). As seen in table 9, the bulk of these claims appear in November 2011 (20.3 percent) reflecting Mario Monti's replacement of Silvio Berlusconi as Italian Prime-Minister and EU leaders' performance at the meeting of the Eurogroup, and May 2013, marking France's return to recession. In both periods, these claims make up the second highest frequency of claims in economic reporting, following claims on EU internal politics. Most claims on domestic politics, during these periods, over eighty percent in each, occurred in economic articles.

examine our budget, "could jeopardise Ireland's low rate of corporation tax". But FG's European affairs spokeswoman, Lucinda Creighton, said she was "very much in favour" of the EU proposals — although she shared the concerns of her party leadership about the need for an enhanced budgetary process in the Dáil."

*Table 9 – Object of political claims, by year**

	<i>EU Internal Policy</i>	<i>Domestic Politics (Ireland)</i>	<i>Domestic Politics (EU Other)</i>	<i>Integration / Membership</i>	<i>Constitution / Institutions</i>	<i>EU External Policy</i>
May 2010 (n=58)	75.9	12.1	5.2			6.9
Nov. 2010 (n=99)	27.6	56.1	5.1	4.1	6.1	1.0
May 2011 (n=40)	32.5	42.5	7.5	10.0	5.0	2.5
Nov. 2011 (n=65)	34.4	17.2	20.3	10.9	15.6	1.6
May 2012 (n=112)	33.0	32.1	8.0	10.7	11.6	4.5
Nov. 2012 (n=38)	60.5	7.9	5.3	13.2		13.2
May 2013 (n=33)	42.4	6.1	18.2	15.2	6.1	12.1
Nov. 2103 (n=47)	46.8	31.9	8.5	2.1	6.4	4.3

* *Values shown as percent of total claims, per period.*

Keeping in mind the overall higher frequency of claims occurring in economic articles, this indicates that ability of politics in other EU member states to enter not just media coverage, but also debate, but most saliently when major political events in other member states are framed in an economic context. For instance, the debate about Britain's possible exit from the EU triggered the following interview with the Britain's ambassador to Ireland, Dominick Chilcott on the future of British and Irish trade relations: "Britain will always want to see Ireland trading well" (Kelpie 2013). It is unlikely that domestic politics could have peaked to these levels without the euro crisis to give them strong economic implications for Europe, and particularly Ireland.

4.5.2 EU-Related Claims in the Irish News Media: Diversity of Opinion

The 'participatory quality' of public debates relating to EU issues presented in the Irish news media is the second ingredient of contestation examined in this chapter (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 80). The greater the range of actors whose voices are heard in public political debate on an issue, the more widespread the contestation, and eventually, politicization of that issue. Paul Statham and Hans-Jörg Trenz identify the inclusiveness of a debate as one of three core dimensions applied to studying politicization in the context of the public sphere, in addition to visibility and contestation (Statham and Trenz, 2013a, 12; Statham 2010, 5). A deeply politicized issue is one that includes diversity of opinion, not only including a wide variety of actors as an audience, but also one that includes voices from a wider variety of actors, transcending state level actor hierarchies, national borders, and the national-supranational divide.

As they are the actors most directly involved in EU decision-making, it is understandable for elite government actors, at either the national or EU levels to be the

main speakers of EU-related claims. In their analysis of media coverage in Germany, France, and Britain during the debates on the EU constitution, Statham and Trenz observe that the media are dominated by claims by “bureaucrats, statesman, and a few other resourceful actors” (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 80). Ruud Koopmans, et.al. make similar observations in their analysis of much earlier media coverage across Europe between 1990 and 2002, speculating that an actor’s degree of engagement with and influence over decision making processes will likely determine the probability of his or her voice being picked up by the news media (Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer 2010, 64). This resonates with news value relating to the *prominence* of actors discussed earlier in this chapter. The news media are a venue for these voices to be heard, but first, they must resonate within journalistic curiosity and present some news value to be picked up. It cannot be assumed that the media’s coverage is necessarily an accurate reflection of all the voices in a debate, but the voices that are politicized in the media are typically those which are heard the loudest by those who are most distant from EU-related decision-making: average Irish citizens.

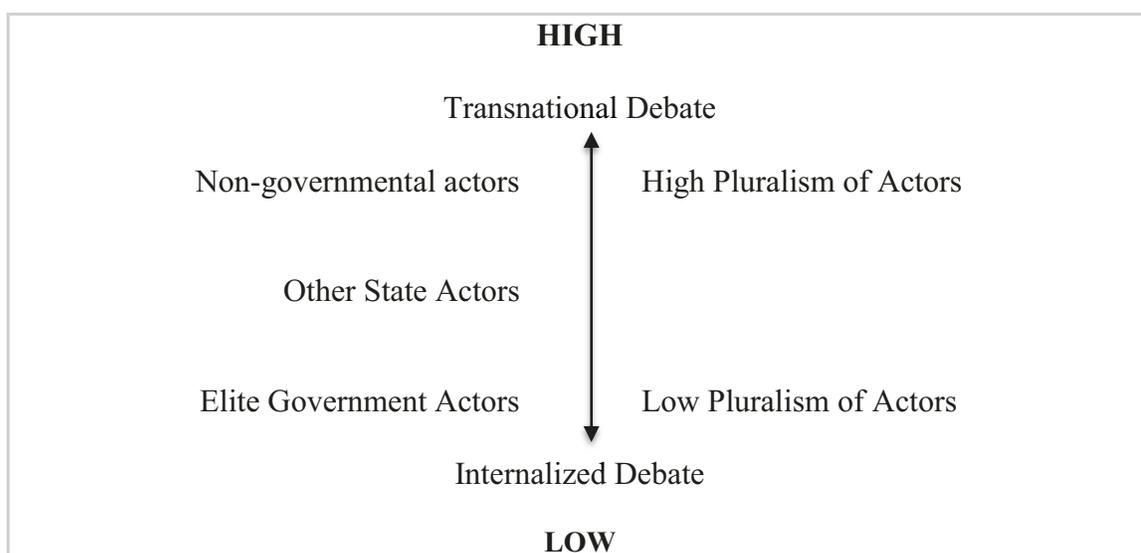


Figure 18 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to speakers of claims

Therefore, inclusiveness is a central indicator of politicization applied to the analysis of the speakers of these claims (see Figure 18). Given the consideration that elite speakers' voices have the easiest access to the media, an opening up of claims making in the media to speakers representing other state actors (e.g. legislative and party actors) and even more so to non-governmental actors (eg. civil society, volunteer organizations, and other non-state actors), is also an opening up towards greater politicization. As issues become more heavily politicized, more actors further from related decision-making processes join the debate. The less dominated claims making in the press is by elite actors, the deeper the contestation, and the level of politicization. A second indicator of inclusiveness, as it relates to contestation, investigates the variety of speakers whose claims are published by the media. It is not only relevant who are the speakers of claims in the media, but also, to what degree is there is a pluralism of voices. The greater variety in different speaker categories, and the more balanced the share of claims between them, the deeper the contestation. Finally, as a point of departure, the analysis of the speakers adapts the Habermasian ideal type of a Europeanized public sphere (Habermas 2006, 103). Politicization is more significant when more claims cut across political levels and national borders. The lower the frequency of debate that is oriented inwards, as demonstrated by claims by Irish domestic speakers about Irish domestic politics, the more politicized the EU.

Examining the average share of claims by speaker category reveals that EU-level actors make up most claims over the eight time periods, followed very closely by Irish government actors (see table 10). While neither salience as an article topic, nor the share of claims of domestic politics in other EU member states were high, apart from particular

moments in time, actors from other EU member states do contribute a good proportion of the political claims reported in the Irish press. The distribution of claims between speaker categories is generally balanced without any particular group dominating claims reported in the Irish media. Those by external actors occur at the lowest frequency, likely because in most circumstances, these are actors with less proximity to Irish politics or EU politics as they relate to Ireland, and possibly therefore of lower news value. However, the balance between speaker categories is not consistent across object (see Annex D, Table D1). Speakers commenting on EU internal politics receive the most equal shares of attention, whereby speakers making claims on integration/membership exhibit the most unequal shares of reporting Irish government actors dominating with nearly sixty percent of the claims about that object, followed by Other EU member state actors at 42.1 percent. Remaining actors are under-represented.

Table 10 – EU Claim-Makers: Speakers of EU claims, by percent of total claims

Speaker Category	No.	%
<i>EU-level</i>	113	23.0
<i>Irish State</i>	101	20.5
<i>Other EU Member State</i>	83	16.9
<i>Journalist</i>	80	16.3
<i>Irish Non-governmental</i>	72	-
<i>External Actor</i>	43	8.7

While there is relative balance between the categories, the Irish data reflects similar trends to earlier observations by Koopmans, Erbe and Meyer (2010) and Statham and Trenz (2013a) whereby executive or government level actors dominate the claims-making by Irish, EU, and other member state speakers at 63.4 percent, 57.5 percent, and 83.1 percent of speakers in that category respectively (see Annex D, Table D3). Opposition politicians and other legislative actors produce a significantly lower proportion of the claims. As a

result, despite an initial impression of balance between speaker categories, and in particular a large visibility of statements of political opinion by EU-level actors, there is a lack of pluralism within these categories as EU-related claims are still very much dominated by executive level actors.

Over time, the speaker category appears to be the least prone to large amounts of variance, when compared to the previous analyses of the object of the claim or article topic. Together, EU and Irish government actors, the two most frequent overall speaker categories, are responsible for at least half of all claims in just three time periods: May 2011, November 2012, and November 2013 (see table 11). However, it is noteworthy that both May 2011 and November 2013 also contain a relatively strong proportion of claims made by non-governmental actors: Irish non-governmental groups, journalists, and external actors.²²

Table 11 – Distribution of political claims by speaker category, by period

	May 2010 (n=58)	Nov. 2010 (n=99)	May 2011 (n=40)	Nov. 2011 (n=65)	May 2012 (n=112)	Nov. 2012 (n=38)	May 2013 (n=33)	Nov. 2013 (n=47)
<i>EU-level Actor</i>	17.2	22.2	27.5	24.6	17.9	28.9	12.1	40.4
<i>Irish Government State</i>	15.5	15.2	30.0	20.0	23.2	34.2	24.2	10.6
<i>Other EU Member State</i>	19.0	12.1	5.0	27.7	16.1	23.7	27.3	8.5
<i>Journalist</i>	17.2	23.2	15.0	13.8	14.3	10.5	6.1	21.3
<i>Irish Non-Governmental</i>	20.7	17.2	20.0	4.6	18.8		21.2	8.5
<i>External Actor</i>	10.3	10.1	2.5	9.2	9.8	2.6	9.1	10.6

In fact, it appears that non-governmental actors are generally more sensitive to variance in the reporting of claims by state actors from other EU member states, another

²² The ‘external actors’ category does include third country politicians, as these politicians are external to policy-making at both the Irish and EU levels.

group dominated by executive level speakers, than they are to a dominance of claims from EU and Irish state actors. The periods representing the heaviest proportion of claims by state actors of other EU members May 2013 (27.3 percent of claims), November 2012 (23.7% of claims), and November 2011 (27.7% of claims), are the same periods that have the lowest frequencies of claims by non-governmental speakers, regardless of how many claims were made by Irish or EU state actors. The inclusion of statements of political opinion from state actors of other EU member states in Irish reporting on EU-related politics is significant. Claims by this speaker group only fall below nineteen percent of claims in November 2010, May 2012, and November 2013. These are all periods overlapping with major national Irish political events: The EU-IMF agreement to a bailout for Ireland, Ireland's referendum on the Fiscal Compact, and the month leading up to Ireland's exit from the bailout program, respectively.

Most interesting to this analysis, however, is the amount of attention that the Irish press gives to claims by Irish non-governmental actors. Claims by these actors, despite having a more minor, or even no direct role to play in EU-related decision making, still manage to approach similar frequencies of claims as those made by either EU, Irish or other EU member state speakers, and in some cases even exceeding them. In fact, during the May 2010 period, Irish non-governmental actors were responsible for more EU-related claims in these two Irish dailies, than any other speaker group. This group is dominated by claims by Irish academics or authority figures (37.5 percent of claims by non-governmental actors), such as Morgan Kelly, a prominent Irish economist and professor at the University College Dublin, whose opinions are not uncommon in Irish media, and business and professional groups (31.9 percent of claims by non-governmental actors). Political

opinions of business and professional interest groups are included in relation to political issues and developments in which they hold an interest relevant to the groups or industries they represent. For instance, the scope of this analysis included twelve individual claims by the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) alone, on topics ranging from implications of the EU-Mercosur trade deal on Irish beef (May 2010) to proposed changes to the EU's Single Farm Payment (May 2013). An additional twelve claims across the eight time periods came from the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC). The high frequency of claims about agriculture, reported earlier, can be mainly attributed to the level of attention given to claims by the IFA. A high proportion of claims by Irish non-governmental actors, compared to other speakers, is directed at EU Agriculture policy (13.9%). Closer inspection reveals that most speakers of these claims were, in fact, actors affiliated with the IFA.

Similar to actors from the Irish State, EU member state, and EU speaker categories, certain non-governmental actors are also more likely to hold prominence in the Irish context. Much of the interaction between civil society, interest groups and the Irish state has been formally institutionalized in a social partnership, which gives higher *prominence* to certain organizations in a hierarchical manner. The Irish Business Association and the IFA are among those near the top of that hierarchy (Adshead and Tonge 2009, 136-7; Murphy 2010, 330). These organizations receive a certain level of privileged influence over national decision-making, often at the expense of other similar smaller organizations, thereby increasing the probability that their claims will be picked up by the media on issues relevant to their industry-specific interests, as has been case here. Previous research has reported such an association between actors who have stronger policy influence and a stronger presence in public debates, particularly in the media (Koopmans 2007, 207).

Nevertheless, this gives at least a sector of Ireland's non-governmental groups, albeit a privileged sector, enough *prominence* its their opinions to be of news value to the press. However, this *prominence* is conditional on the salience of particular topics, and intensity of specific contested objects that are of relevance to the interests of particular groups. The one observation that defies this trend is that claims by individual Irish citizens exceed those by Irish financial institutions and trade unions combined. However, individual citizen opinions make up only a small fraction of overall EU-related claims.

The dominant objects of claims across the speakers, apart from journalists, mirror the overall most common objects of political claims: EU internal policy, followed by Irish domestic politics, which in most cases relate to the Irish financial crisis. Table 12 displays the objects of claims by speaker category. Journalists target nearly half of their claims at issues relating to Irish domestic politics, with those aimed at EU internal politics following at thirty-five percent. Taking a closer look, the clear majority of claims on Internal EU politics are dominated by claims specifically about EMU. This is in line with nearly half of all editorials written by journalists being about either the Irish debt crisis (35.7 percent) or Irish domestic political issues (13.3 percent). Editorials and commentaries published between 2010 and 2013, in the two Irish dailies studied, are nearly entirely dominated by the two economic crises, and most non-economic coverage still focuses internally on national, Irish, politics. Thus, the presence of newspaper editorial content relating to the EU-related content during this period was heavily driven by the crisis. Political opinion of external actors seems to draw the attention of media largely when relating to the euro crisis, with EMU as the object of just under half of all claims by external actors.

Table 12 – Objects of claims, by percentage of speaker

		Speakers of Claims						
		Irish State Actor	State Actor, Other EU Member	EU-level Actor	Irish Non-governmental	External Actor	Journalist	
Objects of Claims	Integration / Membership	<i>EU/European Integration</i>	2.0	8.4	2.7		2.3	3.8
		<i>Membership</i>	2.0	6.0			2.3	3.8
		<i>Eurozone Membership</i>	2.0	4.8	1.8	1.4	2.3	1.2
	Constitution / Institutions	<i>Treaties / Treaty-making</i>	5.9	4.8	3.5	6.9		1.2
		<i>Internal Functioning of EU Institutions</i>		1.2				
		<i>EU Institutions/institutional structure</i>		7.2			2.3	
		<i>Other</i>			0.9			
	Internal EU Policy	<i>EMU</i>	30.7	28.9	24.8	23.6	44.2	31.2
		<i>Single Market</i>	5.0	4.8	4.4	6.9	4.7	
		<i>Agriculture Policy</i>	3.0	2.4	2.7	13.9	2.3	1.2
		<i>Budget</i>	3.0	4.8	3.5			
		<i>Other Internal Policy</i>			2.7			2.5
		<i>Environment / Energy</i>	1.0		0.9			
	External EU Policy	<i>Security (ex. CFSP)</i>	5.0	1.2	4.4		2.3	1.2
		<i>Trade</i>	2.0	1.2	0.9	2.8	4.7	
		<i>Other External Policy</i>			0.9	1.4		
	Domestic Policy	<i>Domestic Affairs (Irish)</i>	32.7	10.8	28.3	36.1	18.6	48.8
		<i>Domestic Affairs (Other MS)</i>	4.0	13.3	15.9	4.2	14.0	3.8

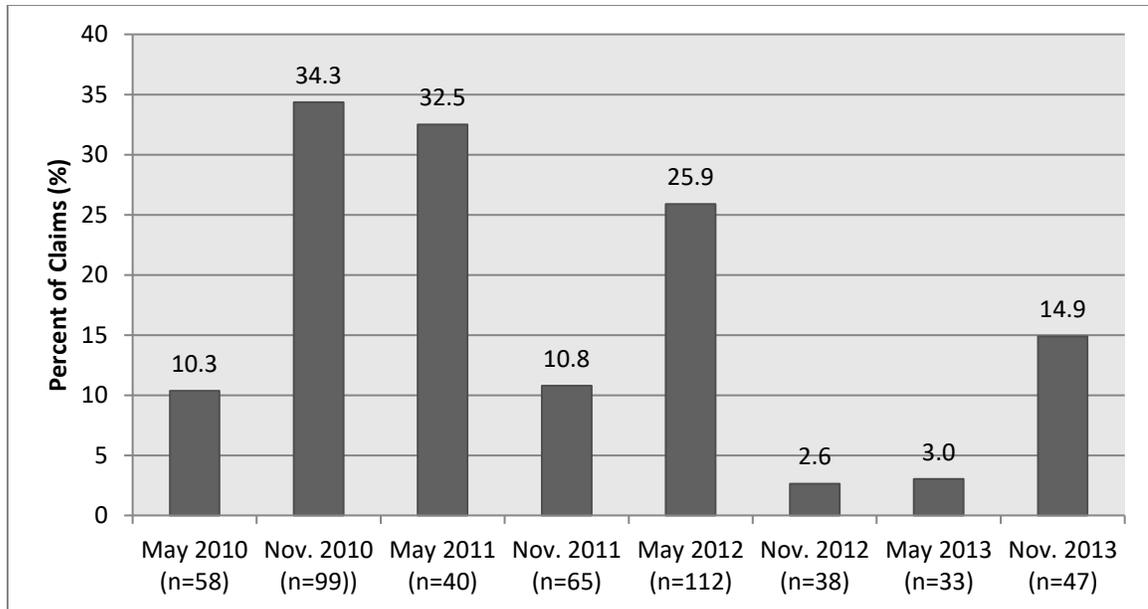


Figure 19 – Europeanized Internal debates: EU Related claims about Irish politics by Irish actors, as relative share of all claims, by period.

Irish state actors, when not commenting on EMU, are to a degree internally focused on national domestic affairs, with very little attention spent on domestic affairs of Ireland's fellow EU member states. The Irish media are more likely to report on debate relating to domestic affairs of other member states, on issues that involve elite state actors from other member states, or from the EU level. Additionally, speakers representing state actors from other member states, are far more likely to comment on Irish EU-related domestic politics (10.8 percent) than Irish state actors are to comment on EU related politics in other member states (4.2 percent). Nearly a fifth of all claims published belong to internalized debates. Figure 19 illustrates the share of internalized debates in the two Irish newspapers, whereby national Irish speakers comment on EU-related domestic politics. However, debates are the most heavily internalized during periods of important political developments with an EU-link relating to domestic activity in Ireland: the Irish bailout and its six-month aftermath (November 2010 and May 2011), campaigning for the referendum on the Fiscal compact

(May 2012), and to a lesser extent, leading up to Ireland's exit from the EU-IMF bailout program (November 2013). May 2011 was also a period with no significant political developments at the EU level or within its other member states. Generally, when the proximity of major political events relating to the EU was weaker, the internalization of debate about the EU was very low.

Overall while the variety of speaker types included in EU-related media debates is broad, and each speaker category, for the most part, receives a good share of the debate with none dominating the debates by a large margin, there is still a lack of pluralism within the categories. In line with conventional journalistic practice, speaker categories at all levels favour elite level actors with more *prominence*, particularly those more closely connected to the decision-making on the topic discussed. Executive actors at the EU level and state level of its member states are the main players involved in policy decisions, treaty change, and other major events relating to the EU. It is therefore typical that a significant proportion of political claims would belong to public statements or debates involving these actors, not only because of their proximity to EU-related decision-making, but also the tendency for them to be generally higher profile individuals, such as national leaders, national cabinet ministers, and key position-holders of EU institutions. Linking back to the core news values referenced at the beginning of this chapter, the *prominence* of actors involved, in this case the speakers of the claims or 'claimants', and *proximity* of the issues or the political event to readers, are two variables strongly influencing journalists' choices of whose opinions and whose claims to include in their reporting. Also interesting is that EU-level actors were much more likely to be claims makers on objects unrelated to the economy and EMU, than most other speakers, apart from non-governmental actors, and

made claims about the greatest variety of objects relating to EU internal policy. This indicates that EU-level actors receive attention in the press even outside of the context of the economic crises

Additionally, EU speakers exceed Irish state speakers both overall, and in half of the eight time periods. This is likely because, at certain points throughout the crisis (such as the period leading up to Ireland's bailout), a greater proportion of EU-level activity had a greater *impact*, particularly an economic one, on Ireland. Additionally, despite the lesser *proximity* of state actors from other member states to Ireland, when these actors' politics and actions, particularly more prominent executive actors such as Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande, are in *proximity* to major (and newsworthy) political events at the EU level, such as Euro Summit decisions, their opinions develop a certain level of news value. Most interesting to this analysis is the still significant amount of attention given to political claims made by non-governmental, including numerous claims by journalists in editorials, and especially by Irish non-governmental groups. While in both cases, *proximity* to both Ireland and highly salient issues are strong, these actors, in many cases, are not directly involved in EU-related decision-making, and they lack the *prominence* of high level Irish or EU officials, they do hold some prominence in their own environments. Journalists, especially, can in many cases act as visible actors in the debate in their own right. These actors' voices are, however, integral to the expansion of debates to a diversity of opinions, as well as audiences and often serve as middlemen on opinion-formation, between elite state actors and the general population.

4.5.3 *EU-Related Claims in the Irish News Media: Contention*

Various authors claim that in the last decade, particularly since the euro crisis, in addition to the EU becoming more salient in the public sphere, and EU-related contention including a wider variety of actors, opinions about EU-related politics have also become more contested and, more polarized (de Wilde and Lord, 2016; Risse 2015). This section examines the contestation of the EU in the context of evaluative statements of EU-related objects in the Irish press. EU issues are the most strongly politicized in the media not just when there is they are contested, that is when actors voice negative or positive opinions about them, but especially the more polarized the views expressed about them are. Politicization, as related to contention, is evaluated using three general indicators (see Figure 20).

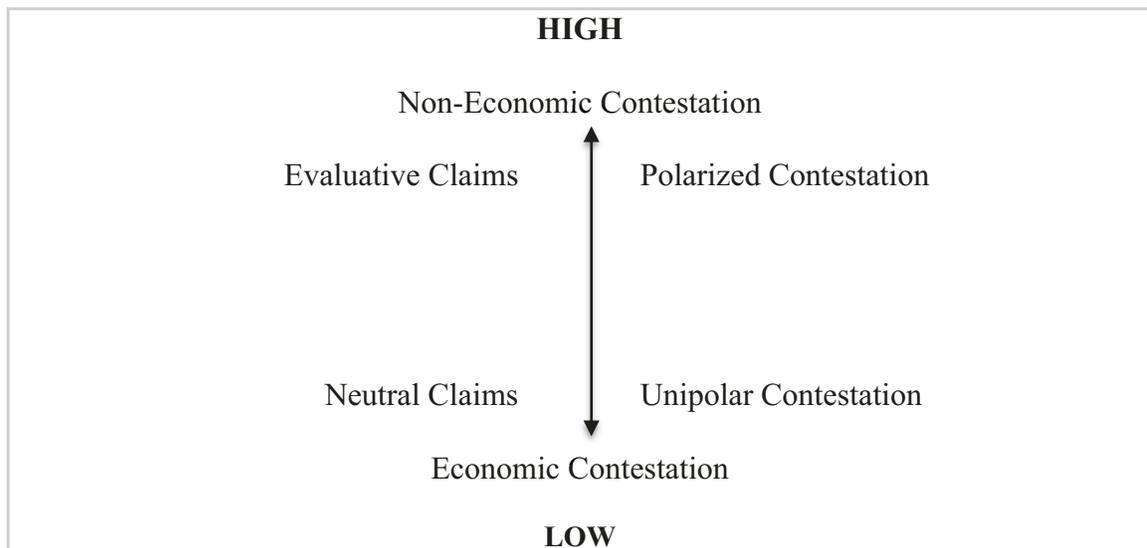


Figure 20 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to contention

First, the greater the share of evaluative claims, meaning statements of support for, or criticism of, EU-related objects, over neutral claims, the higher the level of contestation. Neutral claims are those that include a demand for action, or political speculation, without an explicit expression of support or criticism for a given object. A second indicator of

politicization is seen when media coverage includes coverage of contestation of non-economic EU-related issues, despite the gravity and prominence of the euro crisis and the Irish debt crisis during this time. Therefore, the EU is more heavily politicized the more contestation there exists of non-economic issues over economic ones. Finally, the more heavily polarized the contestation of the EU, meaning the more opposed that opinions of EU objects become, the more strongly politicized it is.

