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Transnational Representation in EU National Parliaments: Concept, Case Study, Research Agenda

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journals.sagepub.com/home/psxLucy Kinski¹  and Ben Crum²

Abstract

This article introduces the notion of ‘transnational representation’ to refer to claims by national parliamentarians on behalf of citizens of other national constituencies. Thus defined, transnational representation combines insights from the constructivist turn in the theory of democratic representation with a renewed focus on national parliaments as the prime institutional sites of representation. A focus on transnational representation advances the debate on democratic representation in an age of internationalisation in two ways. First, it allows for a systematic and comparative analysis of how representation in parliaments responds to internationalisation. Second, it suggests a new perspective on the possible alignment of political representation with the range of affected interests. We illustrate these two claims with a case study of transnational representation in parliamentary debates on the European Financial Stability Facility and by outlining an agenda for further research.

Keywords

transnational representation, national parliaments, European Union, representative claims analysis, internationalisation

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Introduction

Late September 2011, the question whether to expand the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), which was established to bailout Eurozone countries unable to service their debt, was put before the Austrian Lower House. Michael Schickhofer, parliamentarian for the Social Democrats, contributed to this debate with the observation that:

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I quite frankly admit that this decision to agree to this rescue package is not easy, but we should briefly consider how the people in Greece are doing. There, too, are employees who have worked for many years, paid into the pension system and are now confronted with the fact that 20 percent of the pensions are to be reduced. There are civil servants who have always remained in their country and who have been there for the people and are now being confronted with the idea that 30,000 to 40,000 jobs are to be cut [...] (Michael Schickhofer, Social Democratic Party of Austria, Austria, EFSF Expansion, 30 September 2011).¹

Based on these considerations, Schickhofer asserted that this decision ‘cannot be *just* about our own interests’ (emphasis in original) and eventually concluded: ‘I stand by the Austrian interests, but we must also think in terms of Europe and the people of Greece’.

This argumentation exemplifies how ‘standard accounts’ (Castiglione and Warren, 2013; Urbinati and Warren, 2008) of political representation have come under pressure in an increasingly interdependent world as political representatives face a structural mismatch between their electoral constituency and the people whose interests are affected by their decisions. Schickhofer’s statement contradicts the rationalistic conception in which political representatives vie for re-election by exclusively representing the national interest. Instead, he acknowledges a wider European collective interest, which includes the Austrian interest he has been elected to serve. What is more, he directly inserts the plight of the foreign citizens of Greece into the considerations that bear on the political position he adopts.

This article introduces the notion of ‘transnational representation’ to denote claims by national parliamentarians on behalf of citizens of other national constituencies. As illustrated by Schickhofer’s statement, transnational representation exploits the wedge between the constituency that formally authorises political representatives and the constituency whose interests these representatives may invoke. Our conceptualisation of transnational representation contributes to the empirical and theoretical literature on democratic representation in an internationalising world and, in particular, seeks to reconnect the empirical analysis of parliamentary debates with recent theories of political representation. Empirically, we submit that the concept of transnational representation allows us to identify and demonstrate that national parliamentarians adopt this mode of representation and, in a more exploratory take, to suggest certain meaningful patterns in the way that they do so. Conceptually, we suggest that, by building on the dynamic and constructed nature of representation as an act (cf. Saward, 2010), the notion of transnational representation points to a distinctive conception of democratic representation in an ever more interdependent world; one that does not rely on the establishment of overarching representative institutions but rather on networks of representative claims across national parliaments.

To achieve these aims, the article is structured as follows. The next section develops the concept of transnational representation, both in the context of recent constructivist theories of representation and in the specific context of democratic representation in the multilevel polity of the European Union (EU). In the section “Operationalising Transnational Representation and its Alternatives,” we develop an operationalisation that serves to identify transnational representation in parliamentary debates and distinguishes it from alternative modes of representation. Then, the section “Case Study and Expectations” presents the outlines of a case study in which we empirically investigate transnational representation as well as a set of expectations regarding its manifestation. The findings of this case study are presented in the section “Observing Transnational Representation during the Eurozone Crisis”. The final section reflects upon these findings and uses them to sketch a broader research agenda.

Concept: Positioning Transnational Representation

Transnational representation involves national parliamentarians raising claims on behalf of citizens of other national constituencies. Defined as such, the concept contributes to three related, yet different debates in political science and political theory: representation theory, international democratic theory and democratic representation in the EU. First of all, transnational representation builds upon the constructivist turn in representation theory. This turn highlights that political representation is a generative relationship that reflects the dynamic and open-ended nature of political decision-making (Disch, 2011; Urbinati, 2006). Thus, it fundamentally challenges the ‘standard account’ of representation (Castiglione and Warren, 2013; Urbinati and Warren, 2008), which focusses on the relationship between a constituency and a parliamentarian, who acquires the position of representative by being elected into office on the basis of a well-specified programme, and whose actions are driven by the prospect of re-election. As the most notable scholar of the constructivist turn, Michael Saward (2010) reframes representation as a ‘claim’ to underline how representation always remains contestable and depends on others to identify with it and to recognise its legitimacy – even if the claim does not speak for them.

One of the major merits of a constructivist approach to representation is that it does not fix the constituency that is being represented but allows for multiple and shifting constituencies. This feature is essential to our notion of transnational representation as it relies on a distinction between two constituencies: one domestic that formally authorises the parliamentarians and holds them to account, and one potentially ‘foreign’ that the parliamentarians invoke. This echoes Saward’s (2010) distinction between the ‘referent’ actor, on whose behalf a representative claim is put forward, and the ‘audience’ on which the claim is to have an effect. Even closer to our purpose, Laura Montanaro (2018) distinguishes between the ‘authorising’ and the ‘affected’ constituency. The authorising and affected constituency may coincide – and in traditional conceptions of representation, they often do – but this is not necessarily the case. Not only may one be bigger than the other, but also they can actually refer to different populations (Saward, 2010: 49–50). Coming back to the example from the introduction, while the Austrian electorate serves as Michael Schickhofer’s authorising constituency, the Greek people are prominently included in the affected constituency of his deliberations and vote.

