CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Who do national parliaments scrutinising EU decision-making actually speak to? Can they still credibly claim to be representing national citizens only? Or do they represent a collective of national constituencies? Or is the only meaningful constituency some kind of aggregate EU one? (Crum and Fossum 2012, p. 100f.)

1.1 Purpose of the Book

National parliaments continue to be the central representative institutions in European democracies. These age-old institutions have increasingly come under pressure, however, in the European Union (EU) multi-level system of governance. While member states have become deeply interdependent economically and politically, processes of political alignment and collective will-formation remain anchored at the national level (Crum 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2009). We observe an increased politicization of EU issues (e.g., de Wilde et al. 2016a; Hutter et al. 2016), yet this does (so far) not correspond to a transnational reconfiguration of mass politics: “To the extent that European issues raise political conflict, they tend to divide European citizens along national borders, not across them” (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016, p. 49).

Pooled sovereignty, shared decision-making, and a highly integrated Single Market are a European reality, but so are the rise of (right-wing)
Euroscepticism, nationalism, and the United Kingdom’s (UK) exit from the EU (e.g., de Vries 2018; Leruth et al. 2017). Trust in domestic and EU political institutions is declining (e.g., Armingeon and Ceka 2014; Armingeon and Guthmann 2014). The much discussed democratic disconnect of the EU system of governance is ever so present (e.g., Cramme and Hobolt 2015; Piattoni 2010; Schmidt 2013). On the one hand, national parliaments have transferred decision-making power to the EU level, which has reduced their capacity to shape national public policy independently (Bardi et al. 2014). On the other hand, their decisions may have far-reaching consequences on the fate and fortune of citizens in other member states as we have seen during the Eurozone crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, for example.

This situation challenges existing theories and actual practices of national parliamentary representation in Europe. Essentially, it questions the very adequacy of the so-called ‘standard account’ of democratic parliamentary representation based on territory and elections (Castiglione and Warren 2006; Kröger and Friedrich 2012a). This standard view is exclusively rooted in a formal representative relationship between national voters and their national representatives. National members of parliament (MPs) are formally authorized by and accountable to an electorate defined by the territory of the nation-state (Pollak et al. 2009; Urbinati and Warren 2008).

When national representatives become co-responsible within the EU system of governance, it is harder for them to respond exclusively to their national constituencies. The constituencies that political actors are potentially responsible for may well be different from those they are formally responsive to (Mair 2005, 2006, 2009). Put differently, a national parliamentary decision may not only affect the authorizing constituency that is the citizenry defined by the territory of a nation-state (Montanaro 2018; Zürn and Walter-Drop 2011). Effects of policy decisions have increasingly become out of sync with formal democratic authorization and accountability mechanisms. “Decisions made by representatives of nation-states now carry consequences for people in other nation-states, even though they have no say in who is representing them” (de Wilde 2012, p. 118).

Against this background, it is far from straightforward that national MPs only represent a unitary national interest in EU governance. Hence, this book asks:
Whom and how do national MPs represent in EU politics and why do they do so?

There have been repeated calls by representation scholars to move beyond the ‘beaten paths’ of the standard account on national parliamentary representation in the EU (e.g., Crum and Fossum 2012; Piattoni 2013). In recent years, EU scholars have also been focusing on the role of national parliaments in the EU (Auel 2019), yet we still know surprisingly little about (new) patterns of representation within EU national parliaments theoretically, empirically, and normatively.

Therefore, this book seeks to fill these gaps in the literature by following three distinct aims: a theoretical, an empirical, and a normative one.

The first goal is theoretical. So far, scholars have approached national parliamentary representation in the EU from two angles: Representation theorists have taken the increasing interconnectedness to move beyond formal chains of authorization and accountability (Innerarity 2018; Piattoni 2010). To a greater or lesser extent, these authors advocate the decoupling of the act of representation from its electoral connection. The second group of scholars focuses on the fact that, despite the trans- and supranationalization within the EU, national parliaments remain the strongest sites of democratic representation that we have. In turn, they advocate a strong involvement of national parliaments in EU affairs to ensure, among other things, accountability of EU politics toward national electorates (Auel et al. 2016; Rauh and de Wilde 2018; Winzen et al. 2018). What we are still lacking to this point, however, is a combination of the two—a comprehensive theoretical re-conceptualization of what representation of national parliaments looks like in the EU multi-level system of governance.

