Caught in the Deviation Trap*

On the Fallacies of the Study of Party-Based Euroscepticism

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Abstract

Although Euroscepticism as a scholarly term seems to be indispensable in European studies today, we argue that the current approaches to party-based Euroscepticism are in need of reformulation. This is so mainly because students of party-based Euroscepticism mistakenly construe the term as a deviation from the essentialized integration mainstream. While the study of Euroscepticism has also developed in alternative directions, these innovative approaches have only created additional problems: either the redefinition of Euroscepticism leads to more substantive definitions, but also to the denial of the temporal and spatial diversity of Euroscepticism, or the redefinition results in creating new typologies, but these typologies only reproduce the old pattern of deviation vs. the norm on a different level. This critical literature review article concludes by briefly outlining the steps which would redress the situation and which consist of a radical contextualization of Euroscepticism(s).

Keywords: Euroscepticism; party systems; European integration; European Union

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1. Introduction

Euroscepticism is a term that has become virtually indispensable in both the study of the European Union's political system and the political (esp. party) systems of the EU member states. Indeed, the study of Euroscepticism is even considered an autonomous 'cross-disciplinary subfield' of political science (Flood 2009: 912), one which produces dozens of new studies each year and often enjoys a special place at annual European Studies conferences. New articles and even book-length studies on the topic abound (most notably, Leconte 2010; Brack, Costa 2012; de Wilde et al. 2014; van Elsas, van der Brug 2014; Wellings, Baxendale 2015; see also the special issues of the Journal of European Integration [2012] and the Journal of Common Market Studies [2013]), but while new typologies emerge, the overall theoretical landscape of *party-based Euroscepticism*[1] is more or less settled, with just a few leading scholars defining the scope of the study of party-based Euroscepticism as well as its categori-

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zation (for instance, Taggart, Szczerbiak 2002; Szczerbiak, Taggart 2003; Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008a; Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b; Kopecký, Mudde 2002).

Given the recent tumultuous developments in the EU and parallel substantial changes to the party systems of many EU member states, it is, however, questionable whether the classical categorization of party-based Euroscepticism still holds today. There are at least four reasons why the conceptual debate about Euroscepticism should be discussed with renewed vigour today: (1) the increasing salience of European integration in domestic politics as well as EU institutions, (2) the decrease in the number of so-called 'systems of limited contestation', (3) the changing situation in the new EU member states, and, most importantly, (4) the inappropriate definition of party-based Euroscepticism itself.

First, an essential shift regarding party-based Euroscepticism pertains to the salience of European integration among EU voters. For a long time, virtually all scholars who dealt with Euroscepticism insisted that the relevance of European integration for the elections in member states was extremely low. As late as 2008, Taggart and Szczerbiak argued that 'one of the most striking features of the issue of European integration is how little salience it has among voters in any country' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b: 6; cf. also Harmsen and Spiering's [2004: 24] argument about 'low electoral salience'; for an early indication of the changing attitudes see Hooghe 2007). However the salience of European integration among voters has clearly been on the rise recently, at least since the Eurozone crisis started. This claim is backed up by the high number of recent cases in which Europe/European integration really mattered (such as the elections in Greece, Italy and elsewhere or even the Scottish referendum).[2] Parallel with this, new research on the attitudes of EU officials shows that Euroscepticism is also largely present in EU institutions, which are often considered as 'bastions for Europhile actors' (Brack, Costa 2012: 10).

The second trend to contribute to the growing importance of Euroscepticism is related that just noted – the rapid decline in the number of member countries whose party systems can be defined as 'systems of limited contestation' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008a: 350), i.e. party systems in which EU-related contestation is low and which resemble the state of permissive consensus (Taggart, Szczerbiak 2005). Systems of limited contestation are becoming increasingly rare all over the EU. Some new additions to the list of the countries which originally fell under this category but do not meet the criteria of limited contestation any more are, for example, Italy (with the emergence of the Five Star Movement) and Ireland (with the participation of the Green Party in the government and rising support for Sinn Féin in the last general elections). Even in Germany, the new Alternative for Germany party scored surprisingly high (4.7% of second votes) in the last Bundestag election in September 2013 (The Federal Returning Officer 2015).[3]

Third, the assumptions about the new member states have to be reassessed as well. While Taggart and Szczerbiak were perhaps correct in arguing that it was difficult to analyse the positions of the parties from these countries before enlargement 'because often most parties have not even considered their positions on the EU's future trajectory' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b: 5), virtually all parties in the EU's East-Central European member states have now articulated their views of the EU's preferred future course (cf. Neumayer 2008). A related assumption by many scholars was based on the hypothesis that since Eurosceptic parties of the new EU member states are subjected to strong pressures from the old members, they will need to accommodate to the EU's political mainstream (Pridham 2008: 18).