This brings us to the second debate to which transnational representation speaks, namely the one on international or global democracy. Indeed, the constructivist approach is particularly fruitful outside the safe boundaries of the established practices of national representation, as processes of internationalisation challenge established understandings of constituencies. As the decisions that a nation state takes may have severe consequences beyond its jurisdictional boundaries, there emerges a much-noted misalignment between those authorising a decision within national boundaries and those affected by this decision (Koenig-Archibugi, 2017; Näsström, 2003).

Recognising the mismatch between national representatives and an increasingly internationalising world, the study of political representation has tended to turn away from elected politicians. Instead, it has broadened the concept of representation to include non-elected actors who may be better positioned to speak on behalf of interests that might otherwise go unrepresented (Kuyper, 2016; Montanaro, 2018; Steffek et al., 2007). This move suggests that politicians’ perspectives are narrowed by the parochial concerns of their constituency and the games of everyday politics, and that it comes to civil society organisations, like Oxfam, and to celebrities, like Bono, to highlight how national political decisions resonate far beyond national boundaries.

In light of this literature, transnational representation appears as a more ‘traditional’ approach since it returns to the formal representative institutions of national parliaments. However, it is exactly the combination of a constructivist approach with formally defined and well-entrenched institutions that we believe to be particularly effective. On the one hand, transnational representation is located in the institutions of national parliaments, involving formally authorised parliamentarians whose status as political representatives is widely recognised (cf. Rehfeld, 2018). On the other hand, our constructivist approach does not take the representative status of national parliamentarians as self-evident but scrutinises their individual claims and differentiates between the different (represented) constituencies that these involve.

Indeed, the constructivist approach allows transnational representation to escape the assumption that requires the level of democratic representation to be formally aligned with the range of affected interests, and which often stifles current debates about democracy beyond the nation state (e.g. Held, 1995; Koenig-Archibugi, 2017). That assumption essentially leaves two options: one in which public powers are scaled back to the national level to align with the best-institutionalised constituencies (cf. Dahl, 1999) and the other in which democratic institutions are scaled up to the international level to align with the affected interests (e.g. Falk and Strauss, 2001). However, neither of these options appears adequate in the face of the actual challenges of internationalisation.

Enter the third debate to which transnational representation directly contributes: democratic representation in the EU. Here, it becomes clear that neither of these two options – realigning political power with national democracy or establishing a supranational democracy – are viable or desirable (cf. Bellamy and Castiglione, 2013). In the EU, transnational interdependence has become permanent and all-pervasive. As the Brexit process clearly illustrates, even if it may be possible to disentangle a nation state from the formal intertwinements, the practical spill-over impacts of policies and societal movements remain immense (see, for example, the contributions in Outhwaite, 2017). However, the opposite strategy of scaling-up democratic institutions by establishing a directly elected European Parliament has not been an unmitigated success either. Citizens continue to perceive EP elections as second-order elections, as turnouts remain far below national levels and have tended to fall even further over time (Schmitt and Toygür, 2016). More fundamentally, the EP as a ‘strong’ public remains detached from a corresponding ‘weak public’, a pan-European public sphere in which whatever representative claims are made within the parliament can be collectively contested (Eriksen and Fossum, 2002). Instead, public spheres remain mostly organised at the national level (Fligstein, 2009; Koopmans and Statham, 2010), which leaves national parliaments as the main focus points for public deliberation and, indeed, the main sources of political legitimacy.

It is exactly under the conditions where public power is exercised across borders while political identification remains concentrated at the national level, that transnational representation may come in. The key is that transnational representation disconnects the act (and constituency) of representation from the act (and constituency) of electoral authorization. In other words, transnational representation acknowledges the position of national parliaments as the prime sites for representative democracy, but it highlights that this leaves parliamentarians the freedom to invoke constituencies with which they do not maintain a direct electoral relation. In this sense, transnational representation refers to national parliamentarians raising claims on behalf of citizens of other national constituencies. This means it cuts across national borders, but at the same time

remains connected to national identities and has to be distinguished from supranational (or even global) representation that supersedes and replaces such identities (for a similar distinction cf. Angevine, 2017).

The concept of transnational representation builds upon previous studies that have demonstrated how internationalisation, and European integration in particular, allow parliamentarians new discretion in determining the kind of common good they appeal to. Studies of debates in national parliaments on the Eurozone crisis (Closa and Maatsch, 2014; Wendler, 2016) have highlighted how national parliamentarians rely on different conceptions of the European common good, ranging from the purely functional to a deep sense of solidarity. Even closer to our approach, Lord and Tamvaki (2013) have demonstrated how members of the European Parliament can vary the scope of the constituency they rely on as they intersperse references to a European common good with invocations of a national and, even, a global common good.

More broadly, the idea of transnational representation sits well with suggestions to conceive of the structure of democratic representation in the EU as a ‘multilevel parliamentary field’ (Crum and Fossum, 2009) or a ‘Euro-national parliamentary system’ (Fasone and Lupo, 2016) that encompasses both national parliaments and the European Parliament. Such conceptions underline the multilevel and polycentric character of the structure of representation in the EU, in which the relations between parliaments remain underdetermined in constitutional terms and rather rely on informal processes of coordination and communication. In such a context, transnational representation emerges as a way to establish interlocking relationships between these parliamentary sites through representative claims.

