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## Parties' Transnational Coordination in the EU after Lisbon

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## General Introduction

'The European Green Party is a federation of national parties. It is called a party because of the EU treaties.'<sup>1</sup>

This quotation from a prominent insider in the European Green Party (EGP) is very telling of the nature of these 'political parties at the European level' ('Europarties'), as they are referred to in EU law. While the European Commission tries to promote the development of 'truly transnational political parties'<sup>2</sup> through various legal and financial means,<sup>3</sup> it is revealing to observe how this top-down policy is perceived by the actors within the Europarties and how these actors understand the nature of the organisation they are part of.

Achieving a full understanding of the actors' perspective is not an easy task in political science. We must gain access to the political actors we are interested in: find a role to play in their political organisation; learn to know the people working there; gain their trust; closely observe the actors *in situ* over a certain period of time; and, to a certain extent, participate in their activities. Qualitative research methods such as ethnographic fieldwork enable us to obtain unique empirical data, such as the straightforward quote above, which is difficult to obtain through desk research or interviews. An informal discussion held just before lunch during a party meeting is a very different situation from a formal interview with a university researcher.

Over the last six years I have frequently met with Green Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), their personal assistants and the Greens' group staffers during the plenary weeks of the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg. I have attended six EGP councils; have been an active member of the French Green party, Europe Ecologie Les Verts (EELV); served as the coordinator and blogger of the EGP's Individual Supporters' Network (ISN); and held 30 formal interviews and numerous informal conversations with Green MEPs, former MEPs and candidates in EP elections. This dissertation would not have been the same without my immersion in European party politics during these years.

The research question of this dissertation is if and how political parties in the EU coordinate beyond national borders with other parties of the same party 'family'. My main case-study is the European Greens which I consider it to be a critical case on this question. The first reason is the

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1 Juan Bernard, former Secretary General of the European Green Party, informal discussion, Lyon, 14 November 2015.

2 Press release of the European Commission of 12 September 2012, 'Commission proposal boosts European political parties' ability to represent EU citizens, strengthen democracy', [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-12-951\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-951_en.htm) (accessed 26 June 2016).

3 See EU regulation No. 2004/2003 of 4 November 2003 on the regulations governing political parties at European level and the rules regarding their funding, OJ L 297, 15.11.2013; EU regulation No. 1142/2014 of 22 October 2014 regarding the financing of European political parties, OJ L 317/28, 4.11.2014.

Greens' common historical background in Western Europe and their particular attachment to grassroots democracy (*Basisdemokratie*). Historically, Green parties emerged in several Western European countries around the same period, late 1970s, out of pan-European protest movements, notably anti-nuclear and feminist ones (Kitschelt 1986). Because of these common historical origins across Europe, Green parties still have a particular attachment to grassroots democracy as well as to transnational politics beyond the nation-state.

The second reason is the Greens' focus on environmental policies which are well developed at the EU-level of politics (Dezalay 2007). The environmental issue might be an emerging 'European issue', perceived by EU citizens as an issue which is better dealt with at the EU level than at the national one (see Curtice 1989; Franklin and Rüdig 1992; Carruba and Timpone 2005; Hobolt et al. 2008). The Greens build their political legitimacy around the emerging, post-materialist cleavage of economy vs. nature, and not on the traditional left/right cleavage. Arguably, 'only the Greens correspond to a real European cleavage – opposing the 'all market' to the ecology – in which they clearly occupy one of the two poles' (Seiler 2005: 539). The Greens' relative strength in the EP in comparison to their often limited access to power at the national level (Hines 2003; Bomberg and Carter 2006) makes this political family a critical case to study parties' transnational cooperation in the EU.

The first finding of my research is that political parties have only limited interest in genuine transnational coordination and generally use such coordination instrumentally, in order to gain certain benefits in domestic politics. Hence, parties' transnational coordination is often rather weak and used merely as a facade or a decorative element. This is particularly observable in the first two articles of this dissertation, on how parties use the elections to the EP as a 'back door' to national politics (article one) and their limited genuine engagement with the transnational party federation they are affiliated with (article two). The parties' weak effective transnational coordination across the EU is somehow different when we shift our focus to the political groups in the European Parliament (EP groups), in which the parties' delegations are in close coordination with the delegations of other parties of their political 'family'.

However, EP groups' consolidation (Bardi 2004a) and cohesion (see Hix et al. 2007) should not be overestimated since EP decision-making is generally insulated from national politics. In fact, whenever there are major disagreements between the parties' delegations within an EP group on issues that are salient to party voters and supporters 'at home', the transnational coordination is restricted to the lowest common denominator. Thus, each national party keeps its autonomy, following its own position at the national level. This is demonstrated in the study on how left-wing EP groups deal with the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (article three). Moreover, MEPs coordinate mainly with the national parliament of the EU member state in which they were elected

and with their own national party 'at home' (see article four). Therefore, the overall picture is that the rather high level of transnational coordination remains confined to the EP institutional environment and thus has modest impact on the national party organisations at large.

After this brief overview of the dissertation's main findings, the rest of this general introduction is structured in three main sections. The first section deals with national political parties. I first provide a short state of the art on national parties and EU politics. I then discuss two different explanations for the parties' limited role at the EU-level of governance, one following a structural approach and the other a functional one, in regards to the specific nature of democratic representation in the EU.

The second section of the introduction is dedicated to Europarties, starting with a state of the art on their possible development from party federations to transnational parties. I then elaborate on the Europarties' historical background, the three faces of their organisational structure and the possibility of analysing Europarties as multilevel party organisations.

The third section focuses on the dissertation itself. I present my research questions and objectives, my sociological approach, data and methods and finally I provide a general outlook of the structure of the dissertation.

## **National political parties**

The party literature can be divided into two approaches: functional and structural (Schonfeld 1983; Gunther and Diamond 2001: 5). Scholars who perceive parties in functional terms are focused on what parties do, or do not do; on their main functions in society; and on their role in the political system (King 1969). These scholars focus on the parties' core function as mediators between the citizenry and the state's political institutions and on their relationship with civil society (Schumpeter 1943; Manin 1995; Katz and Mair 1995). Parties have been attributed three key functions by scholars: vote-seeking, office-seeking and policy-seeking (Müller and Strom 1999). According to this functional definition, a political party is an organisation that mobilises citizens to vote for it in elections, selects its candidates to hold certain offices as a result of these elections, and coordinates the policies decided-upon by the offices it holds.

