EUROSPHERE COUNTRY REPORTS

Diversity and the European Public Sphere
The Case of United Kingdom

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	SELECTED ORGANIZATIONS	LINKS
POLITICAL PARTIES	Labour Party	institutional data
		interview data
	Conservatives Party	institutional data
		interview data
	Plaid Cymru	institutional data
		interview data
SMOs/NGOs	No Borders	institutional data
		interview data
	The Freedom Association	institutional data
		interview data
	The Anti-Poverty Network Cymru	institutional data
		interview data
THINK TANKS	Federal Trust	institutional data
		interview data
	Centre for European Reform	institutional data
		interview data
	Bruges Group	institutional data
		interview data
PRINT MEDIA	The Guardian	institutional data
		interview data
	The Daily Telegraph	institutional data
		interview data
	The Sun	institutional data
		interview data
BROADCAST MEDIA	BBC	institutional data
		coded data
	ITV	institutional data
		coded data

Foreword

Hakan G. Sicakkan

The present report is one of the sixteen country studies that have been produced by the EUROSPHERE Consortium. EUROSPHERE is an integrated project which is funded by the European Commission within the EU's 6th Framework Programme. The EUROSPHERE Consortium comprises seventeen European universities and research institutes and approximately 100 researchers work in the project's different parts and phases. Two of our partners have now left the Consortium after having successfully completed their tasks in the project. The project is coordinated by this author on behalf of the University of Bergen. EUROSPHERE was launched in February 2007 and will go on until March 2012.

The main objective of EUROSPHERE is to create innovative perspectives on the European public spheres and to identify the conditions that enable or undermine the articulation of democratic and inclusive European public spheres. The focus is on how participation of different kinds of social and political actors in the public debates – political parties, social movement and non-governmental organizations, think tanks and research institutes, and newspapers and TV broadcasters – shape the articulation and structuring of the emerging public European public sphere. The research plan of the project comprises synchronized data collection and analysis activities in sixteen countries as well as creation of a EUROSPHERE Knowledgebase on the European organizations that are participating in public debates at local, national and European levels. In addition to regular research and academic dissemination activities, EUROSPHERE organizes four large-scale international conferences, two European Forums, and four researcher training and PhD courses.

The EUROSPHERE Country Reports Series represents the finalization of the very first step of a comprehensive comparative research programme. The aim of this series is to provide a brief summary of a huge data material collected by the project researchers. Along with the EUROSPHERE Knowledgebase that we created, these reports will be a basis and data search guide for the forthcoming comparative studies of sixteen countries. Therefore, the primary readership target of these reports is the EUROSPHERE researchers who are to conduct twelve inter-related comparative studies of different aspects of the European public spheres. This primary function of the report series necessitated prioritization of a descriptive approach at this stage of our research. Explanations of the findings and applications of theory are identified in our plans as the task of the work groups who will do the comparative analyses, as we believe cross-contextual comparisons and understanding of the particularities of specific contexts should go together in order to obtain a more enhanced picture of reality.

More information about EUROSPHERE can be found in our frequently visited webpage. My task in this foreword is to give the background of the *EUROSPHERE Country Report Series*. In the following, I will briefly present the logic behind the project and the methodological approaches in selection of the cases – that is, organizations and respondents.

EUROSPHERE in a Nutshell

Earlier research on the European Public Sphere (EPS) has made crucial contributions to our understanding of the making of today's Europe. It has shown us that, under current conditions, it is difficult to realize a common EPS in the foreseeable future, but that there are traces of a EPS in the making on some policy issues. Most importantly, it has drawn our attention to the integrative, democratizing, legitimizing, and meaning-creating roles of the public sphere. The focus on EPS as a means of achieving democratic legitimacy at the European level can easily be justified normatively, but, has not been substantiated empirically, and earlier research teaches us little about how public sphere can be inclusive in the European context of deep and complex diversities. Existence of a near-perfect procedural or deliberative democracy, including a public sphere where citizens freely exercise their rights of free speech, assembly, critique, deliberation, opposition, etc in order to form the public will is a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy. If we accept that any notion of state legitimacy produces a corresponding notion of legitimacy of individuals, it is important to inquire into what forms of public sphere include/exclude which groups, to what degree, and on which matters.

In this sense, the EUROSPHERE project takes a complementary normative starting point with a focus on inclusion/exclusion in and at the boundaries of public spheres. It is urgent to investigate whether the existing focus on democratic legitimacy in EPS studies has inadvertently led to emergence of new criteria for defining who the legitimate participants of the public sphere are or should be. Indeed, it has been empirically shown in numerous sociological and social anthropological studies of national public spaces that, in contexts of diversity, such standards can be discriminatory, marginalizing, and excluding.[1] As a supplement to the contributions made by the democratic legitimacy debate in empirical EPS studies, EUROSPHERE conceptualizes the European Public Sphere as a means of inclusion for democracy. Thereby, the project both contests and complements the existing academic work on the EPS with the following overall research question:

> Are inclusive European public spheres (EPS) possible under conditions of complex diversity; national path dependencies of polity forms, institutions and policies; multilevel governance; and shifting boundaries within and of the EU?

The word "inclusive", combined with the project's sub-title "towards a citizens' Europe" is a manifestation of our overall normative orientation towards inclusion and accommodation of diversity in the public spheres of liberal democracies. At the same time, this is also an empirical research orientation posited against the tendency of earlier European research to focus primarily on the procedures, mechanisms, and legitimizing and democratizing functions of public spheres. This focus has left the substantial question of "what kind of diversity and openness are allowed in public spheres" – i.e., the main normative question posed to earlier public sphere research by many diversity, gender, minority, race, sexuality, disability, and marginalization researchers – mostly unanswered in the existing research on a EPS. EUROSPHERE is thus an attempt to remedy this.

This overall research question brings into focus the different approaches to inclusion and diversity, which also impinge upon how one envisions public sphere, politics, society, and the

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[1] In general, a huge body of contemporary race, ethnicity, minority and migrant integration research; gender and gay studies; research on the disabled; and on other marginalized groups strengthen the view that universalistic discourses and rules of participation/communication in public debates result in exclusion of some groups. For examples of theoretical discussions about these, see, among many others: Bader (1995), Fraser (1992, 2007), Sandel (1998), Sicakkan (2004, 2005, 2008), Taylor (2001, et al 1994), Walzer (1983), Young (1990, 1995, 1998).

state. Specifically, it is possible to view inclusion as assimilation, integration, institutional segregation in a shared polity, or simply as co-existence under a minimal state. Likewise, it is possible to view diversity in terms of collective or individual identities and belongings; essentialized collective identities like ethnicity, race, sex, religion, nation; or in terms of constructed group or individual identities. This all depends on the ontological beliefs of the viewer, and not necessarily on reality. Needless to say, each of these ontological priorities includes certain groups and individuals as the prime and relevant components of society, on which public sphere and political institutions are to be based, and, also, which policymaking should address. While determining the relevancy or primacy of groups, individuals, and issues/problems, each of these approaches consequently excludes certain groups, individuals, and themes based on their ontological priorities.[2]

Ontologies and normative visions derived thereof have – through their exclusions and inclusions – direct consequences for, among other things, notions of politics, society, polity, and citizenship.[3] These different ontological points of departure and their normative exhortations have serious consequences for the definition of the European public sphere, European diversity, European Polity, and designs of empirical research on these phenomena. After choosing any one of these approaches, the resulting research design will undoubtedly reinforce certain visions of society, polity, and public sphere, and reproduce and justify certain inclusions/ exclusions from the public sphere. If research ought to be committed to nourishing our restless wonder about how society and politics is possible (as opposed to how a certain vision of society and politics can be realized), it is of utmost importance to assess which models of a EPS are more inclusive than others in a given context.

Although mainstream approaches state that the public sphere is a space located between the state and civil society, they hold that public spheres are not limited to countries' borders. Participation in the public sphere is not membership based, and everybody can freely take part in it. However, if the public sphere is a space between the state and civil society, between citizens and political institutions, its external boundaries are drawn by its very definition: it must have external boundaries in terms of who inhabits it and who speaks in it. In reality, "outsiders" are not expected to take party or "intervene" in "our own" matters; it is the right of those who are directly affected by state actions to speak in the public sphere. Earlier research on EPS shows that there is little "foreign" appearance in national public spheres on themes of internal relevance compared to the appearances of national actors.[4] External boundaries of the public spheres must, then, be expected to follow polities' borders, expansions of states' territories (unifications, secessions, enlargements, invasions), and the movements of people (transnational and global politics emerging from migration and other sorts of mobility) – because it is these phenomena that affect the composition of the participants in a public sphere. Therefore, polity borders have to be taken as a relevant dimension of the public sphere's external boundaries. However, by polity borders, one should understand the zone of a state's power and influence in and beyond physical borders. Indeed, this is presently taking place in the European Union: boundaries of national public spheres are gradually changing, as the EU's political institutions become relevant as a new political center and increase their influence on citizens' lives. Earlier findings indicating the EPS' presence on certain themes, and not on others, can be explained by EU's differing influence on the

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[2] I do not have enough space here to give an overview of the details of relevant ontological approaches, nor to list what each ontology excludes. However, I did this in my earlier work (cf. Sicakkan 2004, 2005, 20006, 2008).
[3] It is also a fact that some "rival" normative theories have ended up with similar policy proposals concerning e.g. citizenship, migration and asylum policy, etc. Although this is true at the policy level, the disagreements about models remain strong and still have consequences for which trade-offs are possible.
[4] Peters 2006

respective themes.[5] Therefore, one should expect to observe a more clearly present EPS on, say, enlargement and EU constitution issues than on policy issues concerning citizenship and internal diversity – because the EU has attempted to exert central influence concerning the former.

Secondly, if the public sphere is a space inhabited by state institutions, individuals, groups, civil society organizations, etc, then, processes of internal inclusion, marginalization and exclusion that are in place in all human interactions must be expected to be in full force also in the public sphere. Issues of inclusion, marginalization, and exclusion are about internal power relations between the groups constituting the citizen body in a state, and they shape the social and political cleavage structures on which the political system and politics in a country is based. These power relations have historical roots in the initial geopolitical conditions at the onset of a country's state formation and nation building process. Indeed, state forms and regimes are based on such initial conditions prior to state formation processes.[6] It is largely these cleavage structures entrenched in diversity and power (defined in different ways in different historical contexts) that determine which inclusions/ exclusions and which notions of diversity are legitimate and relevant in the public sphere and in policymaking. Union states (e.g., UK), federal/confederal states (e.g., Germany, Switzerland), and unitary states (e.g., France, the Scandinavian countries) in Europe came into being as a result of the power relations between the groups in the diverse societies inhabiting the territory and public sphere of a political center that attempted to consolidate that territory.

This historical fact about the variation in the formation of the European states and their politics is the biggest challenge awaiting the Europeanists longing for a common EPS. If polity boundaries are relevant for the boundaries of a public sphere, then internal territorial power structures of a state should be expected to be reflected on the structure of its public sphere: in federal state forms with strong local governments, for example, the public sphere should be expected to be more segmented than in unitary states with a strong degree of centralization. If a public sphere is about politics between the rulers and the ruled, then a segmented political rule will simply result in a segmented public sphere. Indeed, observed rhetoric about, and practice regarding diversity in the European Union implies that national diversity is the only form of relevant diversity at European level politics.[7] European level politics simply does not relate to member states' internal diversity beyond passively accepting the normative approaches about the minority definition and minority rights developed by the *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE). When it comes to diversity issues, the balance of power between member states and European level institutions favors the member states, and if there is a European public sphere, it should be expected to be segmented along national boundaries with trans-Europeanization tendencies on certain themes. However, the variety of approaches to internal diversity in member states and the emerging complex trans-European multilevel governance system in Europe, which makes some decision-making levels redundant on certain policy issues, should be expected to make this depiction foggier than what the previous statement suggests. The question of which diversities are legitimate in the public sphere and considered relevant for policymaking in national and European public debates is, therefore, a key indicator of the prospects for a common European public sphere. EUROSPHERE thus aims to identify the *variations, as well as alignments and misalignments, between European and national level public debates*,

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[5] Latzer and Saurwein 2006

[6] Rokkan (1975), Sicakkan (2005, 2008).

[7] This does not mean that the EU ignores the internal diversity in its member states. However, the fact that the EU does not have a common definition of a national minority, leaves this question to its member states, and moreover bases its decision making systems primarily on nation states, justifies this view.

concerning which diversities are relevant for policymaking. Such a research effort also serves as an inquiry into the initial conditions of the EU-polity formation processes.

This (dangerously) brief discussion aimed to show the importance of identifying how polity, diversity, and public sphere constitute each other differently in different contexts. These three political phenomena subsist in each other and exist in symbiosis. This symbiotic co-existence is the biggest challenge for research attempting to identify the presence of an EPS in the present context of unpredictability about the direction of political development in the EU. In such attempts, it is thus reasonable to base research on multiple scenarios of political change.[8]
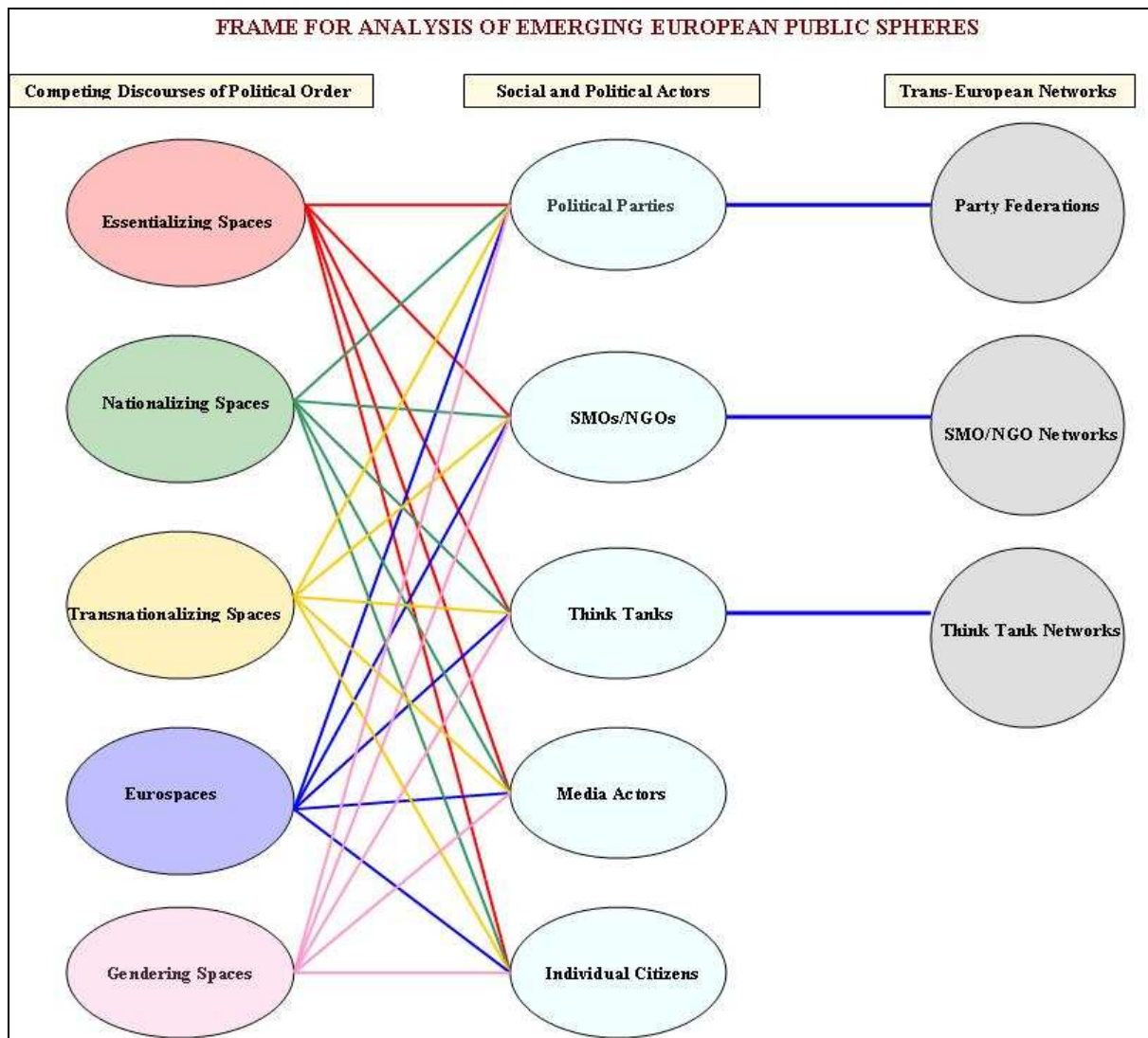
The empirical research programme of EUROSPHERE aims to explore whether it is possible to develop an inclusive public sphere in the European Union. Based on different scenarios and alternative combinations of different approaches to diversity, polity, and the public sphere, EUROSPHERE aims to identify the notions, discourses, and objectives that are in the process of becoming dominant in key European actors and political spaces, how these notions and objectives are spread and made relevant in different political contexts as well as in the context of the European Union politics, and what contestations and conflicts they create in policymaking. Therefore, the overall research question will be answered with a focus on the impact of two specific building blocks of European society, which are seen to be amongst the crucial factors impinging upon the shaping of a public sphere:

- *The roles of different types of social and political **actors** in the articulation of an inclusive EPS* – whether or how different types of social and political actors contribute to or impede the formation of a certain model of an EPS?
    - o   Individual citizens
    - o   Policy research institutes and think tanks
    - o   Political parties
    - o   Social movement / non-governmental organizations – SMOs/NGOs
    - o   Print and broadcast media

- *The impacts of different social and political **communicative spaces** on the articulation of an inclusive EPS* – whether or how different types of social and political spaces facilitate or impede the emergence of a certain model of an EPS?
    - o   Essentializing (ethnic/minority) spaces
    - o   Nationalizing spaces
    - o   Transnationalizing spaces
    - o   Eurospaces
    - o   Gendering spaces

These choices are not arbitrary: A focus on public sphere has to include citizens', institutional civil society actors', and mass media's framings of issues. Concerning institutions, one has to focus on key civil society actors operating and maneuvering in the public sphere. Furthermore, both citizens and civil society organizations still relate to and operate within the different types of public spaces that developed historically as components of the existing national public spheres, which will also have to remain as components of an emerging European public sphere for a long time and constitute the contexts in which a European public sphere can develop. It is therefore crucial to assess the impacts of different actors and public spaces and inquire into how they relate to the emergence of different types of European public sphere.

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[8] For more information about the scenarios being deployed in EUROSPHERE, see the project webpage.

EUROSPHERE's Approach to European Public Spheres

FRAME FOR ANALYSIS OF EMERGING EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERES

As illustrated in the above figure, the European public sphere is inhabited by:

- a set of historically-developed and already existing communicative public spaces (essentializing/minority, nationalizing, transnationalizing, Europeanizing and gendering spaces)
- a set of trans-European networks of organizations (we chose to look at party federations, networks of nongovernmental and social movement organizations, networks of think tanks)
- a set of national and sub-national level social and political actors (we chose to look at political parties, SMOs/NGOs, think tanks, media actors) that operate within, from and across the above mentioned communicative public spaces and trans-European networks of organizations
- individual citizens that operate within, from and across the above mentioned communicative public spaces and trans-European networks of organizations

For purposes of empirical research, the European public sphere is conceptualized in four different ways:

(1) as a set of already existing communicative / discursive public spaces that are increasingly more interconnected and overlapping with each other (horizontal and vertical interconnectedness between sub-national, national and transnational communicative public spaces)

(2) as a separate, emerging trans-European communicative / discursive space that comes in addition to, and complements and/or competes with, the historically developed existing communicative public spaces

(3) as a set of collective social and political actors (organizations) that are increasingly more interlinked and collaborate with each other beyond the existing national boundaries

(4) as a separate set of social and political actors that create European-level networks that come in addition to, and compete with, the already existing trans-European networks

In the current chaotic picture of citizens, organizations, communicative public spaces, and political institutions that interact, interconnect, and interlink with each other, social and political actors are facilitating or inhibiting the emergence of an inclusive European public sphere in different ways. In EUROSPHERE, citizens and organizations' roles in and contributions to the formation of a European public sphere are understood in terms of:

- the inter-linkages, inter-connectedness, and overlaps that they create or deter between the existing Europeanized and non-Europeanized communicative / discursive public spaces (essentializing/minority, nationalizing, transnationalizing, Europeanizing and gendering spaces)
- the new trans-European communicative / discursive spaces that they create or participate in or work against
- the vertical and horizontal trans-European networks of organizations that they create or participate in or work against
- the discourses about the European polity, diversity (including exclusion and inclusion, citizenship, minorities, mobility, migration, asylum, gender, etc) and the European public sphere that they bring into these networks and interconnected spaces

Indeed, all of the above processes of inter-connections, inter-linkages, and overlaps between communicative spaces and networks of organizations as well as a variety of discourses about Europe, the EU polity, and diversity are in place in today's Europe to some degree. Interconnectedness of existing communicative public spaces and inter-linkages between organizations (collective actors) beyond a variety of borders and boundaries constitute each other. It is the social and political actors' transgression of boundaries that create interconnectedness between Europe's communicative public spaces. On the other hand, it is the different degrees of openness / closure of the existing communicative public spaces that facilitate or obstruct such transgression. Hence, to understand the European public sphere, interconnectedness of spaces and networks of organizations are analyzed in one common research frame. One research challenge is thus to assess whether these can be viewed as parts and parcels of a European public sphere in the making. If so, how are these processes structuring the emerging European public sphere? Which types of inclusions and exclusions will a resulting public sphere form and what dominant discourses may it result in? Most importantly, in the normative framework of EUROSPHERE, which notions of a European public sphere are more democratic and inclusive than others?

Our interview questions and the format of the sixteen reports have been devised as a step towards answering these bigger questions. The readers of these reports will notice that each country report has three main sections addressing: (1) notions of diversity and ethno-national diversity policies, including also the themes of citizenship, international migration and political asylum, (2) visions about the political development of the EU and European integration, and (3) data about and views about the extent to which the selected organizations take part in the national and European level public debates.

EUROSPHERE Data

EUROSPHERE collects/deploys relevant data about the features of communicative public spaces, of social/political actors, and of individuals, whose effects on the articulation of a European public sphere are to be assessed at a later stage in the project. The scope and depth of data collection has naturally been determined by our research question and the available resources. Concerning data-collection about social/political actors, at least three social/political actors were selected in each category (*i.e.*, 3 think tanks, 3 political parties, 3 social movements, 3 newspapers and 2 TV channels) in each country according to standard selection criteria. Leaders of these organizations as well as their other important members were interviewed.

Concerning data collection about communicative public spaces, also here *the units of observation* are social/political actors; however, this time they are treated as sub-spaces of the communicative public spaces. Here, the key data collection activity focuses on the interrelationships and patterns/substance of interactions between the different types of social/political actors claiming to belong to or to be speaking on behalf of the same communicative public space (*e.g.*, the substance/patterns of interaction between a political party, a social movement, a media actor, and a think tank). We also collect data about the discourses of public spheres, citizenship, involvement, etc. of which social/political actors are a part of as well as data about the features of openness/closure in these communicative public spaces.

Further, existing survey data about the features of individuals who are associated with the five types of communicative public spaces through their engagement/involvement with different social/political actors are being taken from previous European surveys such as ESS, EVS, and Eurobarometer as well as other international sources like IPSS. The survey data, which will not be presented in these reports, concerns individuals' involvement in political processes, their levels of co-otherness, patterns of multiple belonging, mobility patterns, patterns of multiple orientations to public spaces as well as the individuals' relevant background.

At the national level, we are analyzing how and why political parties, social movement and non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and media actors (newspapers and TV-channels) are forming or joining networks and channels for influencing the public debates at sub-national, national, and European levels. At the trans-European level, we are focusing on several European party federations, several trans-European networks of movements and NGOs, and several trans-European networks of think tanks, and how and why different organizations operate in these trans-European networks and channels. Further, we are investigating the modes, methods, and issues of collaboration between the national and trans-national levels. On both levels, we are collecting data about the institutional features of these organizations as well as data from interviews with their formal, informal, and oppositional leaders in order to understand how, and on which policy issues, they contribute to public debates at which levels (national or European); which arenas, networks, channels, and resources they are using to influence the public debates; and their political objectives concerning diversity, EU-polity, and the articulation of public spheres in Europe.

Criteria for Selection of Organizations

Interviews and institutional data collection was conducted in the period between February 2008 and July 2009. More than 70 researchers were involved in data collection. EUROSPHERE's data collection activities have been divided into four components with respect to the types of social political actors. In the forthcoming 18 months, we will collect 100% of the data needed.

The selection of the organizations to be interviewed was largely completed by the end of February 2008. The procedure for selection of social/political actors is outlined below. As stated earlier, EUROSPHERE focuses on political parties, think tanks, social movements and media actors. The idea is to map how these actors represent and confront different visions of polity, diversity, and public sphere and why they do so as well as their ways of participating in national and European public spaces. We selected only relevant organizations and their organizational and opinion leaders as well as important opposition leaders in these organizations. Social and political actors in each country were selected with respect to the concern that the broad spectrum of the variation in actors' approaches to diversity should be represented.

The following procedure was followed while selecting of social/political actors to be focused on in EUROSPHERE:

1- The aim is to include and represent in our sample all the different views and visions in a country about diversity, EU polity and public sphere.

2- At least 3 political parties, 3 social movements or non-governmental organization, 3 think tanks, and 5 media actors (3 daily newspapers and 2 TV-news programmes) in each country.

3- However, some exemptions from the above rule were allowed, in following ways: Each partner had to select 14 organizations at minimum for data collection. Based on the contextual particularities in the countries that they collected data in, the partners could choose 2 think tanks instead of three and/or 4 media actors (2 newspapers and 2 broadcast media) instead of 5. Such a procedure was followed by some partners when they found that the proposed division of actor types would prevent them from including some important approaches to the phenomena we are researching. In such cases, these partners increased either the number of political parties or of social movement organizations from 3 to 4, or both. This choice was justified with reference to the particular situation in the respective country (e.g., the impact of the pillars as in Netherlands, the importance of the regional level in certain countries which may require more SMOs and/or political parties, etc).