Operationalising Transnational Representation and its Alternatives

As indicated, empirically, we locate transnational representation in the context of national parliaments with a focus on the claims made by members of parliament (MPs). In doing so, we draw on Pieter de Wilde’s (2013) ‘Representative Claims Analysis’ (RCA) (cf. de Wilde et al., 2014, 2015). This method has been ground-breaking in combining Saward’s (2010) theory of representative claims-making with the empirical approach of political claims analysis developed by Koopmans and Statham, (1999, 2010). We follow de Wilde et al. (2014) by defining claims on the basis of necessary core elements. Thus, RCA avoids that entire speeches can be considered a single claim even while different issues and representative objects are addressed – something that was left open in the original political claims analysis. Also, we follow de Wilde in focusing the empirical analysis on what we can observe from the textual claim itself and from the status of the claimant. As this method thus takes the claims of the parliamentarians at face value, it offers a reliable way to code the core elements without seeking to assess their sincerity.

However, we deviate from de Wilde in that we maintain Saward’s and Montanaro’s distinction between the authorising and the affected constituency (cf. Disch, 2015: 494). As we study transnational representation in the context of national parliaments, the authorising constituency can be equated with the national electorate that has formally authorised the national MPs as representatives through elections. With the authorising constituency given by the national status of the parliamentarian, the key variable in our analysis is the affected constituency of the claim and the way it is related to the

Table 1. Modes of Representative Claims and Measurements.

Criterion	National representation	Transnational representation	Supranational representation
Affected constituency	National citizens	Foreign citizens	Overarching citizenry
Foreign interest representation	None or negatively (external constraint)	Positive	None (distinction obsolete)

authorising constituency – what Lucy Kinski (2018) refers to as the ‘representative focus’. In this respect, we distinguish ‘transnational representation’, in which the affected constituency is external to the authorising constituency, from ‘national representation’, in which the two constituencies coincide. Furthermore, we distinguish a third possibility, which we label ‘supranational representation’ and which is of particular relevance in the context of the EU. Supranational representation involves claims in which the authorising, national constituency is included as part of an overarching affected constituency, typically something like the ‘collective European interest’ or the ‘European people at large’.

Concretely, whenever we encounter a representative claim, the mode of representation is essentially determined by two operational criteria: who is represented (explicit and positive reference to the affected constituency: national, transnational and supranational) and how are foreign interests referred to? These two tests allow us to identify transnational representation as a distinctive mode of representation that involves political position-taking on behalf of foreign interests and to distinguish it from the alternative – national and supranational – modes of representation (Table 1).

Purely national representation speaks for national interests only. Such claims either make no reference to foreign nationals or refer to them negatively. For example, a national MP speaks exclusively for her country’s national interest or her national electorate without any regard to the grievances of foreign nationals. Alternatively, she may refer to another state’s interest purely as a constraint on her own representative room to manoeuvre. Transnational representative claims are distinguished from the former by the fact that they include an explicit and positive reference to foreign nationals. Specifically, these references are considered positive, whenever the claimant ‘speaks for or about’ (Saward, 2006: 305) these foreign citizens. Speaking for foreign citizens, the claimant directly claims to represent their interests or shows herself accountable towards them. Speaking about these foreign nationals, claimants refer to their needs or problems, costs and benefits, caused by a political action. Empirically, such representative claims can take different shapes including the claim to ‘represent the interests of a person, [...] to embody the needs of a group of people, to stand for the preferences of a country or a region’ (Saward, 2010: 38). In turn, supranational representative claims refer to an overarching citizenry above the nation state. As in such supranational claims all concerns (national and foreign) are effectively subsumed under an overarching common good, the distinction between national and foreign citizens becomes obsolete. In sum, only in transnational representation, foreign citizens are represented in that the claimant actively and positively speaks for or about their concerns.

A further issue follows from the fact that even within a single claim we frequently encounter mixed references. Consider again the example from the introduction: while there is a clear transnational element in Schickhofer’s invocation of ‘how the people in Greece are doing’, he concludes by saying that ‘I stand by the Austrian interests, but we must also think in terms of Europe and the people of Greece’. In doing so, he essentially

covers the whole sequence from national to supranational and transnational representation. To take account of such cases, we use two classes to operationalise transnational representation, a pure one and a mixed one. For the former, representation is transnational only if an MP positively and exclusively refers to foreign citizens in a representative claim (Pure Transnationalism). For the latter, representation is already transnational the moment an MP positively, yet not necessarily exclusively, refers to foreign citizens in a representative claim (Mixed Transnationalism). Our second measure adds to the pure transnational claims those that also refer to other modes of representation, be they national or supranational.

Case Study and Expectations

As a first exploration of the forms and incidence of transnational representation, we present a case study in which we apply our conceptualisation to parliamentary (plenary) debates on the EFSF in the lower houses of parliament in Austria, Germany and Ireland. The EFSF as the first, ad hoc, Eurozone bailout mechanism is particularly suitable for this purpose because it was concerned with economic and political interdependence, with most of the debate focusing on the fate of ‘foreign’ countries. As these discussions have been politicised along national lines (cf. Maatsch, 2016), our sample includes parliaments from countries with varied positions in the debate, creditor (Austria and Germany) as well as debtor countries (Ireland), and a large country (Germany) as well as two smaller ones (Austria and Ireland).