This book contributes to filling this theoretical gap by providing an original and thought-provoking argument that rejects the idea of national MPs having but one ‘standard’ mode of representation. In theorizing alternative patterns of representation, this study explicitly starts from the ‘standard’ approach to national parliamentary representation in the EU (Strom 2000, 2003). Thereby, it acknowledges the importance of the national electoral connection, but at the same time updates the formal model of delegation and accountability to include externalities within the EU multi-level system. The key assumption is the following: whom and how re-election- and policy-seeking MPs choose to represent is, on the
one hand, driven by their (party-political) positions and individual experiences, and, on the other hand, by their national electorates. In other words, an MP’s choice of representation in EU politics is both agent- and principal-driven. Besides MPs themselves, it may in fact be their national voters who realize and demand the need for a broader representative portfolio that includes other EU citizens.

In its theoretical framework, the study couples this rational neo-institutional approach to representative role (orientations) with a constructivist understanding on representation as dynamic claims-making (Saward 2006, 2010). Against the background of a transnationalization and diversification of politics and societies (Kröger and Friedrich 2012a), it identifies two potentially competing pressures on national MPs and citizens in the EU: interdependencies across national borders and politicization along national lines. Further, it argues that in order to navigate simultaneously being co-responsible within the EU and responsive to their national electorates’ concerns, MPs can assume four ideal-type representative patterns along a focus (whom?) and style (how?) dimension of representation (Wahlke et al. 1962) in EU politics: The National Republican, the National Pluralist, the European(-ized) Republican and the European(-ized) Pluralist. Their representative focus can be either national or European(-ized). Their representative style can be either Republican (unitary public interest representation) or Pluralist (particular interest representation).

In doing so, this study remains connected to the ‘standard account’ of national parliamentary representation, while at the same time effectively challenging its exclusive focus on the national representative connection in EU politics. We can in fact not readily assume national parliamentarians to remain within their traditional national mode of representation given the externalities they create within the wider EU system. Put differently: Does Dieter Grimm’s assertion still hold today that “national politicians orient themselves (…) to their national publics, because effective sanctions can come only from them” (Grimm 1995, p. 296)? Or is there a Europeanized representative dimension after all?

The second aim is empirical. Looking at the empirical literature in comparative politics and Europeanization research, we know much about how European integration has influenced national institutional arrangements, political processes, and policies (Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Poguntke et al. 2007; Radaelli and Exadaktylos 2010). This includes literature on the institutional and behavioral adaption by national parliaments
It is very surprising, however, that we have not yet seen any empirical research into a possible Europeanization of national parliamentary representation itself. While research on MPs’ representative roles in the domestic context has provided many insights into whom and how parliamentarians represent in national contexts (e.g., Blomgren and Rozenberg 2012a; Önnudóttir 2014, 2016), the questions remain fundamentally unanswered for national MPs whose parliament is embedded in the EU multi-level system.

The study contributes to closing this empirical gap by investigating both what national representatives say (the roles they play in parliament) in EU politics and what they think (their self-perception as representatives in the EU context). The two dependent variables, focus of representation (whom?) and style of representation (how?), are analyzed at both the level of speech behavior and attitudes. This study does so within a sophisticated multi-method research design that combines different methods of data collection and analysis for both behavioral and attitudinal patterns of representation.

To provide findings that can, on the one hand, be generalized beyond the specific country cases under study, while, on the other hand, recognizing case-specific differences, this study focuses on four EU member states (at the time of investigation): Austria (Nationalrat), Germany (Bundestag), Ireland (Dáil), and the United Kingdom (House of Commons). Based on these diverse and unique data, the study provides a thorough investigation and comprehensive explanation of whom and how national MPs represent in European Union politics. It is able to uncover both general patterns and case-specific causal mechanisms.

National MPs’ representative speech behavior is analyzed via a Representative Claims Analysis (RCA) (de Wilde 2013; de Wilde et al. 2014) of parliamentary plenary debates on EU Treaty reforms and the Eurozone crisis. This allows for a systematic quantitative coding of the two dependent variables. Adopting a representative claims-making approach for systematic empirical analysis of parliamentary debates has proven to be useful (e.g., de Wilde et al. 2016b; de Wilde 2020; Erzeel 2012; Kinski 2018; Kinski and Crum 2020; for evaluative claims in national parliamentary debates in EU politics, see Wendler 2016). This content analysis data is subjected to descriptive and multivariate regression analyses to uncover the factors that help explain role choice in parliamentary speech.