While this hypothesis was empirically correct a few years before and some time after the enlargement, the current trend gives a different picture. Across the post-communist countries of East-Central Europe, influential parties have started to adopt critical stances towards the EU. The Czech Republic's ODS left the EPP political group in the European Parliament to become a founding member of the European Conservatives and Reformists, Poland's Law and Justice is also becoming increasingly critical of the EU, and Hungary's Fidesz is perhaps the best example of a party's transformation from a largely pro-EU political party to a sharply EU-critical one (but cf. Hughes et al. 2008).[4]

All three of the above-mentioned shifts coalesce in the fourth and most serious problem, that of the very definition of (party-based) Euroscepticism. The idea that 'if someone supports the EU as it currently exists and opposes any further integration, they are effectively Eurosceptic' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008a: 8, the stress is in the original text) no longer makes sense, if it ever did.[5] Today, virtually all actors oppose some aspects of further integration (see, e.g., the position of Germany and the Netherlands with regard to so-called Eurobonds during the Eurozone crisis, which would make them Eurosceptics according to this definition), and even many in the supposedly non-Eurosceptic camp are rather hesitant as far as deepening the integration process is concerned. This problem also pertains to so-called soft Euroscepticism: if soft Euroscepticism is defined as 'qualified opposition to the EU' when a policy is perceived as being 'at odds with the EU's trajectory' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a: 8), then almost every political party across Europe would have to be seen as soft Eurosceptic (cf. the critique by Kopecký, Mudde 2002: 300).

All these problems share a common root. Since the definition of party-based Euroscepticism depends on the definition of the EU's mainstream, the recent crisis and the related transformation of the EU's mainstream also substantially decrease the usefulness of these old definitions. But our argument goes beyond this type of critique. We believe that the main lesson from the recent crisis does not lie in the fact that the previous attempts at a categorization of Euroscepticism are obsolescent today. Otherwise a simple update of the definition would be sufficient. Instead, we argue that the crisis has laid bare the fundamental weaknesses of the study of Euroscepticism as such: the notion of Euroscepticism relies too much on the identification of Euroscepticism with *the deviation from the essentialized EU mainstream*. The classical distinction of soft and hard Euroscepticism (upon which we expound below) is a typical example of such an understanding of Euroscepticism – the further from the integration mainstream a Eurosceptic party is, the 'harder' it becomes, irrespective of what the EU political mainstream means at the moment.

While the deviation trap plagues most scholarly studies on party-based Euroscepticism, some alternative – albeit minority – approaches do exist. One such alternative strategy is to redefine Euroscepticism in substantive terms, thus rendering it more independent of the current integration mainstream; another alternative strategy features a rather diverse group of scholars who are currently coming up with alternative typologies in an attempt to purge the classical categorizations of their flaws. But these innovations create additional problems, too. The former alternative falters on the temporal and spatial diversity of Euroscepticism, falling short of providing a substantive definition applicable both to previous decades and currently. The latter, involving the creation of new typologies (which replace the label Eurosceptics with '*Eurorejects*', '*Europhobes*', etc. – see below), often reproduces the deviation trap on a new

level, and so scholars who use this strategy end up right back at the beginning of this vicious circle.

In this article, we want to contribute to the discussion about Euroscepticism with a critical literature review focusing on how leading scholars conceptualize party-based Euroscepticism. We are mainly concerned with the question what Euroscepticism is (and what it is not), and only secondarily with the 'when' and 'why' questions. Our article is divided into three sections. In the first, we point to the flaws related to the *deviation trap*. We show that studies which conceive of party-based Euroscepticism as a deviation often (but not always) serve normative ends, typically describing Eurosceptic parties as extremist or populist fringe parties which are subsequently contrasted with the positively viewed essentialized EU mainstream. We also discuss the related problem of seeing Euroscepticism as a unified ideology instead of a rather incoherent cluster of diverse political groupings. In the second section, we analyse those studies that produce alternative approaches to the study of Euroscepticism but that also succumb to serious conceptual problems in our view. Two of these alternative approaches to party-based Euroscepticism are most widespread – a) the search for the substantive definition of Euroscepticism, which, however, often leads to a denial of the temporal and spatial diversity of Euroscepticism, and b) the production of new typologies, which nevertheless reproduce the old pattern of deviation vs. norm on a different level. While our enterprise is mainly critical, as we wish to point to the shortcomings of the current debates on party-based Euroscepticism, we also add a third, concluding section, which briefly discusses the conditions under which Euroscepticism might be saved as a useful analytical term in the study of European integration and European party systems.

2. The deviation trap

Without exaggeration, the deviation trap is the most fundamental problem in the study of party-based Euroscepticism. Most scholars start from the more or less neutral claim that Euroscepticism can be best understood when contrasted to the EU mainstream.[6] In other words, the first step is the description of the dominant mode of integration, and only then can Euroscepticism be defined as a deviation from this prevalent norm. However, even though such an approach is deeply problematic since it makes Euroscepticism a derivation of the highly volatile and context-dependent definition of the integration mainstream, it can still more or less rightfully claim that it is a purely descriptive, i.e. neutral, definition of the term. Unfortunately, most scholars combine this kind of analysis with their own implicit or explicit critical attitudes towards Euroscepticism, which is often described as something worrisome, dangerous, unpleasant or simply bad. In fact, the very construction of Euroscepticism as a *negative* deviation from the desirable norm betrays the bias in favour of the desirable norm, i.e. European integration. In other words, although the construction of Euroscepticism as a deviation from the mainstream or as opposition to the status quo itself is not necessarily a normative position, the 'Eurosceptic deviation' is often – explicitly or implicitly – seen as something negative.