Altogether, the three parliaments dedicated 11 plenary debates to the EFSF in 2010 and 2011: three in Austria, four in Germany, and four in Ireland (see Online Appendix 1). The verbatim reports of these parliamentary debates were manually coded for representative claims according to the operationalisation presented in the previous section (see Online Appendix 3 for the codebook). This yielded 490 representative claims.²

In the next section, we present our descriptive, qualitative and quantitative findings on the occurrence of transnational representation among these claims. The case study emphatically involves only a first test of concept. Its main purpose is to demonstrate that transnational representation takes place, to illustrate the different forms it takes in practice and to get a sense of its place in parliamentary debates. Still, beyond qualitative illustrations, we want to show that, as a form of representative claims, transnational representation allows for systematic and comparative analysis. Given the nature of this analysis as a case study, we limit ourselves to presenting some initial bivariate analyses of the prevalence of transnational representation across different parliamentary systems and different kinds of parliamentarians.

To structure these analyses, it is useful to explicate the kind of findings we anticipate. As regards the kind of parliamentary systems that we expect to be most hospitable to transnational representation in the context of the EFSF, two lines of explanation suggest themselves. The first line of explanation departs from the particular characteristics of the parliamentary systems involved. The main variable that we consider in this respect are the formal powers and strength that parliaments enjoy in EU affairs as it is commonly measured in the literature on national parliaments in the EU (Auel et al., 2015; Winzen, 2017). The underlying causal mechanism is that the more MPs are empowered to engage with EU affairs, the more we expect them to perceive and identify with the interests of other European peoples. We therefore expect transnational representation to be more prevalent in parliaments that are relatively powerful in EU affairs.

A second line of explanation rather departs from the EU's order as a whole and considers the place of each parliament's country within it. As the decisions of more powerful countries are more likely to have an impact on the citizens of others, one would expect their parliamentarians to be more prone to engage in transnational representation. In the context of the EFSF – and indeed in the context of the EU in general – the position of Germany stands out as it is the biggest and economically most powerful EU member state. Still, there is also a significant difference between Austria and Ireland, as the first ranked among the so-called 'creditor' states while Ireland became a recipient of the EFSF by the end of 2010. As that moment falls in the midst of our collected data (which cover 2010 and 2011), we can actually establish whether the change in Ireland's position in the EFSF made any difference to its parliamentarians' inclination to engage in transnational representation.

Turning to possible variations between parliamentarians, the critical question is whether we expect transnational representation to be genuinely motivated by a sense of transnational solidarity and interdependence or whether it is above all an instrument that is strategically employed in the political process to expose one's opponents as morally deficient. This is not a question we can settle in the context of this analysis, especially since we only look at claims on face value and have no means to independently gauge parliamentarians' intentions (cf. Markovits, 2006). Still, we can offer some cues by considering how transnational representation is structured between proponents and opponents of the EFSF, between government and opposition and along the party-political spectrum. We can expect transnational claims to be adopted both by supporters and opponents of the EFSF, albeit on rather opposing grounds. Proponents of EFSF support to Greece may rely on a sense of transnational representation to give wider moral credence to their position. Yet, given how contested the austerity conditions attached to the loan package were, one can also imagine opponents to appeal to the plight imposed on the people of Greece.

However, more compelling cues on the exact drivers of transnational motivation can be derived from whether or not one is associated with the opposition and from one's party's ideology. If transnational representation is merely a rhetorical tool for political posturing, then we expect its use to be mostly driven by the government–opposition divide, with opposition MPs invoking transnational representation to shame the government (contra Kinski, 2018 on Europeanised representation). In contrast, if transnational representation is genuinely a reflection of parliamentarians' sense of responsibility towards 'foreign' constituencies, we expect government opposition dynamics to be less relevant and ideological positions to be the main drivers of its use. In particular, we expect it to be more likely to occur among (certain) left-wing parties, which have a rather internationalist orientation (cf. Closa and Maatsch, 2014).

Observing Transnational Representation during the Eurozone Crisis

Analysing the 490 representative claims encountered in the 11 parliamentary debates, we find that, as one would expect, the vast majority (61.2%) of these claims involves pure national representation and exclusively refers to the national (authorising) constituency (Table 2). Still, we identify 8.4% of all representative claims by Austrian, German and Irish MPs to be purely transnational, that is, positively and exclusively referring to foreign citizens' concerns. When we add the 'mixed' representative claims

Table 2. Modes of Representation during EFSF Debates.

Type of claim	Total number of claims	Percentage	Pure TR (%)	Pure + Mixed TR (%)
National	300	61.2		
Supranational	55	11.2		
(Supra-)National	31	6.3		
Transnational	41	8.4	8.4	8.4
(Trans-)National	47	9.6		9.6
Trans-/Supranational	13	2.7		2.7
(Trans-/Supra)National	3	0.6		0.6
Total	490	100.0	8.4	21.2

EFSF: European Financial Stability Facility; TR: transnational representation.

that have a positive and explicit transnational element but also include national and/or supranational references, the share of claims containing at least a transnational dimension rises to 21.2%.