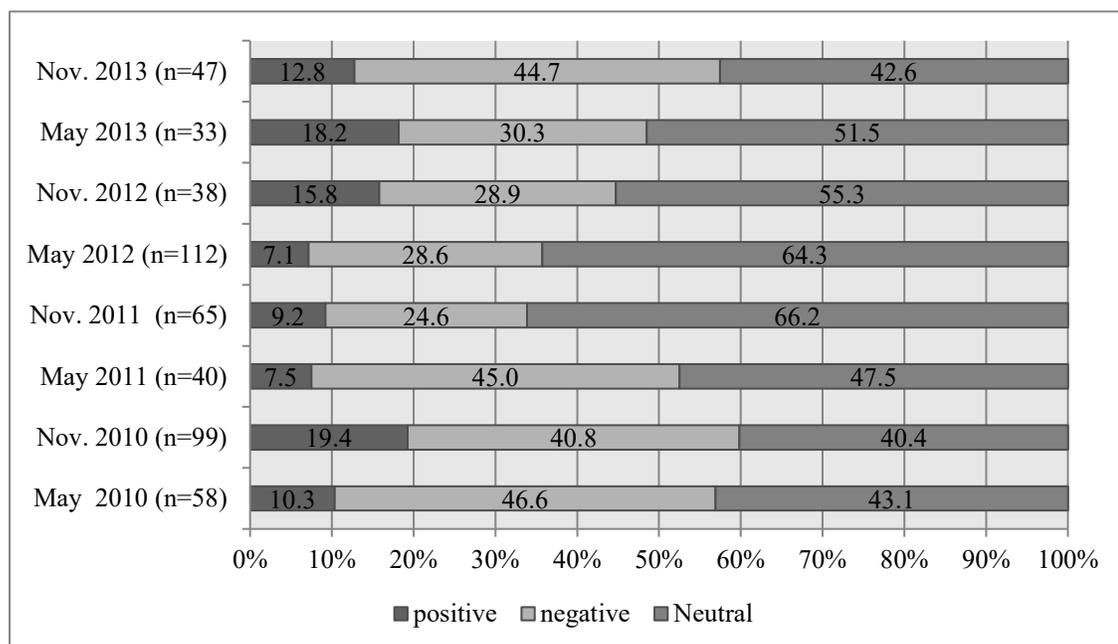


Figure 21 – Share of claims containing evaluations, by period (%)

Over half of all political claims coded between May 2010 and November 2013 did not contain an evaluation (52.2 percent). Of the evaluative claims, nearly seventy-five percent were negative. Over time (see Figure 21), claims containing evaluations exceed fifty percent of all claims in May 2010, November 2010, and May 2011, before sharply dropping down in November 2011. These first three periods roughly correspond with the Greek, Irish, and Portuguese bailouts respectively. Interestingly, claims with demands and speculations exceed evaluations during the periods characterized by the dense sequence of

Euro Summits, which from July 2011 to May 2012 occurred every one to three months and produced a series of key recovery measures for the euro crisis

Additionally, both the debate preceding the Irish referendum on the Fiscal Compact and the Irish Presidency failed to stir up a high number of evaluative claims. Examining the overall trends in proportions of evaluative statements, it appears that contention intensifies during the periods in which Ireland had the most at stake from its relationship with the EU: at the beginning of its negotiations with the EU-IMF Troika and when it received its bailout and during the period leading up to its exit from the bailout program. These are periods when the consequences of the EU were both most *proximate* and had the potential for the highest *impact* on Irish citizens. In fact, November 2010 produced the highest share of evaluative claims. This coincides with Troika officials' arrival in Dublin to finalize negotiations for Ireland's bailout. The second highest, occurred at the very end of the studied period, just weeks short of Ireland's exit from the Bailout. There is no observable relationship between periods with a larger frequency of political claims and evaluative statements. May 2011, which had the highest frequency of political claims overall, had the lowest share of evaluation, at 33.8 percent.

It is clear from these observations that political events or decisions that trigger increased reporting of statements of political opinion, in general, are not necessarily also more contentious. Increased contestation of issues appears to be more heavily influenced by *proximity*, where the bailouts were very much a national, not a European news story, *impact*, whereby the bailouts had the highest stakes for Irish citizens, and *prominence*, where the actors involved included a wide collection of prominent actors from Irish government, the EU, and internationally from the IMF. These are also time periods central

to the timeline of Ireland's debt crisis, and Ireland's narrative of the Eurozone crisis. Non-economic articles were overall more likely to include a claim containing an evaluation than economic ones (see Annex E, table E2). This indicates that economic articles may have dominated due to the salience and overall consequence of the two economic crises on Ireland, whether or not there was an issue of contention, while non-economic EU topics were more likely to be included in media coverage when they were contentious. Looking more closely at the objects evaluated, the top three, EU internal policy, Irish domestic affairs, and domestic affairs of other EU member states, mirror the most frequent objects of claims more generally (see Annex E, table E1). EU constitution and institutions, despite not being a frequent object of claims in general, are contested nearly as frequently as politics in other EU member states. This is largely in part due to increased contestation of constitutional issues during the run-up to the Irish referendum on the fiscal compact.

The final aspect of contestation relevant to this study relates to the degree of polarization of each contested object (i.e. evaluation). The more equally balanced negative and positive debates are against one another, the more polarized the contested object. As Statham and Trenz write, "If political actors agree on the public stage in the stances they take over issues...then the public is presented with few alternatives to take into consideration when forming opinions," which they argue contributes to a passive citizenry (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 80). While contestation of an object contributes to its politicization in general, it is an even stronger indicator of politicization when this contestation is polarized. This chapter is most interested in divisions on positions relating to EU objects between speakers of any level and among claims about EU objects, rather than defining it more strictly, like Statham and Trenz (2013a,b), as discontent or

disapproval voiced by non-executive actors against positions held by Eurosupportive executive actors. Divisions in positions on EU issues can exist across multiple levels of actors, and even among actors of the same speaker category, for instance, civil society groups representing conflicting interests. Therefore, the ideal type of contestation is debate with an equal number of negative and positive evaluations, as opposed an increase in just Eurosceptic or Eurocritical claims against dominate executive Europositive positions. Eurocritical claims, as coined by Statham and Trenz, are those, which are critical of specific aspects of European integration (Statham and Trenz 2013a, 93), as opposed to Euroscepticism, which is typically associated with a general criticism of the European project. To measure polarization, all positive evaluations were coded as +1, and negative evaluations as -1. Neutral claims that contained a demand or political speculation without a clear evaluative element were excluded from this analysis. Therefore, the closer the averaged position of evaluative claim making value falls to 0.00, the stronger the balance between opposing Euronegative and Europositive views, and the more polarized the position. Values, closer to either 1, or -1 indicate greater agreement between speakers. Scores from 0.00 to +/-0.33 are treated as high polarization, from +/-0.34 to +/-0.66 as moderate, and from +/-0.67 to +/-1.00 as low polarization.

Table 13 – Overall polarization of EU-related objects in Irish newspapers, by Object Category

Object Evaluated	Position of evaluative claim-making (-1 to +1)	Share in Evaluative claim-making (%)	N
<i>EU Internal Policy</i>	-0.44	38.2	89
<i>Domestic Affairs, Ireland</i>	-0.54	33.9	79
<i>Domestic Affairs, EU Other</i>	-0.45	9.4	22
<i>Constitution/Institutions</i>	-0.70	8.6	20
<i>EU External Policy</i>	-0.38	5.6	13
<i>Integration/Membership</i>	-0.20	4.3	10

In general, EU-level articles, whether on the Euro crisis, with a value of -0.42, or other EU topics, with a value of -0.53, are somewhat more polarized than domestic politics, valued -0.66. Table 13 displays the overall polarization of EU related object categories. Strikingly, European integration and membership, despite triggering the lowest frequency of evaluations and second to lowest frequency of claims overall, is also the most polarized EU-related object. Figure 22 illustrates the polarization of EU categories over time. Integration and Membership is reasonably highly polarized during May 2011, and contention in remaining periods varies between entirely positive and entirely negative evaluations. The increased polarization during May 2010 was triggered by two events. The first was the release of the National Reform Programme for Ireland under the EU 2020 strategy for growth and jobs a week earlier. The second was a debate in the Dáil Éireann, the Irish house of representatives, on the benefits of EU membership, and membership in the Eurozone for Ireland, in reaction to Europe Day on May 9. Sample articles during this period included:

“Harkin says euro has become straightjacket”²³
Irish Times, 10 May 2011

“Creighton praises European relationship”²⁴
Irish Times, 10 May 2011

“What has Europe done for us, apart from roads, jobs and education”²⁵
Irish Independent, 10 May 2011

This suggests that EU-related contestation that moves away from an exclusively policy-

²³ Marian Harkin is a former TD and an Independent Irish MEP, since 2004.

²⁴ Lucinda Creighton was Ireland’s Minister of State for European Affairs between 2011 and 2013.

²⁵ This is an anonymous editorial article reacting to the debate in the Dáil Éireann on 9 May 2011.

oriented debate is more likely to be reported when it involves prominent Irish speakers, takes place in a politicized arena like the Dáil Éireann, and is heavily polarized. However, this coverage remains inward looking and mostly focuses on Ireland's membership in the EU and the Eurozone. Of the objects falling into the Integration/Membership object category, EU/Eurozone membership, with a polarization value of 0.00, is the most heavily polarized object overall (see Annex E, Table E3).

This indicates that when debate is triggered on the right stage, then even an event with minimal impact, like Europe Day, can trigger an increase in polarized contention. The exchange of justification and questioning of EU membership between Irish government and opposition members, as well as other politicians, is likely a product of existing heightened political tensions concerning the economy following Ireland's plan for meeting Europe 2020 objectives for growth and jobs, just six months after receiving its bailout. While integration/membership is the most polarized object category overall, this is entirely a result of the nature of contention in May 2011. What little reporting of evaluations about this object category exists in other periods is mostly un-polarized and predominantly negative. However, the object category relating to constitutions and institutions, another object removed from strict policy debates, is very weakly polarized in the Irish media.

The EU's internal policy is moderately polarized, at a value of -0.44 overall, and skewed towards negative evaluations. Within internal politics, the Economic and Monetary Union is the most heavily polarized object, although somewhat negatively skewed, while the single market is the least polarized, and most negatively evaluated (Table 13). Over time, EU internal politics were most heavily polarized, at 0.00, during the same periods where they were the least frequently contested (see Figure 22). Therefore, there is no

apparent relationship between the volume of contestation and the polarization of an object. For instance, EU internal politics were much more heavily polarized in November 2010 when they made up only a quarter of total claims than a few months earlier in May when three quarters of political claims contested internal EU politics.

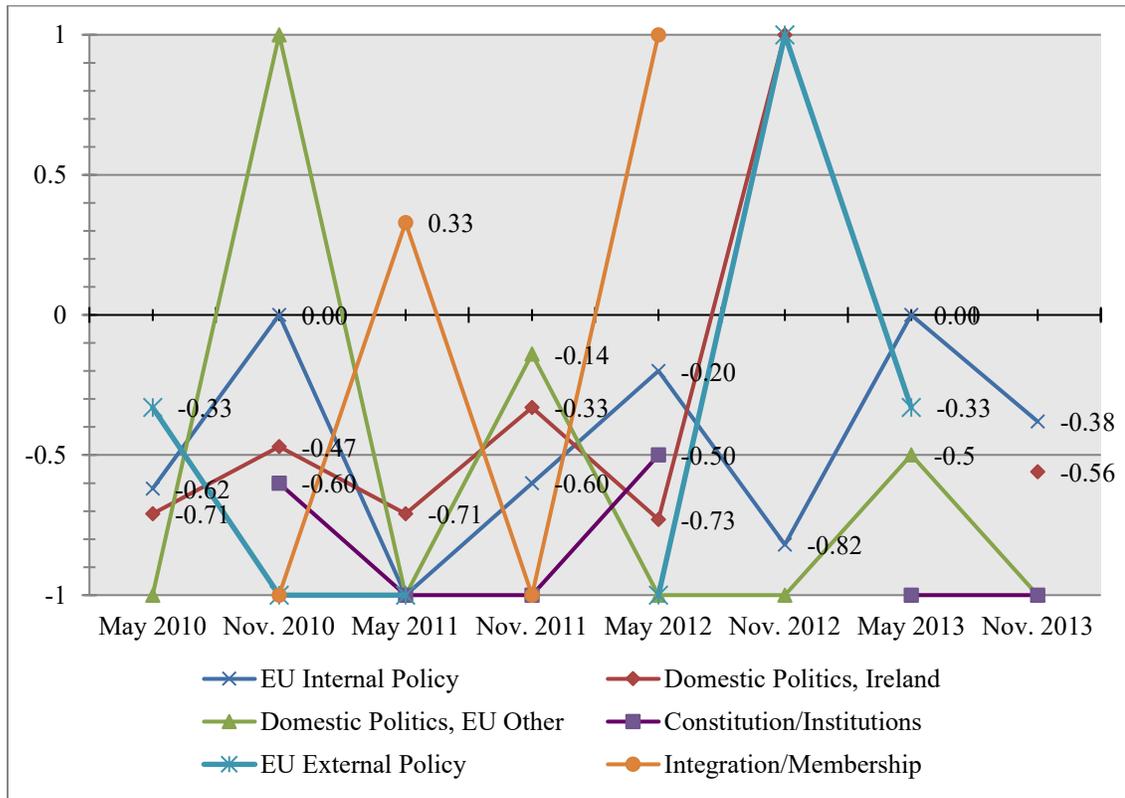


Figure 22 – Polarization of EU object categories, by period

Similarly, in November 2010, claims on Irish domestic politics, in national media were both more plentiful but also less polarized and more heavily negative. Thus, as the Troika approved a bailout for Ireland, evaluations of EU politics, predominantly EMU, in Irish media were mixed, while Irish politics were primarily portrayed negatively in media coverage during this time. May 2012, covering the campaigns and debates leading up to Ireland’s referendum on the fiscal compact display a similar pattern, whereby claims about Irish domestic politics during this period outnumber those about EU internal politics and

are entirely critical. Both time periods correspond with major national political events explaining why domestic politics has generally more visibility and evaluative statements. However, the issues central to the political questions raised in each case relate in the most part to policy issues at the EU level, explaining the higher polarization of EU politics.

Statham and Trenz write that a feature of politicization unique to the Eurozone crisis is the emergence of transnational “elite divisions between executives from creditor and indebted countries” (Statham and Trenz 2015, 299). This is observable in the Irish media debate but is not a dominant feature of media-reported contention. Claims about EU-related domestic politics in other member states compose just four percent of all claims by Irish government actors, and of these, just one is evaluative. However, elite speakers from creditor member states, particularly France and Germany which occur most frequently as speakers of claims by other member state government actors, evaluate Irish domestic politics at just a 9.5 percent share of all evaluations by that speaker category. With an average position of evaluative claim-making of -1.00, these evaluations are entirely negative, displaying an apparent cleavage on the topic of Ireland’s domestic politics as they relate to the EU. There are no evaluative statements of the domestic politics in other EU member states by Irish political actors. Some cleavages emerge between Irish government actors and those in other member states’ regarding evaluations of objects related to EMU. Irish government actors’ average position on EMU-related objects leans toward negative evaluations. A position of -0.38 indicates that this object is also rather polarized (see table 14). Government actors from other member states make fewer evaluations of EMU in general, but their claims are more polarized with an evaluative score of 0.00, suggesting an equal divide between positive and negative evaluations. While there is evidence of

transnational elite cleavages between creditor and indebted countries on the topic of Irish domestic politics, these cleavages relating to EMU are less clearly defined.

Table 14 – Overall polarization of two most frequent objects, by speaker category.

Object Evaluated	Claimant					
	Irish State Actor	State Actor, EU Other	EU-level Actor	Irish NGO	External	Journalist
<i>EMU</i>	-0.38	0.00	-0.71	-0.56	0.00	-0.38
<i>Domestic Politics, Ireland</i>	-0.41	-1.00	0.17	-0.63	-0.20	-0.93

Supporting Grande and Kriesi’s observation of punctuated rather than continuous politicization, the Irish press exhibits no apparent trends in polarization of EU-related objects over time. Based on these observations, this chapter proposes that the level of polarization visible in the media is determined by patterns in contention among highly visible and prominent actors, irrespective of whether it addresses object and issues given most visibility in the press. This circles back to Cohen’s assertion in the opening of this chapter, that while the press may have an influence over determining which issues are visible based on fundamental news values, and which issues readers are exposed to, the opinions on the EU that appear in the Irish press reflect contention produced outside of the media’s sphere of influence. The press picks up this contentious discourse, for the most part, based on the prominence of the speakers and the politicization of issues in their arena. The topics deemed most salient by the three news values, prominence, proximity, and impact are not necessarily the most salient to prominent actors nor most likely to lead to contention between them.

4.6 Conclusion: EU Politicization or Euro-politicization?

In her study of the politicization of EMU in several European newspapers, Leupold

observed that “overall political events at the national and the European levels largely drove the pattern of salience across countries,” including Ireland (Leupold 2016, 91). This analysis observes similar trends in the politicization of the EU more widely. The Irish media are receptive to EU-related political and social issues, in both informational news and analytical capacity. However, as this chapter demonstrates, this resonance of EU issues is informed by traditional news values that aim to bring readers news that is foremost local, affects the readership directly or indirectly in an obvious way, and often involves prominent and well-known actors. The more that EU politics involve actors that are *prominent* in Ireland, on topics with physical or contextual *proximity* to Ireland, and the potential for the most strongly felt *impact* on Ireland, the more politicized they will be in the Irish media. However, regardless of how connected or disconnected EU politics are from the national Irish context at a given moment, the visibility they receive in the press is more or less consistent, apart from when the EU context enters national democratic processes. Despite the modest level of politicization of the EU external to economic issues, its consistent coverage in the press indicates that it is in fact perceived as relevant and important by the Irish media.

There is a consensus in the body of work on the EU since the crises that the EU became more salient and more heavily visible in the media during the peak period of the Euro crisis. This chapter proposes that this intensification of reporting about the euro crisis reflects intensified salience of the euro crisis itself, not of the EU as such. The general salience of the EU irrespective of the crisis remained more or less the same over the four-year sample. It is significant to note that for the most part, the EU remained salient despite the euro crisis. Furthermore, the evidence laid out in this chapter reveals disconnect

between variables responsible for an object's increased visibility and scope, and those that influence contestation, particularly polarization. Which polarized debates are visible in Irish media, represented by the Irish Times, and the Irish Independent, is heavily influenced by whether they are made by high-level speakers who are involved in EU policy-making processes and made in a prominent arena, regardless of the *impact* of a trigger event. Contestation in the news media does not consistently abide by the same framework of news values as the overall visibility and scope of EU-related coverage.

The overall salience of the EU to the news media, as measured by its visibility in weekly reporting and the scope of this coverage, on average give higher priority to the *impact* factor of a political event or development. For this reason, objects that may have very limited visibility and time periods that are limited in the scope of their coverage may be more heavily polarized. The data presented in this chapter strongly suggests that Irish media does display Europeanization, in that the visibility and scope of EU coverage, while much lower than reporting on national government are not insignificant and can exceed exclusively domestic government related reporting at times. Separating reporting of the euro crisis for reporting that is not directly tied to the crisis reveals that the space dedicated to EU issues is more or less consistent over time, despite crisis-driven reporting. While others, like Grande and Kriesi (2016) have observed that growth in politicization occurs in a punctuated pattern, these results reveal that beneath this, there is a consistent and stable base level of EU coverage. However, there is an inconstancy in contestation and particularly the polarization of EU objects indicating that the overall politicization during the 2010-2013 period remains low and still heavily internalized with a strong Irish focus. This observation challenges claims that the euro crisis facilitated a major punctuated

moment of heightened politicization. This chapter concludes that while the Irish media exhibits evidence of Europeanized coverage that remained consistent throughout the crisis, the overall politicization of the EU remains weak even during the crisis.

Chapter 5: Mapping politicization: European integration and the crisis in the Citizen Arena

Equipped with an understanding of politicized discourse in the *intermediary arena*, this chapter sets out to engage with the *citizen arena* of politicization. While the previous chapter, on the media, concentrated on the source of citizen's *indirect* mediated experience of politics, this chapter examines citizens' *direct* experiences and political acts (De Vreese 2010, 134). Despite studies on media effects and agenda-setting research identifying a clear correlation between media reporting and, at the least, which issues gain salience with the public, recent studies observe that the politicization and especially the saliency of issues may vary between political arenas. Going against conventional research on media effects, Jan Beyers and his coauthors write that, "policies that gain media attention are not necessarily salient to citizens, interest groups or policy makers (Beyers, Dür, and Wonka 2017, 9). Hurrelmann and Baglioni (2016) add that even when politicization is actively observed in other arenas, it cannot immediately be assumed to occur on the citizen arena also (Hurrelmann and Baglioni 2016, 121). This re-confirms the value of this project's differentiated approach to understanding politicization and justifies the analysis of citizen discourse in relation to the media analysis. After a brief overview of patterns in political interest among the Irish, this chapter proceeds to map levels and patterns of politicization through indicators on salience, scope and contestation of the European Union and relates them to the patterns observed earlier in the media.

5.1 Political Interest and Engagement in Ireland

The bulk of the research that has found a growing politicization of the European Union has located this politicization in the media, or among national and European political elites. Both the news media and political elites have a professional interest in politics and therefore increased incentives to stay informed. Lay citizens, on the other hand, are those without a professional interest in politics. While an interest in politics may come out of personal interest or a sense of civic duty, it is unreasonable to expect that for most people, it will exist to the same degree as it does for journalists, political bloggers and political elites, for example. Therefore, it is expected that overall politicization of any political issues may ultimately also be lower among citizens. This is consistent with the observations of previous studies of citizen publics (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015; Hurrelmann and Baglioni 2016; Van Ingelgom 2013, 2014). However, if the news media does, in fact, carry some degree of influence over the salient political agenda among citizens (and if it is receptive to the interest of its readers), we should still see similar patterns in the politicization over time, and similar distribution of attention dedicated to economic rather than non-economic issues. Even if the politicization of the EU among citizens and in the media do not align ideally, there should still be noticeable positive correlations (Beyers, Dür, and Wonka 2017, 3).

The Irish population is generally perceived to be well informed and interested in politics (Coakley 2018, 57; Mair 2010, 1) and has self-reported newspaper readership levels higher than what might be expected considering general trends in print media readership. Despite most people spending just one hour or less a day on reading a newspaper, according to the European Social Survey, nearly eighty-two percent of Irish

respondents between 2008 and 2014 reported that they read a newspaper daily. In fact, the proportion of respondents who indicate they never read the newspaper has declined over that same period. Previous research has shown that newspaper readership, to a greater degree than other news sources, is positively correlated with the likelihood of an individual's engagement in political conversation, even when accounting for the influence of political interest (Kim, Wyatt, Katz 1999, 368). Average political interest in Ireland remained more-or-less stable over the course of the crisis, sitting midway between low and moderate levels (See figure 23). Eurobarometer data indicates that from spring 2010 to spring 2013 over half of those surveyed reported a medium or strong interest in politics, signifying that the majority of those who read newspapers likely consume some degree of political news coverage daily. Just an average of one quarter of respondents reported absolutely no interest in politics. Thus, we can expect that at least three quarters of Irish citizens are at the least cognitively engaged with political issues. As such, it is not unreasonable to investigate public opinion, political acts, and political conversations for evidence of a politicization of the European Union.

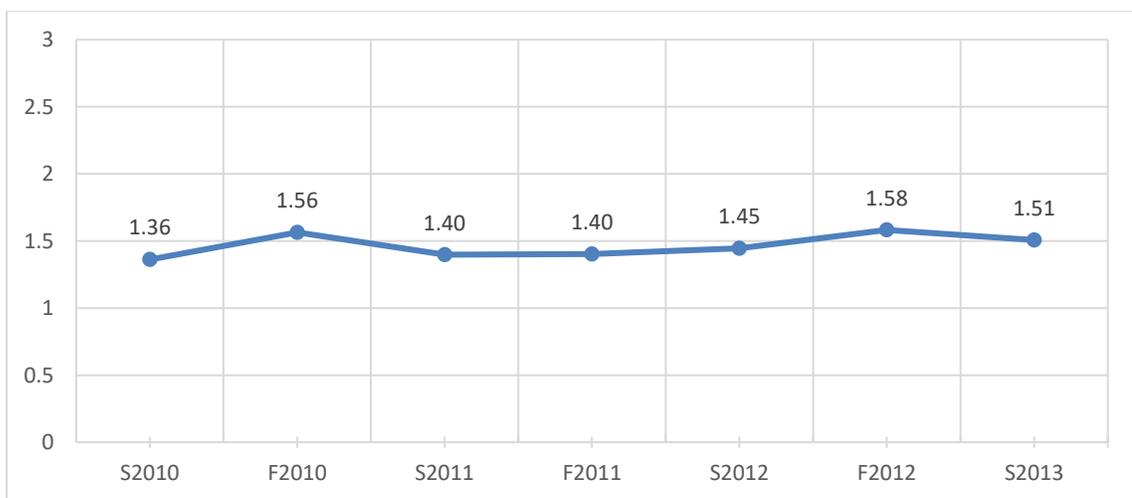


Figure 23 – Average Political Interest: To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? 3 = a great deal, 0 = not at all

Source: Standard Eurobarometer

Leading up to the crisis, Irish citizens have been more likely to report feeling they know little or nothing about the EU than their counterparts in the remainder of the union yet have consistently performed higher than the average for the EU on knowledge tests of EU history and membership (Coakley 2018, 57). Following the 2002 Irish parliamentary elections, a survey found citizens to have exceptionally high levels of recognition of national politicians, starting at eighty-nine percent for leaders of major parties (Marsh et. al. 2008, 275-6). Despite praising the Irish for what he observed as high ‘intelligence and political alertness,’ the late Irish political scientist Peter Mair lamented at Ireland’s low levels of popular engagement, which he claimed were among the lowest in western Europe. With an average electoral turnout of less than sixty-five percent, in 2010 Ireland had the fifth lowest turnout in western Europe after Switzerland, Portugal, France and the UK (Mair 2010, 1). On a more optimistic note, comparing parliamentary elections in EU member states between 2013 and 2018, Ireland’s turnout in 2016 of 65.1 percent is just marginally below the EU average of 66.7. This suggests that lower levels of voter turnout may be part of a larger trend and not necessarily unique to the Irish case.

However, if this dichotomy between high political interest and low engagement is real, then a significant proportion of Irish citizens might classify as what Erik Amnå and Joakim Ekman call standby citizens. These are individuals who are interested in politics without participating in them, for now (Amnå and Ekman 2014, 264). Their idea of standby citizens borrows from Robert Dahl’s original notion of ‘political slack,’ which arises from a dominance of individuals in liberal societies who have the resources to participate in politics, but choose to allocate them to other uses (Dahl 2005, 305). Others have classified some individuals who are highly interested in politics but not actively engaged as

disillusioned (Van Ingelgom 2013). Members of a political community may become disillusioned if they perceive to have lost their sense of political efficacy. Such disillusionment may lead to political indifference and thus decreased incentive to participate. The standard Eurobarometer question on how often respondents try to persuade others of their political views show a subtle decline in Ireland in those who answer often and from time to time in fall 2011, at 43.5 percent falling noticeably below half of all respondents for the first time during the crisis period. While the proportion of those who indicate that they rarely try to convince others remains stable over the course of the crisis, those who answer never increases from just over a fifth of respondents, to just below thirty percent. While the changes are subtle and only tracked biannually over a two-and-a-half-year period, this may be an early sign that Irish citizens are in fact stepping away from political contestation more generally. This is not enough to prove whether Irish citizens might, in fact, be starting to abandon politics rather than contest them, as Van Ingelgom warns may be a consequence of greater politicization of political decision making (Van Ingelgom 2013, 123). However, it is an important contextual factor in examining contestation that is removed from self-mobilized political contestation, particularly in a conversational setting such as focus groups.

