This study examined whom and how members of national parliaments (MPs) represent in European Union politics. The collected evidence suggests that national MPs do not only adapt their parliamentary activities, but their entire representative portfolio to the multi-level realities in the EU. We do not only witness a Europeanization of parliamentary procedures, but ultimately of parliamentary representation itself. Thereby, the study generates theoretical, empirical, and normative insights that are of considerable value for EU studies and international relations literature as well as comparative legislative and party research.

The concluding chapter discusses these insights and their implications in three distinct ways: First, it elaborates on how the theoretical model developed in this study advances the wider theoretical debate on cross-border representation in an interdependent world (Sect. 7.1). Second, on the basis of the main empirical findings, Sect. 7.2 makes the case for the Europeanization of parliaments rather than (or alongside) the parliamentarization of Europe (Koenig-Archibugi 2019). It ties this proposal to the theoretical discussions of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism in EU politics and global governance. Finally, Sect. 7.3 weighs in on how transnational representation in national parliaments may foster transnational democracy.

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Overall, the concluding chapter assesses the democratic quality of the observed patterns of representation. This includes a critical assessment of their potentials and perils for sustaining the democratic legitimacy of the European Union, but also international politics and global governance more broadly. It thereby re-connects the analysis to the democratic properties of the EU as a system of collective representative institutions that operate on the basis of liberal democracy. The EU may be a ‘most likely’ case for cross-border representation within national institutions because it provides a unique institutional framework for the ‘all-affected’ and ‘all-subjected principle’ to coincide (Fraser 2008, pp. 64–65). Nonetheless, these patterns of political representation beyond borders may to some degree extend to other transnational structures governing the global economy, climate and environmental regulations, migration policy, or public health, for instance.

7.1 Cross-Border Representation in an Interdependent World

National parliaments remain the central representative institutions in modern parliamentary democracies in Europe and beyond. Citizens’ identification and processes of collective will-formation are still rooted in the national context. At the same time, this so-called ‘standard account’ of representation based on territorially elected agents of a nationally defined political community has become inadequate to describe the reality of an interconnected European Union in a globalized world. This interdependence of politics and societies leads to a mismatch between boundaries of (EU member) states and the effects their decisions have on other citizens (in the EU), i.e., a mismatch between the authorizing and affected constituencies (Montanaro 2018). In such an environment, we need to look beyond representation as a principal–agent relationship based on formal channels of delegation and accountability.

This study advances theoretical scholarship on the European Union and international politics in that it updated the ‘standard account’ of representation to these interdependent realities. Combining rational-choice with constructivist approaches to representation, we can conceptualize what happens inside of national parliamentary representation (in EU politics) rather than just its outward institutional manifestations. This individual actor-centered approach allowed spotlighting alternative modes of representation within formal chains of delegation and accountability.
that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. This has consequences for the way we view political representation in interconnected settings. Given the importance of national institutions and political processes for democratic self-determination, we need to acknowledge that national representatives remain nationally elected and are first and foremost responsive to their national electorates. At the same time, there are affected interests beyond borders and, acting within formal chains of representation, national representatives may include these interests into the domestic political process. They thereby become ‘surrogate representatives’ (Mansbridge 2003) of non-national citizens without having to forgo their national representative linkage.

This new theoretical approach (see Chapter 2) opens our eyes to diverse patterns of representation that already exist within national institutions, but that the ‘standard account’ of representation would consider irrelevant or impossible. It would have us believe that MPs are either irrational or insincere when representing any other interests than the ones they depend on for re-election. This study has shown, however, that this is too simplistic of a view. Rather, national parliamentary representation in the EU is not an inevitable zero-sum game, in which MPs pit national interests against each other in “the mindset that for some to win others must lose” (Juncker 2017).