Thus, approximately every fifth representative claim in the sample has a transnational representative dimension. While it is impossible to generalise from this particular debate, such a share is very much in line with indications from extant empirical research. For instance, in her study on women's representation in the Belgian national parliament, Erzeel (2012: 38) finds 10% of representative claims by Belgian MPs to refer to women in foreign countries. Investigating representative pluralism in national parliamentary debate, de Wilde (2012) shows that national EU budget debates in Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands feature representative references to other EU member states (9.4%) and even non-EU countries (17.0%). Finally, Kinski's (2018) analysis of Europeanised representation during Eurozone crisis debates uncovers that 39% of all representative claims have a Europeanised dimension, that is, at least include a transnational and/or supranational representative reference.³

When we consider the cases of transnational representation more closely, they clearly reflect how an issue like the EFSF calls upon MPs to consider interests that go beyond their national constituency. What is more, this awareness is not limited to those MPs that are most open to those foreign interests, as is illustrated by the case of Robert Lugar, a former member of the right-wing populist Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) who is an independent MP at the time of the EFSF debates. Lugar explicitly refers to the different modes of representation as the underlying dividing line between national MPs:

There is a difference of opinion about *which* people deserves our attention. There are parties in this House who believe that we are the people's representatives in the Austrian Parliament and are therefore obliged to the *Austrian* people. And there are other MPs here who are spanning this a bit further and who also hold the European people dear to their heart. It may very well be legitimate if you think about Greece and Portugal and the peoples of these countries and if you do not want them to be hit by adversities (Robert Lugar, independent MP (former BZÖ), EFSF Expansion, Austria, 30 September 2011 (emphasis in original)).

Eventually, however, he concludes, 'That is all: the interest of the Austrians because we are in the Austrian parliament, we are elected by Austrians and that is why we represent Austrian interests'. While Lugar thus determinately reverts to national representation, more generally we find that *once* MPs reference foreign interests, they are likely to recognise that

these should have a bearing on their decision-making and need to be somehow balanced against the interests of the national constituency. Such a balancing approach is for instance reflected in the argument of Michael Schickhofer cited in the introduction.

As we saw, 12.9% of representative claims combine transnational representation with another mode of representation. Indeed, transnational representation is the only mode of representation that appears more often in a mixed than in a pure (8.4%) form. While Schickhofer balances different national interests, we also find representative claims that challenge the priority of national identity and define their relevant constituency in terms of specific societal groups. A nice example of that comes from Sabine Leidig, MP, for *Die Linke* in Germany who submits:

We should not forget that there are also top and bottom in Europe. *Employees in Greece* are much closer to *employees here* when it comes to enforcing *common interests* (Sabine Leidig, Left Party, Germany, EFSF Expansion, 29 September 2011 (emphasis added)).

Leidig thus connects the interests of the Greek workers with those of the German workers and opposes them to the elites in both countries. Interestingly, we find that members of the populist far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) also invoke a transnational class divide with a strong focus on ordinary citizens opposing a transnational economic elite:

Not a single *Greek*, not a single *Greek* citizen, will benefit from this [EFSF], not a single *Austrian* will have any advantage from it, but the gentlemen bank directors [...] will be pleased because in reality you [the government] serve the banks with this. Ultimately, you again get the banks out of a tight spot, those banks that were busy speculating (Heinz-Christian Strache, FPÖ, Austria, EFSF Installation, 19 May 2010 (emphasis added)).

Once we turn to the variation between the three parliaments (Table 3), we find a notable difference between the German MPs, among whom we find the highest share of (at least partly) transnational claims in the EFSF debates at 28.4%, and their colleagues in Austria (20.5%) and Ireland (13.8%). Furthermore, from 2010 (setting up the EFSF) to 2011 (expansion of the EFSF), the share of transnational claims increases in all three national parliaments. This increase is most pronounced in Germany, while Ireland keeps the lowest degree of transnational representation in the sample and the highest share of purely national representative claims (74% as compared with 59% in Austria and 53 in Germany).

On a first look, these differences seem indicative of the strong and prominent role that Germany played in these debates while Ireland found itself in a more peripheral and dependent role. Notably, zooming in on the change from 2010 to 2011, the share of transnational claims in Ireland did not increase much as the country went from being a creditor country to the EFSF to becoming a recipient from the end of 2010 onwards. One way to interpret this finding is to assume that, once crisis hits hard, MPs put their own constituents first. In that sense, transnational representation may well be a 'luxury' that is most affordable in countries that are economically healthy and can claim a prominent position in the international constellation. However, the rather consistent differences between parliaments also give credence to the suggestions that transnational representation very much reflects structural constants in the powers and predispositions of the parliaments. Indeed, the observed differences align quite well with the Austrian Nationalrat and the German Bundestag being institutionally strong parliaments and the Irish Dáil comparably weak in EU affairs (Auel et al., 2015: 79). Given that we only look at three parliaments

Table 3. Share of Transnational Claims per National Parliament.

	2010	2011	Overall
Austria	17.9 (7.1)	22.6 (3.8)	20.5 (5.3)
Germany	9.8 (6.6)	39.6 (21.8)	28.4 (16.1)
Ireland	10.8 (2.7)	14.9 (4.0)	13.8 (3.6)

Percentage of pure and mixed transnational claims; pure transnational claims between brackets. Strong association between national parliament and time with transnational claims ($V=0.25^{***}$ [$p < 0.001$] for both pure and pure + mixed TR, see also Online Appendix 5).

here, we cannot, however, conclusively answer what it is that drives the country differences we observe.

Turning to the different kinds of parliamentarians that engage in transnational representation, we find that it is employed both to argue in support of the EFSF as well as against it. Typically, parliamentarians on the far-left appeal to the Greek people to justify their opposition to the EFSF by insisting that the instrument harms them. A nice example is the following:

As has already been mentioned, it is not the people responsible and those profiting from the crisis who are held to account – and that is a reason to vote against this bailout – but the whole thing is carried out at the expense of the majority of the population. I was shocked when I was in *Greece* a few weeks ago and talked to *many people*. Their living conditions are very difficult. Many feel humiliated by this policy, which is also driven by the German federal government. [...] I repeat: that is shameful. That is why I voted against the rescue package today. [...] I support the demand of the Greeks, expressed on Syntagma Square in Athens. These people say: we need a comprehensive debt haircut for Greece; otherwise, there will be no future for our country (Heike Hänsel, Left Party, Germany, EFSF Expansion, 29 September 2011 (emphasis added)).