The representative attitudes are investigated via 66 semi-structured guided interviews with national MPs from the four parliaments’ European
Affairs Committees (EACs), Budget and Finance Committees (FC). This generates qualitative data that allows for a more fine-grained typology of MPs and an in-depth tracing of causal mechanisms behind representative patterns. It also indicates to what extent the representative behavior we see on the parliamentary floor translates into deeper self-perceptions and representative role conceptions of MPs.

In sum, this study’s empirical contribution does not only map and describe representative patterns by national MPs in EU politics, but—most importantly—seeks to explain them.

The third goal is normative. Even if the primary aims of this study are to theoretically conceptualize and empirically analyze representative patterns by national MPs in EU affairs, it nonetheless engages actively with the wider normative debate on the reconfiguration of national parliamentary democracy in the EU (Bellamy and Kröger 2015; Bellamy and Castiglione 2013). We discuss which patterns national MPs should follow from different democratic perspectives and what normative implications this has for representative democracy in the EU and international politics more broadly. This refers to the democratic quality of such patterns of representation and the design of representative institutions.

Essentially, the book substantiates three reasons why we can consider these patterns normatively desirable: First, it makes the theoretical claim that not only MPs themselves start broadening their representative portfolio. Their voters may also demand alternative modes of representation. Second, empirically the national electoral relationship remains intact, classic national interest representation still plays a major role in what MPs say and think. Third, this study stresses the importance of justification in the process of representation. MPs reconcile pluralist and republican styles of representation and combine a national with a European focus of representation. This may in turn create new representative links that can foster the democratic legitimacy of the EU political system beyond formal institutional chains of representation.

Overall, this study, then, offers a distinct theoretical, empirical, and normative contribution to both comparative politics and European Union research. It re-conceptualizes national parliamentary representation to fit the realities of a multi-level EU (and any interconnected international setting really). It empirically investigates and explains so far under-researched practices of representation within EU national parliaments uncovering a diverse range of real-existing alternative forms. Ultimately, it contributes to the normative discussion of the democratic legitimacy
of such national parliamentary representation in the EU. To embed this study’s main research questions more firmly in existing research on national parliamentary representation in the EU, the next section briefly reviews the state of research that this study speaks to.

1.2 State of Research

The Lisbon Treaty holds that “the functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy” (Art. 10 (1) Treaty on European Union (TEU), emphasis added). This representative democracy is based on two channels of representation (Kröger and Friedrich 2013a): citizens “directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament” (direct supranational channel) and member states “represented in the European Council by their Heads of State or Government (…), themselves democratically accountable to their national Parliaments, or their citizens” (indirect intergovernmental channel) (Art. 10 (2) TEU). Further, national parliaments contribute “actively to the good functioning of the Union” (Art. 12 TEU, emphasis added). Scholars have looked at this ‘active’ contribution to making representative democracy work in the EU from many angles. Yet, they have done so predominately based on the ‘standard account’ of national parliamentary representation in EU politics.

National parliaments have increasingly delegated legislative competencies to the EU level, authorized their national governments to act at the EU level on their behalf and negotiate to their benefit. To ensure democratic accountability, they have expanded their rights to scrutinize EU legislation and control their governments’ actions at the EU level (e.g., Karlas 2012; Winzen 2012, 2013). These formal rights are also used more and more often (e.g., Auel et al. 2015a, b). In this logic, the role of national parliaments is to ensure that their governments channel grievances of their national citizens into the EU system. Within this intergovernmental chain of representation, the main points of reference are national interest representation as well as member state sovereignty (Kröger and Friedrich 2013a).