This leaves us with the following theoretical innovations for the study of political representation in the EU and international politics more broadly: Responsiveness to national constituencies and responsibility for other EU citizens are not mutually exclusive per se. In this more optimistic view than the one Peter Mair originally formulated (2006, 2013), responsibility can be both agent- and principal-driven (see Sect. 2.3). Both national representatives and national constituencies can see the need for taking into account the consequences a decision has on other than national citizens. Where problems and solutions transcend national borders, MPs may no longer answer the question of who is in- and excluded in the processes of political decision-making by reference to a national citizenry alone. Instead, they may transcend the national boundaries to include other affected EU citizens in the coming about of that decision.

This insight on the reconcilability of responsiveness and responsibility advances research on parliaments and representational politics because it suggests a new avenue to close the representational void in modern democracies: Voters may feel sympathies for the fates and fortunes of other EU citizens and prefer their representatives to represent them, too.
MPs who are accountable to such voters do not so much face an inevitable trade-off between responsibility and responsiveness. Being responsible and representing those other EU citizens is precisely what makes them responsive to their national voters. To uncover the factors that foster such Europeanization, the agent-driven mechanism induces us to look at the kind of MPs and the institutional context they operate in. The principal-driven mechanism has us ask about the kind of party and voter that favor such representation. Future comparative public opinion surveys could investigate more systematically this demand side of representative roles (e.g., Werner 2019a, b; also Dassonneville et al. 2020). This would help us understand in how far voters are really an impediment to cross-border representation.

The final theoretical innovation concerns the style of representation (see Sect. 2.3). In modern national democracies, representation is democratic because of a delicate balance between pluralist and republican elements of democracy. This balance is enshrined in the constitutional protection of rights, liberties, and the rule of law on the one hand, and through elections that ensure political equality on the other hand. In the EU, this pluralist-republican balance is much more volatile. Pluralist and liberal democratic elements are strong, while the republican, structural dimension is underdeveloped (Bellamy and Castiglione 2013; Scharpf 2009). The diversification of (unelected) representative actors at both the national and the EU level, leaves two choices for national MPs and their style of representation in EU politics: Either, they join the competitive game and represent particular groups, when making their decisions in EU politics. Or they may represent the wider public interest from the privileged position of being electorally legitimized representatives. This study makes the more general point that especially in transnational governance settings, political actors’ and voters’ conceptions of democracy and the common good may be more important than the question how strongly the former are bound by instructions of the latter. Hence, this study suggests that scholars should leave behind the mandate-independence controversy for good and turn to legislators’ pluralist and republican conceptions of democracy instead.

Overall, with these theoretical insights, the study sharpens our theoretical lens for the diversity of representative patterns within national institutions that may already accommodate transnational politics better than the theoretical toolkit on representation from the age of nation-states has us see. This also allows for a fresh perspective on the role
national parliaments play beyond their formal place in EU politics and global governance.

7.2 The Virtue of Europeanized Parliaments

The empirical evidence on national MPs’ representative behavior and conceptions in EU politics compiled in this study suggests that, rather than an “immutable constraint” (Koenig-Archibugi 2019, p. 16) national parliaments are in fact vital building blocks of European representation, be it of foreign EU nationals or an overarching EU citizenry. The specific empirical findings (Chapters 4–6) warrant some broader conclusions.

National MPs stay true to their national representative link. The majority of claims to representation is national-republican. This is important because, after all, the formal national chain of delegation and accountability remains vital to legitimize EU governance. At the same time, MPs go well beyond this standard national representation (as demonstrated in Chapter 4). They insert grievances of other EU citizens into the domestic decision-making process on EU politics. In the majority of these representative claims beyond national borders, they even exclusively speak about European concerns. Ultimately, they are both national and European representatives. In their speeches, MPs do not simply take a national or European side. They simultaneously recognize multiple interests and thereby actively reconcile them with one another. MPs are Republicans rather than Pluralists, when they speak publicly about EU affairs. They stage themselves not as representatives of specific group interests, but as guardians of a greater public good. In promoting the general welfare of the political community, they play out their ‘legitimacy advantage’ as elected actors. This is great news for scholars working on representation within the EU as national MPs seem to produce coherent rather than colliding claims to representation and thereby potentially raise the overall quality of representation in the EU (Lord and Pollak 2010).