Examples of the 'deviation approach' in both its forms (the neutral and the normative) abound, and the dependence of the definition of Euroscepticism on the often vaguely defined integration mainstream is nigh omnipresent in the academic literature. Taggart, for instance,

avoids defining Euroscepticism in substantive terms and instead uses a contextual reference to what Euroscepticism is not: 'The context is one of European integration, and so the term Euroscepticism encompasses those who stand outside the status quo' (Taggart 1998: 366). Let us note that this definition not only derives from the overall critique of European integration, but that its empirical fuzziness is aggravated by tying Euroscepticism to the species of European integration prevalent at the time of writing/research. Hence, Euroscepticism is described as opposition to European integration 'as it is currently conceived' (Taggart, Szczerbiak 2002: 7), as based on its perceived incompatibility with 'the present trajectory of the European project' (Taggart, Szczerbiak 2002: 7) and as being at odds with 'the dominant form of the ongoing integration' (Taggart, Szczerbiak 2002: 8). Clearly, Euroscepticism is then an extremely fluid notion – opposition to the Maastricht Treaty is taken as a clear sign of Euroscepticism in one study (Taggart 1998), but may no longer be a sufficient criterion a few years later, because the mainstream may have come to be critical of the Treaty, as well.

But while Taggart and Szczerbiak clearly cast party-based Euroscepticism as a deviation from the mainstream, they do not take an explicitly negative stance towards the term. Others, however, do so. Krouwel and Abts connect the anti-EU attitudes to a general 'distrust' and 'a cynic perception of the functioning of the national political system' (Krouwel, Abts 2007: 264; cf. also Taggart 1998: 368). Tellingly, for them, the more Eurosceptic a party is, the more it moves from 'reflexivity' towards 'negativism' (Krouwel, Abts, 2007: 252). Additionally, Krouwel and Abts' analysis of Euroscepticism also shows how Eurosceptical parties explore populist strategies, which further reinvigorates the negative assessment of Euroscepticism. Similarly, for Topaloff (2012), Eurosceptic parties are 'often marginal' or 'extremist' (Topaloff 2012: 3). Flood makes an explicit distinction between 'soft Euroscepticism and a constructive policy of campaigning to improve the EU' (2009: 914), hence betraying his belief that Euroscepticism is always necessarily destructive. Yet another example is Bernhard Wessels' study of Euroscepticism: Wessels differentiates between Eurosceptics and 'critical Europeans' (Wessels 2007: 288), making clear where his sympathies lie, sounding the alarm against Euroscepticism and propounding a strongly pro-integration stance. The title of the recent special issue of the *Journal of Common Market Studies (2013) – 'Confronting Euroscepticism'* – also reinforces this tendency. Although the editors try to stress the need for European elites to engage with dissenting voices over the question of Europe, the very title of the special issue betrays their critical attitude towards this phenomenon, as the implication is that Euroscepticism is something that must be resisted, akin to extremism or racism.[7]

However, the danger of the deviation trap is even higher when scholars try to position Eurosceptic parties along the political spectrum. The virtually uniform answer to this question is that Eurosceptic parties are fringe parties. Conti and Memoli believe that 'a marked Euroscepticism is an attitude to be found among radical parties' (Conti, Memoli 2012: 104–105). In a similar manner, Topaloff argues that 'for the most part, Eurosceptic parties are located along the ideological extremes of the political spectrum' (Topaloff 2012: 34). Taggart and Szczerbiak also claim to have found 'a marked tendency for Eurosceptic parties to be located on the peripheries or extremes of party politics' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b: 18; cf. also Katz 2008b). A number of other studies confirm the same view (Taggart 1998; Sitter 2002; Hooghe, Marks 2007; Sitter, Batory 2008b; etc.). In other words, there is a scholarly consensus that Eurosceptic parties are most often fringe parties.[8] Eurosceptic parties are thus doubly devi-

ant: they veer from support for European integration, but they also diverge from the political mainstream within the party systems of individual EU member states.

But this is precisely the problem with the empirical finding that Eurosceptic parties are fringe parties. If Euroscepticism is defined as opposition to the current integration processes and if, at the same time, current integration processes are shaped by the mainstream of the national political elites (as has been always the case), then the empirical finding that Eurosceptic parties do not belong to the mainstream is in no way surprising. In other words, if fringe parties deviate from and are critical of the political mainstream in national political systems, then the fringe parties' critique of European integration, which is a child of that very same political mainstream, is only a logical consequence of this constellation.