The intergovernmental chain of representation has, however, become perforated not only by qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council of the EU, but also by co-decision with the European Parliament (EP) becoming the ‘Ordinary Legislative Procedure’ (Art. 289 & 294 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)), i.e., the ‘default option’ in EU decision-making (Kröger and Friedrich 2013a). The direct
supranational chain of representation via the EP on the other side makes European citizens the subject of democratic rule, yet this channel alone cannot ensure democratic representation in the EU, either (Kröger and Friedrich 2013a; Reif and Schmitt 1980; Schmitt and Toygür 2016). To try and remedy these deficits in the existing channels of representation, the Treaty of Lisbon (LT) grants national parliaments a direct role at the EU level both individually and collectively (Auel and Neuhold 2017).

All these formal mechanisms conceive of national parliaments as representing their national citizens within the traditional national chain of authorization and accountability. Contemporary representation scholars, however, have started to reconsider this narrow notion of representation solely based on the electoral connection in general (e.g., Esaiasson and Narud 2013; Mansbridge 2003; Saward 2010) and with regard to the EU multi-level system of governance in particular (e.g., Piattoni 2013). Since this ‘representative turn’ in EU studies (among many others, e.g., Bellamy and Castiglione 2011; Crum and Fossum 2012; Kröger and Friedrich 2012b, 2013b), research has become more concerned with the precise workings of the relationship between representatives and represented. Scholars do not only investigate representation at the EU systems level (e.g., Lord and Pollak 2010), but as a dyadic and dynamic relationship between those who represent and those who are represented (e.g., de Wilde 2010).

While formal representative institutions still matter, EU scholars now also focus on the ongoing representative relationship beyond Election Day (e.g., Lord 2013; see also contributions in Bellamy and Kröger 2015). They shift their attention more toward symbolic representation or ‘standing for’ as a prerequisite for substantive representation as ‘acting for’ (Pitkin 1967). These endeavors call for going beyond the institutional aspects of a formal concept of representation as “X authorizing Y (with regard to Z), and, at the same time, X being accountable to Y (with regard to Z)” (Bellamy and Castiglione 2011, p. 120).

These shifts in EU studies are much in line with the broader ‘constructivist turn’ in representation research (for a critical assessment and important differences between the ‘representative’ and ‘constructivist turn,’ see Disch 2015). In this view, representation broadly defined as “the making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in fact” (Pitkin 1967, p. 8f., emphasis in original) is not a static fact, but a performative process in which the represented are continuously constructed and ‘made present’ by the representatives.
(Saward 2006, 2008, 2010, 2014). Given these broad developments, the
time seems ripe to tackle the question of “Who represents whom and how
in European governance” (Bellamy and Castiglione 2011, p. 101). This
means that we need to move beyond formal models of representation that
are ultimately “insufficient to legitimate the EU” and to “the rescue of
the full notion of political and democratic representation” (Piattoni 2013,
p. 224).

Therefore, this study proposes to broaden our research agenda to
look beyond and beneath these formal mechanisms of representation of
national parliaments in EU politics at the macro-level. These mechanisms
stay within the ‘standard account’ of representation in that they are
either designed in a logic of compensation for transferred legislative
competencies or in a logic of protection in terms of ‘gate-keeping’ Euro-
pean integration (Raunio 2011) and guarding national competencies
with ‘yellow’ and ‘orange cards’ within the Early Warning Mechanism
(EWM). Within this standard notion, there seems to be broad consensus
that one of the main purposes of Europeanization of domestic democratic
institutions is to regain “the capacity of parties and hence parliaments
adequately to represent their populations” (Bellamy and Kröger 2014,
p. 443, emphasis added).

Instead, in this study, we take a step back and turn to the micro-level,
namely to individual national MPs. We investigate their representative
behavior and conceptions in EU affairs, because they are the ones
breathing life into the institution of parliament (Wessels and Katz 1999,
p. 11). Put differently, if existing formal mechanisms of representation
in the EU fail to generate democratic legitimacy, because they “collide”
rather than “cohere into a defensible system of representation” (Lord
and Pollak 2010, p. 126), we need to analyze the actors and processes
behind these mechanisms. Do national MPs exclusively follow the ‘stan-
dard account,’ when dealing with EU affairs or do they broaden their
representative portfolio, thereby opening up new trajectories and avenues
for democratic representation in the EU?