In contrast, scholars of the structural approach view parties primarily as organisations, structured settings in which human activity takes place. The main goal of these scholars is not to explain what parties do and why they matter in political life and in society at large, but rather to describe and explain the organisational life of the political parties themselves. In this approach we find the earlier pioneering works on the organisational dynamics of political parties by Moisei Ostrogorski (1902), Robert Michels (1911) or Maurice Duverger (1951), as well as later works on

party professionalisation (Kirchheimer 1966; Panebianco 1988; for an overview see Gunther and Diamond 2003). In this dissertation I follow the structural approach to political parties, studying them as organisations. Hence, my focus is rather on the organisational aspect of parties' transnational coordination in the EU.

### **State of the art: national parties and the EU-level of politics**

How do political parties respond to the emergence of the EU in general, and to the rise of the EP in particular? Research on this question can be divided into three kinds of literature. Scholars either focus on the responses at the *national* level of politics, i.e. on national parties; at the *European* level of politics, i.e. on parties at the EU-level (political groups in the EP or the extra-parliamentary party federations); or on the *interactions* between these two levels of politics, studying how political parties link the national and the European level within the EU as a multilevel political system.

Scholars who focus on national parties study their possible Europeanisation, or how national parties treat EU affairs. Research on this question indicates that the Europeanisation of national political parties is rather limited (Mair 2000; Pogunkte et al. 2007; Ladrech 2002, 2007). A large gap remains between the party's 'EU-experts' and the rest of the party since national parties tend not to invest in EU politics. Studies on EP elections, for instance, illustrate that these elections are 'second-order national elections', focused on domestic issues within national political arenas (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998; Hix and Marsh 2007; Van der Brug and Van der Eijk 2007; Conti 2014; Hobolt 2014). In fact, national parties that invest highly in EP elections actually use them as a 'back door' to national politics (Blombäck 2012; Shemer-Kunz 2013; Reungoat 2014) and are not genuinely interested in the EU level of politics.

A second way to study if and how parties respond to the emergence of the EU is to focus on the *European* level of politics - the Europarties. The academic debate on Europarties is often centered on the nature of these relatively new organisations in European politics and their possible future development. We can find extensive research on this topic, but it is mostly focused on the transnational political groups in the European Parliament (EP groups). Studies indicate that there is effective development of a transnational party system within the EP (Raunio 1997; Hix and Lord 1997; Bell and Lord 1998; Hix et al. 2007; Hanley 2008; Bressanelli 2013). However, these studies focus on Europarties' behaviour within the EP itself, and take little notice of their extra-parliamentary element, the European party federations.

However, the national and the EU-level of governance have become interconnected and interdependent. Therefore, it is not easy to distinguish, for instance, between 'national actors' and 'EU-actors' within political parties. The EU-level of politics is very much integrated in the existing

national political systems, and it is therefore difficult to analyse it separately from the national level. In the words of Peter Mair:

It is increasingly difficult to separate out what is European and what is national. In other words, as European integration proceeds, it becomes more and more difficult to conceive of the member states as being on one side of some putative divide, with a distinct supranational Union sitting on the other. Instead, we usually see both together and at the same time. (Mair, 2007: 15)

Similar to the conclusion of Peter Mair, I consider that studies on the EU, and in particular on party politics in the EU, need to take into account both the EU-level and the national level, considering the specific nature of the EU as an emerging multilevel political system (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Bache and Flinders 2004). I limit myself in this dissertation to a two-level analysis that includes the EU-level and the national level, but not the sub-national level of EU governance involving regional developments (on that subject see Abels and Eppler 2016).

Hence, a third way to look at this question is to focus on the *interactions* between the national parties and their Brussels-based EU-experts (Raunio 2000, 2009; Auel and Benz 2006; Poguntke et al. 2007; Crum and Fossum 2009, 2013). Scholars who study vertical inter-parliamentary coordination in the EU have found that the parliamentarians' interactions are mainly informal, using intra-party channels rather than the formal official institutional channels of coordination (Miklin and Crum 2011; Finke and Dannwolf 2013; Wonka and Rittberger 2014). These findings indicate the limits of a strict institutional approach and suggest that an actors' perspective may provide us with a deeper understanding of the actual practices and dynamics. My research builds upon this third way to tackle the puzzle of how parties behave in the EU institutional setting, focusing on the interactions between the EU-level and the national level within political parties.

### **A structural explanation for parties' limited Europeanisation**

Before addressing my research question on how parties coordinate beyond national borders, it is important to state that I view political parties not only as organisations but more particularly as *national* organisations (or institutions). Parties are closely linked to the national polities in which they emerged and developed, and in which they are closely embedded. In many ways, political norms and routines, including norms of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989), were developed in Europe within the political institutions of the nation-state. National political institutions and

institutional settings, in relation to which political parties were created and developed, are a powerful interpretative order within which political behaviour and practices can be comprehended and provided meaning and continuity (Pierson 2000). Once established in this national setting, political institutions are not only very important, they also have a strong tendency to persist, to develop a life of their own, and to resist change.

The analysis of political parties from a new institutional approach, as national institutions, with their routines, practices and norms of appropriateness, established over decades in separate national institutional environments, provides an explanation for the limited level of effective Europeanisation of parties (Ladrech 2007; Poguntke et al. 2007). One may argue that the political power has shifted in a substantial way to the EU-level of politics, leaving the national parties hollowed out of their former powers of policy-making (Mair 2013). However, political power is not only an objective matter, solely related to decision-making and policy outcomes, but it is also a subject of perception and meaning, a matter of legitimacy and language (Kauppi 2000; Kauppi and Rask Madsen 2008). Defining where the political power actually lays within a given polity is also a matter of norms and routines, a result of a process of socialisation (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Despite the power shift to the EU-level, the party elites, which were socialised in the established national polities, and work in an institutional environment that offers continuity, at least in formal terms, remain focused on domestic politics, and thus continue to reproduce the general perception and belief that political power remains in the hands of national executives (Kauppi 2005, 2013a).