However, it is exactly this kind of argumentation and its underlying idea of solidarity that are challenged by German MP Jürgen Trittin, then leader of the Green parliamentary party group:

Dear Gregor Gysi [then *Die Linke* parliamentary party group leader], those who are for Europe, those who are for international solidarity, must not refuse an instrument today [EFSF] that serves to protect *member states of the European Union* from speculation on the financial markets (Jürgen Trittin, Green Party, Germany, EFSF Expansion, 29 September 2011 (emphasis added)).

The Greens' criticism of the far-left opponents of the EFSF is shared by their colleagues from both left and right centre parties. In the end, however, the incidence of transnational claims is twice as high (30.7%) on the side of opponents of the EFSF as it is among its supporters (16.1%; Table 4).

This prevalence of transnational claims among opponents of the EFSF points to the importance of the difference between government and opposition (Figure 2). Naturally, MPs from the governing majority are committed to support the EFSF, as the fund was a common decision among the Eurozone governments by which they sought to 'save' the Member States in economic distress. However, we find that government MPs tend to rely on national or supranational claims (that rely on functional interdependence rather than a sense of solidarity), while transnational claims are much more often invoked by the

Table 4. Transnational Representation and Voting on the EFSF.

Type of claim	Claims by MPs who voted			Total
	In favour	Against	Abstained	
Pure + mixed TR	16.1% (45)	30.7% (59)	0% (0)	21.2% (104)
Other	83.9% (235)	69.3% (133)	100% (18)	78.8% (386)
Total (N= 100%)	280	192	18	490

EFSF: European Financial Stability Facility; TR: transnational representation.
 Cramer’s V of 0.20*** [p < 0.001] shows a moderate relationship between voting behaviour and transnational representative claims making.

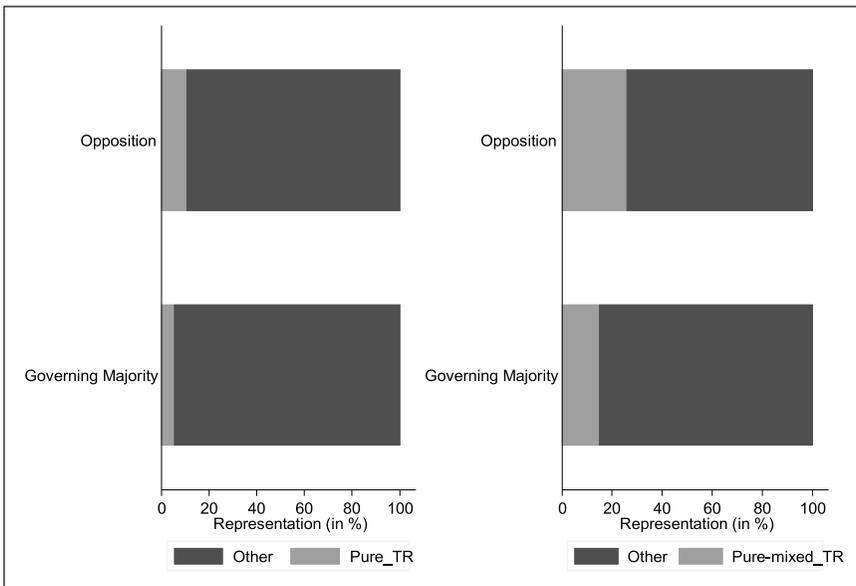


Figure 1. Transnational Representation Governing Majority – Opposition (in %).
 V=0.10* [p < 0.05] for pure transnational claims; V=0.13** [p < 0.01] for pure and mixed transnational claims.

opposition (Figure 1). Claims made by MPs who belong to the governing majority are about half as likely to exclusively refer to, or at least to include a reference to, foreign EU citizens as claims made by their colleagues from opposition parties.

Finally, to shed further light on the mechanisms underlying these patterns, we unpack the use of transnational claims at the level of parties, although the interpretation of these findings warrants some caution given the limited number of cases for some of the parties. When we plot the prevalence of transnational claims against the ideological distribution of political parties on the left-right scale (Figure 2), it turns out that, on average, the more right-wing a party is, the less likely it is for its MPs to engage in transnational representative claims. This relationship is significant and rather strong for both pure and mixed transnational claims combined (right-hand panel, correlation coefficient of -0.6*), while it is not significant for pure transnational claims only (left-hand panel). What is more, it is not so much the Europhile mainstream parties but rather Eurosceptic parties on the left