But there are also concerns over the way the definition of party-based Euroscepticism relates to the empirical findings, which, in circular fashion, feed back into the definition. The first of these difficulties pertains to the historically contingent nature of the empirical findings. We simply cannot deduce from them that the definition that ties party-based Euroscepticism to the political margins can be applied equally to all phases of the integration process. But in practice, these empirical findings are often generalized and implicitly understood as a universal law of party politics in EU member states. Consequently, Eurosceptic parties are, by the very definition of Euroscepticism, seen as always being anti-establishment, radical fringe parties. Euroscepticism itself then turns from being a critique of European integration to representing 'a form of anti-establishment protest' (Harmsen, Spiering 2004: 31). But what if in a country (such as the UK, Greece or Hungary), Euroscepticism becomes mainstream or at least part of the mainstream? If we followed the logic of the mainstream-opposition nature of Euroscepticism, then the result should be a reversal of the positions: Euro-optimistic parties would move to the fringes of the political spectrum precisely because they oppose the (Eurosceptic) mainstream parties. Obviously, such a reversal would be bizarre but this just demonstrates that constructing party-based Euroscepticism as a deviation from the mainstream can lead to absurd conclusions.

In fact, some authors have started to recognize that the conviction that party-based Euroscepticism is a fringe phenomenon is untenable. For instance, Taggart and Szczerbiak rightly realized that party-based Euroscepticism is also present in the political mainstream, but were unwilling to change the definition of Euroscepticism. They therefore offered two new strategies that would allow them to keep the original approach intact and at the same time accept that Euroscepticism is distributed across the party spectrum. The first of these strategies was to brush up the differentiation between soft and hard Euroscepticism and claim that while soft Eurosceptics may perhaps be found in the mainstream, the really dangerous hard Eurosceptics still deviate from the mainstream and remain firmly on the margins. The second strategy was to distinguish between Euroscepticism as 'a broad, underlying party position' and Euroscepticism as 'an element of interparty competition' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b: 13). The result is analogous to the previous move: the mainstream parties are not really Eurosceptic; they only use Euroscepticism tactically in order not to lose their positions in the national party system, whereas purely Eurosceptic parties link Euroscepticism firmly to their own ideologies. In the long term, however, neither of the two strategies presents an escape from the erroneous definition of party-based Euroscepticism since both of them depict the Eurosceptic discourse in the mainstream parties as less dangerous (because it is either soft or rhetorical/tactical) and the

Eurosceptics' connection to the dangerous fringes is reaffirmed in the process. Thus, the original definition of Euroscepticism requires no modification, and its deviant nature is preserved.

3. Alternatives to the deviation trap?

3.1. Substantive definitions of Euroscepticism

It is fair to say that some students of party-based Euroscepticism have come up with alternative interpretations of the phenomenon which do not directly lead to the deviation trap. Two of these approaches are worth mentioning: the first of these two markedly different approaches attempts to recast the definition of Euroscepticism in more substantive terms. The other sees more nuanced typologies as the solution. Unfortunately, neither of the two strategies offers a solution that could save Euroscepticism as a useful academic notion. Scholars who advocate the first approach realize that for Euroscepticism to have any value in academic research, it has to be clearly measurable. A definition that derives the content of Euroscepticism from the ever-changing integration mainstream clearly provides no such specification.

In other words, the claim is that we need a substantive definition of Euroscepticism that would sever the direct link between the characterization of the currently dominant mode of the integration process, on the one hand, and Euroscepticism, on the other. The first possible approach to substantively defining Euroscepticism is to tie it to the ideological families out of which Euroscepticism grows. This argument presupposes that Euroscepticism does not constitute a new cleavage, but merely a new dimension in the political contestation between existing ideological groupings. The argument runs that Euroscepticism is linked to particular ideologies (such as conservatism and nationalism), whereas other ideologies tend to be more pro-European (liberalism, for instance) (cf. Marks, Wilson 2000; Tsebelis, Garrett 2000; Marks, Steenbergen 2004; Hix et al. 2007; etc.).

The problem with this type of argumentation is that in spite of the general tendency of Euroscepticism to appear among some party families, the phenomenon cannot be exclusively derived from or reduced to any one ideology (but cf. Krouwel, Abts 2007), and nobody has succeeded in proving that the propensity of some ideologies to be more supportive of the EU is indeed related to the ideologies' main claims, rather than simply being a temporal correlation. To add to this critique, some scholars argue that Euroscepticism can 'seriously undermine the coherence of the traditional families' (Hix and Lord 1997: 53) or that it even sometimes 'orthogonally cuts across the established cleavages amongst the European political-party families' (Topaloff 2012: 2). In addition, those connecting party-based Euroscepticism to particular ideologies can have in mind two very different things. Typically, the claim is that party-based Euroscepticism can be arrived at from very different ideological principles, but some common Eurosceptic essence remains.