## **A functional explanation for parties' limited Europeanisation**

Like actors in other fields of socially specialised activity, political actors are in an intense on-going competition with other political actors in a relatively autonomous and closed arena of activity: a particular field within the wider society, 'a space of conflict and competition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 17) with its own internal logics, mechanisms and rules (Bourdieu 1981, 2000). National political parties can be seen as collective actors or agents within national political fields, relatively closed spaces or arenas characterized by relations of domination and power struggles between various actors, competing over rare resources of various kinds. The key activities of parties in the different constituencies across the EU revolve around conflict with other national parties within the same political field, highlighting the differences between them (Offerlé, 2002). Hence, political representation is based on how professional party politicians emphasize the differences between them and their political rivals.

In the past, domestic political conflicts were essentially a confrontation between different ideologies and *Weltanschauungen*, or different *projets de société*, political preferences and aggregation of interests in society, which were traditionally around the frozen left/right cleavage (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) and represented by political parties that were clearly situated on that political cleavage. Today, the national political field may be better analysed in a less static way, as a dynamic political market, auto-regulated by mechanisms of supply and demand (Schumpeter 1943), in which politicians try to come out with the best product that answers the citizens-consumers' demands (Manin 1995). Voters today no longer feel that they belong to particular social groups, are less loyal to a particular party than in the past, and hence operate like a rather open and responsive audience to parties' offers.

The dynamic and interactive nature of democratic representation is well illustrated by the theatrical metaphor of political life, inspired by the works of Erving Goffman (1956) and his usage of the notion of stage and performance in explaining social behaviour. Democratic representation is not a static, objective reality, a mechanic result of elections and other formal procedures of the political system, but rather a dynamic set of relations between representatives and their audience (Manin 1995). Representatives constantly create and perform representative claims (Saward 2006), which are then modified by the reactions of the audience to these claims. These visible performances, as well as the reactions to them, are an important element of the relationship between the representatives and the represented.

The focus on democratic representation as a claim highlights the importance of its symbolic and aesthetic aspect and the important role of symbols and images in political life. The main activity of political actors as representatives is targeting a particular audience and creating and



producing visible performances in which the form is often more important for the performance's success than its actual substance or content. Thus, 'political competition is drifting towards an opposition of form rather than of content.' (Mair 2013: 68). Moreover, a crucial element in democratic representation is not only the representative claim itself but the role of the audience that receives it. Representative claims always address a specific targeted audience. As any type of theatrical performance, they are rather meaningless if there is nobody there to see them: 'a representation, a political claim, is nothing if it is not heard, seen, or read by its intended audience' (Saward 2006: 16).

For parties and party politicians, the targeted audience is limited to the national audience. The performative claims of representation hardly target other citizens outside the national constituency. This is due to the electoral rules in Europe, including those of EP elections as second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980) and to the way parties use these elections in domestic politics, but also due to the nature of parties discussed earlier as national institutions with well-established routines and norms (March and Olsen 1989).

### **Democratic representations in the EU**

Unlike national polities in Europe, the EU emerging political system is highly fragmented and divided (Schmidt 2006). Therefore, while the EU may be studied as a regional state or a regional union of nation-states, it is nevertheless a particular kind of political system. However, too often, the EU is simply, and perhaps wrongly, compared to a national state and its mechanisms of democratic representation (Papadopoulos and Magnette 2010). Since the EU is different from the nation-states we are familiar with, research on EU democracy needs to take these differences into account. Scholars like Simon Hix (1994, 2008), for instance, tend to underestimate these differences, and study the EU political system with the same analytical tools and standards used in comparative politics, as if the EU were a fully developed polity.

While political power and decision-making has to a large extent been moved upwards to the EU-level, political life in Europe remains dominated by national parties and their state-based organisational structures. Political issues are debated in different national public arenas, following national actors' strategies and goals, in rather separate public spheres. Despite the growing importance of the EU-level of politics, 'national conceptions of democratic power and authority, access and influence, vote and voice remain largely unchanged'. (Schmidt 2006: 2). Political will formation and legitimacy of decision-making is still largely confined to the various national arenas (Crum 2012). The EU political system has developed without the development of a corresponding pan-European public sphere (Habermas 2010), a common public arena in which the EU citizens and

political leaders can politicize and debate common issues (Wiesner 2014).

Due to its high fragmentation, the EU is characterised by a political culture of consensus-oriented politics, compromise-seeking, inter-institutional checks and balances, a proportional system of political representation, and no government/opposition dynamics (Hix 1994, 1998). This political culture may be rather suitable for such a fragmented and divided society (Lijphart 1977). The role of politicisation and political conflict, partisan ideologies and opposition is particularly limited in the EU (Mair 2007, 2013). The consensual nature of the EU polity leaves rather little space for convincing representative claims-making by political parties.

In consolidated national polities, with the traditional political cleavage between left and right and government/opposition dynamics, the legitimacy of decision-making is primarily based on the representation of the citizenry, mainly through elections (Manin 1995; Mair 2013). However, in the EU polity, the legitimacy of decision-making is primarily based on non-partisan, technical and legal expertise (Georgakakis 2012; Vauchez 2013; Kauppi and Rask Madsen 2013).

This specific nature of democratic representation in the EU is obvious when looking more closely at the dynamics within the only directly elected EU-institution, the EP. The rise of the EP in the past decades and its effective empowerment has been thoroughly documented (Corbett et al. 2005; Rittberger 2005, 2012; Dinan 2014; Kohler 2014). The direct elections to the EP, held since 1979, provide MEPs a mandate to represent the citizens directly at the EU-level of politics (Pekonen 2011), at least in theory.

However, these are rather procedural, institutional developments. Despite its growing powers, the EP's institutional arena provides political parties and party politicians with limited opportunities to make visible and convincing representative claims vis-à-vis their national audience, be it the entire electorate or their party members, due to the particular working methods of the EP (Costa 2001, 2009).

First, within the EP institutional arena, MEPs are engaged in continuous bargaining for the largest consensus possible. MEPs of different parties and EP parliamentary groups work closely together, across party lines, in order to achieve the most broadly accepted compromise within the EP, and thus have a clear and coherent voice vis-à-vis the European Commission and the Council of the EU. This process generally occurs in a non-conflictual, non-politicised manner, and through both formal and informal channels (Roger and Winzen 2015).