5.2 Methodology

Unlike the media, which provides researchers with written or recorded transcripts of its discourse, discourse among lay citizens is more difficult to capture effectively. Citizens can express political opinions in a variety of ways, for instance through interaction with others in person or through online forums and social media, and through acts of political participation such as protest, boycotts, signing petitions and voting. Original

studies of citizen opinion on the EU used survey data to measure aspects of politicization (ex. Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). However, despite their ability to provide the most representative sampling of citizens, surveys are inherently limited in their ability to measure the political salience of issues. In requesting that respondents provide answers to questions relating to specific policies, there is an implied assumption that citizens are interested in those policies to begin with (White 2011, 44). Consequently, surveys cannot effectively gauge the degree to which respondents care about these issues or are interested in them (Hurrelmann, Gora, Wagner 2015, 47). In other words, when asking participants to provide an opinion on a pre-established issue, they are not able to assess whether that issue was one the respondent would have an opinion on before reading the question, or if he or she is forced to develop an opinion on the spot. In forcing a response, surveys can “exaggerate respondents’ level of concern with the topic in question” and thus overestimate the degree to which these opinions exist in everyday political acts and discourse (White 2011, 45). As it is not certain that respondents had an opinion on the topics asked to begin with, some have argued that public opinion research creates or constructs the ‘public’ whose opinion it studies (Osborne and Rose 1999). These are not the publics that emerge organically in society around different issues as they become politicized among citizens. In contrast, these are ‘constructed’ publics created by the same survey methods designed to measure them, for example, by sample selection and question design.

Therefore, in addition to survey research, previous qualitative studies of citizen discourse have relied on in-depth interviews (see Díez Medrano 2003; Favell 2008; Gaxie, Hube and Rowell 2011; White 2011), focus groups (see Duchesne et. al. 2013; Hurrelmann and Baglioni 2016; Hurrelmann et. al. 2015; Van Ingelgom 2014; White 2011), and online

activity through social media and public forums (see Michailidou et. al. 2012; Michailidou 2015, 2017) for their data. While they allow for the study of more spontaneous interactive processes of conversation and debate formation than do surveys, these methods, especially interviews and focus groups, also have their limitations. Due to small sample sizes and more difficulty in collecting participants that reflect national regional and socio-demographic differences,²⁶ observations are less representative, and thus results are not generalizable to the same degree as survey data. However, focus groups as a research tool, are not intended to reproduce a miniaturized statistically representative sample of Irish society, but rather a “typological representativeness” (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016, 113). This project uses data collected from focus groups, otherwise known as group interviews to assess the politicization processes relating to the EU. Particularly significant, in this context, is the ability to test for its salience, as well as spontaneously occurring opinions in a depth or scope chosen by the participants. This is a key element of politicization that survey research has failed to adequately measure. Focus groups, therefore, facilitate analysis of salience through data collected “in a setting that is only loosely structured by the researcher and gives more room to the issues raised by the participants themselves” based on concrete textual evidence (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 47-8).

That said, like public opinion surveys, the publics measured by the focus groups, despite better facilitating the observation and measurement of salience of specific issues, are still artificial publics. Composed of groups of strangers, these are not people who would

²⁶ For instance, focus groups for this project all took place in Dublin.

naturally be in a setting discussing politics together. It is also unknown if these are people who would naturally be inclined to join political conversation. However, like Sophie Duchesne and her co-authors, this project consciously uses an artificial situation because to study how citizens socially engage in politicization we need to create a political situation in which they can be observed. This is done by explicitly and strategically guiding the conversation towards political topics with planned questions. The questions were designed in an experimental fashion, as explained in more detail later, whereby the EU, as the main research interest, was not revealed until later in the groups. This approach assumes conversational and engaged citizens. In some cases, if one participant dominated at the expense of others, or if some participants were reluctant to speak, the researcher did step in to moderate the discussion. Thus, the methods used in this project consciously create citizen publics that facilitate and “make up the world, and the kinds of persons, phenomena and entities” that it wants to study (Osborne and Rose 2003, 368). It is not possible, in this research, to know to what extent publics emerge in relation to these issues naturally and are not just a product of the research methodology. However, they still provide valuable insight into how people in Ireland react when they are confronted with politics in relation to and reactive to others.

Justifying the value of focus groups as a data source, Van Ingelgom observes that “individual attitudes are not given, but result from a process of construction that occurs through the use of speech in a collective” context (Van Ingelgom 2013, 84). Through carefully constructed ‘publics’ focus groups can allow us to observe these processes. As mentioned earlier, while the media, civil society actors, and political parties have a professional interest in politics, lay citizens can either choose to “take a step ‘into’ politics”

or remain in an a-political discursive space (Duchesne et. al. 2013, 163). Focus group conversation thus offers a look at the discursive processes through which shared understandings of political, and particularly EU-related issues are constructed. To summarize, while representative methods, like surveys, can tell us what people think, focus groups help explain what they think about and how they think about it. This is key for a holistic understanding of politicization. It should be noted, however, that they do not show how participants first became aware of and cognitively engaged in these topics. Comparisons to the media analysis in this chapter look for correlation between the focus group and media discourse seeking to compare political arenas. They do not, however, seek to provide causal evidence between them in either direction.

While conversation with other citizens, whether in person or mediated by technology, is not itself a political act or active form of claims making, it is the site where citizens can "think through their idea elements" to develop their opinions and enhance their knowledge or understanding of issues through exposure to others' ideas (Kim et. al. 2001, 362). Thus, even when not in a public forum, conversation is one site where politicization of the European Union can occur, making focus groups a useful tool when supplemented by survey research. Thus, this analysis follows earlier research on citizen attitudes toward Europe that applies a mixed-methods approach using focus groups alongside quantitative surveys (Duchesne, et. al. 2013; Virginie Van Ingelgom 2014). Data from the Eurobarometer surveys is used to confirm and back up results of focus group observations. The focus groups likewise offer a means for a better contextualized and more thorough understanding of the survey results.

Fieldwork for the eight regular Eurobarometer surveys that provide data for this

analysis, spanning from spring 2010 to Fall 2013, corresponds to the dates of the media analysis periods in the previous chapter. While the focus groups do not correspond with these periods exactly, the first set of four groups took place in December 2010, just two weeks after the fieldwork for the fall 2010 Eurobarometer and corresponding media period. The second set of focus groups took place in December 2013, one month after the fall 2013 Eurobarometer fieldwork and corresponding media period, and just one day after Ireland officially exited the bailout on December 15th. Therefore, while the focus groups do not perfectly align with the survey and media periods, each set is still reasonably close to a period of analysis to allow for some comparison. While there are just two periods of focus groups, their dates provide a snapshot of the beginning and the end of the overall research period, and the beginning and the end of Ireland's EU-IMF bailout program.

All eight focus groups, four during each period, took place at the same public opinion research firm, the Grafton Suite in central Dublin. Participants were recruited by the Grafton Suite, under the researchers' supervision, using the firm's own database. They were thus all familiar with the focus group setting. However, it was ensured that they had not participated in groups on similar topics in the past and that the research objective of the project and topic of the discussion were not disclosed. This ensured that citizens who had low interest in politics or felt that they had low political competence were not discouraged from participation. It also permitted for an experimental setup which allowed to test for spontaneous political discussion where participants were not influenced by knowledge of the research interests and objectives. To be effective, focus groups need to establish a comfortable environment where participants do not feel inhibited from freely expressing themselves as well as one where they can understand, and be understood by others.

Therefore, like the CITAE project by Duchesne and her co-authors (2013), which also provided the data for Van Ingelgom (2014), the recruitment for these groups attempted to group participants with others who were not “too far removed from each other socially” and might share similar “social or cultural references” (Van Ingelgom 214, 93). Each set, 2010 and 2013, consisted of two focus groups composed of eight to ten Irish citizens who had completed some level of post-secondary education and two groups composed of those who had not (Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016, 113; Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 48). Students were explicitly excluded from the recruitment. As it is not possible to account for all social or cultural variation in society in the focus groups, other demographic qualities, such as gender and age, were evenly spread across the participants. Each session began with introductory remarks by the researcher explaining that the project is interested in everyone’s comments and opinions regardless of how well versed they feel they are on the topics. The group moderator also emphasized that participants may have conflicting opinions on certain issues and that this is both expected and okay.

Despite these efforts, focus groups are inherently an artificial setting carefully designed by the researcher and the resulting conversation is therefore not entirely natural. Thus, questions used in this project were designed to be as open ended as possible allowing the conversation to develop unmediated and using participants; own vocabulary and frames of reference (Hurrelmann, et. al. 2015, 47). People are generally not as comfortable conversing with strangers, particularly about politics, and especially when being filmed. They were thus offered snacks and hot beverages to create a more comfortable discursive environment, and the recording equipment was not openly visible and operated remotely from a separate room. The researcher maintained a low profile, only interjecting with pre-

planned discursive prompts which allow for the observation of citizens' reactions to them. Similar to the approach in Jonathan White's study of lay perspectives on European politics, participants were first given freedom to discuss politics generally and to spontaneously bring in topics and issues of most interest to them, and only later prompted to specifically discuss the EU (White 2011, 45). The moderator first asked them to describe the recent political events that had most excited them, allowing for an assessment of the degree to which EU-related issues spontaneously arise in political discussions. This was followed by questions explicitly asking respondents about the EU, its policies and its institutions. The original focus groups contained a sequence of seven questions, each with follow-up prompts (see Appendix H). This analysis studied responses to the following four questions from that original set:

- *Which political developments have made you excited about politics recently, in a positive or negative way?* This question facilitates observation of which issues are spontaneously raised in political conversation, and the degree to which, if at all, EU-related politics are represented. Previous studies that have used questions asking respondents to rank policy issues in terms of importance, such as those found in the European Election Study (see Beyers, Dür, and Wonka 2017). This forces respondents to select from issues pre-defined by the survey authors, irrespective of whether these are issues respondents would have come up with on their own.
- *How, if at all, has the existence of the European Union affected you personally?* This question allows for observation of conversation that arises when respondents are prompted to speak about the EU. This project is interested in

both the topics raised (i.e. Economic versus non-economic, domestic versus European) as well as in the existence or lack thereof of political claims. It followed an earlier prompt to discuss responsibility for the euro crisis after which the moderator revealed the EU as the research interest.

- *In general, do you think that it is good that so many decisions are now made at the European level?* This question facilitates observation of political conversation when participants are prompted to evaluate the EU.
- *Are you familiar with the specific institutions of the European Union? If so, which one represents your interests the best?* This question provides an additional measure of levels of knowledge about the EU among participants.

The content of focus group discussions in relation to these questions was analyzed using both quantitative and interpretive methods, an approach also followed by Duchesne and her co-authors (2013) for the CITAE project. The analysis coded the contributions of individual speakers using the NVivo software package, alongside a qualitative analysis of the group dynamics. The quantitative analysis coded speakers' contributions based roughly on the same categories used in the media analysis, which were then inductively adapted and adjusted to the content and context of the discussions. The coding of the responses focused on the following three main qualitative categories which give insight into the salience, scope and level of contestation of the EU in citizen discourse:

- *Claims:* This category distinguishes between evaluative statements, demands for change or the status quo, and ambivalent statements where respondents express both positive and negative evaluative sentiments together. It also differentiates between Europeanized claims and entirely domestic claims with

no EU link. For domestic claims, self-critical claims where respondents negatively evaluate themselves or the Irish people, as opposed to state or institutional-level evaluations are also distinguished.

- *EU References*: This category tracks explicit mention of the EU as such, specific EU institutions, or EU actors. This helps to assess the scope of the EU's inclusion in these conversations in terms of whether the EU is referred to indirectly, or just as the EU as such, or if speakers refer to specific actors and institutions indicated a contribution that is deeper in scope.
- *Topic*: This category, like the object category in the media analysis, identifies the topic or overall aspect of EU related politics relevant to each discursive contribution. Subcategories distinguish between politics relating to integration and membership issues, constitutional and institutional issues, EU internal policy and external policy, Irish domestic affairs linked to the EU, and domestic affairs in other member states, linked to the EU.

One final qualitative category is applied to responses of only the final question relating to familiarity with EU institutions:

- *Depth of Knowledge*: This category assesses speakers' level of familiarity with the EU, its policies and its institutions. Subcategories distinguish between detailed and accurate accounts, where speakers are not just aware of EU policies, institutions or related issues, but also reveal a deeper understanding of them; limited and accurate accounts where respondents are aware of the EU policies, institutions or related issues but are not able to speak about them in greater depth; and limited inaccurate accounts where respondents are either

unaware of EU-related issues, or they are aware of them but reveal misunderstanding or inaccuracies

While quantitative analysis of focus group data is not statistically representative, it offers two main benefits. First, objectively coding and quantifying the percentage of discussion dedicated to various topics or themes reduces the risk of research bias where passages are selectively chosen to best fit the hypothesis (Duchesne et. al. 2013, 193). Second, it offers data in a format that is easily comparable with the results of the media analysis in the previous chapter.

5.3 Salience

This section evaluates the salience of EU politics among the Irish public in relation to the Irish print news media. The level of salience that EU politics hold among lay citizens may be measured by the frequency at which they appear in political conversation, the proportion of political conversation dedicated to the EU in relation to other topics, and an overall awareness of EU politics. While a detailed or in-depth knowledge of an issue is not necessary for it to become salient in citizen discourse, we can expect citizens to be familiarized with it to the extent that they can generate conversation about EU-related topics unprompted and unfacilitated. Similarly, to the media analysis, a distinction between economic or financial topics in political conversation serves as a key measure against the salience of the EU itself. This helps to distinguish the degree to which salience is driven directly by the financial crisis as opposed to a resonance of non-economic EU-related issues. Additionally, a higher volume of ‘Europeanized’ discourse either explicitly about EU politics, or indirectly relating EU politics to domestic politics in member states, over entirely domestic conversation, is another indicator of EU saliency. While citizens will not

necessarily hold the same ‘news values’ as the news media, we might hypothesize that they share a value in the proximity of issues. Those to which citizens can most strongly relate to are more likely to resonate with them.

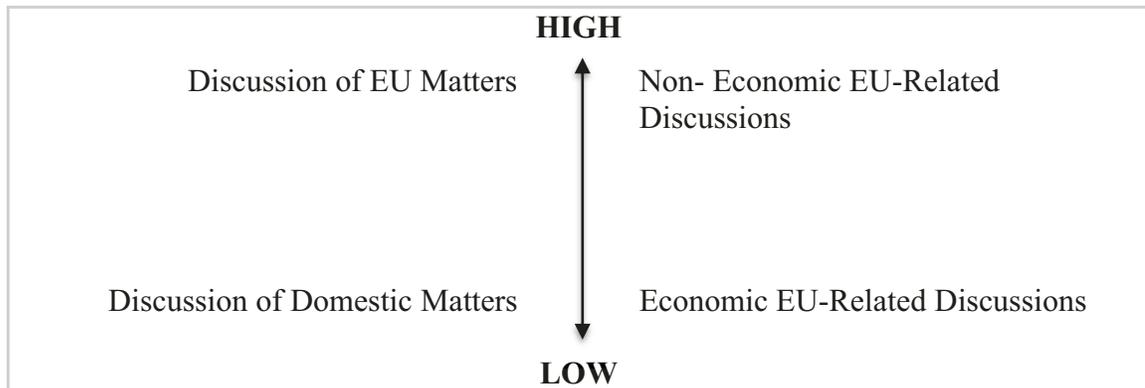


Figure 24 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to political salience

5.3.1 EU Salience in Citizen Focus Groups

Deeper insight into the salience of EU-related politics between 2010 and 2013 can be gleaned from citizen conversation in focus groups. The first question posed to group participants in both 2010 and 2013 asked them to report on *which recent political issues have captured their interest*. This question facilitates an assessment of the degree to which EU related politics appear in general political discussion in relation to other topics when the conversation flows freely. As reported by Hurrelmann et. al.’s analysis of the 2010 focus groups, the EU took a backseat to state-level politics in political debates in line with the patterns in the Eurobarometer data. Taking place just weeks after Ireland received an EU-IMF bailout, it is unsurprising that the financial crisis and Ireland’s austerity budget dominated the discussion. However, just 4.3 percent of participant contributions could be considered ‘Europeanized,’ meaning they had some connection to EU issues and politics.

Of these, the clear majority were about EU-related domestic politics in other EU member states.

Despite the EU's direct role in the bailout, the conversation was initially largely concerned with placing blame in relation to the causes of the crisis and an assessment of national government responses (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 49). These dominated the conversation and took on an entirely internalized domestic character. They placed blame exclusively on domestic actors, namely Irish politicians and banks with accusations of dishonesty, corruption and cronyism. However, later the discussion, remaining domestically oriented, transformed into a conversation where participants shared own lived experiences of the crisis, for instance, unemployment and problems with debt, rather than the politics of the crisis. The following exchange from 2010 provides an example of this:

Noni: I got a different house like two years ago. Bought it for 420,000. It's probably worth about 250,000 now.

Sandra: Yeah, we were just saying...

Noni: I'm screwed (laughs). Do you know what I mean?

Such exchanges where participants shared and compared how their lives and the lives of friends and family were hurt by Ireland's economic troubles and early austerity dominated participants' understandings of 'political issues' when asked to describe those that captivated them the most. This shows that citizens' cognitive framing of political issues is one that concentrates on their lived experiences in relation to the output of politics, and only second, and to a lesser degree on political processes and decisions. Therefore, there is some evidence that the EU is indeed to a certain extent visible in citizens daily lives, rather than just in the media and democratic events. Additionally, the quick shift from placing

political blame for the crisis, to such personal conversation is an indication of this. While unsurprising, this is a reminder that any analysis of the politicization of the EU with respect to its salience in comparison to the media needs to consider a somewhat different weighting of various indicators of news worthiness by citizens. This will understandably influence the extent of the media's agenda setting power in determining which issues citizens pick up on. The news value of *impact* is also a factor influencing the degree to which the focus group participants were drawn to political issues, but only as far as it relates to personal *proximity*.

At nearly one quarter of all contributions, the 2013 focus groups show a noticeable increase in the salience of EU politics from 2010. Of these, over sixty percent were about domestic politics of other EU member states, just over thirty were related to EU membership or questions of enlargement, and the remainder discussed the euro crisis. However, the bulk of the discussion still centred on the Irish sovereign debt crisis and bailout which continued to be understood through a nearly entirely domestic framework. However, the salience of the euro crisis did increase somewhat by 2013. The Greek crisis, which exacerbated the euro crisis, developed later than the Irish crisis, so it is not unexpected that Irish conversation only picked up on Europe-wide crisis-related discourse a bit later.

Despite so few EU-related remarks during political discussion among Irish focus group participants, in December 2010 when explicitly triggered by the moderator to discuss the EU, participants were able to carry conversation about it, indicating a “moderate to high saliency” of EU-related issues for the participants (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 52). When asked to discuss how the EU has impacted them personally, respondents in both the 2010

and 2013 groups proceeded to enter relatively detailed conversation that moved beyond listing ways that they had been affected and proceeding to discuss and evaluate EU regulations, relate the EU to equality of gender, sexual orientation and foreign nationals, Irish fishing rights and infrastructure funding, and to some extent albeit more strongly in 2013 than 2010, questions of transparency and legitimacy. Overall, the observed salience of various EU effects is driven mainly by personal experience, as opposed to a sophisticated knowledge of EU competencies, regulations or policy processes. The salience of the EU, at least with respect to its policy effects is thus not driven exclusively by what is reported in the press, but even more so by the EU's visibility in everyday life. The following comment from 2010 is typical of the focus group conversations on the personal effects of the European Union:

Nick: One of my strongest memories from childhood was driving past the roadwork signs and a big EU flag at the bottom. We would have zero in terms of infrastructure if it wasn't for the EU.

When asked to describe the effects of the EU, participants most often made references to what they saw or experienced, rather than express familiarity with tangible policies or EU competencies. However, while it is not the forefront of citizens' minds when discussing politics generally, most citizens have some level of interest in the EU, based mostly on its visibility to them in their own experiences, and are able to carry a conversation on related issues when prompted. The salience of the EU overall is dominated by those issues to which citizens can personally relate such as visible changes to local infrastructure, rather than EU level political processes and institutions.

When examining cumulative data from all questions posed to participants combined, both the 2010 and 2013 discussions were dominated by domestic issues even in

response to questions that specifically prompted participants to comment on the EU. There was, however, a small increase in overall EU-related conversation from around thirty-five percent of contributions in 2010, to just under half of all contributions in 2013. During both time periods, regardless of whether respondents were prompted to discuss the EU or not, the conversation eventually turned to an extensive analysis of and commentary on the Irish debt crisis and related domestic politics. While the crisis, whether discussed through a domestic or European framework, dominated political debate in both years, participants in 2013 had a more noticeable incidence of conversation on non-economic issues, such as enlargement, migration, and the double Lisbon referendums. Likewise, news reporting in November 2010, just weeks before the focus groups, exhibited a much stronger dominance of economic articles than did that in November 2013. However, the focus groups exhibit a much less extreme degree of change than the news media, where in November 2010 leading up to the signing of the bailout agreement, economic reporting dominated by a significant margin.

Despite it being framed largely in a domestic sense, the financial crisis was still heavily salient even in Europeanized conversation. A good portion of the increased volume of EU-related commentary in 2013 can be attributed to a growth in the saliency of the crisis itself and an interest in placing blame and sharing personal experiences. Even non-economic discussion relating to migration and EU enlargement occurred in the context of the crisis. These issues are more heavily contested in part due to the weak economy. The media analysis demonstrated that the volume of economic articles had a higher variance over time than that of non-economic articles. The heavier volume of EU-related conversational contributions by participants is likewise mostly tied to an increased saliency

of the crisis, whether directly, or indirectly. When prompted to discuss the EU, before conversations transition to domestic politics and the economy, in both sets of focus group data, participants are still able to carry some degree of conversation relating to how the EU effects them personally, however vague they may be. Within the focus group conversations, the crisis was also framed almost exclusively in a domestic context, in relation to Ireland's sovereign debt crisis and the EU-IMF rescue programme, with almost no discussion of the wider euro crisis. Interestingly the strongest reference to the broader euro crisis was implicit and came up during the 2013 focus groups. On numerous occasions and in all four groups, participants compared the Irish, with respect to their perceived lack of resistance towards austerity, to what they saw in media reports of protests by Greek and French citizens. Discussion of politics in other member states with common references is a key component of Habermas' Europeanized national public spheres. Explicit references to the EU were missing from these discussions. However, they occurred with an underlying understanding of belonging to a larger political community. The analysis of the scope of these discussions will provide deeper insight into which issues dominated the Europeanized conversation and to what extent.

5.3.2 EU Salience in the Eurobarometer

While it does not provide data on the salience of EU politics in relation to the crisis or to non-crisis related issues, the Eurobarometer question on how often respondents discuss European issues in political conversation offers a look at whether general salience patterns observed in the focus groups are constant over time. Consistent with observations of the focus groups, levels of political discussion of the EU, as reported by the Eurobarometer, show an increase in the second half of the crisis starting in May 2012 where

levels of discussion appear to stabilize, remaining above fifty-six percent of respondents overall who either occasionally or frequently discuss European matters with friends or family. Despite this subtle growth, the proportion of respondents who indicate never discussing the EU shows no significant change up or down in the overall frequency of EU-related political discussion by citizens over time (see table 15). This parallels the absence of a continuous pattern of growth in salience in the media analysis as well. Instead, we see a few smaller increases that, like those in the media, are likely due to a sensitivity to major political events or decisions. However, these increases are much smaller than the spikes in media reporting. Likewise, political discussions of European matters among citizens appear noticeably more stable than the frequency of news dedicated to EU matters in the Irish press. Despite some fluctuation during the first half of the study period, over half of all respondents claim to at least occasionally discuss EU matters.

Self-reported citizen attention to Europe in political conversation, as measured by the Eurobarometer, does not increase in intensity to the same degree as it does in news media attention to it and in the focus group discussions. The discrepancy between the EU content of focus group conversation and self-reported discussion of EU matters may come down to respondents' understanding of the phrase 'EU matters.' The focus group analysis interprets EU-related political discussion in a broader sense including, for instance, indirect references to the EU as 'them' or 'they' or 'Europe' when discussing domestic politics, such as the bailout, when it is clear that they refer to the EU. For example, citizens' remarks relating to domestic politicians' failure at standing up to Europe is clearly Europeanized and was coded as such. Citizens are likely to associate 'European matters' more narrowly as being explicitly about EU policies, political processes or politics in other EU member

states. Discussion of domestic politics, even when implicated with EU-level decision-making, would likely be perceived, by those involved, as a conversation about national matters. While the survey results provide a conservative image of the degree to which European integration is salient in political discussion, this is still valuable in demonstrating the surprising stability in the volume of discussions about explicitly European matters.

Table 15 – When you get together with friends or relatives, would you say you discuss frequently, occasionally or never about...? 1) European political matters; 2) National political matters, as a percent of total responses (%)

	EUROPEAN MATTERS			NATIONAL ISSUES		
	Frequently	Occasionally	Never	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
<i>S 2010</i>	7.6	39.3	53.0	19.3	48.7	32.0
<i>F 2010</i>	13.1	44.2	42.6	26.2	47.2	26.6
<i>S 2011</i>	7.8	41.2	51.0	19.5	51.0	29.4
<i>F 2011</i>	9.5	41.3	49.3	19.6	47.7	32.7
<i>S 2012</i>	13.1	44.4	42.5	18.6	48.4	33.0
<i>F 2012</i>	15.1	44.0	40.6	26.0	45.2	28.5
<i>S 2013</i>	11.3	45.2	43.5	24.5	45.3	30.2

Source: Spring (S) and Fall (F) Standard Eurobarometer versions 73.4, 74.2, 75.3, 76.3, 77.3, 78.1, 79.1

In spite of a lower degree of increase in saliency levels, the Eurobarometer data shows a higher degree of stability in the levels of political discussion than is seen in news coverage. Since fall 2010, the EU has indeed penetrated people’s everyday consciousness to the degree that it is normally included in political conversation of at least half of the population, within a ten-percentage point range (table 15). EU politics thus holds a consistent level of salience among the Irish, regardless of the amount of newspaper attention they receive. However, as the focus group discussions and the higher rates of political discussion of national issues in table 15 demonstrate, even if EU issues have penetrated individuals’ consciousness, they generally take a backseat to domestic politics in people’s initial definitions of ‘political issues.’ Therefore, as the focus groups initially

demonstrated, citizens' attention and receptiveness to political issues is not affected entirely by how *much* attention they receive in the media, but also by how they are reported and the nature of issues themselves. Like the news values of proximity and conflict, citizens are also more likely attracted to political issues that have a greater tangible effect on them personally, as well as those that are more contentious.

Despite the more stable levels of discussion on European matters since spring 2012, table 15 shows small 'peaks' in Europeanized political conversation, particularly noticeable among those who report they 'frequently' discuss of EU matters. Similar to peak moments of EU reporting in the media, the highest the frequency of discussions about European matters correspond to both (1) major *economic* events relating to the financial crisis involving EU actors and politics, and (2) contested *domestic Irish* political developments with a connection to the European Union. The key political developments during the periods with the highest levels of Europeanized political discussion include the following:

- *November 2010*: EU and IMF officials arrive in Ireland, and the 'Troika' agrees to a bailout package for Ireland.
- *May 2012*: The leadup to the Irish referendum on the Fiscal Compact of May 31st and the first news of David Cameron's pledge for a referendum on EU membership.
- *November 2012*: Parliamentary and media debates in the leadup to Ireland's sixth austerity budget where the government introduces a new property tax, cuts to child welfare payments and increases to student fees to help meet budgetary targets specified by the EU-IMF rescue programme.