4- Each project partner proposed a larger number of actors in each category – at least 5 political parties, 7 social movements, 8 think tanks, and 9 media actors/channels from the country where their institutions are based.

5- From the proposed actors, the EUROSPHERE Steering Committee prepared a proposal for the final list of actors to be focused on.

6- Partners justified each of their suggestions, added brief information about the actors' views on diversity and the EU, and specified and their own priorities concerning the selection of actors. For this purpose, the guide given in subsequent tables below for each type of actor was used.

Political parties

The project focuses on the two largest political parties plus the largest Maverick party in each country. Partners were requested to *propose at least 3 large political parties and 2 Maverick parties* amongst the total of three parties that were selected for analysis in each country. The final selection was based on a concern for representing the largest possible variation of political party approaches to the EU-polity and diversity at the European level as well as representation in the European Parliament. The partners were advised to base their proposals on party manifestos, party web sites, and literature on political parties.

Political Party selection guide

Political Party Type	Specifications	Party names	Short information about the political party	Justification
Mainstream Parties (mass/catch-all parties)	* Representing the national mainstream views/ideologies * The largest government party * The two largest opposition parties	The first largest government party (in terms of vote percentage)	Please mention briefly the following: * place on the right/left spectrum if applicable * views on the EU-polity * views about diversity * the two most important views/issues that each party otherwise advocates	Partners' shortly-stated opinions about why and how the selection of each party should enrich our project?
		The first largest opposition party (in terms of vote percentage)		
		The second largest opposition party (in terms of vote percentage)		
Maverick Parties	* Sharply different views on the EU and diversity from the mainstream * Can be outside the parliament * System-critical, semi-system loyal *The two largest amongst those that satisfy the above criteria	Two Maverick Parties – semi-system loyal		

Social Movements/Citizens' Initiatives (SMOS/NGOs)

The project focuses on three social movement organizations (SMO) in each country. One focusing on *the tension between the national and the European&the global*, one focusing on *the tension between the national and the minority rights*, and one focusing on *transnational minority collaboration* in Europe were to be selected in the end of the process. Each partner was requested to propose at least 3 nationally oriented and 4 transnationally/globally oriented social movement organizations. At least two of the transnationally oriented organizations in this category would be selected from amongst the member organizations of the *Platform of European Social NGOs*. Concerning SMOs and NGO's, it was important to represent in our selection of organizations that are constituted and run by (1) majority population members, (2) national minorities/national minorities in border regions, (3) indigenous populations, (4) immigrant groups. This was determined by each partner with respect to relevance and importance of these categories in each country.

Social movement / NGO selection guide

Social Movement Type	Specifications	Movement names	Short Information about the movement	Justification
Nationally-oriented SMOs/NGOs	*Focusing on nationwide issues *national-oriented ideology/ world view/horizon of action *The three most visible/public in the country *Issues of focus are context-dependent *Ethnic&religious organizations can be included if applicable and justifiable *Totally three nationally oriented SMOs are to be nominated	The three citizens' initiatives/SMOs that are known to have high publicity.	Please mention briefly the following: * place on the right/left spectrum if applicable * views on the EU-polity * views about diversity * the two most important views/issues that each movement otherwise advocates	Partners' shortly-stated opinions about why and how the selection of each social movement should enrich our project?
Transnationally/globally-oriented movements	*Focusing on transnational/global issues or having a horizon of action beyond the nation state *At least two SMOs that are members of the European Social Platform will be suggested. *The two most visible/public movements in each category specified on the right * totally four transnationally oriented movements to be nominated *Main focus of these organizations may be on ethnicity, migration, human rights.	1. One main initiative with **pro-European** views (this doesn't need to be the main focus of the organization) 2. One main initiative with **anti-European** views (this doesn't need to be the main focus of the organization) 1. The main **pro-migration** organization 2. The main **anti-migration** organization		

The final selection was based on a concern for representing the largest possible variation of social movement/NGO approaches to the EU-polity and diversity at the European level as well as transnational collaboration in the European Public Sphere (here, at least one SMO that is a member of the European Social Platform of NGOs was included in the project). The partners were advised to base their proposals on organizational manifestos, web sites, and literature on social movements and NGOs.

Think Tanks

The project focuses on three think tanks in each country. Each partner was requested to nominate 8 think tanks, at least two of which have done projects about the European Union if such exists. The think tank categories in the below table were used as a rough, flexible guide, as not all European countries have all sorts of think tanks. Partners were requested to propose at least 2 or 3 "advocacy think tanks", 2 "Universities without students" and 2 or 3 contract research institutes. At least one of the proposed think tanks should be a member organization of TEPSA (*The Trans-European Policy Studies Association*). The Consortium's final selection of three think tanks in each country was based on a concern for representing the largest possible variation of think tank types and their approaches to the EU-polity/diversity at the European level as well as transnational collaboration in the European public sphere. Partners were advised to base their proposals on think tank manifestos, organizational objectives, web sites, and literature on think tanks.

Think tank selection guide

Think Tank Type	Specifications	Think tank names	Short Information about the think tank	Justification
Advocacy think tanks (ATT)	Think tanks advocating certain views on issues relevant to the EU-polity and social diversity.	2 ATT based in the respective country	Please mention briefly the following: * Proposed think tanks should have previously conducted projects related with European issues * place on the national–global ideology continuum if applicable * work on the EU-polity * work about diversity * the two most important views/issues that each think tanks otherwise specialize on.	Partners' shortly-stated opinions about why and how the selection of each think tank should enrich our project?
		1 ATT that is member of TEPSA (if applicable)		
Universities without students (UTT)	Think tanks claiming to conduct independent research	1 UTT based in the respective country		
		1 UTT that is member of TEPSA (if applicable)		
Contract research organizations (CTT)	Think tanks doing research based on contracts with political institutions and organizations	2 CTT based in the respective country		
		1 CTT that is member of TEPSA (if applicable)		

Media Actors

Five media actors are researched on in each country – 3 print media actors and 2 broadcast media actors. Each partner was expected to identify and nominate *the three main players* in print media in their respective countries and two *(small) print media actors representing/voicing the colours*. Concerning broadcast media, each partner will nominate two *public service news programmes* and two *commercial news programmes*. That is, a total of 9 media actors are to be nominated/selected in each country. For each country, we will finally choose 5 media actors. The General Assembly's selection will be based on a concern for representing the largest possible variation of media types and their approaches to the EU-polity/diversity at the European level as well as transnational collaboration in the European Public Sphere. We advise our partners to base their nominations on media web sites and secondary literature on media's framing of diversity and EU-polity.

Media actor selection guide

Media Type	Specifications	Media actor names	Short Information about the media actor	Justification
Print media (PM)	*Daily press/newspapers *The print versions will be used in the data collection	Three main player print media actors	Please mention briefly the following:	Partners' shortly-stated opinions about why and how the selection of each media actor should enrich our project?
		Two small print media actors voicing colours	* place on the national–global ideology continuum if applicable * framing of the EU-polity * framing of diversity * the two most important views/issues that each media actor otherwise likes to focus specifically on in the recent years. *please indicate the programme of interest in connection with each broadcast media actor	
Broadcast media (BM)	*TV-broadcast channels *Requires recording of news/programmes on tape for analysis.	Two main player public service broadcast media actors (only one programme to be selected for analysis)		
		Two commercially driven broadcast media actors (only one programme to be selected for analysis)		

Based on these general guidelines, each partner team sent their justified proposals to the Steering Committee, the Steering Committee made a long list of the proposed organizations, and chose the organizations that were seen as the most relevant for answering EUROSPHERE's research questions. The Steering Committee's selections of actors were approved by each partner university with minor changes.

Institutional Data and Sources

The data collection activity started with the gathering of detailed information about the selected social and political actors' general features through web-surfing of their internet pages, preliminary analyses of their publications/reports, programme declarations, public debates, daily press/broadcast news, secondary academic literature, and other printed and electronically published material. The dimensions of data collection about actors' general features are:

1. officially stated norms, principles, and objectives
2. the means of dissemination they use to influence
3. the strategies for promoting their preferences
4. the channels of influence they use
5. profile of membership, membership policy
6. financial resources and priorities
7. organizational structure and names of leaders
8. other organizations they prefer to collaborate with
9. channels, forms, discourses, and levels of involvement that they make available for their members as well as other citizens/residents
10. main topic of interest in the last 3 years

Concerning the last point the following topics were of particular interest in a EUROSPHERE context: (a) the European polity and its institutions and policies, (b) the European public spheres, (c) diversity – as this unfolds along the dimensions of European enlargement, citizenship, and mobility/migration/asylum. The University of Bergen and the Norwegian Social Science Data Services devised an online data register system for this type of data. This preliminary data collection about the organizations was completed before we interviewed the elites in the organizations.

Criteria for Selection of Respondents

In the second stage, we identified and selected leaders or elites of these social/political actors as our potential interviewees. These individuals are representative of the institutions that they belong to – that is, organizational, opinion, and internal group leaders were selected. We selected leaders from different categories in each type of social political actor. The following considerations were relevant for our research while selecting the respondents:

i) For each type of social and political actor, it was an important aim to represent both the dominant group and the internal opposition and dissenters.

ii) For political parties and SMO/NGO, it was one of our most important targets to represent also the minorities within minorities in our analyses; e.g. for ethnic, religious, and national minorities: class- and elite-positions and usually also along sex/gender lines and age lines: vulnerable minorities such as women, minors

iii) The gender balance concern determined by our gender action plan was applied when selecting respondents.

The following operative categories were advised to partners when selecting the interviewees from each organization type:

Respondents from Political Parties

	Organizational Leader	Opinion Leader	Internal Opposition Leader	Internal "group" Leader	Total
Political party	1	1	2	3	7

Organizational leader: The formally/officially appointed leader with full mandate to speak and act on behalf of a political party. This may include also the individuals who are members of the central steering committee of a political party.

Opinion leader: Individuals who may or may not have formal/official leadership position, but who are known to be the ideologues and opinion-leaders in a political party.

Internal opposition leader: Potential interviewees who have views on diversity or EU-related issues that are distinct from the present formal/opinion leadership.

Internal group leader: This category includes (a) the leader of organized women's factions (if such exists, at least 1 woman leader should be selected) and (b) leading representatives of 'ethnic, national, immigrant minorities' within parties (if such exists, at least 1 ethno-national minority group leader and 1 immigrant minority group leader should be selected).

Respondents from SMOs/NGOs

	Organizational Leader	Opinion Leader	Internal Opposition Leader	Internal "minority" Leader	Total
SMO/NGO	1	1	1	2	5

Organizational leader: The formally/officially appointed leaders with full mandate to speak and act on behalf of a SMO/NGO. This may include also individuals who are members of the central steering committee.

Opinion leader: Individuals who may or may not have formal/official leadership position, but who are known to be the ideologues and opinion-leaders in a political party.

Internal opposition leader: Potential interviewees who have views on diversity or EU-related issues that are distinct from the present formal/opinion leadership.

Internal "minority" leader: This category includes (a) the leaders of organized women's faction inside organizations (if such exists, at least 1 (female) leader should be selected) and (b.1) *for SMOs/NGOs primarily constituted and run by members of the majority population*: leading representatives of 'ethnic, national, immigrant minorities' within organizations (if such exists, at least 1 ethno-national minority group leader and/or 1 immigrant minority group leader should be selected – according to relevance in different country contexts); (b.2) f*or organizations constituted and run by members of national/indigenous/immigrant minority populations*:

Respondents from Think Tanks

	Organizational Leader	Research Leader	Prominent Researcher	Total
Think tank	1	1	1	3

Organizational leader: The formally/officially appointed leaders with full mandate to speak and act on behalf of a SMO/NGO. This may include also individuals who are members of the central steering committee.

Research leader: Individuals who are known to be leading the organizations' research policy and thematic priorities, especially in the area of ethno-national diversity and EU-research.

Prominent researcher: Researchers/authors in the organization who have done the most relevant research on the themes in which EUROSPHERE is specifically interested (ethno-national diversity and EU).

Respondents from Print Media

	Editor General's Office	News Section Editor	News Section Journalist	Total
Print media	1 (or 0)	1	1 (or 2)	3

Editor General's office: If possible, the newspaper's editor general should be interviewed. If not, people closely working with the editor general who daily interact with him in the daily work of determining the editorial policy (e.g., member of editorial board).

News section editor: Where possible, the news editor of each selected newspaper should be interviewed. If not, a journalist collaborating closely with the news editor on selection of news items should be selected.

News section journalist: A journalist/reporter who is specializing in or who has proven to have an interest in making news about ethno-national diversity and/or relevant EU-policies and institutions.

EUROSPHERE Knowledgebase

The aforementioned institutional and interview data were registered by the data collectors into a central database that was designed and set up by *the Norwegian Social Science Data Services* and *the University of Bergen*. Data registration was done according to standard coding rules. In this database, we have organized the institutional and interview data in a format that summarizes each interview by variables. Therefore, the project researchers also have the option of quantifying the interview data. In addition to the institutional and interview databases, EUROSPHERE also collected media content data in order to observe the extent to which what we observe at the organization and elite levels are reflected in the media space. It is also worth noting that some of our interview questions correspond to some items used in *Eurobarometer* and *European Social Survey*. Thus, at later stages of our research, the EUROSPHERE researchers will be able to compare views and approaches at individual, elite, organizational, and media space levels in order to see a more complete picture of the European public sphere.

The majority of the EUROSPHERE partners were able to follow these guidelines. When they could not, this was due to the inaccessibility of either the interviewees or the organizations. However, except for the University of Amsterdam, which selected far too many organizations because they saw it as necessary to represent the broader diversity of views, deviations from case and respondent selection rules are minor. The partners who had to deviate from the general guidelines explicitly state this in their reports.

Finally, on behalf of the EUROSPHERE Consortium, I would like thank to *Aurora Alvarez-Veinguer* and *Martina Klicperova-Baker* for coordinating the writing of the EUROSPHERE Country Reports Series. The *EUROSPHERE Country Report Series* is the result of the enormous synchronized data collection and systematization efforts of more than 100 European researchers in sixteen countries. Despite some weaknesses that arise from the collaborative nature of comparative international projects, I have great hopes for its contribution of new knowledge to the already rich body of literature about the European public sphere.

Preface

Aurora Alvarez and Martina Klicperova-Baker

EUROSPHERE, *Diversity and the European Public Sphere. Towards a citizen's Europe*, is a EU funded project in which sixteen European countries[9] collaborate. As they investigate the different perspectives on (ethno-national) diversity, migration, citizenship, enlargement, gender policy and European integration, they look for signs of existence of the European public sphere, and conditions that enable or undermine the articulation of inclusive European Public Sphere(s) (EPS). Towards these objectives the project focuses on the role played by certain social and political actors in the formation of EPS and the features of existing communicative public spaces which affect the formation of EPS.[10]

This Country Report is the result of Workpackage 3, the largest of all EUROSPHERE activities. All the 16 partners have carried out single case studies that date back to May 2008. They performed media content analysis, institutional data collection and interviews), data documentation and summary. Although the report does form the basis for further analyses during a later stage of the EUROSPHERE-project, it is also intended as a publication that can be read independently. In it we attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is the meaning of diversity for the interviewees and their organizations?
- Do social and political actors (organizations) engage in sub-national, national, and/or trans-European collaboration and communication?
- Do some interviewees believe it is important to have a more or less fragmented / segmented European Polity and European Public Sphere and why?
- Do the interviewees' and their organizations' notions of public sphere, the European Polity, and Diversity differ from the general public opinion in their countries and why?
- Are these variables or opinions related?

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[9] Coordinating, University of Bergen, *Norway*; Partners: Austrian Academy of Science, *Austria*; University of Amsterdam, *The Netherlands*; Sabanci University, *Turkey*; Aalborg University, *Denmark*; University of Helsinki, *Finland*; Institute of Psychology of Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, *Czech Republic*; University of Osnabrueck, *Germany*; Tallinn University, *Estonia*; Université Libre de Bruxelles, *Belgium*; Granada University, *Spain*; Institute of Psychology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, *Bulgaria*; Trento University, *Italy*; Central European University, *Hungary*; online databases and programming by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, *Norway*; Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, *France*; Cardiff University, *United Kingdom*

[10] We have a point of departure in an analytical distinction between **communicative public spaces** and **public spheres**. The former is a space of interaction and deliberation that is relatively separate from the state. It is a social and political space in which individuals, groups, and other social/political actors with a certain level of in-group feeling form and formulate interests and views to be explicated outwards. These public spaces are also **arenas** where persons' belongings and identities are mediated, confirmed, shaped, and re-shaped. The public sphere, on the other hand, is an arena where views articulated in communicative public spaces confront and are confronted by state actors. Seen from the side of the citizens, the challenge is to make citizens' views, concerns, and interests relevant for the politics and institutions at the European level.

Some theoretical approaches have been included but will be developed in a greater depth in the subsequent comparative analyses in WP4, 5, 6 and 7. Instead, the reports will focus on the explanations / reasons found or given in the mentioned collected institutional, interview, and media data material.

EUROSPHERE will assess the possibility of increasing interaction between and across various communicative public spaces on selected European policy issues. It will inquire into how citizens' involvement in European issues can happen at multiple levels across various types of communicative public spaces.

This report constitutes a basis for comparative studies to be conducted by research topic groups in future stages. That is, in a later phase of the project, EUROSPHERE research teams will use these data for comparative analyses that encompass different approaches and/or fields

- WP4 examines the Impact of Citizens on the Articulation of EPS;
- WP5 the Role of Social and Political Actors on the Articulation of EPS;
- WP6 the Impact of Communicative Public Spaces on the Articulation of EPS
- WP7 studies Gender, Intersectionality and the Public Sphere.

All partners of the *EUROSPHERE* project have started their empirical data collection using the same topics and questionnaire as starting points, according to the guidelines that were provided by the *EUROSPHERE*-Consortium. This specific document is based on (1) data collection activities (teams have gathered relevant data about the characteristics of communicative public spaces and the official discourses of social/political organizations regarding the EU and the public sphere)[11]; and (2) the opinions of prominent people within political parties, think tanks, social movement and media organizations on *EUROSPHERE* themes[12] - in doing so, the report is intended to recall whether there are differences between the official standpoints, rivaling strands and prominent individuals of each organisation.

The information expressed during the interviews can only be thoroughly understood if presented in the specific contexts. Therefore, country reports provide a general introduction to the policy fields relevant to EUROSPHERE and short introductions about the organizations; followed by the body of the document which describes and to some extent analyses, the opinions of these organisation members regarding diversity, the EU, citizenship and the European public sphere.

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[11] Secondary data includes: information on websites, (party) constitutions, manifestos, (election) programs, reports, press releases, newspaper articles, and other sources that are of relevance. In addition we used secondary (scientific) literature. The amount of data collected differs per organization and country: there are respondents who tend to be more open about their standpoints, whereas others are more reluctant to participate or do not have so much secondary data available. When possible, researchers were not meant to rely on the official position of the organizations exclusively, but also searched for diversity within the organization.

12 Concerning data-collection about social/political actors, at least three social/political actors were selected in each category (i.e., 3 think tanks, 3 political parties, 3 social movements, 3 media actors) in each of the sixteen countries. These social/political actors were selected with respect to their orientations to different types of public spaces – i.e., each of the three selected social movements, for example, must be known to be part of a specific communicative public space type. Each country was meant to carry out a total of at least 54 interviews; however interviewees' busy agendas, lack of collaboration and other technical difficulties, as well as the need to include more relevant organizations, have made this number vary from country toh country.

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1   INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a constitutional monarchy. The head of state is the Queen of England, who holds a purely ceremonial role, as Parliamentary Sovereignty was established in the English Bill of Rights (1689). The executive power rests in the UK Government. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the respective national governments hold executive power over a number of policy areas such as education and health. The statewide legislative power rests in a bicameral parliament, whereas Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland have their own parliament / assembly which legislate over specific policy areas in their respective regions. England is the only nation of the UK that does not have a national parliament other than Westminster. Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh Members of Parliament (MPs) thus debate and legislate about policies that will only be in force in England and will not affect their constituents.

    The British Parliament is divided into two houses, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The system for allocating seats in both houses has an important impact over British politics. The House of Commons is a democratically elected chamber with 646 MPs. 'First past the post' is the system that is used for allocating seats in single-member constituencies. In this system, MPs receive their seat if they obtain one more vote than their opponents. As a result, bipartisanism is structurally supported, and minority parties tend to lack representation in Parliament. Even parties with widespread support across the board – such as the Liberal Democrats –win few seats. Small parties with locally/regionally concentrated support (such as the Welsh or Scottish nationalists) manage to get some seats, although their influence might be close to negligible. In the end, the electoral system effectively restricts parliamentary influence to two parties. As a consequence, small parties often remain unrepresented and/or neglected: "The inflexibility of 'first past the post' enables national parties to ignore many political movements and the demands they voice" (Budge 2002, 24).

    The upper chamber, named the House of Lords in Britain, was reformed in 1999, but remains an unelected body. By the end of the 2007-08 session, it had 744 members (603 life peers; 92 peer-elected hereditary members; 23 Law Lords, and 26 Bishops). While the Law Lords and the Lords Spiritual are ex officio members of the House, there are 92 hereditary nobles elected by their peers, and 603 members who are nominated for life on the recommendation of a committee (who in turn was nominated by the Government). The House of Lords has limited powers, as it does not have any veto powers over bills, other than proposing changes or delaying their adoption. Still, many lords are prominent individuals in British society, and their contribution to debates (either in the House of Lords or in the media) can be influential (Shell, 1992).

    The effective bipartisanism of the House of Commons has had a direct impact upon cabinet, as the Conservative Party and the Labour Party have been the only parties in government since 1945 (Jones et al, 2006; Budge et al, 2007). The British Government is amongst the most powerful cabinets in Europe (Budge 2002), as they emerge from a majority in the House of Commons which usually abides by party discipline. Even the opposition assumes the legitimacy of the Government to rule and enact its electoral manifesto. To a certain extent, the opposition does not exercise control over the government, but rather uses parliamentary sessions to promote itself as a credible alternative for the next election (Weir and Beetham, 1999).

    The main political actors are, therefore, the two major political parties, the Labour Party (349 seats) and the Conservative Party (192 seats). The third party is the Liberal Democratic Party (63 seats). The public prominence of the two main parties is enhanced by media coverage.

Although think tanks allegedly originated in the UK (the Royal United Services Institution was founded in the 1830s, and the Labour-affiliated Fabian Society dates back to 1884), the so-called Westminster model has operated as a sort of 'institutional constraint' conditioning the full development of think tanks until the last decades of the twentieth century. Research indicates that the development of think tanks in Britain has been affected by:

> *(1) A permanent civil service that has not relied heavily on external sources of policy advice; (2) strong and relatively cohesive political parties, with an adversarial model of party competition (under a 'first past the post' electoral system); (3) executive dominance vis-à-vis the legislature; and (4) the absence (until very recently) of devolved national and regional assemblies. An additional (cultural) factor is the relatively weak British tradition of individual and corporate private philanthropy, at least in respect of independent policy research.* (Denham and Garnett 2004, 232)

In spite of these constraints, a significant array of partisan and independent think tanks has developed during the twentieth century, most probably thanks to the importance of the broadsheet press in the media system, to which they regularly contribute, either providing data, soundbites, or opinion articles. British think tanks, however, have not managed to build a bridge linking society and politicians to overcome the insulation of Westminster from 'real life.' Individuals affiliated with think tanks are integrated into the political elite, and have close links with those in Westminster. Think tanks constitute a platform for a career in party politics, as they are a common channel for the recruitment of political advisors or political researchers.

The public relevance of think tanks is closely linked to their media prominence, and that often leads to think tanks adopting media-centred strategies and courting journalists. Rather than shaping policy, British think tanks help to construct the neutrality of politicians; they transform soundbites into substance, and they contribute to the production of 'independent research' backing the advisability of certain policies (Stone, 1995).

British organised civil society is characterised by its diversity, as it encompasses big non-governmental organisations (BINGOs) with a well-developed structure (numerous staff, public prominence, and big, well-funded PR and advertising campaigns, such as Oxfam, allegedly the biggest NGO in the world), and small direct action movements with no organisation or structure, and no continuity over time. Although grouped under the same umbrella of 'civil society', there are obvious differences, both in their organisational structures, forms of actions, and scope. For example, Oxfam raises awareness and campaigns for the eradication of poverty around the world, and it also designs and implements humanitarian and aid projects contributing to improving living conditions in developing countries. Amnesty International, instead, focuses on Human Rights monitoring and advocacy. Smaller NGOs have other aims. The Freedom Association, for example, campaigns for individual freedom, free enterprise and national independence, and it mainly does so through the media or organising events. In this particular case there would be difficulties in establishing whether the Freedom Association should be classified as an NGO, a think tank, or a pressure group.

The development of NGOs in Britain was constrained by the very Westminster model that posed difficulties to the development of think tanks. However, while right wing think tanks had a flourishing period during the eighties (see, for example, Denham and Garnett 2004), Margaret Thatcher's "government deliberately tried to undermine the conditions for association in civil society" (Dryzek et al. 2002). After the Thatcher era, and with the advent

of New Labour, Tony Blair's governments adopted some of the claims supported by NGOs and social movements, and established closer collaborative links with some of them, to the extent that there were some accusations of cooptation:

> *Inside the Make Poverty History movement, there is a growing fear that its aims are being diluted and taken over by the government…The finger is being pointed at Oxfam, the UK's biggest development organisation, for allowing the movement's demands to be diluted and the message to become virtually indistinguishable from that of the government (*Quarmby 2005, 10*)*

The uneasiness perceived amongst activists reveals that those who approach politics through activism and civil society actions/organisations aim at impacting institutional politics, but want to remain independent from partisan and governmental politics. In this sense, activists consider that civil society organisations do better when they focus their campaigns on raising social awareness, rather than when they aim to become interlocutors with institutional political actors. However, not every civil society group aims at obtaining positive media coverage, or any media coverage at all. There are organisations/activists that in spite of recognising the importance of the media, consciously reject any dealings with mainstream media because of their ownership by big capital, their record of inaccurate and hostile coverage in relating to social movements, and their focus on spectacle rather than ideas. These movements, such as the women's, the green and peace movements in the 70s or the British direct action movement today, have turned to alternative media or their own forums to have their voices heard and influence public debate.