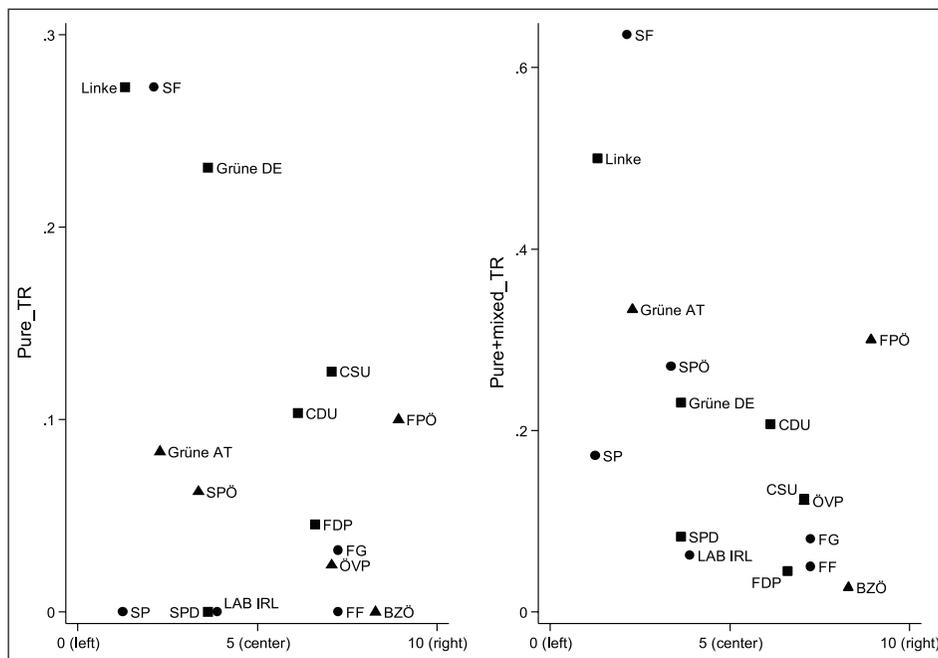


Figure 2. Transnational Representation Left-right Position (in %).

Left-right scaling based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010 (Bakker et al., 2015).

(*Die Linke* in Germany and *Sinn Féin* in Ireland) that seem to be the main drivers of transnational representation in national parliamentary debates on the EFSF. As was already illustrated above, these parties invoke the plight of the Greek people to oppose the EFSF measures. Among the proponents of the EFSF, these arguments are countered by politicians from the Green and Social Democratic parties who argue that the interests of the Greeks are best served by the bailout. However, more often than not, these centre-left MPs rely on national or supranational claims to justify their support.

Still, transnational representation is not the preserve of the left alone. For one, we find the populist FPÖ to be a noteworthy outlier on the right with a notably high degree of transnational representation. Austrian FPÖ MPs tend to refer to the ordinary citizens and the ‘little man in the street’ in a populist fashion but, surprisingly, they do not do so only with regard to their national constituency, but also include, for instance, ordinary Greek citizens when they go beyond national borders:

You [the governing coalition] splash € 22 billion, not a single Cent of which will arrive at *the ordinary people in Greece*. You know that as well as I do. Mr. Cap [then social democratic parliamentary party group leader] is already looking away, because the last remnants of his conscience are beginning to squeeze him (Herbert Kickl, Freedom Party of Austria, Austria, EFSF Installation, 19 May 2010 (emphasis added)).

The exceptional nature of this strategy is underlined by the fact that the BZÖ, the FPÖ’s then competitor on the populist right, does not engage in any transnational representation but chooses to focus exclusively on the national constituency.

On occasion, centre-right politicians also make transnational claims, as is evidenced by this quote from one of the main protagonists of the handling of the Eurozone crisis:

We understand the problems in *Greece*. As I said in an earlier debate, reducing the deficits brings heavy burdens on the population that is *affected*. Nobody should talk about it with malice. However, if you incur too much debt for years, you cannot avoid adaptive measures (Wolfgang Schäuble, Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Germany, EFSF Expansion, 8 September 2011 (emphasis added)).

At the same time, Schäuble's statement is also quite typical for the centre-right in that it is directly accompanied with an insistence that any credit package is subject to strict conditionality.

Conclusion and Research Agenda

In this article, we have called attention to transnational representation as an alternative perspective on how to reconcile democratic representation in national parliaments with the widening range of politically affected interests due to international interdependencies. We have located the notion of transnational representation in the context of the broader literature to highlight how it combines insights from the constructivist turn in representation studies with a focus on national parliaments as well-established sites for political representation. We have furthermore argued for two important merits of the notion of transnational representation. First, the broader theoretical claim is that transnational representation offers a new approach to the challenge of aligning political representation with affected interests under conditions of internationalisation. The more specific empirical claim is that transnational representation offers a tool to analyse how and to what extent internationalisation affects representation in national parliaments.

Speaking to the literature on democracy beyond the nation state, we suggest that transnational representation points towards a distinct way in which the internationalisation of politics can be accommodated by parliamentary politics that does not necessarily rely on parliamentary institution-building at the supranational level or on the involvement of non-electoral representatives. Instead, relying on our age-old national parliamentary institutions, we can imagine national representatives to be drawn into transnational debates that serve to create argumentative linkages across national borders. Systematically tracking the conditions under which such transnational representation occurs, the effects that it has and its legitimacy in the eyes of the foreign affected interests can offer new insights into the ability of democratic representation to respond to the internationalisation of politics.

To demonstrate the empirical relevance of transnational representation, we have presented the findings of a case study of representative claims in debates on the EFSF in the national parliaments of Germany, Austria and Ireland. The case study demonstrates that transnational representation does take place when national parliaments debate about issues such as the response to the Eurozone crisis. It illustrates that MPs can make transnational claims to quite different effects, most notably both in support and in opposition to a proposal. One noteworthy finding is that national parliamentarians often combine claims, and hence avoid simply taking a nationalist, a European or a 'foreign' side. Instead, their deliberate recognition of these different interests suggests that they play an active, discursive role in trying to mediate between them. Furthermore, our analysis

suggests that transnational representation is more likely to take place in parliaments that enjoy greater powers in EU affairs.

The empirical analysis also dispels all too idealistic expectations of transnational representation. For sure, there is evidence that transnational representation is more likely to be adopted by (left-wing) parties with more internationalist orientations. However, we also find that it is a mode of representation that is above all mobilised by the opposition against the government and against the proposed EU measures.