Second, the inter-institutional relations at the EU level are also dominated by a political culture of compromise-seeking and negotiations. The EP works closely together with the European Commission and the Council of the EU, and is rarely in visible conflict with them. This political process takes place, to a large extent, in the backstage of politics, in specialised committee meetings and inter-institutional negotiations held behind closed doors ('Triadialogue') on pieces of legislation

and policies which are often of a very complex and technical nature (Costa 2001; Costa and Magnette 2003). This trend has become even stronger in recent years, with the more frequent usage of the trialogues' early agreements or 'fast-track' EU legislation (Bressanelli et al. 2016).

Hence, EU affairs are not easily translated into political performances that parties and elected politicians can effectively use in their communication with citizens or party members in the constituencies. It is difficult for EP actors - EP groups, delegations of national parties or individual MEPs - to make convincing and visible representative claims during the negotiations process in the EP or around its final outcomes. The final EU legislation is often a compromise and not a clear-cut win for either side, if sides could be identified in the first place, as the coalitions of support and opposition in the EP often change from one dossier to another (Costa 2001).

In view of the limited Europeanisation of national political parties, both from an institutional approach (parties as national institutions) and from a functional approach (parties as mediators with the citizenry), I now examine the potential development of political parties at the European level.

### **Europarties: from party federations to transnational parties?**

Much has been written in the past few decades about the need to develop transnational political parties in Europe (Marquand 1978; Nidermayer 1985; Leinen and Schönlau 2003; Priestly 2010; Leinen and Pescher 2014). Such normative debates would benefit from a better empirical understanding of these emerging organisations and hence of their potential development.

The growing literature on Europarties' suggests that these organisations are to be analysed as emerging transnational political parties. While the parties we are familiar with are confined to the national level, the literature suggests the development of a brand new form of parties. The main suggestion in Europarty literature is that these emerging 'parties beyond the nation-state' are still in an embryonic form, going through a long-term process of institutionalisation and professionalisation, as well as effective consolidation between the different national parties that compose them (Raunio 1997; Hix and Lord 1997; Bell and Lord 1998; Bardi 2002; Hix et al. 2007; Hanley 2008; Sozzi 2013; Bressanelli 2012, 2013, 2014).

The main argument is that Europarties slowly develop over time from loose and weak EU-level federations of national parties, 'parties of parties', into genuine political parties 'in their own right'. Scholars tend to highlight the growing organisational capacities of Europarties as well as the party functions they are slowly beginning to fulfil at the EU-level of politics. For instance, Edoardo Bressanelli (2013: 665) affirms that 'Europarties could actively and directly campaign for the EP elections on alternative policy platforms' and that they are 'well equipped, in policy and programmatic terms, to play up the high expectations that the Lisbon Treaty had placed upon them.'

The main weakness I find in the Europarty literature is its tendency to focus only on the EU-level; on the horizontal interactions of different parliamentary groups within the EP institutional arena (Bressanelli 2013; Bardi et al. 2010) or the comparison between different Europarties' extra-parliamentary organisations (Hertner 2011; Holmes and Lightfoot 2011; Gagatsek 2011; Leinen and Pescher, 2014). However, when Europarty scholars take into account the national level of politics as well, they acknowledge that the emerging organisations at the EU-level still suffer from some important weaknesses, mainly explained by their dependence upon the good will of the national parties that compose them (Külahci 2010; Van Hecke 2010; Bartolini 2012). I suggest to start a comprehensive analysis of Europarties by going back to their historical origins.

### **Historical Background of Europarties**

In June 1953 a small group of members of the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) created the first three transnational parliamentary groups: the Christian-Democrat group, the Socialist group and the Group of Liberals and Associates (see Heidelberg 1961; Van Oudenhove 1965; Nidermayer 1985). These first three 'Europarties' were rather weak transnational groups in a weak consultative assembly. At the time, the Assembly was composed of 78 members who were nominated by the Community's national parliaments, and had a consultative role only. Despite the weak formal powers of the Assembly, some of its members used this institution as a political opportunity and invested in it. This was notably the case of the socialist group, which often publicly criticised the High Authority and used the assembly to deliver political speeches and draft critical resolutions (Van Oudenhove 1965: 58). The creation of the Europarties was part of some parliamentarians' overall investment in the emerging institution they were members of, alongside the creation of elaborate rules of procedure of the new Assembly and the establishment of specialized standing committees, similar to the organisational structure of national legislatures.

From 1953 onwards the development of the Europarties was a by-product of the institutional development of the Common Assembly itself, which soon called itself the 'European Parliament' (EP). This internal process of institutionalisation of the EP was accompanied by a formal and informal process of empowerment and recognition by the European governments (Rittberger 2003; Costa and Magnette 2003). In December 1974 the heads of governments of the European Community decided on direct elections to the EP, to take place no later than 1978 (these elections eventually took place in 1979). Around this time, in the mid-seventies, MEPs further institutionalised and formalised their rather informal transnational party networks into 'party federations' (or *Parteienbünde* in German). The social-democrats formally founded their European

federation in 1974, while the conservatives and the liberal parties founded theirs in 1976.

This short history of the Europarties illustrates that the emergence of these organisations took place as part of the institutional development of the EP and was directly linked to the preparation for the first direct elections to the EP in the mid-seventies (see also Calossi 2014). However, outside the EP institutional setting, among the national parties across Europe, there was only limited interest in and engagement with the Europarties' activities and decision-making. In theory, with the introduction of direct elections to the EP, national parties in the European Community's member states should have had a growing interest to coordinate their activities. However, the actual development of these party federations in the first decade of their formal establishment, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, was rather limited. Oskar Nidermayer (1985) concluded that as long as national parties are concentrated almost exclusively in national politics and do not show much interest in the activities of the European federations they are affiliated with, there will be no development towards more effective transnational coordination between parties or towards their eventual integration within a central organisation.

### **Privileging Europarties as EP groups**

As for the structural organisation of Europarties, I rely on the analytical framework of the three faces of the party organisation (Katz and Mair 1994): the-party-in-public-office, the-party-in-central-office and the-party-on-the-ground,<sup>4</sup> as it was already adapted to the study of Europarties by Luciano Bardi (1994). These three components are a useful tool to analyse the organisational structure of a political party. The 'party-in-public-office' is the party in government and in parliament; the 'party-in-central-office' is the party's central organisation; while the 'party-on-the-ground' consists of the party members and sections across the country. These three elements can be projected on Europarties: the 'Europarty-in-public-office' is then the Europarty's ministers in the Council of the EU, its heads of governments in the European Council and its affiliated commissioners as well as its parliamentary group in the EP (EP group); the 'Europarty-in-central-office' is the transnational party's extra-parliamentary wing; while the 'Europarty-on-the-ground' is the presence of national (or regional) parties at the different constituencies across Europe. I build upon these three faces of political parties in order to assess to what extent the Europarties' organisational structure may be defined as political parties.