Direct action protests transgress political norms, and often confront the legal order. However, and despite the challenges to the social order that these protests may entail, research shows that these protests have an impact on public opinion, and that a majority of British citizens is "prepared to tolerate these kinds of protests" (Doherty et al. 2003, 684). This tolerance for the disruption of social order that certain forms of protest entail is probably a consequence of frustrations with the 'elitist' nature of British democracy (Almond and Verba 1963). In Britain, politics is the business of politicians, rather than the business of citizens. This may be rooted in widespread interpretations of the British unwritten constitution, assigning "deliberation to the politicians, rather than to the public" (Conover et al. 2002, 25).

The centrality of party politics in British politics may also be a consequence of media coverage, which contributes to stressing the importance of party politics, while underplaying the role of other political actors or alternative forms of political participation. In this sense, broadcasters emphasise their independence, constructing their impartiality and objectivity by giving voice to the main (institutional) political actors. The press, instead, adopts the role of the advocate, showing clear partisan allegiances (Hallin and Mancini 2004). The plurality of the press is achieved through its diversity, as each paper represents a different stance on the political spectrum (McNair 2007). In both cases, parties end up as the protagonists of the mediated representation of politics, making it difficult for the media to channel citizens' opinions, and therefore, for constituting an arena where actual political debates are held.

In relation to understanding British elites' orientation towards the European Union, as well as questions around European identity and the European public sphere, it is important to point out that Britain is conventionally seen as a strongly Euro-sceptic national culture. Anderson and Weymouth (1999) suggest that as a result of a historical trajectory of British economic success, world dominance, and island isolationism, there is "an absence of widely accessible discourse which positively locates Britain economically, politically and socially as part of a greater Europe or indeed, for that matter, as an evolving site of socio-cultural

plurality" (pp. 6-7). The result is the prevalence of a discourse which constructs "a perceived external threat...a supra-national 'Other' in the forum of the European Union." A divisive issue for British citizens and politicians (there are Eurosceptic politicians in every party), British elites tend to be essentially pragmatic regarding the EU, and support the Union – sometimes reluctantly– if there are clear benefits for the UK. Still, this approach can also result in some cynical attitudes that aim at obtaining political benefits from questioning The UK's membership to the EU. For example, the Conservative Party has remained decidedly Euroesceptic under David Cameron's leadership, to the extent that the party abandoned the European People's Party after the 2009 European election for their pro-European attitudes. Instead, the Conservative Party created a new parliamentary alliance with Eurosceptic and nationalist parties from Poland and the Czech Republic (Law and Justice and Civic Democratic Party, respectively). On the other hand, David Cameron promised that the Lisbon Treaty would be put to the vote once the Tories were in power again, even if it was retroactively. However, during the Conservative Party Conference 2009, some months before the general election that will likely bring the Tories to government again, David Cameron announced that the referendum on the Lisbon treaty would not be called any more (Watt, 2009). To a certain extent, it seems that British elites see the EU as beneficial when they are in power, but interestedly feed the controversies about EU membership whilst in opposition. As a result, overt support for the EU is practically absent from public debates.

Our report investigates the complexity of British elites' relationship to the institutions and boundaries of the European Union, and their view of European identities, public sphere(s) and political practice(s). It is based on institutional data and interviews: The research team interviewed 15 political party members (5 interviews for the Labour Party, 5 interviews for the Conservative Party, and 5 interviews for Plaid Cymru – the Party of Wales), 9 interviews with individuals affiliated with think tanks (2 interviews with the Centre for European Reform, 3 interviews with the Federal Trust and 4 interviews with the Bruges Group), 14 interviews with members and/or activists of social movement organisations (4 interviews for Anti Poverty Network Cardiff, 5 interviews for No Borders UK, and 5 interviews for The Freedom Association), and 2 interviews with media professionals (one for *The Daily Telegraph* and one for *The Guardian*).

The selection of actors took into account the particularities of the political / media / national features of the UK. In this sense, the selection of political party members considered the national division of the UK in four different nations, and the essentially bipartisan nature of the party system. For think tanks, our selection considered the relevance of their working areas for the research purposes of Eurosphere and their prominence in public and political debates. The three SMO/NGO organisations well represent the plurality of positions held by civil society. The media actors were chosen following two main criteria, namely the need to represent media outlets with different editorial lines, and the need to include different media types, ranging from those considered to be quality media to more commercial/tabloidised media products. All actors were selected by the Cardiff University Team and approved by the general coordinator of Eurosphere.

Due to the particular organisation of the British state in four regions, many organisations are based on national (that is, infra-statal) structures. In those cases, the Welsh chapters were preferred, as it was understood that the Welsh case constituted a good case-study for the analysis of the intersecting debates about Europe, the political participation of immigrants, and of what is known in Eurosphere jargon as 'native ethno-national minorities'. The choice had a practical motivation too, as in the case of political party members, for example, refusing interview requests if they do not originate from an organisation based in their constituency is common practice.

Securing interviews proved to be particularly difficult in the UK, most especially in the case of media actors, as they systematically rejected our interview requests. Those rejections were motivated by different reasons depending on the hierarchic position of each particular individual. More specifically, those higher up in the editorial structure did not even reply to our letters or emails, whilst desk journalists thought they should not participate, as they did not feel comfortable disclosing their personal stances on questions related to diversity and the European polity in the making.

Overall, ten interviews were held and recorded over the telephone, as it was the preferred medium of those particular interviewees. One interview could not be recorded due to regulations in force in public areas of the Houses of Parliament, aimed at preventing accidental recording of confidential conversations of people who happen to be in the same space. That interview was transcribed in shorthand.

All interviews were carried out between October 2008 and May 2009 by four Eurosphere researchers (Dr Simona Guerra, Dr Andrew Williams, Mr Dimitrios Tsagalas and Mr Iñaki Garcia-Blanco). Interviews were transcribed and inputted into the Eurosphere Online Data Tool by Mr Dimitrios Tsagalas (14 interviews for political parties and 2 interviews for the Federal Trust), and Mr Iñaki Garcia-Blanco (1 interview with an MEP, 1 interview for the Federal Trust, all interviews for Centre for European Reform and Bruges Group, all interviews for SMO/NGOs, and all interviews for media actors). All these tasks were closely supervised by Dr Karin Wahl-Jorgensen.

A significant number of interviewees explicitly commented that they were cautious while answering our questions due to the potential misuse of their quotes by the European Commission. On other occasions, interviewees suggested that certain questions clearly followed directions from the European Commission, and pursued particular answers. Finally, a number of interviewees acknowledged that they were using the interview strategically, as their aim was to put what they found relevant forward to the European Commission. To a high degree, interviewees perceived the academic researchers were just gathering sensitive information for the exclusive use of the European Commission.

Several interviewees expressed concerns with the length, the wording, and the (excessively technical) nature of the Eurosphere questionnaire. The questionnaire appeared to put many of our interviewees in an uneasy situation. This obviously affected the quality of our interviews, and is an element that must be taken into account in further stages of the project, above all when it comes to analysing and comparing data. One particular interviewee (Richard Corbett, then MEP for Yorkshire) put an abrupt end to the interview, as he felt that he was being asked nonsensical questions.

2   ORGANIZATIONS[13] NOTIONS OF DIVERSITY AND POLICY PREFERENCES

"Diversity" is a politically loaded term in the UK, insofar as it is a word (and a goal) that is clearly linked to the Labour Party, particularly since its 1997 election victory. The promotion of diversity, equal opportunities and a multicultural Britain has been a driving force for Tony Blair's leadership. As a result, a considerable number of related Acts of Parliament has been passed under Blair's governments: the Human Rights Act 1998, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, and the Equality Act 2006, amongst others. It was also during this period that the report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999) was released. This document, commonly known as the Macpherson report, was the result of a parliamentary inquiry on the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a young black man, by officers of the London Metropolitan Police. The publication of the report is considered a turning point in racial relations in Britain, as it accused the police – and, by extension, most British institutions – of "institutional racism", and suggested certain courses of action for these conditions to change. As a result of this report, many of the aforementioned acts of Parliament were put forward.

New Labour governments have, thus, promoted measures contributing to a more diverse society, considering multiculturalism as a desirable goal for British society. More socially conservative political actors, and the Conservative party itself, have often expressed their concerns about such goals, considering them a potential threat to social cohesion and the future of British traditional values. For example, David Cameron –leader of the Conservative Party since 2005– declared in 2008 that:

State multiculturalism is a wrong-headed doctrine that has had disastrous results. It has fostered difference between communities … it has stopped us from *strengthening our collective identity. Indeed, it has deliberately weakened it* (Sparrow 2008, n/p)

This does not necessarily imply that those closer to conservative positions share essentialist, xenophobic or racist positions. In fact, this discourse is more critical of the government and its minority policies than of the minorities themselves. On most occasions, it simply means a preference for the integration of migrants, rather than a for the adaptation of British institutions to meet the needs or the requirements of cultural or religious minorities. As can be read in the Tory website[14]:

> *Under Labour, state-driven multiculturalism, uncontrolled immigration and the threat of extremism have led to an increase in distrust and segregation, and left us with divided communities. A Conservative Government will correct Labour's mistakes and create a Britain where people from different backgrounds can celebrate their diversity while sharing common civic values and national pride.*

A number of historical conditions have contributed to the current diversity of British society, namely the economic puissance of the country during the past centuries, the country's enduring and stable democratic tradition, and, above all, its imperial past. As a result, the UK is now a cosmopolitan country, encompassing a considerable presence of native ethno-

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[13] Institutions/organizations' views are based on the collected interview, institutional, and media data as complementary sources of information; and when possible should display the internal differences within each organization and the convergences/tensions between informants' responses and institutional data.

[14] http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Community_Relations.aspx.   Accessed October 2009.

national minorities; second-and third- generation migrants; economic migrants, highly skilled migrants, Commonwealth subjects, asylum seekers, refugees, amongst others. A considerable fraction of our interviewees (a fifth) was not originally British[15], in spite of playing a prominent role in British politics. This obviously had an impact on their responses, and must be considered in further stages of analysis.

Although the selected organisations are representative of the British political spectrum, they fail to provide a nuanced depiction of the British rich political fabric. In addition, the questionnaire aimed at obtaining the *personal* stances and opinions of the interviewees, rather than the *official* positions of the organisations they belong to (which, in the case of more grassroots organisations such as No Borders UK or the Anti-Poverty Network Cymru, do not even exist). As a result, this report offers an impressionistic mapping of the different positions held by a number of individuals who happen to belong to/work for certain organisations. On certain occasions these positions coincide, and a certain similarity can be observed in the responses of interviewees belonging to the same organisation, but this is not always the case. The opinions reported here should therefore not be taken as 'the views of the organisations', but rather understood as the personal stances of the interviewees.

Generally speaking, and probably as a consequence of the long British tradition of receiving migrants from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, social diversity is viewed as "natural" by most of our interviewees, and is not commonly perceived as a recent phenomenon in British society. All interviewees, regardless of their institutional affiliation, saw diversity as inherent to society –"Diversity is intrinsic to society" (The Guardian, 59). However, and despite their understanding of diversity as something inevitable, interviewees showed different understandings of the term. Most of them, perhaps as a consequence of Eurosphere's presentation letters, identified diversity with the presence of ethnic and cultural minorities in a society: "Diversity is simply a word used to describe a society in which large numbers of immigrants have come and who are recognised in terms of their cultures or communities" (The Bruges Group, 225).

Some interviewees' personal understandings of diversity, however, considered other social groups. For example, a Plaid Cymru (48) representative included persons with disabilities too: from her point of view, diversity involves "ethnic groups, such as Chinese communities, Polish communities, Eastern Europeans, Somali. You should also look at the diversity of people who are handicapped, deaf and disabled". A member of the Labour Party proposed that in addition to ethnicity and disability, the most pervasive generator of social differences is still social class, because it determines the difference in resources and in the access that certain social groups or strata have when it comes to influencing policies:

> *First of all, although we don't talk normally about class in Britain today, I think it's still relevant, so I think that in a diverse society it is important to recognise that we must include in our policies that we take account the need of the broad mass people who come from a variety of classes as well as different social and ethnic backgrounds. So, often the most articulate and organised of the middle and upper classes in terms of professions and owners of industry, they are used to lobbying and getting policies that benefited them. The working class that we traditionally call and those who are not in employment at all are less well organised and thus they don't advocate their views as the others. But they are the majority of people. So certainly dealing with diversity is absolutely essential that*

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[15] Ms Katinka Barysch, Mr Nirj Deva, Dr Gareth Gordon, Prof Kenneth Minogue, Mr Norbert Mbu Mputu, Ms Clara Martina O'Donnell, and Dr Helen Szamuely. In the same sense, it has to be said that only two out of the six persons who have constituted the Eurosphere team at Cardiff University were of British origin.

we make sure that in newly established policy we get evidence. So I think that that is the diversity in the society, a wide range of groups of people and class and social relationships are just as important as different ethnic groups as those who are able bodied and not able bodied (Labour Party, 75)

The *Telegraph's* correspondent in Brussels stressed the changing essence of the concept of 'diversity' by underlining its mutability and adaptability to different social contexts. He suggested that diversity means different things in different societies, and currently in Britain it tends to be linked to immigration: "It depends on where you are. For example, if you are in a country like Britain, where you have immigration, you would say that immigrants are defining a diverse society" (The Daily Telegraph, 42).

Although each interviewee has an individual understanding of diversity, a certain degree of identification with the organisations they belong to can be identified. A spectrum can be established between the Conservative Party and the Federal Trust (those more in favour of integration of difference into a common set of traditional British values) at one end, and No Borders and the Anti-Poverty Network (those more in favour of respecting difference, advocating for no integration whatsoever as long as Human Rights are respected), at the other, with different shades of grey in between. The group that showed a more consistent position when it came to defining diversity was the Freedom Association, probably because of the impact the question of diversity has upon its core issue, which is, essentially, the neoliberal protection of *individual* freedoms[16]:

I think that individuals are far more important, and I instinctively dislike this putting people into boxes, which is what minorities are. 'Minorities' is not the main thing for individuals. I'm really quite hostile to this whole concept really (The Freedom Association, 214)

The Freedom Association is quite a libertarian group, the way we support diversity is a bit different, as we support any individual's right to practice religion or live their life without any government's intrusion (The Freedom Association, 203)

I don't think ethnonational diversity should be of any importance unless you happen to have the thinking of a Hitler or of apartheid in South-Africa or other racist regimes (The Freedom Association, 141)

However, and despite the emphasis on the freedom of individuals showed by those affiliated with the Freedom Association, and of their identification with libertarianism, the will to protect the central core of British values emerged in the answers of two of the interviewees:

Diversity is important, and in some respects I do personally view it as a potential threat, because if it's too diverse, the diversity impinges upon our essential core. It's fine, you know, I have nothing against people of other colours, religions and hopes coming here but when it impacts our way of life and freedoms it becomes a problem, and tolerance is one thing, but when you have to give up some things to accommodate that diversity, whatever it is, then it becomes a problem (The Freedom Association, 217)

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[16] The neoliberal protection of individuals, and their obsessive underrating of society has been a constant in British conservative politics since Margaret Thatcher famously asserted that "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families" (Keay 1987, n/p).

The second case is even more explicit, and presents a complicated discursive manoeuvre, which to a certain extent blames minorities for their own social exclusion or for being victims of inequalities. According to this interviewee, diversity poses a potential threat to the cohesion of society, as it brings about discourses victimising groups, and ghettoising minorities:

> *There is far too emphasis placed on differences, and there is a whole multicultural equality discourse which is very damaging, creating grievance and chips on shoulders and everybody being a victim culture, and the fundamental position that I take as a member of The Freedom Association is that we all have freedom under the law, and the law should be colour blind and have no interest in sexual orientation or skin colour or ethnic origin or any of this. Multiculturalism is based, as I say, not merely in diversity but in driving wedges between people, creating victims, and particularly encouraging ethnic ghettos, and there are many examples of that, there are immigrants who don't speak English, who are not encouraged to speak English and therefore retire to a ghetto, which may be bad for them and is certainly bad for the cohesion of society* (The Freedom Association, 142)

Similar understandings of the dangers that diversity entails for British society were found among some members of the Bruges Group. A former chair of the Bruges Group suggested that those social groups or minorities that do not easily integrate and abide by the traditional values and norms governing British society represent a threat. This interviewee stresses the open character of British society across centuries, while underlining the importance of guaranteeing a certain degree of cultural homogeneity, so that social cohesion is not at risk:

> *For practical purposes, diversity means having sets of people, having Hindus from India, Muslims, who tend to be a unified group as they operate. I think it makes a big difference whether these people come from Christian or non-Christian backgrounds. Poles, Italians and so on fit perfectly well into British society and do not really constitute much of the word diversity because they live by the same rules. Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims constitute a special type of condition, which I suppose is what diversity means. I'm not very keen on diversity. I think Britain was a free society in earlier centuries, had certain migrants, like French Huguenots, who did not really constitute much in the way of diversity. It has always absorbed individuals from all over the place, but the new situation is one in which different cultures set themselves up as special communities and require special treatment* (The Bruges Group, 225)

Still, this very interviewee showed the most radical attitude towards 'diversity' as a desirable political goal:

> *I don't regard diversity as a goal or as a desirability, but as something imposed upon us by incompetent governments, and I think there is often a political angle behind it, namely left wing parties whose policies include welfare. Welfare parties tend to favour diversity because these communities tend to vote for whoever promises the most welfare* (The Bruges Group, 225)

Although all the other respondents of the Bruges Group acknowledged the benefits diversity brings to society, and underlined its inevitability, all of them expressed fear regarding the impact diversity may have upon the social cohesion and the collective identity of the UK. For example:

Diversity obviously has its benefits. One can argue that life has a richer tapestry, but what is needed in any society is a number of people with shared common goals, and a collective identity and loyalty to the country in which people live and to some shared values, then diversity is all well and good, but if you mean is that one group having a set of values and another group having another, that's a problem, and this can create large problems, and society can become fractured, and integration can't happen and people progress and get on in society if people are living in there own communities and people are not meeting, let alone understanding, people from different groups, so diversity is all well and good, but if we have too much of a multicultural society, and I don't mean multiracial two different things there is a lack of understanding between the groups, we shall all be coming together and having a British identity, rather than saying that oh you're in X group or you're in Y group, and we're going to label you like this and you know you don't have to integrate within British society then groups can emerge, that's when, I believe, when things are going to happen in terms of extremism (The Bruges Group, 227)

Some interviewed members of the Conservative Party showed similar concerns regarding the preservation of British national and social cohesion:

The UK is a very diverse society and there are less fears compared to a homogeneous society, still a problem is that with diversity you don't go far on national identity (Conservative Party, 114)

Another Conservative politician, in this case of Sri Lankan origin himself, married to a French-speaking Mauritian, openly despised the multicultural ideal and advocated the protection of the core values of the nation state:

Diversity can lead to a breakdown of society. If you encourage and strengthen multiculturalism we will end up in a chaotic situation where there will be doing different things. There has to be a core sense about the values of the nation state (Conservative Party, 75)

However, the remaining Conservative politicians considered diversity to be an inherent characteristic of the UK, and one that was particularly beneficial for the country, as it makes society more interesting and richer, and brings intellectual stimulus to British society:

I think it [diversity] makes society more interesting, vibrant and alive (Conservative Party, 60)

I think it can be a great advantage especially if you have an ethno-national group within your country that is part of a wider diaspora around the world and that is part of your community. For example if you look at the Chinese community, there are many cities now with Chinatowns and that can really add vibrancy to the city and to the economy. It can also be difficult thing though where artificial borders have been drawn sometimes between countries (Conservative Party, 62)

It is an advantage definitely, because I think it is worthwhile learning from others' particular ideas and it helps intellectual development to hear other people's ideas and opinions and it's also helpful in a community to have an injection every now and then of difference that is not extreme (Conservative Party, 81)

Another Conservative politician articulated his response along the core democratic values that should guide politics. He suggested that it was a democratic duty that the plurality of society was guaranteed and protected, ensuring that nobody and no group suffer any sort of discrimination. Consequently, and according to this view, the good functioning of the democratic system itself would regulate any possible differences generated by diversity, aiming at accommodating the needs of both the majority and minorities:

> *I believe that everyone in a society has the right to have their voice heard and that it what democracy is about. If democracy is functioning whatever [groups] make up this society should be feeling represented. What I tend to believe is that we must support the plurality of the society and of democracy and not going down the route of discrimination. If democracy is working it will respect the language, the diversity issue and the minority issue. That is what politicians fight for all the time, respect and tolerance* (Conservative Party, 148)

Labour politicians, instead, only saw positive aspects of diversity as such, and did not perceive it as a threat for British society, jeopardising British social cohesion. Labour politicians en bloc described diversity as beneficial for society, as it made it richer both culturally and economically, and helped society becoming more aware of and respectful towards differences. In a sense, Labour politicians' viewpoints were in line with the governmental goal of making a (more) multicultural Britain possible:

> *I think that if we had a very rich mixed culture of diversity that everyone that lives in a society gains from it ... I think that it's a huge advantage because if you look at it from an economic perspective there's the understanding that you can bring in and the learning that can come from that, if you look at academia and the ideas that people can bring in, I think that we've become more rounded people* (Labour, 83)

> *You have to respect the difference. There is no way that you get a situation where everybody would be the same...but that is not a problem because of our tribal, location belongings, of our generic responses and environment and people forget their differences based on our ability or our physiological response to our environment ... I think it's about fair representation. If you get fair representation you feel that issues are being addressed where the discussion and the decision is based on a more inclusive way, then it seems to me that you get a sense of harmony with less distress* (Labour, 139)

> *[Diversity] makes us more aware of the needs of different nationalities, more aware of backgrounds, that certainly needs to encourage more tolerance when there are differences so that people will understand that it is not a threat. It also enhances the view of the world, meaning that we can find other ways of living and working, understanding other cultures and enrich a country instead of hindering it* (Labour, 71)

Plaid Cymru members adopted a similar stance to Labour Party members, as they welcomed and celebrated diversity as an enriching feature of society that generated many positive outcomes for society. Still, the Welsh element appeared, as interviewees suggested that while diversity was positive and society benefits from it, some degree of integration of minorities in their local community should be desirable. This discourse may seem equivalent to the discourse supported by the Conservative Party members, but with a Welsh rather than a British focus. However, this is not exactly the case, as unlike Tories, Plaid members do not

perceive any threat or risk in multicultural societies, rather an aim to conciliate social inclusion and respect difference:

> *I think it [diversity] is great as long as it has respect from different ethnicities in that society. As long as they can understand and absorb the culture of these groups there is not any problem ... I think it is an advantage because everyone must be tolerant, understanding and respecting each other* (Plaid Cymru, 55)

> *I think that people must become part of a wider community. These communities that exist in Wales tend to come and keep their own communities. But I think that the more they come out of these communities and integrate, the better and the healthier our communities will be. I think that it should be a two-way thing. People who come must realise that they are coming to a community and that they need to reach out to that community as well as the community has to reach out to them* (Plaid Cymru, 92)

Members of the Centre for European Reform thought that diversity was an inherent aspect of certain societies, such as the British, but that there were not intrinsic benefits or problems derived from it. According to the members of this think tank, diversity can be turned into an asset if the right approach is adopted, and the right policies are implemented:

> *I think that's just reality, so you may as well enjoy it ... I don't think diversity should be striven for as such. I mean, some European societies were till not many decades ago quite homogeneous, like in the Nordic countries, and they were still good societies, so I wouldn't say, oh that doesn't work, we need to import more people that look completely different ... It depends on how it's handled, if it's a society which is fearful and unsure of itself then you can't say it's an advantage, but then, like the Americans, if you manage to turn that into an opportunity and you say well, we're attracting the best and the brightest from all over the world, you know, we're going to give them a scholarship to go to Harvard, and then give them a start-up loan to open their own business in Silicon Valley, then surely, that must be an advantage for society (Centre for European Reform, 230)*

Anti-Poverty Network and No Borders members had the most inclusive approach, advocating for radical egalitarian, open-border policies that have difficulty fitting with the institutional structures of the modern nation state (many of them, for example, advocated for the abolition of citizenship). It should be noted that these groups are not stable groups with an official membership, nor a hierarchical organisation, and that they constitute an umbrella gathering people of different backgrounds and political views. Different arguments were put forward in support of diversity, such as the different cultural inputs diversity brings to a society, making it richer:

> *It is part of the learning process that when one tries to know what people are like, one starts with oneself, with one's families, and with one's experiences of life and that the more one can come in contact with different groups, different peoples, and different lifestyles, and expectations, and languages, then the more, really, fuller and richer that person's life is* (Anti-Poverty Network, 85)

> *Different people have different skills, different backgrounds, different cultural patterns, they can contribute to a more interesting, a more diverse society* (No Borders, 118)

Other interviewees, instead, thought that diversity was beneficial because it made society more aware of differences, and more tolerant towards those who are not like the social majority:

> *Diversity should be celebrated, because diversity is about acceptance of differences* (Anti-Poverty Network, 77)

> *I don't know whether it is a value worth striving for, but if you live in a society which is open and free, it should naturally happen, but I don't know if you can really strive for it, because everybody is different, and that's the nature of society itself ... I think it's good, I think it is important for challenging people's ideas about what's normal, about what's acceptable, and it [makes] creativity and new ideas [flourish] although it obviously creates problems in some areas ... The more diverse societies are, the better they would be, but as societies aren't that diverse, the minute something different comes in, the minute people categorise that person as one ethnicity or another, and then the person is going to face tension, but then the more you have it the less it actually happens* (No Borders, 91)

> *There's people saying that you have the right to protect one culture. I don't really buy any of that. It definitely leads to more interesting lives and so on, and living in an area as I do that has many ethnonational groups within it, it is more interesting in terms of food, and music, and everything. The value of it for a society really I don't know what it is. We hope a more diverse society leads to a more tolerant society* (No Borders, 136)