If we agree that such European patterns of representation in national parliaments are desirable (see also Sect. 7.3), the question is how we can foster them. The empirical analysis has shown that left-wing parties play a key role (see Sect. 5.4). When we look at who it is among ‘the left’ that drives this Europeanization and what kind of left–right placement we are talking about, we observe two things. First, a cosmopolitan party stance drives Europeanization more than a left position on economic redistribution. The underlying question here is ‘who belongs to the
political community?’ rather than ‘who wins and who loses within a political community?’ Second, especially MPs from Eurosceptic far-left parties insert the grievances of other EU citizens into domestic parliamentary debate. These findings second recent research on the emergence of a distinct cosmopolitan—communitarian cleavage (e.g., de Wilde et al. 2016b). The results signal that MPs base their representative behavior on the fundamental question of the boundaries of the political community in a global world.

Therefore, this study uncovers traces of a Eurosceptic Europeanization from the left that has interesting implications for our view of soft (left-wing) Euroscepticism (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008): A Europhile consensus in parliament carried by mainstream parties does not automatically lead to Europeanized representation. This insight cautions against the assumption often implicitly made in EU research that pro-EU policy stances are equal to favoring transnational solidarity or representation. Euroskeptics from the left criticize the EU’s neoliberal policies and ensuing social inequalities rather than fundamentally opposing integration as such based on nationalist sentiments like their far-right Eurosceptic colleagues (de Vries and Edwards 2009). The former are more conducive to a European focus of representation in national parliaments than some Europhile center parties.

Political parties seem to provide the structures that determine whether Europeanized representation emerges. They are the venues within which responsiveness and responsibility may be either compatible or fundamentally irreconcilable. Yet, not only party ideology helps us explain Europeanization of representative claims-making (see Sect. 5.4). While experience with European governance structures matters at the individual level, governing responsibility only makes a difference for heads of states and government, but not for members of the governing majority. This confirms that we also need to look at individual characteristics of legislators, when explaining their representative behavior, and that government-opposition dynamics are more complex. For EU politics, there does not simply seem to be “a growing bifurcation in European party systems between parties which claim to represent but don’t govern and those which govern but no longer represent” (Mair 2009, p. 17).

While the low number of country and debate cases does not permit us to draw definite conclusions on which factors at the systems’ level precisely explain the observed patterns, they offer some insights on the larger dynamics of interdependence and politicization in the EU. First,
it is not the case that representation during the temporally more distant treaty debates (Constitutional Treaty and Lisbon Treaty) is more European(-ized) than representation during the Eurozone crisis debates. It does not seem to be the degree of politicization that matters for Europeanization of representative claims-making, but the kind of politicization we see. EU salience may in fact foster such claims-making across national borders, whereas polarization may hinder it.

Second, while a country’s degree of interdependence within the EU may explain to some extent the differences between the UK as consistently ‘the most national’ and the other three countries, additional factors such as the strength of national parliaments in EU politics or the country’s power position in the EU may also play a role. It seems to be the case that interdependence does not hamper the responsive relationship between MPs and their voters per se, but that it rather intervenes in the relationship (see also Ezrow and Hellwig 2014). To verify this and find out how these patterns travel to other EU member states, research should examine more national parliaments including Eastern and Southern European member states. This would need to include a more careful investigation of how patterns evolve over time and across a wider range of EU day-to-day legislation.

What this study has clearly shown is the particularity of the UK case when it comes to patterns of representation in EU politics (see especially Chapter 6). The findings offer a new, representational perspective on Brexit that nuances the common explanations of nationalist and Eurosceptic attitudes: For British MPs, representation is exclusively based on citizenship and nationality, not on interdependence and externalities. Consequently, their goal is to ‘regain control’ for national, not European citizens.