Unsurprisingly, November 2010 and May 2012 also saw the two highest spikes in EU-related news reporting. However, the highest rates of Europeanized political discussion occur in November 2012 which coincidentally received the lowest overall volume of EU-related news articles. The most prominent news item at the time involved debates leading up to the release of Ireland's new budget on December 5th, just over two weeks following the media analysis and Eurobarometer fieldwork. This is an initial indication that coverage of the budget debates was possibly presented in a more heavily domestic context in the news media, than in conversation among lay citizens. November 2011, marked by the adoption of the 'Six Pack' of legislative procedures, garnered the third highest frequency of news articles but had among the lower levels of citizen political discussion on EU matters. This backs up observations of Achim Hurrelmann and his co-authors that while the EU has reached moderate levels of saliency among citizens, there is still a deficit in awareness of and interest in the day-to-day policy processes of the European Union (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015). Finally, when compared to political discussion of national issues we see that domestic issues still come up in citizens' political conversations around two thirds as often as European matters. This is consistent with the dominance of domestic politics in focus group discussions *before* participants are prompted to discuss the EU. While this is unsurprising, it is noteworthy that even at times when the discussion of EU matters does see an increase, it still never exceeds or even approaches levels of exclusively national discussion, as we saw in the patterns observed between volume of EU-related and domestic news coverage. This reinforces the notion that the while the media sets the agenda for which issues citizens are exposed to, which issues drive citizen political discourse are influenced by different factors than those that determine media salience. While this

observation neither surprising or unexpected, it challenges the heavy reliance on the media as an exclusive source of data on politicization that dominates this field of research.

To conclude, the analysis of the salience of the EU in the citizen arena demonstrates that citizen levels of interest in European politics are more consistent than that in the news media. Overall, the focus groups, backed up by Eurobarometer survey data show that domestic topics still dominate general political conversation. Even in situations where individuals are prompted to discuss the EU, they often eventually divert to issues of domestic politics. Despite this, there is evidence of a subtle growth in the saliency of EU-related politics between 2010 and 2013. This subtle increase could be attributed to a growing salience of the crisis. By 2013, individuals had more time to experience the personal effects of austerity, and new member states entered similar bailout programs with the Troika. However, Eurobarometer trends indicate that this increased saliency during the 2013 focus groups is not necessarily part of a continuous upward trend. An investigation into the exact depth and scope of the EU's salience to citizens will shed more light on the dynamics between crisis and non-crisis related topics.

5.4 Scope

Building on the observed salience of EU-related politics in citizen discourse, this section proceeds to evaluate whether there is evidence of an expansion in the scope of EU-related discussions and the depth of citizen's knowledge on the EU. These observations are discussed in relation to trends in media discourse. While the media analysis measures the expansion of actors included as claimants or addressees of EU-related claims, in the citizen arena the claimants are always Irish citizens. Thus, this analysis is more concerned with the expansion of the range of topics and references to EU actors or institutions in political

conversation. The wider the range of EU institutions and actors implicated in citizens' political discussions, in contrast to generic talk of the 'EU as such' with no further differentiation, the deeper the scope of EU-related discourse in the citizen arena. Likewise, the less discussions are driven by a single EU-topic, and instead, address a variety of topics and issues, the deeper the scope of EU-related citizen discourse. The media analysis also placed a higher value on levels of non-economic reporting that occurred at peak moments of the crisis. Unfortunately, an equivalent comparison between periods of key crisis-related developments and quieter periods is not possible in the citizen arena as the focus group data marks only the start and end of the Irish bailout programme. Both these periods represent a heightened moment of crisis-related activity. However, a comparison over time of two similarly critical moments in the crisis narrative for Ireland still provides valuable insight into changes in discourse over the course of this four-year period.

In a further evaluation of the topics of EU-related political discussion, evidence of focus group contributions relating to politics at the EU level would indicate a deeper scope of EU politicization than domestic politics related to the EU. Also, considering that avenues of influence between the intermediary and citizen arenas work in both directions and can even overlap when citizens themselves participate in the intermediary arena, we can reasonably apply similar indicators in assessing the scope of political discussions as to the news media. Therefore, expanding on Habermas' expectation that a European public sphere requires national spheres to be receptive to the "substance of controversies being conducted in other member countries" (Habermas 2006, 103), an EU-related citizen discourse, to be deeper in scope, should also be receptive to EU-related political debates in other member states. The greater the degree of conversation about domestic politics in

other member states that are connected to the EU, the deeper the scope of political discussion in the citizen arena.

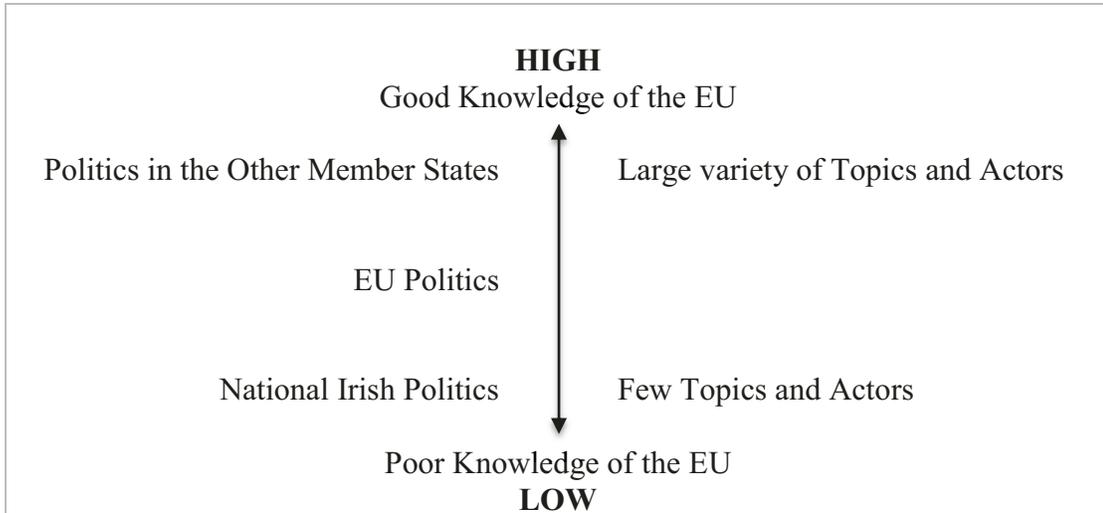


Figure 25 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to the scope of coverage

Finally, a broader scope of EU-related discourse in the citizen arena is linked to the accuracy of information shared in political conversation, and the depth of objective knowledge of the EU among citizens generally. Highly salient EU topics discussed at depth in a superficial manner and lacking precise or accurate understandings represent a weaker scope of the discussion, than a well-informed conversation that explored issues more deeply. For instance, the conversation about a lack in trust for EU institutions where participants point to lack of knowledge and confusion as a key justification, are shallower in scope than those where justifications point to specific decisions, policies or policy processes. The strongest evidence of politicization would involve the EU not only holding saliency among citizens, but also a growing knowledge of EU politics allowing for more in-depth and more expansive conversation. Indicators of depth in the scope of EU-related citizen discourse, are summarized below in figure 25 above. These indicators are all

assessed using the focus group data. Data from the Eurobarometer's basic EU knowledge quiz supplements observations on levels of EU knowledge gathered from the focus groups.

5.4.1 Scope of EU-Related Discourse in Focus Groups

The conversational topics discussed in the focus groups were determined freely by their participants. Through conversational prompts constructed as questions for discussion, the researcher moderating the groups established only the broader context within which topics were discussed: political issues generally, the effects of the EU (political output) or its political processes (political input). With the exception of the question asking participants whether they were familiar with EU institutions, the moderator did not specify explicit topics for discussion. The analysis of the focus group discussion coded individual contributions based on the overall topic of the relevant comment or remark. The coding distinguished between the roughly same general distinct topics as the media analysis to facilitate ease of comparison, including: The Euro/Eurozone crisis, European Monetary Union, the Irish financial/debt crisis, Domestic Politics (Ireland), Domestic Politics (EU other), EU internal politics, EU external politics, EU constitutional issues, EU Structural and institutional issues, EU membership issues, third country politics, and other. Third country politics were not coded in the news media analysis. However, politics of third countries such as the United States, Syria and Ukraine, for example, came up enough times when respondents were asked to discuss the effects of the EU, that they were assigned their own code.

In 2010, once participants were explicitly prompted to discuss the EU, the Irish debt crisis dominated focus group conversations, representing over forty percent of all contributions. Domestic politics in Ireland followed at 28.3 percent. Thus, well over half

of the 2010 focus group conversation in response to questions explicitly asking participants to discuss the EU, is exclusively internalized toward Ireland. In contrast, the November 2010 period of the media analysis, which saw the highest volume of EU-related articles, was dominated by reporting of the Irish financial crisis which accounted for almost eighty percent of all EU-related reporting. Our focus group participants, while largely pre-occupied with the Irish debt crisis, also engaged in a discourse that balanced discussion of the crisis with the Ireland's domestic politics related to the EU (see figure 26). While often tied to politics of the crisis, these conversations take on issues relating to domestic politics with only an implicit EU-context underlining the conversation. Examples include discussions of Irish citizens' reluctance to stand up to austerity measures that were imposed in response to the demands of the EU/IMF bailout, and the ability of Irish politicians to stand up to Brussels. In assessing whether a statement had an underlying link to EU-related politics the analysis took into consideration not only the individual contribution but the conversational dialogue of which it was a part. Even if an individual contribution makes no direct EU-related reference, it is included if it is made in response to more directly EU-related comments in a continuation of that same conversation. These are by far the least Europeanized forms of political conversation and their dominance, at the expense of other topics, implies a general weak scope of EU-related discourse in this regard. Following the domestic economic and non-economic topics, the most prominent EU-related topic discussed in 2010 was related to EU internal politics. Many of these remarks were connected to migration in the context of EU membership, particularly of labour migrants to Ireland.

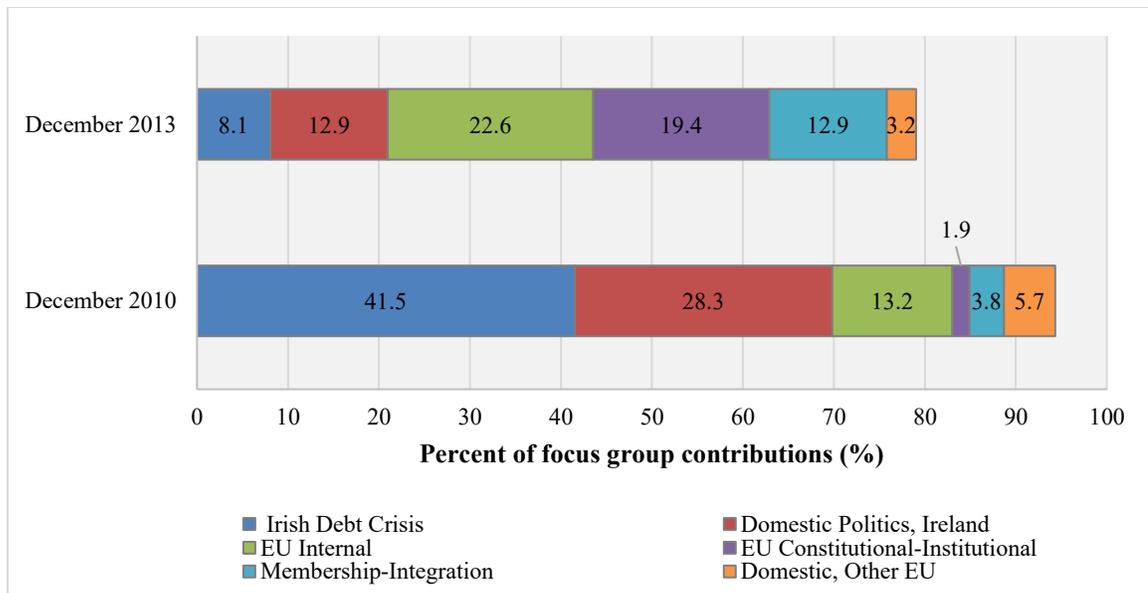


Figure 26 – Six Most Salient Topics of EU-Related Focus Group Discussion, Over Time

When asked to discuss the effects of EU membership, participants of the 2010 groups started by evaluating various elements of EU membership in relation to how it affected Ireland with respect to agriculture, the fishing industry, and infrastructure, among other things. Agriculture and fishing, likely due to the EU’s strong level of competency in these areas, were also a standard feature of media reporting. Because these industries play an important traditional role in the Irish economy, it is unsurprising that citizens would have some familiarity with EU influence in these areas when asked to describe the effects of membership. However, the conversations in 2010 quickly turned to the Irish debt crisis and eventually a deep critique of Irish politicians and banks, entirely moving away from the intended EU focus. The corresponding period in the media analysis was the period with the smallest range of topics covered by the press, yet the highest volume of articles about the EU. In contrast, the December 2010 focus groups displayed both a lower frequency of EU-related contributions and a smaller range of EU-related conversational topics. While the dominance of crisis-related reporting and domestic reporting related to the EU is

reflected in a similar dominance of these issues in the focus groups, even when discussing the financial crisis, citizens did not share a similarly high level of attention to the EU as did the media during this period.

The 2013 EU-related focus group discussions display a greater balance in the range of topics brought up during the conversation (see figure 26). With a much lesser degree of dominance of the Irish debt crisis and Irish domestic politics in the 2013 focus groups' political discussion, the conversation did not shift to an exclusively domestic frame nearly as fast as it did in 2010.²⁷ The wider range of topics in 2013, when respondents were prompted to discuss the EU, is evidence of an increase in the scope of EU related discourse. This was observed in conversation both when participants were prompted to discuss EU membership, and later when they were asked to assess whether the scope of the EU's involvement is a good or a bad thing. Interestingly, despite the Irish crisis, followed by the euro crisis, dominating over half of the media coverage connected to the EU in November 2013, in the focus groups conducted a few weeks later, other EU-related topics were not overshadowed to the same extent by these economic issues and enjoyed a broader scope in conversational topics. Again, these observations provide evidence that while both the media and citizens favour domestic politics relating to the EU both in crisis and non-crisis related discourse, citizens do not necessarily assign weight to these topics in the same proportion as does the media. Citizen discourse especially as observed during the 2013

²⁷ To clarify, this project distinguishes between discussion frames that are exclusively domestic, and discursive framing of domestic politics related to EU integration in one way or another. Even if a political topic implicates the EU, if this was not acknowledged by respondents and framed entirely domestically, then it was coded as domestic. Otherwise, it was coded as domestic politics related to the EU.

focus groups, divided attention across a more balanced range of EU-related topics than the 2010 groups, and when compared to media reporting during the same period.

While this is evidence of greater attention to EU issues and effects among Irish citizens, it might also be a function of the Irish exit from the bailout not being as interesting to citizens as the original entrance into the bailout programme. Regardless, the scope of EU-related topics of which citizens are aware and somewhat interested does show noticeable increase between 2010 and 2013. In fact, when prompted to address effects of the EU membership during the 2013 focus groups, ‘EU internal politics’ (e.g. policy-related issues such as EU development funds and agriculture policies) and ‘constitutional and institutional issues’ (e.g. the Lisbon Treaty) emerge as the two most commonly addressed topics despite the continued dominance of the Irish debt crisis and the euro crisis in media coverage. However, when discussing politics more generally in 2013, before participants were prompted to comment on the EU specifically, domestic Irish topics still dominated conversation followed by the domestic politics of other member states, usually with a connection to the euro crisis, the euro zone crisis and then the Irish debt crisis. Discussion of the euro crisis in relation to other member states even before they were prompted to discuss the EU, indicates that participants increasingly began to frame of the crisis as an EU crisis rather than exclusively a national Irish crisis. However, despite a less internalized understanding of the crisis in the 2013 general political conversation, explicit references to EU politics were still outside of most participants most salient political issues. Regardless, on the few occasions that a participant did mention EU, for instance questioning whether Greece should have been allowed to join, it did generate some further engagement and interest from other participants. Overall, general conversation on politics

appears to have more similarity to the distribution of attention to various topics by the news media, than conversation specifically about the EU. When prompted to discuss the EU specifically, citizens engaged a wider scope of topics than media coverage during that period.

Domestic politics of other EU member states, usually in the context of comparison to Ireland, were not a significant part of the 2010 focus group discussions. However, representing 4.3 percent of all contributions during general political conversation and 5.7 percent of EU-related conversation, they were still more salient to participants than they were in news reporting just a few weeks earlier, where they did not appear at all. In response to the question of which recent political issues had excited them most in 2013, references to the domestic politics of other member states, mainly Greece, France and Germany in relation to politics of the euro crisis, increased significantly to 24.5 percent of overall contributions, mirroring the increases reported in media attention. Attention to these issues declines when respondents are prompted to discuss EU membership and assess the reach of EU influence in the 2013 focus groups. However, because these questions to some degree lead participants to think about the EU in relation to their own membership, the prominence of domestic politics of other EU member states in the general political discussion provide an optimistic indication of some degree of Habermas' condition of member states' receptiveness one another's domestic controversies for a Europeanized public sphere. Some participants' contributions in the 2013 discussion on general political issues that interest them referred to primarily domestic issues such as new tax measures in France, and Germany's attempt at forming a government and its implications for Ireland. Others related more directly to the EU and lead to further contributions related to the EU

specifically, especially concerning issues of membership and integration. The following exchange between two participants, addressing political issues of greatest interest to them with no EU-related conversational prompts, is illustrative of this:

Helen: The whole breakdown with Greece as well. The fact that Greece was let into the EU when they knew that there were so many problems and people that were self-employed and like just didn't pay taxes and nobody bothered to question that. They knew what was there before it blew-up.

Dave: It was bad financially. Certain countries were allowed to get in, like Portugal included, as well as Greece, as well as ourselves. Um, it's very worrying as part of a community. As a whole community.

Ken: Like Spain, a country that size getting itself into financial troubles. It's worrying when we see where we are. Like we are also in the periphery of Europe, and we're a lot smaller. We don't have the work for it, so that's worrying.

Such exchanges, particularly their growth in 2013, indicate an understanding among participants of their participation in a wider political community and to some extent, its significance for Ireland. This exchange also demonstrates the degree to which increased EU-related discussion that is not explicitly relating to the politics of the euro crisis has still been inspired by the greater context of the crisis. Like in the Irish news media, a greater engagement with non-crisis related EU politics among the focus group participants in 2013 is thus still a product of the high salience of the euro crisis, particularly as demonstrated by media's attention to euro crisis-related politics in November of that year.

To sum up, the Irish crisis did not dominate citizen political discussions in 2010, to the same extent as it did in the news media. Regardless, it still tended to eventually overshadow broader conversation on the EU, even when prompted to comment on the EU

by the moderator. While the high volume of EU-related coverage that is linked to domestic politics, whether economic or non-economic is clearly reflected in a similar dominance of these topics among citizens, citizen discourse did not touch on topics connected to decision-making relating to the euro crisis, which were one of the two most dominant foci of media attention in all time periods but November 2010. While the larger questions of the euro crisis, relating to the Greek bailout, for instance, arose in the 2013 focus groups, Irish citizens appear to be more concerned with the domestic side of the crisis than are the Irish news media. In this case, the euro crisis itself was more salient among the press than citizens, meaning the discussion of the crisis was more heavily Europeanized in the news media in this context. However, with less attention to the euro crisis, and to economic topics more generally when prompted to discuss the EU, 2013 focus groups explored a much wider scope of topics connected to the EU that were neither exclusively domestic or economic in scope, both in general political conversation and even more so when prompted to discuss the EU specifically.

In particular, Habermas' idea of Europeanized public spheres that speak to controversies in other member states is satisfied to a greater degree in citizen discourse than news reporting and it grows over time. While inconsistent with the attention given to these questions by the media, this observation is likely still a consequence of the high level of salience of the euro crisis in the Irish press. The news media's reports focused more heavily on the economics of crisis in other member states, like Greece, and common efforts within the EU to deal with the crisis. However, based on the overall lower salience of policy issues among citizens, it is unsurprising that citizens would reframe the euro crisis to conversations regarding the domestic politics of the countries involved. This gives some

credence to the initial hypothesis in chapter two, that that media may have some influence over what people think about (i.e. which issues are salient to them) but deciding which issues gain visibility, but ‘what’ people actually think and how it is framed may be subject to a broader range of factors, external to the news (Cohen 1963).

The focus groups demonstrate that citizens are aware of the euro crisis both in relation to Ireland and external to it. However, its distance from citizens’ everyday experiences and media attention on the crisis that mainly focused on policy details of crisis response measures is not as relatable as lived experiences of the Irish crisis and what the Irish government is doing in relation to them. Again, citizens appear to be more strongly affected by the news value of *proximity* and *impact* as long as it is connected with proximity, than to *prominence* or *impact* alone. The high prominence of actors or institutions, such as the European Commission, arriving in Ireland to negotiate a bailout in November 2010 had a significantly greater effect on coverage of their activity in the media than it did on citizen discourse. While aware of the Troika, participants of the focus groups did not differentiate between the institutions that this term represents and often just referred them in relation to the “EU” as such. A favouring of political topics with strong proximate impact over those relating to prominent individual actors or institutions is in line with limited references to them in focus groups in both years, and a low familiarity of them when respondents were asked to name which EU institutions represent their interests the best.

Thus, it is clear from these observations, illustrated in figure 26, that despite exhibiting some similar patterns, the range in topics discussed by Irish news media and the distribution of attention they receive in political discourse in the citizen arena, do not

always align. Comparing responses from general political discussion to conversations about EU membership and politics provides initial insight into a discrepancy in the degree to which citizens' conversation aligns with topics that dominate media reporting in general political conversation compared to specifically EU-related conversation. Future research utilizing citizen interviews or reformulated focus groups may be able to dig deeper into the distinction between citizen awareness of an issue, and their interest in discussing, debating and ultimately acting on it.

References to EU Actors and Institutions

Like the analysis of media reporting revealed in the previous chapter, a more comprehensive political discourse on the citizen arena and thus one that is greater in scope includes references to institutions and actors of the EU. This fosters a deeper potential politicization of the European Union than a generic discussion of the 'EU as such.' In the citizen arena, as in the media, it also expands the scope of actors and institutions susceptible to political claims-making and conflict. The original study of the 2010 focus groups observed that participants generally perceived the EU as one big whole, without distinguishing between its various institutions. When assessing conversations resulting from all questions combined, this analysis found the 2013 focus groups, despite having marginally more awareness of individual institutions (see table 16), similarly treated the EU as a homogenous whole. For the most part, references to either EU institutions or actors were made only when participants were asked to name the institutions that they are familiar with and describe which represents their interests the most.

Table 16 – Statements with an explicit EU reference as percent (%) of total coded contributions

	2010 (n=198)	2013 (n=205)
EU institutions:	4.5	10.2
European Commission	0.5	2.9
European Council	0.5	0.5
European Central Bank	0.5	2.0
European Court of Justice	1.5	2.4
European Parliament	1.5	2.4
EU actors:	2.5	0.5
Commissioner	1.0	0.5
MEP	1.5	0.0

In both years, when asked about their familiarity with EU institutions, respondents reacted with a great deal of uncertainty and participants were quick to admit their knowledge deficits. Actual political conversation beyond being asked to name institutions, rarely, if ever referred to more than just the ‘EU as such.’ The following exchange from 2013 illustrates participants’ typical responses when asked to name institutions:

Moderator: Ok, moving on to the next question then. Are you familiar with the specific institutions of the European Union?

Brian: Ok, how many of them are there?

Hellen: Let's say when people mention them I'll be like oh yeah, I've heard that, oh yeah, I know that.

Allen: ...the European Parliament...

Brian: Yeah...

Allen: The commission...the European Central Bank is somehow related, isn't it?

Despite Ireland’s intimate interactions with the Commission and the ECB over the three years that Ireland participated in the bailout programme, most participants in 2013 were not able to immediately name them as EU institutions. As the quote above illustrates, even

participants who were able to identify some institutions, often did so with uncertainty and hesitation. For example, in spite of high levels of awareness of the crisis and knowledge of the Troika bailout, in the above dialogue, one participant still questions the ECB's relation to the EU. While the conversation evolved similarly in both 2010 and 2013, the overall proportion of participants who admitted little knowledge and limited recall marginally decreased in 2013. However, most participants, even when able to recall EU institutions, had limited knowledge of their function and general role in the EU. In both years, this question failed to result in a deeper dialogue relating to institutional representation, even when the moderator later followed up by asking which institution participants feel represent them the best.

It is important to point out here that this question, being asked in a group dynamic, is not an accurate test of citizens' average depth of knowledge, which is discussed in the following section of this chapter, and it is not intended to be. Rather, it demonstrates the mechanics of how recollection of EU institutions evolves in a dialogic context, as politicization here is treated as a communicative act and not a process that evolves individually for each person in isolation. Participants, even those who initially expressed a lack of knowledge, did present some recall knowledge of institutions once they were mentioned by what might be considered 'opinion leaders' in the groups (see Price and Feldman 2009) and were aware that the EU is composed of multiple institutions. While individual institutions are infrequently brought up in citizen political discussions, there is evidence that citizens are to some extent conscious of them and thus could name them as claimants in political claims, for instance, if an 'opinion leader' were to take a conversation in that direction. That they are infrequently brought up in EU-related discourse is thus a

testament to a narrower scope of EU-related discourse, than necessarily an inability to discuss them. The EU is treated as a whole rather than in relation to its' individual parts in spite of awareness that it consists of smaller units.

Overall, the scope of EU-related commentary in the citizen arena, as demonstrated by the focus group discussions, is much more generalized than that observed in the media. Citizens have greater recall of issues, and political developments that are linked to the EU as such, than to the specific individual actors and institutions that are implicated in them, but that recall can be triggered by reference to actors and institutions by other participants. While references to EU actors and institutions did improve between the between late 2010 and late 2013, levels of familiarity with the institutional structure and personalities of the EU remain low. However, this is a deficit that participants are both aware of and even express interest in improving if only they had, in their opinions, easier access to information. Considering the relatively low volume of references to EU-level actors and institutions in the Irish news media, the availability of political news is not enough, on its own, to fill this deficit.

Overall Depth of Knowledge

A greater awareness of EU-related politics, marked by a growth in the variety of topics raised by participants, does not necessarily imply a more profound knowledge of them. In an analysis of the 2010 focus groups, Hurrelmann and his co-authors conclude that “only the most fundamental aspects of European integration are politicized” (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 44), for example, the basic benefits and costs of membership and legitimacy of EU constitutional arrangements, particularly the second Lisbon Treaty referendum. However, policymaking and the everyday politics of the European Union

remain un-salient, similar to patterns we might expect in relation to national politics. This analysis proposes that a similar observation can be made of the 2013 focus groups. Such a dynamic is largely a consequence of low objective knowledge, despite arguably growing awareness of the EU and its consequences. Such a contradiction between higher awareness yet low objective knowledge is likely due to the generally lower salience of policy making processes and decisions over every day experiences for lay citizens. The lower level of attention in the focus groups to everyday EU-level decision-making processes and its institutions, in contrast to these more fundamental aspects of EU integration, even in 2013 when more EU-related topics are discussed, provides initial evidence of potentially low degree of objective knowledge of the EU.