Only two interviewees from these groups perceived that diversity could be problematic for a society. In one case, the interviewee suggested that the protection and preservation of original cultures was, in principle, desirable, as long as it did not generate ghettoes or a society constituted by independent, isolated groups that did not have any mutual interaction:
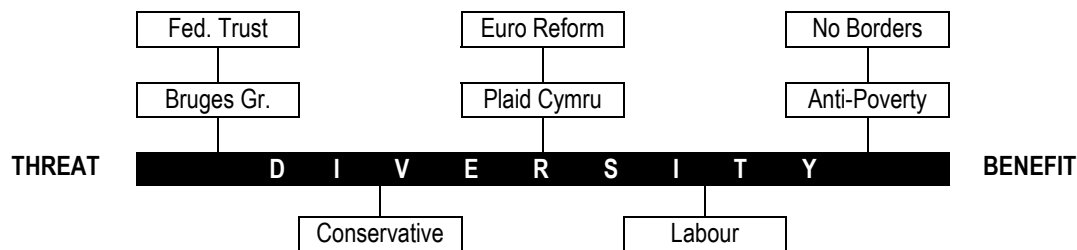
> *From my point of view, that should be a good thing that people tried to preserve their legacies, but I think there is a danger somewhere, because it looks that this society will become something like a puzzle* (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

Another interviewee showed concern with identity politics, as if it was a negative consequence of a society that places so much emphasis on ethnicity, gender, religion, or any other type of belonging, rather than aiming at rendering such differences politically and socially irrelevant:

> *I think diversity is an inherent fact in life. We live in diverse societies. You know, a society is a multiplicity of individuals who are diverse themselves, and then these people make claims according to different allegiances, belongings, etcetera, etcetera ... We live in a society with certain individuals and groups who use ethnicity and problems of belonging to cause friction. Therefore, the existence of groups who will mobilise around race issues are the negative side of diverse society or at least of a society that defines its diversity around bounded identities, you know the whole multicultural idea that I've got problems with... I think the state should intervene to make sure that everyone has the same rights, regardless of their origin. However, I'd like to push it further and avoid any sign of state control* (No Borders, 127)

Overall, the organisations' perception of diversity and its normative (un)desirability could be summarised as a spectrum ranging from an understanding of diversity as a threat to social cohesion and British cultural values, to an understanding of diversity as a benefit for society[17]. A graphic representation of such spectrum would be as follows:

Figure 1. Organisations' normative understanding of the desirability of diversity[18]

2.1   The organisations and their views towards diversity policies

Although the organisations and the individuals that operate in the political realm are normally driven by certain normative principles, concepts and goals, they often have a more practical approach to issues, and therefore find themselves more comfortable when discussing actual policies. In this sense, interviewees showed that their thoughts were actually more substantiated when they were posed with more specific, policy-related questions. The Eurosphere questionnaire covered a number of specific policies relevant to diversity and political rights and participation in Europe. Respondents delivered *more* consistent responses (in relation to the responses of other interviewed members of the organisation they belong to) when asked about issues that were, in one way or another, present in current or recent political debates. Issues that did not mach this criterion – such as the one asking about their stances on dual citizenship – prompted less elaborated responses.

a)   Citizenship
The Conservative Party does not seem to have a unified policy regarding citizenship, although their proposals to apply tougher controls on immigration (even from EU countries, if the EU is further enlarged) may suggest that this party could support more restrictive stances regarding citizenship. Still, Conservative Party members showed a wide range of opinions on the criteria they thought should be applied for granting British citizenship. From those considering that nothing should be changed:

> *I think the rules are perfectly acceptable at the moment … Your citizenship, residence and rights of borders must be regulated through having borders, laws. People should know how to become citizens and who is eligible and who is not* (Conservative Party, 60)

Other Conservatives suggested that historical bonds between countries, communities and familiar ties should also be contemplated in addition to *jus soli*: "I think that historical ties are factors of acceptance and of course from whether you were born here" (Conservative Party,

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[17] The Freedom Association is excluded, as their interviewed members rejected the usefulness of diversity as a concept.

[18] The Freedom Association is excluded, as their interviewed members rejected the usefulness of diversity as a concept.

81). A different Conservative politician thought that those having been brought up in the country should also be granted citizenship:

> *I don't think that it's a matter of where you were born, I think it's a matter of generally where you were brought up and where you've spent your formative years. I think that shows what person you are along with your roots ... I think that citizenship initially should be with your formative and where your family comes from. Saying that of course you must allow people to become citizens in your country, they subscribe to the overall cultural ethos of your nation, whether they want to adopt that as their role* (Conservative Party, 62)

The majority of Tory interviewees, however, conceived citizenship as a combination of rights and duties, and therefore thought that candidates should show their will to accept those duties, understanding that "the aspiration of the person to live and improve the society" (Conservative Party, 148) should be required. For example:

> *Citizenship should be granted to those who have chosen voluntarily to live in the country without compulsion, want to be a part of that country and its institutions, and want to make a contribution to that country. If they can't or are unwilling to play a role in those institutions, they should drive themselves to a different country where they will find a more comfortable life* (Conservative Party, 75)

> *Citizenship requires an extension, it means accepting legal structures, taxes, there has to be the enthusiasm, there are rights and obligations... we cannot give citizenship if he does not know anything of that country, its history and achievements, tests should be supported* (Conservative Party, 114)

The Bruges Group's take on citizenship is not explicit either, but it can be inferred from the group's attitudes towards immigration that any intervention of the EU in the matter would not be welcomed. Probably as a result of the Group's lack of a unified stance on the issue, the interviewed members of the Bruges Group showed a very mixed approach to the question of citizenship, although all of them believed that "citizenship is as much about responsibility as it is about privilege" (The Bruges Group, 68), and therefore respect for the laws and an unquestionable loyalty to the country should be expected and required from those who are successful in their applications for British citizenship. While members of the Bruges Group do not show any enthusiasm for the *Life in the UK* test (a required examination for those applying for the right of remain or British citizenship), they are very strong in supporting the desirability of leaving such a matter in the hands of British authorities (with no interference whatsoever from EU institutions). Equally, they intensely support the need to examine the criminal record of the applicants extremely thoroughly, so it is assured that nobody who has committed an offence in the past can get a British passport:

> *Certainly people who in becoming citizens break the laws of this country I think they probably shouldn't be citizens, and if there are links with organisations that perhaps intend to blow us up, then I think for instance, again. It's not something you can take for granted, in my opinion. I mean this applies to any country, Britain, Spain, France, whatever, but I'm not sure one can define criteria, I mean, I think that the idea of asking do you know who Henry VIII was is absolutely idiotic, because most people who have been born here, well they may not know who he is, but may know something that has to do with him. I think these questionnaires are silly. I think, honestly, that I know this country quite well, and I looked at some of the questions in the test and said, well, I don't know how to*

> *answer that, you know, anything about pop music I'd fail, so I think it's very difficult to define, I mean, you live in a country, you obey its laws, you don't demand any special treatment for yourself, and that's probably it, but I do think that a state, any state, Britain, France, Spain, whatever, has the right to say no, you can't be a citizen of this country, because their first and immediate duty is to those who are already there* (The Bruges Group, 228)

Another member of the Bruges Group suggested that the national and religious backgrounds of the applicants should be used as valid criteria for deciding whether applications for citizenship should be granted or not, as evidence shows that individuals with certain religious backgrounds are more prone to become radicalised or apply for benefits:

> *If someone wants to become a citizen, if they come here, and they learn the language, and they live according to our laws, then they can become citizens. The problem is an issue above all with Muslims, when handing out citizenship rights as if they were sweeties has lead to large numbers of Muslims, of young Muslims with British citizenship becoming radicalised, becoming a very big problem. That's the reason why we should be much more parsimonious in allowing citizenship rights to people. We might just wait a generation or so to see how these groups have settled down. Different communities differ greatly in their relation to British society as a whole. There are very different criminality records, there are very different welfare records. For example, Chinese do not have any problem with school, they do not have much involvement that I'm aware of in knife crime, most of them are not in welfare and do not end up in prison. This is a rather different profile from some of the other peoples, of other immigrants. And I think that governments ought to take note of all these problems because we don't want to import people with a high level of criminality and a high level of dependence* (The Bruges Group, 225)

Another member of the Bruges Group stressed the desirability that a preference was given to those who showed loyalty to the UK, shared British national values *and* came from a Commonwealth country:

> *Personally, I think that British citizenship is something which has to do with people sharing loyalty to the state and to the values that we want to live by in this country … I think if there are people who's had historic ties with Britain or with British people, they should get a preference, if they can contribute to British life and of course to British economy as well* (The Bruges Group, 227)

Even though certain institutional claims of the Freedom Association seem to suggest that this particular NGO would not like any differences to be made when it came to immigrants and their accession to citizenship[19], members of the Freedom Association also expressed their

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[19] A Freedom Association blog entry published on the 4th August 2009 read: "Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme Phil Woolas laid out new government plans, under which migrants would have to earn points to gain British citizenship … The government also said they would deduct points for what they referred to as 'bad behaviour'. However, what concerned me is what the government meant by 'bad behaviour'. It was not strictly limited to illegal activity but includes what many would consider to be a basic human right; the freedom peacefully to protest and express one's opinion. Speaking on Radio 4's Today Programme, Phil Woolas made it clear that "if you took part in anti-war demonstrations… that that would be an example of 'bad behaviour," suggesting that freedom of speech would not be guaranteed for non-citizens...I think this introduces a shocking precedent

wish that citizens coming from any Commonwealth country had preference, rather than citizens from EU countries:

> *Why should we give priority to the EU, to these countries of the EU, Latvia, Croatia, who's the next to come in and deny priority to countries with which we've had close ties for hundreds of years?* (The Freedom Association, 217)

While making such assertions, members of the Freedom Association were also making explicit their disagreement with the idea of EU citizenship, and with any sort of EU interference in questions having to do with citizenship and the UK:

> *[Citizenship is a] national right. And I don't think we should have EU citizenship at all* (The Freedom Association, 141)

> *A nation exists first and foremost to protect the interests of their nationals, that's what it's there for. Its nationals are the people that the country has decided are nationals* (The Freedom Association, 142)

Another member of the Freedom Association suggested that British citizenship should be granted to those who have lived in the country for an extended period of time and shown that they have made positive contributions to society. At the same time, he disliked the idea of the citizenship test:

> *I would say probably a combination of period of time, say a dozen years, and contribution to society. I certainly wouldn't like it limited to people's ethnicity or country of origin. I prefer it if these things are left a little bit vague, actually. I don't like this idea of citizenship test* (The Freedom Association, 214)

The only member of the Federal Trust who elaborated on the question of citizenship suggested that different ways of acquiring citizenship should be contemplated, leaving the path open both for those who are born in the country, or happen to live in it for a period of time, and those who are descendants of nationals:

> *I come from a country where you have the birthright [to be a citizen]. So you have a very large immigrant community, the Turkish community who are born and raised in Germany but haven't got any rights and I think that this is not right … I think that it should be a mixture of birth, residence, descent…* (Federal Trust, 132)

Another German, in this case a member of the Centre for European Reform, suggested that citizenship should not be regulated by the EU, as it is one of the core national attributes:

> *Given that citizenship is such a sensitive issue, really at the heart of national sovereignty, I would advise the EU to leave that for national governments* (Centre for European Reform, 230)

As could have been expected from members of the party currently in Government, no major changes to the system currently in force were suggested by Labour party members. They essentially agreed with granting citizenship a) through *jus soli* and b) through passing a test on British institutions and regulations after those having lived in the country for an extended period of time:

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whereby we are no longer all equal in the eyes of the law. If we in Britain value the principle of freedom of expression, it must be a universal principle. It is a human right not a citizen's right" (http://www.tfa.net/tfa_blog/page/2/. Accessed October 2009).

> *I'm quite happy with the regime and I think that there is a time qualification and you give and gather and you look on the criteria that were set. I think you are asked to show your understanding and I don't have a problem with the questions that they ask* (Labour Party, 139)

Another Labour politician argued that in addition to descent and living in the country, a certain degree of patriotism should be expected from those holding any particular citizenship:

> *I think that [citizenship should be based on] descent, living in the country. It all stands on the existence of national boundaries that defines citizenship... So citizenship is based on your national boundaries and people feel patriotic for that and I think there's nothing wrong with that* (Labour Party, 83)

Plaid Cymru politicians showed a more radical approach to citizenship, as they argued that no restrictions whatsoever should apply when it came to granting citizenship, a position that brought them close to the stances supported by No Borders members:

> *I think that we shouldn't be constraining people. If people want to become citizens of the country, I would try to open that up and act as an advantage rather than stop them (*Plaid Cymru, 55)

> *I think citizenship should be open to whoever wants to apply for it under no conditions* (Plaid Cymru, 48)

No Borders members honoured their self-definition as classic libertarians (some of them declare themselves to be anarchists), and openly despised citizenship as a useful or desirable concept, as it has an essentially exclusionary nature and perpetuates difference, and a power structure based on exploitation. In fact, one of their main mottoes explicitly states that "We call for a radical movement against the system of control, dividing us into citizens and non-citizens". In the words of their members:

> *I don't like the exclusionary idea of citizenship. I'd rather live in a post-citizenship world* (No Borders, 127)

> *I think we are all world citizens. Full stop. Who the fuck came up with this shit? Essentially, I feel no great affiliation with the state I am part of or I have lived my entire life within. I don't feel that I should have some sort of solidarity with the members of the middle or upper classes from this state, because they don't serve my interests or look after the people whom I live amongst, and whose lives I am part of. My cultural ethnic identity, such as it is I feel some affinity, but I don't feel it translates into any political manifestations at all. I feel quite strongly that I am a member of the human race and I am connected to everybody on this planet to a certain extent, and I think that the pressing thing is those who are suffering the worst now and that is at odds with any idea of national citizenship* (No Borders, 136)

The Brussels correspondent for *The Guardian* advocated the granting of citizenship to those migrants showing a commitment to the legislation currently in force and the democratic ruling of the country:

> *Citizenship should be granted to those who precisely have a commitment with collective laws and democratic structures*

The correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, instead, thought that a more open approach to citizenship would be desirable, as rights also involve obligations, and therefore guarantee a better integration:

> *I think there should be a much more generous approach to citizenship, as it could make the lives of people living and working in, let's say, Britain much easier, granting them citizenship and rights, rights that come with obligations too such as sending your kids to school or paying taxes, for example (The Daily Telegraph, 42)*

b)   Dual citizenship

The analysed organisations did not have any official positions regarding dual citizenship, as they did not have official positions regarding UK citizenship. That clearly indicates that dual citizenship is not currently a political issue in the UK: in fact, the UK is one of the few countries that does not require those who apply for citizenship to relinquish their original citizenship, regardless of the country of origin, or the existence of bilateral agreements. At the same time, this lack of official positions resulted in a greater diversity of answers from the interviewees, offering a richer depiction of the concerns that such an issue generates amongst prominent politicians and activists.

In this sense, conservative politicians showed mixed feelings towards dual citizenship. Most of them showed a very open attitude towards it, reaching sometimes very enthusiastic endorsements: "I think that needs to be encouraged. I think that it enables the person to maintain one of the nationalities but it might be for reasons of family or business" (Conservative Party, 81). A respondent thought that dual citizenship was a desirable option, as it made it possible for migrants to preserve their roots in their original countries while allowing them to integrate in the country where they decided to live, work, and raise their offspring. A system that did not grant dual citizenship would not guarantee that those who happen to live their lives in the country but were born somewhere else integrated and participated fully in society:

> *I don't have a problem with dual citizenship... if someone is born in a country and it is their parents that are bringing him into this world and they might wish to settle down in another part of the world. There are the ancestral roots and the respect to the community. I fully understand why people tend to keep their dual citizenship simply because their roots belong in another community. Through the progression of time they would like the host country to be their mother country and the family they would raise in their host country which ultimately will turn out to be their permanent home* (Conservative Party, 148)

Although they all essentially agreed on the desirability of dual citizenship for practical reasons, some of them showed some concern regarding national allegiances and identification and integration in both countries:

> *I find it difficult if people want citizenship in a number of different countries but I think dual citizenship ought to be the norm in many cases because, especially in ethnic-diverse cities, dual citizenship is OK* (Conservative Party, 62)

> *I personally think that you really need to make up your mind whether you want citizenship. But it is very difficult as I've had cases of people who were declared "stateless" which is quite tricky as well because you have citizens with no citizenship and no citizens' rights as well ... I personally think that if people are*

> *fortunate enough to have a choice I think that people will use that right*
> (Conservative Party, 60)

A particular interviewee supported dual citizenship but showed concerns regarding the linguistic integration of those holding dual citizenship and deciding to move to their other country:

> *There is no problem with dual citizenship however it can become a problem due to linguistic problems for those who decide to live in a country* (Conservative Party, 129)

Finally, an interviewee saw a risk with dual citizenship when there was a conflict between the two countries. However, he did not offer any practical solution or way of implementing regulations that overcame such situation:

> *Dual citizenship is fine as long as you don't have the notion that you're going to compete. If you are from a country which is in conflict with the other country, then it becomes a very difficult situation* (Conservative Party, 75)

Members of the Bruges Group also portrayed divided opinions on dual citizenship. While some of them had no objection whatsoever to dual citizenship, and were happy with the continuity of the current system –"I do not have any objection or opinion on dual citizenship" (The Bruges Group, 68) – others suggested that not accepting dual citizenship constituted a respectable decision, and that a bi-national agreement was desirable: "It depends on the two countries, I mean, not every country agrees to it for their own reasons" (The Bruges Group, 228). Finally, another Bruges Group member –a dual citizen himself– suggested that a number of elements should be assured before dual citizenship was granted. These included cultural and linguistic similarity between the countries, a clean criminal record, and a record of not having benefited from the welfare system in the past:

> *It depends on the circumstances. Immigrant societies such as the American do not normally like dual citizenship. I myself have something close to dual citizenship, but that is because I am very old, and when I was born, Australia was part of the British empire, and there where no differences whatsoever in culture or language. I've never been in prison or on welfare. If these are not the conditions, then dual citizenship becomes very difficult* (The Bruges Group, 225)

The question of benefits was also mentioned by a member of the Freedom Association when arguing against the desirability of dual citizenship:

> *It seems a bit silly, but as that entitles you to get all the benefits from all two nationalities, and therefore, I disagree* (The Freedom Association, 203)

Other members of the Freedom Association, instead, understood the personal benefits that dual citizenship could bring to those entitled to it, and therefore supported it:

> *It is normal (and desirable) that people keep their previous citizenship when they are entitled to a second one* (The Freedom Association, 217)

> *It's only a piece of paper isn't it? I mean, you're living in one place and you're living by their laws and all there, why shouldn't you go somewhere else and do the same there? ... I think you can have as many citizenships as you like* (The Freedom Association, 141)

> *I don't have any particular objection* (The Freedom Association, 214)

In fact, this was also the case with the members of the Centre for European Reform, the Anti-Poverty Network, and the Labour Party:

> *As more and more people are now bilocational I don't see why the state should ask you to renounce to your citizenship to acquire another* (Centre for European Reform, 230)

> *I do not see any problem with dual citizenship* (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

> *I don't have any problem with citizenship. I know a few people who, for variety of reasons, either because of birth or marriage have dual citizenships* (Labour Party, 71)

This was, in fact, the question that generated the strongest agreement amongst all interviewees, regardless of their organisational affiliation. A member of the Federal Trust, however, suggested that her enthusiasm could vary if dual citizenship was to be granted to citizens who originally come from countries outside the EU. Still, she did not make a very strong case in that regard:

> *From a personal point of view, it's a positive thing if I would be able to have a son with dual citizenship so that is a good concept. I can see how there are cases that will lead to difficulties. Obviously I'm talking about two EU countries, part of the same EU polity and I can see with other countries it will bring difficulties* (Federal Trust, 132)

The answers of the interviewees of Plaid Cymru and No Borders redefined the concept of dual citizenship. In the former case, the multi-layered individual affiliation with Wales, the UK and the EU was considered as an equivalent to dual citizenship, turning all EU citizens into dual citizens. In the latter case, dual citizenship was rejected as a principle, as interviewees believed that everybody should hold a global citizenship, or no citizenship at all:

> *I think that most of us have dual citizenship. For example, I'm Welsh, British and European* (Plaid Cymru, 48)

> *I think everybody should have global multiple citizenship* (No Borders, 91)

The Brussels correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* shared the opinion of most interviewees, and supported the desirability of allowing dual citizenship, because "I think dual citizenship can make the lives of people working and living in Britain easier" (The Daily Telegraph, 42).

c)   *Minority issues*

Conservative Party members showed a consistent opposition to the accommodation of the British social and political system to meet the requirements and the needs of minorities. This is consisten with their understanding of diversity as a potential threat to British social cohesion and the prevalence of British traditional values. The Conservative Party proposes four measures to enhance the cohesion of the different communities and minorities living in the UK:

> a) *Supporting community groups based on their effectiveness in countering poverty and deprivation rather than on the basis of ethnicity or faith*

> b) *Devolving power to local authorities, who are better placed to make decisions for their communities*
> c) *Offering English language instruction for all to cement the English language as the bedrock of our national identity*
> d) *Tackling unacceptable cultural practices, such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation*[20]

These proposed measures fit with the views sustained by Conservative Party members in their interviews, as they were essentially supporting the idea that the adaptation to accommodate minorities needs "is not healthy, we should sustain integration" (Conservative Party, 114). To a certain extent, they perceived that migrants are intruding on an already existing society, and therefore the onus should be placed on them to adapt, not the other way around:

> *If they voluntarily came to Europe to be in Europe, they have to have European values, as they have chosen to go to Europe, like I've chosen to go to Britain: nobody forced me to go to Britain ... Well, they have chosen to come, haven't they? Anybody pointed at them with a gun and told them to come here? No, they voluntarily paid money or decided to live in Britain, because they love Britain* (Conservative Party, 75)

This was even the case with one Tory politician who appeared far more open to accommodating institutions, as he suggested that even though certain adaptations might be made, in principle migrants should respect and abide by the laws already in force in the country:

> *I think that you can adapt public institutions and make sure that there is proper representation ... I think that's a mistake that happens a lot in certain countries, where you get a perception really of an ethno-national group for being represented and sometimes you see over-representations of certain groups. Obviously if you talk about welfare, health etc, there needs to be an understanding amongst the professionals within those services on the different need of other ethno-national groups ... I think that there are expectations of those who come into the country that they should respect the laws, the government's arrangements, and try to assimilate as best as they can. That doesn't mean that they have to throw out their cultural identity- on the contrary their national identity should be celebrated. I think there must be an understanding of the different way of life for people who get educated in terms of different approach that might be taken in the country they come to settle in* (Conservative Party, 62)

Another Conservative member opposed accommodations because they represent a form of positive discrimination and lead to higher degrees of positive discrimination, which, to her understanding, is negative as "discrimination is discrimination" (Conservative Party, 148). Conservative politicians respected religious diversity and the practice of different faiths in the private realm, as long as they did not contradict common law, nor interfere with the state nor with the regulations currently in force, above all with regard to sharia law:

> *If you want to live under sharia law you go to a country where there is sharia law. You've chosen to come to a country and therefore, in the moment you walk into*

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[20] http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Community_Relations.aspx. Accessed October 2009.