While the behavioral focus of representation seems to be driven by factors outside of parliamentary speech that make certain types of MPs and parties more prone to Europeanization of representation, the behavioral style of representation rather depends on factors within parliamentary speech (see Sect. 5.5). Hence, for the style of representation, what an MP talks about and how she talks about it matter rather than where she sits or which party she belongs to. Additionally, there seems to be a split along the majoritarian—consensus democracy divide, with the former showing more pluralist, and the latter more republican claims-making. This is a first indication that the electoral (constituency-/majority-based
and parliamentary system (working vs. debating parliaments (in EU politics)) play as much a role for the style of representation in EU politics as do differences in the type of domestic interest group representation (pluralist vs. (neo-)corporatist).

Overall, the patterns of representation we observe when EU politics are debated in national parliaments are by no means invariable and homogeneous. Instead, they are versatile and dynamic. Regarding the conceptual patterns of representation, this study offers an even more nuanced picture (see Chapter 6). National MPs do not only talk about other EU citizens’ concerns, when speaking in public, but we find a deeper Europeanization of representative role orientations as well. It is not just ‘cheap talk,’ but MPs have well thought-out representative foci, which go beyond the national citizenry in a remarkable 44 per cent of our interview partners. MPs are even more Europeanized in their self-perception than they are, when speaking in parliament. On average, purely national representatives do not ignore the EU context, while Europeanized representatives do not cut the national link, either.

These findings have important implications for the kind of conceptual Europeanization we observe: Europeanized representatives do not perceive of their representative choice as an ‘either-or-decision’. In a sense, they embody a new role for national parliaments in EU affairs, one that understands parliaments as national representative institutions that are simultaneously trans- and supranational. Even the MPs with an exclusively national representative focus tend not to be inward-looking, but concern themselves with the EU environment. This set of findings directly speaks to research on the emergence of a European public sphere (Koopmans and Statham 2010) and especially the role of EU citizens within it (Walter 2017). It gives reason for optimism in that even those MPs who exclusively represent domestic constituencies are aware of what happens in other EU member states and at the EU level. Those who also represent other EU nationals or an overarching EU citizenry may even more actively contribute to a European public sphere. They help establish a multi-level representative field (Crum and Fossum 2009) through forging trans- and supranational representation networks that incorporate their national constituencies.

National MPs have made up their minds about whom they (should) represent in an interconnected EU. Their styles of representation signal that they balance pluralist and republican elements, but have a different emphasis in speech behavior as compared to self-conception. While in
their speeches, they are Republicans, they are more likely to be Pluralists, when asked about their role orientation. This does not only indicate that it may be fruitful to look at how public settings shape representation more broadly (see Bächtiger and Steenbergen 2004). It also suggests that national MPs can assume an integrative function in EU democracy by reconciling the interests of the whole and the parts. In EU politics, they mainly see their role as Politicos in “resolving the conflicting claims of the parts, on the basis of their common interest in the welfare of the whole” (Pitkin 1967, p. 217). The question that they truly care about is who constitutes ‘the part’ and ‘the whole,’ i.e., their focus of representation in EU politics.

Overall, behavioral and conceptual representation are inherently connected. To a certain extent, they both relate to rational explanations including re-election motives, party strategic, and institutional factors (see Chapter 5). At the same time, European representation in national parliaments goes deeper than such interest-based explanations. It is connected to constructivist explanations that is a specific understanding of what it means to be an MP—more particularly, to be an MP in a highly interdependent world. As we have seen, MPs’ understanding of what representation and democracy are, of European identity and demos as well as the EU’s future shape their role expectations and ultimately behavior in EU politics (see Chapter 6).

What does all of this mean, then, for national parliaments and representation in the EU? The tempestuous crises challenging the European Union in recent years including the electoral success of nationalist and Eurosceptic forces have shown the limits of both the intergovernmental and supranational models of representation. All too often, we believe there is only this ‘either-or-decision’. In his speech on the State of the Union 2017, then Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has said “We only had two choices. Either come together around a positive European agenda or each retreat to our own corners”. In this view, for representation to work democratically in the EU, it is either reverting back to national sovereignty or strengthening the Community Method.