For example, when asked whether it is good that many decisions are made at the European level, as opposed to the national level, one respondent in the 2013 groups did not immediately recognize that the question was a follow up to the previous discussion of the EU, as her response clearly demonstrates:

Lucia: Sometimes, well I am...well take one little thing: the Eurovision song contest. You know the big powers get an automatic because they've got more money. Some day you would feel like a small fry.... France, Italy, and Germany and the UK. They have an automatic spot.

Brian: They have a huge TV audience.

Lucia: Yeah

While this is one of the more extreme examples, the fact that 'European-level decisions' are not immediately associated with the EU is as much telling of the degree of salience the EU holds to this participant as it is about her objective knowledge of it. In both years, focus group participants displayed a diffuse understanding of the EU's policy competencies and

most lacked knowledge of the degree to which decisions are made at the EU level. Participants also confused European elections and referendums and a number of participants could not answer whether or not they had voted in the last EP election. While most participants were able to answer the question applying some assessment of the EU, all but a select few did so in a broad diffuse sense.²⁸

Respondents in 2010 approached the question of whether it is good that many decisions are made at the EU level with an analysis of whether the EU acts in Ireland's interests. This discussion developed in a very general sense, at one-point alluding to the crisis with one respondent suggesting that the EU is 'serving the banks'. The conversation remained diffuse in scope through to the end and did not trigger any more detailed contributions that justified these positions with examples of policies or EU-level decisions. One participant, for instance, responded that the EU's core values, particularly with respect to human rights are superior to Ireland's because Ireland's court system is still heavily under the influence of the church. This discussion, like many others during the 2010 focus group conversation eventually turned inward, in this case into a discussion of who is more 'mature' to make decisions for Ireland: the Irish government or the European Union.

All four 2013 focus group discussions stemming from this same question immediately jumped into a juxtaposition of the EU against Irish political leaders in most cases as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with how the Irish government handled the crisis. The 2013 arguments, like those in 2010, centred around who is better at ensuring the common good. The religious bias of Irish political decisions was also brought up again in

²⁸ However, as the next section will demonstrate, a comprehensive, or even accurate understanding of an object is not necessary for people to have an opinion on it.

one group in contrast to the EU's values being perceived as removed from such bias. A couple of groups also engaged in questions of democratic legitimacy implying that they have no influence over EU-level decisions, using the requirement for a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty as a justification.

In general, in place of pragmatic reasoning, in both years participants framed their discussions around general ideas about democracy, sovereignty and 'European values' particularly in relation to broad legal and human rights issues, without an indication of a more in-depth understanding or knowledge of European policies or processes. The overall depth of EU knowledge expressed during this groups was low and there was no noticeable improvement between 2010 and 2013 providing further evidence that observations of politicization, or at least an increase in the volume of EU-related content in the media does not necessarily have a dramatic effect on the general population, and this is not entirely surprising. Most people, unless they have a high interest in politics, will not rush to study an issue, actor, or institution in more depth just because it receives more attention from the media. Most lay citizens, those who are not professionally involved in politics, have little incentive to study the EU or any political institution for that matter, in detail unless it has direct immediate consequences for them. Thus, politicization in the citizen arena is, therefore, more likely to be characterized by growing contestation, scope and salience without necessarily a growth in the depth of politicization.

5.4.2 Scope of EU-related discourse in the Eurobarometer: Objective Knowledge

Considering that actors in the citizen arena do not have a professional interest in politics, it is expected that in-depth knowledge of specific policies and decision-making processes of both the EU and national levels will be limited for most individuals. However,

with a subtly increased salience of EU politics observed in the focus groups, thus higher interest in it, it is reasonable to expect some growth in objective knowledge. The focus groups show that while recall of EU institutions slightly increased between 2010 and 2013, overall depth of knowledge remained low. Data from the Eurobarometer regular surveys confirms that the crisis period in Ireland did not experience a growth in objective knowledge of the EU. Following a slight increase since 2010, Irish respondents' perceptions of their own level of knowledge about their rights as EU citizens have been more-or-less consistent since 2011.²⁹ The proportion of citizens who responded they are either definitely, or to some extent familiar with their rights has hovered at between fifty and fifty four percent. While perceived knowledge does not necessarily equate with actual levels of knowledge, the fact that only about half of respondents feel knowledgeable about their own rights is consistent with observations from the focus groups where participants express awareness of their own knowledge deficits, sometimes coupled with a desire for more, and more easily accessible information. Van Ingelgom's 2013 study of focus group data from Oxford, Brussels and Paris similarly observed that participants often explicitly expressed "a feeling of ignorance and uniformedness" about the European Union (Van Ingelgom 2013, 103). Such a perceived lack of knowledge about the EU may have consequences on citizens' ability to or willingness to actively engage in claims-making about it. Thus, it makes sense to ask to what extent perceived lack of knowledge corresponds to actual knowledge levels.

²⁹ This is measured by the Standard Eurobarometer question, "You know what your rights are as a citizen of the EU... / Yes, definitely / Yes, to some extent / No, not really / No, definitely not."

Since spring 2011 the bi-annual Standard Eurobarometer surveys have measured objective knowledge using a brief quiz of basic information about the EU. Respondents were asked the following question:

For each of the following statements about the EU could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false. The EU currently consists of 27 Member States³⁰ / The members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State / Switzerland is a member of the EU.

Respondents were then classified as having good, average or poor knowledge depending on whether they answered three, one or two, or no questions correctly. Table 17 displays average objective knowledge compared between Ireland and the EU average. Irish citizens have consistently been above the EU average with respect to their levels of knowledge of the European Union. However, this changed in the spring of 2013 when Ireland fell below the EU average for the first time. Coincidentally, this corresponds to the timing of the Irish Presidency of the European Council, when one might expect interest in and knowledge of the EU to increase.

Table 17 – Average Objective Knowledge of the European Union in Ireland and the European Union

	Ireland	European Union
<i>Spring 2011</i>	1.31	1.28
<i>Fall 2011</i>	1.43	1.42
<i>Spring 2012</i>	1.37	1.27
<i>Fall 2012</i>	1.28	1.28
<i>Spring 2013</i>	1.25	1.29
<i>Fall 2013</i>	1.18	1.27

Source: Standard Eurobarometer

Note: 2= Good Knowledge, 1 = Average Knowledge, 0 = Poor Knowledge

A closer look reveals that while average objective knowledge in the EU block has

³⁰ In the fall 2013 Eurobarometer this became ‘28 member states’ following the accession of Croatia in July of that year.

remained more or less at a consistent level over time, apart from one spike in fall 2011, Irish citizens' knowledge of the EU has been steadily declining since spring 2012. When comparing the proportions of respondents assessed as good, average or poor (see Appendix F.1), we see that between spring 2011 and fall 2012, the Irish had both a higher proportion of respondents with good and poor knowledge than the EU average. Thus, during this period, Irish citizens appear to have either been better versed in basic facts about the EU or more likely to know very little or nothing about it than the average European with fewer than average Irish respondents falling in between.

However, respondents with poor objective knowledge have always remained in the minority, and Ireland's higher than average knowledge, notably the higher than average proportion of those with three out of three correct answers on the Eurobarometer's EU quiz is to some extent correlated to Ireland's high level of newspaper consumption. A simple one-way ANOVA test reveals that those who have high objective knowledge of the EU in Ireland, are statistically more likely to be regular consumers of the printed press than those with average and especially poor levels of knowledge (see appendix F.2). In fact, while the those with higher levels of knowledge are more likely to be consumers of most forms of media (i.e. printed press, radio, internet) than those with poor knowledge, the difference on average consumption between knowledge levels is highest for the printed press. Social media consumption, on the other hand, is nearly equal between those with good and average objective knowledge, but significantly lower among those with low knowledge.

On the surface, this reaffirms the importance of the news media, particularly the print media, on a deep and informed public discourse. However declining average objective

knowledge indicates that its importance may be declining as citizens' media consumption habits change, or in response to factors, such as changes in overall political interest. This section demonstrated that the news media may inform citizen discourse to some degree with respect to the topics discussed but not necessarily the depth of their knowledge about them. Even with a somewhat higher range of topics discussed during the 2013 focus groups, the objective knowledge of the EU as measured by the Eurobarometer declined and EU discussions focused mostly on broad substantive issues, rather than specific policies or processes. Differences over time were minor and suggest that the increased media attention the EU received because of the crisis is not paralleled by a similar improvement in the overall scope of citizen discourse about the European Union. This raises the larger question of whether the media provides an adequate degree of information about the EU. As Hurrelmann and Baglioni observed in their analysis of the 2013 groups, participants openly admitted to having a lack of accessible information available to them (Hurrelmann and Baglioni 2016, 114). Further research might investigate the degree to which the depth of knowledge, and consequently scope of EU-related discussion is connected to the quality of national news media, newspaper readership and overall political interest.

5.5 Contestation

Speaking about Irish citizens in an interview for this project, Bernard Harbor of Impact Trade Union said that "if you're in a social situation and the conversation comes up, you will hear very strong views about the situation we find ourselves in" (Bernard Harbor, 2013). The implication here is that the Irish financial crisis was heavily politicized, or at least heavily contested, in the months leading up to Ireland's exit from the bailout. As

demonstrated in chapter three, for reasons closely tied to Irish political culture and institutional arrangements, Irish citizens did not choose to participate in the intermediary arena through social movement membership or protest as an active form of EU contestation. This section pursues a claims-based analysis of focus group contributions and investigates the extent of polarization within the groups to assess if and to what degree the EU was contested on the citizen arena. The *intensification* of EU-related claims-making is assessed through political claims made during the focus group sessions, particularly those in response to the question asking respondents to evaluate the EU’s degree of influence over national politics. The degree of *contention* of political claims in the citizen arena is assessed on the basis of levels of *polarization* during focus group discussions. These observations are then compared against levels of polarization in longitudinal Eurobarometer data from responses to evaluative questions. Figure 27 summarizes the key indicators of politicization with respect to contestation.

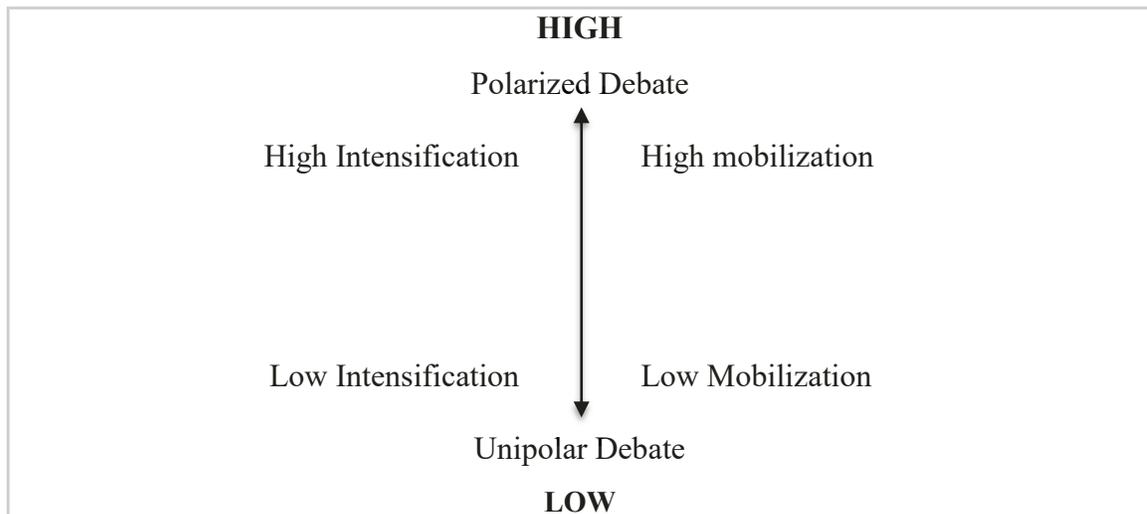


Figure 27 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to contestation in the citizen arena

Similar to the approach taken for the media analysis, the investigation of citizen discourse for evidence of political contestation seeks out opinion-formation in the form of

positive or negative evaluations and demands for change. Departing from the media analysis, this section also tracks political ambivalence in contributions to focus group statements. This refers to contributions that reflect a mix of both positive and negative sentiments. Van Ingelgom (2013) studies ambivalence to get a better understanding of ‘neither good nor bad’ responses to evaluative survey questions. She proposes that contestation within citizen discourse does not all fall cleanly into a Eurosceptic versus Europositive dichotomy. Another study, by Florian Stoeckel, hypothesizes that “strong politicization of European integration and a debate among parties increases the probability of individuals being ambivalent” (Stoeckel 2012, 41). Both studies find that increased levels of information and knowledge about the EU, or at least exposure to increased cognitive cues from the news media, for instance, is positively correlated with the probability of ambivalent views (Stoeckel 2012, 41; Van Ingelgom 2013, 102).

5.5.1 EU Contestation in Focus Groups

The previous section demonstrated that the Irish focus group participants did not display a growth in knowledge of the EU over the course of the crisis, despite increased EU-related reporting, especially about the euro crisis. More generally, increasing access to information, particularly in the past few decades with the continuously growing abundance of information online, may serve to trigger uncertainty and thus ambivalence leading citizens away from political contestation rather than towards it, or as Van Ingelgom warns, towards “abandoning Europe” (Van Ingelgom 2013, 123), even if it fails to improve objective knowledge levels. This challenges those who advocate for a European or ‘Europeanized’ public sphere that is characterized by vibrant contestation of the EU (Habermas 2006; Koopmans and Statham 2010) in the hopes that this will lead to

deliberation and contestation among citizens, and ultimately greater democratic participation. If there is, in fact, a connection between growing contestation in the news media and ambivalence among citizens, then we might expect this to negatively influence levels of citizen mobilization for active claims-making over EU-related issues, for instance, voter turnout to EP elections. In fact, Irish turnout to the 2014 EP election saw a decline for the first time since 1994. Thus, on the citizen arena, increased levels in the salience of EU issues and/or the scope of discourse related to them does not immediately imply an increase in contestation, and especially polarization.

Intensification

As in the media, issues are only fully politicized in the citizen arena if they are also contested. EU-related politics, to be thoroughly politicized must not only be salient across a broad scope of issues, but there must also be a degree of contestation of the EU. The EU is contested when citizens express opinions and make political claims in relation to it, whether at the most basic level of conversation with peers or through various forms of mobilized claims-making, whether institutionalized through elections and referendums or un-institutionalized through other forms of participation. This section examines the intensification of EU-related contestation in the citizen arena as represented by conversations in mediated focus groups between December 2010 and 2013.

During general discussions of political issues that were salient to focus group participants, as described earlier in this chapter, in 2010 conversations focused entirely on domestic issues in relation to the crisis and bailout. There were a select few comments on domestic politics in other EU member states that gave some indication of a minimal acknowledgement of a shared political community. However, none of these contained an

EU-related claim. In 2013, fifty-two percent of all contributions contained a political claim, with nearly two thirds of those connected to the European Union. In contrast, just a quarter of the total contributions (i.e. not only those containing claims) could be classified as Europeanized. Thus, during the general political discussion among citizens in 2013, the EU was more heavily contested than it was salient. All these claims took the form of negative evaluations and were related either to the EU's economic situation being unable to support further enlargements (presumably but not explicitly driven by knowledge of Croatia's accession earlier that year), and Greece being permitted to accede to the EU despite its economic troubles. While the EU was more heavily contested in 2013 overall, it is important to note that these conversations occurred in only half of the focus groups, with the other half being entirely domestically-framed.

This reaffirms that in general political conversations the EU is more heavily contested than it is salient. It comes up infrequently, but when participants do raise an EU-related issue, it is more likely than not contested. Additionally, when citizens do contest EU-related issues in these conversations where the topics are participant-driven, it is exclusively discussed in a Eurocritical manner. However, this should not immediately be taken as a sign of growing discontent or Euroscepticism. Domestic claims made during these same conversations also all contained either negative evaluations of domestic actors, policies and institutions, or were self-critical of the Irish people themselves. Like the media's favouring of bad news, drama and conflict in news coverage, when people gather in conversation, regardless of what those topics are, they are also often drawn to bad news and crises. A conversational topic based around complaints is more likely to arise than one intended to praise a policy, decision or political development. A growing body of research

on ‘negativity bias’ in human behaviour has observed that “individuals may have a propensity to weight negative information more heavily than positive information” (Trussler and Soroka 2014, 363; see also van der Pligt and Eiser 1980; Vonk 1996). A 2014 experimental study of consumer news preferences found that negative news content was more salient to people than positive news, despite them stating the opposite when asked about news preferences in a survey. This negativity bias was found to be even stronger for those with a high interest in politics (Trussler and Soroka 2014, 373). Given that the news media needs to be reactive to the interests of its consumer base, it is unclear to what degree negative media coverage is prioritized because it sells, or that citizens are conditioned to weight negative news more highly because of its higher salience in the press. Due to the receptiveness of the news media and citizen arena to one another this pattern is likely to be, to some degree, mutually reinforced. Thus, the dominance of negative evaluations in EU-related claims in general discussions of politics, rather than a positive or polarized debate, is more likely in cases of increased politicization. A better idea of the extent to which the EU is either positively or critically evaluated or polarized can be gained by looking at how conversations develop when respondents are specifically asked to speak about the European Union, and in particular to evaluate it. This will be discussed in further detail in the next section on polarization.

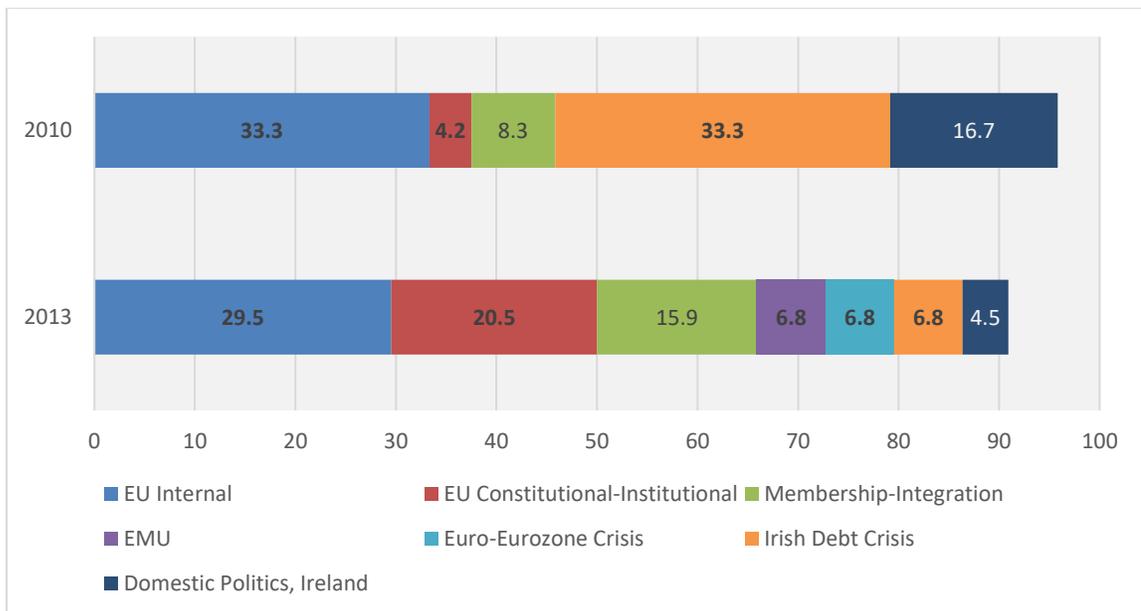
However, before exploring the degree to which focus group discussions were polarized on issues connected to EU policy or processes, the intensification of political contention will be further explored in relation to EU-based focus group discussions. Once the moderator prompted participants to speak about EU membership and policies, both the volume and the diversity of political claims increased. Despite EU-related contestation

playing a minor role in generic political discussions, once prompted to speak about it, citizens were quick to voice opinions, even when not explicitly asked an evaluative question. Nearly sixty percent of all focus group contributions in December 2010 (compared to 77.9 percent of news reporting a month earlier) and nearly eighty-three percent in 2013 (compared to 65.7 of news reporting a month before that) included an EU-related claim. However, while the intensification of EU-related contestation increased in citizen discourse in 2013, in the news media it decreased both in density (i.e. as percent of total EU-related articles) and in total number of claims. Despite experiencing spikes and dips in claims-making from 2010 to 2013, news reporting in May and November 2013 reflects the lowest density of EU-related political claims across all eight periods.

This discrepancy may be explained by the news media's predisposition to report on the contestation of political *decisions* and *processes* as they are happening. In contrast, Irish citizens' contestation of the EU in the focus groups developed retrospectively in relation to observations and experiences of the *consequences* of these processes and decisions. Thus, contestation that is closely linked to *input legitimacy* is of higher saliency to the news media than to citizens who are more concerned with *output legitimacy* of the European Union.³¹ In particular, evaluative statements have in both years focused on the long-term effects of EU membership on Ireland, in terms of positive effects such as EU funds resulting in improved infrastructure as well as adverse effects on the national fishing industry, as one example. Only in relation to the recently signed bailout package did participants in the 2010 group engage in contestation of the negotiating process, in the

³¹ That is not to say that news media ignore questions of output legitimacy, or citizens entirely ignore questions of input legitimacy.

context of the Irish government’s competence in representing Irish interests at negotiations and overall feelings of being pushed around by “the bigger countries” and the EU. During the 2013 focus groups, statements of input legitimation also appear in relation to the second Lisbon referendum. This was observed in 2010 as well but to a lesser degree. Voting on the treaty for a second time has left most participants with a sense of democratic disenfranchisement that was also reported by Hurrelmann and his co-authors in 2010 (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 57). Previous research has shown that referendums have the highest impact, of all EU-related policy events, on the visibility of the EU in news reporting (Boomgaarden et. al. 2010). This is consistent with observations of the Lisbon referendums having such a lasting salience for citizens in Ireland.



Note: $n(2010)=47$, $n(2013)=52$

Figure 28 – Most frequent topics of political claims as proportion of focus group contributions (%), in response to the question ‘How, if at all, has the existence of the European Union affected you personally?’

However, for the most part, political claims during the 2013 focus group conversations engaged in the contestation of output legitimacy with respect to the EU's overarching effects mostly on national industry, the economy and social change. While the debates leading up to the signing of the bailout package triggered a spike in claims-making in the news media in 2010, citizens contested the EU's argued implication and involvement in the crisis to a much greater degree in 2013, after several years of witnessing the euro crisis in Europe and experiencing austerity measures introduced to satisfy the terms of Ireland's bailout programme. Over time, citizens' experience the *impact* of the crisis and EU policies and decisions more strongly. Additionally, the lived experience of an EU-level policy or decision has greater *proximity* to the citizens, than the decision-making processes at the EU level from which it stems. Consequently, periods of intensification of contestation will not necessarily align between the news media and citizens. Interestingly, the increased intensification of EU-related issues in 2013 was related to domestic effects of the EU's internal politics, constitutional issues and enlargement, rather than either crisis or the monetary union (see figure 28). However, much of the debate of these issues was still framed in the broader context of the crisis.

The higher growth in the density of EU-related contestation in the focus groups, in contrast to news media, is also connected to the generally higher salience of bad news and controversy for citizens, over neutral or positive news. The news media places a heavier weighting on the news values of *prominence* and potential *impact* of issues in determining which topics are given attention, than to controversiality alone. While the media still reports on important political events involving prominent actors even in the absence of controversy, for instance, preparations for the Irish European Council presidency, the focus

group discussions demonstrate that citizens are more likely to discuss an issue about which they hold a strong opinion. While the media analysis exhibited no relationship between periods of higher salience of EU-related issues and a greater intensification of contestation, the 2013 focus groups saw an increase of both contestation and intensification of EU politics. Bad news and controversial topics are more likely to trigger expressions of opinion than neutral or positive news items. Despite the November 2010 period containing a greater volume of EU-related news articles and political claims, in the November 2013, the newspaper analysis revealed a smaller proportion of neutral claims and a somewhat higher percentage of negative evaluations. Therefore, because bad news is more heavily salient in the citizen arena, salience is correlated with contestation to a degree that was not observed in the news media.

Despite a growing level of contestation of the EU, its scope, as described in the previous section, was limited by participants' depth of knowledge leading to an 'uninformed' manifestation of contestation politicization. In both 2010 and 2013, conversation about EU-related processes and policies was vague, and evaluations of its democratic quality emerged from a sense of political disenfranchisement, rather than explicit justification based on constitutional or institutional terms of reference (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 56-7). With respect to the scope of contestation, the distribution and variety of contested topics increased between 2010 and 2013 (see figure 28). Generally, while political claims in 2010 were largely domestically-oriented, concentrating on Irish internal politics related to the EU or the Irish debt crisis, by 2013 these debates were exceeded by participants' interest in evaluating constitutional issues, particularly the Lisbon Treaty's ratification process, and membership and integration issues, especially with respect to

migration, and further EU enlargement. In general, these topics were more heavily contentious during the focus groups than in EU-related media reporting, especially in 2013.

In short, the focus groups demonstrate that despite a lack of sophisticated knowledge of the EU, the citizen arena did experience some growth in both the intensity and scope of EU-related contestation in relation assessments of the EU's policy output and to a lesser degree, input legitimacy. Thus, most heavily contested topics roughly paralleled the most heavily salient subjects, to a much greater degree than in the news media. Finally, focus group participants' interest in political issues was shown to be more heavily driven by the controversiality of an issue than what was observed in newspaper reporting. Thus, while EU related politics experienced only a subtle increase in salience, there was a much more noticeable increase in their political contestation, as opposed to neutral conversation. While a growth in contestation is the final element confirming evidence of politicization, contestation as an indicator is strongest when it most heavily polarized. This chapter will now turn to examining how the EU and these EU-related topics are contested and the degree of polarization in citizen discourse over the course of the crisis.

Contention: polarization or growing ambivalence?

On the one hand, growing media attention to the European Union has been linked to growing Euroscepticism or at least Eurocritical attitudes among citizens, especially considering the significant newsworthiness of crises, whether political, economic or social, of which there have been several over the last decade. While this would indeed mark an intensification of EU contestation, the higher degree to which it results in a polarization of opinion as opposed to a full turn to Euroscepticism or eurocriticism, the higher the level of politicization. On the other hand, authors like Van Ingelgom have suggested that increased

volumes of information might instead encourage greater ambivalence towards the EU, with citizens evaluating various aspects of it differently due to uncertainty in making more wholistic evaluations. This may affect citizens' levels of mobilization to engage in political claims-making relating to EU-related issues, but ultimately ambivalent views still fit into the big picture of political contention to a greater degree than do neutral claims (i.e. demands). Ambivalent opinions are especially of importance to anyone concerned with political opinion of the EU. If political ambivalence stemming from a sense of confusion or uncertainty does not lead one to step away from political participation, then these individuals may choose a unipolar position if and when knowledge and comprehension deficits improve.