> *that country you accept the institutions of that country, you don't change the institutions: this sounds to me like colonialism* (Conservative Party, 75)

Similar positions were held by members of the Bruges Group. This may be indicative of the conservative leaning of the interviewees, as the Bruges Group does not have a unified take on minorities (as long as they remain under the competencies of the UK, not the EU). One member of this organisation argued that immigrants should make an effort to adapt to the country they are migrating to, as they are deciding to live in this country voluntarily:

> *Yes, I think so. I mean, these are not slaves, they were not forced to come here. They choose to come to this country, for whatever reason, and I think that therefore the onus, I speak as someone who came to this country as a teenager, and the onus, my family accepted that the onus was on us to adapt to this country, and of course that does not mean that one forgets one's own language, one's own food, or one's whatever, but yeah, I think you do have to adapt* (The Bruges Group, 228)

Still, she believed that there were certain questions (such as the request to be treated by a female gynaecologist) that should be respected, because they are not requirements which are exclusive of those sharing certain religious beliefs:

> *It depends on what you mean. For instance, if women want to be seen by female doctors, that actually has nothing to do with religion, especially with gynaecological problems. You often get non-Muslim women, or non-whatever, I'd rather be seen by a woman doctor, and I think you should definitely have that choice. I think it is not up to doctors to decide who their patients are, so under no circumstances can we have a health service, I mean, if you're going privately, that's different, but we have a NHS in this country, and most countries have some kind of a health service, but if you have a national service you can't have a doctor saying I'm not seeing her because she's a woman* (The Bruges Group, 228)

Again, sharia law was considered a no-go area for members of the Bruges Group, as they believed it undermined the core values and principles of the British nation and its democratic system. In essence, members of the Bruges Group strongly supported the fundamental principles according to which everybody should be equal before the law, and that the law should be equal for everybody:

> *No, we've got to have one set of rules within this country, and anyone can't say oh you're a Muslim so you're going to have a different legal system or you're going to live, you know, a very different set of laws will apply to you if you're not a Muslim, you know we are all in Britain, and we should all have shared values and shared responsibilities and duties and to some extent* rights (The Bruges Group, 227)

> *If by their own political institutions you mean sharia law, then the answer would be no. If they want to live under sharia law, what are they doing in Britain? The essential question with all these people is why do they come here. And if they came here to live exactly as they used to live in the lands where they come from, then they should go back, rather than expect the British to respond to their demands* (The Bruges Group, 225)

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Even though the Freedom Association does not have a unified stance on minorities (they believe in the individual, rather than in social groupings[21]), members of this NGO showed a diverse range of attitudes, from those supporting the right of migrants and minorities not to adapt to the dominant values, to those arguing that the state should not engage in any sort of adaptation process that might undermine the core values holding the British nation together. As an example of the former case, an interviewee suggested that:

> *If immigrants do not want to adapt, I don't think they should be forced to. I don't think the state should force people to adapt or encourage them not to adapt. By and large, I think that if people had the opportunity to choose, they'd choose to adapt, but I'd also respect people's right not to adapt* (The Freedom Association, 214)

An example of the second trend would be the following:

> *There shouldn't be any [adaptation for minorities], as this is undermining the integrity of the nation. If you want to be a citizen of the UK, you're free to practice your religion, that's fine, as religion is a personal thing, but to take an active part in society, to work there, to pay taxes, to benefit from all the health services there should be a willingness to learn the language of our country. The idea that we have a never ending array of languages to accommodate the people so that they don't find the need to integrate I think is wrong* (The Freedom Association, 217)

In spite of the Association's strong defence of individual freedoms, the knowledge of the English language was perceived as crucial for members of the Freedom Association:

> *No [adaptations for minorities should not be made], and one of the things I am thinking about is local authorities, or indeed lots of other public bodies sending you something saying that you can have it in 26 different languages. I don't think that should be* (The Freedom Association, 141)

Another member of the Freedom Association who had similar views presented a more moderate position, as he suggested that nobody should be excluded from services for not speaking English, and that the state (or local authorities) should help migrants to learn the language and integrate in the country:

> *I don't think anybody should be excluded from services because of their language problems, if there's something who speaks only Urdu, and they are seriously ill, and they present themselves in a hospital, you obviously cannot say that we are not dealing with this patient because he speaks only Urdu, and you have to make some kind of special arrangement, on the other hand, the idea that local authorities should be required to publish everything in seventeen languages or twenty-three languages that is as lunatic as the European parliament, which is doing everything in twenty or twenty-one languages at the moment. I am strongly in favour, and I think the Labour government is coming up with this view, but the presumption should be that the English country works in English, and people*

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[21] The Freedom Association believes that a free society should be organised alongside the following seven principles: a) Individual Freedom; b) Personal and Family Responsibility; c) The Rule of Law; d) Limited Government; e) Free Market Economy; f) National Parliamentary Democracy, and g) Strong National Defences (http://www.tfa.net/the_freedom _association/about-the-freedom-associa.html. Accessed October 2009).

should be encouraged and helped and taught to speak English and to engage with society (The Freedom Association, 142)

The interviewees from the Centre for European Reform and the Federal Trust stressed the need for migrants and minorities to accept abide by the British law:

Obviously there is the question that is related with the compliance with the rule of Law and the pragmatic principles that there are. I think there is a certain requirement that you have to expect (Federal Trust, 132)

In the particular case of an interviewee of the Centre for European Reform, sharia law was also mentioned as a practice that should not be accepted in the country. If we take into account that most organisations *do not* have a unified stance when it comes to minority policies, the significant number of spontaneous mentions of sharia law by interviewees reveals the extent to which this issue is opposed by British political elites:

You need to accept the Constitution, and the fact that this is a democratic, secular country so if you come here and say I'm a Muslim, I observe sharia law and I have four wives, well no, you should probably not come and live here, you probably should live somewhere where the national values suit your lifestyle better. You don't have to become British to live here, but you have to accept the principles of the Constitution of this country (Centre for European Reform, 230)

The Labour Party presents itself as "the party of equality"[22], and even though they do not address the issue of minorities as such, their public discourse explicitly supports social equality, showing particular concern about gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, race, religion or belief. Perhaps as a result of the controversies generated by New Labour's support for multiculturalism, culture is no longer mentioned in that list, and a stronger endorsement of integration is now showed. Interviewed members supported respect for the law as an essential requirement that migrants should meet. Although Labour party members suggested that migrants should not necessarily fully adopt the dominant culture, they also perceived knowledge of the English language as a crucial requirement for enjoying the state-provided services and a satisfactory life in Britain. Labour politicians were careful in presenting these requirements more as something desirable that would benefit migrants themselves rather than as a necessary, unavoidable requirement. Still, and although they did not think it was the ideal situation, some Labour politicians also felt that the state itself should aim at providing translation services in certain cases, as it would improve the quality of the services provided:

If you are delivering a service and you are dealing with people who have diverse languages, [...] then how can we be sure that you are delivering the proper services. You can't have treatment that is passive. You have to bring in measures whether it's translation, whether it's people with a particular language skill. So that is just a proper thing to do ... I think it's a lot of nonsense of who hasn't adapted but when people talk about it they have to use their languages on one hand and then sort of speak the dominant language. I went to houses where [the people] didn't speak English and there was a lot of interaction with body language but you can't have a conversation if you don't have someone translating (Labour Party, 139)

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[22] See, for example: http://www.labour.org.uk/equalities (Accessed October 2009).

I think that there are two dimensions: One is the understanding of the culture they are about to enter for those people but I think there's also an advantage for the people in the country who are able to learn about the other. So I think that it's a balanced approach and I don't think that we need to be pushing one culture over the other because it will cause difference of opinions and rift ... if you want them to live in your country then you would have to adapt to meet their requirements. I think that you cannot invite people to your country and accept them in without accommodating their needs. But you have to do it in such a way that you don't overcommit your budget in one area ... I don't think we should impose a way of life on the people. I think that it's advantageous to anyone who comes to a country not of their origin to at least understand its culture and language. Because if they don't understand the language they won't have access to services, work and won't be able to help their children do the same. I think that should be helped to understand the country that they live in for their benefit (Labour Party, 83)

A Welsh Labour politician adopted a similar stance, although the Welsh perspective, rather than the British one, was underlined:

I don't think that anyone should be forced to adopt any form of life providing they are not breaking the law and there is tolerance all around and that people's ideas and beliefs are respected and understood as far as possible. So I think that it's important for people who come to Wales to be respected, welcomed and at the same time there's an obligation for them to understand some of the traditions and cultures of Wales. Not to integrate necessarily but more to understand as much they can. And certainly they must not be excluded from activities, either accidentally or deliberately (Labour Party, 71)

Members of Plaid Cymru insisted on the Welsh aspect, as they perceived it had been wiped off from the debates, and, what was more important for them, from the courses and tests that migrants are presented with in the publicly funded schemes aimed at facilitating a smooth(er) integration in British society:

I think the language is the most important element for me. I think this goes back to the whole UK policy on immigration and with the tests that take place, such as the English language and English history tests. There aren't any signs of the Welsh language or history in those tests so if someone wants to come here, this application goes through London and this is what we need to change (Plaid Cymru, 55)

Even though the Anti-Poverty Network does not have a unified position when it comes to minorities, its members stressed the importance of learning English as a desirable common ground that might enhance dialogue between cultures and groups. They also thought that the state should play a role ensuring that migrants preserved their original language, as they saw a multilingual society as a richer society. A balance between setting common arenas for dialogue and respect for minority cultures was thus pursued:

The state plays an important role in regulating ethno-national diversity. If it wasn't for this regulation, we could end up in the jungle of culture. The state should not protect minorities, but should play a role in promoting dialogue between groups. The state should guarantee that newcomers keep their mother tongue, but, at the same time, it should guarantee that they learn English, so that they will have more opportunities in this country ... I think there is really a benefit

> *in adapting to certain cultural traditions and legacies, but there is also a fear, and it is the duty of the government to keep these issues in balance … It is important to know how we adopted certain policies or institutions, and it will also help you to know where you come from, that might generate a kind of a cultural foundation for dialogue* (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

Members of No Borders, instead, advocated cross-cultural integration, placing the onus both on the dominant culture and the minority one, in a coherent line with the group's egalitarian and inclusionary –yet not homogenising– approach. They argued that the state should guarantee that a more balanced linguistic environment emerged, enabling those belonging to a minority to keep their language and use it even with those who did not originally speak it:

> *I don't think anybody should be forced to do anything for living in this country. I think generally it would be good if we encouraged each other to integrate more, for example learning more languages to integrate everybody into the local community* (No Borders, 91)

> *I think institutions should be more and more tolerant on some issues like language. There are languages used here by some people that we need to work on. I don't know on what level the doctor has to be able to speak, but I do think that integration is essential, and it is the way towards becoming a more tolerant society* (No Borders, 136)

Regarding the media, the Brussels' correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* suggested that paying a special attention to minorities may be a way of legitimising inequalities:

> *I don't think a person with an Asian background should be treated differently than a person with a Welsh background. You have to be careful so you don't end up institutionalising inequality. For example, I was reading that the city council of Utrecht had opened two information desks for Muslims, one for men and one for women. You don't want to institutionalise these prejudices as a public authority. I particularly think that public authorities should not privilege any religious groups* (The Daily Telegraph)

d)   *Migration*

Migration is a controversial issue in contemporary British politics, as there is a widespread assumption amongst a considerable proportion of the public that the UK has welcomed more immigrants than British public services can handle. Other discourses stress the social and cultural fracture immigrants have generated in what allegedly was a united society, the lack of space, or the loss of sovereignty that the UK membership to the EU has brought with regard to this particular issue, as the UK is no longer able to reject migrants from other EU countries. These views –or at least some of them– are common amongst those closer to the right, and are often turned into the official discourses of the organisations in that area of the political spectrum.

In the particular case of the Conservative Party, their official line shows concern with current border controls, as it allegedly lets terrorists, traffickers and illegal immigrants into the UK[23]. In spite of the fact that they acknowledge the economic benefits that immigration brings to the UK, Tory official statements underline the need for stricter border controls to identify the 'right' type of migrants. Not only that, an annual limit for immigrants would also be desirable:

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[23] http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Immigration.aspx. Accessed October 2009.

> *Our approach will ensure that we admit both the right people for our economy and also the right number of people. For economic migrants from outside the EU, we propose a two-stage process: The first stage is making eligible for admission those who will benefit the economy. The second stage is an annual limit to control the numbers admitted with regard to the wider effects on society and the provision of public services[14]*

In addition, the Conservative Party pre-emptively warns that in the eventual case of a further EU enlargement, citizens from those countries should not automatically benefit from free movement within the EU, or, at least, when it comes to the UK: "A Conservative Government would also apply transitional controls as a matter of course in the future for all new EU entrants."[14]

The essentially restrictive migration policy proposed by the Conservative Party was closely followed by the interviewed Tories. In this sense, while showing an open attitude towards international migration, mostly based on the economic benefits migrants generate for the British economy, all of them agreed that migration should be kept under control, so that it would not be too overwhelming for British society:

> *Migrants are a huge benefit, they bring benefits to rural areas and town, they get those jobs that the UK citizens cannot and won't do, if they have a good education and are doing well, we can only gain, but great numbers can create problems* (Conservative Party, 114)

> *There are benefits and there are drawbacks. Migration can enrich the society, it can balance the norms in a society. In the western world we have [an] ageing population. Obviously that means that there are fewer younger people who are looking after the ageing population. So by having people coming and do the jobs, [they] settle in the society and bring that balance back. If you look back in history every society has benefited from migration and from this flow of people to the society ... As long as a society is able to host a group of people that come into the country and intend to stay on a permanent basis, I think that there shouldn't be any restrictions. Society and democracy have to make that decision [about] what we sustainably achieve over a certain period of time ... I think that any society would be receptive towards a sustainable society and its future* (Conservative Party, 148)

One Conservative politician also stressed the potential problem that guaranteeing integration could bring to British society. The impact that migration could have on the British welfare system was also perceived as a problem, as it could put an excessive pressure on it which could affect the quality of the services British citizens expect:

> *I think from a sending country's point of view it can lead to a brain drain in terms of the expertise they might need -- usually people leaving developing nations to go to more developed nations. In terms of the receiving nations, the capacity of receiving nations must be able of accepting immigrants and take into account the cultural, linguistic barriers and the capacity of public services in particular. They must be able to meet the demands and respond to the new residents of the country. That's why I think there need to be controls in place which make sure that there is a balance between both ends of this process* (Conservative Party, 62)

Another Conservative politician brought the argument a step beyond, as he suggested that certain migrants only came to the UK to benefit from the free and universal National Health Service:

The two main problems are the high standards of living that attract economic migrants, and that's the majority. That has to be regulated when they come but the numbers cannot be overwhelming, particularly in a smaller community. I also think the EU must be careful on health migrants who simply want healthcare ... I think international migration is inevitable ... I think that there has been a problem mainly [due] to large numbers. In the 1950s there was a problem with recruitment [and] the government recognised and actively acted on it. The world has changed within the last couple of years and now people are allowed to come here and it seems that we can't support them economically (Conservative Party, 81)

Finally, a Conservative politician who acknowledged the need to welcome migrants so that they can better integrate in the UK, advocated for controls and checks on migrants, to avoid resentment in the host population:

Migrants do a great patriotic act, as they leave their country to live in a new country because they LOVE that country. That is why British society should be welcoming to them and helping them to become more British ... Unchecked and uncontrolled migration can bring huge problems between those coming in, and those already living in the country. Migration should be controlled to meet the needs of the host population, as you want the host population to be welcoming, not resented. We need to have fair, just migration policies (Conservative Party, 75)

In spite of the fact that the Bruges Group is only concerned about migration policy because of what they perceive as an EU interference in a sensible issue for security and for national sovereignty also[24], members of the Bruges Group were probably the least enthusiastic about migration as such, as they perceived that an uncontrolled, excessive amount of migrants had overpopulated the UK during the past years. They showed concern about the impact of what they saw as an excessive number of migrants on the quality of public services. On the other hand, they acknowledged the benefits that some of these migrants bring to the economy:

Problems: volume in relation to social resources,[like] high population density areas and infrastructures such as schooling or transport in the South East of England. If you can't plan for population increase, it becomes a problem. [The benefits of migration are that] it is often the more industrious, and indeed, the more educated who are economic immigrants, those who are a great deal for the national economy (The Bruges Group, 68)

Another member of the Bruges Group perceived an impoverishment in the quality of British social and political life as a result of welcoming migrants from areas that do not have the long-lasting tradition of stable democratic rule that the British have enjoyed in the past centuries:

The British way of life distinguishes, or used to distinguish because things are getting worse for the last 30 or 40 year, British life was distinguished by the contrast between public and private life, which obviously goes back to the

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[24] http://www.brugesgroup.com/news.live?article=14042&keyword=24. Accessed October 2009.

distinction between God and Caesar. This was what made the British in particular and the Europeans in general free in a way in which peoples from other countries were not free, and were ruled more or less despotically, and when they migrate in large numbers to Europe they bring of course their despotic habits amongst us, and this is not, I think, a good thing (The Bruges Group, 225)

The question of the number of migrants was also perceived as a problem by members of the Federal Trust, who in spite of acknowledging the inevitability of migration flows, expressed their wish for stricter migration controls:

I think that international migration is a fact of global life and I think that in the EU context there are benefits and problems with the EU receiving, not so much sending, and that is something that needs to be addressed in a common way (Federal Trust, 132)

The Freedom Association official discourse clearly shows double standards when it comes to their defence of individual freedoms, as apparently only British citizens' freedoms should be respected. Migration, free movement, and related issues find a difficult accommodation with the Freedom Association's aims to promote individual freedoms while keeping strong national defence policies. Its members advocated for the implementation of a system that guaranteed that those who are more likely to integrate better in British society (because they already speak English, for example) would get preferential access to the country:

It has always happened. That's as much as my thinking is. Receiving countries usually benefit from migrants, because it broadens the base, it brings experience, and expertise, new ideas, new ways of doing everything which is all great. The only difficulty is the volume, and how much you have to pay in order to cope with these people that do not know the language, or whatever it is ... If they are willing to work and adapt, and they are not going to put an undue pressure upon the country's welfare system, they should be able to come ... I'm not opposed to a system of points where people get points if they can speak English, or if they can contribute, as long as this system does not exclude people who have had lots of bad luck in life, even though they haven't got the education, but they would have to come at the bottom of the pile, and I think we should have a limit on numbers (The Freedom Association, 141)

Whilst the question of limiting the number of migrants was the dominant discourse amongst the interviewed members of the Freedom Association, the proposed criteria for discerning who should be accepted or not differed. In this sense, and in addition to the aforementioned points system that evaluated the likelihood of integration in Britain, two additional sets of criteria were mentioned. One interviewee suggested that the suspicion that a potential migrant might have any link with a terrorist organisation should automatically lead to rejection. Another interviewee, who presented his views as the dominant in the country, showed concern with migrants and their use of public benefits:

These would be my constraints: total numbers, and the problems with integrating people with different cultural values ... We should have a right to decide on absolute numbers, we must have a right to decide on the qualities of the people, for example, if we suspect, not prove, if we suspect that someone is associated with terrorism, we should not let them in. It must be consistent with the needs of our economy, in terms of skills and numbers (The Freedom Association, 142)

What I'd like to see, and what I think most people would like to see that if people are coming here, regardless of their religion, regardless of their ethnicity, if they are coming here to play a role in the society, to work, to contribute and to generally be law abiding, then I have no problem at all and it should be welcomed and celebrated ... I think I share the view of most people in this country. You see it a lot in the media. I don't think the British public is particularly anti-immigrant, what they don't like is people coming here who seek to abuse the system, who seek that the state should be more favourable to certain ethno-national groups, or you set certain people over the native population, and I'm not saying here that the native population should be superior to anybody coming to this country, I'm saying that it should be equal ... There are certain benefits providing that immigrants are coming here to do their job, to live here and to contribute to the economy, but if we have people coming here with no intention to work, who have to use the public services, then we have to question if that's really a benefit ... This should be based on a quota system that we ought to have here (The Freedom Association, 203)

Interviewees from the Centre for European Reform also criticised the migration policy in force in most European countries, as it attracted low skilled migrants, rather than highly skilled ones. They also criticised the fact that European countries were open to migration while the economy was growing, and closed the door during times of recession. Still, they celebrated the dynamism that migrants bring to the economy, and the sense of competition it generated amongst local workers too:

International migration brings a degree of flexibility to the labour market that most markets don't have, because they're much more willing to take up odd jobs, because they're willing to move around regions and also across countries. If you have a smart immigration policy, and EU countries other than the UK, that is a bit better, have in general very bad immigration systems. If you have a smart immigration policy, then you can attract clever people from around the world, which is very good for the economy, and also by facing ethnonational diversity, the local population increases competition. Having said that, the immigration systems that we have on the continent, which are not based on skills, I mean, you just import loads of low skilled workers at a time when your economy is booming, then you shut the door when the economy is doing worse, then you kind of rely on family reunions for the next ten years, and everyone who comes are family members of those low skilled workers, and this is something that once the economy turns down brings some resentment to the local population (Centre for European Reform, 230)

Plaid Cymru members were enthusiastically supportive of immigration, even though they some of them also acknowledged that it was not always an easy process for migrants nor for locals. They concluded, however, that the benefits outnumbered by far the inconveniences as long as equality and mutual understanding of the respectability of everybody's culture were assured, and migrants abided by the law:

We've always taken a stance that everybody who comes to Wales has brought something new. The important thing is the attitude they come with. And if that attitude is developing the nation, that's fine. Therefore everybody regardless of creed or background or colour or ability is equal and must be treated as equal (Plaid Cymru, 92)

> *Citizens of Wales are everybody who is here now, wherever they came from, whether their family has been farming the same piece of land on the slopes of the mountains in the north for over a thousand years or a refugee who got off from a boat from Kosovo or Somalia. We can't define our citizenship or any nationality in any other way and an attempt to do something else would be crazy, it would also be completely illogical, because we are a country that has survived out of migration and had migration for a very long time, and, you know, we don't have pure Welsh blood lines* (Plaid Cymru, 122)

> *There are massive problems as well as massive opportunities as well. Looking at the economic recession, I think it's becoming easier to criticise foreign workers who come here to work. I think that times are tough and everyone looks after their own, rather than the global outlook. I think that everyone must look outside their borders and their people and work collectively ... I think instead of ticking boxes with specific groups we must say who should we not let into the country. I think that should go back and say: "Open the borders but with respect to the country, to each other's cultures and backgrounds"* (Plaid Cymru, 55)

Probably due to the dominant discourses spread by right wing media organisations, particularly by the tabloids, and to the related quite generalised perception (at least amongst certain sectors of the public) that immigration is a social problem that still needs to be addressed, Labour Party politicians were less enthusiastic, although they also felt that migration was in essence beneficial for the receiving country. There were members, however, who insisted on the need for migrants to pay taxes, and abide by the law, and respect the local regulations:

> *There are enormous benefits. First of all, in terms of expertise where we may encourage immigration for shortage areas of expertise such as the medical profession, engineering and teaching. The recent wave of nurses from the Philippines but we almost denuded the nursing structure in the Philippines. Bear in mind that we also lose through emigration a lot of highly skilled people as well in places like the US, Canada and Australia where the income is greater* (Labour Party, 71)

> *For example, London is such a city that is dependent on the incoming labour. So that's what a city strives for, needs and can never get enough, of skilled people and labour. You cannot have enough people who are dynamic and that can help growth. And there are many people where if their countries are stable and if they get sense of more of an economic well being they may think that it is a great country to live and have a family ... if someone is staying for a reasonable time and paying taxes and settle here and then their family come here then it is reasonable* (Labour Party, 139)

Another Labour politician adopted a discourse closer to the one supported by Tories and members of the Bruges Group and the Freedom Association, suggesting that stricter controls over migrants, as well as a consistent policy guaranteeing that there were not massive migrant flows should be in place:

> *As regards the problems I think that there would be in the recipient countries who are not equipped to deal with the mass amount of people, either economic or socially, we have to think then globally as politicians how we are going to deal with the consequences of that migration ... We have to have people who share our*

common beliefs. We also need to be very mindful if we want to let in friends and not enemies of this country. I think also that we must have control in our borders and we cannot let anybody in our country regardless of checks and balances ... I think that we are a very small geographic area that is the UK and we are talking about even smaller area when we are talking about Wales and so you need to look at the capacity (Labour Party, 83)

In any case, the Labour Party is not proposing any major review to the British current immigration policy, and therefore, their official stance basically supports the government in their assessment and its tackling of the question.

The activity of Anti-Poverty Network is basically focused on the reduction poverty in the UK, and the group does not have an official line regarding immigration. As a result, members of the Anti-Poverty Network had different approaches to the question. The bottom line in their discourses would be that migrants should abide by the law, learn English, and integrate in British society, in order to prevent social unrest. Still, they recognised the benefits that increasing the diversity of the country brings to society:

The good thing when you receive so many people in your country is that they contribute to the diversity of the country. On the other side, it is not that simple, because if there are migrants that do want to live as if they lived in their countries, many difficulties may arose. It is positive as long as there is the will to integrate in that society (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

It is an enormous advantage if they learn the language ... The state should go further than looking peoples' status within British law and at peoples' status within the framework of Human Rights ... Advantages: I think that the benefits always are that you bring new blood into the country. It brings a revivification of the country. Disadvantages: if there was a large group of society that decided to cut off society and live in a separatist way (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

A member of the Anti-Poverty Network, however, added a complaint, as according to her migrants had taken jobs from British citizens, and that was not desirable: "Of course immigrants should adapt, as it is their own choice to be living in this country … My only complaint would be that they have taken all our jobs" (Anti-Poverty Network, 77).

No Borders UK, instead, is mainly dedicated to the elimination of international borders and the eradication of the notion of citizenship (understood as nationhood), and the inequalities it generates within any given society. The group publicly supports the right of every individual to free movement, and therefore, to migrate freely. For No Borders UK, migration is not a problem, and therefore, it should not be addressed as such. Consequently, interviewees from No Borders rejected the current migration policy, and opposed the widespread discourses about migration, as they believed that it stigmatised a sector of population that were already victims of inequalities. No Borders activists rejected the very idea of 'Illegal immigrant' –"I don't understand the concept of 'illegal immigrant" (No Borders, 118)–, and denounced the use of migrants as scapegoats of the inequalities generated by the very capitalist system based. More specifically, they criticised the hypocrisy behind the widespread discourse that migrants have an undesirable impact on public services and on British citizens' job opportunities, since they also contribute to paying for them through their taxes. In addition, they underlined that the NHS is making profits – instead of reinvesting in the service so that the increased population gets a better service – and big companies are increasing their revenues by exploiting migrants. At the same time, and in addition to these

negative statements, they celebrated the beneficial aspect of migration as an invaluable cultural input for British society:
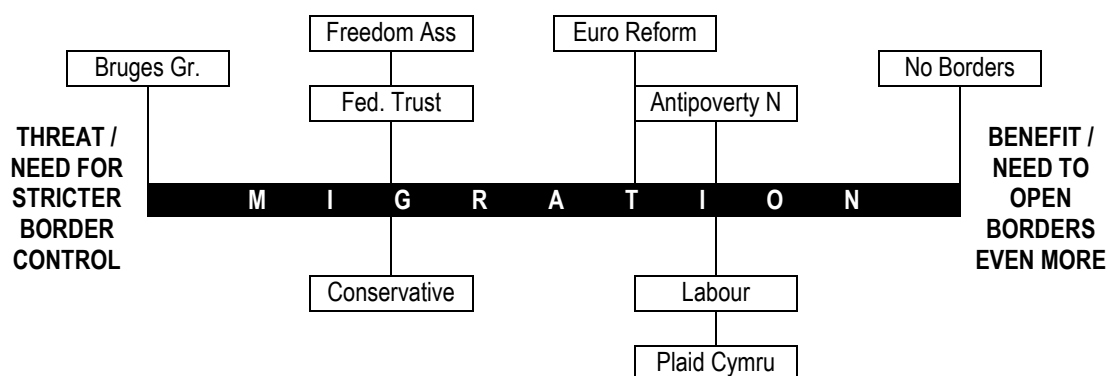
> *As the current system stands, with unequal rights for migrants, various companies are able to benefit massively from exploiting migrants that don't have equal labour rights. I'd like to add that migrants use these structures to create their own mobility, and they exploit the system as well. Migrants bring a hell of cultural value to this society. Migration is great in order to bring new ideas, new thought ... There should not be any limits for immigrants to be let into the country* (No Borders, 127)

> *At the moment, migrants coming from different countries are often misunderstood and seen as something completely different to what they are, they are seen as complete outsiders in other people's mindsets, and are blamed for various problems. They are the scapegoat for all the things going wrong. Regarding benefits, the more diverse a society is, the more challenges, debates and therefore the more creativity can be found in a society* (No Borders, 91)

> *Migrants are often blamed for lowering wages, increasing population, and putting pressure upon our social services. All three are flawed: migrants are not bringing wages down. It is bosses drawing their margins up. It is conflated from two different points. Regarding the increase in population, I just don't buy, I think it's just bollocks. Regarding social services, again that's a problem of the economy: there's enough money, there's enough professionals to do these things, but the money has not been released for it. The NHS just made a profit last year and there are still waiting lists. I don't buy [the argument that] any of these migrants are making our lives harder* (No Borders, 136)

Figure 2 seeks to sum up and synthesise the viewpoints on migration reconstructed here, and demonstrates how groups and organisations' positions on the political spectrum correlate with their understandings of migration as, at one end of the spectrum, a threat to society and, at the other end, a benefit. As we have demonstrated, these views, in turn, inform our actors' arguments about the need for stricter border control or, conversely, the desirability of more openness.