The Europarty literature tends to focus on only one aspect of political parties' organisational structure - the party-in-public-office. Thus, the tendency to regard Europarties as emerging

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<sup>4</sup> In other terms, political parties may be analysed as a three-part structure: party-in-government (party-in-public-office); party-as-organisation (party-in-central-office); and the party-in-the-electorate (party-on-the-ground) (Aldrich 2006).

transnational political parties is driven by the rather limited focus on EU policy-making and on the EP institutional arena, which is only one face of the complex organisational structure of political parties. By focusing on the party-in-public-office face of Europarty organisation, Europarty scholars tend to leave the other two faces - the party-in-central-office and the party-on-the-ground - mostly in the dark.

Formally, EP political groups consist of at least 25 MEPs from at least one-quarter of the EU member states who are joined together according to their 'political affinities'.<sup>5</sup> Recognised EP groups are then provided with a secretariat with administrative facilities financed by the EP budget.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the chairs of EP groups' compose the EP's Conference of Presidents and have various rights regarding different procedures of the EP<sup>7</sup>. Policy congruence is the most important factor in parties' decision to join EP groups (McElroy and Benoit 2010; Bressanelli 2012, 2013, 2014). It is primarily this ideological convergence of the various like-minded parties within an EP group that explains the groups' high voting cohesion (Attinà 1990; Hix et al. 2007; Bardi et al. 2010). In fact, scholars who claim that Europarties are transforming into integrated political parties base their claim mainly on the policy congruence between parties within EP groups and on the high level of voting cohesion of these EP groups in plenary.

However, using EP voting cohesion as the main indicator to study parties' transnational coordination is problematic when we consider two elements: the process of negotiations within the EP groups between the delegations of different national parties, which leads to the lowest common denominator; and the insulation of this entire decision-making process of EP groups from the dynamics of domestic politics.

The first reason EP voting cohesion is not a satisfying indicator of the coherence of Europarties is that the eventual voting cohesion is a result of a long process of negotiations and compromise-seeking between the delegations of national parties within the EP group. In the case of external attention to EP decision-making, the common EP group positions are the result of intensive intra-group negotiations and compromises (Roger and Winzen 2015). These common EP group positions often reflect the lowest common denominator of the different delegations that compose the EP group (Priestly 2010). They are often rather vague and unclear statements, leaving aside issues on which there is no agreement: 'intra-group quasi-unanimity is usually guaranteed by long preparatory committee and party group sessions, which have the stated purpose of smoothing out most disagreements' (Bardi 1996: 104). This was already observable in the very first years of the Common Assembly, back in the 1950s:

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<sup>5</sup> See rule 32 of the EP Rules of Procedure, on formation of political groups.

<sup>6</sup> Rule 33 (1) of the EP Rules of Procedure, on activities and legal situation of the political groups.

<sup>7</sup> EP groups' chairs have voting rights based on the number of members in each political group. See Rule 26 of the EP Rules of Procedure on the composition of the Conference of Presidents.

'Such intra-party compromises were obtained at the group meeting, where the differences were as far as possible ironed out. It should also be pointed out that the divergences between the groups were tempered by the strong desire to avoid an open clash. Especially in the standing committees was there an urge to reconcile the conflicting political viewpoints on the basis of the lowest common denominator' (Van Oudenhove 1965: 49).

The second reason EP groups' voting cohesion is not satisfying empirical evidence for the level of coordination of the various national parties within Europarties is the limited visibility of these votes. Scholars do not pay much attention to the extent to which national parties tend to ignore the entire process of decision-making in the EP, as well as the voting behaviour of their delegations in the EP (Poguntke et al. 2007). The daily work of MEPs is largely insulated from that of the parties' national parliamentarians (Raunio 2002; Miklin and Crum 2011), and even more so from party members and the EU citizens (Costa 2009). national party organisations delegated to a large extent the day-to-day task of policy-making at the EU level to their EU-experts based in Brussels, and even to a small number of policy experts within the EP groups (Roger and Winzen 2015), who are only weakly controlled by national parties (Hix 2002; Raunio 2002). In the rather few cases in which national parties are interested in the voting behaviour of their EP delegations, national parties tend to have the final word over their MEP's vote (Hix 2002).

In fact, Luciano Bardi (2002) suggests that it is precisely this insulation from domestic political dynamics which enables the consolidation of the transnational groups in the EP. Even the EP group affiliation of national parties remains quite invisible outside the EP institutional arena. Delegations of national parties may even leave their EP group and join another one while 'the respective electorates remain uninformed and unaware of these new alliances, and are not asked to ratify them' (Bardi 1994: 335). All in all, the parties' transnational coordination within their EP groups remains rather technical in nature, and lacks visibility outside the EP.

Despite the long preparatory work within the EP groups and their insulation from domestic politics, there are still certain cases of open conflict between delegations of national parties and the EP group they are affiliated with. In these cases, MEPs tend to vote, even in the final roll-call plenary vote, according to their national party line, and not along the official line of their EP group (Hix 2002; Hix et al. 2007; Scully et al. 2012). However, this happens rather rarely.

To conclude this section, the study of Europarties primarily as EP groups allows scholars to evaluate positively these organisations' development over the past few decades of European integration. However, Europarties' development is an effect of the institutional development of the EP. Scholars' focus on EP voting cohesion somehow downplays the divisions within EP groups

between different national parties' delegations. All in all, the empirical evidence on Europarties indicates that as EP groups they do matter in the EP, but not necessarily outside the EP institutional setting.