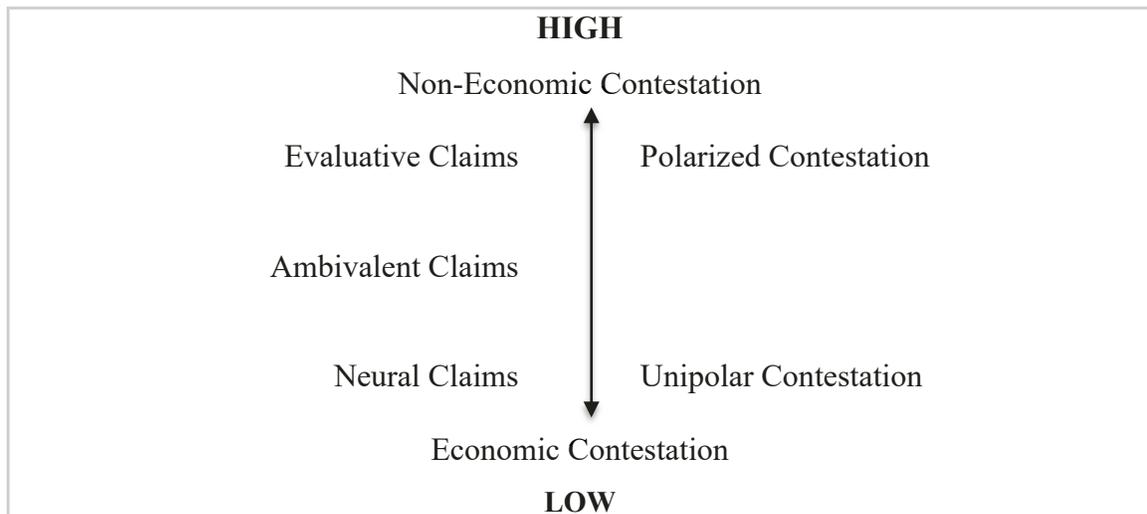


Figure 29 – Indicators of level of politicization relating to contention

A final indicator of contention is an intensified polarization of issues unrelated to the crisis, during a period when the both the Irish debt crisis and broader euro crisis dominated visibility in EU-related news coverage. With only two sets of focus groups, the discursive data does not lend itself to longitudinal analysis. For this reason, the

observations are later backed up by trends in responses to evaluative questions in the standard Eurobarometer series. However, the focus groups are essential to get a deeper understanding of how EU-related contention is articulated by citizens. Figure 29, above, illustrates the indicators used to analyse trends in contention over time in the citizen arena as it is related to politicization.

Even when participants are provided with discursive cues through questions posed to them by the moderator, focus groups allow for more flexibility from participants in terms of what they talk about and how. In asking people how, if at all, the EU has impacted them directly, the moderator nudges the discussion to reflect on the European Union's domestic impact, which provides some cognitive limits on what citizens might discuss. For instance, conversations relating to internal institutional issues or external politics would be less likely to emerge out of this discussion. It also invites evaluations that are *output oriented*. Similarly, asking participants if it is good that so many decisions are made at the EU level cues participants into making *input-oriented* evaluative claims to a greater degree than the previous question. However, shares of evaluative claims summarized later in this chapter in *Table 19* show that neither the contestation nor polarization of EU-related constitutional or institutional issues is correlated with the question asked. Despite these questions offering some communicative cues, how citizens perceive the EU's impact, whether they choose to voice an opinion or merely make an observation, and which specific aspects of European integration they relate to depend on the participants themselves. This freedom in the discussions is what allowed the focus groups in both years to eventually evolve into debates on domestic Irish affairs. Thus, the focus groups facilitate a look at the degree to which issues relating to the EU are polarized when participants contest issues as they perceive

them, on their own terms, and the degree to which ambivalence is present in evaluations of the EU, especially when not explicitly asked an evaluative question.

In contrast to Irish newspaper reporting, where over half of all political claims analyzed took the form of speculations or demands, claims in the citizen arena were predominantly evaluative in nature, with only a small handful of political demands emerging in the 2013 discussions. This was the case both when participants were prompted to speak on EU membership, and when they were explicitly asked to evaluate the degree to which the EU has influence on the national level. Claims on Europeanized non-crisis related issues dominated the focus groups. This is connected to participants in both sets of groups locating blame for the crisis almost exclusively with national actors, and to a large extent with Irish people themselves. Nearly a third of all domestic claims during the 2010 focus group contributions blame Irish people themselves for irresponsible spending, laziness and a failure to protest austerity policies the way that citizens in Greece and Spain were doing. This pattern of blame was often coupled with positive evaluations of citizens in other EU member states. The proportion of self-critical claims drops off in 2013. This corresponds with the declining volume of contestation relating to the national crisis in general. While such discourse did appear in the Irish press, it was certainly an exception to the dominant trend of reporting on the crisis which placed blame almost exclusively on domestic institutional actors.

Both the news media and the focus groups saw an increase in negative evaluations in participants' contributions between 2010 and 2013, although participants' debates exhibited an even higher proportion of negative statements on politics connected to the EU, than did the media. In fact, when specifically prompted to provide an assessment of the

EU, negative evaluations exceeded half of all claims in 2013 (see table 18). Interestingly, the degree of ambivalence towards EU-related topics also increases between 2010 and 2013 in conversations relating to effects of Ireland’s EU membership, but noticeably drops in when participants are specifically asked to evaluate if they agree with the EU’s level of influence over domestic policy.

Table 18 – Political claim types in EU-related focus group conversation when prompted to discuss effects of EU members vs. when asked to evaluate the degree of EU influence on domestic politics, as proportion of total EU-related claims, by year

	Prompted to Discuss EU Membership		Prompted to Evaluate EU Influence	
	2010 (n=33)	2013 (n=44)	2010 (n=25)	2013 (n=39)
<i>Ambivalent</i>	30.3	34.1	32.0	17.9
<i>Demand</i>	-	6.8	-	5.1
<i>Neg. Evaluation</i>	36.4	47.7	36.0	56.4
<i>Pos. Evaluation</i>	33.3	11.4	32.0	20.5

With several years of experience with the consequences of the crisis, participants are more decisive in choosing who should be making important political decisions (i.e. on questions of political input). In all four 2013 focus groups, this is reflected in a growing contention between individuals who feel that the EU has had too much pressure over Ireland in accepting poor conditions in the bailout programme, and those who are increasingly dissatisfied with the Irish government, perceiving the EU as the more competent of the two. Interestingly, in each group, these conversations typically build from of an originally ambivalent statement. The following exchange illustrates how the EU earns legitimacy at the cost of national politicians and government:

Brian: My own view is I think too many decisions are made centrally by too small a group of people. That's always dangerous, but on the other hand with the shower we had running the show at least it's like the headmaster putting manners on them to a certain extent so it has its good points and its bad points.

Lucia: It's got a sense of fairness yeah

Helen: Yeah, we kind of proved that we can't really look after ourselves. We made a mess when we were given any sort of level of freedom that we had. So, I think it is kind of good that we have somebody looking over everything.

This exchange illustrates that even when the EU is explicitly evaluated, whether positively or negatively, it is overwhelmingly done so in relation to domestic politics. This was the case even when participants were specifically asked to evaluate the EU. Such construction of EU assessments is consistent with earlier observations that the focus group discussions eventually transition to a domestically oriented debate in every group. In 2013, nearly three quarters of political claims about exclusively national Irish politics that were expressed during the overall focus group discussions were negative. This is up about ten percentage points from 2010, at the expense of ambivalent contributions. The declining ambivalence in relation to assessments of the EU's legitimate level of domestic input (input legitimacy) corresponds with declining national input legitimacy. As the above dialogue illustrates, this is characterized by an increased disenchantment with the Fine Gael-Labour coalition's ability to effectively govern. Political claims relating to EU membership's effects on Ireland (output legitimacy), on the other hand, were more removed from domestic politics and saw a growth in ambivalence between 2010 and 2013, as did overall levels of ambivalence in the focus groups. When participants made ambivalent comments relating

to membership, uncertainty in taking a unipolar position was often due to conflicting evaluations that attributed Ireland's past economic and social development to EU membership yet held critical views of the EU in the present. This is a pattern that Hurrelmann and his co-authors also observed in 2010 (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 51). The following excerpts from two different 2013 groups provide an illustration of this tension between past and present evaluations of the EU:

- Brian:** I'd be very positive about it in the sense that it's driven a lot of social change you know stuff that wouldn't have happened here, or would have happened here eventually, has come accelerated ... as well as the economic injection that has it produced, but you know it's kind of like an elephant and it's now starting to impinge on peoples lives in way they might not like, you know.
- Caitlyn:** We shouldn't have ever joined it. All the countries that joined it are worse off than they ever were
- Michael:** Well, in fairness when we went into it originally...
- Jane:** We all loved it.
- Michael:** Because they were turning money over... construction and railways and roads and it was great then I suppose, but now...
- Jane:** We're paying for it.

These excerpts illustrate how conflicting assessments of the EU's past benefits and present-day effects exist not only in individual ambivalent contributions but also as a degree of indecisiveness in dialogue between multiple participants who evaluate the EU membership generally negatively. In contrast, to a tension between long-term and present impressions of the EU in relation to its effect on Ireland, when participants were asked to evaluate the degree of influence the EU should have, they were more inclined to answer in relation to the present, and therefore critically. Accounting for the link between considerably high

levels of uncertainty in assessing the EU and a tension between past and present evaluations, ambivalent individuals are a potential source of any significant changes in levels of pro-European or Eurosceptic sentiment that may develop in the future, especially if dissatisfaction with Ireland's membership grows.

In both years the highest proportion of ambivalent evaluations during the focus group discussions, were related to the EU's internal politics, albeit through an imprecise and diffuse understanding of the EU. More specifically, they were linked to social changes as well as changes to important industries and the economy overall. The diffuse nature of the above exchange between participants in 2013, in conjunction with an absence of pragmatic policy-based justifications, is illustrative of the low scope of understanding of EU institutions, responsibilities and procedures described earlier, even in cases where participants do take a position. Given the inconsistency in the proportion of ambivalent to unipolar responses when asked to evaluate the EU's competencies, in relation to the remainder of the focus group discussion, unprompted evaluations are more representative of polarization levels and uncertainty in relation to the EU on the citizen arena, as they test spontaneous, participant driven contestation. However, to facilitate later comparison against evaluative survey responses as a test of consistency in the results, and to offer a look at longitudinal patterns, this chapter measures polarization in participants' conversation in relation to both evaluative and non-evaluative questions.

As in the media analysis, this chapter measures levels of polarization in the citizen arena on a scale between +1 representing entirely positive claims-making and -1 indicating entirely critical claims. The higher the disagreement between speakers the closer the value on the scale is to 0. Evidence of intensification in the degree of contestation of a given issue

contributes to a politicization of it. However, just as in news reporting, the most persuasive evidence of contestation in support of a politicization of the EU is a polarization of the debate around it. Like in the previous chapter, scores from 0.00 to +/-0.33 are treated as high polarization, from +/-0.34 to +/-0.66 as moderate, and from +/-0.67 to +/-1.00 as low polarization.

Table 19 – Overall polarization of EU-related objects in focus group discussions, by question and year

<i>Object Evaluated</i>	2010		2013	
	<i>Position of Evaluative Claim-Making (-1 to +1)</i>	<i>Share of Evaluative Claims (%)</i>	<i>Position of Evaluative Claim-Making (-1 to +1)</i>	<i>Share of Evaluative Claims (%)</i>
<i>Q: Do you think it is good that so many decisions are being made at the EU level?</i>				
Domestic Affairs Ireland	0.00	35.0	0.20	33.3
EU Internal Politics	0.50	50.0	0.00	13.3
Membership/Integration	-1.00	12.5	-1.00	13.3
Constitutional/Institutional	1.00	12.5	-1.00	40.0
<i>Q: How, if at all has the EU impacted you personally?</i>				
Domestic Affairs Ireland	-0.40	45.5		
EU Internal Politics	0.33	26.0	-0.71	29.2
Membership/Integration	-1.00	8.7	-0.50	16.7
Constitutional/Institutional	-1.00	4.3	-1.00	33.3

As explained earlier, when focus group participants are asked to evaluate the degree of influence the EU has on the domestic level, they are invited to make an input-oriented evaluation. Despite this, the conversation during the 2010 groups was largely pragmatic and heavily concentrated on the general topic of the EU’s internal politics in relation to what the EU has done for Ireland. This changed in 2013. Discussions became more heavily concentrated on constitutional issues, with many participants referring to the Lisbon referendums. Participants also made vague assessments of the democratic legitimacy of the EU in relation to Ireland’s influence at the EU-level, to a greater degree than in 2010. As

illustrated in table 19, evaluations of EU-related constitutional and institutional issues were not only more frequently contested in 2013 but are also evaluated exclusively negatively with a score of -1 indicating no polarization of these debates.

Interestingly, the media analysis covering the periods just before the focus groups took place did not include any evaluative claims in relation to these issues. However, when evaluations of institutional or constitutional issues relating to the EU did come up during other periods in the media, it was either entirely critically or moderately polarized with a higher frequency of negative evaluations. Thus, when conversing on the topic of the EU's degree of influence over domestic politics, citizens' evaluations reveal some correlation to the direction of polarization of these issues in the media. In 2010 the topic category 'EU internal politics' dominates debates in response to this question with a moderate degree of polarization that leans towards more positive evaluations. By 2013, domestic politics are evaluated increasingly more negatively, which shifts this category to the position of most heavily polarized object category during that period. The trend in the polarization of the EU's internal politics is visible even more strongly in the focus group conversations stemming from the non-evaluative conversational prompt to discuss the effects of EU membership (political output). Here, as seen in table 29, it shifts from moderate levels of contestation that lean toward a higher frequency of positive evaluative contributions in 2010 to a domination of negative evaluations in 2013.

Therefore, when asked for their opinion, participants' conversations in 2013 became more heavily polarized over the EU's internal politics, due to a growth of Eurocritical assessments of the degree to which the EU is involved in Irish politics. However, when evaluations of the EU's internal politics occurred spontaneously during a

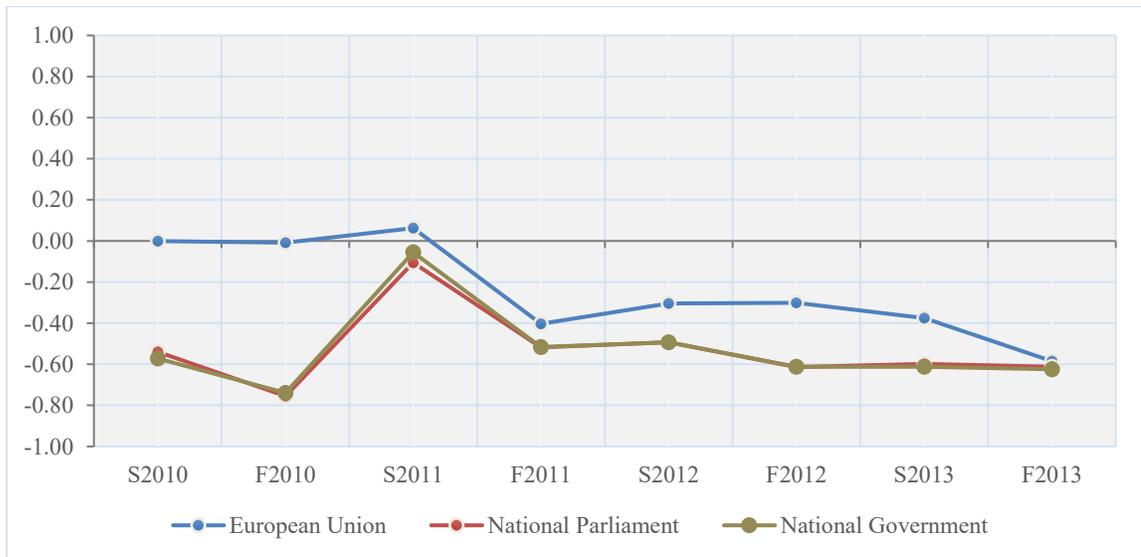
discussion of the effects of EU membership, participants were much less polarized and heavily Eurocritical. The EU's internal politics, thus, became less heavily contested but more intensely polarized in 2013, when respondents were asked to evaluate the EU. Both the intensity of contestation and level of Eurocritical responses increased when respondents evaluated its internal politics unprompted. This increased volume of Eurocritical conversation coincides with an increase in ambivalent statements. Thus, when asked to make an evaluation relating to the EU's input legitimacy, participants were more heavily polarized, thus more likely to take a unipolar position, than in conversation with unprompted evaluations of the EU's output legitimacy. Here citizens were more likely to be uncertain and those who did take a position were critical of the EU's effects on Ireland. Growing ambivalence coinciding with Eurocritical attitudes when discussing the effects of EU membership confirms observations of growing scepticism in relation to EU membership in Ireland (see Murphy and Puirseil 2008; Fitzgibbon 2013). While conversation about the EU's internal politics is less critical and more heavily polarized when asked to evaluate how much influence the EU has domestically, the change between 2010 and 2013 still indicates a move toward increased negative opinions. In brief, the focus group conversations indicate a progressive move to more critical discourse about the EU, rather than greater polarization. A negativity bias in EU contestation during participant-driven general political conversation might explain observations of an excess of negative evaluations in the focus groups, especially when compared to news coverage. However, a growth in negative claims in EU-related conversation, both with and without evaluative prompts, is symptomatic of more widespread changes in attitudes. These attitudinal changes over time do not correspond to trends observed in the media analysis. Quantitative

data from the regular Eurobarometer surveys provide a more detailed look at these longitudinal trends.

5.5.2 EU Contestation in the Eurobarometer

This section measures polarization in citizen responses to the Eurobarometer surveys in relation to two evaluative questions. The first asks respondents to indicate their level of trust in various political institutions. The second asks them whether the current direction of the EU or Ireland is moving in the right direction. Data based on responses to this first question reveals a longitudinal pattern of declining trust in the EU since 2011, following a period of consistent polarization. This pattern corresponds to the growing euro-critical assessments observed in the focus groups. However, trust in national institutions during this period also declines. At the start of the research period, in spring and fall of 2010, Eurobarometer data confirms that distrust in both the Irish government and national parliament was high and largely unipolar, until the 2011 national elections, which saw a new Fine Gael-Labour coalition come into government (see Figure 30). The post election period corresponds to increased trust in, and thus a heightened polarization of, government institutions among Irish citizens, similar to that of the EU until then. Focus group conversations show that some citizens were cautiously optimistic of the new Fine Gael and Labour coalition while the former Fianna Fail government was largely blamed for failing to prevent the crisis. Participants, especially in 2010, accused the Fianna Fail government of mismanaging the economy. Assigning blame to the government was also a factor that contributed to the discussions so easily shifting to a domestic focus. This is similar to opinions that appeared in Irish news coverage at that time.

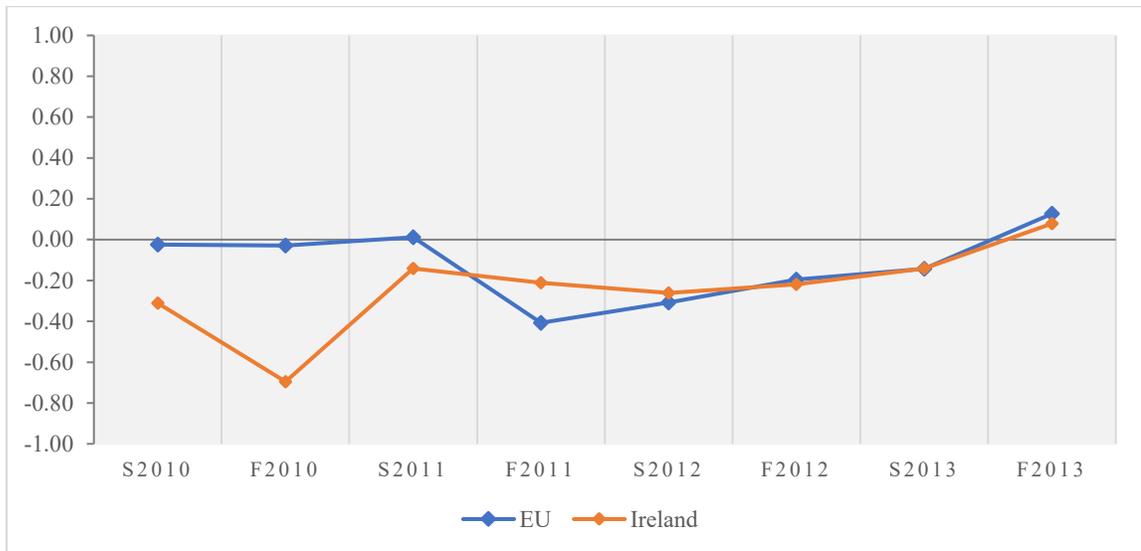
Figure 30 – Degree of polarization in Irish citizens’ responses to the question, ‘For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it? / European Union / National Parliament / National Government’



Source: Standard Eurobarometer, 1 = fully trust, -1 = don't trust at all

On the other hand, when asked about the European Union during this same period, citizens were nearly evenly split on whether it can be trusted. Therefore, until spring 2011, trust in the EU was more heavily polarized than that of national institutions. This indicates a more diverse degree of contestation. Trust in both the EU and the national institutions dropped off noticeably in fall 2011. By then the effects of Ireland's austerity measures were increasingly felt and EU-level efforts to fix the crisis picked up with monthly emergency summits of the Eurogroup. Neither the EU, national government nor Irish parliament recovered trust levels by the end of the research period, although trust in the EU has hovered in the range of moderate polarization and until fall 2013 remained more heavily polarized than national institutions, which are perceived as untrustworthy with increasing frequency.

Figure 31 – Degree of polarization in Irish citizen’s responses to the question: ‘At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in...? / The European Union / Ireland’



Source: Eurobarometer, 1 = the right direction, -1 = the wrong direction

Opinions on whether things in the EU and in Ireland are moving in the right direction have followed a very similar pattern with the exception that polarization levels in all cases do start to recover to moderate to high levels between fall 2011 and spring 2011, even leaning slightly towards more positive evaluations by fall of 2013 despite the overall levels of polarization remaining very high (see figure 31). Although they can be criticized for pushing respondents to either take a polarized position or select ‘don’t know’ rather than organically testing pre-existing or more nuanced notions of legitimacy, these questions in the Eurobarometer do provide several initial insights. First, regardless of some degree of correlation in patterns of legitimation, the EU tends to polarize citizens to a higher degree than do national institutions which are both more negatively evaluated and, for the most part, less polarized than the European Union. This is especially true in the case of institutional evaluations, as opposed to assessments of their performance, or output legitimacy. This data also reaffirms that polarization, as a feature of politicization should

differentiate between different aspects the EU (i.e. the object categories) and the type of legitimation (i.e. input versus output). As evidenced in the variation between patterns of responses to these two questions, despite starting out the same, not all aspects relating to institutions and institutional actors are evaluated in similar patterns over time.

In sum, these figures demonstrate that despite some variance, when asked to take a position, citizens are consistently polarized over assessments of the EU's output legitimacy, in relation to its performance. However, in focus group discussions, when they have an opportunity to develop their ideas over the course of a conversation with others, by 2013 participants on average had a more critical assessment of the current state of affairs of the EU, more in line with Eurobarometer results for level of trust in the EU. The Eurobarometer responses show that evaluations of the EU's institutional trustworthiness are increasingly less polarized and more negatively assessed. This indicates a growing degree of Eurocritical attitudes towards the European Union as an *institution*, despite higher polarization among the Irish in terms of its *performance*. That this dichotomy is also reflected in national assessments is an indication that a greater understanding of these differences needs to also consider *how* issues are contested on the citizen arena in addition to the polarization of public opinion collected through surveys. The focus groups show that in conversations with peers, participants can be convinced to accept a more unipolar opinion on an issue. For example, this is seen when Michael, a participant in the 2013 focus group conversation excerpted on page 239, second-guesses his positive assessment of the EU following remarks from other participants. This shows just how fluid assessments of the EU can be. The growth in positive evaluations leading to increased polarization of citizen assessments of whether the EU is going in a good or a bad direction is not reflected

in either the focus group debates or news coverage at the time. It also contradicts the tensions observed between long term and present-day assessments in ambivalent statements. It is possible here that general assessments of the EU's present direction are removed from citizens' opinions of its consequences for Ireland.

Finally, the general shift in attitudes towards fewer positive evaluations observed here corresponds to similar shifts from the news media's exclusively positive coverage of topics relating to the EU's internal politics in November 2010, albeit at a very low frequency, to entirely Eurocritical coverage at a much higher frequency by November 2013. This growth in Eurocritical reporting of EU internal politics in the media is irregular and does not correspond the continuous trend characteristic of the Eurobarometer. However, looking back to figure 22 on page 170, negative claims dominate EU-related reporting over time, with only a few exceptions. Summing up the relation of citizen discourse to media coverage, the comparisons in this chapter show that contrary to what one might expect, the Irish new media's EU's related coverage over time has a stronger correlation with citizens' direction of polarization of EU-related topics, than it does on their salience or the scope with which they are discussed. However, even in relation to polarization, the extent of this correlation is limited.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that politicization within citizen discourse is complex and multifaceted and thus one should be careful in generalizing patterns and observations. The topics on which citizens choose to engage and the ways in which they engage them are as much situation- and context-specific as they are influenced by news media consumption and media effects, the scope of knowledge, political interest and the overall

salience of the issues to them. As an agenda-setter, while the news media defines the basket of issues that citizens are exposed to, it has less influence over which of those will resonate most strongly with individuals and how. In addition to general individual levels of political interest, interest in conversation on a political topic can vary depending on if someone is initiating a conversation him or herself or reacting to something said by someone else. Likewise, conversational prompts and triggers may affect citizens' recall of issues and how and if they contest them. Despite a minor increase in 2013, the EU was neither heavily salient, deep in scope or intensively contested in a general discussion about politics. However, once prompted to discuss the EU, participants did have enough interest in it and sufficient cognitive cues to carry on a discussion even if there was a propensity to get drawn back in to domestically-oriented conversation. While the salience of various topics and the scope of their representation in citizen discourse did not neatly align with the news media, there is an observed correlation between media and citizen patterns of evaluation.

These conclusions agree with Achim and his co-authors' assessment of an "uninformed" politicization in 2010 and observe a similar pattern in 2013. The original analysis of the 2010 groups concluded that "politicization is limited to the most fundamental questions brought up by European integration: EU membership and its benefits and costs for one's own country, the possibility of further enlargement, as well as – in the constitutional category, the democratic legitimacy of the EU" (Hurrelmann et. al. 2015, 56). This chapter demonstrated that this did not change during the three years between the focus groups. This descriptive analysis has also revealed that while the EU does exhibit some increasingly polarized, albeit uninformed, politicization over time in the citizen arena, this is only the case when the topic related to the European Union has already

been raised. This chapter has demonstrated this through political conversation. However, one can imagine that major participatory events, albeit ones removed from the national electoral context such as EU referendums, may offer the same type of opportunity structures for citizens to actively engage the EU, as do EU-related prompts and triggers in conversation with friends or colleagues.