Figure 2. Organisations' and their members' attitudes towards migration

e)   Political Rights

The question of non-citizens' political rights is not a prominent issue in British public debates. As a result, other than in the case of single-issue organisations such as No Borders UK, organisations do not have a unified stance on that particular question. Still, respondents showed a strong degree of coincidence in their responses, probably at the expense of their arguments' sophistication. Once again, those closer to more conservative positions showed a unified view, while those interviewees holding more liberal positions were more nuanced in their responses.

Conservative politicians, for example, opposed en bloc the participation of non-UK citizens in British politics. They did not offer any other explanation that went beyond the idea that 'only British citizens should participate in British politics'. Only one Conservative interviewee acknowledged the potential benefits that allowing non-citizens to participate might have over British society, as it might facilitate social cohesion and could even prevent further isolation of those who are new to a society:

> *It depends on the background of the individual where very often they come from a very different political system with the political system they reside, such as the Chinese community for example and if they are trying to engage with the British political system it can be difficult because freedom of speech is suppressed in many parts of China. I think that there must be a recognition of that and support to ... enable them to fully participate in the political system that they arriving in. But what I would not advocate is the existence of different political systems within a state. I don't think that is helpful at all.* (Conservative Party, 62)

Members of the Bruges Group suggested that only British citizens should have the right to vote in the UK, even in the case of EU citizens:

> *No you don't have political rights, you're not allowed to vote here if you're not a citizen, and obviously you're still equal before the law, and if you happen to be working and living in the UK your children get school places and so on, but you don't have a vote and you can't stand for various things* (The Bruges Group, 228)

> *If EU citizens want to participate in British political life, they'd have to do what I've already said: show loyalty to the state and to the values we want to live by[25]* (The Bruges Group, 227)

Members of the Bruges Group also opposed the idea that alternative political institutions were set up for minority groups, as they believed such a practice would undermine the principle according to which everybody is equal before the law. Still, they left the door open for minorities to set up organisations of political nature such as charities, pressure groups or NGOs:

> *You have only one law in one political system. If people want to set up their own charities or something like that, yeah, of course, but a double law you can't. Everyone is equal before the law. Otherwise you cannot have democracy and you cannot have freedom* (The Bruges Group, 228)

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[25] He had previously stated that these requirements should be the criteria for accessing to British citizenship. Therefore, by saying this, he was expressing his wish that only British citizens should have the right to vote.

Members of the Federal Trust and the Freedom Association showed similar positions to those held by the Bruges Group, and opposed the possibility of allowing minorities to have alternative political institutions. Like the members of the Bruges Group, they did not object to minorities setting up political organisations that were meant to operate in the already existing institutions:

> *I think that political institutions are too broad because I think they should have a right to form a political party for example. I think that they shouldn't have the right to have their own parliament for example, because I think that it is something that can't be happening* (Federal Trust, 132)

> *Anybody, any group of people with a common interest should be entitled to get together, should be entitled to form an organisation, they're entitled within the law to have their own rules, they're entitled to lobby, and I tell you I was many years an MP and many of them do, and I was often lobbied by people interested in animal welfare, in the environment, age concern, and you know, the whole list, and teachers' groups and media groups, and any employees, and trade unions, so yes, anybody is free to form a group, to be a pressure group, to appear in the media, to lobby their representatives, provided they do it within the system we've got. If they came along and said no, because we are different we are a different group in society and we want rules for us, then I just can't take it* (The Freedom Association, 142)

Although all the members of the Freedom Association shared this view, two of them also showed some concerns regarding the nature of certain associations. They felt that rather than promoting the rights of minorities, some groups might instead perpetuate differences and constitute an obstacle to the integration of minorities. Particular concerns were shown regarding the already existing Black Police Association. Two interviewees mentioned it, and criticised its existence using the very same argument, which might indicate that this particular issue was been previously discussed in internal meetings, briefs or in public debates:

> *Everybody should have the same rights under the law … Everybody should be free to join or to form their own groups within the law, provided that they are legally resident here, but that should not necessarily mean an approval, for example one of the things that I find myself more antidiversity, more antiintegration is the police, where you've got the Black Police Association, when you don't have a white one* (The Freedom Association, 217)

> *If private individuals, for any reason, they want to have a Jewish Golf Club, I don't have a problem with them having a Jewish Golf Club, I don't mind it even if I applied to the Golf Club and they said sorry you're not Jewish, you can't come in. I have a bit of a problem with the Black Police Association, because there is not a white police association, indeed I have a bit of a problem with the women's committee in the European Parliament, because we don't have a men's committee. I object to questions of nomenclature, such as the Muslim Parliament. I don't object to having a Muslim council, or a Muslim organisation, but don't call it a parliament, because then it implies that it has some democratic authority which it may really doesn't have, and shouldn't have* (The Freedom Association, 142)

Interviewees from the Centre for European Reform suggested that sizeable minorities might have the right to establish certain institutions/associations to ensure their political

representation, as long as that entailed an acceptation of the current regulations and their integration in the existing institutions:

> *Up to a point. Obviously, if there is a sizeable minority in a country, that minority should have certain minority and cultural rights that are distinct from the majority group. Having said that, I would say that there is a bargain to have somewhere, you have your cultural rights, you get representation for your own group at the local and up to the national level, but the other side of the bargain is that you need to make the effort to integrate into your host society, where you learn the local language, you accept the local constitution, and so on and so forth* (Centre for European Reform, 230)

However, this same interviewee also suggested that citizens from EU countries should enjoy greater political rights, and even the right to vote, as it is much easier to guarantee that British citizens would enjoy these rights if they happened to live in a EU member state: "I think there should be a difference between EU citizens and non-EU citizens, because within the EU it's much easier to ensure reciprocity" (Centre for European Reform, 230).

Plaid Cymru members supported the extension of political rights to long-term residents in Wales, regardless of their country of origin. They believed, however, that it would be desirable if those rights, if ever granted, were exercised within currently existing institutions:

> *I think that everyone should be engaged in the democratic process but I think that they need to get involved in the political institutions because that is like playing with the fear factor of the opposition who are against integrating communities* (Plaid Cymru, 55)

> *The people who live in Wales must have faith in the political system that exists here and stand for politics at the institutions that exist here, either in the Welsh Assembly Government or even in the UK parliament* (Plaid Cymru, 48)

Labour Party members, instead, thought that only citizens should have the right to vote, even though they granted that it could be desirable if that right was extended to non-citizens too: "the right to vote in a country? I can't envisage the situation with those who don't enjoy British citizenship vote necessarily, but I think it's important" (Labour Party, 71).

A member of the Anti-Poverty Network, an asylum seeker himself, accepted the fact that he was not entitled to vote under the current regulations. Still, he expressed his wish that such regulations were modified, as the only way to fully integrate in a country is through enjoying the same rights and obligations as the local population. He also thought that there were alternative forms of political participation other than voting, such as the network he is involved with:

> *Being an asylum seeker myself, I do understand that I do not have the right to vote in this country. Still, I participate in politics through other means ... If people are willing to come to this country, you must give them the same rights as the rest of the population. And once you have the same rights as everybody, you must have the same obligations. And this is the only way to be part of a country* (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

No Borders' members, in line with the organisation's official line, openly rejected what they saw as a legalistic distinction between citizens and non-citizens, as they felt it was an exclusionary way of organising society, and a way of legitimising relations of domination and

(neo)colonialism. They all argued that everybody occupying the same political space should enjoy the same rights and obligations, regardless of their country of origin:

> *I don't know why people belonging to different ethno-national groups should have different rights if they are all occupying the same political space at the same time ... For practical reasons, it would not make much sense that individuals only living in the country for, let's say, six months, would have the right to vote. Therefore, I would say that every individual living here as a part of this society should have every possible political right, regardless of their country of origin* (No Borders, 118)
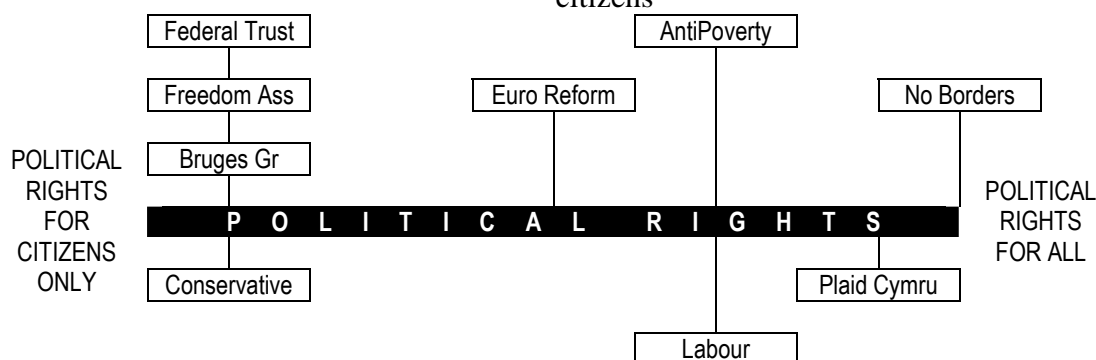
> *The creation of the idea that some people who have the same physical attributes as others, and are of the same species are somehow second class because of the particular longitude and latitude of their birthplace, because of who is in charge of their country is at best foolish, and at worst incredibly offensive. We are all world citizens ... I'm very much of the belief that everybody should exercise their personal political power in whichever way they see fit, and... it's very hard to oppose people setting up alternative political structures or political institutions and for whatever reason* (No Borders, 136)

Among our media interviewees, the Brussels correspondent for *The Guardian* endorsed the general opinion according to which the political system should be equal for everybody, while supporting the devolution of certain powers to native minorities. In his opinion, other than devolved assemblies, there should not be any political institutions competing with the Houses of Parliament:

> *I certainly do think that the political system should be identical for every citizen. That does not exclude, though, forms of devolution, like the Welsh Assembly Government, there is a Scottish Government, there is a Northern Ireland Assembly. I do not favour any sort of political counter-structures that are in conflict with the democratic structures that have evolved from mature societies for the past several hundreds of years* (The Guardian, 59)

The figure below charts our interviewees' attitudes towards political rights for non-citizens, demonstrating once again that organisations' positions on the political spectrum inform their views of notions of citizenship. In particular, right-leaning groups and organisations are more likely to support political rights for citizens only, whereas left-leaning interviewees were keen to advocate a more inclusive understanding of these rights.

Figure 3. Organisations' and their members' attitudes towards political rights for non-citizens

f)   *Free Movement*

As with the case of political rights, free movement is only a central issue for relevant single-issue organisations such as No Borders UK. When it comes to political parties, think tanks, or other civil society organisations no official lines exist. On most occasions, interviewees themselves did not have a well-grounded opinion on the issue, and based their responses on their basic political principles, rather than on analysis of the issue and its implications. In this sense, for example, Conservative politicians were generally in favour of free movement. However, they had different understandings of what free movement entailed. One of them understood free movement as the free movement of workers: "it helps countries with a large number of skilled and unskilled labour boost their economy" (Conservative Party, 81). The rest understood it as the free movement of individuals across borders. The latter group advocated special treatment for EU citizens, but allowing the British government the right to change the regulations at any time:

> *My view is that if you are a sovereign state and a EU member, that should entitle you to certain rights to move around because you are a part of a club. But ultimately it would be on the discretion of the member state to decide whether to reside those rights or not* (Conservative Party, 148)

Members of the Freedom Association ideally supported free movement, but in practice fiercely opposed it. The issue that prevented them from supporting free movement in practice was the sheer number of migrants, which they believed should be kept under a limit – possibly through a points system (*vide supra*). They worried that uncontrolled migration – and even migration controlled with the regulations currently in force– could lead to collapse of the economy and the public services:

> *Ideally, I'm all for freedom of movement of labour, but in reality, it's a number's game ... I think the points system is probably very sensible* (The Freedom Association, 214)

> *Absolutely not. This crazy policy which in theory is great and if we were all prosperous from free and massive countries would be fine, but in today's climate, in the country we live in to say to open up the borders and say to the world you're free to come here and work fine, but to say anybody can come here and no one will stop you is absolutely crazy, and is leading to some serious problems in parts of this country* (The Freedom Association, 203)

Members of the Bruges Group showed mixed opinions with regard to free movement. While some of them fiercely opposed it, and felt that the UK borders should be kept under British control –"the UK is not in Schengen and I don't think we should be" (The Bruges Group, 68)–, other members enthusiastically supported it, with no special treatment whatsoever for EU citizens. Still, those supporting it also used the caveat of the numbers of migrants, and the subsequent need to limit migration:

> *Well, European Union and anywhere else. I'm all for freedom of movement of people [but] I'm not in favour of people arriving here in large numbers and claiming benefits, but then I'm not in favour of large number of people claiming benefits anyway* (The Bruges Group, 228)

Another member of the Bruges Group, instead, suggested that free movement within the EU could be a positive development, although the last enlargement had brought to the EU certain

states that were, from his point of view, problematic, and that was already a problem for the UK:

> *I think that it is probably all right that EU citizens are granted free movement within the EU except, I mean, I think there have been some problems with Romania and Bulgaria. That is, the EU, like most political organisations, wants to extend its power, and what was tolerable, barely tolerable, when the EU was made of small relatively homogeneous states becomes less and less tolerable when more and more states are included within it. The larger and less heterogeneous it gets, the more free movement becomes a problem. It means, for example, that Britain is open to all sorts of, in some ways, highly undesirable people. We no longer have the right to exclude such people* (The Bruges Group, 225)

Members of Plaid Cymru endorsed the idea of free movement as a desirable one –"I can't see what the major barrier would be to not having that [free movement]" (Plaid Cymru, 48)–, while Labour Party members thought that it should be kept for EU citizens only, and not extending this right to all countries in the world:

> *I do believe in the free movement of labour, and that all citizens from the EU countries should enjoy equal rights in any of the member states … I think that all Members of the EU should have free movement but I don't think you should remove all barriers right across on a worldwide basis. I think that our controlling systems would be overwhelmed, if that was the case.* (Labour Party, 71)

> *We have free movement for people coming from the EU member states but there must be some border control for people who come from non-EU countries. I think that I would be very uncomfortable about not having some sort of control…*(Labour Party, 83)

That was exactly the same position advanced by Anti-Poverty Network members, although they also explicitly expressed their conviction that the UK should be integrated into the Schengen agreement: "Once you cross the EU border, there should be no further border controls inside the EU" (Anti-Poverty Network, 88). On the other hand, members of No Borders considered the freedom of movement to be a crucial human right – not surprising given that their official communications describe their organisation as a "network of groups struggling for the freedom of movement for all and an end to all migration controls."[26] Restricting this freedom was just a mechanism states had to exert their power, including the power of exclusion:

> *I think freedom of movement is a core human freedom and borders have been designed by states to control the monopoly of violence within their territory. I don't accept their legitimacy. I don't accept that borders should have any right to be there. I think that everybody in the planet has the right to freedom of movement* (No Borders, 136)

Interesting, a similar approach was put forward by the Brussels' correspondent of the right-leaning *Daily Telegraph*: "I think free movement should not be a privilege. I think people are far too paranoid with borders" (The Daily Telegraph, 42).

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[26] http://noborders.org.uk/, accessed November 27, 2009.

g) *Asylum*

As a general principle, both the organisations and the particular interviewees think that the long British tradition of welcoming and helping refugees should be maintained, as long as every refugee / asylum seeker is a genuine one. The concern about bogus refugees and asylum seekers was prominent, and shows evidence that the authenticity of the claimants and their motives constitutes the actual dividing point on the issue, informed by the centrality of this theme in British political discourse (Sales, 2002). For example, a significant proportion of socially conservative interviewees argued that many migrants were benefiting from the condition of political refugee or asylum seeker, while they were not under threat for political reasons in their countries. Conservative party politicians shared that view, and suggested doors should be kept open for genuine political refugees, while ensuring that those who did not match the criteria were transferred to the tracks reserved for regular migrants:

> *Genuine refugees can never be a problem. Genuine political refugees escaping from terror and oppression are entitled to benefit from the consideration of asylum seekers in Britain. Bogus refugees should be accepted or denied access based on economic criteria* (Conservative Party, 75)

Members of the Bruges Group believed that asylum seekers were essentially a problem for the country, at least under the current regulations. One of its members suggested that they constituted a problem just because they were perceived as one –"They are seen as a social problem, and therefore, they become one. It's a self-fulfilling political issue" (The Bruges Group,68), whereas other members of the think tank suggested that the problem with asylum seekers is that, like regular migrants, have an undesirable impact over British public services:

> *Certain areas just cannot cope. I'm not sure how are we going to solve that. Our health system, and our education system just find it difficult. When you have a school entry in which a whole class of children can't speak English, and they all speak different languages, you have a problem in that school* (The Bruges Group, 228)

Interviewees from the Bruges Group had a particular issue with refugees living on benefits, and with the costs such schemes have for the British state. This question was perceived as particularly problematic when refugees are considered regular migrants using the application for asylum as an alternative way to obtain a residence permit entitling them to stay in the country:

> *Yeah, financially there's a cost. There's also issues with asylum seekers coming to this country under the terms of the asylum, and they can't work so they have to live on welfare, and of course they'd all be working in the black economy, that's bound to happen. Yes, they are a problem in terms of their reception, and of course they'd be costs. I'm sure lots of people coming here as asylum seekers are, in many cases, not genuine asylum seekers. If they are genuine asylum seekers who face being prosecuted in their country then we should offer them protection and help and look after them, protection from their own government, but if they are coming here for the wrong reasons, well they want to have a better life, fair enough, but we should really be checking who we let in* (The Bruges Group, 227)

Another member of the Bruges Group had a more radical approach, as he perceived that under the current regulations all Africans and most Asians would potentially be entitled to asylum in the UK. However, the numbers were not his main objection. His main objection had to do with the fact that many of those who are entitled to the condition of refugee are persecuted in

their countries because of their rebellious behaviour, often linked with organised terrorism. He thought that offering these individuals asylum brought terrorists to the country for an undefined period of time. As that was not a desirable situation, the interviewee advocated for changing the law:

> *The criterion of an asylum seeker is that somebody has a justified fear of being killed or ill-treated. By that criterion, the entire population of Africa and quite large populations all have the right to be refugees, so I think that the asylum question is a very difficult one. I mean, the British are often tormented by people saying that we used to give asylum to people like Karl Marx, or Mazzini, but those were relatively small numbers of people, and they did not cause great trouble to us or, indeed, to their homeland. That was a different situation: when you have mass asylum-seeking, you have a totally different situation, and I think a very dangerous one, because people who are in danger of prosecution in other countries are by no means merely innocent victims, they are often people who are very troublesome and violent indeed. Britain has acquired large numbers of Muslims who have been kicked out of their own countries, and are part of international Jihadism, and we have lot of trouble to get rid of them, because no country will take them. So we are stuck with them, and that constitutes a major problem, and a stupid problem, so I think the law needs to be changed* (The Bruges Group, 225)

Members of the Freedom Association shared the bottom line with Conservative politicians and members of the Bruges Group, and therefore felt that genuine asylum seekers were not a problem for the country, whereas fraudulent ones should not be let in because of the costs they generate: asylum seekers are "not [a problem] if they are political asylum seekers. Otherwise yes, as there is a cost" (The Freedom Association, 141). Although the Freedom Association shared this point of view, one of the organisation's members asylum seekers are problematic, on the basis of the frequent reporting of concerns in the press. Still, the response put forth the argument that the UK should continue accepting genuine asylum seekers, due to its long tradition in that regard:

> *I think they have clearly been a problem, as they have been often in the press. I'm not an expert in the question ... I think this country should accept genuine asylum seekers. It has a long tradition of doing so* (The Freedom Association, 214)

Another member of the Freedom Association expressed concern with the increasing number of deportations (and with the cost of these deportations) involving failed asylum applicants:

> *The problem we have now is that we have people who are really asylum seekers, and that it takes some time to process these applications, so if you are a genuine asylum seeker, and face prosecution, and choose to seek asylum in this country, and work, then yes, I wouldn't have a problem with that. The problem I see here is that we see a massive increase in failed asylum applicants, and a massive increase in deportations* (The Freedom Association, 203)

Members of the Federal Trust did not consider asylum seekers a problem for the UK –"I don't think there are problem for this country" (Federal Trust, 132). Members of the Centre for European Reform shared this view, and added that "asylum should be granted to those who deserve it" (Centre for European Reform, 230).

Labour Party members also agreed with this position, and acknowledged the difficult situations faced by asylum seekers. They criticised the widespread perception that asylum

seekers were taking British citizens jobs, and stated that the only solution to the alleged flow of asylum seekers would involve increased cooperation with countries asylum seekers come from:

> *I don't think there are problems for Wales, I think that there are opportunities for potential problems to arise from a movement of refugees and asylum seekers that doesn't start or end in our own boundaries. I think it's about joint working so I don't think that as long as we work internationally that is going to be a problem* (Labour Party, 83)

> *They are perceived as a problem because much of the perception is around the notion that they are coming for work and to undercut and work more cheaply. That is a negative perception and it is not true. Overwhelmingly, asylum seekers are fleeing through desperate situations and I think we should be welcoming. Reasonable control is necessary and we need to have in mind the historic links with some countries* (Labour Party, 71)

Plaid Cymru politicians showed support for asylum seekers, and blamed the media for spreading negative images of asylum seekers, ignoring the difficult experiences these particular individuals have had:

> *I don't think there are and especially those people who flee to the country for certain reasons. What's worrying is that the Press doesn't share that view* (Plaid Cymru, 55)

> *I think it's a problem with the way the media report asylum seekers … It was seen that everyone who is not from this country originally has come through illegal ways. And that is not the case* (Plaid Cymru, 48)

Anti-poverty Network members thought it was mistaken to present asylum seekers in terms of numbers, and that the idea that there were individuals who were entitled to asylum under international agreements should prevail: "The question should not be looking at numbers in the case of asylum applications, it should be looking at the right to seek asylum, which has been agreed under the UN Charter" (Anti-Poverty Network, 85).

No Borders interviewees rejected the idea that there were asylum seeker flows, as the numbers had been going down since migration camps had opened in Libya and Ukraine – "What flows? They hardly exist any more. Europe has been so zealous about its policing of its external borders, and creating migration camps in Libya, Ukraine, etcetera that flows of refugees have fallen massively" (No Borders, 127). They also suggested that the UK had the moral obligation of welcoming asylum seekers and refugees, given its status as a global actor exercising political, economic and military power: "Being one of the wealthier countries in the world, taking so much money from every other country, we should be granting more asylum seekers and refugees applications" (No Borders, 91). Finally, another member of No Borders argued that whilst asylum seekers could not be considered a problem themselves, they were helping to expose some of the problems of British society: "They are not a problem per se, although they expose many of the problems existent in British society" (No Borders, 118).

The Brussels' correspondent of The Daily Telegraph suggested that a certain degree of cooperation amongst European countries would be desirable, above all if the shared problems and ideals of European citizens are taken into account. However, he did not think that the EU should necessarily be the arena for voicing and articulating such political concerns, since its institutions are not sufficiently transparent:

I think there is a lot that needs to be changed. For me the first issue that needs to be tackled is the fact that most of the institutions here do not operate in public, and I don't really see how a political authority should have the right to exercise their political power if those decisions are not taken in public. At the same time, I am convinced that Europeans do have shared problems and shared ideals, whether that corresponds to the EU or not is a different issue (The Daily Telegraph, 42)

3   EU POLITY AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: HOW FAR SHOULD INTEGRATION GO?

To a certain extent, the debates about the nature of the model(s) of European polity are totally absent from British politics, as the debate is focused on the desirability for the UK to be integrated into that polity. "A crisis issue in British politics" (Budge et al., 2007: 166), EU membership is a major cleavage in British politics, revealing deep divisions amongst the public, political elites, and political leaders themselves. The European question, for example, and the British endorsement of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 prompted one of the more severe crises the Conservative Party has been through since the seventies, leading to an increasingly Eurosceptic leadership and an discourse overtly opposed to the EU, its institutions, and its policies. The Labour Party position on Europe evolved from hostility to endorsement during the eighties and the nineties. Still, and despite the official pro-European line, Euroscepticism is not alien to Labour, and prominent members of the party often state their concerns with the current state and the further developments of the Union. In fact, the only national party that is clearly pro-European is the Liberal Democratic Party. The Welsh Party (Plaid Cymru) and the Scottish National Party, now strongly pro-European, also have a tradition of hostility towards European integration (Mitchell, 1998). However, and regardless of the official Europeanism of Labour, the LibDems, and the main regional parties, the most prominent discourses in public debates are extremely critical with the sole idea of European integration. These debates are often dominated by the discourses put forward by political parties such as the UK Independence Party (a single-issue party advocating UK's independence from the EU), think tanks such as the Bruges Group (another anti-EU single-issue organisation), and campaigns such as Better Off Out (of the EU, obviously). In fact, the mere existence of very prominent single-issue organisations (UKIP came out second in the last European election, getting more votes than the Labour party, for example) is a clear sign of the anti-EU feeling that dominates British public discourses.