Nevertheless, one minority position is that there are various party-based Euroscepticisms, each connected to a particular ideology. The latter position we find highly plausible, but the former (which is, unfortunately, much more common) has never been empirically demonstrated. In spite of this lack of empirical evidence, many scholars stick to the essentialist view of Euroscepticism, focussing on 'whether the opposition to the EU is framed in language that stresses that it is too capitalist/socialist/neo-liberal/bureaucratic, depending on ideological

position (communist/conservative/socialist/populist)' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008a: 7, stressed by us). What Taggart and Szczerbiak imply is that there is only one Euroscepticism, but that it is, unfortunately, framed in a variety of ways. For them, the difference is solely linguistic. For us, it is substantial. The Eurosceptic who sees the EU as too capitalist has almost nothing in common with the one who stresses that the EU is too bureaucratic. The first may wish to create a stronger bureaucratic apparatus that would curb neoliberal capitalism in Europe, whereas the other would be shocked at the idea of creating further administrative bodies capable of further regulating the EU market.

Some authors have come some way toward realizing that Euroscepticism is in fact rather mutable, and their via media solution is to acknowledge this and consequently identify the substance(s) of Euroscepticism for each historical period. Hooghe and Marks thus differentiate two types of Euroscepticism, with the first defined as 'opposition to market integration' in the early decades of the Communities, and the second as the 'defence of the national community' after the Maastricht Treaty (2007: 121). While this recognition is certainly a step in the right direction, it still reifies the belief that at any given point in time, Euroscepticism is essentially the same across the EU. Hence, while this approach does acknowledge the diachronic evolution of Euroscepticism, it fails to realize the spatial variation therein (for a similar argument regarding the huge variation in Euroscepticism, in both geographical and temporal terms, see Leconte 2010).

Another typical attempt at a substantive definition of Euroscepticism lies in its identification with the critique of supranationalism. Since some influential scholars consider supranationalism one of the essential features of integration (Kopecký, Mudde 2002: 301; Lubbers and Scheepers 2005: 224–227), in such accounts, Euroscepticism can be identified with the attempts 'to revert to a more intergovernmental kind of regional coexistence' (Topaloff 2012: 14). But if we look at recent developments in the EU, we quickly realize the shortcomings of such a definition. The most important of these is the obvious fact that many recent anti-crisis instruments (such as the European Stability Mechanism or the Fiscal Compact) were agreed outside the traditional treaty framework, and their basis is almost purely intergovernmental. In light of the above-mentioned definition of party-based Euroscepticism, such a reversal to intergovernmental decision-making would necessarily imply that its political proponents (such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel) are in fact Eurosceptics.

The same problem arises in other similarly broad substantive definitions of integration and the opposition to it. Kopecký and Mudde mention the opposition to the EU-wide 'liberal market economy' as another essential feature of Europhobia and thus also of 'Eurorejects' (Kopecký, Mudde 2002: 301). But is it not precisely under the banner of a liberal market economy that the Eurosceptic attack on the EU is often led? Actually, as Crespy and Verschueren (2009: 384) show, what is mentioned in the treaties (art. 3 TEU) is not *liberal* market economy but rather *social* market economy. To put it simply, while Kopecký and Mudde may be right in pointing out some Eurosceptics (or 'Eurorejects', in their terminology)[9] who prefer a more intergovernmental Europe with a less liberal economy, this is certainly not an exhaustive feature of Euroscepticism, nor is it, under the current circumstances, the most typical Eurosceptic stance.

To give one more example that shows that the strategy of essentializing Euroscepticism may avoid the trap of deviation but simply fails to encompass all types of party-based Euroscepticism, focusing instead exclusively on the authors' favourite Eurosceptic stream(s), one

may point to a study by Lubbers and Scheepers (2005). The authors perceive Euroscepticism in two ways: it is related either to the opposition to EU policies (political Euroscepticism) or to the perceived financial losses caused by EU membership (instrumental Euroscepticism). While this distinction is quite useful since it implicitly touches on the debates about different motivations for Euroscepticism (Hooghe, Marks 2007; Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008a; Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b; etc.), these two elements are also clearly insufficient to capture the whole breadth of Eurosceptic thought and practice. For instance, what is entirely missing from this characterization is identity-based Euroscepticism (cf. Leconte 2010) that does not oppose a particular EU policy or complain about the financial losses incurred, but dislikes the very idea of European integration, which many argue is a motive very strongly present among Eurosceptic voters (e.g. Hooghe, Marks 2004a).

The problems related to the creation of substantive definitions of (party-based) Euroscepticism are thus not easily removable. Unfortunately, instead of acknowledging that Euroscepticism is a too flexible and too general term that resists attempts at its specification, most scholars adhere to the notion and its portability across time and space even with the price demanded by its all-encompassing nature and its indeterminacy. Taggart and Szczerbiak are most eloquent here: 'All this, of course, begs a series of questions, an important one being: how many extensions of sovereignty must a party oppose before it can be categorized as Eurosceptic? In this respect, a certain amount of common sense has to be applied. There are no simple answers here and clearly further reflection on this point is necessary.' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b: 249) Although we are largely sympathetic to the endeavour of coming up with a substantive definition of Euroscepticism, and although we believe that such an approach is, together with the contextualization of Euroscepticism within national political systems, the only way forward if Euroscepticism as a term is to be saved at all, resorting to '*common sense*' instead of precisely defining the criteria is scientifically rather precarious.