Chapter 6: Conclusions on the differentiated patterns of politicization across arenas

Embarking on this project, the euro crisis was in full swing with no end in sight and many even questioning the future of the European Union. Here in North America the theme of the 2012 biennial conference of the European Community Studies Association – Canada questioned if Europe’s future was one of “Integration, Disintegration, or Stagnation?”. Today, much has changed and with Greece’s exit from its third and final bailout programme in August 2018 the euro crisis has become overshadowed by a persistence of new crises, most notably the refugee crisis, the Brexit referendum and Britain’s impending exit from the Union, the election and rise of populist leaders and a questioning of the EU’s core democratic values by some member states, notably Poland and Hungary. However, the insights of this detailed case study of political discourse about the EU in Ireland are no less valuable now, than they were in 2013 when this research project commenced. Understanding politicization as a differentiated phenomenon and insight into how citizens diverge from wider politicization trends in the public sphere is now even more relevant as more citizens across Europe are electing euro-critical governments and electoral turnout in European elections continues to fall. By exploring the nuances of how the EU is politicized both within and between political arenas, this study provides greater insight into the mechanisms of the politicization process that can help to inform approaches to the future analysis of these more recent political crises, as much as they inform our understanding of the euro crisis.

Questioning the generalizability of claims of an ‘unprecedented politicization of the EU’ during the euro crisis, this project set out to map the politicization of the EU and how it changed and evolved over the duration of the crisis in Ireland comparatively between the media and citizen discourse. The preceding analysis investigated the discrepancies between them. It now concludes with a warning regarding the generalizability of media-based politicization research which has carried the bulk of conclusions about the trajectory of the politicization of the EU until now. Unlike previous research on politicization that used the media as a single source of data on different arenas (for example, see Grande and Hutter 2016) or studied political arenas independent of each other (for example, see Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016; Duchesne et. al. 2013), this study used common indicators for politicization to study the media and citizens in parallel over the same time periods. There have also not been any previous major longitudinal studies of politicization specific to the citizen arena.

As this dissertation has shown, despite evidence that media discourse does resonate to various degrees with citizens, lay citizens respond to issues in different ways and in response to different factors than do the news media. Citizen discourse has not experienced the same degree of fluctuation in EU-related debates as did the media and is less reactive to punctuated peaks of interest and debates that are driven by key political moments. A final synthesis of the empirical findings in the following pages demonstrates that the intensity, scope and level of contention characteristic of the politicization of the EU in the citizen arena is prone to more gradual change in response to individuals’ lived experiences of the EU. As more Eurosceptic populist governments are elected in Europe and euro critical assessments of the EU legitimacy increase, nuances of politicization among

citizens, and the media is especially important. To address the original objectives this final chapter sums up the results of the empirical analysis, first comparatively for the media and citizens, followed by a discussion of patterns over time. It concludes by mapping several models for a differentiated politicization of the European Union.

6.1 The Politicization of the EU in Citizen and in Media Debates Compared

This dissertation evaluated the politicization of the European Union based on three indicators, each of which is necessary, but without the others, insufficient for the ideal-type model of politicization applied to the analysis. The political world rarely fits ideally into the categories that we, as social scientists, build for it. In real life, politicization is a messier process where each of these indicators does not necessarily change and evolve in unison with the others. However, this does not negate this three-part conceptualization. The empirical results presented in the last two chapters have shown that each of these elements are indeed continuously present in both the Irish print news media and the citizen arena, at some moments more so than at others. Therefore, the EU is to some extent politicized in Ireland. Staying true to this understanding, for politicization to increase, there should be a noticeable upward trend in the *salience* of the EU, the *scope* of actors involved and depth of the discussion, and degree of *contestation*. However, even observations framed by an absence of overall politicization can offer new insights into its changing *character* which is just as, if not more, important to understanding the changing frames through which the EU is contested. Therefore, before presenting the degree to which the politicization of the EU has changed over the course of the study period, it is helpful to first summarize the key observations from a deeper comparison of the nature of politicization between citizens and the news media.

6.1.1 Mapping salience in the news media and citizen arenas

In a recent study investigating the salience of the EU only (i.e. at the exclusion of scope and contestation), Jan Beyers and his co-authors observed that:

[w]hat is salient to a particular actor type, is not necessarily salient to other actor types. Moreover, policies that gain media attention are not necessarily salient to citizens, interest groups or policy-makers (Beyers, Dür, and Wonka 2017, 8).

While one of the only studies to explicitly compare the two arenas, this study depended on pre-existing data comparing across unparallel periods and contexts. Nevertheless, taking a deeper look at the salience of the EU over paralleled time periods in the context of the euro crisis, this dissertation confirms their observation. November 2010 saw domestic and EU politics come together on the national stage as Ireland negotiated a bailout package with the Troika, including representatives of the European Commission and ECB, in Dublin. This was overall the most visible period for EU-related debate in the Irish media and saw the largest jump in the frequency of Irish respondents who claim to discuss European matters with friends or colleagues, especially those who discuss it frequently. At first, it might appear that there is a correlation in the salience of European affairs among citizens and in the media. However, unless EU-related topics were explicitly brought into the conversations in focus groups, citizens' political discussions were entirely domestically focused making no connection to the EU. November 2012, the period with the highest frequency of respondents who claim to discuss European matters was unspectacular in terms of the overall visibility of EU-related debates in the Irish news media. Despite a low intensity of EU-related media reporting overall, that period has the highest proportion of EU-related reporting dedicated to its internal affairs, largely in relation to negotiations for a new EU budget.

News coverage of the budget debates focused heavily on agriculture, the fishing industry and oil prices. As observed during the focus group discussions the salience of political topics for citizens is heavily driven by their visibility in people's everyday lives and their lived experience of politics. The empirical evidence presented in chapter five highlights that when the EU became a topic of conversation, citizens' understandings of EU politics were characterized not by processes or institutions but very strongly by how they experience the EU, for instance through the effects of the EU's funding for infrastructure. Stories of the EU regulating the 'curvature of bananas', however, exaggerated, paint a much more vivid picture in peoples' minds than news of meetings in Brussels and high-level political decisions. In one example a woman, discussing how she felt about the austerity measures imposed on Ireland, spoke of her grandson having to leave Ireland due to the lack of opportunities for young people. In another, a man recalls seeing signs while driving along the highway indicting that it was funded in part by the EU structural funds. Therefore, while the media covered the *process* of negotiating the new EU budget in relation to agriculture and competition policies, the *effects* of the EU's agricultural policies on local farming, or competition policies on local business and industry emerged as common motifs in EU-related discussion among citizens. A greater visibility of debate on such issues in the media, even during a period with a lower volume of EU-related reporting overall, might then explain the greater incentive for citizens to discuss 'European matters' with their friends or colleagues than a high volume of news attention to technical details of the debates on the crisis. For example, the period that marked the adoption of the 'six-pack' of legislative procedures reforming the Stability and Growth Pact reported among the highest frequencies of EU-related news coverage yet

corresponded to a period of decreased conversation about EU matters among citizens, as reported by the Eurobarometer.

The news media largely report on politics as they happen, particularly EU news that is allocated limited space, with an even smaller allotment of space for opinion pieces or editorials. Consequently, a high volume of the news coverage analyzed focused on the EU or member states' *political input*. Citizen conversation, on the other hand, was drawn more intensely to a discussion of *political output*, in relation to experiences of the effects or consequences of EU politics. While detailed objective EU knowledge was not found to be exceptionally high, citizens did display a general understanding of which policy issues in their own lives involve some level of EU influence or interference. Therefore, while individual citizens may have first heard of issues relating to EU politics in the media, or through politically interested friends acting as information shortcuts, in the focus groups issues appeared to only gain salience once triggered by memories or reminders of lived experiences and real-life exposure to them. What the media presents as debates on political input were thus translated into discussions of political output. One notable exception to this is in relation to EU referendums, particularly the Lisbon Treaty Referendum, which was an especially salient topic in the 2013 focus groups. Referendums are an exception as they directly involve citizens and are routinely covered by news media as significant democratic processes. By 2013 the Lisbon Treaty referendums were not discussed at all in Irish newspaper coverage. However, in the focus groups, they were raised in the context of disenchantment with national government and a high degree of ambivalence regarding the degree to which the EU could be trusted, in light of several years of austerity imposed on Ireland.

The observations of the two empirical chapters, therefore, reveal that the intensification of reporting on certain issues relating to EU politics in the news media does, in fact, resonate in citizen discourse, but not necessarily at the same time that it appears in media debates. While not salient to the media at the time of the 2013 focus groups, the Lisbon Treaty debates were very prominent in earlier media coverage. Similarly, despite EU internal politics never triggering a peak in EU-related reporting overall, Agricultural issues, which were a reoccurring topic associated with the EU in focus group discussions, were the most frequently reported area of EU internal politics. Information about issues picked up through the news media can linger in individuals' memories until their salience is triggered by an observation or experience in their everyday lives. Therefore, any parallels that were observed in the salience of the EU-related debates were more strongly a factor of the nature of those debates, than citizens' reactions to a higher exposure to these debates to begin with.

This dissertation found that it is not necessarily how much visibility the EU receives, but rather which issues and debates are given visibility in the public sphere, that matter most to political debate in the citizen arena. This confirms the initial assertion that research concerned with the effects of public debates on citizen behaviour and attitudes should shift concern from an intensification of EU politicization to one that looks more deeply also at the character of how the EU is being politicized.³² While these conclusions

³² In the years since the data was collected for this project, there has been a major shift in how people use and interact with digital and especially social media, which today competes with and even replaces traditional media to a much greater degree than it did between 2010 and 2013. Thus, future politicization research of citizen and media relations, or even of just the media would be wise to account for the increased power of social media to drive debates and even influence democratic processes.

that citizen understandings of politics depend heavily on their environments and lived experience of political issues are not exactly shocking or novel, they have still been largely overlooked by the dominant approaches to politicization studies which depend heavily on the news media to make sweeping observations absorbing actors of the intermediary and citizen arenas into a single case. Acknowledging how salience is *not* transferred from media to citizens, and how it is, can better inform future studies of the media.

6.1.2 *Mapping scope in the media and citizen arena*

Scope, the second dimension of politicization explored in this study is understood as the depth or breadth of EU-related discourse. Europeanized national politics, in other words, domestic politics that are in some way connected to the EU by the author or speaker, are naturally the most likely topic-area of politicization. Domesticated EU politics have both proximity to citizens and consumers of domestic media, and thus a more immediate and relatable impact. Therefore, the wider the variety of topics in addition to domesticated EU politics, and the greater the balance between them, the deeper the politicization of the EU. This includes the EU's internal and external politics, constitutional and institutional issues, questions of EU membership that extend beyond a discussion of national government actions, and a responsiveness to politics and EU-related debates in other member states (see appendix H for a comparison the three dimensions of politicization in media and citizens).

Habermas, and other proponents of a European public sphere (see Risse and Van De Steeg 2003; Gerhards 2001; Statham and Trenz 2013) highlight such a mutual responsiveness between national public spheres to the debates and affairs in others, as an essential element of a truly Europeanized public sphere. The analysis in the preceding

chapters demonstrated that Irish media debates during the crisis years were not widely receptive to politics in other member states, at least in as far as they were connected to the EU. When EU-related reporting did engage with the domestic politics of other EU members, it was almost exclusively in relation to debates on the euro crisis and limited to other debtor states, mainly Greece, and key creditor countries, mainly France and Germany. In contrast, in the citizen arena, as measured by the focus group discussions, individual citizens were more likely to connect EU-related conversation to political events and citizen experiences in other member states, often comparatively to Ireland. While this was also framed by the crisis, these conversations extended beyond the economic debates on the crisis itself. Overall, the citizen arena exhibited discussion over a wider range of topics than the Irish news media, which was heavily dominated by the crisis and domestic politics (see appendix H for comparison). Therefore, while the salience of the EU generally was lower in the citizen arena, when looking at the width of the scope of citizen discourse we see that the level of salience that was observed, was to a lesser degree than the media carried by the immediate relevance of the euro crisis.

As explained in chapter three by Anna Visser of the Dublin-based NGO, the Advocacy Initiative, the Irish did not blame the EU for the crisis. The focus groups confirmed this, through a heavy criticism of national leaders juxtaposed against the EU when asked to evaluate it, and a surprising degree of self-blame. It is clear that despite the wider euro-crisis effecting economies across the union, the economic situation in Ireland was largely internalized as an Irish problem originating from Irish decisions. This would explain the lower dominance of the crisis over citizen discussion of the EU that made room for a wider range of topics despite them being framed by the crisis in the background. Thus,

the EU-related discussions that did occur, while still dominated by domesticated EU issues, were not as heavily dependent on a salience of the euro crisis as was the media.

Finally, for citizens, the depth of the discussion is largely, but not exclusively connected to objective knowledge of the EU. The deeper one's knowledge of an issue, the deeper the potential discussion of that topic he or she is able to have. Despite a tendency for the media to focus on EU policy-making processes and negotiations whether supernatural or intergovernmental and the debates relating to those, the focus group analysis in chapter five found evidence of a diffuse sense of the EU's policy competence and processes. Participants' knowledge of the EU was largely informed by understandings of what it represents, for instance, progressive politics, human rights, and either democratic transparency or lack thereof.

While lay citizens are not political scientists, they are not stupid, nor are they obliged to care about or know every aspect of EU politics comprehensively. Robert Dahl wrote that "[i]n liberal societies, politics is a sideshow in the great circus of life" (Dahl 2005, 305). For citizens, the EU is a distant part of that sideshow. People's daily lives are filled with endless responsibilities and interests that compete for limited time and resources. Politics, especially EU politics, for the most part, remain on the outside. This analysis proposed that when citizens hear or read about political issues, they will remember most those elements of the news that are relatable and relevant to them. Usually this does not include intricate details, but general issues and themes. Despite what some have observed as *low* EU knowledge, the Irish reported higher objective knowledge than the average European and overall higher than average levels of knowledge about national politics. That the scope of EU-related discourse on the citizen arena is generally more

diffuse than it is in the media, is perhaps more a factor of the lower significance of politics at any level in people's daily lives, than it is a symptom of a weak politicization of Europe.

6.1.3 Mapping contestation in the media and citizen arena

The political, as understood by this project, is characterized by active deliberative contestation relating to conflicting positions and opinions. Therefore, a contestation of EU issues, not just an increased scope of attention to them across a wider array of actors, is an essential component of politicization. This was measured in two ways. First, in relation to the frequency of political claims present in media and citizen discourse, and secondly, in relation to the degree of polarization of specifically evaluative claims-making. The preceding media analysis found that in the Irish print media, the level of contestation of EU politics was more closely linked to reporting on conflict and contestation among prominent actors, than it was to the overall salience of specific news items. Those issues that were the most salient, were not necessarily most heavily contested. Thus, an intensification of EU-related content in the media, in both scope and visibility should not be immediately linked to politicisation in that arena. It is likely for this reason, that many initial assessments and predictions of the effects of the euro crisis overestimated the extent of EU politicization that occurred. On average, we saw that most of the news articles analyzed did contain a political claim (i.e. evaluation, demand, or speculation), but less than half of those contained evaluations. While this did vary by period, most of these evaluations were negative. Therefore, the EU was heavily contested but not necessarily contentious in the media during this period.

In the citizen arena, most contestation observed in focus group discussions centred on national politics. While some political claims relating to the EU did emerge in general

conversation, for the most part, they intensified when prompted with an evaluative question that asked participants to provide an assessment of very general EU-related issues. Evaluative claims in the citizen arena, particularly when assessing the present state of the EU were likewise more heavily critical rather than polarized, both in the focus groups and the survey analysis, but general assessments of the effects of the EU on Ireland were more positive. While the frequency of contestation in the citizen arena was lower than in the news media, there was a general similarity in between these two arenas in that both were characterized by a propensity toward negative evaluations, as time went on. However, a coupling of generally positive evaluations of EU membership but negative assessments of its present-day effect on Ireland, might explain a high proportion of respondents that exhibited ambivalence towards the EU.

6.1.4 Conclusions on characterizing politicization

Overall, the EU experienced only a small degree of salience in the citizen arena, which expanded under certain discursive circumstances. Whether domesticated or supranational, EU issues were heavily overshadowed by entirely domestic issues in citizen discourse. However, some topics like the Lisbon Treaty referendums, migration and agriculture attracted attention and interest within an EU context once they were raised in focus group discussions. *The EU was overall more salient in the news media and even competed with news coverage of exclusively national government and processes.* The overall intensity of EU coverage, in terms of total words dedicated to EU issues, was only marginally below coverage of national government. The EU was politicized across a greater range of issues in the citizen arena, than in the news media, but with a diffuse level of detail. These were mostly connected to policy effects and to some degree constitutional issues relating to the

Lisbon treaty. Thus, in the citizen arena, the politicization of the EU is wider in scope, but not as deep as in the news media. In Irish print media discourse, the EU was politicized across a smaller range of issues with a higher tendency for one issue, particularly the crisis, to dominate. Finally, in the citizen arena, the EU was less likely to be contested, than in media debates, unless citizens were specifically triggered with an evaluative question. Even then political claims exhibited a high degree of ambivalence. Overall, the EU was more heavily contested and more heavily polarized in the media than in citizen debates. While initially polarizing for citizens, it became progressively more negatively assessed over time, particularly in relation to the present. However, despite growing euro-critical attitudes, EU internal politics were consistently more positively evaluated than they were in the media. This dissertation found that, the general negative direction of polarization in the news is mirrored in the focus groups in relation to Europeanized national politics. However, EU politics, particularly its internal politics, were more frequently positively evaluated by citizens despite the much heavier density of negative evaluations in the media.

Table 20 – Comparing media (📰) versus citizen (👥) discourse in relation to the level of politicization by politicization dimension

	Higher		Lower
SALIENCE	📰	>	👥
SCOPE			
<i>Width</i>	👥	>	📰
<i>Depth</i>	📰	>	👥
CONTESTATION	📰	>	👥
<i>Polarization</i>	📰	>	👥

Overall, the pattern of EU politicization between media and citizen arenas in Ireland differed in character, more so than it did in intensity. This dissertation has demonstrated that the process of politicization is one that should be differentiated not only by political arena, but also by the three dimensions applied in this project: salience, scope, and contestation. Politicization is not a phenomenon that can and should be thought of only in relation to an increasing or decreasing intensity. Approaches, such as the one applied by Swen Hutter and his co-authors in their recent volume on ‘Politicizing Europe’ (see Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016), that reduce the three dimensions into a single politicization index, do not account for changes that can occur to the character of politicization even when no major instance of intensification is observed. It is these smaller changes that might accumulate over time to influence future moments of intensification.

6.2 Conclusions on the Change in Politicization of the EU Over Time

Having taken a closer look at the character of EU politicization, the general trend in politicization within the two arenas can be compared. Previous research looking at the politicization of the EU among citizens found evidence that the EU is not heavily politicized in this arena. However, even the most cautious media-based assessment of the effects of the euro crisis on politicization (see Kriesi and Grande 2016) observed that there was indeed an intensification, albeit one driven mostly by increased salience, and not a move toward ‘mass politics’. In contrast, this project found generally no upward trend in the salience of the EU, expansion of topics or actors, or in the level of contestation or polarization of EU-related objects over time (see table 21). The exceptionalism of the euro crisis in instigating what some even call ‘unprecedented’ levels of visibility of the European Union in media debates, observed mostly in creditor states, was not found in

debates in the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* between 2010 and 2013.

Table 21 – Change over time in politicization, by politicization dimension (2010 – 2013).

	Media	Citizens
<i>Salience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No upward trend over time. ➤ Stable intensity of news coverage. ➤ Fluctuations in overall salience caused by increased attention to the debate on the euro crisis. Frequency of articles on non-crisis related issues stable over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Subtle growth in salience of the EU from 2010 to 2013, largely, but not exclusively in relation to the euro crisis
<i>Scope</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No expansion of the range of topics covered but more balanced coverage of issues, away from the euro crisis. ➤ Increase over time in frequency of references to EU actors, but not in scope of these references. ➤ No upward trend in reporting on politics in other EU member states. Moments of intensification linked to euro crisis debate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Expansion of the range of topics discussed and greater balance of issues away from the euro crisis. ➤ Objective knowledge of the EU declining, but some evidence of greater recognition of EU actors and institutions. ➤ No upward trend overtime in depth of EU-related discussion.
<i>Contestation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No visible trend in levels of EU-related contestation over time. ➤ Fluctuations in contestation levels linked to key moments in the crisis for Ireland. ➤ No visible trend in the polarization of EU-related objects over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Growth in polarization of EU internal politics over time due to increasing eurocritical assessments. ➤ In Eurobarometer, EU trustworthiness (input legitimacy) increasingly critically polarized.

In most cases these moments of intensifications occurred in response to important moments in the euro crisis, particularly those that brought it home to Ireland. Often these were routinely covered topics by the media, such as democratic processes, for example the referendum on the Fiscal Compact. By distinguishing between debates on the euro crisis and other EU-related debates, it becomes clear that most observed spikes in salience were

the result of heightened attention to reporting on or discussing the euro crisis. These were not punctuated moments of increased attention to the EU more holistically. Therefore the ‘unprecedented’ degree of salience that Statham and Trenz (2013b, 1015) and others have observed during the euro crisis was confined to a few key moments in the Irish press and did not affect the salience of EU-debates external to debates on the euro crisis. This is not to say the EU is not politicized in the Irish media. On the contrary, despite fluctuations in increased reporting on the debates exclusively on the euro-crisis, the overall space dedicated to the EU was surprisingly consistent, even when the article counts fluctuated. Comparing between 2010 and 2013, contestation of the EU’s internal politics did recover from the earlier dominance of crisis-related debates. Even though the EU did not experience a noticeable increase in politicization, non-economic EU debates remained surprisingly visible, for the most part, despite the dominance of the crisis. *Overall, politicization of the EU in the Irish news media can be characterized as a moderately salient, deep, moderately euro-critical polarization that is becoming somewhat wider in scope over time with no consistent trend in either the salience or contestation of EU politics.*

In contrast, political discourse in the citizen arena did witness a subtle growth in the salience of the EU, despite no evidence of a significant upward shift. It also saw an expansion in the scope of topics and a noticeable growth in the polarization of EU-related debate, particularly driven by a rise in euro-critical assessments (i.e. negative evaluations of the EU without explicit objections to the EU or EU membership), and even some euro-sceptic assessments (ie. evaluations explicitly objected to the EU project or to Ireland’s membership). While the media analysis found no visible trend in the polarization of EU-

related objects over time, Eurobarometer results suggest an intensification of Eurocritical attitudes among citizens when it comes to trust in the EU, at the expense of polarization on these issues. The focus group discussions, regardless of the question asked, likewise confirm a noticeable increase in the volume of contributions offering a negative evaluation at the expense of both positive and ambivalent statements. Despite EU politics remaining greatly overshadowed by domestic issues in political discussion among citizens, and the depth of the discussions not exhibiting change, there is evidence of a subtle intensification of EU politicization in the citizen arena in Ireland, even external to the debates on the euro crisis. *Therefore, within the citizen arena in Ireland, politicization can be characterized as a weak to moderately salient, wide, moderately polarized politicization that is slowly progressing in a wider but not deeper euro-critical direction.*

Reasons why other qualitative studies of citizen attitudes have downplayed politicization in the citizen arena are two-fold. First, likely due to heavier logistical burdens of focus groups or interviews longitudinally, other studies (ex. Baglioni and Hurrelmann 2016) have not tracked change over time and have also not tracked change in relation to the media. While change in the citizen arena has not been drastic, in relation to an absence of a consistent upward or downward trend in the media, it is significant. At any moment in time, with expectations based on observations of heightened moments of politicization in the media, for instance, the degree of politicization of the EU among citizens may in fact appear low. But we now know that, despite being a discourse that falls far behind the media in the salience of the EU and the depth of that discussion, in fact citizen discourse directs attention at a wider and more balanced scope of issues. Additionally, considering the lower salience of politics for most citizens generally, including domestic politics, the benchmarks

against which politicization in the citizen arena is measured are very high. No, there has not been a shift towards a ‘mass politics’ of the European Union (Kriesi 2016), and these observations are still a far cry from increased mobilization of publics around EU issues engaged in active claims-making beyond political conversations and debates, and participation in conventional democratic processes. Such observations begin with too high expectations of what a politicization of EU-related debates among citizens would look like. These assessments are made against theoretical ideal-types, ideal-types of active publics, and of what a fully politicized outcome might look like. These should serve as a framework against which phenomena in the real world are assessed, not as benchmarks that they are expected to reach. The polarization of the EU as measured longitudinally by the Eurobarometer surveys exhibited change over time and was not susceptible to intensification based on immediate events as was the news media. As a result, the citizen arena is not marked by a punctuated moment of salience and polarization, but rather by incremental change. It is these incremental changes to the character and trajectory of politicization on the citizen arena, rather than punctuated but fleeting moments of intensified politicization in the news media that might accumulate and lead to greater change down the road.

As the lingering controversiality of the Lisbon Referendums in focus group discussions, for example, has shown, the salience of certain political issues, events, decisions and controversies sticks with people over time. News media, in contrast, are much more closely tied to certain events as they happen with less retrospection. Therefore, we can conclude with a hypothesis that an increasing contestation or controversiality of EU politics would not necessarily be slowed down, stopped or reversed by a change in the

tone of media reporting. The lingering salience of certain issues for citizens can be exacerbated by new grievances and through conversation and debate with others whether in person or through the growing power of social media. In the years since 2013 when final data for this project was collected, it has become undeniable that social media, to a much greater extent than traditional news media, now facilitates contact between the executive and citizen arenas. This does not negate the potential influence of the news media as there is no evidence yet to counter that news media remain a key source of knowledge and information for both citizens and much of social media. However, the traditional media do not decide or control which information will resonate with their audiences, and how it will be applied, understood and interpreted in citizen discourse and through political action or inaction. This provides a further argument against permitting for the research into politicization and political discourse more generally, to be driven too heavily by media analysis alone.

6.3 Final Thoughts and Avenues for Further Research

In striving for academic rigour, wrapping up a project of this scale calls for reflection and methodological reflexivity. To begin, it is important to acknowledge that political arenas are a conceptual construct designed for the purpose of facilitating analysis. They divide society into those professionally involved in politics, lay citizens, and the actors that serve as a link, but they are not perfect. A closer look at the Irish political environment in chapter three demonstrated that the lines between these can sometimes be blurred. Citizens enter the intermediary arena when they act through civil society and NGOs to enact change. Lines between the intermediary and institutional arenas can become blurred when civil society groups are co-opted into the policy-making process as they had

been in Ireland. Journalists and executive actors become lay citizens when they are off-duty from their position and conversing with friends or family. These are the people who are likely opinion leaders in their personal social circles in the citizen arena. However, the observed differences between politicization among citizens and the media indicate that these distinctions do add value to a better understanding of how political discourse evolves. Comparing politicization between member states, without differentiating between the deeper dimensions and arenas across which they can change, fails to accurately portray the complex nature of politicization. Because Irish citizens did not protest austerity to the extent that citizens did in other debtor states and did so through a domestic frame, does not imply that how the EU is politicized to citizens has not evolved. Differentiating the analysis facilitates insight into emerging rifts or allegiances within arenas, and between arenas. As the EU deals with further challenges, particularly increasing numbers of citizens voting for euro-sceptic parties, these rifts in how various actors politicize the EU are important and implicate the institutional arena as an essential extension of this research agenda.