We know, however, that especially supranational representation may not be desired by many citizens. Eurosceptic tendencies are on the rise and Brexit has been the most prominent, but by far not the only sign of citizens feeling the need to ‘regain control’. The fact that we do find these alternative modes of representation in national parliaments, and
that they are not isolated and erratic, but quite noticeable and systematic, may be a way forward that is precisely not the institutionalization of a European super-state. Instead, it keeps the national anchorage of national representatives and simultaneously opens up the possibility of inserting grievances of other EU citizens and an overall European good into domestic decision-making.

Therefore, this study suggests that national parliaments can play a vital role as a third way between the supranational channel which “seeks to represent the common good of a European people” (Bellamy and Castiglione 2013, p. 206) and the intergovernmental channel which encapsulates “the mutual self-interest of the single member states” (Bellamy and Castiglione 2013, p. 206). This third way is European(-ized) representation within national parliaments, which combines the intergovernmental, trans- and supranational logics in domestic will-formation on EU politics. Its key virtue is that it simultaneously goes beyond national borders and remains within formal national chains of electoral authorization and accountability. Thereby, it may be conducive to “a European ‘demoi-cracy’” based on “shared policies that treat the different demoi with equal concern and respect” (Bellamy and Castiglione 2013, p. 206, emphasis in original). The virtue of European representation in EU national parliaments is that it does not need a cumbersome re-designing of the EU institutional setup. As Juncker (2017) has put it: “When we talk about our own future, experience tells me new Treaties and new institutions are not the answer people are looking for. They are merely a means to an end, nothing more, nothing less”. Instead, to some extent we can rely on the actors within such institutions. Therefore, this study goes beyond existing proposals for a third way, e.g., early proposals on a system of veto rights (Abromeit 1998) or on interparliamentary co-operation (Crum and Fossum 2012), in that it does not call for institutional innovations to insert the interests of those affected in interconnected settings into the domestic decision-making process.

In essence, it suggests a refocusing of theoretical and empirical research: MPs already do define their representative mandate more broadly than we as scholars tend to expect. They do have a multi-layered conception of the relevant political community, possibly consisting of different national demoi and a European demos they feel simultaneously responsible for. Rather than (only) parliamentarizing Europe, i.e., strengthening the supranational channel, the findings of this study suggest Europeanizing parliaments (the intergovernmental channel)
instead (Koenig-Archibugi 2019). Another virtue of such a refocusing for representation research is that the underlying mechanisms of cross-border representation may travel to other international settings as well (see also Sect. 7.3). While this is beyond the scope of this study and ultimately an empirical question, the study has confirmed the theoretical and empirical virtue of the representative claims-making approach (de Wilde 2013; Saward 2006, 2010) to uncover such patterns in the first place. We can extend the analysis to other international and non-state forms of governance. This may include representative patterns in international assemblies such as the United Nations (UN) (e.g., de Wilde et al. 2016b), in international parliamentary institutions (IPIs) in international organizations (IOs) around the globe or among non-state actors that influence transnational policy issues such as Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future movement. Ultimately, empirical representation research can use the modified version of the Representative Claims Analysis introduced in this study for any kind of representative object, not just for detecting cross-border representative patterns. This may include representative relationships in regional assemblies or questions of party-voter dealignment, for example (e.g., Nyhuis et al. 2016).

### 7.3 From Transnational Representation to Transnational Democracy

Now that we have argued that Europeanized parliaments can be an antidote to the EU’s democratic deficit, the fundamental normative question arises whether or not they should be. Should national representatives deviate from their classic role based on formal electoral accountability and expand their representative appeal in the first place? Given that national voters elect them, and other EU citizens do not possess the formal sanctions to decline these self-proclaimed representatives, is European representation desirable from a democratic perspective? How can we ensure this kind of representation to guarantee public control, political equality, and public justification (Lord and Pollak 2013, p. 526)? That is essentially, how do these patterns of representation remain democratic?