3.2. New typologies of Euroscepticism

The second strategy of coping with the above-mentioned weaknesses of the notion of party-based Euroscepticism is to replace the term with more nuanced typologies. But this is another strategy that is not entirely successful because the typologies do not really remove the above mentioned problem of Euroscepticism being too vague and, at times, arbitrary. In addition, the result of the whole exercise is that, paradoxically, the new typologies always create a new deviation category (such as Eurorejects or Eurocynics), thus reproducing the deviation trap on a different level. To demonstrate the first problem of the new classifications – their vagueness – it suffices to point to the very influential reformulations of Euroscepticism presented by Taggart and Szczerbiak and by Kopecký and Mudde. Taggart and Szczerbiak first came up with the distinction between the hard and soft versions of Euroscepticism (Taggart, Szczerbiak 2001), which was sharply criticized for the overinclusive nature of their definition of soft Euroscepticism (Kopecký, Mudde 2002).

To partially placate this critique, the two scholars suggested that we should also take into account the difference between 'core' and 'peripheral' areas of policy (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2003: 13). Arguably, in their view, opposing the core policies of the EU would make a party more strongly Eurosceptic than opposition to the peripheral ones. The major problem here,

however, lies in the indeterminate character of such a definition. For instance, many parties (including those which would not be seen as Eurosceptic in Taggart and Szczerbiak's framework) oppose some elements of the European Monetary Union. Even if we accept that the EMU is a core policy, we still grapple with the conundrum of how to measure the opposition to the EMU. Does the party have to speak against the common currency? What if the party is critical of the Euro but still approves of its existence in other countries (as is the case with many parties in the newer member states)? Or is a negative attitude to the Fiscal Compact sufficient? Arguing against the Banking Union? We do not know.

A very similar critique can be levelled against Kopecký and Mudde, who distinguish between 'diffuse support' and 'specific support' for European integration and derive their categories from this distinction. Diffuse support is defined as 'support for the general ideas of European integration' (Kopecký, Mudde 2002: 300–301). Specific support is 'support for the general practice of European integration; that is, the EU as it is and as it is developing' (ibid.). What is, however, not clear at all is what constitutes the 'underlying ideas' or the 'general practice' of European integration. But even if these terms were specified, the key difficulty is that there is no transhistorical general practice of European integration since the integration practice can – and indeed does – change quite fundamentally (cf. Hooghe, Marks 2007). The 'underlying ideas' are equally difficult to pinpoint, and the attempts at doing so (such as the above mentioned suggestion that an integrated liberal market economy might be one of these ideas) only show that the possible underlying ideas are malleable as well.

If one of the original impulses for the redefinition of Euroscepticism was its normative nature and an imprecise understanding of it as a deviation from the mainstream, the new typologies often move away from the term, but the principle of deviation is reaffirmed. The clearest – and probably most well-known – instance of such an alternative categorization is, again, Kopecký and Mudde's typology. One of the four positions in their typology – the others being 'Euroenthusiasts', 'Europragmatists' and 'Eurosceptics' – is that of 'Eurorejects'. In their empirical analysis, Kopecký and Mudde then claim that 'most Eurorejects parties… are fringe parties, some with little hope of a more successful future, … others destined for (semi-)permanent opposition' (Kopecký, Mudde 2002: 317). In all but their name, Eurorejects parties thus occupy exactly the same position as Euroscepticism in the above analyses.[10] This also means that the normatively tinged (i.e. negative) attitude towards the originally Eurosceptic and newly Eurorejects parties is retained even in the new typology.

To give another example, Krouwel and Abts came up with the new category of 'Eurocynicism', for which 'a closed mindset, totally lacking reflexivity' is typical (Krouwel, Abts 2007: 262; see also de Vreese 2007). An even more pertinent example is their further category of 'estranged citizens' (Krouwel, Abts 2007: 263). These 'alienated citizens outright oppose the general principles, institutions and processes of European integration and do not want to belong to the supra-national community' (ibid.). The normative position behind this claim is clearly visible: this categorization does not take into account the fact that some people may be alienated from the EU and its institutions, and yet be perfectly loyal, integrated citizens of a member state. In other words, the assumption is that those who most strongly oppose the EU must be generally alienated from regular citizens too, hence again being deviants on both the supranational and national levels. Krouwel and Abt's further comment confirms this impression: 'Cynic and alienated citizens disengage from politics, they adopt a low degree

of observation and they have an outlook of pre-reflexive dissent' (Krouwel, Abts 2007: 263). Other typologies that replicate the same pattern include Tiersky's 'Euro-skepticism, Europessimism, Euro-phobia, and Eurocynicism' (Tiersky 2001: 3), Flood's 'rejectionism' (Flood 2002), Price's Euro-hostility, Euro-critique and Euro-phobia (Price 2009: 367), etc. In addition to the references to deviation of the Euroscepticism-related terms the thinkers coin, a new problem (for which they cannot be blamed, though) is that the proliferation of new typologies is simultaneously accompanied by the low level of their acceptance by their colleagues. These approaches are undoubtedly relatively successful in terms of striving for the goal of separating the journalistic and academic discourse[11], since the new categories virtually never penetrate into newspaper articles. However, the corollary is further marginalization of the new typologies. If the marginalization were tied only to the absence of the new terms in the popular media, it would still be an acceptable price to pay. But unfortunately, the problem goes deeper since the new typologies are almost never replicated and worked with even within academia, and thus they ultimately fail in establishing a new set of terms of reference for the study of Euroscepticism.