However, so far there has not been any research into a possible Euro-
peanization of representative patterns by national MPs. In short, we need
to move from studying the Europeanization of national representative
institutions to the question of a Europeanization of (national parliamen-
tary) representation itself. This asks us to do nothing less than altogether
rethink the way we see national parliamentary representation in the
European Union.
1.3 The Representative Puzzle

This study examines national parliamentary representation in the EU. It does so by theoretically conceptualizing, empirically investigating, and explaining patterns of representation by national parliamentarians in EU politics. It defines patterns of representation as both behavioral (representative roles) and conceptual patterns (representative role orientations) (Eulau and Karps 1977; Wahlke et al. 1962). Therefore, representative patterns comprise representative roles MPs play (strategically) in parliament, and representative role orientations they hold as representative self-conceptions in EU politics. These are two sides of the same coin.

These patterns contain two elements: (1) focus of representation and (2) style of representation. Thus, this study seeks to answer the two classic puzzles in representation research (Eulau et al. 1959; Pitkin 1967) for the EU context:

**Whom (focus of representation) and how (style of representation) do national MPs represent in EU politics and why do they do so?**

The *focus of representation* relates to the geographic boundaries of the political community national legislators represent when dealing with EU affairs. The underlying questions are: What is the *territorial scope* of the relevant democratic constituency MPs speak for? Do these national MPs represent national citizens only or do they Europeanize their representative portfolios and include citizens from other EU member states or an overall European citizenry? Under which conditions do they become such *European(-ized) representatives* who insert grievances of citizens across Europe into the domestic political decision-making process on EU issues?

The *style of representation* relates to the questions of how legislators make decisions in representative democracies and how the representative relationship works (Bellamy and Castiglione 2011, p. 120). The discussion usually revolves around the infamous ‘mandate-independence controversy’ (Pitkin 1967, pp. 144–167). Does the representative act independently of her constituents in pursuit of what she considers in their collective welfare (the Burkian *trustee*)? Or is she not rather a *delegate* mandated by principals such as her constituency or her political party (Converse and Pierce 1979)?
This study goes beyond this “wrongly put” controversy (Pitkin 1967, p. 165). It rather looks at the universality of MPs’ interest representation. Are these interests “attached to a certain group of people” or “unattached” (Pitkin 1967, p. 156)? That is do MPs promote the ‘common good’ (Republicans) or do they speak for particular interests (Pluralists)? By zooming in on this dimension of the style of representation, we can uncover the aim of MPs’ interest representation in EU politics (Rehfeld 2009, 2016).

Accordingly, the main research questions are summarized below:

1. **RQ1: Focus of Representation: Whom do national MPs represent in EU affairs?**
   
   RQ1.1: Do national MPs have a national or European(-ized) focus of representation?
   
   RQ1.2: How can potential differences in the focus of representation be explained and what are the factors that explain a national or European(-ized) focus of representation?

2. **RQ2: Style of Representation: How do national MPs represent in EU affairs?**

   RQ2.1: Do national MPs have a republican or pluralist style of representation (public vs. particular interest representation)?

   RQ2.2: How can potential differences in the style of representation be explained and what are the factors that explain a republican or pluralist style of representation?

1.4 **Outline of the Book**

The second chapter of this book spells out the theoretical framework to analyze national parliamentary representation in the EU. It starts from the ‘standard account’ of representation and updates it to fit the EU context. Building on existing literature on national parliaments’ responses to European integration and extant research on representatives’ roles in domestic and supranational contexts, it deduces national MPs’ four patterns of representation in EU politics. Chapter 3 then describes the study’s comparative perspective. It discusses how the empirical material was selected, collected, and analyzed. The book then contains three
empirical chapters. The first describes whom and how national MPs represent in EU politics and maps the representative patterns we observe (Chapter 4). The two subsequent chapters then explain MPs’ representative behavior (Chapter 5) and representative conceptions (Chapter 6). The concluding Chapter 7 summarizes the main theoretical and empirical findings of the study. We discuss how we can apply the theoretical model developed for the EU context to the broader challenge of squaring classic nation-based political representation with the internationalized reality of modern politics. The question will also be to what extent we can transfer the empirical instances of trans- and supranational representation in the EU context to other, globalized contexts and interdependent settings. It also relates the findings back to the normative questions of this study. That is it assesses the democratic quality of the uncovered patterns of representation as well as their potentials and perils for sustaining the democratic legitimacy of the European Union. We highlight the broader normative and political implications these patterns have for responsibility and responsiveness of representatives acting in multi-level settings with multiple principals.

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