The study highlights three reasons why the observed patterns can be considered normatively desirable and democratically legitimate. First, and this relates to public control, national MPs remain exactly this, nationally elected representatives. Their national institutional anchoring and electoral relationship remain intact and there is no need to loosen these chains of
authorization and accountability. This formal context helps render their representative claims legitimate. At the same time, classic national interest representation still plays a major role in what MPs say and think. Many are National Republicans, and the standard account of representation remains vital, yet other forms of representation also gain momentum in response to EU realities. This calls for caution toward the “idea that we can have democracy without boundaries means that the intimate link between democracy and the state can be severed” (Dryzek 1999, p. 44). On the contrary, this study indicates that this national link is vital for democracy without boundaries to be possible (see also Bellamy 2019 on republican intergovernmentalism in the EU).

Second, and this relates to political equality, the patterns are not only agent-, but also principal-driven. Not only MPs themselves start broadening their representative portfolio. This may very well be initiated by the wishes of their voters. Scholars commonly ascribe awareness of responsibilities beyond the nation-state to the political elite rather than the voters. This study has raised attention to the fact that a sense of cross-border responsibility may also be located at the voter-level. Research has in fact found traits of even more far-reaching solidarity among some European citizens (e.g., Kuhn et al. 2018; Risse 2014b). Some may interpose that this mechanism will not apply to the majority of voters and even those that do show cross-border solidarity, for example, discriminate against foreigners (e.g., Kuhn and Kamm 2019). Even if this only applies to a limited number of voters, in an increasingly interdependent world, some responsibility toward non-national citizens is better than none.

Ultimately, the question is whether the Left Party represents the ‘working poor’ in Greece in the German Bundestag not only because the MPs think it is the morally upright thing to do, but because their voters also feel the fate of these Greek citizens should be taken into account by their German MPs. This latter one should be the more ‘durable variant’. It reconciles responsibility with responsiveness and can therefore increase trust in and legitimacy of representation in the EU. Even if the majority of voters were not to drive European representation in national parliaments, the normative potential of these alternative representative patterns unfolds regardless of whether their inclusion in domestic will-formation on EU matters is driven by the agents or the principals. The same holds true for the “sincerity, authenticity, truthfulness” (Saward 2017, p. 85) of such representation. The analysis of MPs’ self-perception in this study does indicate a certain sincerity, but even if MPs were not at all sincere in their
representative claims beyond borders, their publicly uttering them might produce policy outcomes that reflect transnational interests better than had they not been mentioned at all. This resonates with the importance of transnational discourse for evolving transnational democracy (Dryzek 1999).

The third reason why we can consider such broader representative debate and mindset among national MPs in EU politics normatively desirable relates to the importance of justification in the process of such representation. The burden is on the MPs to provide justification for why they are legitimate representatives of certain constituencies, and why they construct them the way they do. Even for constituencies who do not agree with an MP’s representative choice in EU politics, it may become more legitimate, when the MP adheres to every citizen’s “individual right to receive justifications” (Lord 2013, p. 249) for decisions that affect them.

All three reasons show that there are important normative implications of distinguishing between the authorizing and the affected constituency who do not tend to match in a globalized world (Montanaro 2018). While the national electorate as the authorizing constituency may judge the effectiveness of representation, only the affected constituency can judge its legitimacy (Disch 2015). The problem is that an affected constituency that goes beyond national borders does not have the institutional means to relay that judgment to the national representatives. This can lead to claims of misrepresentation (Guasti and Rezende de Almeida 2019), in a worst-case scenario even to paternalistic forms of surrogate representation like in the context of colonialism, for instance (Kinski and Crum 2020, p. 385).

One might then conclude that speaking for European constituencies can certainly be a matter of advocacy, but never truly one of representation. This study would argue that the difference between Europeanized constituencies and say, future generations, for example (Whiteside 2019) is that the former are actual flesh and blood constituents who inhabit a fixed territory and have an ascertainable will. Therefore, they can in principle become objects of trans- and supranational representation.