### **Europarties as multilevel party organisations?**

In comparison to EP groups, the extra-parliamentary component of Europarties has gained less scholarly attention (but see Delwit 1998; Dakowska 2002; Delwit et al. 2004; Gagatek 2009; Van Hecke 2010; Hertner 2011; Bartolini 2012; Von dem Berge and Poguntke 2012; Pridham, 2014; Timus and Lightfoot 2014). Scholars who study Europarties (mainly) as extra-parliamentary organisations highlight their structural weakness due to their dependency on the national parties that compose them. As extra-parliamentary organisations Europarties are rather loose federations or umbrella organisations of national parties, with little chances to develop into genuine transnational political parties in the near future.

However, considering the specific nature of the EU as a multilevel political system, we might consider Europarties as multilevel organisations, taking into account the complex dynamics of vertical interactions between the national parties and their affiliated Europarty (on the vertical integration of parties in federal states see Thorlakson 2009, 2011; Van Houten 2009). After all, since every party model is linked to a certain conception of democracy (Mair 2013), it may be possible that Europarties are genuine emerging political parties after all, but a different kind of parties, particular to the multilevel setting of the EU political system. This appears like a promising way to understand what Europarties are, what they do and how they are organised.

A comprehensive analysis of the Europarties' extra-parliamentary element should hence include both the EU-level and the national level. This alternative way of conceiving of Europarties is not confined to the EU-level or the EP institutional arena alone; this conception includes the other two faces of Europarties' organisational structure: the party-in-central-office, which are the extra-parliamentary Europarty, and the party-on-the-ground, which is the various national parties that compose it. Several Europarty scholars have raised this option in their analysis of these organisations. Let us examine three such propositions, by Luciano Bardi (1994), Steven Van Hecke (2010) and Thomas Jansen (1995).

Luciano Bardi (1994) has suggested that Europarties are composed of three components, situated at different levels of governance; two at the EU-level and one at the national level. According to Bardi's model, the EP groups are the Europarty-in-public-office and the EU-level extra-parliamentary federations are the Europarty-in-central-office, while the various national parties, active at the level of the constituencies, are the Europarties' party-on-the-ground. Bardi



acknowledges that the main challenge of Europarties' development is the integration of these three different components, and in particular the integration of the Europarty-on-the-ground, the national parties, with the two EU-level components.

While referring to the national level in his theory, Bardi does not empirically study the vertical interactions between the various elements of the Europarty, and remains focused on the EP groups' consolidation over time, and to a lesser extent, on the Europarties' extra-parliamentary federations. Bardi's empirical research consists of comparing the level of institutionalisation, professionalisation and cohesion across EP groups. Hence, while Bardi's theoretical model of Europarties is multilevel in nature, and includes the national level, the national parties that compose the Europarties are not part of his empirical analysis.

Steven Van Hecke (2010) has proposed to study Europarties as multilevel organisations, distinguishing between three different levels of politics: the national level; the transnational level; and the supranational level. These three levels of governance correspond with three Europarty organisational elements and their presence in the different EU institutions. According to this analytical distinction, political parties are the organisations active at the national level, via their national governments and parliaments; party federations are active at the transnational level, via their representatives in the Council of Ministers and the European Council; while party groups are active at the supranational level, in institutions such as the European Commission and the EP. However, Van Hecke's model does not explicitly tell us how to empirically evaluate the level of integration of the Europarty at the national level with the other elements situated at the transnational or the supranational level. Moreover, the distinction between the various levels of politics is a rather analytical one, making empirical operationalisation difficult. While this model considers the EP itself as a supranational institution, it is composed of national politicians (Neunreiter 2005), elected in second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998), who conduct parliamentary activities primarily vis-à-vis their own national audience (Sozzi 2016).

Finally, Thomas Jansen (1995) simply compares Europarties to multilevel political parties in federal political systems, such as Germany or Spain. For example, in the case of Germany, individual party membership is only possible via a party structure in the citizens' regional constituency, the *Kreisverband* (KV). These members are then automatically considered party members in the higher levels of German politics, the state (*Länder*) and the federal (*Bund*) levels. Similarly, in France, although a unitary polity, political parties are organised in a federal structure, composed of relatively autonomous regional chapters, while the national level is merely a federation of the regional party chapters. From this perspective, most political parties in Europe are, in fact, federal parties. In this sense, the multilevel organisational structure of Europarties may not be that different from the one of the national parties we are familiar with, only at a higher level of

the political system. However, this narrow focus on organisational issues as simply technical matters underestimates the substantial difference between federal national polities such as Germany or Austria, and the EU system, which is a highly compound polity (Schmidt, 2006) (see previous section of this introduction). The main caveat of analysing Europarties as multilevel party organisations is the problematic application of conceptual tools developed in comparative studies of national polities to the very particular political system of the EU. The empirical evidence on the case of the Greens, provided in the first and second articles of this dissertation, suggest that national parties in the EU, while formally affiliated with a Europarty, are far more autonomous than subnational party chapters in federal states.

### **Objectives and research questions**

This dissertation aims at answering the question how and to which extent political parties in the EU coordinate transnationally, across national borders, with other parties of the same party 'family'. This question is related to the general debate on the EU's democratic legitimacy, and on the democratic qualities of the EU political system as a representative democracy. More specifically, the question of parties' transnational coordination in the EU may be seen as one indicator among others of the development of the EU political system into a genuine democratic polity. Parties' transnational coordination is inter-linked to a few other indicators in the direction of bypassing the nation-state: the emergence of a pan-European public sphere and a pan-European identity; the development of an active EU citizenry; and pan-EU mobilisation and contestation on EU politics (see Kauppi 2013a).

Such developments in European society may result in a certain shift in the focus of citizens and journalists from the domestic arena of politics to the EU level, and from their national governments and parliaments to EU institutions such as the European Commission, the EP, the European Central Bank, etc. In fact, parties' transnational coordination may not only serve as an indicator for such a process but even constitute a basic condition for the development of representative democracy beyond the nation-state in Europe.

Observing such a possible shift in democratic representation in Europe from the national level to the EU-level of politics naturally prompts us to examine the possible emergence of political parties and party politicians at the European level. Such politicians would be accountable not merely to their national constituency 'at home' but to EU citizens as a whole. This question has led me to study in detail the emerging Europarties, both as EP groups and as extra-parliamentary transnational party federations, since these organisations obviously have a crucial role to play in the possible emergence of democratic representation beyond the European nation-state.