4. Conclusion

The current academic debate on party-based Euroscepticism is caught in a fundamental dilemma: either scholars opt for definitions that are too broad and vague and nigh impossible to apply empirically, or they choose more specific yet essentialized and often arbitrary typologies. This dilemma has its roots in the original understanding of (party-based) Euroscepticism as a negative deviation from the desirable norm – the integration mainstream. The key question, which still begs an answer, is whether Euroscepticism can be saved as a valid academic notion, as 'a portable concept' (Szczerbiak, Taggart 2008b: 6) that retains the same meaning throughout different phases of the integration process and across the many party systems of the EU member states. While this article focusses on a critique of the existing conceptualizations, and its aim is not to elaborate in detail on the possible ways out of the problem, we see three possible solutions here, the first two aiming at a modification of the concept, the third at a future transformation of the political space of the EU.

The first solution is a radical contextualization of Euroscepticism. Today, the term encompasses every type of critique of the integration process, even if the critique is used to improve the integration structure. We believe that in order to save the concept's applicability, we need to narrow it down substantially. The first step should be to define only those political attitudes which fall under the category of outright 'polity contestation' as Eurosceptical (cf. de Wilde, Trenz 2014; de Wilde et al. 2014).[12] Hix (2007) is right to describe Euroscepticism as *'*little more than a set of preferences by citizens, parties and interests groups about institutional design in Europe*'*. However, what needs to be added is that attitudes towards European integration cannot be seen as a simple continuum of positions from positive to negative regarding the current shape of the EU; different rejections of integration may well be based on entirely opposite assumptions (e.g. the EU is too socialist; the EU is too neoliberal). In other words, party-based Euroscepticism should be broken down into individual critical approaches in terms of their political ideologies and not just be categorized on the scale of soft

and hard Euroscepticism. The critical attitudes to European integration should not be lumped together under the single heading Euroscepticism. Instead, the explanation of these attitudes must be linked to the ideological background of the critique and to the party families from which the attitudes arise. To put our argument differently, instead of attempting to generalize the notion of Euroscepticism to make it '*a portable concept*', we should accept its historical and geographic plurality and focus on the specific types of party-based Euroscepticism in the individual national contexts separately. To talk about party-based Euroscepticism (or rather Euroscepticisms) on the European level then makes sense only as far as comparative studies of the national contexts are concerned.

The second solution is inspired by Brubaker and Cooper's application of the distinction between the 'categories of practice' and the 'categories of analysis' to the term 'identity', which is possibly even vaguer than the term 'Euroscepticism' (Brubaker, Cooper 2000). Similar to what they have done in their approach, we can accept 'Euroscepticism' as one of the categories of practice. 'These are categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts' (Brubaker, Cooper 2000: 4). However, we can abandon the term altogether as a category of analysis and replace the term with more specific concepts. One such concept that is already widely used in political science but that is simultaneously less normatively loaded is the notion of an 'anti-systemic party'. If Euroscepticism is recast as a critique of the emerging EU political system, then 'Eurosceptic' parties can be better understood as anti-systemic parties. In other words, while we contest the usefulness of 'Euroscepticism' as an analytical concept, we do realize that the European political and social space is filled with 'Eurosceptic talk' (analogically to the 'identity talk'). However, this 'Eurosceptic talk', regardless of whether it is practiced by the political mainstream or peripheral political agents, should be analysed with the use of much more precise analytical terms.

The third solution is not so much a modification of how we understand what Euroscepticism is, but a change in the empirical world students of Euroscepticism want to describe (and we do acknowledge that such a change might be very far away). A meaningful definition of Euroscepticism that would transcend national borders and become a truly EU-wide phenomenon depends on two conditions, neither of which has been met so far. First, the spatial diversity and the strong contextual dependence of party-based Euroscepticism would be substantially reduced if a genuine European party system with full-fledged pan-EU European parties were established. Although there are some signs that a supranational party system might arise in the future (based on transnational party cooperation [Pridham 2008] and the party groups in the EP), such a system does not exist today. This new party system would offer a common ground for the expression of party-based Euroscepticism, which would be reflected in the existence of a European cleavage, which in turn would allow the determination of Euroscepticism's (empirically observable) substance. This is clearly linked to our previous argument: if a new pan-EU party starts to criticize the EU, then clearly it will do so from a specific ideological position, and from a specific political perspective, which may be leftist, conservative, nationalist or libertarian. Then such a critique of European integration may rightly be called Eurosceptical, but it will still be linked to a concrete political ideology.