The question of the underlying motivation and sincerity is a first direction where transnational representation asks for further exploration. It may well be that transnational representation is above all a device for the opposition to embarrass the government for the effects its proposed policies have on foreign constituencies. Still, transnational representation is certainly not the exclusive preserve of the opposition, as it is also employed by those favouring the proposed policies, albeit to a more limited extent. What is more, even if the initial motivation is strategic, that does not undermine the fact that transnational representation brings the interests of foreigners into parliamentary debate and forces democratic representatives to justify their decisions with reference to them. In that sense, the effectiveness of transnational representation in affecting parliamentary debate and decision-making is in principle independent of the motivations of its advocates. Indeed, in the exchanges between the Left Party and the Greens in the German Bundestag cited above, we already saw how transnational representation can become the subject of parliamentary debate. Further research can more systematically look at the reception of transnational representation by fellow parliamentarians, the responses it elicits, and its place in the overall parliamentary debates.

A related aspect is to further explore the different ways in which transnational representation can be linked to forms of political identification that transcend national boundaries. If there are actual transnational political movements – for instance, on the basis of class, identity or issues (climate) – parliamentarians that identify with these movements can invoke transnational representation to have these interests register in national parliaments. The case above of *Die Linke* MP Sabine Leidig appealing to the shared interests between German and Greek employees appears as an example of this, but such observations would be even more interesting if we were to find them reciprocated in Greece and indeed to be coordinated across a range of parliaments.

Furthermore, the scope of our case study was limited. One would like to examine many more parliaments as well as different kinds of policy issues. Obviously, the handling of the Eurozone crisis is a rather specific case as it was highly salient and involved distinct redistributive issues across national lines. We do not know whether similar patterns would be found if we turned to regulatory or institutional affairs. Is there, for instance, any transnational representation of the distinctive interests of the British people in the parliamentary debates on Brexit that are held on the continent? We would also want to examine cases that go beyond the EU confines, like EU trade or association agreements with third countries, or indeed global agreements like the ones on fighting climate change.

Indeed, while our focus has been on national interactions in the context of European cooperation, this kind of analysis can be stretched across multiple levels of political rule. One might analyse whether there are members of the European Parliament who identify with the interests of third countries. On the other hand, one can also turn to local and regional politics to analyse how politicians relate to the interests of other regions affected by their decisions. In doing so, one might look for variation between the interests of regions within the same state and regions across the national border. Still, we would

maintain that the EU context is of particular interest because it is here that we witness a major mismatch between greatly increased levels of social and institutional interdependence while political identification and representation remain mostly concentrated at the lower, national level.

In the end, the concept of transnational representation also raises normative questions that merit further exploration. Primary among these is the question how the validity and legitimacy of the representative claims staked on behalf of foreign interests is to be assessed and, more practically, whether within an interdependent polity like the EU, any mechanisms could be envisaged to facilitate such assessment. To some extent, these observations simply reinforce Saward's argument that representation is nothing but a claim that remains open to contestation, which in principle applies as much to national relations of representations as it does to transnational ones. Importantly, however, within national polities, the totality of representative claims is eventually subject to the verdict of the electorate at the next elections. In contrast, as much as transnational representation may promise a mechanism to internalise foreign interests into national parliaments, it does not come with any institutional controls. Under these conditions, it is easy enough to think of cases in which parliamentarians claim to represent interests beyond their formal constituency in ways that are deeply problematic, paternalistic and illegitimate. The prime example would be domestic justifications of colonialism, but one can also think of examples in the context of humanitarian intervention and development aid. Such examples underline that anything like transnational representation may eventually remain problematic without institutional means for the affected constituency to check and respond to the claims made on its behalf.

However, in a world of ever-increasing interdependencies, some sense of responsibility towards foreign interests, as displayed by transnational representation, is better than none at all. What is more, as is also suggested by Saward, the very making of a representative claim opens up a platform for political debate; it invites in a way the affected constituency into the discussion and gives it a legitimate entry-point into the decision-making process. Importantly, the quasi-constitutional framework of the EU has some characteristics that can help to make transnational representation a more effective and legitimate force. While the EU treaties certainly do not guarantee the absence of interstate power and the mutual observation of each other's well-being, they do enshrine the permanency of the cooperation, which makes parliaments and their voters well aware that they are bound to each other for the long-term. These dynamics are reinforced by the fact that all EU member states are democracies and hence allow in principle for the expression of a plurality of interests in their domestic decision-making. Thus, even if 'foreign' interests are unlikely to acquire direct access rights in national parliaments, one can envisage that transnational representation is reinforced and may, over time, result in some kind of democratic 'conversation' across parliaments (cf. Weiler, 1996).

Eventually, transnational representation is not going to 'take over' in national parliamentary debates, as there is every reason to believe that most MPs will prioritise national commitments. Still, even a limited share of transnational claims that invoke the interests of foreign peoples literally broadens the debate and is bound to provoke a dialogue between national interests and those of others. In that way, transnational representation can have a transformative impact on debates in national parliaments, the nature of collective will-formation and indeed the (self-)understanding of the relevant polity. It thus facilitates the alignment of national political processes with the interdependencies created by regional cooperation or international cooperation more broadly.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Quotations in original language, see Online Appendix 2.
2. We conducted intra- and inter-coder reliability tests for unitising and coding (see Online Appendix 4), calculating the Holsti coefficient and Krippendorff’s alpha for all variables individually. Both tests exceed accepted standards (Krippendorff, 2013; Lombard et al., 2002).
3. At first, this degree of transnationalisation seems at odds with Closa and Maatsch (2014) who do not find many references to solidarity with citizens from countries adversely hit by the Eurozone crisis. Importantly, however, transnational representation is not only restricted to solidarity claims with foreign citizens but also includes references to their (economic) interests.

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