Nevertheless, the point remains that they have no institutional channels to validate the claimant’s assertion of representativeness. Here, we could argue that the affected constituencies still receive some form of access that they would not have had, had representation been purely national and their interests been seen as irrelevant among national MPs. As we have seen, many national MPs open up the domestic debate on EU politics
to these constituencies and sincerely believe this to be the appropriate thing to do. Ultimately, it may be easier for affected constituencies to contest representation on their behalf by such elected than by unelected representatives.

If transnational representation in national parliaments can be democratic, can we then conclude that it is a stepping stone to transnational democracy? The answer is: it may be. The European Union as the overall institutional framework, in which these representative patterns emerge, clearly has some virtues that may make the observed patterns especially successful there. First, member states co-operate within the framework of the European treaties based on shared values. This ensures equality and permanence to a degree that we do not see in international politics and global governance more broadly. Those most affected by EU decisions are also those jointly subjected to the EU as a “structure of governance that sets the ground rules that govern their interaction” (Fraser 2008, p. 65). Possibly this makes members of EU national parliaments and their voters especially aware of their responsibilities for more than just the national interest. Second, as we have seen, national parliaments as institutions are very much involved in EU politics. In the EU, they are ‘multi-arena players’ (Auel and Neuhold 2017) in a ‘multi-level parliamentary field’ (Crum and Fossum 2009). Again, this is something that does not necessarily hold true for international relations more broadly.

What we can say is that parliaments remain key representative institutions in a globalized world, and there is much to say in favor of bringing international affected interests into these institutions. Ultimately, whether the patterns we observe travel to other international settings and transnational policy issues, is something future empirical research has to investigate. Do debates on migration revolve around the interests of those seeking sanctuary or around the protection of national citizens? Are representative patterns during the global COVID-19 pandemic national or cross-national?

The all-affected principle (see Goodin 2007; Held 1995) as a normative yardstick for global governance and transnational democracy (Koenig-Archibugi 2017) suggests that all those affected by a decision should be able to give their input into that decision. To make that work, scholars have proposed the creation of various formal mechanisms of authorization and accountability for all those affected by a political decision (Koenig-Archibugi 2012; Rehfeld 2005; see also contributions in Blatter and Bauböck 2019). For national parliaments in the EU, such
proposals include extending EU citizens’ election rights from local to national level, or introducing a ‘Green Card’ for national parliaments as a proactive rather than protective way to put proposals on the EU agenda (Fasone and Fromage 2015). This would mean that national parliaments have to consider not only subsidiarity and proportionality, but ultimately also shared responsibility across borders.

This study enriches these discussions on institutional responses that foster transnational democracy by highlighting that alongside these, we need the corresponding representative practice and actor behavior. Such alternative patterns of representation in national parliaments can contribute to a more responsive and responsible representation in the EU. They may also fulfill the requirements of democratic representation, although some properties of the EU as a political system may make it special in this regard. Looking at both representative speech behavior and conceptions, this study shed light on what MPs say and think. It provided empirical evidence that what MPs say in parliament is not ‘mere talk,’ but that there seems to be something going on below simple strategic rhetoric. While MPs remain strategic actors responding to electoral and party-political incentives, they have a deeper opinion on whom and how to represent in EU politics.

Whether this translates into substantively different policy decisions, and whether parties “walk like they talk” (Bischof 2018, p. 310) remains up to future research to investigate. A starting point could be to look at the congruence between MPs’ understanding of representation in transnational contexts and that of their voters (e.g., for the national context Bengtsson and Wass 2010; Méndez-Lago and Martínez 2002). What we have seen is that national parliamentary representation continues to adjust to modern realities, and it seems, “[t]here is no alternative in sight to parliamentary representation when it comes to combining responsiveness and leadership in a democratically responsible way” (Schüttemeyer 2009, p. 11).

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