This dissertation closely examined the Irish news media and citizen arena in relation to one another. A separate body of work in policy studies considers the multi-directional potential of agenda-setting influence between the institutional arena and both the media and wider citizenry (ex, Jones and Baumgartner 2012; True, Jones and Baumgartner 2007). This project took a communications studies-inspired approach to examining the correlation between news media and citizens due to the prioritization of understanding the citizen arena outside of institutional policy objectives. Building on these observations, future research would be wise to heed calls to merge media and policy studies traditions in agenda setting (Wolfe, Jones and Baumgartner 2013), particularly if we wish

to understand the changing political dynamics presently underway in Europe. Such subtle changes in how citizens politicize the European Union may have the potential to produce large-scale departures in the European policy agenda in accordance with punctuated-equilibrium theory in the field of public policy (True, Jones, and Baumgartner 2007, 155) not unlike the British Brexit vote.

Figure one, at the beginning of this dissertation, lays out the multidirectional paths of influence between three arenas: the institutional, the intermediary, and the citizen arena. The preceding analyses closely examine the citizen arena and just one major actor of the intermediary arena, the news media. This tells only part of the story, albeit an important part. Building on this work to expand comparison to the institutional arena, and test the hypotheses proposed in this dissertation across a wider range of member states is a natural next step in painting a fuller picture of the true dynamics of a differentiated politicization. A high frequency of ambivalence that is characterized by a contradiction between overwhelmingly positive assessments of what the EU has done for Ireland and more critical views of its continued influence over the Irish, hints at potential shifts away from what appeared to be a conventional image of the EU as a force for positive economic and social change in Ireland. If such trends in polarization continue, and if they are paired with growing salience, and the entry of new members into these debates, they have potential to ultimately contribute to the ‘positive feedback’ required for a punctuated moment of policy change at the national, or supranational level.

This project embarked on an exploratory endeavor that used an in-depth case study of Ireland to explore nuances in political discourse, and map patterns in various dimensions of politicization across and between political arenas. Ireland provided a case characterized

by a relatively politically well-informed population in a debtor state, and of documented changes in public opinion towards the EU that were not paralleled by large scale public mobilization (see section 1.2). It seemed like a best-case scenario, a critical case, to observe politicization among citizens yet one where such a politicization had not been observed by previous research. A qualitative single case study allowed for a deeper analysis of than that which most large-scale quantitative studies allow. However, as valuable as the insights and hypotheses generated by a deep analysis are to understand the Irish case, they still need to be tested longitudinally across other member states representing a broader spectrum of political contexts, both through media analysis and surveys, but most essentially through comparative qualitative focus group data.

The citizen analysis in chapter five includes just two periods of focus groups which means that it lacks the longitudinal depth of the media analysis. Observations of salience and polarization in the focus groups were backed by data from selected questions in the Eurobarometer to sketch longitudinal trends in parallel with the media, particularly in the period between the 2010 and 2013 focus groups. However, survey data is limited in its ability to observe the salience of specific issues over others, and the interactive conversational processes of opinion formation and the extent to which they are tied to knowledge and overall salience. Do citizens immediately have an opinion, do they develop one over the course of conversation with others, or are they genuinely uncertain, undecided or uninterested? A continuation of this research agenda on a larger comparative scale could fill this gap by scheduling citizen focus groups over time in tandem with media analysis and Eurobarometer fieldwork for a deeper longitudinal analysis that tests the claims of this dissertation.

This project provides evidence for the necessity for a differentiated longitudinal analysis of political arenas. To properly test the assertions and hypotheses of the preceding chapters future research will need to expand such an analysis across a wider selection of member states. Finally, this project's mixed-methods differentiated approach paves the way for further research that wishes to extend it to a comparison of citizens and the media with the institutional arena (i.e. national governments and European institutions. This dissertation illustrated that over the course of the crisis, inter-arena politicization between Irish citizens and the news media has not intensified but has become progressively less polarized as citizens slowly move towards the more critical assessments characteristic of the media reports. However, as Ireland's leading political parties, both in government and in opposition are strongly pro-European, there is indication of a slowly growing polarization of the EU between the citizen and executive arenas. Ultimately, a three-way longitudinal comparison across member states, that follows the research agenda set out here, may help to shed some light on the mechanisms behind growing legal, democratic, and social disputes between the EU, some member state governments, and the citizens that elect them.

Appendices

Appendix A Salience

A.1 Article topic by year, as share of coded articles

May 2010 (n=68)	Percent (%)	November 2010 (n=127)	Percent (%)
Euro / Euro zone Crisis	52.9	Irish Financial / Debt Crisis	79.5
Domestic Politics (Ireland)	17.6	Domestic Politics (Ireland)	5.5
EMU (non-crisis related)	8.8	EU External Politics	4.7
EU External Politics	5.9	Euro / Euro zone Crisis	3.9
Irish Financial / Debt Crisis	4.4	EU Internal Politics	3.1
EU Internal Politics	4.4	Irish Economy (non-crisis)	3.1
Domestic Politics (EU Other)	2.9		
Irish Economy (non- crisis)	2.9		

May 2011 (n=54)	Percent (%)	November 2011 (n=90)	Percent (%)
Irish Financial / Debt crisis	35.2	Euro / Euro Zone Crisis	55.6
Euro / Euro Zone Crisis	24.1	Domestic Politics (Ireland)	24.4
Domestic Politics (Ireland)	18.5	Irish Financial / Debt crisis	4.4
EU Internal Politics	11.1	EU Internal Politics	3.3
EU External Politics	3.7	EU Constitutional Issues	3.3
Unclear	3.7	EU Structural Issues	3.3
Domestic Politics (EU Other)	1.9	EMU (non-crisis related)	2.2
Irish Economy (non-crisis)	1.9	EU External Politics	1.1
		Domestic Politics (EU Other)	1.1
		Other - Non-EU	1.1

May 2012 (n=116)	Percent (%)
Euro / Euro Zone Crisis	39.7
Domestic Politics (Ireland)	16.4
EU Constitutional Issues	16.4
Irish Financial / Debt crisis	6.9
EU External Politics	6.9
EU Internal Politics	6.0
Domestic Politics (EU Other)	1.7
Irish Economy (non-crisis)	1.7
EU Membership / Size	1.7
Other - Non-EU	0.9
EU Structural Issues	0.9
Unclear	0.9

November 2012 (n=47)	Percent (%)
Euro / Euro Zone Crisis	34
EU Internal Politics	21.3
Domestic Politics (Ireland)	14.9
Irish Financial / Debt crisis	10.6
EU External Politics	6.4
Other - Non-EU	6.4
EU Membership / Size	4.3
EMU (non-crisis related)	2.1

May 2013 (n=57)	Percent (%)
EU Internal Politics	26.3
Euro / Euro Zone Crisis	26.3
Domestic Politics (Ireland)	12.3
Other - Non-EU	10.5
Domestic Politics (EU Other)	7.0
Irish Financial / Debt crisis	5.3
EU External Politics	5.3
EU Membership / Size	3.5
Irish Economy (non-crisis)	1.8
EU Structural Issues	1.8

November 2013 (n=70)	Percent (%)
Irish Financial / Debt crisis	27.1
Euro / Euro Zone Crisis	24.3
Domestic Politics (Ireland)	14.3
EU Internal Politics	10.0
EU External Politics	10.0
EMU (non-crisis related)	10.0
Other - Non-EU	4.3

Appendix B Scope

B.1 References to EU actors and institutions as percentage of total references, by time period

	May 2010 (n=347)	Nov. 2010 (n=582)	May 2011 (n=288)	Nov. 2011 (n=507)	May 2012 (n=620)	Nov. 2012 (n=229)	May 2013 (n=264)	Nov. 2013 (n=453)	Total (n=3,290)
<i>EU as Such</i>	48.7	35.2	49.0	31.8	46.8	41.1	58.7	25.2	40.4
<i>Euro Zone</i>	13.5	7.2	8.7	25.6	17.6	14.0	11.0	17.0	14.9
<i>European Central Bank</i>	5.5	9.8	9.0	16.4	6.5	12.7	5.7	21.9	11.2
<i>European Commission</i>	13.3	5.3	7.3	4.5	5.2	10.5	8.7	11.3	8.3
<i>Troika</i>	0.3	26.0	12.9	2.4	2.4	3.5	0.8	10.4	7.6
<i>EU Executive Actor</i>	6.9	8.4	6.9	7.9	5.3	3.9	4.6	7.7	6.7
<i>Council of Ministers</i>	2.9	5.8	2.8	2.4	1.1	1.3	2.7	0.9	2.6
<i>European Parliament</i>	2.3	0.3	1.7	2.4	3.7	1.8	1.9	1.3	2.0
<i>Irish MEP</i>	0.9	0.3	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.8	0.4	2.9	1.3
<i>European Council</i>	0.6	1.0	0.4	1.4	1.1	3.1	1.2	0.4	1.2
<i>European Court of Justice</i>	0.9	0.5	0.4	2.2	3.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.1
<i>Other MEP</i>	0.9	-	-	0.4	2.9	1.8	1.9	0.4	1.0
<i>EU Presidency</i>	1.2	-	-	0.4	0.7	3.9	1.9	0.2	0.9
<i>EU Summit</i>	2.3	-	-	1.2	1.9	0.4	0.4	-	0.8

Appendix C Polarization

C.1 Objects of EU claims, as percent of total claims by time period

Object Category	2010		2011		2012		2013		TOTAL (N= 492)
	May (n=58)	Nov. (n=99)	May (n=40)	Nov. (n=65)	May (n=112)	Nov. (n=38)	May (n=33)	Nov. (n=47)	
EU Internal Policy	75.9	27.6	32.5	34.4	33.0	60.5	42.4	46.8	41.2
Domestic Politics (Ireland)	12.1	56.1	42.5	17.2	32.1	7.9	6.1	31.9	29.8
Domestic Politics (EU Other)	5.2	5.1	7.5	20.3	8.0	5.3	18.2	8.5	9.2
Integration / Membership	-	4.1	10.0	10.9	10.7	13.2	15.2	2.1	7.8
Constitution / Institutions	-	6.1	5.0	15.6	11.6	-	6.1	6.4	7.3
EU External Policy	6.9	1.0	2.5	1.6	4.5	13.2	12.1	4.3	4.7

C.2 Speakers of EU claims, as percent of total claims by time period

Speaker Category	2010		2011		2012		2013		TOTAL (N= 492)
	May (n=58)	Nov. (n=99)	May (n=40)	Nov. (n=65)	May (n=112)	Nov. (n=38)	May (n=33)	Nov. (n=47)	
<i>EU-level</i>	17.2	22.2	27.5	24.6	17.9	28.9	12.1	40.4	23.0
<i>Irish Government</i>	15.5	15.2	30.0	20.0	23.2	34.2	24.2	10.6	20.5
<i>Other EU Member State</i>	19.0	12.1	5.0	27.7	16.1	23.7	27.3	8.5	16.9
<i>Journalist</i>	17.2	23.2	15.0	13.8	14.3	10.5	6.1	21.3	16.3
<i>Irish Non-governmental</i>	20.7	17.2	20.0	4.6	18.8	-	21.2	8.5	14.6
<i>External</i>	10.3	10.1	2.5	9.2	9.8	2.6	9.1	10.6	8.7

Appendix D Diversity of Opinion

D.1 Main Speakers of political claims, by share of object category (%)

		Objects of Claims					
		Integration Membership (n=38)	Constitution/ Institutions (n=36)	EU Internal Policy (n=202)	EU External Policy (n=23)	Domestic Affairs, Ireland (n=146)	Domestic Affairs, EU Other (n=45)
Speakers of Claims	<i>Irish Government</i>	58.8	22.2	21.3	30.4	22.6	8.9
	<i>Other EU Member State</i>	42.1	30.6	16.8	8.7	6.2	24.4
	<i>EU-level Actor</i>	13.2	19.4	21.8	30.4	21.9	40.0
	<i>Irish Non-Governmental</i>	2.6	19.4	15.3	13.0	17.8	6.7
	<i>External Actor</i>	7.9	2.8	10.9	13.0	4.8	13.3
	<i>Journalist</i>	18.4	5.6	13.9	4.3	26.7	6.7

D.2 Main objects of political claims, by share of speaker category (%)

		Speakers of Claims					
		Irish Government	Other EU Member State	EU-level Actor	Irish Non-Governmental	External Actor	Journalist
Objects of Claims	<i>EU Internal Policy (n=202)</i>	42.6	41.0	38.9	43.7	52.4	35.0
	<i>Domestic Affairs, Ireland (n=146)</i>	32.7	10.8	28.3	36.6	16.7	48.8
	<i>Domestic Affairs, EU Other (n=45)</i>	4.0	13.3	15.9	4.2	14.3	3.8
	<i>Integration / Membership (n=38)</i>	5.9	19.3	4.4	1.4	7.1	8.8
	<i>Constitution / Institutions (n=36)</i>	7.9	13.3	6.2	9.9	2.4	2.5
	<i>EU External Policy (n=23)</i>	6.9	2.4	6.2	4.2	7.1	1.2

D.3 EU Claim-makers: Speakers of EU claims, by speaker type

Speaker	No.	%
Irish Government	101	100.0
<i>Executive actor / government</i>	64	63.4
<i>Politician / legislative actor</i>	30	29.7
<i>Other Irish state</i>	7	6.9
EU-Level	113	100
<i>Executive</i>	65	57.5
<i>Legislative</i>	26	23.0
<i>EMU institution (including. ECB)</i>	11	9.7
<i>Troika</i>	6	5.3
<i>Other, EU</i>	5	4.4
Other MS Actor	83	100
<i>Executive actor / government</i>	69	83.1
<i>Other state actor</i>	7	8.4
<i>Multiple member states</i>	4	4.8
<i>Politician / legislative</i>	3	3.6
Journalist	80	100.0
Irish Non-Governmental	72	100.0
<i>Academic/expert/authority</i>	27	37.5
<i>Business/Professional Association</i>	23	31.9
<i>Individual Citizen</i>	12	16.7
<i>Bank/financial institution</i>	4	5.6
<i>Trade Union</i>	3	4.2
<i>Non-Profit /Volunteer organization</i>	2	2.8
<i>Grassroots group</i>	1	1.4
External Actor	43	100.0
<i>Bank/Financial Institution</i>	15	34.9
<i>Academic/expert/authority</i>	12	27.9
<i>Third country politician</i>	10	23.3
<i>International organization</i>	5	11.6
<i>Grassroots group</i>	1	2.3

Appendix E Contestation

E.1 Objects Evaluated, by share of claims per time period

		May 2010 (n=33)	Nov. 2010 (n=59)	May 2011 (n=21)	Nov. 2011 (n=22)	May 2012 (n=40)	Nov. 2012 (n=17)	May 2013 (n=16)	Nov. 2013 (n=27)
EU Internal Policy	<i>EMU</i>	48.5	18.6	23.8	13.6	17.5	35.3	6.2	22.2
	<i>Agriculture</i>	3	3.4	4.8	-	7.5	5.9	18.8	14.8
	<i>Single Market</i>	9.1	1.7	4.8	9.1	-	5.9	18.8	3.7
	<i>Budget</i>	-	1.7	-	-	-	17.6	6.2	3.7
	<i>Other</i>	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.7
Domestic Politics	<i>Domestic Affairs, Irish</i>	21.2	57.6	33.3	31.8	37.5	5.9	-	33.3
	<i>Domestic Affairs, Other MS</i>	6.1	3.4	9.5	31.8	5.0	5.9	25.0	7.4
EU External Policy	<i>Security</i>	-	1.7	-	-	7.5	11.8	12.5	-
	<i>Trade</i>	9.1	-	-	-	-	-	6.2	-
	<i>Other</i>	-	-	4.8	-	-	-	-	-
Integration/ Membership	<i>Membership</i>	-	1.7	9.5	-	2.5	-	-	-
	<i>EU/European Integration</i>	-	1.7	-	4.5	-	5.9	-	-
	<i>Eurozone Membership</i>	-	-	4.8	-	2.5	5.9	-	-
Constitution /Institutions	<i>Treaties / Treaty-Making</i>	-	3.4	-	9.1	20	-	-	-
	<i>EU Institutions</i>	-	5.1	4.8	-	-	-	6.2	7.4
	<i>Other</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.7

E.2 Position on Evaluative Claim, top objects of claims

	Irish State Actor		State Actor, EU Other		EU-level Actor		Irish Non-Governmental		External		Journalist	
	<i>Position</i>		<i>Position</i>		<i>Position</i>		<i>Position</i>		<i>Position</i>		<i>Position</i>	
	<i>(-1 to +1)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>(-1 to +1)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>(-1 to +1)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>(-1 to +1)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>(-1 to +1)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>(-1 to +1)</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>EMU</i>	-0.38	13	0.00	6	-0.71	7	-0.56	9	0.00	4	-0.38	14
<i>Irish Domestic</i>	-0.41	17	-1.00	3	0.17	12	-0.63	16	-0.20	5	-0.93	27

E.3 Types of evaluations found in economic and non-economic articles

ECONOMIC ARTICLES				
	Positive (%)	Negative (%)	Neutral (%)	N
<i>May 2010</i>	9.8	39.0	51.2	41
<i>Nov. 2010</i>	21.3	36.0	42.7	89
<i>May 2011</i>	6.7	36.7	56.7	30
<i>Nov. 2011</i>	8.0	24.0	68.0	50
<i>May 2012</i>	7.0	15.8	77.2	57
<i>Nov. 2012</i>	14.3	35.7	50	14
<i>May 2013</i>	6.7	13.3	80	15
<i>Nov. 2013</i>	15.6	37.5	46.9	32

NON-ECONOMIC ARTICLES				
	Positive (%)	Negative (%)	Neutral (%)	N
<i>May 2010</i>	11.8	64.7	23.5	17
<i>Nov. 2010</i>	-	80.0	20.0	10
<i>May 2011</i>	11.1	66.7	22.2	9
<i>Nov. 2011</i>	13.3	26.7	60.0	15
<i>May 2012</i>	7.4	42.6	50.0	54
<i>Nov. 2012</i>	17.4	26.1	56.5	23
<i>May 2013</i>	27.8	44.4	27.8	18
<i>Nov. 2013</i>	7.1	57.1	35.7	14

E.4 Overall polarization of EU-related objects in Irish newspapers, for non-domestic objects

Object Evaluated	Position of evaluative claim-making (-1 to +1)	Share in Evaluative claim-making (%)	N
EMU	-0.38	42.6	55
Agriculture Policy	-0.47	11.6	15
Treaties/Treaty-making	-0.67	9.3	12
Single Market	-0.83	9.3	12
Security	-0.25	6.2	8
Functioning of EU Institutions	-0.71	5.4	7
Budget	-0.33	4.7	6
EU Membership	0.00	3.1	4
Trade	-0.50	3.1	4
EU/European Integration	-0.33	2.3	3
Eurozone Membership	-0.33	2.3	3

* Includes only objects with ≥ 3 evaluations each.

Appendix F Objective Knowledge

F.1 Objective Knowledge of the EU by percent of respondents (%), EU Average and Ireland compared

	European Union			Ireland		
	Good	Average	Bad	Good	Average	Bad
<i>Spring 2011</i>	36.3	55.1	8.7	42.5	46.4	11.1
<i>Fall 2011</i>	54.5	32.7	12.8	57.4	27.9	14.7
<i>Spring 2012</i>	35.9	55.4	8.8	46.4	44.2	9.4
<i>Fall 2012</i>	36.1	55.7	8.2	38.6	51.2	10.2
<i>Spring 2013</i>	36.9	55.2	8.0	35.5	54.2	10.3
<i>Fall 2013</i>	35.4	56.3	8.3	31.2	55.7	13.1

Source: Standard Eurobarometer

F.2 Average media consumption by objective EU Knowledge, One-way ANOVA

Objective Knowledge	Level of Media Consumption							
	Written Press		Radio		Internet		Social Media	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Poor</i>	2.54	1.10	2.82	1.18	3.49	0.85	1.85	1.22
<i>Average</i>	2.90	1.02	3.12	1.05	3.59	0.75	2.05	1.25
<i>Good</i>	3.13	0.94	3.29	0.97	3.64	0.71	2.05	1.24
<i>p-value</i>	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 76.3

Note: Level of media consumption is based on the following question: Could you tell me to what extent you...? / Read the written press / Listen to the radio / Use the Internet / Use online social networks.

Responses are coded as: 3 = almost every day, 2 = 1-3 times a week, 1 = rarely, 0 = never

Appendix G Interview Guide

These questions provide a guide but were adjusted to the context of the interview.

1. Can you tell me a bit about what you do in [name of group or organization]?
(*Prompts: How long have you been a member? What drew you to become a member? Which issues that [name of group or organization] deals with interest you the most? What have been the biggest topics or issues discussed within [name of group or organization] recently? Does the European Union ever come up in [name of group or organization]'s work? How often do members of [name of group or organization] meet? What is the purpose of these meetings?)*)
2. What types of public activities or campaigns does [name of group or organization] organize?
(*Prompts: Can you give examples? How do you publicize/advertise these? Who is your target audience for these activities? How many people, on average, participate?)*)
3. What campaigns or projects has [name of group or organization] spearheaded or participated in in the past year?
(*Prompts: Were any slogans associated with any of campaigns or projects during the last year? Have any of these campaigns or projects been specifically relating to or targeting the EU or an EU institution? If not, have any of them referenced the EU in any way?)*)
4. Have any of [name of group or organization]'s recent activities been related to the financial crisis, either generally or in relation to the IMF and EU bailouts or the referendum on the European fiscal compact?
(*Prompts: Who or what was the audience of this activity? In your opinion what actors are responsible for the financial crisis? Who should be responsible for finding a solution?)*)
5. Does your organization ever open up public forums whether in person, online etc. intended to expose the public to certain issues or to educate the public?
(*Prompts: Please describe these? How often does this occur? What are the participation rates? Have there been any related to the economy or the financial crisis? Have any been related to the European Union?)*)
6. Are you aware of any other groups that have campaigned or acted on issues related the European Union?
(*Prompts: What are the names/Do you know the names of these groups? Is this group's/are these groups' activities widely known or visible? What kinds of activities do they engage in?)*)
7. Do you follow events in the news?
(*Prompts: What are your prime sources of news? To what extent do you think your social and political interests are affected by your media exposure?)*)

Appendix H Irish Media and Citizen Arena Compared by Politicization Dimension

H.1 Salience and Scope

	Media		Citizens	
Salience:	<i>EU- / Irish gov.-related articles (no.)</i>		<i>EU-related Contributions (%)</i>	
<i>Fall/Winter 2010</i>	127 / 83		31.1	
<i>Fall/Winter 2013</i>	67 / 54		48.3	
Scope:	<i>%</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Topic</i>
<i>Fall/Winter 2010</i>	79.5	Irish debt crisis	41.5	Irish debt crisis
	5.5	Domestic Politics, Ireland	28.3	Domestic Politics, Ireland
	4.7	EU External Politics	13.2	EU Internal Politics
	3.9	Euro/Eurozone Crisis	5.7	Domestic, Other EU
	3.1	EU Internal Politics	3.8	EU Membership-Integration
<i>Fall/Winter 2013</i>	27.1	Irish debt crisis	22.6	EU Internal Politics
	24.3	Euro/Eurozone Crisis	19.4	EU Constitutional-Institutional
	14.3	Domestic Politics, Ireland	12.9	Domestic Politics, Ireland
	10.0	EU Internal Politics	12.9	EU Membership-Integration
	10.0	EU External Politics	8.1	Irish Debt Crisis

H.2 Contestation

Political Claims	Media		Citizens	
	%	Topic	%	Topic
<i>Fall/Winter 2010</i>	56.1	Domestic Politics, Ireland	33.3	EU Internal Politics
	27.6	EU Internal Politics	33.3	Irish Debt Crisis
	6.1	EU Constitutional- Institutional	16.7	Domestic Politics, Ireland
	5.1	Domestic Politics, EU Other	8.3	EU Membership-Integration
	4.1	EU Membership-Integration	4.2	EU Constitutional- Institutional
<i>Fall/Winter 2013</i>	46.8	EU Internal Politics	29.5	EU Internal Politics
	31.9	Domestic Politics, Ireland	20.5	EU Constitutional-Institutional
	8.5	Domestic Politics, EU Other	15.9	EU Membership-Integration
	6.4	EU Constitutional-Institutional	6.8	EMU
	4.3	EU External Politics	6.8	Euro/Eurozone Crisis
	2.1	EU Membership-Integration	6.8	Irish Debt Crisis
Polarization, Overall	%	Type of Claim	%	Type of Claim
<i>Fall/Winter 2010</i>	40.8	Negative Evaluation	36.4	Negative Evaluation
	40.4	Positive Evaluation	33.3	Positive Evaluation
	19.4	Neutral	30.3	Ambivalent
<i>Fall/Winter 2013</i>	44.7	Negative Evaluation	51.2	Negative Evaluation
	42.6	Positive Evaluation	12.2	Positive Evaluation
	12.8	Neutral	36.6	Ambivalent
Polarization by Topic		Topic		Topic
<i>Fall/Winter 2010</i>	0.00	EU internal Politics	0.50	EU internal politics
	-0.47	Domestic Politics, Ireland	0.00	Domestic Politics, Ireland
	-0.60	EU Constitutional-Institutional	1.0	EU Constitutional-Institutional
	-1.00	EU External Politics	-	-
	-1.00	EU Membership-Integration	-1.00	EU Membership-Integration
	1.00	Domestic Politics, EU Other	-	-
<i>Fall/Winter 2013</i>	-0.38	EU Internal Politics	0.33	EU Internal Politics
	-0.56	Domestic Politics, Ireland	-0.40	Domestic Politics, Ireland
	1.00	EU Constitutional-Institutional	-1.00	EU Constitutional-Institutional
	1.00	Domestic Politics, EU Other	-	-
	-		-1.00	EU Membership-Integration

Appendix I Longitudinal distribution of data collection

2010	
Eurobarometer fieldwork 7-23 May	Media Analysis 14-20 May
Eurobarometer fieldwork 11-25 November	Media Analysis 18-24 November
	Focus Group in Dublin December
2011	
Eurobarometer fieldwork 9-22 May	Media Analysis 10-16 May
Eurobarometer fieldwork 5-18 November	Media 8-14 November
2012	
Eurobarometer fieldwork 12-25 May	Media Analysis 16-22 May
Eurobarometer fieldwork 3-18 November	Media 8-14 November
2013	
Eurobarometer fieldwork 11-26 May	Media Analysis 15-21 May
Fieldwork in Ireland August 27- October 1	
Eurobarometer fieldwork 3-17 November	Media Analysis 6-12 November
	Focus Groups in Dublin December
2014	

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