## **A sociological approach**

In this research I use a sociological approach to EU studies by which I mainly mean an actor-centered approach (for an overview of the sociological approaches to EU studies see Favell and Guiraudon 2009, 2011, Saurugger and Mérand 2010; Zimmermann and Favell 2011). Political actors (rather than institutions) are my main research object, taking into full consideration the role of actors' perspective, agency and strategies, how actors perceive and use the institutional setting in which they work.

The main actors I am interested in are political parties. While I am aware that every party organisation as such is also a field of domination and power struggle (Offerlé 2002), I chose not to pursue an analysis that drills down into intra-party conflicts between different currents and groups, or all the way down to the individual level, but to remain at the meso level of analysis. This is because the parties I study are already part of transnational organisations such as EP groups and the extra-parliamentary party federations, and a further zooming-in into the parties' structures and struggles would make it difficult to maintain the comparative perspective I chose to focus on, either across the EU within a Europarty or between a few Europarties.

This actor-centered approach puts a strong focus on the actors' practices and behavior, which allows to go beyond formal rules and legal provisions. Actors may seize certain formal arrangements they view as genuine opportunities while refrain from using others since they do not have the incentives to do so. For instance, I go beyond the legal provisions provided in the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU regulations on Europarties, the EP's rules of procedure or the transnational party federations' rulebooks. While I fully acknowledge that the legal framework has important consequences for the actors' possibilities and constraints, I focus rather on how actors make use, or not, of the institutional setting they work in and the organisation they are part of, on what they do in practice.

My theoretical framework is close to new-institutionalism (March and Olsen 1984, 1989; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Parsons 2000), which highlights the importance of institutions in political life. Institutions play a vital role in structuring political life, in the construction and elaboration of meaning, and in the interpretation of events and reality. Political institutions are important instruments of interpretive order, through their contribution to the establishment, stability and continuity of routines, rules and norms: 'norms of appropriateness, rules, routines, and the elaboration of meaning are central features of politics' (March and Olsen, 1989: 171).

In addition, my theoretical framework is also inspired by constructivism and the sociology of knowledge (see Berger and Luckmann 1966, Goffman 1956). According to the constructivist approach, notions such as framing, meaning, socialisation and social constructions are the main

elements that construct social life at all levels of interaction and action. However, I see constructivism as a complement of an actor-centered approach and not as a distinctive approach to study political life, detached from the actors' positions in the organisations they are part of or the resources they have at their disposal (for further discussion see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Kauppi 2005).

This dissertation is also an exercise in dialogue between the French school of political sociology (for an overview see Georgakakis 2008) and the mainstream English-speaking literature of political science (Kauppi 2013b). Rather than staying in the comfortable company and friendly environment of fellow French political sociologists, I decided to take the challenge to 'mainstream EU sociology' (Saurugger and Mérand, 2010). During the past six years, I presented my research to peers at various academic conferences and networks such as CES, ECPR, UACES, THESEUS, PADEMIA, etc. Quite often I found myself surrounded by 'number crunchers' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 31) who were often rather sceptic towards my qualitative methods and anecdotic story-telling, a standard writing-style in departments of political sociology in the French academy. During these years I was sometimes taken by the desire to 'dance in the ways expected by those who run the ball' (Ross 2011: 215). This will to be accepted and acknowledged, and to get my work published in mainstream English-speaking academic journals, very fortunately pushed me to consider more in-depth the legal institutional framework in which the actors are embedded as well as to conduct statistical analysis in order to be in a better position to generalize my findings.

## **Methods and data**

The starting point of this dissertation was an exercise I conducted together with three colleagues<sup>8</sup> during my Masters in EU studies at the University of Strasbourg. The research question was how French parties were preparing for the EP elections of 2009 and we chose the case of the French Greens. The research method we used was mainly interviews with French Green MEPs of the 2004-2009 term, with the party's candidates for the 2009 elections and with party officials. During certain interviews we found that the questions we prepared beforehand, based on the academic literature on EP elections and preliminary data collected on the internet, were quite irrelevant to the actors' own perceptions and practices. Notably, there was a gap between the official version of the European Green Party (EGP), which we found on the internet, and the reality on the ground from the actors' perspective. Here are two quotes from two different interviews conducted during the 2009 EP elections campaign in France. The first quote is from an interview with Eric Schultz, a local Green

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<sup>8</sup> See Pflugbeil, Antje, Elodie Spielmann, Yoav Shemer-Kunz and Alexis Walker, *Le parti Vert français et les élections européennes de 2009*, unpublished Masters thesis, University of Strasbourg. I thank my colleagues for allowing me to continue the research we have started together.

politician who was the French Greens' campaign director in the 2009 EP elections in the Grand Est region:

*Q: I know that last year the European Green Party's Council in Slovenia decided upon the main axes of the campaign.*

*A: Well, you know more than me!*

Another example is from an interview with MEP Marie-Helene Aubert, during which she burst out laughing when confronted with an element from her official EP candidate biography:

*Q: I saw you were co-founder of the European Green Party.*

*A: That's an exaggeration. The EGP was created in 2004 in Rome. I was there like many others. So, I don't know if I am co-founder (laugh) but yes, I was there at the moment it was created, that's all.*

These situations reveal to what extent desk research that consists of merely consulting official documents needs to be cross-checked by fieldwork. This has led me to devote more attention to ethnographic fieldwork in my research methods.

In this dissertation I use a multi-method approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods (Guiraudon 2011). I have used a qualitative research strategy and intensive fieldwork, observing actors *in situ* over a relatively long period of time (for an overview of the usage of ethnography in EU studies see Adler-Nissen 2016). Many of the interviews I conducted were also part of ethnographic fieldwork observing the actors *in situ* (Beaud 1996). Using ethnographic fieldwork in EU studies, I follow previous works that have used such methods, notably the original work of Marc Abélès (1992) on the daily life in the EP, which observed MEPs as a strange multilingual nomad tribe, or George Ross' (1995) fieldwork within the European Commission of Jacques Delors. More recently, Amy Busby (2013) used ethnographic fieldwork while working as an intern of an MEP, a position which provided her with a privileged access to qualitative data otherwise hard to obtain by quantitative methods of research. The works of Willy Beauvallet (2007) and Sébastien Michon (2014) were also based to a large extent on ethnographic fieldwork in MEP offices.