Generally speaking, prominent British political organisations do not favour the integration of the UK in a federal European polity. This is also the case for the organisations analysed by the Cardiff University Team. Even in the case of pro-EU individuals and organisations, the possibility of further European integration is generally perceived as an attack to British sovereignty, as an opportunity for other countries to have control over policies affecting British citizens, because the EU is seen as an organisation with carte blanche for spending British taxpayers' money. The EU is often perceived as a remote, non-transparent, extremely unaccountable organisation lacking the consent of the public that should legitimate institutions aspiring to be democratic. The media also play a part there: in addition to the anti-EU discourses voiced by the outlets owned by Rupert Murdoch (Jones et al., 2006), the *Telegraph* also portrays essentially anti-EU positions. The importance of negativity as a news value (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001), together with the unfinished nature of the European project – which renders it more prone to criticism – makes it difficult for the media to portray positive discourses about the EU. The only media outlet portraying an official pro-EU discourse is *The Independent*, even when it comes to supporting the British integration in the European Monetary Union.

The Conservative Party has showed growing anti-EU attitudes since Labour won power in 1997. These attitudes, built on the foundations set by pro-Atlanticist Prime minister Margaret Thatcher[27], who opposed further European integration. In spite of the generous

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[27] Her famous speech at the College of Europe (Bruges) in 1988 inspired the creation of the Bruges Group, and gave name to the group, of whom she is now Honorary President. On that occasion,

opting-out conditions that were guaranteed by the EU during the negotiations that led to the British adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, that process revealed the Euroscepticism of the Conservative party. The Conservative Party has subsequently voiced the need for a referendum on the treaty of Amsterdam (and on the Lisbon treaty), and finally abandoned the European People's Party, because Tories perceived it was too supportive of European federalism (Watt and Traynor, 2009). Some internal divisions have been arising recently since David Cameron announced that the referendum on the Lisbon treaty that the Conservative Party promised to call as soon as they got into power would not be called if the Treaty had already been adopted by all EU member states by the time the Conservative party eventually got into office (Helm, 2009). The official Conservative statement on European integration reads as follows:

> *We believe in an open, flexible Europe in which countries work to achieve shared goals rather than the ever greater centralisation of power in Brussels. We believe that in democracies nothing lasting can be built without the people's consent - and yet people have been denied their say on the renamed EU Constitution.*

> *If the Lisbon Treaty is not yet in force at the time of the next general election, and a Conservative Government is elected, we would put the Treaty to a referendum of the British people, recommending a 'no' vote. If the British people rejected the Treaty, we would withdraw Britain's ratification of it. But if the Treaty is in force we will be in a different situation. In our view, then, political integration would have gone too far, the Treaty would lack democratic legitimacy in this country and we would not let matters rest there.*

> *A Conservative Government would also amend the 1972 European Communities Act so that any future EU Treaty that transfers powers from the United Kingdom to the European Union would be subject to a referendum of the British people. The British people must be in charge of their future in Europe.*

> *A Conservative Government would never join the euro. Giving up our currency would mean losing a vital tool for running the British economy in the interests of the people of Britain - and that means an unacceptable loss of the independence of this country.*

> *The EU must adapt to the times we live in - and it should act where European countries together can achieve things they cannot do alone. So our priorities for the EU are today's challenges of global competitiveness, global warming and global poverty. That means:*

Thatcher (1988) stated: "I am the first to say that on many great issues the countries of Europe should try to speak with a single voice. I want to see us work more closely on the things we can do better together than alone. Europe is stronger when we do so, whether it be in trade, in defence or in our relations with the rest of the world. But working more closely together does not require power to be centralised in Brussels or decisions to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy. Indeed, it is ironic that just when those countries such as the Soviet Union, which have tried to run everything from the centre, are learning that success depends on dispersing power and decisions away from the centre, there are some in the Community who seem to want to move in the opposite direction. We have not successfully rolled back the frontiers of the state in Britain, only to see them re-imposed at a European level with a European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels. Certainly we want to see Europe more united and with a greater sense of common purpose. But it must be in a way which preserves the different traditions, parliamentary powers and sense of national pride in one's own country; for these have been the source of Europe's vitality through the centuries."

-Ending the remaining barriers to free trade within the EU

-Taking back control of social and employment policy so we can make our own decisions in these vital areas for Britain's prosperity and social well-being

-Improving the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme

-Reforming the EU's aid policy so that it is more focused on poverty reduction and less entangled by bureaucracy and administrative short-comings.[28]

In spite of the apparent Euroescepticism of the Conservative Party's official line, some of its prominent politicians (such as Kenneth Clarke, shadow business secretary: see Sparrow, 2009), are overtly supportive of the EU, and would enthusiastically support the adoption of the Lisbon treaty. Our interviewees clearly showed the diversity of opinions on the EU within the Conservative Party: while a majority support the idea that the EU should devolve all its political powers to member states, and go back to the initial common market idea, others believe that the EU has been largely beneficial for European countries and constitutes an essentially positive example of international cooperation. A third group of members would support inter-state cooperation that did not involve institutions like the European Commission – "I am into member states' cooperation, not by the European Commission: there should be a stage of intermediate cooperation" (Conservative Party, 114).

Some Conservative politicians opposing political integration at the European level argued that policies should be made at the local level:

> *Policies should be made close to the people. It is absurd that you can know the needs of Andalusians, Catalonians, Basques, or Navarres if you are working in Brussels. It's ridiculous* (Conservative Party, 75)

> *I think the EU is a remote body and that shouldn't be happening. Politicians must not be so away from the people* (Conservative Party, 60)

Conservatives also suggested that the EU should go back to its original structure, aiming at rebuilding Europe through integrating the markets. They therefore advocate for the EU to devolve certain powers and abandoning aspirations of forming a federal state. The mandate given by the British public in the European Communities membership referendum (1975) constitutes the main argument backing such positions:

> *I think the EU has already gone too far and taken responsibilities from the countries themselves. And that can't be happening ... I wanted a European Economic Community following the Coal and Steel Union. But we are getting a closer and closer political Union, and that is not a way forward* (Conservative Party, 60)

> *The EU should be restricted to what it used to be before, a market-oriented organisation that supposedly created wealth from the devastation of World War II. Coming together from people with common interests from both sides of Europe to form a confederation that was strong enough to rebuild its infrastructure. That to me is a very noble cause. I believe that it has now lost its way by seeking to replace the states of Europe with an overarching structure. I happen to believe that if they carry on pursuing the goal of a federal Europe, the dream of a marketing block that can create stability will be lost and that will lead to polarise*

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[28] http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Europe.aspx

situations and people will turn their backs on the original dream (Conservative Party, 148)

National publics are not told that most of the legislation being passed in their parliaments derives from EU legislation. Many powers (all those not helping to construct a common market), should be returned (Conservative Party, 75)

Those supporting the existence of the EU highlighted the benefits derived from inter-state cooperation, its contribution to protecting the interests of the member states, as well as the platform it constitutes for exchanging experiences and best practices. Still, they showed concern with the lack of democratic legitimacy of certain EU actions, and the lack of control regarding the enforcement of actual policies:

I think that the EU by and large has been good in many ways, but one thing that it has failed to do is to give full democratic values to its actions, especially the way the European Commission operates. I also think that the EU has failed to ensure that directives and regulations from the EU Parliament are consistently applied in the whole EU. I don't think that EU should become a federal Europe, but I think that nations must be able to protect their own interests and also that there must be closer cooperation in some areas and better understanding, and better learning between EU countries to roll out best practice (Conservative Party, 62)

Another Conservative politician in favour of the EU highlighted its importance in protecting cultural differences, and empowering regions. At the same time, he also rejected the widespread argument that a considerable proportion of laws are passed in the EU Parliament with no intervention of the member states:

I think that it's very important and I would like to see more recognition with things like the Committee of the Regions, that's also a very good mechanism of publicising minority differences. Perhaps some of the linguistic ones … I think it would be positive in the cultural agenda of the EU that is helpful towards preserving cultural traditions and can do more in that way … I think we are getting better and in that ways some of the EU legislation is helpful. There is a resistance towards the way laws come from Europe as they were, forgetting what is actually been agreed by national governments coming near the European Parliament and we do have a tendency to gold plate regulations (Conservative Party, 81)

Finally, another Tory politician in favour of the EU stressed its opposition to the two-speed EU, and showed certain reservations concerning the Eastern enlargement, as he believed it had increased the heterogeneity of the EU, and as a consequence the common goals of the union had been diluted:

I think that there would be problems if the EU had 2 or 3 different levels of integration. I think that everyone must have an equal status. I think that it can get problematic when it is too big because the EU represents largely developed countries or countries that are getting by economically and on the periphery of the EU now are countries less economically [developed] and [less developed] on citizens' rights … I think the EU nation states have many things in common. Most of them are developed, most of them are in Europe, which helps the EU and it's relatively easy to move forward, due to common values. I think that where you have approaches of political arrangements, different political systems, and the

*very different role of religion, that creates barriers to the EU. I think that today
we have a totally different EU than when it was first started* (Conservative Party,
62)

Surprisingly, the Freedom Association (an openly anti-EU NGO[29]) use the very same
arguments used by Conservative politicians. This could either indicate the success of the
NGO in influencing the Conservative Party, or the pervasiveness of the anti-EU machinery
and its success in spreading its discourse:

*We are strongly in favour of free trade and voluntary inter-government
cooperation between European nations, and not just European nations. One of my
problems with the EU is what's special about those twenty-six and what's wrong
with the other 165 countries in the world, why we are preferentially linking
ourselves to an economic bloc which is in long-term relative decline, so what we
would like to do as the Freedom Association, and what I would like to do as an
MEP is to unpick most of what exists in the European Union, most of the policy
areas I would like to close down, most of the institutions I would close down, the
free trade area would require some regular meetings amongst ministers, so
something like the Council of Ministers would remain, the Commission would be
reduced to a small secretariat serving the Council of Ministers and the
Parliament would be closed entirely and what you would have is European
democratic nation states cooperating and trading together ... to the extent that the
governing institutions become more and more remote, and less and less amenable
to the influence of the voters so you get a great deal of unhappiness both at the
national level and at the subnational level* (The Freedom Association, 142)

*I don't want it as a political construct, and I already voted to stay in back in 1975,
but I thought it was a trade arrangement, an economic agreement, and I valued
the propaganda, and decided to stay in, but it has developed into more
integration, into something with one currency, and I have more and more
concerns with staying there, and once they got Lisbon passed, and now all the
decisions are going to be passed onto the regions ignoring the central
government. I think it's harming our free trade and fair trade with the world ...
Our Parliament should be sovereign and is not, and that's at the heart of what is
wrong with the EU* (The Freedom Association, 217)

Two members of the Freedom Association, however, incorporated another argument to their
discourse. They highlighted the number of rejections the EU had obtained (and ignored) when
citizens of a number of countries had been asked about it in referenda:

*I'm very clearly of the view that it's far too centralised, far to controlling, and
that it needs a really radical and dramatic change, and it needs to become a much
looser structure such as a confederation rather than a single European state. I'd
like to see it develop [to be] much more diverse and respectful to the nation states,
but because I don't think it will, I think we should better get out of it ... I think all
this project of top-down integration is already leading people towards hostility. I
think in that sense it's a mistake to push people in a direction that they do not
wish to go. There is evidence, which is now overwhelming, [in] repeated*

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[29] The Freedom Association started an extremely successful non-party campaign "We'd better off out
of the EU", endorsed by a number of prominent politicians from all parties. See:
http://www.tfa.net/betteroffout/

referendums that there is no public support for further integration whatsoever. I can't see any positive sides at all. It's all negative (The Freedom Association, 214)

The way it wants to develop is up to the EU. What I'd like to see is Britain outside that political framework … I can't see any benefits of further integration at all. I think integration has gone way too far, and the worrying thing that I see with this is that every time a certain integration is proposed to the people, whether it would be the Lisbon treaty or the EU constitution, all the people are saying no, and I found it is a worrying trend that the EU continues to push on with more central powers and further integration when the people of the countries concerned keep saying no … I think the nation state does not exist any more. Control over our military policies is the only thing we have left …The EU should not be pursuing to me such a ridiculous policy. It was not set up to pursue such a stupid policy. The UK joined a trade union (The Freedom Association, 203)

The Bruges Group is also an anti-EU single-issue organisation. Its mission statement declares:

The Bruges Group aims to promote discussion on the European Union and to advance the education of the public on European affairs. The Bruges Group's research also explores alternative international relationships and policies. Equipping politicians, key opinion-formers and the media with the information needed for a complete restructuring of Britain's relationship with other European countries.

As could be expected from an organisation whose raison d'être is opposing the EU, interviewees from the Bruges Group expressed their criticisms about the European polity and its eventual further development:

The European Union should be shut down. It can develop by going away (Bruges Group, 227)

How about abolishing the EU and having power resting in the elected parliament who is accountable to the people who elected it … Well, where would you like me to start? How about the fact that our Parliament cannot legislate? That somewhere between 75% and 80% of our legislation comes from the EU and we cannot throw it out although we are supposed to have a Parliament. That our courts of law that have been acting through the English legal system for centuries, since the 12th century, are overruled by a court that we know nothing about because it is made up of different people from different countries and different traditions, is that enough? … Sky is the limit! Take in Turkey, let it fall apart (Bruges Group, 228)

Many powers should be returned to national parliaments … As a first step, Brussels institutions should acknowledge a limit to their ambition. The alternative is that one day several states will decide to leave (Bruges Group, 68)

I would like it to fall apart. The more it develops in the future, the more power it gets, the more power it wants in fact. I mean, the Lisbon treaty is an attempt to turn Europe into a state. I don't want to be part of a European state, I'm very happy being part of a small, free state, not a large, highly regulated empire (Bruges Group, 225)

A different discourse was supported by members of the Centre for European Reform and the Federal Trust, in line with their organisational positions – which are not opposed to the EU as such. In the case of these organisations, the EU was favoured, but not as a potential state in the making. They suggested that the political institutions of member states, their regions, and their localities should be maintained, as they guaranteed that policies were designed and enforced at the level that assured a more satisfactory implementation. At the same time, the multilevel organisation of political institutions also constituted a system for checks and balances:

> You may want to call it more federalisation, but that doesn't mean more centralisation necessarily. It might mean in certain areas more centralisation and in other areas decentralisation. The main reasoning for that is that a more federal structure will allow the most democratic elements in the EU while at the same time delivering policies and services in the best way (The Federal Trust, 132)

> I don't have any idea for the final objective of the EU, I don't think we will ever get to an end state where there is a settled balance between the centralised decision making of the EU, the multi-lateral decision making and the different powers of the member states. This is a balance that keeps shifting and it will always be tricky. So I actually don't see an end state, and I don't really want an end state where permanently there's more power at the member states or permanently there's more power at the central institutions (Centre for European Reform, 230)

Members of Plaid Cymru expressed some concern with the high levels of bureaucracy of the EU, and the lack of knowledge politicians themselves have about its procedures and ways of functioning. They believed that the EU would benefit if these procedures were more transparent, as it would enhance its accountability. At the same time, they also saw the EU as a beneficial platform for a future Welsh state, where Wales could make its voice heard, standing equally with every other member state:

> As an advocate of an independent EU, our party thinks that it is massively bureaucratic. Up until the last month I represented the Assembly to the Committee of the Regions and it took me a while to realise what was going on ... I think that if these things were more transparent, the whole thing would have gained more effectiveness (Plaid Cymru, 55)

> Well, at the moment we don't have a strong independent voice within the EU, I am a member of Plaid Cymru, so we would aim to have a independent equal voice within the EU, so, if, with my personal preference would be for a United States of Europe model, where Wales had an equal voice together with all the other member states within that (Plaid Cymru, 113)

Labour politicians, openly pro-European, stressed the influence of the generally Euro-sceptic British media in the negative perception citizens have about the EU, and they also took their part of the blame in that regard. They underlined the fact that EU procedures for decision-making and policy-making are not thoroughly explained, and therefore poorly understood, resulting in public perceptions of a lack of democracy and EU regulations being imposed upon the UK, rather than the UK actively participating in their elaboration. They also thought that these perceptions had an influence in the traditionally low turnout in EU parliamentary elections. Finally, and in the particular case of Wales, they also stressed the benefits the nation gets from EU structural funds:

I think that we need much more honesty and more information. The average British [person] doesn't understand our ministers are sitting at the tables with other EU ministers to work on regulations. I think that we've failed in terms of communicating that vision that came out of the economic union in terms of trade (Labour Party, 139)

I think that the formal relationships are fine, however what is not so good is what the European Union is all about by ordinary people. As you know on June the 6 we have EU elections and as usual the turnout is very low and that is because people don't know what the EU is all about. Moreover, the media tend to talk about it in a very negative fashion and concentrate on the ridiculous, and even tell lies. But I must say that we benefit a great deal from the structural funds but that is not understood. I don't know whose job it is to prove that benefit, but I think you need more sympathetic media because we don't have that (Labour Party, 71)

Members of the Anti-Poverty Network considered the EU an essentially benevolent organisation, as it represented a common platform through which countries could jointly address the global challenges of contemporary societies. They also proposed that any transfer of powers should be done in a cautious fashion, and advocated for the maintenance of national political structures and institutions as a way of guaranteeing a system of checks and balances:

As the EU is still in the making, there should be a step by step transfer of power. Countries are confronted today by global challenges, and they must understand that the EU is a way of facing those challenges together (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

There needs to be a balance between the powers of the states and the powers of the EU (Anti-Poverty Network, 77)

Members of No Borders showed a consistent unity in their support for decentralising the EU, devolving all its powers to local communities as a means of enhancing the democratic quality of European societies, as well as bringing politics closer to the people who actually benefit from or are affected by their consequences. They criticised the lack of sensitivity the EU shows to local issues, its strong economic component, as well as its top-down approach to politics and the democratic process:

Personally, I think the EU should be implementing less rules and laws. If the EU wasn't there, or if any sort of top-down political system was there, there'd be more localised, natural support within each community, and these institutions would be no longer relevant (No Borders, 91)

Ideally the EU would blow up and devolve its powers to the local level. The EU is completely blind to the particular questions that affect my local area (No Borders, 118)

Scrap the EU. I don't have time for the EU. I believe the EU is obviously an emerging political force, and migration law is obviously EU, that's why we need to be attacking them. Obviously they are implemented by the UK state here, but they are very much organised and harmonised on an EU level. Yes, potentially the institutions that have been created around the EU could be used to create more rights for migrants, but a more solidified EU? No, I want a EU from below not a EU from above (No Borders, 127)

> *I think it is essential that the European Union decentralises itself. There are obvious historical links in Europe that should keep us together, but centralising power does no good for people. I think power needs to be returned to the community level, and Europe be split up no into its nation states but into the local communities existing within it. I am all for European collaboration if it led to world cooperation, but the EU is a Western mercantilist institution* (No Borders, 136)

Overall, then, our interviewees expressed a variety of different objections to a centralised Europe, as well as various degrees of scepticism towards the current trends in policy-making within the European Union. Discourses on the perceived "democratic deficit" were, in particular, implicit or explicit among many actors. Even the most pro-European actors found grounds for concern, reflecting the generally Euro-sceptic nature of British political discourse. Nevertheless, the ideological orientations and preoccupations of actors were reflected in their statements in this area, so that positions on market capitalism, regionalism, and national identity, affected their expressed views on Europe.

4   THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE UK ACTORS

Probably as a consequence of the British questioning of the EU as a desirable structure to belong to, the debate about the desirability of a European Public Sphere is not really part of the agenda in the UK. The organisations, therefore, do not have official opinions on that particular question. Their members, however, take particular views when asked about the European Public Sphere.

The Conservative Party is home to politicians holding a wide range of different understandings of what the European Public Sphere is and should be, ranging from those equating the European Public Sphere with the Council of Ministers, to those advancing the argument that the European Public Sphere should actually involve the European demos and their public deliberation, or believing that any plans for further European integration would fail if pan-European media are not put in place:

> *I presume that there is one [European Public Sphere], and it is formed by the Council of Ministers, because democracy elects people to speak on their behalf* (Conservative Party, 148)

> *I think that it would be good to have something in place so that EU citizens could discuss the EU and the future of the EU in their own views, so it's not parliamentarians who by the varied nature of being a European parliamentarian or someone in the Commission that has an interest in attracting more power to the institution and doing it in a certain way. So I think there is a need for something separate that will help to facilitate those discussions* (Conservative Party, 62)

> *The idea of a single European state is mad, as we don't have a single European newspaper, one newspaper that every European can read, no TV channel which is common for Europe. You cannot create a state called Europe because there is no demos. Even if you watch CNN: you will know what colour Obama's tie was, or what he had for breakfast, whereas if you ask, er, 90% of the European population who Mr Barroso is they will ask 'who?' so where is the demos? … If someone is trying to construct a united Europe there should at least be a European News service informing all Europeans about the things happening in Europe, as the CNN does in the US. Even the Arabs, coming from their tents have set up Al Jazeera* (Conservative Party, 75)

Other Conservative politicians instead argued that a European Public Sphere does not exist as such. However, by saying that, they did not mean that issues were not discussed, rather that the public had not articulated into a common demos: "I think there is no European communication space but rather issues of concern that are being discussed" (Conservative Party, 60).

A pro-EU Tory politician believed that a better understanding of European politics leading to the emergence of a European Public Sphere would be fostered if more resources and staff were allocated for officials trained in communicating with the media and with the public:

> *I think that we are very well served here by the EU representatives but I think they are under-resourced. It is difficult for them really because the more they do the better it will be to understand what the European Union does … It should be organised with better resources and trained officials. The reason is that all communication should be able to remove misguided prejudice … I think that it's a*

question of finance for the EU representatives so as to be able [to] have a beneficial influence and correct some of the scare stories in the media and understand that the whole EU is about people and advancement, not about regulation (Conservative Party, 81)

Another Tory politician blamed the media for failing to pay sufficient attention to European politics, especially given the magnitude of the impact of the EU upon British politics and policies:

The Conservative party plays a huge role in shaping European politics, and we have a large presence in our constituencies. Still, given the fact that 80% of the British legislation is made in Brussels, the media tend to hide our activities (Conservative Party, 75)

The Conservative Party is linked to the Polish Law and Justice Party, and the Civic Democratic Party of the Czech Republic, as they all constitute the European Conservatives and Reformists' Europarliamentary group, founded after the June 2009 European elections. Up until that moment, the Conservative Party was affiliated with the European Popular Party – European Democrats group. At the time when Eurosphere interviews were conducted, Conservatives explained the reasons behind their affiliation with EPP-ED, their role in the parliamentary group, and the arguments for departing from this coalition as follows:

We [the Conservatives] created the group, close to the EPP constitution, but without signing [up to] a federal EU. Mostly Eurosceptic Cameron supports more transparency and the British European Democrats can be more attractive. The European Democrats have their own website, hold their own conferences, they stand at the centre-right in Europe. With the European Democrats we want to remain stuck to the EPP, but to have more weight within a large group, but people pay attention because the UK Conservative members are chairing committees. British Conservatives, even though Eurosceptic, take coordination of five policies within the European Democrats and are very active in the policy making (Conservative Party, 114)

The Freedom Association fiercely rejected the idea of a European Public Sphere. The main arguments behind such rejection were the essentially elitist nature of the EU, that aimed at preventing public debate about policies, and the lack of a common European language, history, and identity:

No, I don't think such a thing exists at all … There's certainly an elite in Brussels who seem to be operating almost in a sphere that most of us cannot penetrate, and they are disconnected from the main populaces of all countries, and not just this one (The Freedom Association, 141)

The whole European project thing is an elite thing … It seems to me that the EU is taking these views that go back to Mussolini's Italy. I don't want to overdo the fascist thing of the EU, but there are certain elements of it, there's no doubt (The Freedom Association, 214)

No, and I'd go back to that wonderful quote 'have enough in common in terms of language, history, and economic interest to be prepared to accept governance at each other's hands'. I don't see anywhere people talking about it today in Milan or Sofia, and I don't think I particularly want it either. I'm a person who likes

> *broadly to be aware of what's going on, but it takes me enough time to read the Telegraph without reading a lot of foreign papers as well, so there absolutely isn't, there is not ... There is a Brussels bubble, and one of the dangers within the European project is that opinions within the Brussels bubble are becoming so distant from the views of ordinary people* (The Freedom Association, 142)

There were, however, different positions regarding the desirability of such a space for debate, deliberation, and political exchanges. Whereas those in favour of it argued that it could bring politics – regardless of its level – closer to the people, those opposing it suggested that it would be pushing the creation of a non-existing identity and cohesion amongst European citizens:

> *The whole EU thing has become an elitist, and it's also the case in the national level, because there is a class, that they have never done any other job, like Cameron, being researchers in the House, then interns, then going to an NGO and then go into politics ... Yeah, nothing wrong with that, whether you are pro-EU or anti-EU it'd be good to have that* (The Freedom Association, 217)

> *I'd say no, and any efforts to create one should be discouraged. This whole thing has been about diversity and ethnonational diversity, so celebrate that and don't try to create an alternative set of European identity with its EU flag, its EU anthem, when people don't particularly want it ... Yes, in Parliament British MEPs sit with Danish MEPs or Dutch MEPs, but regarding citizens, and this European identity, I don't see it* (The Freedom Association, 203)

The Freedom Association suggested that Conservatives were at least partially influenced by their stances – "The Freedom Association is growing, and it has a certain influence on the Conservative Party" (The Freedom Association, 214). The Freedom Association cooperated closely with other organisations, such as "the Taxpayers Alliance, Better Off Out, Liberty, and the Campaign for an Independent Britain" (The Freedom Association, 203). Another interviewee stated:

> *We are very small, and we only have the resources of two employees. We publish a magazine which reaches 400 people, we have a website, we do things from time to time, we participate in conferences, we have a certain influence in political parties and think tanks on the centre-right side of the political spectrum* (The Freedom Association, 142)

Members of the Bruges Group also argued against the existence of a European Public Sphere, suggesting that it would probably not emerge in the future, as the EU was meant to operate away from public scrutiny. Although the internet was seen as a potential medium for a transnational public sphere, the lack of a common language was considered a major obstacle for such a sphere to emerge:

> *No, and there will never be. People talk about the EU having a democratic deficit, but that's the whole point of the EU. It is to stop ordinary people making their decisions through a democratic system and to make things happen by more or less self-appointed apparently enlightened elite. That's the whole point. Decisions are taken behind closed doors, not through the democratic system ... No, the EU can't be democratised that way, because the only point of the EU is to be anti-democratic. You don't establish an anti-democratic organisation and then make it democratic* (Bruges Group, 227)

An actual European space is not emerging, despite the EU's best efforts since 1957, and I don't think it's going to, because you just don't have that common space, you just have these different groups talking to each other and that's fine (Bruges Group, 228)

Well, the internet gives us a world wide communication space. No, there's not because not everybody speaks English or German or French. We speak many different languages, so there are many things we communicate a lot about, and there are many things we don't (Bruges Group, 225)

Another member of the Bruges Group provocatively suggested: "The only common European communication platform is Youtube", only to add: "All the policies fostering trans-European communication are just an excuse to throw money into the EU propaganda budget" (Bruges Group, 68). Members of the Bruges Group criticised the limited attention European institutions paid to them, due to their Eurosceptic nature –"Regarding institutions, we are Eurosceptic, so nobody ever really takes much care about what we say" (Bruges Group, 68).