Second, a closely related but more general factor that would greatly facilitate the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of European integration would be the emergence

of a European public sphere and an EU-wide civil society. Even though there is a heated academic debate going on about which of these features of European integration are already present in the EU (cf. Risse 2010), we cannot yet talk about the existence of a 'dense' European public sphere, a trans-national civil society and a strong collective identity in Europe. If the EU's political system were unified to this extent, party-based Euroscepticism would cease to be a mere conglomerate of rather disparate political groupings and movements with often incompatible national backgrounds, gaining instead a more clearly articulated political position of what it stands for and what it stands against, a position that is today largely missing. To put it differently, Euroscepticism would evolve into a political ideology with a stable core of hierarchically ordered fundamental values. Needless to say, this argument applies not only to our understanding of Euroscepticism, but also to our understanding of the supporters of the integration process (Europhiles), who today are almost as multifaceted and diverse as are the Eurosceptic movements.

The fulfilment of these two conditions could contribute to the 'normalization' of the debate about party-based Euroscepticism, as Euroscepticism would become an ordinary political movement within the well-established polity of the EU. Simultaneously, Euroscepticim would then cease to be seen as the critique of the vaguely defined mainstream and would instead gain a much more clearly defined position akin to those of political parties in national party systems. But until these conditions are met (and as we said above, we believe that their fulfilment is indeed still far away), Euroscepticism should be treated as a conglomerate of diverse national political movements with various and often contradictory ideological stances towards the EU (cf. Sørensen 2008). Irrespective of the evolution of Euroscepticism towards a unified EU-wide political movement or towards even greater fragmentation and diversity, academia should be able to distinguish between the popular sentiments and its own position. Only then can Euroscepticism be saved as a concise and empirically fertile academic term.

Footnotes:

1. Although we focus on party-based Euroscepticism in this article, we argue that this notion should be examined in the broader context of other types of Euroscepticism (public, institutional, etc.). At this point, we agree with Crespy and Verschueren (2009: 381–382) that the whole study of Euroscepticism and the attempts to define it are excessively affected by the dominant empirical focus on political parties. This problem is connected with the fact that 'the notion of Euroscepticism was mainly elaborated by scholars of political parties' (Crespy, Verschueren 2009: 381).
2. It is not only elections that matter here, but also the stability of coalition governments, as their stability has been influenced by the European issues. For instance, the Slovak government fell apart because of the disagreement of one of the coalition parties with one of the solutions of the so-called Eurozone crisis in 2011.
3. There are other countries where so-called Eurosceptic parties even entered the parliament with large proportions of seats (e.g. the True Finns in Finland – 39 seats [Ministry of Justice of Finland 2011] – or the Swedish Democrats – 49 seats [Sveriges Riksdag 2015]).
4. To be fair, Pridham (2008) anticipated an increase of Euroscepticism in these countries.
5. We acknowledge that this definition was already criticized elsewhere and that this critique is increasingly accepted by the scholars in the field (see below). At the same time, however, this theoretical criticism is very often not reflected in the empirical research of the party-based Euroscepticism.

6. By the term 'EU mainstream' we understand the political forces which significantly influence the course of European integration. These forces include political parties that are often represented in the member states' governments and thus have had the opportunity to influence the positions of these governments with regard to European integration.
7. There are, however, some scholars who recognize and try to address the problem of the negative normative connotations of the term Euroscepticism (for examples of such scholars, see footnote 10).
8. We acknowledge that recently there has been a growing discussion in the literature about mainstream parties adopting Eurosceptic positions. However, this kind of Euroscepticism is often identified as the 'soft' one. Thus the deviation trap is reproduced on a different level (see the section 'New typologies of Euroscepticism' below).
9. For a more detailed analysis of their typology see page 10.
10. The work of other authors, such as Crespy and Verschueren, is laudable in that they realize that any new typology should avoid the deviation trap and the related normative undertones. For this reason, Crespy and Verschueren put forward and propose the concept of resistance to Europe, claiming that 'since it [the term resistance] is polysemic, the positive and negative connotations tend to cancel each other, thus providing a level of semantic neutrality' (Crespy, Verschueren 2009: 386). The problem of the negative connotation of the term Euroscepticism is also addressed by Fitzgibbon (2014) and by Startin, Krouwel (2013: 386).
11. For a similar distinction between the 'categories of social and political practice' and 'categories of social and political analysis' and its application to the vague term of 'identity' see Brubaker and Cooper (2000). The authors criticize the term 'identity' for its sheer vagueness and propose more suitable 'categories of analysis', namely 'identification and categorization', 'self-understanding and social location' and 'commonality, connectedness, [and] groupness'. These concepts can also be used in the study of Euroscepticism (which is a similarly vague term as the one they criticize) (see the conclusions below).
12. It is important to stress that this approach substantially differs from the definition of hard Euroscepticism of Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b: 2). They argue that hard Euroscepticism is 'a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived'. Our claim is much more specific since it is focussed on a critique of a specific understanding of the EU as a polity. Hence, our approach is more substantive and narrower. Additionally, we do not claim that Eurosceptic parties have to be fringe parties only (e.g. the British Conservative Party is clearly opposed to the idea of the 'EU polity' and yet it is not a fringe party).

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