By conducting fieldwork I was acquainted directly with the actors' own process of bricolage (Mérand 2011), how they see and use the institutional setting they work in and what they do in

practice. I found ethnography to be useful for my research to get a grip on how national party politicians experiment with the EU-level of politics; and how MEPs or Europarty officials handle their dependence on the national parties in practice. This fieldwork was complemented by quantitative data I gathered through more classical research methods of political science such as surveys via a questionnaire and consultation of official documents.

The first article, analysing EP elections as a 'back door' to national politics, is an in-depth case-study, focusing on one national party only, the French Greens. The article is empirically based on ten semi-structured interviews with French Green Party's candidates for the 2009 EP elections, the party's MEPs, local party officials and electoral campaign staff; participant observations within the party's campaign team; and numerous informal discussion with party staff and members. This was complemented by an analysis of the French Greens' electoral results in national and in EP elections since 1979.

The second article, on the individual membership in Europarties, is an in-depth case study on the EGP. The article combines three different methods: ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and a survey conducted among Green parties in Europe on their attitudes towards the EGP policy of individual membership and how they implement it in practice. The ethnographic fieldwork included participant observations *in situ* in the EGP, notably in six major EGP meetings<sup>9</sup>. In addition, between November 2011 and November 2013 I conducted participant observations within the EGP's Individual Supporters' Network (ISN). The observations included attending a few physical meetings, mainly in Brussels, a few Skype meetings, and taking part in informal email exchanges of the network. This ethnographic fieldwork at the EU-level of the Europarty organisation was coupled with participant observation as an active member of the French Green party, EELV. In addition, desk research conducted during the past six years included the analysis of numerous EGP documents: the EGP rulebook and EGP Council resolutions; the EU regulations on Europarties and Commission and EP communications on this topic.

The third article, on the diplomatic role of EP groups, is a cross-case study on the three left-wing EP groups, S&D, GUE/NGL and Greens/EFA, and their position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This article is empirically based on 20 in-depth interviews and numerous discussions with a variety of actors from these three EP groups: MEPs, parliamentary assistants, the groups' political advisors, as well as with officials of human rights NGOs based in Brussels and in Israel and the Palestinian territories. These sociological research methods were combined with the consultation of EP resolutions and EP groups' motions for resolutions, press releases, conferences, hearings and agendas of visits to Israel and the Palestinian territories between 2010 and 2015, in addition to activities of the relevant EP committees, delegations, and EP plenary debates on the issue.

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<sup>9</sup> The EGP congress in Paris (November 2011) and five EGP councils: in Athens (November 2012), Madrid (May 2013), Brussels (November 2013), Lyon (November 2015) and Utrecht (May 2016).

Finally, the fourth article, on the role of MEPs in national parliaments, is an EU-wide comparative study, taking into account variations across EU member states and EP groups. The empirical analysis is based on data from COSAC<sup>10</sup> bi-annual reports, two surveys among parliamentary administrators in charge of EU affairs in national parliaments, and consultation of the Rules of Procedure of several national parliaments, in addition to the literature on the topic. These qualitative methods were combined with quantitative ones, building on an original dataset: I conducted a survey among all MEPs of the 7<sup>th</sup> legislative term (2009-2014) on their practices in the national parliament in the EU member state they were elected in. The survey's dataset (150 out of 751 MEPs, 20% of the total population) was then processed and codified in a way that enabled a statistical, multivariate regression, analysis.<sup>11</sup>

### **Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation consists of a collection of four separated academic articles, either already published, in print, or on their way to publication in the near future. The first two articles deal with parties' transnational coordination outside the legislative arena, while the last two articles deal with parties' cross-border coordination within the EP institutional setting or in the national parliaments across the EU.

The first article is on EP elections from the perspective of national parties, analysing how certain parties use these elections as a 'back door' to national politics. It is a case-study on how the French Greens used the 2009 EP elections as an opportunity to improve their position vis-à-vis their domestic rivals in French politics, notably the Social Democratic Party (PS) as well as rivals in the field of political ecology. In the aftermath of their success in the EP elections, the French Greens were able to establish independent parliamentary groups in both of France's parliamentary chambers and to obtain two ministries after the 2012 presidential elections. This article was published as chapter ten in the book *Practices of Inter-Parliamentary Coordination in International Politics: The European Union and beyond*, edited by Ben Crum and John-Erik Fossum, which came out in 2013 from ECPR Press.

The second article examines individual membership schemes of Europarties. The article illustrates these schemes' contradictions and limited implementation in practice, mainly explained by the lack of interest among national parties or even their reluctance to cooperate with the individual membership policy of the Europarty they are affiliated with. A second explanation is the lack of interest of individual party members in such an option. Hence, I show that Europarties'

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10 Conference of the committees of the national parliaments of the EU member states dealing with EU affairs.

11 Bart J. Bes, PhD candidate at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, helped me with the multivariate regression analysis.



capacity to develop individual membership is limited in the actual institutional setting. This article was submitted to the journal *Acta Politica* and is currently under peer-review (updated August 2016).

The third article deals with EP groups as diplomatic actors, studying the stances and activities of left-wing EP groups with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The article shows that EP groups have a certain potential to develop an independent diplomatic role, notably through close coordination with civil society actors in third countries, outside the EU. However, this potential is hampered by substantial disagreements between the national parties' delegations within the EP groups. In fact, the common diplomatic activities of certain EP groups tend to be restricted to the lowest common denominator or to be subject to opting-out by certain national delegations. The article is in print in a volume edited by Stelios Stavridis and Davor Jančić *Parliamentary Diplomacy in European and Global Governance*, forthcoming in 2016 in Brill publishers, in its series of Diplomatic Studies.

The fourth article of this dissertation examines the formal participation rights of MEPs in the national parliament of the EU in a comparative perspective, and proposes a distinction between two roles that MEPs play in the chambers, as national representatives at the EU-level and as external EU-experts. Furthermore, beyond the legal perspective, the article is an assessment of MEPs' practices in the national parliament of 'their' Member State and the variation of these, based on a multivariate regression analysis of a survey conducted among 150 MEPs. This article will be published in a special issue of *Politique européenne*, edited by Diane Fromage and Kolja Raube, *Member State Parliaments and the European Challenge(s)*.

The conclusion of the dissertation wraps up the main findings of these four articles and explores some avenues for further research on parties' transnational coordination in the EU.