The Bruges Group perceives that the group has an influence over the Conservative Party, and publicly claims that the Conservative Party abandoned the EPP following the "Adieu EPP" campaign[30] started by the Bruges Group (Oulds and Rotherman, 2009). In addition to that public claim, interviewees from the Bruges Group believed that they have "a certain influence on public opinion which is what slowly would change institutions" (Bruges Group, 228), thanks to "the UK having a relatively healthy media environment, so we can contribute significantly to the democratic debate" (Bruges Group, 68). More specifically:

Well, it has an influence in public discussion. It has less influence than I would like it to have but it contributes quite a bit of arguments and contents to public discussion and I suppose it has some sort of effect, but Britain is a large country, and London is a large town with lots of politicians. It is successful in the sense that it has an audience, people take notice of them, people read its publications, yeah it is part of the general conversation that goes on in politics (Bruges Group, 225)

Interviewees from the Centre for European Reform also suggested that a European Public Sphere does not exist. They perceived that there is a cosmopolitan sector of the European population who are very international, have lived in different countries, and follow international news, whereas other sectors of society show a stronger interest in national and local issues. This was, however, not seen as problematic by the interviewees:

This is probably a question that runs more within countries rather than across countries. I mean, in every EU country there is a group of people that is very internationalised, and we know how people think in Slovakia, and we've lived in countries that are not our own, we speak languages that are not our own, and we are very acutely aware of what goes about around the EU. But then there's a large group of people, and they don't look very much across borders, and they don't want to, that's ok. Do I want every possible person in Britain to know what is going on in Sweden and in France? No. If they choose to concentrate on local issues, that's perfectly acceptable (Centre for European Reform, 230)

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[30] See: http://adieu-epp.com/

Despite its British origin and its base in London, the Centre for European Reform is a European think tank, has an important branch in Brussels, and aims at exercising its influence beyond the borders of the UK:

> *I think we have a considerable influence at the level of opinion formers, not only in this country, but also at the EU level and the other member states as well. We don't have a direct influence on public opinion understood as the general public because we do not try to influence public opinion directly but we try to do so indirectly by working with politicians, officials, the media business groups and so forth* (Centre for European Reform, 230)

Members of the Federal Trust argued that a European Public Sphere already exists, although not many citizens know about its existence. They considered that it does not exclude anybody, but neither do they see it as constituting a politically influent element. These interviewees called for promoting participation in European politics through national politicians, as that was the only way they considered a European demos would be created:

> *There is [a European Public Sphere] but there is a vast number of people who are not aware of it … I don't think it actively excludes them but it doesn't have any importance to people's lives in order to create a democratic way … A lot of communication needs to be seen from a national level. National politicians must make people aware of the European Public Sphere … It will lead to the creation of demos which would make the EU more democratic* (The Federal Trust, 132)

Plaid Cymru politicians offered a different twist on this issue when they suggested that a European Public Sphere exists, but that it only includes actual politicians or people who work in the political sphere. In their view, an effort should be made to better inform the public about European institutions and their daily work, and they criticised some Eurosceptic claims widely spread by the media that stressed the cost of European integration without acknowledging the benefits. Plaid Cymru interviewees also emphasised the need for stateless nations such as Wales to get better representation at the EU level. All in all, the lack of information on European institutions and policies made available for the public was the main criticism they posed:

> *I think collaboration is made through the political structures. However, there is quite a lot that needs to be done in terms of educating people about what's happening in Brussels and in Strasbourg* (Plaid Cymru, 48)

> *It exists … I think it excludes most people. I think people who are paid to follow are the ones they actually do it, and it's so huge. I think it is impossible for anyone to keep up with what's happening in the European Union … There's good work done on a European level - we don't know about it and we don't share experiences and we are left in the hands of Eurosceptics claiming that there is a waste of money … The debates here have a massive impact on the regional level. However as an Assembly we have no jurisdiction on European issues and we rarely have debates on the Lisbon Treaty and similar issues … We need a referendum that will give us extra powers as an Assembly and we need better representation in the European Union* (Plaid Cymru, 55)

> *I think it's developing and I think one major problem is the media. In Britain it has increased our antipathy towards anything European and I think that translates in terms of the way people feel about other European people, there is*

this idea that 'Europe' (in inverted commas) which is not the real one, but the created one, something which people, more than politicians and the government can blame, and I think that's being a really irresponsible way of working on part of the government and the media, because it's only difficult to build or to create an idea because there are some [who have it on their] agenda to leave Europe, to leave the EU, but I think that more people feel generally that it's ok to leave the EU, we don't want any external organization and so on, but what we create is an anti-EU feeling and I believe it has always been around ... To create a positive and constructive debate, that would be the first thing. If there is a reason to say no, we would say no, but we want to talk to people about the European space, how to involve people in it and we are fighting all the time with people who are putting up their barriers against us all the time? (Plaid Cymru, 45)

Another Plaid Cymru member also suggested that a European Public Sphere exists, although, in their conception, it does not really include the UK. The traditional lack of ability with foreign languages among British citizens and the 'special relationship' the UK has with the US and with the Commonwealth countries were considered the main reasons for the British isolation from the European core:

I am sure there is [a European communicative space]s, but I am not sure that the UK is very much part of it, and therefore I am not sure that Wales is very much part of it, and I think that it's a pity. I think that one of the problems has to do with language. In these countries, in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland we are very bad at teaching people other European languages. That I think affects it, but also it's an effect of a mindset the way we tend to see things through an Anglo-American prism, and of course from a point of view of Wales it's very important to crack down that prism and start looking at things differently (Plaid Cymru, 122)

In the European Parliament, Plaid Cymru is integrated into the European Freedom Alliance since the beginning of the eighties, and remain satisfied with this particular affiliation:

We've been, since the early 80s, part of the European Freedom Alliance, which is a nationalist regionalist grouping, and so we have links with other caucuses not yet represented. That is quite a well developed link, and I think that within the Parliament as well because of the way it works and there is no government and it is very much a consensus way of working, you do work more closely with members of the other parties because you want to build a certain level of government (Plaid Cymru, 45)

Plaid Cymru members also declared that they have close ties, and satisfactory collaboration experiences with the Scottish National Party. They also collaborate with the Green Party on environmental and food safety issues, and with the Basque party Eusko Alkartasuna on minority language questions (Plaid Cymru, 45; Plaid Cymru, 113).

Labour Party members showed division when it came to deciding whether a European Public Sphere exists or not. While the majority of them believed that a European Public Sphere exists, and that this is a positive thing, one Labour politician thought that such a sphere does not "exist at the moment because I think the decisions are being made by the Parliament, which has got to be in one place. I think we are being affected by Brussels and by Luxembourg" (Labour Party, 139). However, those believing that a European Public Sphere exists were not completely satisfied with it as it stands. Different criticisms arose, especially around its excessive focus on institutional actors, generating a feeling of exclusion –or even,

actually excluding– citizens from the debates. In their view, the EU should be more effective in communicating its policies, making intensive – but not exclusive – use of the Internet, as it is a tool with an enormous potential for developing a more engaged citizenship:

> *I think it [the European Public Sphere] exists more than it did and I think that it's a good thing. But I think there are other people who don't think there's a European space and close their minds to it. Only the institutions exist for that debate. The new technologies that are being developed so that people could communicate online have helped the communication space significantly ... I think that minority groups will always be excluded whether because of access to goods, services, languages, and understanding ... I think there should be more opportunities but I can't guess how it should be organised* (Labour Party, 83)

> *In Wales we send every year a representation to the EU parliament in Brussels and they communicate with the academics, the media, the trade world and so on ... There are no exclusions, however there are difficulties in promoting Europe. The negative press and media towards Europe don't help to get the message to the people on what the EU is. And it has brought many positive things to our lives and that stabilises the daily lives of people across Europe. Those messages are not understood and there is a job to do in terms of communication ... There is more work to do from the EU to communicate through its side and I think it's beginning ... Because in terms of democracy you advance by winning the hearts and minds of people getting them to understand why this is good what you do ... At the moment there are many communication events that take place to promote the EU and that's how we influence the people ... I think the EU should do more informing the young people through the Internet about some of the key objectives* (Labour Party, 71)

The Labour Party is a member of the European Socialist Party and often collaborates with its other European counterparts.

Anti-Poverty Network members believed that a European Public Sphere does not exist, as the European Union is essentially an elitist organisation that involves politicians, rather than the public, and not engaging in substantive consultation. They also thought that the media are not fulfilling their mandate when it comes to informing the public about the European Union and other European countries:

> *The EU seems to be something for some leaders meeting in Brussels, and deciding a couple of things without consulting* (Anti-Poverty Network, 88)

> *You only know what you're being told. You need to go to other countries and read their papers to know what is going in these countries* (Anti-Poverty Network, 77)

The Anti-Poverty Network is integrated in the European Anti-Poverty Network (Anti-Poverty Network, 77; Anti-Poverty Network, 85), and collaborates often with the Poverty Alliance Scotland and Oxfam (Anti-Poverty Network, 85).

A majority of No Borders members felt that a European Public Sphere already exists, but that it is only made up by politicians, journalists, and experts, excluding rank and file citizens:

> *It would be a fantastic thing to happen, to have that common area of debate, but I don't see it happening. There is one amongst politicians probably, but I don't see that as an open public space for debate ... Absolutely. I don't know how it should be organised, but I'm all for it* (No Borders, 136)

The majority of No Borders members suggested that there was not a real point in limiting a potential trans-national public sphere to the EU, as there would be positive outcomes if it was extended to the whole globe, and organised through grassroots organisations:

> *The political, expert, and media spheres excludes most normal citizens ... I think any exchange or communication is positive, but I'm not sure there should be any restriction or border on it. It would be good if it was organised at the grassroots level* (No Borders, 91)

> *I don't understand how existing channels of communications that already exist, such as the internet, should be limited to the EU* (No Borders, 127)

Another member of this organisation proposed that the current European Public Sphere does not exist in the mainstream media, but in alternative forms of communication. He spoke in favour of the creation of new media that oppose the mainstream discourses normally spread by traditional media:

> *Probably [it does not exist] the same way it exists nationally. If it does exist, it exists outside the media structures that we know, I mean, through alternative forms of communication ... For elitist communication: No. For people from below: Yes, please ... No Borders is an attempt to counter a lot of the shit that the media pumps out around migration and address a wider public, so it is an attempt to create connections and undermine right wing shit about migrants ... Our main focus is more to create our own media rather than courting the media* (No Borders, 127)

No Borders, as a non-hierarchical` grassroots organisation, does not have any formal links with other organisations, although they benefit from casual contacts with "local groups working on similar questions" (No Borders, 136). These contacts are normally done on an individual basis and through the internet, and aim at exchanging ideas and best practice: "Other individuals belonging to different organisations exchange ideas and best practice with us … We get in touch with each other through the internet" (No Borders, 118).

No Borders activists stress the importance of personal contacts in their organisation, as no contact whatsoever has been initiated by institutions –" It's worth noting that even amongst migration activists all our international contacts have been based on individual friendships, and have nothing to do with the institutions … They work on similar issues, and they do it all from below" (No Borders, 131). This organisation criticises the coverage they normally get from the media, which they consider a consequence of being at odds with the right wing agenda that they perceive the media are advancing:

> *I don't really believe in speaking the truth to power, because the power knows the truth and doesn't give a fuck. We speak truth in the teeth of power to people ... I think that the questions that we deal with have a pretty bad press. The right has an agenda, the government is following the right wing agenda, appeasing right wing opinion, and I think the antiracist movement which blossomed in the early eighties in the UK absolutely failed to take the next logical step, and we are working from a vacuum regarding migration, and it's pretty common right now that organisations which have no opinion or are pretty neutral on the issue of migration to use the language of racists. The term illegal immigration is used pretty often by people who don't know how loaded it is, bogus asylum seekers, even progressive politicians would say things such as 'bonafide asylum seekers' or 'legitimate concerns'. We've got a long way to go* (No Borders, 136).

The Brussels' correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* thought that a European Public Sphere would have difficulty emerging because of the national scope of European media, and their 'nationalisation' of European-related stories. He believed, however, that there was potential for such a space to emerge, as European publics had similar concerns, above all with the advent of new technologies and new forms of communication (blogs). He was sceptical about the communication strategies of European institutions:

> *There is not a European communication space today because we still have national media and there is not a European public in spite of the fact that there are European parties. There is probably a potential for a European public, because there are mutual concerns. If you have a look at different newspapers published in different countries they cover European stories in different ways for different audiences ... I think that there are lots of possibilities: the internet, blogs. I don't think this is the kind of top-down kind of thing. I am extremely indifferent to the EU's attempts to communicate itself* (The Daily Telegraph, 42)

Across the range of actors and organisations, it appears that there is a great deal of scepticism about the idea of a European public sphere, perhaps rooted to some extent in conventional British Eurosceptic approaches. Depending on their definitions of the concept, most actors believe that the European public sphere either *does not exist*, or that it is an elite space which only includes policy-making actors and/or other privileged groups or individuals, and has little relevance to the lives of ordinary British and European citizens. The lack of an authentic, bottom-up European public sphere is sometimes presented as a matter-of-fact reality, whilst some interviewees see it as a problematic indicator of the democratic deficit of the EU. To most interviewees, it also seems that questions of organisational collaboration are entirely conceptually distinct from issues around the European public sphere. Overall, then, in the British context the notion of the European public sphere remains problematic and debatable, rather than taken for granted as an empirical reality and/or normative ideal.

5   PUBLIC OPINION AND THE UK ORGANIZATIONS[31]

According to the Standard Eurobarometer 71 (Spring 2009)[32], the British general public opinion is not really enthusiastic about the prospects of a European polity. Data clearly indicate public distrust, both in the Union (only 22 per cent British citizens responding to the Eurobarometer questionnaire in Spring 2009 declared they trusted the European Union), and in relation to its institutions (trust of the European Commission was equally 22 per cent). In the same sense, 32 percent citizens thought that EU membership was essentially bad for the UK. Our research indicates that British political elites tend to be more pro-European than the general British public, particularly in the case of British political parties – and generally more supportive of the EU than the average British citizen.

Although the aforementioned caveats about the extrapolation of data also apply to the analysis of public discourses on the EU, it seems that there is a closer match between those discourses and the discourses circulating in the media – above all those that are covered more intensely. While it is impossible to ascertain whether there is any influence of public opinion on media discourses or vice versa, the convergence of discourses should be noted.

Interviewees are aware of the gap between British political elites and the general public opinion on European integration. As public opinion support is the crucial element for the legitimisation of policies in representative democracies, interviewees either use this mismatch to represent themselves as the actual depositories of the public will, or use it to represent themselves as members of an enlightened avant-garde, whose discourses are now ridiculed, but will be eagerly embraced once the public sees the light. Those interviewees supporting more conservative positions, who are less positively inclined towards diversity and more in favour of integration in British culture tend to present their views as being those of the British "man in the street." These actors present their positions as 'reasonable', root their claims in tradition, and show fear about societal changes, which tend to be described as the thin end of the wedge. To a certain extent, their underlying discourse appeals to images of an idealised past, to the good old days, and characterises the current situation as a critical one, as governments pursue lunatic goals through absurd policies putting Britain at risk, bringing in conflict and caring for anybody but the Brits. Those interviewees think that they are voicing the claims of British public opinion, and are disgruntled by the government, which is allegedly letting Britain be superseded either by migrants, terrorists, or unelected and unaccountable Eurocrats.

On the other hand, some interviewees promote a more tolerant and diverse society, open to migrants and to cultural exchange, universally compassionate, and aiming at reducing inequalities and eliminating exclusion. These interviewees perceive that they are putting forward messages which go against the grain of British public opinion. They pursue what they view as 'desirable' and 'ideal' visions, even if that entails upsetting certain sectors of society. These interviewees see the media as inherently conservative, and one of the key goals of their groups is to pursue the 'reeducation' of the public, or making the public see the light, and question taken for granted conceptions about the social. Discourses circulating in society, and

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[31] This research theme should be answered primarily by using the respondents' answers to V2.7 "How do your views on these questions correspond with the dominant public opinion in this country? Do you feel that your views on these questions face much support or resistance when you voice them publicly?" as well as relevant institutional data collected from organizations' documents, websites, and other, secondary literature on these themes. The results of the work in WP4 can also be used to obtain the content of the general public opinion in each country, and partners can request these data from the WP4 leaders.

[32] See: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb71/eb71_en.htm. Accessed October 2009.

even more those spread by the media, are considered by these interviewees as conservative-by-default and therefore playing a crucial role in the maintenance of the status quo. These individuals constantly present themselves and their opinions as if they were radical and divergent from the general public opinion in the country.

These self-perceptions do not only come up when interviewees are asked whether their opinions correspond with the dominant public opinion in the country, but rather permeate every answer, and constitute a general frame for their discourses.

6   DIVERSITY, POLITY AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The UK has a long democratic tradition, with long-lasting, stable political institutions. Due to its economic, strategic and military power, the country plays a central role in world politics. The UK holds a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, is a founding member of NATO, and thinks of itself as a country having a (much cherished) "special relationship" with the US. The UK also has a recent imperial past, and a close bond with its former colonies, institutionalised through the Commonwealth of Nations. The UK is racially diverse, thanks to a constant influx of migration originating from different corners of the world, and to native British who are born to migrant parents. The UK is somewhat more supportive of free-trade than its continental European counterparts. The UK is not within the Schengen area, and there is a strong opposition to the adoption of the Euro.

Despite its EU membership, and other cultural, economic and political factors, including the Eurotunnel and the holidays Brits spend in France, Italy and Spain, the UK self-perceives itself as a quite distinct (European) country. Regardless of the well-known dysfunctionalities of the first past the post system, or the democratic imbalance generated by the existence of the House of Lords, UK citizens are generally satisfied with their democratic system (even though there may be a generalised dissatisfaction with parties or politicians). Although certain cultural/religious/migrant communities have generated concern amongst certain sectors of the British public, the majority of citizens do not wish any EUropean interference with UK border control, or with the UK visa system.

In this sense, the fact that British political elites are more Eurosceptical than their continental European counterparts does not mean that the UK is not a country where diversity is welcomed and celebrated. Quite the contrary, in fact. The British concern with the EU has to do with its homogenising potential, as the EU is often perceived as an extremely interventionist organisation, potentially endangering the singularities, idiosyncrasies, and national differences of EU member states. The British media obsession with disseminating what have come to be known as 'Euro-myths'[33] probably play an important part in this. The British media are constantly reporting stories about the EU regulating how bent bananas or how big kiwis can be, sometimes even with "fabricated stories such as donkeys having to wear nappies on British beaches or banning of the British sausage" (Jones 2007: 174).

Data in the public domain, public discourses in the media, official political lines, and our own research within the framework of the Eurosphere project provide supporting evidence about British satisfaction with the national involvement in the European common market. It is the transformation of an economic free-trade area into a political organisation, and the potential loss of sovereignty that such transformation may entail which generates uneasiness amongst UK citizens and politicians.

Our interviews, however, show a tendency, which is probably a self-fulfilling one. Those organisations which are more reluctant to welcoming migrants, which advocate more intensely for the integration of migrants (as opposed to a multiculturalist approach), and which are more worried about the preservation of British culture are also the organisations which are more reluctant to any further European integration. On the other hand, the organisations which are more open to diversity, which are more prone to accommodating different cultures and languages in the country, are also the same organisations which are more inclined to further European integration, and therefore, more open to political participation at the European level.

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[33] See, for example: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6481969.stm. Accessed October 2009.

It can be said that there is a certain pattern according to which certain organisations perceive migration and cultural diversity as a threat, would like the UK to be ruled exclusively through British national institutions, would like the UK borders to be controlled by British authorities, would like tougher migration controls, and are more overtly supportive of free trade. These organisations normally present themselves as representing 'the voice of the public'. On the other hand, there is another organisational mindset, which is more open to welcoming migrants, which would strive for a more egalitarian world, which would like the UK to be a welcoming place for those migrants who had economic and/or political difficulties in their countries of origin, and which is more open to relinquishing some degree of national sovereignty in order to meet those goals. The latter position is in general more supportive of the European Union (and of further European integration too) than the former.

The degree of consistency of those approaches also differs. While those individuals and organisations sustaining more conservative approaches show a stronger degree of agreement and overall consistency, those favouring more liberal and culturally open policies and attitudes show a stronger degree of internal dissent. In the same sense, pressure groups such as think tanks or civil society organisations show stronger positions, and are more adamant in their stances. Political parties –and their members– are more strategic in their positions, and often 'spin' them so that they look more palatable for the general public.

7   CONCLUSION

Ascertaining the extent to which a civil sphere counterbalancing the existing European institutions exists / is emerging in the UK is a difficult task, since the very desirability and political legitimacy of the European Union are permanently questioned by political and media institutions (vide supra). The Euroscepticism of the British public is constantly reproduced in media and political discourses, and debate about any attempted trans-European policy is systematically limited by the discourses questioning European integration as such. In this sense, the British public has more opportunities to discuss the existence of the EU or the role the UK should play in it (if any) than to discuss any European policy.

However, that does not necessarily mean that EU policy-making is not influenced by British actors. Amongst others, the organisations studied by the UK Eurosphere team play an important role in British public debates, and actively engage with the public and the institutions (both British and European) through institutional, mediated, and alternative channels of communication, consultation, and political participation. This report has showed that these organisations actively engage in public debate, make their messages available through the media, and exercise their influence upon political parties and institutions. All the analysed organisations enjoy a high degree of publicity in the British media, and therefore also exercise their influence over the public. These organisations play a key role in British politics, and contribute to the mediated representation of the British public sphere.

It has to be said, though, that different organisations have different relationships with the media, consequently having an impact upon the articulation of these organisations in the public space. While political parties are perceived as *a priori* legitimate political actors, which are therefore entitled to media coverage, think tanks need to find ways to obtain media prominence (organising events with relevant personalities, publishing cutting edge, provocative data challenging certain policies), while grassroot organisations often distrust mainstream media, and prefer to use their own media outlets, so that they can control the message until the point of delivery.

The organisations have also indicated that, to different degrees, they are integrated within and benefit from cooperating with other European organisations. This might be a mere replication of the institutional organisation of the EU, which calls for trans-European social, political and civil actors as counterparts. The political parties winning seats in the European Parliament need to cooperate with other European parties when constituting parliamentary groups. Think tanks and civil society organisations benefit from cooperating with other European organisations, either as a way to generate organisational synergies, in order to coorganise activities, actions or protests, or when it comes to applying for EU funds. Trans-national cooperation at the EU level might be a desired or unwitting consequence of the process of European integration. Regardless of the causes, there are signs of growing trans-European cooperation amongst political, social, and civil organisation. In addition, a significant proportion of the interviewees believes that a higher degree of communication amongst European institutions, organisations, and civil society would be beneficial for increasing the levels of mutual understanding, exchanging experiences and best practice, minimising the negative consequences of the social processes taking place in Europe, and enhancing the daily functioning of the organisations and the institutions themselves.

Assessing the extent to which the analysed organisations facilitate or obstruct the articulation of a European Public Sphere would require an ideal model against which our data could be evaluated. We will briefly consider how these organisations contribute towards the construction of three different ideal models of the European Public Sphere:

a) If the European Public Sphere is meant to consist of a single discursive European public sphere based on the perspective of a civic political community, the analysed organisations would constitute an *obstacle*, as they normally work at the British level. The only organisations favouring a different type of public sphere advocate for smaller public spheres at the community level, instead of a supranational one

b) If the European Public Sphere is meant to consist of European ethnic minority movements that may call for essentialised (ethnic / religious) public spheres cutting across the national states borders but within the framework of the European Union, the analysed organisations would constitute an *obstacle*. The analysed organisations do not consider the possibility of cultural / ethnic / religious public spheres, not even at the national or infra-national level. The analysed organisations, in addition, reject cultural isolationism, either by promoting the integration of the culturally different into British culture, either by promoting the conviviality of different cultural groups within the same community, mutually enriching each other through their cultural exchanges

c) If the European Public Sphere was meant to consist of a plurality of nested public spheres based on the existent limitations that the Westphalian state system poses, where the nested communities have a high degree of sovereignty, the analysed organisations would be *facilitating* the European Public Sphere. A consideration, however, needs to be made: in the case of all organisations but No Borders UK and Anti Poverty Network, 'the high degree of sovereignty' of nested communities could be a problem, as these organisations see sovereignty as always resting at the national level (or the regional level, when it comes to certain devolved powers)

d) If the European Public Sphere is understood as a differentiated public sphere where citizens and residents bear rights with respect to their insiderness in the political system, the organisations (except No Borders UK) are actually *facilitating* the European Public Sphere, as they all believe that our political systems offer different degrees of political participation to individuals holding different sets of rights (residents, permanent residents, subjects, refugees, citizens…)

Ultimately, however, that the organisations and interviewees either asserted that they did not believe that a European Public Sphere actually existed, or suggested that if a European Public Sphere existed, it was clearly dominated by European elites.

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